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2026 Region Previews Section

AAAAA to be competitive, but Dutch Fork still the team to beat

By David Shelton
Senior Writer

Region 1-AAAAA Predicted Order of Finish
Byrnes
Hillcrest
Mauldin
J.L. Mann
Eastside
Woodmont

Overview: Byrnes enters the 2026 season as the favorite in region 1-AAAAA, but Hillcrest could certainly be a major challenger. The region, overall, is not particularly strong when compared to other regions in AAAAA but there will be a lot of competition for the top four spots in the league.

Byrnes, despite some ups and downs in recent years, has enough talent and experience to make a serious state title run in 2026. The group of skill playmakers at Byrnes will be as good as any team in the state.

The Rebels will run the football with LSU commit **Tre Segarra** and ETSU commit **Jacobi Fuller**, who combined for more than 2,000 yards last season. **Chanin Harris**, committed to Syracuse, leads a talented and deep receiving corps.

The big question will be who will be the quarterback as both **Walker Burdette** and **Gideon Merhib** battle for the starting nod. The potential starting offensive line will include four seniors – **Josiah Chambers**, **Xavier Harris**, **Jailyn Boyd** and **Daniel Cornell**.



2026 Gray Collegiate War Eagles

A lot less experience returns on defense and that unit will need to progress as the season develops. Auburn commit **Aidyn Wiggins** will hold down one cornerback spot. Senior **Gabe Guerrero** will be a key lineman while **Nasir Ingram** will be a leader at linebacker. All total; coach **Reggie Shaw** anticipates seven underclassmen starting on defense.

Former offensive coordinator **Amos Lamb** takes over as the head coach at **Hillcrest High**. The Rams are coming off an 8-4 record of 2025.

Quarterback **Jackson Free** returns as a third-year starter and will be among the most productive quarterbacks in the region. **Tyler Tolbert** returns as the leading receiver while the running game is anchored by returners **Nydarrian Allen** and **Trey Booker**. Along the offensive line are projected starters **Kesheun Jones**, **Markel Martin**, **Trey Lashley**, **Lucas Hancock** and **Max Barnes**.

On the defensive side of the ball, expected leaders are linemen **Cory Collins**, linebackers **Tyvin Grady** and **Elijah Jackson**, and safety **Gavin Sullivan**.

J.L. Mann slipped from state title contender in 2024 to 1-10 a year ago but second-year head coach **Bryce Smiley** feels his 2026 team will be improved.

The Patriots will have to settle on a quarterback where **Gage Watkins** and **Wilkes Mellard** are competing for the starting nod. **Bucky Griffin** will be the primary back in the run game while **A.J. Rush**, **Tristian Shell**, **Tre Fuller** and **Chris LaTorre** are quality targets in the passing game.

Expected starters on the line include tackles **Thomas Bull** and **Parker Godfrey**, guards **Scion Jones** and **Jentzen Sullivan**, and center **Christian Sullivan**. Sullivan is considered a top college prospect.

Along the defensive line will be, **Luke Penland**,

Amare Bowman, **Jayden Wheeler** and **Shaun Carvalho**. Projected starters at linebacker are **Morgan Copeland**, **Miles Honeycutt** and **Xavier Trussell**. Working in the secondary are **Jeremond Jackson**, **Kadyn Hollis**, **Louie Booker** and **Seaver Berg**.

Philip Georgopoulos handles the kicking and punting.

Eastside has spent the offseason working to improve on a 4-7 record. Coach **Andre Woolcock** returns 12 starters to work with. Entering preseason camp, **Peyton Burns**, **Kason Clark**, **London Butler** and **Colton Hampton** were all in contention to be the QB1.

Returning as the playmakers at receiver are **Jamarion Perrin** and **Christian McDowell**, while **Kelyn Durham** and **Devin Sligh** are running backs to watch.

Lyndez Smith returns at linebacker to anchor the defense, along with tackle **Frank Stathakis** and defensive back **Zyair Robinson**.

Mauldin should improve on last year's 5-6 record under head coach **Andre Cook**. Quarterback **CJ Edwards** will take over as the offensive leader this fall, and will have returning backs **Kamari Cannon** and **Ryland Walton** to shoulder the load in the run game. Four starters also return along the offensive line. **Malakai Ford** is the top returning receiver.

Linebackers **Zaiden Addison** and **Isaiah Thompson** will be leaders defensively, along with returning defensive ends **Josh Evans** and **Javari Henderson**. Secondary returners include **JaQuan Delbridge**, **Mykhalil Cannon** and **Trey Chilliious**.

Woodmont went 5-6 last year but was 1-5 in region play. Second-year head coach **Malcolm Boyd** has a solid cast of returners, particularly in the offensive backfield.

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AAAAA Football Feature

AAAAA, Continued from Cover

Look for the Wildcats to focus on the running game, even with returning quarterback **Harper Doyle** providing some passing threat.

Anchoring the run game will be returning running backs **Amari Harris** and **Devonte Taylor**. When a big play is needed through the air, Doyle has threat **Frank Lewis** back at wide receiver.

Leaders defensively will include linebacker **Riley Doyle**, safety **Jaylen Williams**, end **Malakhi Mitchum** and tackle **Zach Land**.

Region 2-AAAAA Predicted Order of Finish

Northwestern
Dorman
Rock Hill
Spartanburg
Boiling Springs
Fort Mill

Overview: It would be hard to argue that region two is not the most competitive league in AAAAA. As many as four of the six teams in the region have a legitimate chance to be the region champion. While Northwestern and Dorman are probably the two favorites, one should not discount the chances of Rock Hill and Spartanburg.

Northwestern lost just one game over the last two years but opened 2026 with a 15-10 loss to North Carolina power Hough High.

Coach Page Wofford again has a quality group of athletes in key positions but is looking at several new starters on both sides of the ball.

Whatever the Trojans lack, there won't be issues at quarterback where senior **Xavier Means** returns after a stellar junior season that saw him account for more than 4,000 total yards and 52 touchdowns. Though not as explosive as past receivers, returners **Payton Vining** and **Malik Ratliff** are highly capable, and **Quay Mobley** is a quality performer at running back.

Anchoring the offensive line is three-year starter **Beau Chumley**.

The defense should be solid at all three levels, adding transfer linebacker **K.J. Burg** from South Pointe as a key player. Linebackers **Alex Hingl** and **Dash Holley** are back as well. **Malik Darby**, **Trenton Hall**, **Jonathan Parker** and **Bron Nicholson** return along the front.

Dorman won 10 games last season under head coach **Jake Morris**. The Cavs won their first region title since 2020. Dorman's offensive backfield is loaded with quarterback **Cooper Patterson** and running backs **Nick Means** and **Carter Nash**. Talent also returns at receiver in **Juice Watkins-Hymes**, **Kendael Jones**, **Judah Adams** and **Anthony Peaks**.

AAAAA Football Polls	
1. Dutch Fork	6. Northwestern
2. Byrnes	7. Berkeley
3. Dorman	8. Rock Hill
4. James Island	9. River Bluff
5. Summerville	10. Carolina Forest

and corner **Jabez Thomas**, among others.

Leon Boulware begins year two as the head coach at **Rock Hill**, looking to build off a 7-5 record. The Bearcats made early noise in the season opener, upsetting Irmo, a top AAAA program.

The Bearcats are loaded athletically with several players expected to contribute in a variety of ways on both sides of the ball.

Players to watch include **Kaleb Wright** (LB), **Jo Jo Brooks** (WR/RB/DB), **Nigel Lightener** (DB), **Ames Oliver** (DL), **Kaiden Watkins** (RB/WR), and **Zymier Gordon-Myles** (RB/WR). Junior **Jonah Young** is the starting quarterback.

Fort Mill moves into the region after a 5-6 season. The top returner is running back **Broden Mitcheson**, who rushed for more than 1,000 yards last season. Receivers **Jamerion Terrell** and **Jerrell Douglas** have play-making ability but will be working with a new quarterback.

There are some holes to fill at **Spartanburg** but coach **Mark Hodge** always find a way. The top returners offensively include all-state running back **Trenton Lynch**, a senior, senior receivers **Skylar Douglas**, senior linemen **Justin Sims** and **Ligon Martin**, and receiver **BJ Dawkins**.

Junior **Chris Colin** is next in line at quarterback while freshman **Mason Whitesid** should impact the running game.

The Vikings return eight players on defense, led by **Jayden Brown**, **RJ Estrich** and **Sentell Hall** in the secondary. **Tryon Duncan** **Marquez Smith** return at end and **Kamarian Davis** returns at tackle. **Antavion Hawes** is a returner at linebacker.

Boiling Springs coach **Matt Reel** begins his fifth season after last year's 5-7 record. He says building some depth is key.

"We must stay healthy to compete in this region, which is hard to do," Reel said.

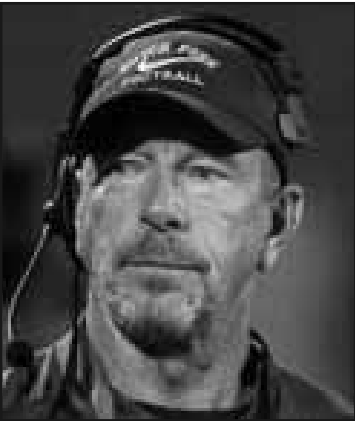
The offense is led by returning quarterback **Imri Logan**, a senior. He is one of seven returning starters on the unit, which includes receivers **Deion Suber** and **D'Jay Leak**, and running backs **Kyron Tobler** and **RJ Boyd**. Senior **Jake Henderson**, **Collin Johnson**, and **EJ George** will anchor the offensive line. Expected leaders defensively include are safety **Tyvvion Hall**, linebacker **Ta'mijay Brown** and tackle **Dennis Glenn**.

Region 3-AAAAA Predicted Order of Finish

Dutch Fork
River Bluff
Lexington
White Knoll
Chapin

Overview: While it appears that every team in region three will be better than they were a year ago, the fact remains that the road to a region title runs through Dutch Fork. The Silver Foxes are still at the head of the class in region three but look for every team to be improved. What that improvement means in terms of wins and losses remains to be seen but nearly every team will have a solid core of athletes to work with this season.

Dutch Fork is seeking a fifth consecutive state championship, and their 11th in the last 12 years. Coach



Dutch Fork's Tom Knotts

Tom Knotts certainly has some key personnel to replace but the cupboard is hardly bare. The transfer portal remains very good for the program as well.

Jaxon Knotts returns for his senior season at quarterback after topping the 2,000-yard mark in passing last season. Running back **Kyle Henry** also returns to carry his share of the load in the running game.

Transfers **Corey and Maleek Miller** will be impactful performers at wide receiver, having combined for about 1500 receiving yards at Irmo last season. Anchoring the offensive line is senior ETSU pledge **Brody Lorenzo** at center, along with **Nirah Ford**, **Jonathan Eustace**, **Kam'Ren McNeil**, and **Caleb Gibson**.

Defensive lineman **Payton Bishop** fits nicely on defense after transferring from A.C. Flora. Clemson commit **Jaden Wuerth** returns along the front and **KJ Dupre** is back in the secondary.

Perry Parks will have an improved team at River Bluff in year two. A good competition at quarterback between **Davis Taylor** and **Brayden Moore** will be interesting. Both played in an opening game win over Cane Bay. Senior **Darius Carter** is back at receive, as is senior **Brady Barrineau**. Tight end **Hamp Pitt** also will be a factor.

A solid defense is led by linebackers **Bubba Alexander** and **Ben Cowart**, along with linemen **Preston Minor** and **RJ Jacobs**. **Caleb Renwick** returns in the secondary.

Lexington's Stewart Young also is in year two and the Wildcats expect to be much improved this season. The offense is directed by returning quarterback **Easton Crocker**, with receivers **Ian Dansan** and **Vic Kaczenski** back as primary targets. Senior tackle **Hunter Winarski** anchors the offensive line, joined by returner **James Loudesdorff** and **Blake Crocker**.

Leaders defensively include linebacker **Charlie Schrodt**, defensive backs **Jackson Kemoer** and **Cam Wright**, and linemen **Grayson Kelley** and **Malachi Lucas**.

Proven winner **Victor Floyd** is the new boss at **White Knoll**, inheriting a team that went 8-4 last season. Senior backs **Christian Chisholm** and **Kirkland Day** are key returners offensively. Junior **Brayden Cress** returns with experience at quarterback. Juniors **Kyle Griffin** and **Tyler Brown** will be the receivers of note, with **Kentrell Bonnette** back at tight end.

Guard **Ritchie Setzer** will be the lone senior on the offensive line. Senior leaders on defense will be linebacker **Jah'Mauri Davis**, end **Evan Pierce**, linebacker **Cyrus Evans**, and defensive back **Jonathan Keith**.

Chapin also has a new head coach as **Cory Helms** takes over. The Eagles will continue to rebuild but should be improved overall this fall.

Tyler Black returns as the starting quarterback and Harper Ellerbe will be the key running back. Back are quality receivers in **Anderson Stutts** and **Ny'Shawn Palmore**. Seniors **Grady Meetze** and **Kemp Tisdale** are the leaders up front.

Defensive leaders include **James Goss**, linebacker **Parker Collins**, tackle **Clinton Gentry** and defensive back **Rory Dreher**.

Region 4-AAAAA Predicted Order of Finish



Dutch Fork's Jaxon Knotts

AAAAA, continued from pg. 3

Hauff is counting on leadership offensively from tackle **Lashawd Allen**, tight end **Dereon Mungin**, and running back **Luke Downey**.

Defensively, top returners include linebackers **Brandon Rosser** and **Domanek Dixon**, cornerback **Jamonte Nelson** and safety **Khazeh Kennley**.

Region 6-AAAAA Predicted Order of Finish

Berkeley
Carolina Forest
Cane Bay
Wando
Goose Creek
Socastee

Overview: The realignment process by the SCHSL has changed the complexion of region 6-AAAAA in 2026 with two schools from the Myrtle Beach area joining the league.

Gone is long-time region member Stratford, the defending region champion. The Knights have moved over to region 5-AAAAA for the next two years. Lucy Beckham also has been reassigned, moving to class AAAA this fall.

Taking the place of the two departed schools are Carolina Forest and Socastee. Carolina Forest is one of the largest schools in the state and have been very successful in football, while Socastee has struggled a bit in recent years. Both programs routinely scheduled some of the area schools in non-region games and also have met in the postseason in recent years.

Carolina Forest likely will be one of the better teams in the region and should contend with Berkeley as the teams to beat in region five.

The Panthers, coached by **Marc Morris**, have some key players to replace but have become a very productive offensive team over the years. The Panthers

AA, continued from pg. 3

and they will be joined by senior **Jemeek Bridges**. The secondary is manned by **Komari Allen**, senior **D'rontae McClam**, junior **Geno Lester**, **Jayden Hunt**, and **AC Chavis**.

Lester and Campbell will handle the kicking and punting, respectively.

The **Marlboro County Bulldogs** are expecting big things in head coach **Cory Johnson's** third season after finishing 2025 with an 8-4/3-2 and like Dillon they fell to eventual state champion Oceanside Collegiate in the second round. Coach Johnson has 19 starters back so expectations are high.

Leading the Bulldogs will be junior quarterback **Tre Blakeney**. Last season he threw for 1639 yards and 11 touchdowns while rushing for 761 yards and 11 touchdowns. Junior running back **Khrishawn Smith** is back after rushing for 451 and 8 scores and at wide receiver will senior **LaQuincy Leach**. Who is coming off a 26-catch season for 407 yards and 7. Also back at receiver is **Mikyi Littles**. He missed last season due to injury. The Bulldogs are expecting big things from this playmaker.

The defense is loaded with talent and has 10 starters returning. Senior linebacker **Myjae McCoy** is the leader of this talented group. Some other players that had breakout years last season are senior defensive linemen **Patrick Williams Jr** and **Jaden Ashe**, senior linebacker **Jamorie Williams** and senior strong safety **Layton Chavis**. McCoy led the team in tackles with 107 while Williams Jr led in tackles for loss with 16 and sacks with 5.5.

East Clarendon was made the playoffs the last three seasons and in the past two they reached the second round. The 2025 season saw them finish 9-3/4-2. Head coach **Larry Cornelius** has a talented offense returning but must replace a lot of his front seven from last year.

Back at quarterback is junior **Gavin White** (6,160) and he will have junior wide out **Jamal Prince** (5-8,145) to get the ball too. Seniors center **Colton Baker** (5-10,206) and tackle **Walker Kirby** are the leaders

traditionally have tried to assert dominance with a running game but also put the ball in the area when the personnel fits.

Carolina Forest will have a new quarterback as **Matt Kellner** looks to step into a starting role. Anchoring the run game will be running back **Christian Bennett** with receiver **Brady McDowell** serving as a key threat through the air. Defensive tackle **George Handley** and linebacker **Connor Ross** are two key returners on defense.

The Stags of **Berkeley** won 10 games last season and return a bevy of offensive skill players this season. Back for his fourth season as the starting quarterback is senior **Henry Rivers**, a major dual-threat performer with speed and a powerful arm.

Receivers **Elijah Williams**, **John Cleveland**, **Johnathan Williams** and **Malik Callen** all had productive seasons in 2025, while running backs **LJ Washington**, **Bryson McGee** and **Jessie Brown** bring experience to the ground game.

The defense was hit hard by graduation but defensive back **Cam McCune** is a returning starter. Senior Avery Everette will be an impact player at linebacker. Sophomore **Jalen Wigfall** is a player to watch along the defensive front.

"We have some guys that have worked really hard for their opportunity and we are excited about the potential of this team," said head coach **Eric Lodge**.

Cane Bay coach **Russell Zehr** says his team will look different offensively and defensively but the primary focus of running the ball and stopping the run will remain goals. **Coran Houpe** is slated to take over at quarterback this fall. Houpe was a wing back last season.

Returning in the backfield are **Mayson Samuel** and **Sam Rolston**, with some talented backs d coming from the lower levels. The offensive line returns two

on the offensive line.

Senior middle linebacker **Crosby Timmons** is back to quarterback the defense. Junior **Jesse Floyd** and senior **Walker Kirby** are back along the defensive front.

Head coach **Reggie Kennedy's Manning Monarchs** finished 2025 with a 9-4/5-1 and for the second straight season advanced into the third round of the playoffs. He has a veteran group skill player returning but will have replace some linemen on offense and on defense the Monarchs will look to replenish the front.

Back at quarterback is senior **Lovell Stevenson**, who accounted for over 1600 yards of offense and 23 touchdowns and also returning are two of the top ground gainers from last season in senior **Daniel Robinson** and junior **Isiaah Baxter**. Robinson rushed for 716 yards and six scores while Baxter gained 515 yards and five scores and a team high three picks. Robinson also notched 44 tackles and 8 tackles for loss. Stevenson will have his top target back in senior **CJ Robinson**. He caught 47 passes for 876 yards and 13 touchdowns.

Senior **Isaiah Hamilton** is back to lead the offensive line.

Senior linebackers **Lovon Stevenson** and **Ethan Lowder** (5-10,2100 are tackling machines, especially behind the line. Stevenson had 17 tackles for loss among his 73 total tackles while Lowder had 18 tackles for loss among his team 155 tackles. Junior **Vijay Donaldson** is back along the defensive front.

Waccamaw's **Amondre Johnson** has posted back-to-back winning seasons in his first two years as head coach. The Warriors have made it the playoffs as well

starters, **Isaac Siefken** and **Eli Taylor**.

Junior **JJ Rose** is back as the leader along the defensive front, with ends **Devin Cobbs** and **Brennen Shokes** also returning. The linebackers will be new starters with only **Jackson Williamson** returning with experience.

The secondary could be a strength with returners **Tion Bryant** and **Caeden Wilson**. The kicking game is a solid strength with senior **Aiden Thorne** returning. Thorne is a deep threat on kickoffs and field goals.

Wando has some inexperience at quarterback but overall should be better last year's 4-7 record. **Jake Glassberg** is a key returner at running back with an offensive line led by three-year starter **Tristan Stein** and Oceanside Collegiate transfer **Grant Castellow**. Another key offensive returner is receiver **Ryan Jahn**.

End **Brock Yocum** and tackle **Zach Mussehl** are two key leaders defensively. Defensive backs **Cade Rogers** and **Quinn Neal**, and linebacker **Jacob Pelic** will be key personnel.

Goose Creek has a new head coach as former Gator running back **Jamie Fordham** takes on the role this season. The Gators were winless last season with a large contingent of underclassmen on the field.

Tyler Holmes is operating the offense at quarterback while **Sincere Lewis** is a threat at running back. Three up and coming receivers include **Josh Bing**, **Reggie Dozier** and **Troy Smalls**. Up front are leaders **Blaine Beaulanger** and **Jadon Pringle-Jackson**.

Defensive leaders will include end **Donovan Brown**, backs **Chris Brown** **Guy Simmons**, and **Teandre Burgess**.

At **Socastee**, coach **Ben Hampton** is counting on development from quarterback **Marcus Dukes**, running back **Elijah Owens**, and linebackers **Aven Price** and **Noah Slade**.

but now his team is ready to take that next step and advance in the playoffs.

The Warriors will have a lot of senior talent led by the offensive line with four senior starters in **Zavion Singleton** (RT), **Pierce Johnson** (LG), **JB Meadors** (RG) and **Mike Winters** (C). They are joined by sophomore **Greyson Ballard** (LT). They will protect junior quarterback **Robbie Carrington** and open holes for senior running backs **Chris Nash** and **RJ Rogers**. The wide receivers are s **Jhustyn Funnye** and **Xavier Gregg**s. Senio tight end is **Ben King**. King also starters at outside linebacker.

Seniors **Gaberiel Coats** (DL) and **Talib Turner** (DB) will join King, Johnson, Rogers, Meadors, Singletary, Nash, Funnye, and Smith. The only underclassmen is **Ashton Greer** a junior.

Lake City played their best ball in region play last season finishing 3-3 and earning playoff spot. Unfortunately, they had to travel to eventual lower state champion Hampton County in that first round game. Head coach Jamison Estep looks to add to the Panthers victory total in 2026 and make a return trip to the playoffs.

Offensively, the Panthers are young with only two senior starters in running back **Jordan Dobson** and wide out **DJ Singletary**. Junior starters are **Evan McClam** (TE), **Jaylen Brown** (LT), **Mahki Nero** (RT), and **Ryan Keve Jr** (LG). Sophomore starters are quarterback **Jayce Edwards**, **Derwin Myers** (RB) **Terrence Williams** (WR), **Easton Prosser** (RG) and **Derrick Croker** (C).

The Panthers have a little more experience on defense with 6 seniors with half of them being along the defensive front four. They are **Ser'Roy Murry**, **Kapp Caulder** and **De'Von Baines**. McClam is the other starter. The other senior starters are linebackers **Niquan Flemming** and **Alex Rambo** and, in the secondary, is Dobson.

The underclassmen are sophomores **Jorrell McClary** (LB), **Ziyre McFadden** (DB), **TJ Hickson** (DB) and Williams.



Manning's Reggie Kennedy

AAA, continued from pg. 7

Darlington (3-8, 1-5 Region 5-AAAA)
Darlington lost an experienced quarterback and several seniors to graduation. **Alston Singletary** moves up from the junior-varsity squad to compete with **Simon Whaley** for the starting spot. While the backfield took a hit at graduation, four out of five starters on the offensive line remain, including tackle **Jaiden Williams-Green** and center **Grayson Walker**. **Maleak Duncan** and **Zireon Shannon** return as receivers although they saw limited play last year.

On the flip side, seven defensive starters return, including linebacker **Keonte Scipio** (73 tackles, six for loss, two interceptions, two forced fumbles) and **Christian Charles** (64 tackles, 10 for loss, two fumble recoveries).

Darlington beat **Lamar** 19-14 in its season opener.

Aynor (3-8, 1-4 Region 5-AAA)
The Blue Jackets’ single-wing offense returns,

Quarterbacks, continued from pg. 12

rushed for 785 yards and 16 touchdowns on 134 carries.

Holliday is looking for a really good senior season.

“It’s been a really good offseason,” he said. “I feel really good about the work I’ve put in. I had a productive summer. There were lots of things I can build on. It’s going to be super exciting to see everything come together.

“I feel like I’ve improved in a lot of different aspects,” Holliday “I’m stronger, faster, and bigger and I’ve put on weight. I’m trying to perfect my mechanics and growing in the knowledge of football.”

Heading into the season, Holliday had offers from **Samford**, **Presbyterian**, **Anderson**, and **UNC Pembroke**.

Xavier Means of **Northwestern** is committed to **East Carolina**. It remains to be seen whether that will be as a quarterback, or somewhere else on the field at the next level.

Whatever Means does at the collegiate level, he is electric as the quarterback for the Trojans. Means completed 258- of- 341 passes for 2,873 yards and 25 touchdowns against just eight interceptions while rushing for 1,239 yards and 27 touchdowns on 208 carries in leading Northwestern to the AAAAA Division II state championship.

Kevin Johnson led **Northwood Academy** to the SCISA AAAA state title last season. He had a big year, completing 180 of 284 passes for 2,499 yards and 24 touchdowns against just five interceptions.

With most of the pieces on offense returning, Johnson expects more of the same.

“We have nine out of 11 people back on offense, so we should have good chemistry,” Johnson said. “I’m confident we’ll be good again this year. We just have to concentrate, communicate, play as one team, one family.

“I feel like I’m more patient, my footwork is better. I’ve just been working with my QB coach and just throwing and getting better.”

