

# Central Claims Conference Crown

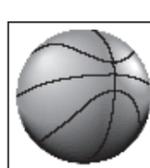


NASH CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR VETERAN JAYDEN BAGGETT  
(Photos Submitted by Meryn Johnson)

## Bulldogs finish undefeated in QCAC action

From Staff Reports

ROCKY MOUNT -- Winning the newly formed Quad County Conference and making a deep run in the Class 4-A State Basketball Playoffs were the chief goals this season



for long-time Nash Central girls coach Terri Cash.

One down, one to go. Not only did the Lady Bulldogs earn the QCC crown, they did so in dominant fashion, going undefeated in the league, with the closest contest being a nine-point decision over Bunn.

Central, with an 18-5 overall worksheet, enters the Class 4-A Playoffs as a No. 4 seed, which gave the Lady Bulldogs a

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NASH CENTRAL'S TANNER MOSS

## Familiar foes for Bulldogs

Langley's club set for season

From Staff Reports

ROCKY MOUNT -- Willie Langley couldn't help but reach for his phone when the new Quad County Conference was unveiled as part of the most recent realignment by the North Carolina High School Athletic Association.



"As soon as the conferences came out, I sent a group text to (Bunn coach Patrick Warren and Roanoke Rapids coach Mark Snead) and said nothing has changed for us," said Langley, Nash Central's long-time baseball skipper. "We still have to beat up on each other."

Certainly, that has been the case over the past four years for the trio of schools, who competed as lower-classification entities in the former split Big East Conference.

Despite having lower enrollment numbers, these three

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# 2025-26 NASH COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL LET THE GAMES BEGIN



NN COACH HENRY DRAKE (RIGHT) IS LEADING THE FIGHTING KNIGHTS INTO THE STATE PLAYOFFS  
(Photos Submitted by Carl Copeland)

## Nash clubs gear up for state basketball playoffs

By CHANCE PUCKETT  
Correspondent

NASH COUNTY -- Three of Nash County's boys basketball programs received passing grades on their regular season tests and have been rewarded with a playoff berth, headlined by the Northern Nash Fighting Knights being tabbed as the top seed in the Class 6-A East.



Northern capped a 20-3 regular season last Thursday with a revenge win at Hunt, wrapping their first season in the split 5A/6A Big East Conference at 9-3 in

league play. Ironically, the Knights weren't the league champion, but swept the eventual Big East winner Fike in their two-game set against the Golden Demons.

Northern dropped road outings in league play against Rocky Mount and C.B. Aycock after being blitzed at home by Hunt on Jan. 13, resulting in ending the year tied with Hunt for second place in the conference.

Of course, the team's nine league victories coupled with a nonconference résumé that includes wins over East Wake, Kingston and Durham-Riverside was still

enough to earn top billing on their side of the bracket.

A four-man quartet that enters the playoffs averaging double figures in scoring looks to lead the Knights into a hopeful playoff run, headlined by freshman Quantay James who's totaling nearly 15 points per outing under the direction of head coach Henry Drake.

Christian Barnes, Kingston Little and Jah'Marzea Williams round out the big four for Northern, and will look to knock off the winner of Tuesday's matchup between No. 16 Triton and 17th-seeded

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NASH CENTRAL'S AVERY FLOWERS

## STATE THEIR CASE Knights sharp at swim finale

By CHANCE PUCKETT  
Correspondent

GREENSBORO -- A banner year for the Northern Nash High School boys swim team came to a close with a Top-10 finish at the Class 6-A State Championship meet, ending the 2025-26 campaign with a 103.5-point performance.

The Knights' record-breaking result comes just a few weeks removed from the boys winning their third straight



NN'S ERIN WILSON



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NORTHERN NASH'S TRAVELING PARTY FOR THE STATE SWIM FINALS  
(Photos Submitted by Meryn Johnson)



**NASH CENTRAL SENIORS (L TO R) JAKAYLA GAY, JAYDEN BAGGETT AND CHRISTIANA LYNCH WITH HEAD COACH TERRI CASH (AND HER LUCKY SHOES)**

**NCHS**

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bye through Tuesday's opening round of action.