SCISA, continued from pg. 26

season. Silas Brawner (Pinewood) 592 yds 7 TDS, Harris Janik (Augusta Chr) 479 yds 7 TDS, Gibbs Isom (First Baptist) 466 yds 6 TDS, Cale Owens (Colleton Prep) 465 yds 6 TDS, Jordan Turner (Bethesda) 420 yds 5 TDS, Ethan Collins (Laurens) 351 yds 7 TDS, Kevin Johnson (Northwood) 283 yards 4 TDS, Kres Langhals (Hilton Head Chr) 271 yds 5 TDS, Graham Bokinsky (Ben Lippen) 250 yds 1 TD and B J Suits (Northside Chr) 227 yds.

Here are the early leaders in pass receiving or

with running back **Eli Allen** leading the way. **Jose Morales** leads the offensive line, and when returning quarterback **Alex Lewis** needs to throw it, he has tight end **Lane Varnadore** as an outlet.

Aynor tied with **Conway** 8-8 in the CNB Kick-off Classic Aug. 14, with the Blue Jackets and Tigers to get anything going on offense. Receiver **Brandon Wallace** turned several short Lewis passes into decent gains in the 2-quarter matchup, and defender **Grier Kirby** made several stops and had a tackle for loss.

Aynor beat **Georgetown** 20-8 in its season opener Aug. 21.

Lakewood (0-10, 0-6 Region 5-AAAA)
Down to AAA, the Gators have the sky as the limit. **Jerran Devlin** took over Lakewood football when **Willie Offord** took the head coaching job at **A.C. Flora**. A first-time head coach, Devlin’s task is to build up the program, starting with sophomore quarterback **Justin Wilder** and senior wide receiver

Johnson has offers from **Hampden Sydney** and **Johnson C. Smith**, and he hopes more opportunities are coming his way. He also went to junior days at **Wofford** and **North Carolina Central**.

Dwayne Louallen Jr. is back for his third year starting at **Central**. After leading the Eagles to two of their most successful seasons in recent history, Louallen is looking for even better things.

“Every year I see improvement in myself,” he said. “I’m a better player and I’m trying to get as close as I can to being a college athlete.”

Louallen put in the work over the summer, going to 16 different camps. No offers have come his way as of yet, but he sees it as just a matter of time.

All I have to do is keep doing what I’ve been doing every year,” he said. “I’m just going to keep my faith in God, and when it comes, it comes.”

Louallen completed 102 of 166 passes for 1,665 yards and 17 touchdowns while running for 697 and 11 more scores in leading Central to the AA lower state championship contest.

Andrews’ Avery Durham, **Laurence Manning’s Grainger Powell**, and **Johnsonville’s Larkin Powell** all hope to impress some college scouts this season in their second and third seasons as a starter, respectively.

“I feel like my arm is bigger, I throw harder,” said the 6-4, 195-pound Durham. “I think I’ll be able to make more plays with my feet this year.”

“One of the big things will be the experience level,” Powell said. “You just get that by playing over time. You just grow up when you play and move into roles fulfilling your duties. You get better over time.”

Grainger Powell (5-11, 165) burst on the scene as a freshman quarterback at **Laurence Manning Academy** when he threw for over 1,500 yards. In his career, Powell has averaged 208 yards passing per game while completing 66.9 per cent of the passes he has thrown.

Powell is also a talented baseball player who can

the 2026 season. Thomas Corbett (Colleton Prep) 269 yards 4 TDS, Tre Green (Pinewood) 204 yards 2 TDS, Deuce Bradley, jr (Augusta Chr) 187 yards 3 TDS, Joshua Bradley (First Baptist) 172 yards, Drew Wolf (Northwood) 167 yds 3 TDS, Lavioris Lucas (Pinewood) 151 yds 3 TDS, M J Scott (Bethesda) 131 yds 2 TDS, Joseph Houpt (Hilton Head Chr) 129 yds 3 TDS, Elijah Hornberger (Laurens) 128 yds 2 TDS, Jackson Richardson (Hilton Head Chr) 121 yds and Caleb Hardy (Laurens) 116 yds 3 TDS.

Brian Brooks (32 catches or 214 yards, two touch-downs) who is also a running back and defensive back.

Also returning are running backs **Kaden Brown** (270 yards, four TDs), **James Brand** (316 yards), and receiver **Ziggy Offord** (16 catches for 219 yards, 1 TD), among others.

Lakewood snapped its 16-game losing streak dating back to Sept. 27, 2024, with a 28-26 win over **Andrews** Aug. 21.

Region 6-AAA Predicted Order of Finish:
Loris
Hartsville
Crestwood
Atlantic Collegiate
Darlington
Aynor
Lakewood

play numerous positions on the field.

Pinewood Prep QB Silas Brawner (6-6,210) transferred to the Panthers from **Summerville** after his sophomore season and he led the team to the SCISA AAA state tile last year with some eye-popping stats. Brawner completed 182-of-280 passes for 3,414 yards and 45 TD’s.

He is currently committed to **Presbyterian**, and the Blue Hose are holding their breaths that a major college offer that does not come Brawner’s way at the end of this season.

After his first two games of ‘26 season Pinewood Prep is 2-0 and Brawner has completed 36-of-55 passes for 555 yards and seven TD’s.

Do any major colleges need Brawner’s phone number?

The *HSSR* is also very high on **Camden** Top 100 senior QB **Greysen Rimpf** (6-2, 190) who threw completed 148-of-236 passes for 2,390 yards and 28 TD’s as a junior.

Rimpf’s father, **Brian**, is the head coach at Camden High and he spent four seasons in the NFL after finishing a very successful college football career at **East Carolina**. No doubt the young Rimpf is like a coach on the field for the Bulldogs.

Rimpf helped Camden defeat Dillon 35-13 in their season opener when he completed 8-of-123 passes for 155 yards and two TD’s.

Hanahan junior QB **Tripp Gallus** (6-4,200) is an emerging signal caller for the Hawks and he has picked up an offer from **Eastern Michigan** since the end of his sophomore year.

Gallus also plays baseball for the Hawks and he will also get some baseball attention. Gallus helped lead Hanahan to a 34-33 win over **Philip Simmons** in game one by completing six passes for 137 yards and one TD.

Note: HSSR Publisher Billy Baker Contributed To This Article

Here are the early tackles leaders for the 2026 season. Kamond Young (Bethesda) 21, Isaiah Jones (Bethesda) 21, Luke Sobey (Patrick Henry) 20, David Barnes (Palmetto Chr) 20, Elias Littleton (Laurens) 19, Davis Padgett (Palmetto Chr) 18, Ben Bailey (Augusta Chr) 18, Eli Garrett (Laurens) 17, Harrison Ray (Jefferson Davis) 17, Jake Harrington (Jefferson Davis) 17 and Scooter Brown (Porter-Gaud) 15.

AAAAA Football Feature

Ridge View
Sumter
Gray Collegiate
Blythewood
Spring Valley

Overview: Though Ridge View probably has a slight edge in overall talent, the rest of region four will have enough talent and athleticism to put in a challenge for the region title. If the Blazers stay healthy, they should be region champions but Sumter and Gray Collegiate will be strongly in the mix.

Ridge View’s hopes lie in the health of quarterback **Tre Howard**. Howard made a huge splash in 2024 but missed all of last season with an injury. He appears to be full strength now and that’s great news for an offense that should score some points.

Top receiver **Christian Jackson** returns as does leading rusher **Spencer Bobian**. The offensive line has some new faces but is led by USC commitment **James Ross**. Transfer receivers **Isaiah Small** and **Kanye Reed** add explosive capabilities to the offense.

The Blazers will need to improve defensively but must replace eight starters. Top performers will include linebacker **DJ Epps** and safety **Kingston Lucas**.

Sumter has new leadership as former player **Drew Marlowe** takes over. Marlowe built a powerhouse at South Florence before returning home. The Gamecocks will again lean heavy on the running game, starting with quarterback **Franklin Richardson**, who led the team in rushing last season. Backs **Cleveland Pinckney** and **Reggie Shannon** also return as potential 1,000-yard rushers. **Zymier Davis**, **Cooper Seigler** and **Caspian Brogdon** are three potential leaders up front.

The defense will be led by end Ari Rendell (also a tight end), and tackle **Rashaun Dickey**.

Gray Collegiate is playing in AAAAA for the first time, posting an 11-3 record in AAAA last season. Sophomore **Xavier Wright** threw for 2,215 yards and 23 touchdowns last season. Senior **Trevon Williamson** also returns after rushing for 1,662 yards last season.

Receivers David Quattlebaum, **Corey Gleaton** and **Royce Williamson** return as well. Gleaton and Williamson combined for more than 100 receptions and 2,000 yards last season.

Senior starters up front will include **Wilson Sweatt** and **Jack Armstrong**.

Defensively, senior **Carson Cartwright** anchors the front. **Jayshon Singleton**, **Hampton Boiling** and **Ryan Mobley** will be at linebacker. Royce Williamson, Gleaton and **R.J. Oliver** anchor the secondary.

Blythewood looks to improve on last year’s 4-8 record. Coach **James Martin** will lean on defensive leaders **Dillon Hutcherson** (tackle), **Chris Long** (linebacker, and end **Josh Reaves**.



2026 Blythewood Bengals

On offense, **Jayden Veasey** is the returning starter at quarterback and **Dolan Nelson** is the top returning receiver. **Landyn Strong** is a quality ball-carrier, with **Reed Paolucci** and **Ryan Keitt** leading the way.

Region 5-AAAAA Predicted Order of Finish
Summerville
James Island
Ashley Ridge
Stratford
West Ashley
Fort Dorchester
Stall

Overview: While not discounting the chances of every team contending for the region title this fall, the end result will likely include Summerville and James Island being near the top of the standings.

Both teams have factored in the region race for the last several years and while both have some key pieces to replace, the programs have been built to contend on an annual basis.

Summerville has reached the state finals in AAAAA in each of the last two seasons, losing both times to Dutch Fork. Head coach **Ian Rafferty** is breaking in a new quarterback and his top receiver is now at Oceanside Collegiate. But the offense returns senior running back **Jayven Williams**, who has posted back-to-back 2,000-yard seasons and is on track to become the school’s career rushing leader. Williams is regarded as one of the state’s top backs and has committed to James Madison.

Junior receiver **Terue Davis** also returns, along with solid experience along the offensive line, led by Army commit **Nolan Giet**.

Summerville should be very good on defense with the return of tackle **Dexter Chavous**, linebackers **Demarkus King** and **Jaylen Pryor**, and linebacker turned safety **Eli Pressley**. King racked up 13 sacks last season while Pryor and Pressley each totaled more than 100 tackles.

Linebacker **MJ Respass** transferred from Ashley Ridge and will be an immediate impact player for the defense.

“A lot of people talk about the players that we lost but we return a lot of really good players,” said Rafferty. “This is going to be a good football team before it’s over.”

James Island coach **Jamar McKoy** also has some holes to fill but the coach expects new faces to step up and earn their keep. One of the new faces is at quarterback where **Brady Dantzler** takes over the offense from his brother Connor, now at Tulsa.

“He is very ready for this opportunity,” McKoy says of his new signal caller.

Dantzler’s favorite targets in the passing game include junior **Raphael Puui**, who led the area in receiving yards last season, and senior tight end **Sam Crumpton**, a Charleston Southern commit.

Senior **Israel Harris**, a Liberty pledge, anchors an offensive line with four returning starters.

Linebacker **Bryson Bowers** returns as the leading tackler from last season, and corner **Deuce Prioleau** anchors an athletic secondary. **Issac Lorentz** returns as one of the state’s top placekicker/punters.

Stratford moves over to the region from the area’s other AAAAA region. The Knights are coming off a 10-2 season but lost several key players on both sides of the ball, including quarterback Jachin Davis and running back Maliq McGowans.

Sophomore **Caleb Lott** is in the running to be the new quarterback while **Malachi Breland** is up next at running back. **Robert Washington** and **Maddox Kizer** return along the offensive line.

Linebackers are the strength of the defense with **Cameron Gibbs**, **Bryce Clemmons** and **Jonah Coleman** leading the way. **Kermit Davis** and **Antonio Waring** return along the front defensively.

Ashley Ridge also faces a season with a bevy of new players on the field. Coach **Jeff Tate** has four returners on each side of the ball. **Jagger Spivey** is the top returning playmaker offensively and is one of the area’s top receivers. Linebacker **Mario Pringle** and safety **Tyrell Bess** will be two leaders defensively.

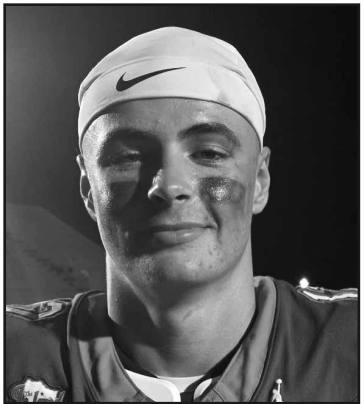
West Ashley looks to improve on last year’s 2-9 season and coach **Rashad Graham** has more than 16 returning starters. Among the returners offensively are linemen **Tyler Hunter**, **Tramaine Rivers** and **Marshall Ward**. Chase Townes returns at quarterback and **Cooper Welch** is a top receiver.

Leaders for the Wildcats defensively include tackle **Donovan Pinckney**, linebacker **Brandon Cowley** and defensive back **Cooper Fischer**.

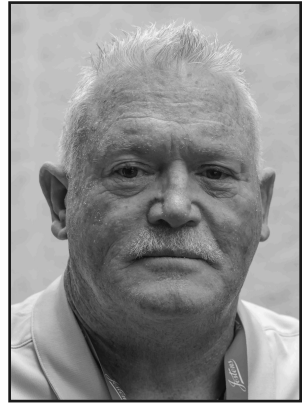
Fort Dorchester mustered up five wins last season, despite a host of new players. The Patriots will again be playing with several underclassmen in 2026.

Sophomore **Laurez Matthews** returns as a playmaker at receiver while sophomore **Liam Chapman** is looking to make an impact at receiver. Junior **Kasa Milo** will be a factor at tight end and defensive end and junior **Jayden Oliver** is returning at linebacker.

Stall High has won seven games since 2017 and **Joe Hauff** is in his first season as head coach, the fourth head coach since 2020.



James Island's Brady Dantzler



Ashley Ridge's Jeff Tate

AAAA Football Feature

Gaffney, South Pointe look to rule the roost in AAAA football in 2027

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor
Sumter – As is always the case when it comes to the **South Carolina High School League** and its bian-nual reclassification, there are always plenty of shakeups. It’s just the nature of the beast.

However, the AAAA classification in this year’s reshuffling has a much newer look to it. That’s because the AAAA class was top-heavy the two previous seasons with two different divisions. This year the split is happening with the smaller schools with Class A having two divisions.

That means the split among the larger schools will be more equitable. There are 44 schools playing AAAA football this year. Twenty of them were classified AAAAA last year, 22 are returning AAAA schools, one was a AAA school last year and another is a brand-new school altogether.

The two teams that played for the title last year – defending state champion **South Pointe** and runner-up **South Florence** – remain in AAAA. In fact, the last six state champions – **A.C. Flora** in 2020, South Pointe in ’21 and ’25, South Florence in ’22 and ’24 and **West-side** in ’23 are all still AAAA schools.

Here’s a breakdown of each of the seven regions and a look at some of the standouts on each of the 44 teams.

REGION 1

EASLEY
Easley was 3-7 last season as a AAAAA school. The Green Wave lost their season opener to **Pickens** in a 61-41 shootout.

Sophomore quarterback **Whitley Rodgers** completed 21 of 45 passes for two touchdowns and one interception. Sophomore **Chase Wimpey** had 10 catches for 96 yards and the two TDs, while sophomore **Layton Scott** had four catches for 124 yards.

Senior **Preston Bivens** rushed for 133 yards and two scores on 14 carries.

FOUNTAIN INN
Fountain Inn was 6-5 last season at AAAA. The Fury opened its season with a 24-20 triumph over fellow AAAA school **Greenville**.

Fountain Inn is led by senior quarterback **Sam Holliday**, who returns for his fourth season as a starter. Holliday completed 153 of 231 passes for 2,069 yards and 23 touchdowns while running for 785 yards and 16 more scores.

Fellow senior **Bojack Johnson** is back after running for 707 yards and eight TDs. The teams two leading receivers from a year ago are back in seniors **Ben Rowe** and **BJ Curenton**. Rowe had 45 catches for 637 yards and seven touchdowns, and Curenton had 35 catches for 458 yards and two scores.

GREENWOOD
Greenwood went 9-2 in AAAAA last season, losing in the second round of the Division II playoffs. The Eagles opened their season with a 35-7 triumph over **Riverside**, which is a AAAA school this year after playing AAAAA last year.

Junior defensive back **Desiray Christian** is a Greenwood standout. Some other key returnees are quarter-backs **Quay Justesen** and **Zatavion White** and running backs **Martavious Hamilton** and **Cassidy Lee**.

LAURENS
Laurens has won only eight games over the last four years, going 1-9 last season in AAAA. However, the Raiders opened this season on a bright note with a 43-34 triumph over **J.L. Mann**.

Sophomore quarterback **Logan Bragg** completed 22 of 32 passes for 358 yards and two touchdowns and ran for 80 yards and another score on 12 carries in the win over Mann.

AAAA Football Polls	
1. Gaffney	6. AC Flora
2. South Pointe	7. Indian Land
3. Greenwood	8. Hilton Head
4. Westside	9. Bluffton
5. TL Hanna	10. Catawba Ridge

catches with 50, 51 and 59 yards, respectively.

T.L. HANNA
After several years at the AAAAA level, T.L. Hanna will be AAAA this season. The Yellow have won 10 games in four of the last five years with the other season ending in nine wins.

Hanna opened the season with a 17-14 triumph over 2-time defending AAA state runner-up **Belton-Honea Path**.

The Jackets rely mainly on their running game, spreading the wealth among several running backs. Senior **Brian Cole** is back after rushing for a team high 808 yards to go with six touchdowns on 96 carries. Junior **Esailas Carroll** rushed for 46 yards and the two TDs in the win over BHP, while Cole ran for 69 yards on 12 carries.

Handling the duties at quarterback is senior **William Mayfield**.

WESTSIDE
Westside “only” went 9-5 last season, but playing 14 games meant the Rams reached the upper state championship game.

The Rams opened their season with a 31-14 triumph over **West Ashley**. Sophomore quarterback **Bear Woods** completed 13 of 19 passes for 187 yards and five touchdowns. Sophomore **Jae White** had three of the scoring receptions, finishing with five catches for 56 yards.

Senior **Tajeh Watson**-Martin, who is a Virginia commitment, had five catches for 56 yards and a score, and senior **Elijah Lipsey** had two catches for 48 yards and the other TD catch. Senior **Damauri Robinson** had 10 catches for 121 yards and a score.

Defensive lineman **Christian Webb-Scott** is one of the top juniors in the state.

REGION 2

GAFFNEY
Gaffney is dropping down to AAAA after years of being in the highest classification. As they’ve been over the last few decades, the Indians will be right in the mix of things in AAAA, likely one of the favorites.

Gaffney opened with a 24-20 victory8 over longtime rival **Spartanburg**. Senior running back **Amire White** had a huge game. The transfer from **Irmo** rushed for 163 yards and a touchdown on 22 carries.

Senior **Kendaris Bailey** rushed for 68 yards and two touchdowns on nine carries. Senior quarterback **Corey Taylor** completed 11 of 17 passes for 82 yards.

Senior offensive lineman **Calvin Brooks** is an **Alabama-Birmingham** commitment.

Defensive back Zion Dawkins is the top-rated junior in the state, according to *High School Sports Report*.

A key defensive performer for Gaffney is senior line-man **Marquell Smalls**.

GREENVILLE
Greenville went 7-5 at the AAAAA level last season. The Red Raiders lost to Fountain Inn 24-20 in the season opener.

Junior **Kilshawn Farrow** is back at quarterback. The junior completed 102 of 170 passes for 1,086 yards and nine touchdowns. He was also the leading rusher with 751 yards and 10 touchdowns on 112 carries.

Also returning is sophomore **Deandre Dogan**. He rushed for 576 yards and two scores.

GREER
Greer went 4-7 last year competing in AAAA. The Yellow Jackets opened their season with a 45-31 victory over **Woodmont**.

Sophomore **Xavier Sammett** completed 14 of 17 passes for 173 yards and three touchdowns while rushing for 130 yards on 12 carries. Senior **Calvin McCoy** rushed for 207 yards and three touchdowns on 28 carries.

Sophomore **Zay Moseley** had six catches for 93 yards.

RIVERSIDE
Riverside went 4-7 last year as a AAAAA team. The Warriors opened the season with a 34-7 loss to Greenwood.

Senior quarterback **Gideon Merhib** returns after completing 182 of 288 passes for 2,361 yards and 19

touchdowns while rushing for 822 yards and eight touchdowns on 155 carries.

Senior **Keyon Knowles** is back as well after running for 878 yards. Knowles had 314 receiving yards on 32 catches. Also back is junior **Peyton Stevenson**, who had 53 catches for 667 yards and six touchdowns.

Senior **Marques Skinner** is a top tight end.

TRAVELERS REST

Travelers Rest went 2-8 last season playing at the AAAA level. The Devildogs opened their season on August 28 against **Blue Ridge**.

Key returnees for Travelers Rest are quarterbacks **Colton Sorsby** and **J.T. Pochard** and mid-dle linebacker **Aiden Garrett**.

WADE HAMPTON
Wade Hampton lost all 19 games it played at AAAAA over the past two seasons. The Generals return to AAAA in the midst of a 24-game losing streak.

Wade Hampton opened its season on August 28 at home against **Southside**.

Some of the key returning performers are quarter-back **Walker Kay**, running back **Coleman Batson** and defensive end **Demetrius Massey**.

REGION 3

CATAWBA RIDGE
Catawba Ridge is one of six **York County** schools in the region with a **Lancaster County** outlier in **Indian Land**.

The Copperheads went 6-6 in the second of two years in AAAAA. They opened this season with a 24-6 triumph over **Blythewood**.

Junior quarterback **Will Gambrill** threw for 129 yards and a pair of touchdowns in the victory.

Junior **Lucas McCauley** had the two TD catches and four receptions for 80 yards.

Senior Defensive end **Alex Johnson** is a **Boston College** commitment.

CLOVER
Clover has gone down to AAAA after going 5-6 last season. The Eagles opened this season with a 28-7 loss to **Fort Mill**.

Senior **Grady Stone** rushed for 112 yards and Clover’s only touchdown on 18 carries. Senior **Aaron Shealey** is the starting quarterback.

INDIAN LAND
Indian Land went 11-2 last season, losing in the AAAAA Division II upper state title game to **Northwest-ern**.

The Warriors beat **Harding University** of **North Carolina** 49-0 to open the season. Junior quarterback **Matt Kucia** completed 15 of 20 passes for 229 yards and five touchdowns.

Junior **Kenneth Wilson III** had five catches for 65 yards, two of them going for touchdowns.

Senior linebacker **Jackson Conner**, a **Marshall** commitment, led the defense with 10 tackles.

LAKE WYLIE
Lake Wylie is the new school with its first ever football team. The Chargers, under the tutelage of former White Knoll head coach Nick Pelham, beat Ballantyne Ridge of Charlotte 41-35 in their first game.

Sophomore quarterback Landon Robinson passed for 358 yards and two touchdowns and ran for 160 yards and three touchdowns. Junior Rhyan Watson had eight catches for 283 yards and three touchdowns.

NATION FORD
Nation Ford went 4-7 last year as a member of AAAAA. The Falcons opened this season with a 21-14 loss to **Gilbert**.

Senior quarterback **Asher Becker** passed for 150 yards and ran for 152 in the opener. Junior **Graham Lee** had three catches for 64 yards.

Senior defensive lineman **Kaydin Green** is a team leader.

SOUTH POINTE
South Pointe went 14-1 in winning the AAAA crown

AAA, continued from pg. 7

Lower Richland (6-5, 3-3 Region 5-AAAA)
The Diamond Hornets lost 26 seniors from last year but still has plenty of young talent that might make things interesting in AAA. Returning at quarterback is **Raymond McLaughlin** (455 yards passing, five touchdowns). **Michael Moss** saw limited time in the backfield last year but will lead the running backs in making up more than 1,000 yards rushing and 17 TDs lost to graduation.

Joshua Tucker and **Kaden Sumter** will lead the defensive backs, and **Zach Ross**, **Matthew Robinson**, **Jory Taylor**, **Kameron Dukes**, **Maxwell Wilson**, and **Kaleb Frederick** will see time on the defensive line.

In its season opener at home Aug. 21, the Diamond Hornets fell 34-6 to 1A **Fairfield Central**.

Brookland-Cayce (3-8, 3-4, Region 4-AAAA)
The Bearcats have nine returning starters on offense and six on defense. **Andrew Frick** (2,287 yards passing, 18 touchdowns) returns at quarterback, as do receivers **Mekhi Pringle** (36 catches for 523 yards, 2 TDs) and **Bennett Plane** (30 catches for 473 yards, 6 TDs) among others. Running back **Avery King** (833 yards, 4TDs) returns as the team’s leading rusher.

Evan Simmons (136 tackles, 10 for loss, three sacks, two fumble recoveries) returns at linebacker, while **Ari Jones** and **Jamarieye Jones** anchor the defensive line, with Pringle, Plane, **Jaden Michael** and **Trevione Robinson** in the secondary.

SCISA power Hammond whipped **Brookland-Cayce** 31-13 in the season opener Aug. 21.

Airport (0-10, 0-7 Region 4-AAAA)
With the move down to AAA after a rough year at AAAA, The Eagles are itching for one win or more. In head coach Chris Napier’s second year with the team, Airport has an improved defense that could help the team at least one victory somewhere on the schedule, and maybe a few more.

Leading the way is defensive lineman **Jessiah Thompson**, a surefire run stopper who holds the school record for a 715-pound squat. **Yave Castanedas** is also on the line and **Justin Conyers** leads the linebacking crew.

Airport quickly snapped its 16-game losing streak dating back to Oct. 17, 2024, with a 34-7 victory over **Pelion** in its season opener Aug. 21.

Region 4-AAA Predicted Order of Finish:
Camden
Swansea
Gilbert
Lower Richland
Brookland-Cayce
Airport

Region 5
Oceanside Collegiate (13-2, 4-0, 2-time State AAA champions)
With three straight state championships in hand—one at Class AA and the last two in AAA—the beat goes on for the Landsharks. Returning at quarterback is senior **Aiden Manavian**, who passed for an incredible 4,028 yards and 41 touchdowns last year.

Anthony Williams (61 catches for 1,061 yards, 12 TDs) returns. Also coming back is **Tyler Garner** (36 catches for 589 yards, 5 TDs) and **Cooper Webb** (37 catches for 533 yards, 4 TDs). **Julyun Bonneau** (288 yards, 1 TD) returns with a large group of running backs. **Summerville’s Jaiden Kelly-Murray** (64 catches for 957 yards, 14 TDs) joins the Landsharks for his senior season.

Defensive backs **Michael Strickler** (81 tackles, three for loss, two interceptions) and **Cole Gaspar**

(55 tackles, two for loss, five interceptions) return to lead the defense with linebacker **Tyler Stafford** (40 tackles, four for loss), and others.

Oceanside Collegiate fell 41-21 to AAAAA power **James Island** in the season opener Aug. 21.

Bishop England (8-4, 2-3 Region 6-AAAA)
Back down to AAA, the Bishops lost a lot of playmakers on offense but still look to contend for a region title. **William Donato** (403 yards passing, 5 TDs), who played a little wide receiver last year, is up for the starting quarterback role.

Running backs and receivers are plentiful but inexperienced, but the offensive line featuring guards **Gavin Bailey** and **Coleman Runey**, tackle **Jake Olsen**, and center **Jon DiLiegro** have been blocking well in practice. The defensive line has **Matthew Ponkow** and **Luke Russell**, and brothers **Chase** (defensive back) and **Trevor Tonon** (linebacker) will help lead the defense.

Bishop England beat SCISA’s **Porter-Gaud** 14-7 in its season opener Aug. 21.

Hanahan (6-6, 2-2 Region 6-AAA)
The Hawks averaged 26 points per game and return 10 starters on offense and seven on defense. **Tripp Gallus** (1,497 yards passing, 14 touchdowns) returns as quarterback along with leading rusher **Isaiah Snodgrass** (914 yards, 13 TDs.) **Grayson Mathes** (45 catches for 651 yards, 7 TDs) is back at wide receiver.

Linebacker **Mason Bellamy** (54 tackles, eight for loss, two sacks) and **Ben Jackson** (55 tackles, 11 for loss, three sacks) lead the defense. Mathes (44 tackles) is also an effective defensive back.

Hanahan edged area rival **Philip Simmons** 34-33 in its season opener Aug. 21.

North Charleston (5-5, 1-3 Region 6-AAA)
Omar Collier is the interim head football coach of the Cougars, taking over in August after former head coach **Adrain Grady** stepped down to move into an administrative role at the school. New quarterback **Anthony Porter** and running backs **Kamauri Meggett**, **Andre Finkley**, and **Tyrone Frazier-Jackson** will look to replace the production lost at graduation.

Linebacker **Cedrick Burkes** (78 tackles, 13 tackles for loss, eight sacks) and **Demonte Aiken** (17 tackles, one tackle for loss, one interception). **Tion Blackney**, who is capable of playing defensive back, running back and on special teams, will contribute.

North Charleston beat **Ridgeland Secondary Academy of Excellence** 18-12 in its season opener Aug. 21.

Georgetown (0-11, 0-5 Region 5-AAA)
There’s nowhere to go but up for the Bulldogs. The offense returns three starters and the defense four. Among the offensive starters are **Kendal Boyd** at receiver. Other receivers include **Sean Lucas** and **Andre Reed**.

Keamon Gillard returns to anchor the defensive line, as does **Damajah Smith**, and **Davion Linnen** will start at defensive end. **Amarius Tucker** will be in the secondary as a cornerback.

Aynor beat Georgetown 20-8 in its season opener.

Region 5-AAA Predicted Order of Finish:
Oceanside Collegiate Academy
Bishop England
Hanahan
North Charleston
Georgetown

Region 6
Loris (13-1, 5-0 Region 5-AAA)
The Lions’s only loss last year was to **Oceanside Collegiate** in the AAA lower state final. To repeat that run—and maybe reach the state title game, they will have to make up for the loss of graduate **Zamire Gerald**, who passed for 2,772 yards and 42 touchdowns and rushed for 437 yards and five scores.

Loris also has to replace nine starters on each side of the football. On offense running backs **Deuce Stephens** (930 yards, 16 TDs) and **Roderick Purcha** (260 yards, 6 TDs) return. On defense linebackers **Ethan Shaw** (108 tackles, three interceptions, three sacks) and **Jay Dalton** Todd (113 tackles, four for loss, one sack, one interception) return.

Loris whipped **Conway** 41-0 in its season opener Aug. 24.

Hartsville (7-5, 5-1 Region 5-AAAA)
Down to AAA this year, Hartsville, bolstered by team speed on both sides of the football, may likely mash the accelerator on the season. Quarterback **Ford Wallace** (1,548 passing yards, 18 touchdowns; 360 rushing yards, four TDs) returns, along with wide receiver **C.J. Hickman**, who had more than 500 receiving yards. **Trace Hillian**, a 1,000-yard rusher with 12 touchdowns last year, returns.

Eight starters return on defense, including linebackers **Ziyon Mason** and **Jamyarui Scipio-Bishop**. Safety **Ron Cranford** is another top returner, along with defensive ends **Pat Rhoad** and **Levy Henry**.

Hartsville beat **Wilson** 55-34 in its season opener Aug. 22.

Crestwood (6-5, 3-3 Region 5-AAAA)
Junior **Marek Yates** (1,005 yards passing, 10 touchdowns) returns at quarterback. Senior and Charlotte commit **Calvin Wofford** (1,357 yards rushing, 13 TDs) also returns. Joining Wofford in the backfield is **Brayden Boult**s. Boult’s also is a capable receiver, with 13 catches for 103 yards and a touchdown last year. **Jayden Martin** (36 catches for 393 yards, six TDs) returns to lead the wide receivers. Martin also had four interceptions as a defensive back.

Linebacker **Yachin Gamble** (79 tackles, 20 for loss, 2.5 sacks, one interception) returns to lead the defense, as does linebacker **Ahmadre Ricks** (88 tackles 10 for loss, one sack, three interceptions).

Crestwood beat **Manning** 32-27 in its season opener Aug. 24.

Atlantic Collegiate (5-7, 4-2 Region 7-AA)
The Armada enter their third season and are up from the AA classification. Atlantic Collegiate returns quarterbacks **Brennan Moore** and **Broderick Evans**, in addition to the team’s top rusher **Quay Vereen** (979 yards, four touchdowns). **Semaj Wilson**, besides rushing for 571 yards and 12 touchdowns, made 77 tackles on defense. A running back/linebacker, Wilson can also line up in the secondary and, if needed, take snaps at quarterback.

Besides Wilson, **Garrett Smith** (96 tackles, three for loss, one sack), **Solomon Freshley** (46 tackles, seven for loss, three sacks, one interception), **Riley Stowers** (34 tackles, six for loss, one sack) and **Dallas Brown** (28 tackles, six for loss, one sack) return on defense.

The Armada beat **Mullins** 29-8 in their season opener Aug. 24.

O-Line, continued from pg. 14

direction up front, it's a likelihood that more success will come.

"Thomasson is very consistent which is one of the best qualities of any player at any position. He dominates the line of scrimmage," Camden head coach **Brian Rimpf** said. "He already has 26 varsity starts and has played in big, meaningful games at some of the toughest stadiums in the state. He is never phased by the magnitude of the game."

Sullivan's teammate, J.L. Mann OL **Luke Penland** (6-2, 265) is 111th. Penland has been a starting tackle and a starting defensive lineman. Penland and Sullivan look to help revive the Patriots as they try to bounce back from an injury-laden 2025.

"I kind of see everyone putting in work. We're trying to figure out the team, trying to figure out where everyone's playing, but we can see all the effort that people are putting in," Penland said. "It's great getting people getting used to the mindset."

From what I've dug up He's more a linebacker than an OL At 113th is Woodland OL/MLB **Sam Gadsen** (6-3, 230) –TAKE OUT

Laurence Manning OL/NG **Tristan White** (6-3, 290) is 123rd. As a defender White had 33.5 tackles, eight for loss, six sacks, a fumble recovery, four pass breakups and a blocked kick. As an offensive lineman, White graded out at 92 percent and led the team in knockdowns and pancakes.

Philip Simmons DE/G **Roman Hood** (6-0, 205) is 130th. In spite of missing playing time because of an injury, Hood had 72 tackles, 28 for loss, 4.5 sacks, and an interception. Whether as an offensive guard or lining up as a defensive tackle, he has shown to be a tough challenge for anyone lining up against him.

Hampton County DT/T **Charles "C.J." Williams** (6-0, 245) is 133rd. He had 26 tackles, four for loss, a sack, and four quarterback hurries last year. He is also the Hurricanes' starting left tackle.

"He is an awesome kid," head coach Rob Hanna said. "Been a varsity player for 4 years and has grown into being a leader of the OL. He shows up every day with an

D-Line, continued from pg. 18

helped lead the bears to 12-1 record last year. As an interior lineman, he had 21 tackles, 10 for loss, six sacks, a forced fumble and two fumble recoveries. As an offensive lineman at center, he has shown his capability to stay solid in the middle, whether in run blocking or in pass protection.

"We're coming off a great season last year and the expectations are as high as ever, so we have to work 10 times harder to meet those expectations," he said, adding that his commitment to the SC military college makes it pertinent that he step up his game for his final high school year. "It just means I have to hold myself to a higher standard and elevate my level of play."

Diggs' teammate, TE/DE JaQuan **Hannah** (6-2,215) is 105th on the list. He missed most of the 2025 season to a sprained knee but returned in time to show off his abilities in three postseason games. Now healthy and ready to go for his final season, he's excited to get fully involved, whether as a defensive end, tight end, placekicker, or punter.

"I really started playing sports in High school and I came to find out I was good at it," Hannah said. "Last year we did a good job leadership wise, we got the team to the third round where in the last couple of years we didn't. we had good leaders like (c/o 2026 OL/DL) **Zion Guiles** and this year we're going to continue to get better and try to get past the third round."

James Island DE **Rob Grant** (6-3, 240) is 108th. Grant had 35 tackles, 15 for loss last year and was ever present no matter where he posted on the line. After the Trojans 12-2 finish that ended with a loss at **Summerville** for the AAAAA Division 1 lower state championship, Grant said the team is focused on going further.

"We came up short and now, it's momentum for us to get back. It's that time now," he said.

At 109th on the list is **Bluffton** DL **Rahiem Saunders** (6-2, 275). Saunders played on both offensive and defen-

attitude to work hard and get better each and every day."

An honorable mention goes to **Blythewood** OL **Reed Paolucci** (6-3, 295), an Army commit looking to close out his senior year with a winning Bengals season. He's been on the varsity since his third game as a freshman in 2023. He said that this year's team is committed to doing a lot better than Blythewood's 4-8 effort last year.

"I love the fact that we've gotten closer to God through our junior year," he said. "Our guys are all in with that, so that's No.1. No.2 is we've had a lot of participation and working out and conditioning and everything, which is awesome and I love that. They're more committed than they were last year and I can't wait to see what happens."

He chose the Army over **Duke**, **Wake Forest**, East Carolina, and Charlotte, and eight other offers, adding that it was an easy decision for him.

"I love the Army," he said. "I always want to see what my future brings, not just in four years of college but what happens after that. I feel like Army, West Point does exactly what I want. Also my brother is there too."

Another honorable mention is 2-time all-region **Hartsville** G **Fred Turner** (6-1, 265). Turner, who has loads of experience in run blocking and pass protection from Hartsville's offense. Turner attended the Carolina Coaches Combine at Fort Mill High School in May and recently visited Newberry.

Juniors

Dutch Fork OL **Brody Lorenzo** (6-3, 330) is No.8 on the list of top juniors and has gotten a lot of interest lately. Lorenzo currently has 10 offers, including offers from South Carolina State, **Cincinnati**, **North Carolina**, Appalachian State, Liberty, Coastal Carolina, East Carolina, and Charlotte.

Those schools and many others will look forward to seeing film on a lot of athletes on the Silver Foxes roster, especially among the offensive front five.

"This team is different, but this team is different every year," Lorenzo said. "We've got a lot of chemistry and this is the strongest group of guys on the offensive

sive lines at Class AA **Whale Branch** before transferring to Class AAAA Bluffton in August.

"I got some friends over there and it was pretty easy for me to make that move," he said. "It's also a business move; it'll look better on me if I play higher-A ball."

Saunders already has a lot of interest, as he has offers from **Campbell**, **Coastal Carolina**, **Old Dominion**, **Appalachian State**, **Marshall**, and he's still in contact with **Tulane**.

Jaiden Bryant's teammate, Irmo DT **Tyrone Jennings** (6-2, 285) is 110th. Jennings had 72 tackles, six for loss, and a sack last season. He has offers from Appalachian State, East Carolina, **Georgia State**, **Jacksonville State**, and **Liberty University**.

Gaffney DT **Marquel Smalls** (6-5, 265) is 122nd on the list. He has an offer from **Presbyterian College**, **Concord University** and **North Dakota State**.

Laurence Manning Academy OL/NG **Tristan White** (6-3, 290) is 123rd. As a defender White had 33.5 tackles, eight for loss, six sacks, a fumble recovery, four pass breakups and a blocked kick. As an offensive lineman, White graded out at 92 percent and led the team in knockdowns and pancakes.

Philip Simmons DE/G **Roman Hood** (6-0, 205) is 130th. In spite of missing playing time because of an injury, Hood had 72 tackles, 28 for loss, 4.5 sacks, and an interception.

Hampton County DT/T **Charles C.J. Williams** (6-0, 245) is 133rd. He had 26 tackles, four for loss, a sack, and four quarterback hurries last year. He is also the Hurricanes' starting left tackle.

"He is an awesome kid," head coach Rob Hanna said. "Been a varsity player for 4 years and has grown into being a leader of the OL. He shows up every day with an attitude to work hard and get better each and every day."

line that we've ever had. It's been a great offseason.

We've been training every day and getting better."

Powersville OL **Jackson Miller** (6-6, 270) is 19th.

Miller is one of three returning starters on the line for the Patriots, who opened the season with a 28-12 victory over Seneca Aug. 21.

Woodruff interior OL **Ian Jones** (6-4, 260) is 23rd. Jones has an early offer from Appalachian State, and likely there will be many other offers to come.

Another Dutch Fork junior, **Jeremiah McGowan** (6-4, 290) is 30th on the list and joins his teammate among the top stars of the Class of 2028. A transfer from **A.C. Flora**, McGowan already has offers from **Southern Methodist University**, **Arizona**, **Arkansas**, **Boston College**, and several other schools.

Oceanside Collegiate OL/DL **Will Hunt** (6-3, 275) is 30th. He saw limited play last year on defense but is a stalwart offensive lineman.

Newberry T/DT **Elijah Sanders** (6-1, 276) is 36th. Sanders sees time on both sides of the football and has offers from UNC Pembroke and South Carolina State, and is getting interest from USC, Clemson, and Coastal Carolina.

"We have a lot of people in development and filling the spots (the seniors left)," Sanders said about the Bulldogs, who went 12-1 last year. "I want to make as big an impact as I can. We should have another great season."

Laurence Manning OL/DT **Blandyn Miller** (6-1, 275) is 39th. A transfer from **Atlantic Collegiate Academy**, he also plays baseball.

Northwood Academy OL **Brayden Andy** (6-2, 265) is 41st. Last year Andy helped the offensive line protect Kevin Johnson, who passed for 2,499 yards and 24 touchdowns, and Kaven Ford rush for 1,148 yards and 22 TDs. The Chargers finished 2025 defeating Heathwood Hall for the SCISA AAAA state championship.

Goose Creek T/DE **Jadon Pringle Jackson** (6-0, 245) is 44th. An up-and-comer with the Gators as both a right tackle and a defensive end, he will look to helping turn the program around from its 0-10 record last year.

Highly Rated HSSR 2028 Junior Defensive Line-men

Quite a few defensive linemen in the Class of 2028's top juniors list are worth watching as well.

Westside DL **Christian Webb-Scott** (6-6, 250) is sixth. He has offers from Georgia, South Carolina, and Texas.

Stratford DE **Kermit Davis** (6-4, 235) is 24th. He had 40 tackles, 15 for loss last year, and has offers from Coastal Carolina and Appalachian State.

Oceanside Collegiate OL/DL **Will Hunt** (6-3, 275) is 30th. He saw limited play last year on defense but is a Stalwart offensive lineman.

Newberry T/DT **Elijah Sanders** (6-1, 276) is 36th. Sanders sees time on both sides of the football and has offers from UNC Pembroke and South Carolina State, and is getting interest from USC, Clemson, and Coastal Carolina.

"We have a lot of people in development and filling the spots (the seniors left)," Sanders said about the Bulldogs, who went 12-1 last year. "I want to make as big an impact as I can. We should have another great season."

Laurence Manning OL/DT **Blandyn Miller** (6-1, 275) is 39th. A transfer from **Atlantic Collegiate Academy**, he also plays baseball.

Central DL **Tahir Wise** (5-9, 210) is 42nd. He had 27 tackles, three for loss, and two sacks last season.

Goose Creek T/DE **Jadon Pringle-Jackson** (6-0, 245) is 44th. An up-and-comer with the Gators, he will look to helping turn the program around from its 0-10 record last year.

J.L. Mann DT **Jayden Wheeler** (6-0, 235) is 45th. He had 41 tackles, 14 for loss, three sacks and three quarterback hurries last year.

AAAA Football Feature

last season, losing to Hough of North Carolina 14-10 in the season opener. The Stallions lost a load of talent from that team, but return a good deal as well.

Seth Tillman, a 6-4, 300-pound lineman, is committed to **Clemson**. Another key performer up front is junior **Bryce Collins**.

YORK

York went 4-7 playing AAAA last season. The Cougars opened this season with a 26-0 triumph over **Westwood**.

Junior quarterback **Ryan Brochu** completed 15 of 23 passes for 158 yards and three touchdowns. Junior **Zamaron Isom**, senior **Brian Davis** and junior **Caiden Tine** each had a touchdown reception.

Senior outside linebacker Hayden Adkins led the defense with 11 tackles.

REGION 4

A.C. FLORA

A.C. Flora went 11-2 in reaching the quarterfinals of the AAAA playoffs last season. The Falcons are in their first season under head coach **Willie Offord**.

Flora is being led offensively by senior running back Zion Gaddist, junior wide receiver **Ziggy Offord** and junior quarterback **Riggs Scott**.

Senior defensive tackle **Brennen Williams** leads the defense along with junior defensive end **Nasir Walker**.

DREHER

Dreher went 3-8 last season in AAAA, but opened this season with a big 56-13 triumph over **North Central**. Freshman running back **Ashton Felder** ran for 154 yards and four scores in the victory. Quarterback **Aiden Fitzgerald** completed 8 of 16 passes for 179 yards and a touchdown.

Senior **Hadi Jabali** led the defense with 10 tackles.

LANCASTER

Lancaster went 2-9 last year in AAAA. However, the Bruins opened this season with a 49-21 triumph over **Chester**.

LUGOFF-ELGIN

Lugoff-Elgin played at AAAAA the past two seasons and had a pretty good 2025, going 6-6. The Demons opened this season with a 41-25 victory over **Chapin**.

Senior running back **Tijon Fanning** had a big game in the opener, running for 200 yards and two touchdowns on 20 carries. Junior **Zach Williams** is the quarterback. Senior wide receiver **Eric Richardson** is a **Coastal Carolina** commitment.

Junior **Cash Majar** led the defense with 17 tackles, while **Jace Coleman** had 13, one being for a loss. Senior cornerback **Oliver Coleman** is a Coastal commitment as well.

RICHLAND NORTHEAST

Richland Northeast came into this season on an 11-game losing streak after going 0-10 last year. The Cavaliers took care of the streak in the season opener, beating archrival **Spring Valley** 38-9.

Sophomore quarterback **Zion Farmer** completed 11 of 18 passes for 175 yards and two touchdowns. Sophomore **Isaiah Woods** and senior **Malachi Farmer** both had a touchdown reception.

Junior **Cameron Ceasar** had seven carries for 76 yards and two scores.

WESTWOOD

After two years at AAAAA, Westwood is back at AAAA after going 7-5 in their first season under Stephen Burris as head coach. They didn't get off to a greatest start this year, suffering a 26-0 loss to York.

Westwood is breaking in a new quarterback in sophomore **Kylen Dopson**. Others expected to be key offensive performers are seniors **Angelo Rios** and **Jayden Risher**.

Senior defensive lineman **AJ Veal** is committed to **East Carolina**.

REGION 5

AIKEN

Aiken is one of four schools in this region that was part of Region 4-AAAA last season. The Fighting Green Hornets went 2-8 last season, but that was actually the most wins they'd had in a season since 2021.

They opened this season with a 31-7 win over Lakeside from Georgia. Senior quarterback Tanner Padgett completed 12 of 9 passes for 240 yards and two touch-

downs.

Senior Allen Cummings had eight catches for 113 yards, and senior Tarrant McKenzie and sophomore Michael Francis both had TD catches.

FOX CREEK

Fox Creek was at the AA level just two years but moved up to AAA the past two years because of the student multiplier rule when counting enrollment. The Predators are AAAAA this season because of that.

North Augusta:

They went 5-6 last year in their final season under **Lemuel Lackey**. FCHS opened this season under new head coach **David Sammonds** with a 32-14 loss to **Silver Bluff**, where Lackey is now the head coach.

IRMO

Irmo is the other newcomer to this region and the only one that made the drop from AAAAA. All the Yellow Jackets did in their two years in AAAAA is play for the Division II state championship twice.

Irmo is having to replace some top players from last season. The Jackets suffered a 24-14 loss to Rock Hill to open the season.

Still Irmo has three of the top five seniors in the state, according to *High School Sports* Report. They are defensive end **Jaiden Bryant**, who is committed to **Miami**, running back Tai Phillips, who is committed to **Alabama**, and 6-foot-5-inch, 285-pound offensive lineman **Nate Carson**, who is committed to **South Carolina**.

Irmo has another commitment in senior free safety **Jamar Grissette**, who has pledged to **Appalachian State**. Another key performer for Irmo is senior defensive tackle **Tyrone Jennings**.

MIDLAND VALLEY

Midland Valley went 7-4 last season in AAAA. The Mustangs opened this season with a 49-42 triumph over AAAAA Lexington.

Junior running back **Preston Smith** had a huge game in the opener, rushing for 180 yards and four touchdowns. Senior quarterback **Xavier Geter** completed 15 of 22 passes for 191 yards and also had 19 carries for 135 yards and three touchdowns.

Junior **JJ Shephard** led the defense with three tackles for a loss.

NORTH AUGUSTA

North Augusta went 11-2 last season, losing in the quarterfinals of the AAAA state playoffs. However, the Yellow Jackets opened this season on a sour note with a 21-7 loss to defending AA state champion **Strom Thurmond**.

The North Augusta defense is led by 6-1, 305-pound senior tackle **Simeon Jones** and junior defensive back **DJ Johnson**.

SOUTH AIKEN

South Aiken had a respectable season last year, going 5-6 in AAAA. The Thoroughbreds opened this season with a 59-6 pounding of Silver Bluff.

Junior quarterback **Tommy Burns III** completed 8 of 9 passes for 160 yards and four scores. Senior **Kyson McLeod**, who is committed to Appalachian State, had three catches for 51 yards and two TDs, and junior **Blake Goodman** had three catches for 91 yards and the other scores.

REGION 6

BEAUFORT

Beaufort is one of five schools that were all members of Region 6-AAAA a year ago. The Eagles are coming off of a 3-8 campaign from a year ago. They opened this season with a 30-22 loss to **Hardeeville**.

BLUFFTON

Bluffton is coming off of an 8-3 campaign from a year ago. The Bobcats opened this season with a 29-7 triumph over **Savannah Country Day of Georgia**. Bluffton is breaking in a new quarterback in junior **Jack Calendine**. He completed 12 of 24 passes for 198 yards and two TDs in the opener. His top target was senior **Amare Patterson**, who had seven catches for 109 yards and a touchdown. Patterson has pledged to **North Carolina**.

Senior running back **Kordell Holley** had 77 yards and a TD on 20 carries.

COLLETON COUNTY

Colleton County went 1-9 last season. The Gators didn't open this season on a good note, falling to defending AA state runner-up **Hampton County** 33-0.

Keandre Allen is a one of the top senior wide receivers in the state.

HILTON HEAD ISLAND

Hilton Head Island had an impressive season a year ago, going 11-2 in reaching the quarterfinals of the state playoffs. The Seahawks opened this season in impressive fashion as well, beating South Florence 38-21.

Senior running back **Jayvin Risher** ran for 103 yards, while senior wide receiver **Jeremiah Waiters** had 175 receiving yards and two touchdown catches. Senior quarterback **Derrick Raniszewski** completed 11 of 19 passes for 241 yards and three scores.

Senior outside linebacker **Andrew Massey** led the defense with 11 tackles.