NCHS will return to the hardwood today for a matchup against the winner of the first-round meeting between Carrboro and Randleman.

Today's contest will be held at The Dawg Pound on the NCHS campus.

It's easy to wonder how the young Lady Bulldogs, with only three seniors, will fare under the postseason pressure.

But some of Central's returnees, including standouts JaKayla Gay and Jayden Baggett, gained considerable playoff experience last year when the Lady Bulldogs reached the third round before falling at Fairmont.

And it should be noted that Central's freshmen were tested during their

middle school careers, along with competing in several high-impact travel basketball events.

The veterans and youngsters have provided a successful blend to date for Nash Central, which enters the postseason riding a seven-game winning streak.

NCHS closed out its regular season schedule -- and its QCC sweep -- with a 52-21 road decision at Wake Prep last Thursday evening in Franklin County.

After a low-scoring first period, the Lady Bulldogs pulled away for good with an 18-4 surge in the second stanza of action.

Freshman star A'dia Cash enjoyed a brilliant regular season finale as the coach's daughter came through with a

game-high 26 points to go with six rebounds, six assists and eight steals.

Harmony Dupree, another ninth-grader, was also effective with a double-double of 12 points and 12 rebounds.

Gay, who passed the 1,000-point career club two weeks ago, delivered eight points to go with 12 rebounds.

Central also delivered a quality defensive performance by limiting the homestanding Guardians to just a 19-percent shooting effort from the field -- along with collecting 14 steals.

If Central gets past its second-round showdown, a possible rematch with fifth-seeded Fairmont could loom in the third round -- and that game would be played at The Dawg Pound.



**NORTHERN NASH FRESHMAN WHIZ QUANTAY JAMES**

**HOOPS**

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Southern Alamance in the second round today at the NNHS Gymnasium.

Northern's loss to Rocky Mount did help propel the Gryphons to a playoff spot, though. And not only that, Michael Gaaney's squad played itself into a first-round hosting opportunity as well.

Rocky Mount closed the regular season with three-straight victories while winning four of the team's last five games, headlined by a 20-point comeback against archrival Northern Nash.

The Gryphons ended the regular season at 11-9 overall and 7-5 in Big East play, flipping the script from a rocky 0-4 start to the year and ending the year as the No. 15 seed in the 5A East. A Tuesday night tilt with South Granville on the Gryphons' home floor resulted in the winner being sent to Big East champion and second-seeded Fike for a matchup on Thursday night, with a potential conference matchup set for Thursday evening.

Well-acquainted with its Nash County foes, Rocky Mount squared off against Nash Central three times this

season, narrowly winning the season series against the Bulldogs with two victories to one. The one for Nash Central though, was one of the program's biggest wins in recent years.

That win helped push the Bulldogs to the playoffs for the first time since 2019, this season being a serious step forward in the fourth season of Brian Thomas' reign as the head coach at Central.

The Bulldogs will not only participate in the playoffs for the first time in seven years, they're also set to host a playoff game -- doing so alongside their conference champion girls team.

Nash Central was issued the 13th seed in the Class-4A East after a fifth-place finish in the Class 2A/3A/4A Quad County Conference, attempting to eliminate No. 20 Fairmont in hopes of setting up a second-round matchup with conference foe Roanoke Rapids High School.

With the opening round now in the rearview mirror, area teams will participate in the second round tonight with the third and fourth rounds set for Saturday and Monday, the semifinals and finals coming after that.



**NORTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL SWIMMER CALEB PRICE**

**SWIM**

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conference championship, wrapping up the year as one of the top teams in the state.

East Chapel Hill claimed the 6A title by a wide margin, nearly doubling up second-place Charlotte Catholic by closing at a meet-high 506 points.

Northern was able to capitalize on strong performances in both relay and individual events en route to its top-ten result, most notably top-five finishes in the 200-yard medley relay and 200-yard freestyle relay while individually Conner Ezzell placed fourth and fifth in the 50-yard freestyle and 100-yard butterfly, respectively.