LUCY BECKHAM

Lucy Beckham is the lone newcomer to the region, where it dropped down from AAAAA after going 7-4 last year. The Bengals opened this season with an impressive 29-6 win over **Fort Dorchester**.

Lucy Beckham's top player is 6-6, 300-pound offensive lineman **Ty Johnson**. He is committed to Georgia.

MAY RIVER

May River is coming off of a nice 7-4 campaign from a year ago. The Sharks were scheduled to open their season on August 28 on the road against Wando.

REGION 7

Conway is one of four Horry County Schools that is dropping down from AAAAA to AAAA.

The Tigers are in their first season under former West Florence head coach Jody Jenerette after going 2-9 last season and winning just six games in three years under Josh Pierce. They didn't get off to a good start, falling to Loris 41-0.

MYRTLE BEACH

Another of those Horry County schools is Myrtle Beach. The Seahawks went 8-4 last season in AAAAA. They suffered a rough loss in their season opener, falling to **Marlboro County** 61-20.

MBHS senior **Julian Brown** is one of the top wide receivers in the state. The quarterback is **Camden DeBruhl**.

NORTH MYRTLE BEACH

North Myrtle Beach is another Horry County school. The Chiefs went 3-8 last season, but opened this campaign with a 31-7 win over **Socastee** in **Perry Woolbright's** return as head coach.

Some of the key returnees are skill position players **Reo Stevenson**, **Jayden Wilson** and **Jayden Chestnut**

ST. JAMES

St. James is the final of the Horry County schools. The Sharks went 4-7 last season. They've opened this year with a 22-21 win over **Waccamaw**.

SOUTH FLORENCE

All of the Florence 1 schools – South Florence, **West Florence** and **Wilson** – are all back in AAAA and part of the same region.

The Bruins played for the AAAA state title for the fourth consecutive season, falling to South Pointe. All of those appearances were under **Drew Marlowe**, who is now the head coach at Sumter.

Senior **De'Eric Davis** is starting at quarterback with junior **Samaj Parker** a top wide receiver. The defense is led by junior linebacker **Warren Prew**.

WEST FLORENCE

After two years in AAAAA, West Florence is back in AAAA. After a slow start, the Knights went 6-6 under **Chad Wilkes**.

West Florence opened its season with a 49-38 win over Hartsville.

WILSON

Wilson went 7-5 in its first season under head coach Brian Wilson. The Tigers didn't open this season on a strong note, falling to Hartsville 55-34.

AAA Football Feature

Schools down from AAAA make up roughly half of new AAA alignment

By WORTHY EVANS
Special to the HSSR

At the Class AAA level football state playoffs in 2025, **Belton-Honea Path** beat **Powersville** 35-7 for the upper state championship, and **Oceanside Collegiate Academy** beat **Loris** 38-7 for the lower state championship. For the second straight year, Oceanside won the 3A state championship with a 28-7 victory over Belton-Honea Path.

With the **South Carolina High School League’s** 2026-2028 Realignment, the AAA Classification has seen much change for fall 2026. In all, 18 schools have moved down from AAAA to find a home among the AAA regions. One school, **Atlantic Collegiate**, has moved up to AAA from AA.

Several schools leaving Class AAA include **Pendleton**, **Crescent**, **St. Joseph’s**, **West-Oak**, **Carolina**, **Mountain View**, **Woodruff**, **Fox Creek**, **Keenan**, **Newberry**, **Silver Bluff**, **Marlboro County**, **Dillon**, **Waccamaw**, **Battery Creek**, and **Orangeburg-Wilkinson**. Those schools moved down to the AA classification.

Class AAA, which is composed of 35 schools (one AAA school, Legacy Early College, does not have a football program), welcomes former AAAA schools **Daniel**, **Seneca**, **Pickens**, **Berea**, **Southside**, **Wren**, **Emerald**, **Blue Ridge**, **Camden**, **Gilbert**, **Lower Richland**, **Airport**, **Brookland-Cayce**, **Darlington**, **Bishop England**, **Hartsville**, **Crestwood**, and **Lakewood**.

For the football season review by classification, the AAA regions outlined below include the school, the 2025 record, region, and classification is included in the subhead.

The order of each region is determined by the predicted finish of the team in each region.

Region 1
Daniel (10-2, 6-0 Region 2-AAAA)
The Lions are down a classification to AAA, and they haven’t seemed to have lost anything from last year.

Junior quarterback **Jace Grass**, who passed for 2,779 yards and 31 touchdowns to just two interceptions, lit up the **Green Wave Jamboree** going 10-for-13 in passing for 194 yards and a touchdown in a 21-0 win over **Easley** in two quarters of play last week. Grass’ longtime friend and junior veteran receiver **Trey Wimbley**, who had 57 catches for 1,072 yards and 14 TDs last year, pulled in six passes for 135 yards and a touchdown.

In the Lions’ 42-28 season-opening victory over Wren Aug. 21, Grass, senior **Damien Curry**, and sophomore **Kingsten Bibb** rushed for two touchdowns apiece. Bibb led all rushers with 176 yards on 21 carries. Grass was 13-for-122 in passing for 141 yards with two interceptions.

Seneca (10-2, 5-1 Region 2-AAAA)
The Bobcats are back down to AAA and under a new coach. Former defensive coordinator **Drec Ellis** succeeds **David Crane**, who left to take the head

TDs. Returning on offense are lineman **Jeremiah Good** and top receivers **Elias McGee** (33 catches for 764 yards, 9 TDs), **Jeremiah Hunter** (70 catches for 985 yards, 14 TDs), and Jack **Webb** (33 catches for 524 yards, 7 TDs). **Eli Wiley**, the new quarterback should have protection and weapons to grow into the position.

Seneca’s defense includes defensive end **Mekhi Mendez** (70 tackles, 10.5 for loss, 4.5 sacks), strong safety **William Philpott** (50 tackles, three interceptions), and linebackers **Jamauri Chapman** (50 tackles) and **Chance Cleveland** (49 tackles, one for loss).

Seneca fell 28-12 to **Powersville** in the season opener Aug. 21.

Pickens (3-8, 2-4 Region 2-AAAA)
The Blue Flame had a tough go last season, but with 10 returning starters on offense and nine on defense, the team is looking to make an impact on the 3A level. Quarterback and USC commit **Brooks Dow** (1,492 passing yards and 17 touchdowns; 883 rushing yards and five TDs) returns along with **Harison Clark**, who had 21 catches for 283 yards last year and will be one of Dow’s top targets.

Defensive lineman **T.J. McCullough** is shaping up to lead in the trenches. **Wes Hullett**, **Ethan Bentley** and **Aniken Saunders** join him on the line. Linebackers **Laken Hamilton** and **Nate Taylor** will start, and **Sam Hall** will be the nickel. **Connor Mason** will start in the secondary.

Pickens beat **Easley** 61-41 in the season opener Aug. 21.

Berea (2-8, 1-5 Region 2-AAAA)
Down from AAAA, the Bulldogs lost just nine seniors from last season and have just seven seniors on this year’s roster. Judging from the **Green Wave Jamboree** results last week, Berea may continue to struggle.

Liberty shut out the Bulldogs 28-0 in two quarters of play, as the Red Devils rolled up 259 yards of offense on 22 plays. Berea mustered just 14 yards on 18 plays. The Bulldogs only highlight was **Isaiah Griffin’s** fumble recovery.

Berea fell 44-22 to **Blacksburg** in the season opener Aug. 21.

Walhalla (2-9 1-3 Region 1-AAA)
The Razorbacks had just seven seniors on the roster last season, and a load of sophomores and juniors. This year’s team is similar: six seniors, 18 juniors, eight sophomores and one freshman.

Among the returners are senior running back **Essien Nathan**. Nathan played in the midst of a stable of running backs but had a team-leading 479 yards and three touchdowns in seven games. Senior linebacker **Charlie Galbreath** had 29 tackles, five for loss, and two sacks last year to lead the underclassmen.

Walhalla fell 32-21 at **Landrum** in the season opener Aug. 21.

Southside (0-10, 0-5 Region 1-AAAA)
Down from AAAA, the Tigers have gone 2-30 in the last three years and are hoping this year just to string a couple of wins together.

Sophomore offensive and defensive lineman **Josiah Poindexter** represents a youthful hope for a team that had just three seniors on the roster last year. Poindexter made people take notice as a fresh-

man in the trenches, and as a rising sophomore should grow in the role. Poindexter showed his defensive and offensive skill in the Carolinas Coaches Combine in the summer.

Southside snapped its 10-game losing streak dating back to the 2025 season opener Aug. 22, 2025, with an 18-13 victory over **Dixie** in the season opener Aug. 21.

Region 1-AAA Predicted Order of Finish:
Daniel
Seneca
Pickens
Berea
Walhalla
Southside

Region 2
Wren (8-4, 4-1 Region 1-AAAA)
Down from AAAA, the Hurricanes look to be region contenders. Junior **Jacob Owings** returns at quarterback, having passed for 1,903 yards and 19 touchdowns last season. Senior **Muntu Brown** is back at running back and looking to add to last year’s 1,686 yards and 20 TDs. Senior **Carson Bryant** (53 catches for 816 yards, 7 TDs) is back at receiver, as is senior **Caiden Hill** (29 catches for 443 yards, 6 TDs).

Defensive end **J.T. Forrester** (42 tackles, seven for loss, four sacks) returns. Defensive backs **Sloan Sanders** (59 tackles, 7 for loss) and **Hayes Reid** (42 tackles), and junior linebacker **Travys Woodard** (54 tackles, 9 for loss) also return.

The Hurricanes fell to **Daniel** 42-28 in the season opener Aug. 21.

Powersville (11-3, 5-0 Region 2-AAA)
The defending region champion Patriots have their work cut out for them this season. Gone are quarterback **Keagan Reid** and wide receiver **Tavi-ous Williams** and two other starters on offense.

This season features a battle among three quarterbacks, **Harleston McInnis**, **Hutton Black**, and **Kash Bracken** for the starting job. **Nasir Waldrop** returns at running back. **Xavier Huggins** and **Jaydon McGrier** return at wide receiver, in addition to three starting offensive linemen. On defense, linebacker **Jayden Wertz** and lineman **Jaydon McGrier** return, as do defensive backs **Steel Gamble** and **Stephen Hudgins**.

Powersville defeated **Seneca** 28-12 in its season opener Aug. 21.

Belton-Honea Path (14-1, 4-0 Region 1-AAA)
The Bears reached the state championship final for the second straight year in 2025, and for the second straight year they fell to **Oceanside Collegiate Academy**.

BHP will be without quarterback **Noah Thomas**, who passed for 2,221 yards and 33 touchdowns as well as rushed for 762 yards and 11 scores. The Bears also have a new coach in **David Crane**, who succeeds **Russell Blackstone** after Blackstone stepped down after 16 years at the helm.

Freshman **Rylan Crooks** is the likely starting quarterback, but his BHP teammates will have to work to protect him as he gets adjusted to being a varsity player under center. Running the football will be paramount.

T.L. **Hanna** edged BHP 17-14 in its season opener Aug. 21.

Class A, continued from pg. 25

6-5 last season.

The Bobcats return solid leadership at quarterback in senior **Brayden Franklin**, who topped 2,000 passing yards and 21 touchdowns last season. The top returning receiver is senior **Kiylin Gordon**, who will also play in the secondary defense.

Senior **Lamar Singleton** returns as the anchor defensively at linebacker and senior **Dontay Gathers** returns along the offensive and defensive line. Junior **Jerome Wright** will be a solid leader in the secondary.

St. Johns:
Paul Hamilton, a former college head coach, begins his first season as the head football coach at **St. Johns** and he has his challenges with the Islanders finishing 1-10 record last season.

The **Islanders** opened their season at **St. John’s Christian Academy** Aug. 28.

Hamilton is returning to a veteran core of six seniors and 12 juniors to help turn the tide.

Sophomore **Cayden Alt** will call the signals on offense, and seniors fullback/linebacker **Mike Green** and wide receiver/safety **Ezra Green** figure to be playmakers on both sides of the ball. Juniors’ fullback/linebacker **Micah Murray** and running back/outside linebacker **Bruce Rivers** are expected to be major contributors.

“We want to work to get better each week and raise the level of the football program,” says Hamilton of his early goal.

Coach Hamilton says the defensive leaders this fall include DE **Michael Green**, DE **Brenden Morris**, LB **Kendall Fuhrman**, and CB **Jamari Brown**. Guard Alex Martinez will also provide depth in the OL

Burke:
Earl Brown Jr. begins his fifth year, in his second stint as head coach of the **Bulldogs**. They finished 1-8 last season. Coach **Brown** had a 2-35 mark in his previous four seasons. He had a 9-42 mark over first stint from 2011 to 2015.

Brown will be looking for overall consistency, execution, and depth this season. The **Bulldogs** opened their season against **Denmark-Olar** Aug. 28.

The veteran head coach will look to senior center/in-side linebacker **Horatio Vice-Parson**; juniors quarterback/defensive back **Sheldon Wright** and running back/defensive back **Jaquan Moore**; and sophomore wide receiver/safety **Tshantez Fokes** to set the pace.

Military Magnet:
Military Magnet head football coach **Alvarez Pringle** is beginning his 4th season with the Eagles, and after his troops went 0-10 last season they are hoping for improvement this season. The Eagles last won a game over region foe **St. Johns** in October 2024.

Senior leadership is a key to any team’s success. A core group of returning seniors includes **Corey Matthews** (CB/WR), **Dontavious Jackson** (QB/FB), **Kweli Johnson** (FB/TE), along with **Jamari Alston** (MLB/FB), and **Curan Matthews** (FB/OLB). A top junior is **Emmanuel Autridge** (DE/G). An up- and-coming player for the Eagles is sophomore LB **Mical Mitchell** (5-11, 220).

The team began the ’26 season with a 48-0 loss to cross-town rival **North Charleston**.

Region 9-A Predicted Finish
Carvers Bay
Johnsonville
Andrews
Hannah-Pamplico
Kingstree
Region 9-A Overview
Carvers Bay:
The **Bears** finished 12-1 last year after being knocked out of the playoffs in the third round by the eventual state champion, **Bamburg-Ehrhardt**.

“We are looking to continue the tradition of Carvers Bay Football,” said coach **Matthew Richards**, now entering his seventh season as Carvers Bay’s head coach. “We have worked hard in the weight room all Summer, so we are hoping to take that next step.”

He says the strength for any good football team starts up front. The Bears’ leader in the trenches will be center **Triston Diggs**. Also, key in the blocking game will be tight end **Jaquan Hannah**. Also, a defensive end and kicker, Hannah is on the **HSSR Top 100 List**.

Running back **Dominique Walker** will be key to moving the sticks. Joining him in that effort will be

Georgetown transfer **Trent Singleton**, who will line up at running back, slot receiver and corner back.

“Coming off all the hype of an undefeated regular season, you have to force these young kids to understand that last year’s success doesn’t have anything to do with this year’s season,” Richards said. “We are keeping them motivated and making sure they understand they have to earn it every single day.”

Last season, Richards coached defensive backs during the **Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas**.

“It was a great experience, and I got to work with some great coaches,” he said. “Seeing what some of the best coaches in the state do and how they do it makes you better. Paul Sutherland was our head coach, and he understands the character portion and how to take that to the players.”

See feature story on Carvers Bay elsewhere in this issue.

Johnsonville:
Last season the Flashes finished 10-3 under the tutelage of veteran head coach **Ken Crobb** (171-35) and with many playmakers back for this season the team is hoping to make even a deeper run.

Against **Lake View** in the season opener August 24 the Flashes were leading the Wild Gators 14-0 in the first period, behind a solid ground game, and they were nearing the red zone for a third score that might have put the game away. However, a pass was intercepted and returned over 40 yards by Lake View and from that point on the momentum swung to LV, and Johnsonville ended up losing a highly competitive game, 30-28.

A few of the key returning players this season are speedy WR **Ja’Mere Ross** (5-8,155), top junior DL **Jordan McFadden**, and top sophomore TE performer **Brice Ellison**. The top player up from the jayvee is **Zyleer Wright** who will see action at CB/WR.

Senior QB **Larkin Power** returns along with senior WR **Skylar Montgomery**. The Flashes have a solid group of OL to push the running game led by RT **Zy-i’Kel Cooper** (6-2, 285) and LG **Chance McDaniel** (6-5,330) along with soph TE **Brice Ellison**, LT **KC Davis**, RG **Devon Sanders** and center **Carson Graham**.

Zaghe Davis is the RB. Some other key players on defense are Cooper who flips to DT, and he is joined by **Shawn Wilson** and senior DE **Parker Baxley** (5-11,210) up-front. Ellison flips to LB where he is joined by **Logan Lewis**, and **Lucas Thaxton**. Ross flips to lead the secondary where he joins DB’s **Edmund McClary**, **Rondrell Livingston**, and Montgomery who flips from offense. **Jake Squires** will be the team’s combo kicker.

Please see feature story on Johnsonville elsewhere in this issue.

Andrews:
Scott Durham is a veteran coach of the Andrews Yellow Jackets and after his team’s 28-26 loss to **Lake-wood**, in week one, he told the *HSSR*, “I was about to lose my mind when that game was over,” he said. “We are a very young team with about five players we can really count on. The best thing that has happened to us is a transfer player from Virginia who moved in over the summer named **Michael Pembleton** (6-2, 200) and he is a DB/CB with 8 college offers now. His best offer is **Akron** right now.”

Other key returners include: **Dutch Stafford** - SR-RB, **Avery Durham** -SR-QB, **Caleb Marlow** -SR-WR/DB

OL/DL - **Dontavias Davis**, **Johnathan Lawre**, **Daylin Dixon**, **Kaleb Thomas**, **Kadyn Purbia**

DE/TE * **Javon Bessellieu** SO/ DB’S, **Gavin Gary**, **Jeronde Johnson** both are SR’s

Top SR - **Caleb Marlow** -wr- Coach Durham is very high on him. Play maker

Top SO - **Javon Bessellieu** - DE/TE Coach Durham feels like Bessellieu can be the next big star at Andrews. Had great freshman year.

Hannah Pamplico:
The Raiders finished 2-7 a year ago under veteran head coach **Trey Woodberry**.

The team lost 20-7 to Lake City to start the season so it might just be another rebuilding season.

Key returning players include: WR Matthew Richardson, OL Austin Mitchell, LB/TE Jonah Poston

Please See Feature Story On Hannah-Pamplico Elsewhere in this issue.

Kingstree:
Brandon Cantrell begins his second year in Kingstree and the Blazers finished 4-7 in his first year.

The team returns all-region Defensive Player of the Year **Maleek Dukes** who had 60 tackles including 11 QB sacks and two fumble recoveries a year ago. LB **Mark Picard** returns to lead the defense.

(Please see feature story on Kingstree elsewhere in this issue)

Region 10-A Predicted Finish

1. **Lake View**
2. **Latta**
3. **Marion**
4. **Green Sea Floyds**
5. **Mullins**

Region 10-A Overview
Lake View:
Last season Lake View finished with a 5-5 record under the tutelage of veteran head coach **Daryl King**. The Wild Gators started the ’26 season a high note with a come-from-behind 30-28 win over Johnsonville to start the season.

More than half of the Wild Gators who started in ’25 was under classmen, so this year’s team should be more experienced over-all.

Jalen Clarke returns as a key RB for Lake View while Yuri Richardson returns as a WR, and Riley McCormick and Alonzo Hamilton are back to hold down the OL. Soph Gabe Lee is back at LB a Terrence Alford will provide depth at WR/DB. Balin Rice and Elijah Paradise return to anchor the defensive line.

Returning juniors who will add depth to the OL include Richard Thomas and Isaiah Blue. Tyron Betha will add depth at LB and senior Peyton Hilburn will see action in the OL.

Please see feature story on Lake View in the first section of this issue.

Latta:
The Vikings finished 8-3 in 2025 under veteran head coach **Brandon Iseman**.

They began the 2026 season with a 27-0 loss to **Carvers Bay**.

Their two key returning all-region players are who can play both OL/DL are **Javonte Kollock** and LG **Zack Page**. Luke Huggins is the Vikings starting QB

Noah Alford had six tackles in game one along with Ry’ion Gulrey with 9 stops and Josiah Durant made 8 tackles, two TFL.

Please see feature story on Latta elsewhere in this issue.

Marion:
Marion has come down to Class A from AA with the realignment and that might be a good thing as they were 0-10 last season.

Marion started the season with an impressive 33-6 win over **Kingstree**.

The good news is that are numerous experienced players returning to help build success. **Ben Wofford** (5-9,165) returns as an all-region LB from last season. Junior LB Kaleb Monroe is all back along with senior DB **Ka’Mari Williams**. **Kendrick Brown** brings depth in the OL along with junior **Kamryn Davis** at LB. Senior TE/DE Amari Green (6-3, 195) should all be a playmaker on both of the football.

Please see feature story on Marion elsewhere in this issue.

Green Sea Floyds:
Ty Sutherland’s Trojans lost a close game to **East Columbus**, NC 12-8 to start the season, but in the loss a playmaker was born.

He is sophomore QB **Aaron Fowler** who rushed for 125 yards in the game, and his 60-yard scamper in the first quarter set up a short pass play for a TD to WR **PJ Stephens**.

GSF were 0-10 last season and they are hope to rebound this season.

Mullins:
After finishing 7-4 in 2024, head Marion coach **Marc Lowery** was hoping to take that next step last season. However, the Aue’s slipped to 3-6 last season.

Mullins lost to ACA 29-8 to start the season.

In the loss several players stepped up. Senior LB **Nathan Perpeki** had 7 tackles and LB Tyler Kelly had 5 stops in the loss. The team QB is Justin Rowell who passed for 41 yards. RB Michael Coleman had 74 yards and a TD vs ACA.

Please see feature story on Mullins elsewhere in this issue.

AAA Football Polls	
1. Camden	6. Emerald
2. Hartsville	7. BHP
3. Daniel	8. Airport
4. Powersville	9. Aynor
5. Hanahan	10. Gilbert

SCISA Football Feature

AAAA Polls
1. Northwood Academy 2. Pinewood Prep 3. Hammond 4. Heathwood Hall 5. Porter Gaud 6. Laurence Manning

AAA Polls
1. Bethesda 2. Florence Christian 3. Trinity Collegiate 4. Wilson Hall 5. Hilton Head Christian 6. First Baptist

AA Polls
1. Williamsburg Acad. 2. Greenwood Christian 3. Calhoun Academy 4. Orangeburg Prep 5. Pee Dee Academy 6. Colleton Prep

A Polls
1. Dorchester Academy 2. Beaufort Academy 3. Holly Hill Academy 4. Carolina Academy 5. Thomas Heyward 6. Clarendon Hall

SCISA football wide open for 56th football season

By: Gerald Doolittle
Goose Creek, S.C. – On August 14th the **South Carolina Independent Schools Association** opened its 56th football season with twelve games. In 1970 **Jefferson Davis Academy**, **Roy Hudgens Academy** and **Country Day** launched SCISA football. In 2026 47 schools will compete for Titles.

Because of the two-year re-alignment new Champions will be crowned in classes 3A, 2A and 1A. **Northwood Academy** will defend their **4A** Title and **W.W. King Academy** will defend their **8-Man** Title.

Last season **Pinewood Prep** won the **3A** title with a win over **Wilson Hall**. This season the **Panthers** will be in 4A. Last season **Bethesda Academy** won the **2A** title with a win over **Pee Dee Academy**. This season they will compete in 3A. Last season **Williamsburg Academy** won the **1A** title with a win over **Colleton Prep Academy**. This season both schools will compete in 2A. This season Class 1A is wide open for the taking as eight schools fight for the title.

Can **Coach Jon Wheeler** fire his **Hammond Skyhawks** back to the top of **Region 1-AAAA**? Last season the Skyhawks finished 9-2 and will be tested by the much improved teams from **Augusta Christian** (1-9, **Ben Lippen** (3-8) and **Cardinal Newman** (1-9).

Hammond opened the season with a 31-13 win over **Brookland-Cayce**. Augusta Christian has opened the season with wins over **Greenville Hurricanes** 48-7 and **John Paul II** 33-10. Ben Lippen opened their season with a 42-0 win over **Spartanburg Christian**. Cardinal Newman has opened the season with a 12-6 win over **Clarendon Hall** and a 34-0 over **American Leadership**.

The Region 2-AAAA will be a battle between Pinewood Prep (10-3), Northwood Academy (11-1) and **Laurence Manning** (6-5). John Paul II (5-6) could be a sleeper.

Pinewood Prep has opened the new season with a 62-27 win over **First Baptist** and a 41-14 win over **Heathwood Hall**. Northwood Academy opened their season with a 60-27 loss to **Bethesda Academy**.

At this writing Laurence Manning has yet to open their season. John Paul II has opened their season with 42-8 loss to Hilton Head Christian and a 33-10 loss to Augusta Christian.

Coach Adam Jarecki hopes his eleven seniors can help his **Barons** improve on last seasons 11-2 Class AAA record. Last season the Barons were defeated by Pinewood Prep for the Title. The Barons defeated **Orangeburg Prep** 22-0 to open the 2026 season.

Coach Neil Minton hopes his nine seniors can propel his **Florence Christian Eagles** to Region and State Titles. The Eagles defeated **Dillon Christian**



2026 Northwood Academy Chargers

42-35 to open the season. Last season the Eagles finished at 8-3.

Bethesda Academy and **Hilton Head Christian** will battle for the Region 2-AAA Crown. Last season **Coach Antwain Turner** coached his **Blazers** to a 12-0 season for the **Class AA** title. They have opened the new season with a 55-7 win over **Fred-erica Academy** and a 60-27 win over Northwood Academy.

Hilton Head Christian has opened the 2026 season with a 42-8 win over John Paul II and a 41-0 win over **Beaufort Academy**.

Calhoun Academy (9-2) and **Colleton Prep Academy** (9-3 will battle for the Region 1-AA and State Titles. Colleton Prep has opened the 2026 season with a 50-6 win over **Hilton Head Prep** and a 44-0 win over **Lee Academy**.

All five schools in Region 2-AA are primed to have winning seasons. **Williamsburg Academy** after winning the 2025 Class 1A Title with an 11-1 record have not at this writing opened the 2026 season.

Pee Dee Academy (8-4) at this writing has not opened the 2026 season. **Greenwood Christian** after finishing the 2025 season with a 9-3 record has opened the 2026 season with 21-20 loss to North-side Christian and a 28-0 win over **McCormick High School**.

Orangeburg Prep (7-4) opened their 2026 season with a 22-0 loss to Wilson Hall. **Spartanburg Day** playing football for the first time in over 40 years has opened the 2026 season with a 39-6 loss to **Asheville Christian** and a 35-14 win over **Calhoun Academy**.

SCISA Region 1-A will be a wide open race between four schools who all had losing records in 2025. **Carolina Academy** (5-6) and **Dillon Christian** (3-7) appear the two stronger teams. Lee

the 2026 season with losses to Calhoun Academy 36-20 and Hilton Head Christian 41-0.

Coach Brian Kneece has been working hard to get his **W. W. King Academy Knights** ready to defend their 12-0 **SCISA 8-Man** Title. The Knights opened their season with a 38-2 win over **Wardlaw Academy**.

Coach Jolly Doolittle has the **Laurens Academy Crusaders** ready to improve on their 9-3 record and again play for the 8-Man title. The Crusaders opened the season with 50-18 win over the **Richard Winn Academy Eagles**.

Coach Anthony Reitenour has his **Jefferson Davis Raiders** ready to make a serious run for the 8-Man Title. Last season the Raiders finished with an 8-5 record. They have opened the 2026 season with a 24-19 win over **Providence** and a 14-0 win over **Andrew Jackson Academy**.

Richard Winn Academy (4-7) and **Community Christian** (3-4) could be spoilers in the race. Community Christian opened the season with a 22-18 win over **King's Academy** and Richard Winn opened with the 50-18 loss to Laurens Academy.

Here are the early rushing leaders for the 2026 season. Eli Beville (Palmetto Chr) 342 yds 4 TDs, B J Suits (Northside Chr.) 283 yds 7 TDS, Marquel Williams (Jefferson Davis) 251 yds 1 TD, Joseph Morse (WW King) 235 yds 4 TDs, Cooper Franklin (Cross Schools) 230 yds 3 TDs, Jordan Turner (Bethesda) 205 yds 5 TDS, Jeff Armstrong (Bethesda) 189 yds 4 TDS, Parker Kizer (Holly Hill) 171 yds 1 TD, Derrick Porter (First Baptist) 170 yds 3 TDs and Jordan Blackmon (Dillon Chr) 145 yds 3 TDs.

Here are the early passing leaders for the 2026

See **SCISA**, continued pg. **30**

AAA Football Feature

Emerald (6-6, 2-3 Region 1-AAAA)
Down from 4A, the Vikings will make the fight for a region crown that much tougher. Junior **Beau Hite** returns from his sophomore season as quarterback in which he passed for 1,845 yards and 19 touchdowns, and rushed for 398 yards and 4 TDs. Returning with him is senior running back **Chris Dean** (1,418 yards and 12 touchdowns on 175 carries; 18 catches for 285 yards, three TDs).

Greenwood transfer **Desiray Christian**, a junior who has more than a dozen offers from NCAA Division I schools, tops the list of receivers that includes Dean, **Coleson Marino** (38 catches for 533 yards, 6 TDs), and **Camelle Hill** (26 catches for 367 yards, 5 TDs).

Emerald beat **Crescent** 21-6 in its season opener Aug. 21.

Palmetto (1-10, 1-4 Region 2-AAA)
The Mustangs have been on the downside of the region standings since posting a 9-4 record in 2017. With the influx of two AAAA teams in addition to **BHP Powdersville**, and **Palmetto** will have an even tougher road.

With **Kaleb Ricketts** (579 yards and two passing touchdowns; 710 rushing yards and 6 TDs) gone at quarterback, seniors **Byrson Arflin** and **Grant Klieber** will battle for the starting job.

Palmetto has just 14 seniors on the roster and 18 sophomores.

Pendleton topped **Palmetto** 21-11 in its season opener Aug. 21.

Region 2-AAA Predicted Order of Finish:
Wren
Powdersville
Belton-Honea Path
Emerald
Palmetto

Region 3
Christ Church (8-4, 3-2 Region 2-AAA)
The Cavaliers are coming off a 14-9 run in their first two years in the AAA classification after moving up from A, where they won back-to-back state titles in 2022 – 2023.

Senior **Judd Windham** (2,160 passing yards, 22 touchdowns) returns at quarterback. Junior running back **Michael Martin** also returns after last year's 1,425-yard, 30-TD effort.

Senior **Hayes Lyman** and junior **Hampton Shields** return at receivers. Lyman had 35 catches for 481 yards and a score and Shields had 27 catches for 306 yards and three TDs.

Christ Church fell 10-3 at **Mauldin** in the season opener Aug. 21.

Blue Ridge (6-5, 3-3 Region 2-AAAA)
Gavin Forrester (1,664 passing yards, 12 touchdowns; 1,014 rushing yards, 15 TDs) is gone, along with **Jakorey Dodd** (972 rushing yards, 12 TDs), as is **Mitch Bobbitt** (58 catches for 700 yards and 12 TDs). **Greenville High** transfer **Holden Powell** and returners **Tanner Schrock** and **Perry Reed** have competed for quarterback throughout fall practice.

Braylon Edwards (20 catches for 323 yards, 3 TDs) and **Marquiel Troupe** (21 catches for 304 yards. 2 TDs) look to replace Bobbitt's yardage. A committee of running backs that includes Seniors **Brylon McCoy** and **Thaddeus Hammond** and junior **Cooper Smith** and look to share production on the ground attack.



Christ Church Head Coach Quin Hatfield coaches up his Cavaliers

Blue Ridge fell 35-21 to St. Joseph's Catholic Aug. 21.

Broome (5-6, 2-2 Region 3-AAA)
The Centurions lost quarterback **Jameson Dearybury** (1,738 yards, 12 touchdowns) as well as **Tyqwon Booker** (1,424 rushing yards, 16 TDs), **Rece Waugerman** (55 catches, 445 yards, 3 TDs), and **Asher Littlejohn** 24 catches, 526 yards, 4 TDs).

Leading receiver **Braden Simpson** (33 catches, 656 yards, 6TDs) returns and is also battling with **Corley Turner** for quarterback. Simpson was 28-for-37 with 304 yards and three touchdowns under center last year.

Returning Linemen **Kelvin Crook** and **Carson Taylor**, both seniors, will anchor both offensive and defensive lines.

Broome fell 55-25 to **Woodruff** in its season opener Aug. 22.

Chapman (1-10, 1-3 Region 3-AAA)
After going 4-18 over the last two years following the team's 10-2 season in 2023, the Panthers lost just 11 seniors to graduation and many returners have game experience. Senior athlete **Keilon Tucker** will be on the field in several positions on offense and defense. Also returning are **Taylor Rogers**, a receiver who missed all of last year following an injury in a preseason jamboree.

Sophomore quarterback **Ashton Moore** returns to lead the offense and will have Tucker and Rogers as targets. Junior **Khameron Von** will be running back.

The Panthers beat **Eastside** 26-6 in their season opener Aug. 21.

Union County (1-10, 0-4 Region 3-AAA)
Union County is looking to shake off its ill fortune over the eight wins in the last six seasons. Coach **Bryan Robinson** replaces **Quinnon Isom**, who led Union County to a 3-18 record over the past two seasons. A longtime former Yellow Jackets assistant, Robinson played for Union as an offensive lineman in the 1990s and helped lead the team to the 4A Division 2 state championship in 1995.

Shiro Crosby and **J.J. Kershaw** are competing for the quarterback job, but Union has many more pieces in place on the defensive side.

Union fell 27-0 at **Newberry** in its season opener Aug. 21.

Region 3-AAA Predicted Order of Finish:
Christ Church

Blue Ridge
Broome
Chapman
Union County

Region 4
Camden (9-4, 4-2 Region 3-AAAA)
Down from 4A, Camden returns four out of five offensive line starters, including **Worth Thomasson** and **Kenneth Lawson**. Quarterback **Grayson Rimpf** (2,390 yards passing, 28 touchdowns) returns, along with **Will Huanert** (23 catches for 434 yards, 8 TDs) who will move to tight end. **Isaiah Smith** (27 catches for 468 yards, 4 TDs) returns.

Linebacker **Lavay Penny** returns on defense, coming off a team-leading 128 tackles, six for loss, and three sacks. **Jaden Manning** also returns as a multi-position player, seeing time as running back, linebacker, and special teams unit play.

The Bulldogs went on the road and whipped **Dillon** 35-13 in their season opener Aug. 22.

Swansea (8-3, 2-2 Region 4-AAA)
Last year the Tigers won their first seven games in the team's best start in a decade, but they lost three out of their last four games. Head coach **Willie Fox**, in his fourth season, has a veteran of-fensive and defensive line anchored by **Kevin Sightler** and **Davis Livingston**.

Deandre Caldwell returns at running back, **Trace Selfridge** returns at wide receiver, and **Kendall Wright** returns at quarterback. Besides Sightler and Livingston, the defense features Selfridge and **Gabriel Kirsch** as linebackers and **Jayron Heartwell**, **Jaden Stroman**, and **Brian Zeigler** in the secondary.

Swansea fell 36-34 to **Keenan** Aug. 21.

Gilbert (6-6, 4-3 Region 4-AAAA)
Down from AAAA, Gilbert lost 23 seniors and will have a new starter at quarterback for the third straight year—**Jack McQuikin** and **Jayden Jones** were competing for the spot over the summer. Three big uglies return on the offensive line, **Mason Hupertz**, **Hudson Smith**, and **Justice Corley**. Tight end **Ethan Collins** and running back **Jaylen Bost** also return.

Defensive back and Army commit **Gavin Elliot** (95 tackles, eight for loss, two interceptions, two pass breakups, two sacks) returns to lead the defense, which also includes returning lineman **A.J. Doria** and Linebacker **K'Mari Brown**.

Gilbert beat **Nation Ford** 21-14 Aug. 21.

See **AAA**, continued pg. **29**

AA Football Feature

Several teams ready challenge for the AA crown

By Neill Kirkpatrick
Special to the HSSR
Goose Creek – The 2025 football season saw the **Strom Thurmond Rebels** (13-2/5-0) return to the top of the mountain defeating the **Hampton County Hurricanes** (11-4/5-0) 26-7 in the AA state championship and while it was a bitter end to the season for the Hurricanes they were in the title game in just their third year of existences.

As the 2026 season gets set to begin there are several teams that could make a serious run to the AA state championship game and with some new teams dropping from AAA it should be another exciting year on the gridiron.

Region 1: 1- Crescent 2- St. Joseph's 3- Liberty 4- Pendleton 5- West Oak 6- Carolina Academy

The **Crescent Tigers** finished the season 8-4 and made it to the 2nd round of the AAA playoffs last season and they return 28 seniors. “We have a lot of guys that have played a lot of snaps for us the past couple of years,” said head coach **Sheldon Evans**.

Leading the Tigers is senior quarterback **Mason Evans** (5-11, 205). He earned SCFCA AAA All State honors last season after accounting for 3255 total yards and 45 touchdowns. Joining him in the backfield will be senior **Jace Devlin** (5-9,160), who is also one of the leaders on defense at outside linebacker.

Junior **PJ Deveaux** is the top returning receiver after snagging 24 balls for 325 yards and three scores.

The offense line is led by seniors **Tinsley Evans, Hayden Compton and Braxton Tillman**.

Defensively, the Tigers are led by their linebackers. Along with Devlin, are seniors **Hunter Dale** (5-9,190) and **Zach Lumpus** (5-9,208) and junior **Ryder King** (6,215). Free safety senior **Nyleek Geer-Harrison** (5-10,180) led the Tigers in tackles with 59 and picks with three.

St. Joseph's Catholic (5-6/2-3) like Crescent is dropping down from AAA and head coach **Eric Nash's** team is led by a returning AAA All State selection in senior **Sam Patterson**. He totaled over 1400 of total offense scoring 14 touchdowns to go with 52 tackles and two interceptions. He is ranked 70th in the state by the HSSR.

Seniors quarterback **Jack Stewart** (6-2,190) and running back **Mack Rambo** (5-11,195) are back to lead the offense. Rambo just missed 1000 yards last season rushing for 978 yards and a team high 16 touchdowns. They will operate behind a veteran offensive in senior **Clyde Williams** (5-9,210), junior **Jensen Granger** (6,225) and sophomore **Dimitri Katsafouros** (6-1,215).

Senior linebacker **Brodie Martin** is the team’s top returning tackler with 58. Granger plays defensive end and had 45 tackles and 8 tackles for loss while senior defensive tackle **Nick Passerrello** had six tackles for loss.

Buddy Ruff’s Liberty Red Devils (8-4/3-1) rushed for over 3300 yards last season. Unfortunately, they lost over 2500 yards to graduation but the silver lining is that Red Devils return four of their starting five offensive linemen. The group of road graders are led by **Jacob Tucker, Jaxson Ray, Jaxson Black and Nick Brackin**.

AA Football Polls	
1. Strom Thurmond	6. Timberland
2. Clinton	7. East Clarendon
3. Marlboro County	8. Orangeburg-Wilk.
4. Woodruff	9. Woodland
5. Dillon	10. Andrew Jackson

Cullen Spence. Also returning are senior linemen **Braylon Hunter** and **David Adams**.

Junior **Zane Smith** is the lone returning starter in the defensive backfield. Is also the team’s leading returning rusher as he rushed for over 600 yards and 9 scores. He led the team in interceptions last season with four.

The Bulldogs of Pendleton finished 6-6/2-2 and advanced to the second round of the AAA playoffs. **Coach Grayson Howell** has solid group of returning players so the Bulldogs will have their sights set on getting back to the playoffs.

The Bulldogs will be led by the offensive and defensive lines as they return AAA All State linemen center seniors **Walker Dunlap, Jaden Wilson, and Fisher Saylor**s. Saylor is a demon on the defensive side of the ball as he led the team with 18.5 tackles for loss to go with 83 tackles. He tied for the team lead in sacks with 4.5.

Middle linebacker senior **Michael Dixon** is back in the middle. He was third on the team in tackles for loss with 12.5 and had 49 tackles. **Kew Dean** is back in the secondary

Wide receiver senior and returning AAA All state **Sam Jennings** is the top returning offensive threat and will be joined on offense junior quarterback **Jaden Guess**, sophomore running back **Mitravivus Brown**, senior wide outs **Landen Moody** and **Noah Bagwell**.

West Oak is another team that reclassified from AAA. They went 4-7/0-4 making it into the AAA playoffs. Head Coach **Glenn Padgett** has some good players returning that have game experience.

Leading the Warriors offensively will be juniors running back **Carter Fountain** (5-11,195) and wide receiver **Jake Williams** (5-9,170). They both play in the secondary as well.

The offensive and defensive lines are led by seniors **Bryan Carbajal** (6-5,320), **Landon Beardon** (6-4, 330) and **Cadence Campbell** (5-10,235). The junior and sophomore classes are loaded with size and talent.

Senior outside linebacker **Brice Durham** is back to lead the defense. Returning defensive back junior **Cole Brucke** will also be in the mix at quarterback.

Chris Glover, head coach at **Carolina Academy** returns a solid core of players and is another one of the schools dropping down from AAA.

On offense they return quarterback senior **Jaylen Patterson** (6, 225) and junior running back **Caleb Gamble** (6,185). Gamble also plays in the secondary,

Leading the offensive and defensive lines are seniors **Caleb Martin** and **Debari Tillman** (5-11, The back seven are led by senior free safety **Nakeam Boston** (6,160) and some talented underclassmen in junior linebacker **Amir Abercrombie** (6-1,215) and junior defensive backs **Timothy Fowler** (5-11,165) and **Bryson McMoore** (5-10, 185).

REGION II: 1 – Woodruff 2 – Clinton 3 – MVP 4- Southside Christian 5 – Chesnee 6- Landrum

Woodruff – Head Coach **Brett Sloan** enters his fourth year at Woodruff and his Wolverines should not have trouble scoring points as the are led by the region’s best player in **Connor Davis**. The 6-2, 210 senior is coming off a AAA all state season where he completed 60% of his throws for 2554 yards and 30 TD’s. One of his top targets will be junior is **Curtis Bell** (5-9,175) **Tee Glenn** while senior **Jaylen Lyles** will take over the rushing duties, he rushed for 515 yards and 7 TD” s.

Big things are expected from new addition **MiCah McClintock** (6-3, 225). The Florida Atlantic commit will play on both sides of the ball at tight end and defensive end.

Junior **Ian Jones** (6-4, 295) will lead the offensive line along with seniors **Paul Davis** (6,230) and **Daw-**

son Cleveger (5-10,200)

Defense is a different story as the Wolverines have to replace 9 starters but like at top programs coach Sloan has guys that are just waiting to get their chance. Junior defensive back **Malachi Thompson** (5-10,175) is a returning starter from last season

Senior **Addison Davis** (5-9,150) saw a lot of time at safety last season and is expected to one of the leaders while a lot is expected from linebackers **Kelan Hunter** (6-2,185) and **Nick McConnell** (6-2,185), and defensive back **Aidan Lanford** (5-10,170). Newcomer **Reco Abney** (5-10,230) will add a physical presence to that unit along the defensive front. **Diego Tranquilino** returns to handle the place-kicking duties and was 54 of 55 on extra point attempts last season.

Clinton returns six starters on offense, led by quarterback senior **Owen Glenn** (6-1,175) Last season he over 1000 yards of total offense and scored 12 touchdowns. He will be joined in the backfield by senior **Angelo Cromer** (5-10,170). He rushed for over 690 yards and 7 touchdowns averaging 9.4 yards per carry.

Only one starter is back on defense for the Red Devils in senior outside linebacker **Avavian James**.

Senior **Jafyrie Cunningham** (6-1,240) and junior **Jace Patterson** (6,245) are back along the offensive and defensive’ fronts.

Mountain View prep head coach **Grey Ramsey** has led the Stars to a 22-3 in their first two seasons on the gridiron. MVP returns 8 starters led by junior **Savion Booker** and sophomores **Dylan McKey** and **Chase Richards**. They lost quarterback **Mak Anderson** to a transfer to Christ School in North Carolina just before the start of the season.

All State kicker senior **Henry Phillips**. He was 32 of 37 on extra points and had 35 touchbacks on kick offs.

Defensively, the Stars get back 5 starters led by sophomore linebacker **Jamar Brown**, senior linebacker **Cliff McDaniel**, junior **Javion Dawkins** and junior **David Lewis**.

Southside Christian head coach **Jonathan Gess** has 8 starters on both sides of the ball so expectations are high for this veteran group of Sabres. One returning starter that has already has his season cut short is sophomore quarterback **Max Breit**. Senior **Aaron Gilliam** (6,170) will be taking over at QB. Junior **Ash-ton Martin** will tote the mail and senior **Aiden McGowan** (6-2,235) is back to lead the offensive and defensive lines.

Sabres are returning over 400 tackles from last season in seniors **Cole Brancati**, Gilliam, **Nigel Rock**, and **Richie Maxwell** and juniors **Derion Glenn** and **Martin**.

Sophomore **Jack Campbell** is back to handle the kicking duties as he was 35 for 37 on extra points and 4 of 5 on field goals with a long of 41.

The Chesnee Eagles return 11 starters on both sides of the ball and are led by returning AA All State quarterback in senior **Evan Lawter**. He is one of the top dual threat quarterbacks in the state. He will be looking to get the ball to returning senior **Ben Hefner** and junior **Bryce Horton**. Newcomer **Christian Bryan** had a good spring. Head Coach **Brett Chappell** is expecting big things from him this fall.

Seniors **Cody Breitenbach**, **Brayden Traynham**, and **Oscar Paniagua** are the leaders of the offensive and defensive lines. Breitenbach and Paniagua are returning All-Region selections. Senior linebacker **Zach Henderson** is back to led the back seven.

Landrum is the only team that did not make the playoffs last in this region but with several starters returning head coach Mike Reid’s team will be looking to change that this season

The Cardinals seven returning defensive starters are **Dallas Collins**, **Trey Nesbitt**, **Keon Wilkins**, line-

Class A, continued from pg. 11

The Eagles come into the season returning 9 starters on offense and five on defense. The offense returns all-region WR play-maker **Keith Rogers** (43-802-10 TD’s) from last season and Rogers (6-0,185) also chipped in with 50 tackles and four interceptions on defense while also returning four kick-offs for TD’s.

Soph QB transfer **Kaleb Manger** (6-4, 210) will be a first- year starter at QB with solid potential for next level development. The OL returns three starters in senior LT **Zion Starks** (6-0,265), junior LG **Sa’Nye Hilton**, and senior **Danny Ragin** (6-2, 245). Two other all-region players are back in senior WR/OLB Nyren **Bowman** (6-0,210) and senior athlete **Quinton Jackson** (5-10, 190). Bowman had 92 tackles on defense last year.

Jackson filled in at QB last season after an injury and threw for 500 yards, rushed for 454 yards and 8 TD’s and he also caught 18 passes for 306 yards and four TD’s. *Call him Mr. Versatile or Action Jackson!*

Please see feature stories and updated information on Scott’s Branch elsewhere in this issue.

Denmark Olar:

Returning 18 starters from a team that went 1-9 a year ago, 5th year head coach **William M. Raysor** brought a good many of his players to the annual *HSSR* football media day at USC in July.

Coach Raysoe told the *HSSR* at media day, “We have the most interest in the program since I’ve been here,” he said. “Last Summer we only had 13 players during workouts. This Summer we had 31 kids consistently. They understand they need to put in the work and dedication early to make this program work and grow. We had a pretty good offseason so we should be able to get some good things going this year,”

Some key returning players for the Vikings include OL **Blake Brown** (5-10,270) and QB **Nyheem Brimfield** (6-4, 250) who the team’s starting QB before he tore an AC last season. He is back and looking be an impact player.at both QB and LB. DE **Dilan Hammonds** (6-5 215) returns, and he runs a 4.5 40.

“We have some guys receiving a lot of **D1** interest,” Raysor said. “We can only put 11 on the field at a time, but we have about 14 kids on defense who will get after it. When you have kids that have a passion for the game, it will carry you. We will be very fundamentally sound on defense.”

Although the Vikings lost to number one Div. II rated **Blackville-Hilda** 38-0 in the season opener on August 21 this team has a lot of potential to make a deep run in post season play.

Please see feature story on the Denmark-Olar football team elsewhere in this issue.

Branchville:

Veteran head coach Sandy Dukes must be very pleased with his Branchville Yellow Jackets 38-30 win over **Whitmire** in the Yellow Jackets season opener on August 21.

The *HSSR* dropped by Branchville’s scrimmage against **Holly Hill Academy** in early August and we were very impressed with the get after attitude of the Yellow Jacket players.

Eli Hayden is a WR who had seven catches against the Wolverines in the opening game. The Branchville defense is anchored by two veteran linebackers, **Isiaah Bruce** and **Tucker Wolfe**. **Jamie Wilson** is another solid WR for the team. Other team leaders are **Jonas Strother**, **Finley Buall** and **Noah Hayden**.

Edisto:

Tommy Brown’s return to head coaching football was spoiled in the season opener when Edisto fell to **Blackville-Hilda** 44-6.

Bethune-Bowman:

The **Mohawks** finished 4-8 last season with a post-season appearance under first-year head coach **Roland Shuler**.

They opened the ’26 season with a 14-8 victory over **Clear Dot Charter**. Freshman **Jyreon Keitt** ran for 110 yards on 14 carries with a touchdown, and fellow freshman quarterback **Roland Shuler II** completed six of 10 passes for 60 yards with a touchdown.

Other expected major contributors are senior wide receiver/defensive back **Anthony Hall**, senior lineman **Jayden Smith** (6-1, 275), junior tight end/defensive end **Bryce Fleming** (6-3, 200), and sophomores’ wide

receiver/defensive back **Jordyn Mack** and tight end/defensive end **Johnntrell Thomas** (6-2, 210).

Region 7-A Predicted Finish:

1. Hampton County
2. Ridgeland
3. Whale Branch
4. Hardeeville
5. Allendale-Fairfax

Region 7-A Overview
Hampton County:

The 2025 football season was historic for the Hurricanes, head coached by **Rob Hanna** (47-16), when the team won the AA Lower State title and finished with an 11-4 record before losing out in the AA state finals to **Strom Thurmond** 26-7.

The big void left with graduation was RB **Jaylen Singletary** who rushed for 2,209 yards and scored 37 TD’s a year ago when the Hurricanes averaged 43 points a game.

Hampton County started off the ’26 season with a 33-0 dominating win over **Colleton County** showing great potential for another deep playoff run. The team rushed for 320 yards on 45 carries against the Cougars. Junior RB **Nigil Fripp** (5-7, 156) runs with low pad level, and he led rushers with 187 yards and a TD in the opening win. Sophomore RB Robert Amaker added 40 yards four carries.

Junior QB/SS Roderick **Loadholt** has stepped up at QB and three of his four pass completions in the season opener resulted in TD receptions and 102 yards of offense. His arm can help keep defenses from over-stacking the box against the patented rushing attack of HC. Senior WR **Deondre Duncan**, junior WR **Jamar Housey**, and senior TE **Jashon Williams** all had TD receptions against the Cougars.