Ezzell was a star for the Knights in the pool throughout the team's 2025-26 campaign, competing on both of Northern's two relay teams that placed in the top five at the state championship meet as well.

Prior to states he was named the league's Male Swimmer of the Year for the second-straight season, and set school records at the conference meet in the 200-yard individual medley and 100-yard freestyle events.

Ezzell also contributed to the Knights breaking conference records in the 200-yard medley relay and 200-yard freestyle relay outside of his individual accolades.

Northern's star swimmer was joined on the 200-yard medley relay squad by Blake Denton, Nicolas Groesser and Nicolas Garzone, while Groesser, Garzone and Graham Hicks rounded out the 200-yard freestyle relay foursome. The Knights 200-yard medley quartet recorded a time of 1:42.23, good for a fifth-place 28 points, while the 200-yard

freestyle relay resulted in 30 points at 1:32.24.

Outside of Ezzell, Garzone, Groesser, Denton, Hicks and Caleb Price each competed as individuals in various events, headlined by Denton's 10-place, seven-point result in the 500-yard freestyle.

Garzone tied for 12th place in the 50-yard freestyle while recording an 18th-place finish in the 100-yard backstroke.

Groesser tabbed a 12th-place result in the 100-yard butterfly which was good for five points, later finishing 21st in the 100-yard freestyle.

Outside of his point-scoring effort in the 500-yard freestyle, Denton also recorded a 17th-place mark in the 100-yard breaststroke, while Hicks and Price each finished outside of the top 30 in their respective events.

The lone member of the Lady Knights swim team to participate in the state championship meet was Erin Wilson, the 2025-26 Big East Female of the Year who finished in the top-20 in both the 200-yard freestyle as well as the 500-yard freestyle.

Overall, it was certainly an impressive performance for Northern Nash and veteran head coach Tracy Dodrill, whose boys improved dramatically from an 18th-place finish at the Class 3-A State Championship meet the prior season.

Having now added a third-straight conference title and a laundry list of individual accolades to the record books, the Knights are primed for another successful season this time next year.



**NORTHERN NASH HIGH SCHOOL SWIMMER NIC GROESSER**

**BASEBALL**

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schools stood in with the 'big boys' in the league, with Bunn sharing or winning the title outright in each of the past two campaigns.

RR has also seen its share of success, as have Langley's Bulldogs, who split their tight series with Bunn in 2025.

Throw in Louisburg, American Leadership Academy and Wake Prep, and the QCC looks to be very strong this spring and beyond on the diamond.

"The conference top to botto will be tough -- there will be no push-over teams," Langley said. "We are gonna have to bring it every night to have a chance to make some noise."

Langley considers Bunn to be the team to beat as the Wildcats lost only one starter from a club that dominated the Big East last spring under Warren's direction.

"(The Wildcats) are a talented group," Lang-

ley said. "They are well-coached and know how to win baseball games."

Langley's Bulldogs certainly should be in the mix as what used to be a young, potential-rich group has blossomed into an experience-laden crew loaded for a potential deep playoff run.

The Bulldogs return their two mound aces from last spring in sophomore Caleb Cox and junior Peyton Harris.

Cox broke the school single-season whiff record in 2025 with 102 as a freshman and earned honorable mention all-state honors.

Avery Flowers burst onto the scene last year as a freshman at catcher, while Shea Whitley is expected to serve as NC's number-three pitcher when he is not excelling at other positions -- or at the plate.

Tanner Moss, Dylan Moseley and Aiden Parks are other key returnees as the Bulldogs

are blessed with skill and depth up and down their lineup.

Langley isn't sure about the status of senior Winston Lee, who suffered a serious knee injury during football season at his quarterback position.

"Last year, Winston was a do-it-all guy -- he could play anywhere on the field and is a natural leader," Langley said. "We should have him back in some capacity this season."

Central opened its ledger on Wednesday against Rocky Mount. The Bulldogs' first QCC showdown will be March 17 at home against the Louisburg Warriors out of Franklin County.

"It should be a fun year, but they are all fun as we get to play baseball," Langley said. "I'm really excited about the upcoming season."

"This team has a chance to be very competitive."