HC returns their entire OL except for the center. Senior RT **Ty Quavian Jones** (6-5, 265) is a leader in the trenches alongside LT **Charles Williams** (6-0,245), LG **Lonzo Johnson** (5-8,230), RG **Cautey Taylor** (5-7, 235) and newcomer **Will Cobb** at center (5-9,255).

Against CC freshman LB prospect **Isaac Jones** made his varsity debut something to talk about at future class reunions. He had 13 tackles with 1.5 TFL and played from sideline to sideline the whole game. Senior OLB Henry Critington had 7 tackles and three TFL in game one and junior DE Cleavon Maxwell (6-0,225) had five tackles. As a team the HC defense had 10.5 TFL against the Cougars.

Coming into the season, Coach Hanna told the *HSSR*, “We have a pretty good depth chart,” he said. “We have three really good running backs, and all our OL/DL players return except at center.”

Please see feature story on Hampton County football elsewhere in this football issue.

Ridgeland Secondary Academy:

Second-year head coach **Reginald Alexander** enters his second season in charge of the **Jaguars’** program with plenty of optimism with a strong core back in the fold. The **Jaguars** finished 4-6 last season and did make the postseason.

They suffered a tight 18-12 defeat to **North Charleston** in their opener.

Among those players to watch are senior’s quarterback/linebacker **TaiShaun Smith**, running back/wide receiver **Markus Hunter**, wide receiver/safety **Christian Crawford**, running back/linebacker **Alexander Mitchell**, and junior tackle/nose guard **Jerome Barns**.

Whale Branch:

If you are looking for a feel- good story look no further then new **Whale Branch** head coach **Dee Delaney** who is returning to his alma to begin his first year with the Warriors after an outstanding football and track career, Delaney earned 14 varsity letters while playing football, basketball, track and baseball at Whale Branch. He went on to earn All American honors at **The Citadel** as a FS. After college he played six seasons in the NFL as an undrafted free agent.

If he can’t instill a winning culture in Whale Branch football, who can?

The team lost to **Battery Creek** 22-8 in the opener,

but the *HSSR* feels like Coach Delaney fits Whale Branch like a hand in a glove, and within a few years the Warriors could be winning region titles and more.

The team was 3-8 last season and only produced 180 points of scoring offense all season. Developing play makers on offense is a top challenge for Coach Delaney.

Some returning players include senior RB/Athlete **Jamaur Bagley** (5-10,170) along with senior LB **Jamari Smalls** (5-9,200), The OL will be led by senior **Vincent Sharp** (5-10,237) who played RG last year. Soph DB/Athlete **Makai Zachary** is back along with junior LB **Franklin Lawton** (5-11, 205).

Hardeeville

The **Hurricanes** opened their season with a 22-20 victory over **Beaufort**. Second-year head coach **Arthur Gardner** believes his team can further raise the bar after a 3-7 campaign last season.

Senior quarterback **Emiliano Santago** ran for 110 yards and threw for 97 with a touchdown against Beaufort. Fellow seniors running back/linebacker **Jonathan Greene** and wide receiver /defensive back **Greg Grant** figure to be offensive playmakers. Two-way lineman senior **Da’Main Gillyard** should be a force up front.

Region 8-A Predicted Finish

1. Cross
2. Baptist Hill
3. St Johns
4. Burke
5. Military Magnet

Region 8-A Overview:

Cross:

Head coach **Shaun Wright** (106-55) won a Class A state title in his first year as the head coach at Cross in 2012, and his team played for a second one in 2024 when they were 12-3.

The Trojans are coming off an 11-2 season, and Class A fans are reminded that Cross took the lead over Bamberg Ehrardt in the fourth quarter last year in the Lower State finals, but the Raiders rallied to pull out a 29-26 win. Cross will be in the Div. II Class A group for the playoffs.

All-everything athlete, **Caden Ramsey**, now playing at **South Caolina**, will be hard to replace. “Caden was a once in a generation player and not any one athlete on our team can replace him,” said Coach Wright. “He had the pick six for a touchdown that gave us the lead at Bamberg last year. He is going to be a great TE with the Gamecocks.”

Eight starters return on offense, with six players back on defense so the Trojans have a good foundation for continued success. They will start the ’26 season hosting **Woodland** before facing **Timberland** in week two.

The team will be placed on offense by *HSSR* Top 100 senior RB **Mahky Green** (5-10,170) who finished with 1,601 yards rushing last year with 16 TD’s. **Tyler Harris** (6-1,180) is also a senior leader who returns at QB after passing for 1,619 yards and 17 TD’s a year ago.

Other seniors who will start include two-way performer **Corinthian Wilson** (WR/DB), TE **Khalill Levine** (TE/LB), **Jailyn Broughton** (RT/DL), **Dakori President** (LG), along with **Jakari Wright** (DB), and **Jimmy Smith** who moves up to RB while maintaining his spot at LB.

The junior group I sled by **Andrew Hockett** who starts at LT/DL this season along with LB **Keyawn Wilson**. LB **Jakori Jones**, and **DB Bernard Middleton**. First year starters include center/DL **Augustus Davis** and **DB Jimmy Sweatman**. Pedro Pervi will be handling the place-kicking duties.

Please see feature story on Cross elsewhere in this issue.

Baptist Hill:

Marion Brown has been the head coach at **Baptist Hill** since 2009, and the Bobcats have made it to the Class A state finals only once, and that was in 2027 when they finished 10-2. His teams won region titles in 2017, 18, 19, and 2021. While at Baptist Hill, Coach Brown has compiled a record of 104-75. The team was

See **Class A**, continued pg. 27

AA, continued from pg. 9

Tigers the ability to stretch the field which will help the running game. Also, senior offensive linemen **Jordan Padgett** and **Trent Skinner** have moved into the starting lineup.

Defensively, the Tigers are led by twin brothers **Jayden** (5-10,195) and **Jahmeer** (6-0,180) **Myers**. Jayden plays Middle linebacker while Jahmeer causes havoc from his defensive end position. Junior **Cash Martin** and **Landon Hicks** are the other linebackers.

Mathew Bennett head coach of the **Pelion Panthers** has some very talented players returning especially in the offensive backfield where he returns all-region senior quarterback and captain **Alan Moore** (6-2,170). He threw for 1860 yards and 20 touchdowns. Joining him in the backfield is fellow senior **Brady Cottingham** (6, 205) and junior **Tre Jackson** (5-9,195). Cottingham has offers from Erskine and Averett while Jackson rushed for 1112 yards and 9 touchdowns. Junior **Kypton Taylor** will be at wide out and **Will Green** (5-10,150) will be at wingback. He is also one of the team's captains.

The O-line is has seniors tight end **Axel Garcia**, left tackle **Garrett Osborn** and right guard **Matt Boozer** (5-7,190) and juniors left tackle **Chance Long**, left guard **Cooper Hartley** (5-10,210) and center **Levi Brown**. Hartley is also a team captain.

Coach Bennett feels his defense is the strength of the team especially in the back seven. Joining Taylor, Garcia and Green will be **Zae'Reon Thomas** in the secondary. The linebackers are Cottingham, Jackson and freshmen **Landon Jolly** (5-9,150). The defensive front is all seniors in Nehemiah Green, Sawyer Berry, **Justin Adams** and **Jonathna Davis**.

Senior **Jamie Reynoso** will be back to handle the kicking chores.

American Leadership Academy is entering its third year and second year under veteran coach **Kemper Amick**. Last season the Patriots finished 2-8 but they the two wins were the first in program history so there is excitement surrounding this young program.

Leading the team are its five of its six captains are senior's wide receiver/ free safety **Lenord Pressley**, linebacker/ fullback **Chris Parnell**, linemen **Greg Kempson**, linemen **Kyler Long**, linemen **Ayden Mitchum** and junior defensive back/ running back **Ted Rowe**. Parnell led the team in tackles last season with 52.

REGION 5: 1- Philip Simmons 2- Timberland 3-Lake Marion 4-Woodland 5-Academic Magnet 6-Battery Creek

Philip Simmons Ironhorse's after posting back-to-back 10-3/5-0 seasons they head into the 2026 season poised to take that next and get out of the third round of the playoffs. Head coach **Eric Bendig** has veteran squad with 18 returning starters back so the expectations are very high as they have been since the program's inception.

Returning to lead the offense is senior quarterback **Hayes Goddard** . The AA All-State quarterback threw for 2674 yards and 30 touchdowns while rushing for 521 yards and 6 more scores. His top target is senior wide out AA All-Stater **Ashton Kellerman** who caught 70 passes for 1314 yards and 14 touchdowns. They form one of the best passes/catch combo's in the state. Also, back at wide outs are seniors **Patrick Clarke** and **Blake Johnson**. They combined for 42 receptions for over 600 yards.

Senior running back **Jeremiah Richardson** will run behind a veteran offensive line led by seniors **Christian Cromedy**, **Sullivan Tollison**, **Greyson Salvo**, and **Liam Doherty**. This group was responsible for over 4600 yards of offense and 60 touchdowns.

The defense is just as experienced as the offense with 9 returning senior starters led by AA All-state defensive end **Roman Hood**. Last season he had 72 tackles to with 28 tackles for loss and joining him is another AA All-Stater in **Alex Tchoryk** with **Jordan Johnson** rounding the defensive line. Tchoryk had 27 tackles for loss and a team high 7.5 sacks.

The back 7 returns 6 senior starters in linebackers

Nate Elsey, **Layson Stockton**, and **Diavante Irving** and defensive backs **Maurico Curry**, **Ryland Donley**, and **Omonte Taylor**. The linebacking trio accounted for 279 tackles, 33 tackles for loss, and five blocked kicks.

Donely led the secondary in tackles with 52 to go with one pick, two fumble recoveries and four passes defended. Taylor had 21 tackles but he led the team in rushing last season with 848 yards and 14 touchdowns.

Senior **Sutton Schultz** handles the kicking chores for the Iron horses.

The **Timberland Wolves** begin a new era as former Wolves standout **Brooks Burnette** takes over one of the top AA football programs in the state. He played at Timberland from 2002-05. He takes over a squad that went 9-3/4- last season and with several returning players the Wolves have high expectations.

The Wolves are led by Wake Forest, commit senior wide receiver/ safety **Carter Hawkins**. He is a returning AA All State and ranked 26th by the HSSR. He led the Wolves with 25 receptions for 426 yards and 8 touchdowns. Another returning AA All-State pick is senior defensive lineman **Derion Jones**. He will also play on the offensive line.

Joining Hawkins and Derion on defense are senior **Josh Goodman**, **Micah McHoney** and **Elijah Crawford** along the front, linebackers **Anthony Peeples**, **Eric Johnson**, **Tyler McCormick** and **Caylen Jones** and in the secondary **Tristian Simmons** and **Damari Mathis**. Goodman (RG), Peoples (TE), Mathis (SL) and Johnson (RB) all start on offense as well.

Offensively, **Josh Brown** and **Gavin Harwell** are at quarterback while **Kam Foster** will be at the wide out opposite Hawkins. **Jahmarrei Jenkins**, **Michael Middleton** and **Micah Middleton** round out the offensive line.

Senior **Anthony Huizar** returns to take care of the kicking game.

Lake Marion is coming off a 5-6/3-1 and a playoff berth last season but there has been a change at the top as offensive coordinator **Kamrie Connell** has been promoted to interim head coach. He had been the offensive coordinator the past two seasons. He inherits a young football team with only five seniors among his starters.

Seniors **Quincy Robinson** (WR) and **Ty Brigman** (LT) are back to lead the team with their experience. Juniors in the starting lineup are **Zay Watson** (RB), **Laval Rock Jr** (WR), **Harlem Brown** (WR), **Charles Smith** (RT), **Caleb Keller** (RG) and **Larry Gore** (C) and the sophomores are quarterback **Dante Wright Jr** and running back **Daylen Ferguson**.

Defensively, Smith and Jenkins will also start on the defensive line while Robinson and Watson will be in the secondary. Joining them will be seniors **Semaj Smalls** (LB), **De'Jourian Lemon** (LB) and sophomores **Logan Void** (DL), **Trevone Snider** (DL) and **Chris Mathis** (DB). **Kayin Houston** is a freshman starting on the defensive line.

Watson will handle the punting and Rock Jr will take care of the placekicking.

Head Coach **Eddie Ford's** Woodland Wolverines went 5-6/2-3 and made it into the class AA playoffs but it was a short stay. Last season the Wolverines won the games they were supposed but against the better teams on their schedule they failed to show up and that has to change this season. Fortunately, coach Ford has a good mix of returning players and some young players ready to make their mark.

Offensively, the Wolverines return five seniors led by the HSSR's #79 player quarterback **Jervaze Salley** (6-2,190). He has two of his main targets form last year in seniors **Jermaine Jean** (WR) and **Zane Williams** (TE). Senior **Sam Gadson** (LT/MLB) and **Owen Messex** (RT) are back to lead the offensive line. Gadson is ranked #113 by the HSSR.

The rest of the offense are underclassmen in junior Jordan Ford (RG), sophomores **Kiyan Thompson** (RB), **Jhalin Herring** (WR) and **Machi Singletary** (LG) and freshman **Grady Baggett** (C).

On defense the Wolverines have 7 senior starters

with the strength being their linebacker with **LaKye White**, **Chandler Fogle** and **George Perry** (HSSR #94). Seniors **Koby Doctor** and **Cross Batten** are on the front four and **Tre Gilbert** and **Majai Wolfe** are in the secondary.

Sophomore starters on defense are **Ray Smith** (DL), **Kymonte Goodwin** (DB) and **Khalin Bryant** (DB).

Academic Magnet Head Coach **Austin Miller** led the Raptors to a 5-6/1-4 record last and a first-round playoff game with 29 seniors returning his team has its sights set on another playoff trip in 2026.

Leading the charge for the Raptors is one of the more exciting players in the low country in quarterback senior **Owen George**. He accounted for over 2000 yards last season and 23 touchdowns. He makes plays with his arm and his feet as he was the team's leading rusher last year. Joining him in the backfield are seniors **Cole Ivey** and **Sambo Diallo** and at wide outs are seniors **Bryce Lee** and **Anson Harrison**. Lee led the team last season with 18 receptions for 325 yards.

Three seniors are the leaders of the offensive line in senior center **Logan Kane-Eames**, tackle **Simon Halberda** and tackle **Andrew Severs**. They also play on the defensive line and combined 14 sacks and tackles for loss last season.

The leader of the defense is junior middle linebacker **Samson Peters**. He totaled 114 tackles last season to go with 8 tackles for loss to lead the team in both categories. Also, junior outside linebacker **Johnny Rose** had 74 tackles last year. Senior **Liam Rust** is a leader in the secondary and he is the team's punter.

The Battery Creek Dolphins and Head Coach **Ed Susi** are looking for their first winning season since 2012 and with his group of returning players they are looking to accomplish just that thus season.

Two seniors that plan to lead the charge middle linebacker/ tight end **Michael Cohen**, and senior running back **Eddie Heyward**. Their goal is start building a "Winning Culture".

REGION 6: 1-Dillon 2-Marlboro County 3-East Clarendon 4-Manning 5-Waccamaw 6-Lake City

Dillon finished last at 9-4/4-1 and advanced into the third round of the plays where they lost to eventual state champion Oceanside Collegiate and while that is a good season for most schools for **Kevin Roller's** Wildcats it was short of their goal to win another state championship.

The Wildcats return a solid core group of talent and as always, their players just waiting for their chance to shine. Leading sophomore **Nibras Harrison**, he moved from wide receiver to quarterback as last year's quarterback transferred. Harrison brings outstanding athletically ability to the position. Seniors **Noah Singletary** and **Trayvon Brown** are at running back while at wide receiver will juniors **JJ Campbell** and **Zayquan Carmichael**.

The offensive line is manned by junior **Jaylen Bacote** (LT), **Trey Coward** (RT), senior **Darian Gibbons** (LG), junior **Lucas Butler** (RG), junior **Nathan Rowell** (C), and senior **Keshawn Ray** (TE)

The "Nasty Cats" a name given to the Wildcat defense by HSSR editor **Billy Baker** is led by senior linebacker and strong safety **Kelvion Manning**. Manning is on several school's radar and will the next Nasty Cat to take his talents to the next level. Ray is also a linebacker on defense and the other linebacker is **Malachi Nelson**.

Bacote and Butler also play on the defensive line

See AA, pg. 31

AA Football Feature

backers Karson Roach and senior **Vuthy Som**. Up front sophomore **Zeke Poore**, and senior **JT Gist** will lead the defensive line.

Offensively, junior **Ian Patterson** moves over from wide receiver to quarterback and will run the offense. Sophomore **JP Branyon** and Nesbitt will be key performers at running back and wide receivers. Gist and Som will also be the leaders on the offensive line.

Region III – 1-Newberry 2 – Andrew Jackson 3-Mid Carolina 4-Chester 5-Keenan 6-Columbia

Newberry head coach **Cedrick Jeter** lost 20 seniors and three All-State players from a squad that went 12-1. However, he had several underclassmen that saw significant playing time and are waiting to make their mark. **Sincere Glymph** has won the starting quarterback job and will line up behind junior linemen **Anthony McDowell** and **Elijah Sanders**. Running backs sophomore **Xavier Harding** and junior **Ty Abrams** will help in the running game and on defense they will line up at linebacker and defensive back respectively.

The Bulldogs are led by defensive end **Dontavious Griffin** (6-1,235). The senior defensive end is ranked 73rd by the HSSR. Senior defensive backs **Cordell Jackson** and **Dontavias Griffin** and sophomore **Nevah Willingham** are back in the secondary and **Kaden Goff** (5-10,225) will be at middle linebacker.

Andrew Jackson has a lot of talent returning in the skill position but they will be young up front. Leading the offense will be senior running **J'Von Kelly** (5-8,155). He rushed for a team high 646 yards last season and scored six touchdowns.

Head coach **Jeremy Smith** is looking for senior's defensive back **Jayce Brown**, center **Caden Bowers**, linebacker **Ja'Cayden Miller-Anthony** and left tackle **Ethan Horton**.

Junior **Brody Broughton** is up from the JV to take over the quarterback position. The junior class also has linebacker **Braylon Harley**, defensive back **Isaiah Cunningham**, defensive linemen **Antonio Grant**, defensive linemen **Jantzen Jeffers**, and defensive linemen **Braxton Wolfe**. Harley is the team's top returning tackler with 93 stops while Jeffers had six sacks and a team high 8 tackles for loss.

The **Mid Carolina Rebels** will be breaking in a new coach in **Jody Haltiwanger**. He inherits a team that has 16 senior starters with all of them being part of region championship team last season. Leading the offense is senior quarterback **Davis Ruff**. He will be joined on offense by seniors running back **Ryker Woolstenhulme** (667 yds/ 6 tds), returning AA All State All-purpose selection **Wyatt Mazza**, wide receivers **Cash Knight** and **Kayden Trappier** and offensive linemen **Quin Cutler** and **Connor May**. Woolstenhulme will handle the kicking duties

Defensively, Woolstenhulme, Mazza, Knight, May will be joined by fellow seniors **Debronze Wicker**, **Dylan Horning**, **Alon Williams** and **Gavin Mitchell**.

Junior **Blair Cromer** 96-2,270) will in the trenches on both sides of the ball and sophomore wide receiver and outside linebacker **Akai Williams** (5-8,185) is a player to watch. He had 67 tackles last season as a freshman.

The **Chester Cyclones** tied for the region championship in 2025 and played into the third round where they lost to eventual AA state champion Strom Thurmond so with a strong core of players returning head coach **Jerry Caldwell** expectations remain the same for n his Cyclones.

Leading the Cyclones will be senior running back **Caleb Feaster** (5-10, 185). He rushed for 1381 yards and 34 touchdowns last season. He is currently ranked 93 by the HSSR. He is joined in the backfield by sophomore quarterback **Adrian Dula** (6, 155). The offensive line is led by seniors **Tyler Campbell** (6-3,310) and **Colton Thomasson** (6,245). Senior **Amari Nesmith**

(5-8,160) leads the receiving corps.

Senior **Luke Reed** (6-1, 225) will join Thomasson and Campbell along the defensive line. Senior defensive back **Jakobe Starks-Wright** (5-10, 173) is back after leading the team in interceptions with five and five passes defended.

Head Coach **Jarrett Neely** Keenan Raiders are one of the schools that dropped from AAA to AA and will look to get back to the playoffs. The Raiders return AAA All State running back senior **Hunter O'Neal** (5-10,185). He rushed for 1254 yards and 12 touchdowns. He is joined in the backfield by senior quarterback **Dante Howse** (5-11, 170). Junior **Jamauri Johnson** (6-3, 170) and senior **Jordan Wilson** (5-10,151) will be Howse's top targets. Senior **Ethan Jackson** (6-1,274) leads the offensive line.

Junior middle linebacker **Conrad Hampton** (5-9,190) is back to lead the defense after making 72 stops and 10 tackles for loss. Senior strong safety **Jae-mon Benson** (5-11, 165) is back to led the secondary. Senior **Kaedon Lumpkins** (5-11, 256) will join Jackson along the defensive front.

Columbia high head coach **Stephen Roberson** Capitals missed the playoffs last season for the first time in four years so getting back to the playoffs this season is one of their goals. The Capitals return 9 starters, four on offense and five on defense, so they will need some of the younger guys to step up.

Leading the Capitals this season will be seniors; cornerback **Jonathan Bush**, running back/ Defensive end **Stefan Price**, linemen **Randy Murphy**, and running back **Umar Muhammad**. Bush led the team in passes defended with six while Murphy was in a demon in the trenches as he had 42 tackles, 7 tackles for loss and 14 qb hurries. Price also had a solid junior year with 28 tackles and five tackles for loss.

Top juniors are cornerback **Elijah Roseborough**, wide out/ free safety **Tavaras Edmond** and quarterback **Darius Cunningham**. Edmond's had a pick and two passes defended last season to go with 30 tackles.

Coach Roberson is expecting big things from sophomore's defensive back **Ricardo Williams** and wide out / defensive back **Nycari Kinard**. Last season as a freshman Kinard showed his play making ability as he led the team in receptions with 19 for 334 yards and four scores.

A couple of newcomers in senior wide out/ safety **Deion Hollis** and junior linemen **Jerimiah Marion**.

Region 4: 1-Strom Thurmond 2-Orangeburg-Wilkinson 3-Silver Bluff 4-Saluda 5-Pelion 6-American Leadership

The **Strom Thurmond** captured their third state championship last season and despite losing a large senior class head coach Anthony Webb's expectations remain high for his team. The Rebels return 10 starters; however, the new starters are all have experience.

Junior running backs **Zy Rouse** and **Kaden Wigfall** are back after combing for over 1300 yards and 23 touchdowns last season and they averaged over 7 yards a carry. They will be running behind two of the four returning starters in seniors center John **Lester** and left guard **Hezekiah East**. Also returning are starting wide receiver **Jakari Wigfall** (11-157-2) and tight end **Bralen Searles**. Searles is also a returning starter on defense where he had 39 tackles and 7 tackles for loss.

Joining Searles as returning starters on defense are outside linebacker **Gregory Moore**, defensive backs senior **Wytrayvious Dugar** and junior defensive backs **BJ Creswell** and **Wigfall**. Moore had 67 tackles and 13 tackles for loss.

The Rebels picked up a couple of key transfers in senior **AJ Hillary** and **Mekhi Quiller**. Hillary steps in at quarterback and Quiller will start in the secondary. Last season Hillary completed 60% of his throws for over 1200 yards and 11 touchdowns and Quiller had

five interceptions with 8 passes defended.

New starters along the offensive line are seniors **Trystan Brannon** and **Tyler Culpepper** and sophomore

Bennie Mobley. Junior **Preston Holmes** will be a wide receiver. Defensively, new starters on the line are seniors **Kamarean Andrews** and **Grant Gentry** and junior **Taylor Collins** and at linebacker are junior **Kevin Bibbs** and sophomore **Bryson Mims**.

Orangeburg-Wilkinson head coach **Chris Carter** has a strong core of returning players returning from a team that went 10-2/3-1 and advanced into the second round of the AAA playoffs. The 10 wins were the most by a Bruins team since 1979 and only the third time they have achieved 10 wins.

The Bruins have one of the top junior quarterbacks returning in **Brenden Peoples** (5-10, 180). Last season he threw for 2343 yards, 29 touchdowns and rushed for 216 and another three scores. Seniors running back **Zyquan Williams** (5-9,180) and receiver **Desi Miller** (6-2,185). Miller is the top returning receiver and 28 receptions for 476 yards and 6 touchdowns.

The offensive line returns three starters in seniors tackle **Jackson Glen**, center **Kristopher Darby** and guard **Jayden Lambert**. Glen and Lambert also start on the defensive line. They both had 47 tackles lasts season while Glen had 13 tackles for loss and 6 sacks. Sophomore linebacker **Najhir Plezer** (6-4,218) had an outstanding freshmen campaign as led the Bruins in tackles for loss with 14 and sacks with 12. Senior strong safety **Jordan Logan** (6-2,220) leads the secondary and he will join by sophomore corner Mason Bell.

Silver Bluff's new head coach **Lemuel Lackey** takes over a program that went 7-5/3-1 and reached the second round of the AAA playoffs but he also inherits a team that lost a lot of seniors and transfers from that squad. Despite the losses he is excited because of the younger players in the program who are ready to prove themselves.

The offense will be led by senior running back **Dorian Jones** (5-9,185). He is one of four senior starters with the other being running back **Kendrick Workman** (5-8,165), wide receiver **Chris Jackson** (5-9,170) and tight end **Amir Harris** (5-8,186).

The rest of the offense are under classmen in juniors right tackle **Willie Hill** (6-3,240) and center **Dalton Robinson** (6-2,290) with rest of the starters being sophomores wide receivers **Reshawn Johnson** (5-10,190), left tackle **Alex Kent** (6-2,275), left guard **Kaiden Sims** (5-10,230) and right guard **Sean Russell Jr** (6-1,255).

Defensively, the Bulldogs have six senior starters in defensive linemen **Josh Edwards** (6-3,290) and **Trey Parker** (6,227), linebackers **Jermaine Turner** (6-1,205) and **Vincent Allen** (6,191) and defensive backs Jones and **Barney Thomas** (5-8,189). The underclassmen are juniors Hill and **I'Keem Bell** (6-1,255) and freshmen **Tanner Sullivan** (5-10,175) and **Wesley Moody** (5-10,185) are in the secondary. Sullivan will also handle the kicking duties.

Saluda's **Greg Woerner** enters his second season at the helm of the Tigers program. The Tigers finished the year 6-6/2-3 advancing to the second round of the AA playoffs. He has a solid core group of Tigers returning so expectations are high.

Tristan Daniels (5-10,185)one of the top senior running backs in AA and will lead the Tiger rushing attack. Senior **Jaylen Bledsoe** will also get some carries as well as playing on the defensive side of the ball at outside linebacker. The offensive line returns two junior starters returning in **L.J Sanders** and **Zaden Couch**. They will also see time on defense.

The Tigers have one key addition to the offense and that is at quarterback where **Avery Coyle** (5-10,170) transferred from Lexington. He gives the

See AA, continued pg. 24

Class A Football Feature

Class A expands to 56 teams, Bamberg-Ehrhardt looks to be toughest team

By Billy G. Baker
Publisher
Moncks Corner—With the 2026-27 SCHSL realignment of teams, that takes place every two years, significant changes have come to Class A football, where 56 teams will comprise 10 regions, with a Class A Division I and a Class A Division II playoff system, that will crown two state champions at the conclusion of the season.

By comparison, there were 36 teams competing in Class A football last season with six regions across the state. **Bamberg-Ehrhardt** won the Class state title last season with a 35-13 win over **Lamar**, and the Red Raiders were the only undefeated SCHSL team in 2025 when they finished 15-0 and outscored teams 758-122. This season, 35 of the 36 Class A teams from last season remain in Class A. After going 0-10 last season, and with low participation numbers, **Williston-Elko** is not fielding a varsity football team this season. There are players who desire to play varsity football who are being allowed to join the team at **Blackville-Hilda** this season. **Blackville-Hilda** is head coached by former **Barnwell** head coach, and assistant coach, **Dwayne Garrick**. Coach Garrick will also be the head coach for the South Carolina Sandlapper Shrine Bowl team this December.

One interesting observation is that **Blackville-Hilda**, even after picking up as many as 15 players from W-E, and the Hawks also gained a few players who transferred from **Barnwell**, the SCHSL left the school in Class A Division II based on their enrollment. This is a key reason why the *HSSR* ranks B-H number one in Class A Div. II. The other top four teams in the HSSR Little A ranking include: 2. **Cross** 3. **Johnsonville** 4. **Scott’s Branch** 5. **Lamar**.

In many ways the top teams in Class A Div. I am realigned down from their traditional AA status. Some of these schools include **Central of Pageland** (11-2), **Fairfield Central** (10-4), **Barnwell** (4-7), **Cheraw** (7-5), and **Chesterfield** (4-7) from the upper state Big A who have come down from AA. From the lower state Big A schools like **Hampton County** (11-4), and **Andrews** (4-7), down from the AA ranks.

Traditional Class A powers **Abbeville** (9-3) returns to compete in the Upper State Big A while **Bamberg-Ehrhardt** will compete in the Lower State Big A playoff system. This Class A pre-season report went to press after week one games, but based on early season results, factoring in scrimmages and jamborees, the *HSSR* ranks Big A top five like this to start the season: 1. **Bamberg-Ehrhardt** 2. **Central of Pageland** 3. **Abbeville** 4. **Hampton County** 5. **Carvers Bay**.
Just For Fun Prediction: Abbeville plays Bamberg-Ehrhardt for state title in Big A. Blackville Hilda plays Cross for state title in Little A.
Region 1-A Predicted Order of Finish:

- Abbeville
 - Ware Shoals
 - Dixie
 - Ninety-Six
 - McCormick
 - Calhoun Falls
 - Thornwell
- Region 1-A Overview:

Class A Division I Football Polls	
1. Abbeville	6. Cheraw
2. Bamberg-Ehr.	7. Batesburg-Lees.
3. Hampton County	8. Chesterfield
4. Fairfield Central	9. Andrews
5. Central	10. Latta

yards against the Tigers, so “Big A” appears to be a well- oiled rushing offense once again. Many in the media are taking note that **Abbeville** has won a state title in all even years since 2018, so you know what this year means? RB’s **Jamearin Williams** (15-172-3 TD’s) and **Jamiere Killingsworth** (17-91-1TD) led the onslaught in game one.

The Panthers return 8 other starters: **Jakob Wilson** (QB), top tackler **Collins Brown** (RB, LB), **Kingston Marshall** (RB), **De’Stalain Brown** (WR), **Jay Ford** (TE, DL), **Carson Harrison** (C), **Tre Jackson** (G/T), **Zach Jordan** (LB), **Corey Calhoun** (S, CB), and **Jo’-Vareon Dixon** (OLB).

Abbeville went 9-3, 5-0 in ’25. Coach Nickles has loaded up the schedule with teams like **Saluda**, **Strom Thurmond** and **Crescent** to get his team ready for another state title run. The only thing that slows **Abbeville** down is that bad word called injuries.

(Please see feature story on **Abbeville** elsewhere in this issue).

Ware Shoals:

In ’25 the Hornets had one of their best seasons in memory when they finished 10-2 and outscored teams 410-200. With the graduation of 10 seniors the team is in a slight rebuilding mode, and they lost their season opener to R-S-M 48-34.

Hard to imagine a team losing a game when they rushed for 420 yards as the Hornets did versus R-S-M. Freshman **Jamison Crockett** will fill the shoes of graduated QB **Jayden Johnson** and he rushed for 108 yards vs R-S-M. The workhorse on offense will be senior RB **Eamon Pulley** who led all rushers against R-S-M with 221 yards and four TD’s. RB **Jackson Willis** had 91 yards. The team’s top WR is **Drew Nix** who had one catch for 35 yards in game one.

Senior **Lev Nayberger** is a key DB who is also a kicker. **Ware Shoals** has proven they can use a punishing ground attack to score points and eat the clock. They will need to develop some stoppers on defense if they hope to equal the success of last season.

Ware Shoals is head coached by **Chris Dodson**.

Dixie:

The **Dixie** Hornets finished 7-4 in head coach **Mark Sorrow**’s second season with the team in ’25. Coach Sorrow has 40 years of coaching experience on his resume.

The Hornets lost an 18-13 heart-breaker game to **Southside** in week one. The team will be led on defense by LB **John Robert Dunn** who recorded a team high 10 tackles vs **Southside**. DL **Ericson Gray** is a force up-front with 8 tackles, two sacks and a fumble recovery in game one. DL **Cain Blackwood** also contributed 7 tackles in game one. Other step- up players on defense include senior FS **Will Carter** and junior DB **Trent Brown**. LB **AJ Yeargin** provides depth at LB.

Dixie is a ground-oriented offense. In game one, **Yeargin** led the way with 71 yards and one TD. **Brown** had 51 yards and one TD. The QB is soph **Tate Chadwick**. One of the key players in the OL is senior **Chris Leverett** who plays both ways.

Ninety-Six:

Austin Sargent returns to his alma mater as the new head coach of the **Ninety-Six Wildcats** who are focused on improvement after two back-to-back 3-8 seasons. Eleven starters returned from last year, so Coach Sargent did not find the cupboard totally bare. These players include **Jacob Evans** (QB), **Parker Sutley** (RB), **Joshua Thompson** (RB), **Ke Brunson** (RB),

be led by LB **Mason Ellis** and **MJ Gardner** are a leader in the back.

Ninety-Six lost in game one of the ‘26 season to **Mid-Carolina** 49-21.

McCormick:

Daniel Burton takes over the Chiefs football program hoping to rebuild a program that went 2-9 a year ago.

Around 11 starters returned to help build the team in ’26. Senior **Jayden Nelson-McGrier** (5-10,226) is among top players on the team, and he will hold down DE/LB spots on defense as well as flipping to RT on offense. Two juniors with experience return in RB **Markhal Bost** (5-9,160) who can also play LB, along with LB **Zyon Chamberlin** who will also see action at FB.

Senior **Jeremiah Williams** started DB last year, but he can also play at QB along with **A’Mar Baylor** who can also contribute at QB. His receiving targets are junior **Ja’Kelvius Purdy** (6-3, 190), and returner **Justin Middleton**.

Michael Durant and NG **Jermiane Polly** help anchor the defensive front as returning starters. **Tylan McGrier** is returning starter at DB and provided depth at LB. **Makel Tillman** returns to start in the OL along with junior **Ty Clark**. Freshmen newcomers OL/DL **Graeson Widman** and **Ja’Morian Barksdale** are hoping to provide depth in both lines.

McCormick lost to **Greenwood Christian** 28-0 in the season opener.

Calhoun Falls

Calhoun Falls lost to **West Oak** 42-8 in week one of the season indicating that new head coach **Pervis Corley** is likely facing a rebuilding season for the Blue Flashes who finished 3-8 last season.

Four noted starters return on offense led by dual threat junior QB **Preston Thomas-Smith** (5-9,165) along with senior RB **DJ Roundree**, LG **CJ Turman** and RG **Kam Bell**. The team was dealt a blow when starting WR/DB **Aiden Usher** broke his collar bone and he will miss the season.

On defense the **Blus Flashes** will build around the return of DL **Cam Bryant** (6-0,270) along with DL **Isaiah Brown**, with **Roundtree** flipping to DB and **Thomas Smith** flipping to DB also. **Kazbian Gray** is the team’s top returning WR.

Thornwell

Adams Dean, who played high school football at **Laurens High**, begins his second season as the head football coach of the **Thornwell Charter School**. Last year the Saints played only two varsity games, and they were 0-2 as a new program under development.

The Saints lost to **Northside Christian**, 55-16 in week one of the season. The team runs a Single Wing offense that can be hard to defend. In game one wing-back Soph **Ti’Ran Grant** led the team in rushing with 86 yards and a TD while junior RB **Tru Kinard-Shelton** contributed 78 yards and a TD.

The QB is **Ben Parris**, and the skinner back is **Caleb Young**. **Landon Lowman** is the strong TE while **Brock Burton** plays the other TE.

In game one the top tacklers were **Parris** at LB with six and **Grant** who flipped to DB who had 5.5 stops. The five offensive linemen who also flip to a four-man front on defense are **Bryce English**, **Jordan Roberts**, **Khalid Davis**, **Jackson Laird**, **John Wessell**, and the center/DL is **Jacob James**.

“Honesty we are such a young team our main goal is not to face a running clock in games that we play,” said Coach **Dean**. “Our other goal was to get our numbers up in football in all grade levels and we have gone from around 31 players in our programs two years ago to just over 50 this season. We also avoided a running clock ion our first game.”

Region 2-A Predicted Finish:

Batesburg-Leesville
Whitmire
C.A. Johnson
4.Ridge Spring-Monetta
5. Eau Claire.
6. Clear Dot Charter
Region 2-A Overview:

Coaching Records, continued from pg. 22

ATLANTIC COLLEGIATE	ANTOINE RIVENS	2-9
EAST CLARENDON	LARRY CORNELIUS	64-92
KINGSTREE	BRANDON CANTRELL	
LAKE CITY	RONNIE BAKER	31-63
MANNING	REGGIE KENNEDY	197-148
MARION	BRIAN HENNECY	28-15
MULLINS	MARC LOWERY	7-4

REGION 1-A

SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD
ABBEVILLE	JAMIE NICKLES	235-46-1
CALHOUN FALLS	ZAK THEUS	5-27
DIXIE	MARK SORROW	13-30
MCCORMICK	LEROY COLLIER	5-17
WARE SHOALS	CHRIS JOHNSON	43-68
WHITMIRE	ANDREW CAMPBELL	14-18

REGION 2-A

SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD
C A JOHNSON	RODNEY BARR	30-54
GREAT FALLS	SYVELLE NEWTON	2-8
LAMAR	TYLER BOYD	22-3
LEE CENTRAL	JUSTIN DANNER	53-72
LEWISVILLE	TRENT USHER	35-28
MCBEE	ANDY KARCHER	11-11

REGION 3-A

SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD
BLACKVILLE-HILDA	KEVIN JONES	20-14
CALHOUN COUNTY	WAYNE FARMER	160-143
HUNTER-KINARD-TYLER	WILLIE FELDER	27-21
RIDGE SPRING-MONETTA	JERRY BRANNON	7-16
WAGENER-SALLEY	BLAZE GILLESPIE	2-7
WILLISTON-ELKO	KENNY LIPSEY	33-46

REGION 4-A

SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD
ALLENDALE-FAIRFAX	TRAVIS LEWIS	FIRST YR
BAMBERG-EHRHARDT	COREY CROSBY	38-11
DENMARK-OLAR	WILLIAM RAYSON	4-7
HARDEEVILLE	ARTHUR GARDNER	FIRST YR
RIDGELAND	JAMIE ISSAC	5-5

REGION 5-A

SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD
BAPTIST HILL	MARION BROWN	108-94
BETHUNE-BOWMAN	CODY MCNEAL	4-27
BRANCHVILLE	SANDY DUKE	41-32

CROSS	SHAUN WRIGHT	95-53
MILITARY MAGNET	DERRELL PRINGLE	9-21
SCOTTS BRANCH	PATRICK FLEMING	4-7
ST. JOHNS	ERIC BROWN	0-10

REGION 6-A

SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD
CARVERS BAY	MATTHEW RICHARD	30-31
GREEN SEA-FLOYDS	PATRICK MARTIN	3-18
HANNAH-PAMPLICO	JAMES JOHNSON	46-47
HEMINGWAY	MIKE DONALD	0-10
JOHNSONVILLE	KEN CRIBB	169-98
LAKE VIEW	DARYL KING	150-63
LATTA	BRANDON ISEMAN	56-49

SCISA AAAA

SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD
AUGUSTA CHRISTIAN	BRANDON COMPTON	FIRST YR
BEN LIPPEN	STEPHEN CAGLE	18-25
CARDINAL NEWMAN	JARED SHAW	2-19
HAMMOND	JON WHEELER	80-46
HEATHWOOD HALL	TYMERE ZIMMERMAN	2-8
LAURENCE MANNING	JIMMY NOONAN	130-132
NORTHWOOD	JOHNNY WATERS	113-62
PORTER-GAUD	MATT NEIGHBORS	FIRST YR

SCISA REGION 1-AAA

SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD
FIRST BAPTIST	KEVIN MAPP	FIRST YR
HILTON HEAD CHRISTIAN	RON PEDUZZI	123-75
JOHN PAUL II	SHAYNE MILLIGAN	3-20
PINEWOOD PREP	DEVONTE HOLLOMON	59-21

SCISA REGION 2-AAA

SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD
CAMDEN MILITARY	WILL RICE	2-22
FLORENCE CHRISTIAN	NEIL MINTON	109-68
NORTHSIDE CHRISTIAN	DEAN HOWELL	104-66
TRINITY COLLEGIATE	SHAWN FAGAN	6-19
WILSON HALL	ADAM JARECKI	148-127

SCISA REGION 1-AA

SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD
BETHSDA ACADEMY	ANTWAIN TURNER	103-106
CHRISTIAN ACADEMY	LEE GAINEY	0-8
DILLON CHRISTIAN	CHRIS ALPHIN	FIRST YR

Defensive Backs, continued from pg. 20

season,” head coach **Donnie Littlejohn** said. “He has a natural ability to find the football and understand what is happening around him. In my opinion, when **Zion** is in the middle of the field, there are not many receivers who are going to be open for long.

“What separates **Zion** is that he does not shy away from contact. He plays with an almost linebacker mentality when it comes to being physical and making tackles. His intelligence is another major asset. He takes the same academic approach he uses in the classroom and applies it to football, studying opponents, understanding tendencies, and looking for every possible advantage he can find.

“Last season, **Zion** had more than six touchdowns negated on punt returns or interceptions because of penalties. Those plays are a reminder of the impact he can have when he gets the opportunity to make plays in space.

Desiray Christian EMERALD (6-0, 190 lbs.)

Christian is a transfer from **Greenwood**, and he had an impact **Emeralds** win over **Crescent** to start the season. **Christian** is ranked 14th overall in the

King, continued from pg. 17

lege, while continuing to pursue her high school education.

When asked about what the “NETC” did to help her, **King** said, “This helped me realize I can’t wait until the last minute to get stuff done, and best of all, I get to experience what college classes will be like,” she said.

Overall, **King** says the online classes are good experi-

Moody, continued from pg. 17

good. It’s helped fill some high school requirements by taking college level classes now, so I’m fulfilling a freshman year pre-requisite also.”

Moody added, “The demands of both my athletic and academic endeavors have taught me time management

HSSR Class of 2028

D.J. Johnson NORTH AUGUSTA (6-2, 180 lbs.)
As a sophomore, **Johnson** had 36 tackles, 10 pass breakups and returned an interception for a touchdown. He’s ranked 21st in the HSSR Class of 2028.

“D.J. is a long and athletic cornerback who can cover man to man and will come up and make tackles at the line of scrimmage,” head coach **Richard Bush** said. “He has had a really good offseason and continues to make great strides as a football player. He does a great job on special teams and will play wide receiver also this coming year.

Jordan Logan ORANGEBURG-WILKINSON (6-1, 195 lbs.)

As a sophomore, **Logan** tallied 71 tackles and two interceptions for the **Bruins**. He’s ranked 31st by HSSR and **Newberry** and **Erschine** have given him offers.

“A very physical guy who tackles well and is an excellent student who works hard,” head coach **Chris Carter** said. “He’s a guy who can benefit any program who signs

ences through “NETC”. She learned valuable time management skills. She has learned to schedule her work plan for Monday through Friday, with the college work on Wednesday and Friday. Plus, as a senior she has two study halls this year, and that also gives her time to get work done.

King recalled her favorite times in sports are a combi-

and my having to plan in order to meet due dates.”

When asked about a memorable moment in his sports career, **Moody** said, “Last football season, the other team was going for it on a 4th and 2 play; I read the offense. and got a tackle for loss on the play. That set up a three-

him. He doesn’t shy away from anything and he’s a hard-nosed kid.”

DB Malachi Thompson WOODRUFF (5-10, 170 lbs.)

As a sophomore, **Thompson** had 40 tackles, 10 pass breakups and a sack. He has started the past two seasons at cornerback. He’s ranked 37th in the HSSR Class of 2028.

“Malachi is a very experienced player,” head coach **Brett Sloan** said. “He has started at corner for us as a freshman. He is very good in coverage. He really breaks the ball well and he is super physical in run support. His physicality and explosiveness are going to give him an opportunity to be a very good player at the next level.

Tyler Murray KINGSTREE (6-1, 185 lbs.)

Ranked 28th by HSSR, **Murray** has transferred from **South Florence** where he played mostly as a wide receiver.

nation of many memories. “The locker room antics and funny talk with friends always makes for good memories,” she said. “Then while playing Volleyball last season, one of our games went to overtime, and I made the game winning tip and it was a great feeling to be congratulated by my teammates.”.

play scoring drive for us and it made me proud.”

			All-Time Coaching Records								
REGION 1-AAAAA			REGION 2-AAAA			REGION 3-AAAA			REGION 4-AAA		
SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD	EMERALD FOUNTAIN INN	TAD DUBOSE	15-36	SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD	FOX CREEK	LEMUEL LACKEY	108-87
EASLEY	SAM R. HOUSTON	1-9	LAURENS	BRETT NICHOLS	9-22	W J KEENAN	JARRETT NEELY	8-5	NEWBERRY	CEDRICK JETER	17-18
GREENVILLE	STEVE WATSON	32-24	SOUTHSIDE	GREG PORTER	122-79	ANDRION FRATE			SILVER BLUFF	MATT HAYES	2-9
GREENWOOD	CHRIS LINER	109-85	WESTSIDE	A J MILLIS	FIRST YR				SWANSEA	WILLIE FOX	74-38
HILLCREST	BENNETT SWYGERT	18-7	WREN	BRIAN LANE	143-69	REGION 5-AAA					
J L MANN	BRYCE SMILEY	FIRST YR	REGION 2-AAAA								
MAULDIN	ANDRE COOK	4-27	SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD						
T L HANNA	JASON TONE	SC 54-13 GA 24-20	BEREA	DREW CHISHOLM	39-57						
WOODMONT	MALCOLM BOYD	FIRST YR	BLUE RIDGE	JOHN BOGGS	50-117						
REGION 2-AAAAA			DANIEL	CHRIS STONE	10-12						
SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD	GREER	WILL YOUNG	157-95						
BOILING SPRINGS	MATT REEL	53-36	PICKENS	JAMES REYNOLDS	18-34						
DORMAN	JAKE MORRIS	9-12	SENECA	DAVID CRANE	68-91						
EASTSIDE	ANDRE WOOLCOCK	37-47	TRAVELERS REST	CHRIS GOODMAN	31-17						
GAFFNEY	DONNIE LITTLEJOHN	FIRST YR	REGION 3-AAAA								
BYRNES	REGGIE SHAW	129-78	SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD						
RIVERSIDE	MATTHEW ROCHESTER	22-22	A C FLORA	KEN FLOYD	25-12						
SPARTANBURG	MARK HODGE	130-67	CAMDEN	BRIAN RIMPF	71-30						
WADE HAMPTON	REUBEN WRIGHT	11-40	DREHER	TREIGH SULLIVAN	50-67						
REGION 3-AAAAA			LANCASTER	MARCUS SURRATT	15-41						
SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD	RICHLAND NE	WALTER WILSON	101-94						
CATAWBA RIDGE	ZAC LENDYAK	33-31	SOUTH POINTE	BOBBY COLLINS	55-53						
CLOVER	PERRY WOOLBRIGHT	95-73	YORK	DEAN BOYD	240-134						
FORT MILL	ROB MCNEELY	8-56	REGION 4-AAAA								
INDIANLAND	ADAM HASTINGS	27-24	SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD						
NATION FORD	JAKE BENTLEY	FIRST YR	AIKEN	STEVE HIBBITTS	63-93						
NORTHWESTERN	PAGE WOFFORD	58-15	AIRPORT	CHRIS NAPIER	FIRST YR						
ROCK HILL	LEON BOULWARE	4-7	BROOKLAND-CAYCE	LOUIS CLYBURN	29-64						
REGION 4-AAAAA			GILBER	TOZZIE EXUME	8-5						
SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD	GRAY COLL.	DEANGELO BRYANT	38-36						
CHAPIN	RYAN COLE	RECORD	MIDLAND VALLEY	BRENT DORN	5-6						
DUTCH FORK	TOM KNOTTS	178-28-1	NORTH AUGUSTA	RICHARD BUSH	25-17						
IRMO	AARON BRAND	48-23	SOUTH AIKEN	CHRIS HAMILTON	57-51						
LEXINGTON	STEWART YOUNG	93-38	REGION 5-AAAA								
RIVER BLUFF	PERRY PARKS	54-46	SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD						
WHITE KNOLL	NICK PELHAM	30-20	CRESTWOOD	ROOSEVELT NELSON	53-60						
REGION 5-AAAAA			DARLINGTON	JAMIE JOHNSON	6-6						
SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD	HARTSVILLE	JEFF CALABRESE	217-86-1						
BLYTHEWOOD	JAMES MARTIN	19-21	LAKEWOOD	WILLIE OFFORD	5-26						
LUGOFF-ELGIN	JARVIS LITTLEJOHN	19-20	LOWER RICHLAND	TAYLOR MARLIN	22-28						
RIDGE VIEW	DEREK HOWARD II	48-28	SOUTH FLORENCE	DREW MARLOWE	50-14						
SPRING VALLEY	NORMAN WASHINGTON	FIRST YR	WILSON	BRIAN WILSON	FIRST YR						
SUMTER	MARK BARNES	98-20	REGION 6-AAAA								
WESTWOOD	STEPHEN BURRIS	18-8	SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD						
WEST FLORENCE	CHAD WILKES	62-22	BEAUFORT	BRYCE LYBRAND	43-26						
REGION 6-AAAAA			BISHOP ENGLAND	LOGAN HALL	9-3						
SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD	BLUFFTON	JOHN HOUP	31-48						
CAROLINA FOREST	MARC MORRIS	73-53-1	COLLETON COUNTY	ADAM KINLOCH	3-18						
CONWAY	JOSH PIERCE	18-66	HILTON HEAD	B J PAYNE	68-62						
MYRTLE BEACH	MICKEY WILSON	156-47	MAY RIVER	RICHARD BONNEVILLE	12-10						
N MYRTLE BEACH	PERRY WOOLBRIGHT		REGION 1-AAA								
SOCASSEE	BEN HAMPTON	16-31	SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD						
ST. JAMES	TOMMY NORWOOD	21-45	BELTON-HONEA PATH	RUSSELL BLACKSTON	133-44						
REGION 7-AAAAA			CRESCENT	SHELDON EVANS	34-39						
SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD	PENDLETON	GRAYSON HOWELL	28-37						
BERKELEY	ERIC LODGE	12-12	WALHALLA	BLAKE DYAR	FIRST YR						
CANE BAY	RUSSELL ZEHR	63-48	WEST-OAK	GLEN PADGETT	9-31						
GOOSE CREEK	JASON WINSTEAD	40-34	REGION 2-AAA								
LUCY BECKHAM	JAMEL SMITH	20-15	SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD						
STRATFORD	DENNIE MCDANIEL	40-52	CAROLINA	CHRIS GLOVER	5-25						
WANDO	ISIAAH PERRIN	5-6	CHRIST CHURCH	QUINN HATFIELD	48-14						
REGION 8-AAAAA			PALMETTO	RYAN NORTON	8-15						
SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD	POWDERSVILLE	ROBERT MUSTAR	82-66						
ASHLEY RIDGE	ASHLEY HASKINS	64-90	SOUTHSIDE CHRISTIAN	JONATHAN GESS	187-49						
FORT DORCHESTER	SHAUN LORENZANO	6-6	ST. JOSEPH	ERIC NASH	5-6						
JAMES ISLAND	JAMAR MCKOY	42-15	REGION 3-AAA								
R B STALL	KEN FREEMAN	0-9	SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD						
SUMMERVILLE	IAN RAFFERTY	45-14	GETTYS BROOME	LYNN FLEMING	125-115						
WEST ASHLEY	RASHAD GRAHAM	FIRST YR	CHAPMAN	HARRY CABANISS	51-37						
REGION 1-AAAA			MOUNTAIN VIEW PREP	GREY RAMSEY	12-1						
SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD	UNION COUNTY	QUINNON ISOM	2-8						
ASHLEY RIDGE	ASHLEY HASKINS	64-90	WOODRUFF	BRETT SLOAN	48-30						
FORT DORCHESTER	SHAUN LORENZANO	6-6	REGION 3-AAAA								
JAMES ISLAND	JAMAR MCKOY	42-15	SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD						
R B STALL	KEN FREEMAN	0-9	GETTYS BROOME	LYNN FLEMING	125-115						
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WEST ASHLEY	RASHAD GRAHAM	FIRST YR	MOUNTAIN VIEW PREP	GREY RAMSEY	12-1						
REGION 1-AAAA			UNION COUNTY	QUINNON ISOM	2-8						
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ASHLEY RIDGE	ASHLEY HASKINS	64-90	REGION 3-AAAA								
FORT DORCHESTER	SHAUN LORENZANO	6-6	SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD						
JAMES ISLAND	JAMAR MCKOY	42-15	GETTYS BROOME	LYNN FLEMING	125-115						
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WEST ASHLEY	RASHAD GRAHAM	FIRST YR	WOODRUFF	BRETT SLOAN	48-30						
REGION 1-AAAA			REGION 3-AAAA								
SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD	SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD						
ASHLEY RIDGE	ASHLEY HASKINS	64-90	GETTYS BROOME	LYNN FLEMING	125-115						
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SUMMERVILLE	IAN RAFFERTY	45-14	WOODRUFF	BRETT SLOAN	48-30						
WEST ASHLEY	RASHAD GRAHAM	FIRST YR	REGION 3-AAAA								
REGION 1-AAAA			SCHOOL	COACH	RECORD						
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SUMMERVILLE	IAN RAFFERTY	45-14	WOODRUFF	BRETT SLOAN	48-30						
WEST ASHLEY	RASHAD GRA										

Quarterbacks Feature

2028 Junior QB class is loaded with talent - led by Daniel's Grass, Emerald's Hite and York's Bruchu

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor

Sumter —Jace Grass of **Daniel** (6-1, 190), Beau Hite (6-0,170) of **Emerald** and Ryan Brucha (6-5,200) of **York** are all high quality and talented signal callers who are highly valued on the *HSSR* junior prospects list coming into the 2026 season.

Hite, who committed to the **South Carolina** baseball program in August, is ranked as the number three overall prospect in the class, while Grass is ranked 5th and Bruchu is in the number seven spot. This represents the first time in the 40 years existence of the *HSSR* that three quarterbacks have claimed the first seven spots in the publication's ranking service, studied by major colleges all over the nation.

We will first go inside the world of Grass. After throwing for 18 touchdowns and 1,969 yards as a freshman at **Pendelton High School** in 2024, **Grass** made the decision to transfer to **Daniel** for his sophomore season.

Along with adding two inches, and 20 pounds for a 6-foot-1-inch, 185-pound frame, Grass threw for 2,779 yards and 31 touchdowns against just two interceptions in leading the Lions to a 10-2 record as a sophomore. Those accomplishments earned Grass a spot among the top junior quarterback in **South Carolina**, leading him to receive offers from several **Power 4 Conference** schools.

Grass' offers include **Mississippi** of the SEC, **Louisville**, and **California**, both ACC. Reports indicate that his top five schools going into his junior are **Ole Miss**, **Syracuse**, **SMU**, **App State** and **Akron** but with each passing week this order can change.

He is listed as a 3-star recruit on *Rivals*, but with a tremendous junior season Grass is hoping to continue to see his stock soar. While he feels he is continuing to physically mature as a quarterback, Grass thinks he has made the biggest jump in how he processes the game mentally.

"My mind for sure, the feel of the game," was Grass' response when asked about why he is a better quarterback than at the end of last season. "That's the most important thing. I've trained; I've been able to get my feet a lot faster. But I'm smarter in the game, I know coverages, I know what to do every day."

That, in turn, has made Grass better physically. "My accuracy, my anticipation has really improved," he said. "I'm better at knowing where the defense is at all times. It changes my game for sure."

Grass was pretty accurate last season, completing 62 percent of his passes, 193 of 311.

Grass is hoping to post some huge numbers this season and believes that is achievable if Daniel makes one of its deep playoffs runs.

"The most important thing is for us to win state," said Grass in reference to the Lions, who will be back at AAA this season, after playing at AAAA the two previous seasons. "I want 40 touchdowns and 4,000 yards/. I think I've got a few more games in me. I want a state championship."

The *HSSR* has been following the progress of Hite with keen interest the past two seasons. His father (**Tombo Hite**) was an outstanding athlete at **Abbeville** in the 1990's, and his uncle **Mack**, was elevated from being athletic director, and head baseball coach at Emerald the past few years, to becoming



South Carolina's Quarterback standouts

ing the new Principal at the school.

During his first two years on the varsity football team, Hite threw for 3,000 yards with 27 TD's. In his first game this season, he helped lead Emerald to a 26-0 win over **Crescent** when he completed 18-of-29 passes for 226 yards and three TD's.

While Hite has been having fun on the football field, as a 14, 15 year and 16-year-old, it has been his summer baseball "*Show Case*" experiences that put him on full display in-front of college and professional scouts from all across the nation. Hite is considered by the Perfect Games organization to be among the best fielding shortstops in the nation, and he rarely makes an error in the field. He is also rated as the number one junior baseball prospect in the state of South Carolina by most scouts for this upcoming season.

Tad Dubose, the head football coach and athletic director at **Emerald**, explains why Hite went ahead and committed to South Carolina in baseball, despite having exceptional talent as a quarterback.

"I do not know many college baseball staffs go to watch one of their recruits practice football at 6 a.m. in the morning," said Coach Dubose. "This is what happened in early August when we decided to practice that early, due to the heat. I am talking the entire baseball staff from South Carolina shows up, and they stayed for the whole practice, and watched Beau's every move with keen interest."

"Gosh, what kid in America would not have been impressed with that recruiting strategy," said Coach Dubose. "I guess that proved to Beau how much the Gamecocks wanted him to play baseball at the school he grew up following. When they made him an offer, he wasn't too long in making a commitment."

Dubose is very high on Hite's football ability. "Beau is a natural athlete, and the unreal speed and agility he has in his feet helps him both a great quarterback and a great shortstop in baseball," said coach Dubose. "He can make all the throws. He is hard to sack with his mobility. His arm has really become stronger in the past year as he continues to develop physically."

"Also, we finally have some talented receivers for him to work with, and we expect him to put up some huge numbers this season," said Coach Du-

bose. "Just maybe we will have football staffs coming to his baseball gamers in the Spring, after this season is over. I know that Beau is a very special athlete who enjoys competing, no matter the sport he is playing at the time."

Hite runs a 6.8 sixty in baseball which translates to a 4.5 forty in football. It is also likely that he might have an opportunity to be drafted into professional baseball after his senior year of high school, but sign ability is going to be a major issue.

Ryan Bruchu (6-5, 200) is a late developing junior quarterback prospect at **York High** and his high school coach, **Dean Boyd** brought the signal caller to the *HSSR*'s attention at the summer Coaches Clinic in Greenville.

"He's impressed college coaches at all the many camps he attended over the summer," said Coach Boyd. "He has a huge upside with his height and strong arm. We expect him to have a ton of major college offers by the end of this season."

Bruchu got off to a great start in his first game of the '26 season. He was 16-of-23 for 158 yards and three touchdowns.

The top-rated senior by the *HSSR* in the 2027 class is **Oceanside Collegiate Academy's Aiden Manavian** who is rated sixth overall. He led the Landsharks to a second straight AAA state title last season, throwing for 4,028 yards and 41 touchdowns. He comes into his senior season having passed over 6,100 yards in his prep career.

While Manavian has several offers from the **Group of 6** conference schools, he has committed to **Davidson College**, a Football Championship Subdivision school located just outside of **Charlotte**. Another dominant performance as a senior might get him some more offers to pore over.

There are several other quarterbacks across the state who are getting varying degrees of interest and these quarterbacks are all in the *HSSR* Top 100 prospect list and they warrant evaluation. One of them is **Sam Holliday**, who will be in his fourth year as a starter at **Fountain Inn**.

Holliday became the starter at Fountain Inn in just the second year of the school's football program. He completed 153 of 231 passes for 2,069 yards and 23 touchdowns last season. He also

See **Quarterbacks**, continued pg. 12

Kickers & Specialists Feature

Breeland sits atop kicker rankings in South Carolina

By Roger Lee
Special Contributor

Goose Creek - The *High School Sports Report*'s top senior kicker/punter prospect in the state comes from the smallest classification, and he is quite a combo-kicker at his small rural high school.

Charles (Chaz) Breland of **Class A Bamberg-Ehrhardt** is the only kicker/punter on the publication's **2027 Top 100 Football Prospects** list. Breland helped the **Red Raiders** to a perfect 15-0 record in 2025. His big leg and accuracy helped the team capture the state championship and earned him a spot on the **Class A All-State Team**.

"He kicks six to seven touchbacks a game," said Bamberg-Ehrhardt coach **Corey Crosby**. "When your opponent has to go 80 yards for a touchdown that helps your defense and were playing good defense here in **Bamberg**. Any time our offense gets near the 25-yard line we are comfortable putting him in, right hash, left hash, middle, it doesn't matter. That's a good weapon to have especially in our class."

Breland had 81 touchbacks last season and landed 21 other kickoffs inside the 20. He only had one field goal attempt and sent the 47-yard field goal through the uprights. He was also accurate on PATs, making 104 of 109 extra-point attempts.

"When he missed it wasn't his fault it was due to something like a snap or block," Crosby said.

Breland averaged 40.7 yards per punt with a long boot of 59 yards. He also made five tackles.

"He works on his craft, on improving his technique," Crosby said. "He does all the little things a kicker should do to perfect his kicking. He's serious about it and right in the mix with the best in the state."

The kicker has been at it for some time. "My dad kicked at **Blackville-Hilda** when he was in high school and loved it so he got me into it and taught me how to kick," Breland said. "I attend **Kohl's** camps and have trained with Kohl's for several years. When I first started I could barely make a field goal, but I've grown so much. Coaches tell me they see great potential in me so I'm hoping to kick in college."

He is in his third year as the kicker for the **Red Raiders**' varsity. He has participated in a few camps at colleges and has visits planned to others. He already has an offer from **Concord University** in **West Virginia**. Other colleges that have shown interest in him include **The Citadel**, **Charleston Southern**, **Garner-Webb**, **Erskine** and **Presbyterian**.

"Right now I'm just focusing on doing everything I can to help Bamberg-Ehrhardt," he said.



South Carolina's standout kickers and specialists

"All I can do is keep practicing to get better every day."

While the 47-yarder is his best in-game kick so far, he has hit from 55 yards in practice.

Top junior
Jackson Sumney of **Oceanside Collegiate** is the only kicker on the publication's list of top junior football prospects. He is ranked 41st overall on the **2028 Football Prospects** list.

He helped the **Landsharks** to a 13-2 record and the **Class AAA** state championship last season. According to **MaxPreps**, he averaged 50.8 yards per kick off with a long boot of 60 yards and had double-digit touchbacks. He was perfect on PAT kicks and only missed two field goal attempts. He averaged 39.3 yards per punt with a long punt of 61 yards.

While only a junior, he is receiving a lot of college interest and already has multiple offers, including from some **Division 1** programs.

Players not ranked by HSSR But On Our Watch List:

Some might argue there are other kickers in the state who are every bit as much of a prospect as those mentioned above. This publication chose to include more athletes from other positions based on overall athleticism rather than select more kickers so it shouldn't be seen as a slight if a kicker didn't make the list.

However, the *HSSR* was able to catch up with a few other promising kickers, or their coach, this Summer. Below are a few and some of their thoughts.

Gray Collegiate senior **Weston Mims** tore his ACL last season, but when he was on the field showed good leg strength and accuracy. **Pro-kicker.com**, which only rates kickers who attend their camps, rate him No. 1 in state. Their statistics indicate he has a 59.25 yard average kickoff distance, 3.66 average hang time and 100 percent

accuracy on field goals. As a sophomore, he hit a 49-yarder in a game. In practice he has hit from 62 yards.

Kickers often don't get the recognition players in other positions do but when they step onto the field on Friday nights most eyes turn to them.

"I don't really focus on that," Mims said. "I know my coaches and team mates, everyone I surround myself with, aren't going to think any different of me. They know you can't make them all and have my back whether I make it or don't."

Northwood Academy's Elliott Parrott, who transferred from **Stratford** for his senior season, is looking to make an impact. His personal best field goal is from 60 yards and his average punt hang time is 4.4 seconds.

"He is the mix to get a scholarship offer with teams such as **Clemson** and **App State**," said Northwood coach **Johnny Waters**. "He is popping 55-yard field goals and with him we don't have to go to the pooch kick."

This Summer, Parrott won a punting competition in **Chicago**.

"I'm excited for the opportunity to be out there and hopefully get some more looks by colleges," Parrott said. "It's my senior year so I'm going to put my all into it and help the younger guys when I can."

Summerville has a pair of big legs in senior kicker **Nate Beaver** and senior punter **Hayden O'Rear**.

"Nate Beaver is in the running to make one of these all-star teams," said Summerville coach **Ian Rafferty**. "His leg has gotten stronger; he is pretty much landing most of his kickoffs in the end zone and in a scrimmage he just barely missed a 50-yarder. He is drawing a lot of college interests. Punter **Hayden O'Rear** has two D1 offers so they will both be a strength for us this year."

Heathwood Hall kicker/defensive back **Liam Edwards** has a college-strength leg and is hoping to help his team get back to the **SCISA AAAA Football Championship**.

"A tired leg doesn't have as much as an impact so I've been working on my conditioning to try to balance things," Edwards said. "I'm also trying to get my form down so I'll be kicking my best if they need me."

Defensive Backs Feature

Defensive Backs galore getting looks from colleges around the nation

By Thomas Grant Jr.
Special Contributor
Columbia— Athletic, versatile, and impacting is the best way to describe the **High School Sports Report’s** **Classes of 2027 and 2028 defensive backs.** This group makes up 18 players in both classes. They include state champions who have already made their college choices and All-State and All-Region players.

CLASS OF 2027
DB Kaiden Watkins ROCK HILL (5-9, 180 lbs.) James Madison
The 16th ranked HSSR Top Prospect for the Class of 2027. A 2-sport athlete who won a state title at South Pointe last season, he played cornerback and wide receiver.

Before verbally committing to **James Madison**, Watkins received 19 Division I scholarship offers.
“Kaiden is a four-year varsity starter and one of the most experienced defensive backs in our program,” head coach **Leon Boulware** said. “He has the ability to play multiple positions in the secondary and gives us the flexibility to match him up against an opponent’s top offensive weapon. He is physical in the run game, has excellent coverage ability, and plays football extremely well in the air.
“What separates Kaiden is his competitiveness and confidence. He wants the difficult assignment. When the game is on the line, he wants to be matched up with the other team’s best player. He brings toughness, instincts, athleticism, and a high football IQ to our defense.”

Tajeh Watson-Martin WESTSIDE (5-10, 170 lbs.) Committed to Virginia
Ranked 22nd overall by HSSR, he transferred from Belton-Honea Path for his senior season. Last season, he had 27 tackles, four interceptions, three pass breakups and a sack on defense. He led the Bears on offense with 58 catches for 1,101 yards and 11 touchdowns and two rushing touchdowns.

Christian Chancellor DANIEL (5-9, 162 lbs.) Committed to Clemson
Ranked 23rd overall by HSSR, Chancellor had 30 tackles, 5.5 tackles for loss, five pass deflections, an interception and touchdown on defense last season. He also caught eight receptions for 195 yards and three touchdowns.
“He is a lockdown corner and team captain,” head coach Chris Stone said. “We insert him on offense when we need a spark, and he almost always provides that spark. He is one of the best leaders I have ever had.”

Jamar Grissett IRMO (6-3, 195 lbs.) Committed to Appalachian State
Ranked 35th overall by HSSR, the junior has been a focal point of the Yellow Jackets’ two straight Lower State champions and state runner-up teams. He had 66 tackles, seven interceptions, five pass breakups and two blocked field goals.
“He is remarkable with great ball skills,” head coach Aaron Brand said. “The sky is the limit. A remarkable human.”
James Smith DUTCH FORK (6-1, 180 lbs.) Liberty
Ranked 39th overall by HSSR.

Oliver Coleman LUGOFF-ELGIN (6-2, 175 lbs.) Committed to Coastal Carolina
Ranked 42nd overall by HSSR, Coleman had 38 tackles, 15 pass breakups, two interceptions and two tackles



SC’s best at Defensive Back

for losses as a junior.
“Oliver is an exceptional athlete with outstanding physical tools,” head coach Jarvis Littlejohn said. “He possesses excellent ball skills, outstanding body control, and the ability to change direction effortlessly. As a former All-Region basketball player, he has transferred those athletic traits seamlessly to the football field, making him a dynamic and versatile playmaker.
“What excites me most about Oliver is that he is still developing. He has only begun to tap into his tremendous potential, and I believe his best football is still ahead of him. I look forward to watching him excel during his senior season and continue his academic and athletic career at Coastal Carolina University. I have no doubt he will make a positive impact at the next level.

Jaylon Richardson NORTH-WESTERN (5-11, 165 lbs.) Committed to Charleston Southern
As a junior for the Class 5A Division II champion Trojans, Richardson had 24 tackles, nine pass deflections and four interceptions. He’s ranked 50th overall by HSSR.
Jaylon has committed to play football at Charleston Southern University,” head coach Page Wofford said. “They are getting a steal. He is a solid player who loves football. Jaylon is a high character guy who will only get better.”

Michael Strickler OCEANSIDE COLLEGIATE ACADEMY (6-1, 210 lbs.)
Ranked 54th overall by HSSR, Strickler tallied 81 tackles and two interceptions for the Class 3A champions.

John Campbell ST. JOSEPH’S CATHOLIC (5-9, 181 lbs.)
Ranked 70th overall by HSSR, Campbell had 57 tackles and a sack for the Knights. In the season-opener against Blue Ridge, he had 11 tackles and 75 total yards on offense.
“John is a great player for us in all 3 phases of the game,” head coach Eric Nash said. “John missed is entire junior season with a knee injury and we are super excited to have him back this year! He was an All-Region Safety as a sophomore and has had a great start to this season.”

DB Dejay Leak BOILING SPRINGS (5-9, 176 lbs.)
Ranked 103rd overall by HSSR, Leak had 32 tackles, five pass breakups and an interception as a junior. He has an offer from Miami (Ohio).
“Djay Leak is a great player for us on both sides of the football,” head coach Matthew Reel said. “He played multiple positions last year on defense and will play wide receiver for us this fall as well.
“He is also a weapon in special teams....he is our punt returner and one of our kickoff returners as well. Big time play making ability with the ball in his hands.”



Gilbert’s Gavin Elliott

Gavin Elliott GILBERT (6-0, 185 lbs.) Committed to U.S. Army
As a junior, Elliott had 95 tackles, two interceptions, two sacks, two pass breakups and a blocked field goal. He’s ranked 116th overall by HSSR.
Gavin is the leader of our team,” head coach Oz Exume said. “He has started on varsity since he was a

sophomore.
“He has an intense motor and attacks practice the same way he attacks games. He is physical in the run game and is a great tackler in the open field. He can play multiple positions on defense and is a game changing player.
“He pushes everyone at practice and plays the game the right way. He is a great ambassador for Gilbert High School and Gilbert Football.”

Christian McDowell EASTSIDE (5-9, 155 lbs.)
As a junior for the Eagles, McDowell had 13 Tackles, four pass breakups and returned two of his three interceptions for touchdowns. He also rushed for 64 yards and a touchdown and had 16 receptions for 275 yards and two scores in receiving All-Region honors.
He’s ranked 139th overall by HSSR.
“You can’t teach someone to be a dog, I’m happy we have one in Christian,” head coach Andre Woolcock said.

CLASS OF 2028
Zion Dawkins GAFFNEY (5-11, 181 lbs.)
The number-one top prospect for the HSSR Class of 2028. As a sophomore, Dawkins had 29 tackles, two interceptions, three fumble recoveries and 13 pass breakups.
He has received offers from 13 schools (Virginia Tech, Wake Forest, Georgia Tech, Boston College, Syracuse, Duke, USF, App State, Florida Atlantic, Howard, Coastal Carolina, ECU, UNC Charlotte)
“Zion began his career with us at cornerback before making the transition to free safety during his 10th-grade

See **Defensive Backs**, continued pg. 23

Running Backs Feature

Strong group of running backs in SC headlined by D-1 commitments

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.comAssociate Editor
Sumter – Depending on what you’re looking at, **Franklin Richardson** can be many things on the football field. One is an athlete. He is definitely an athlete.
The 6-foot-2-inch, 220-pound **Sumter High School** senior is being sought out as a running back by many **Power 4 Conference** schools. And while that may be where he eventually ends up playing, he is the starting quarterback for the Gamecocks for the third consecutive season.

So how is Richardson approaching things as he looks to make a decision on his choice of college – and position for that matter.
“I’ve added a little bit of both in my workouts,” Richardson said of his personal workouts beyond SHS. “I’ve added a little bit of running back work into my quarterback workouts. But I’m still focused on learning the game at quarterback because learning the game will help me at running back.

Richardson ran for 1,424 yards and 31 touchdowns as a junior while completing 55 of 106 passes for 651 yards and four TDs. That was under head coach **Mark Barnes**, who retired at the end of last season. He is in his first year under **Drew Marlowe** as head coach.

“He’s developing his game better, but he’ll tell you too, just like everybody else, he’s got to get better,” said Marlowe, who won two AAAA state titles at **South Florence**.

While his future may be taking handoffs instead of snaps, Richardson thinks he is making steady progress as a signal caller.

“I feel like I’ve improved significantly, not only from the throwing aspect but from the reads,” he said. “I can read the defenses better, I’m more decisive.”

As is normally the case, the state of **South Carolina** is filled with plenty of running backs who are garnering plenty of attention. **David “Tre” Segarra (5-11, 202)** of **Byrnes** is rated as the top RB in the state by the *HSSR* and he is rated as the third best over-all prospect in the state by the *HSSR* who began tracking the development of football prospects in the state in 1987. Segarra is committed to **LSU** at this time.

Segarra, head coached by **Reggie Shaw** at Byrnes High, rushed for 1,464 yards and 17 TD’s last year. **Tai Phillips (5-11, 190)** is a running back at **Irmo**, and he is considered the number two running back in SC, and he is rated as the number four over-all prospect by the *HSSR* in the 2027 class. Phillips is a firm commitment to **Alabama**.

Phillips is in in his first year at Irmo after transferring from **Cape Fear High in Fayetteville, North Carolina**. He rushed for 919 yards and 12 scores after missing over half the season with an injury. He had one game late in the season where he rushed for nearly 400 yards and that feat got the recruiting action going for him.

Summerville has scatback **Jayen Williams** who is rated as the state’s number 14 overall prospect in the 2027 class. Williams is back for his senior year focused on having his best season yet. He rushed for 2,017 yards and 24 touchdowns in 14 games as a junior. The 5-7, 170-pounder has committed to **James**



SC’s best at Running Back

Madison, which earned a bid in the **College Football Playoffs** last season.

There are numerous other *HSSR* rated running backs in The *HSSR* Top 100 who have landed next level opportunities. Another Power 4 commitment is **Spartanburg’s Trenton Lynch**. The 5-9, 185-pounder has committed to **Rutgers**. Lynch ran for 1,204 yards and 17 touchdowns last season. Lynch is rated as the 31st best over-all prospect by the *HSSR* starting the season.

Another running back who is a Group of 5 commitment is **Crestwood** running back **Calvin Wofford**. The 5-11, 195-pounder has committed to **Charlotte**, but admits he is hoping some other offers might be coming his way.

Wofford ran for 1,357 yards and 13 touchdowns in 11 contests last season. He sees himself as a better all-around running back heading into this campaign.

“Me going into my senior year I would like to get a lot of attention by going over 1,500 yards,” Wofford said. “I feel like I’ve improved a lot by slowing down and letting the offensive linemen get their blocks. I feel like my footwork is better and my hip ability as well.

“I feel I’m a very big, physical, downhill running back who also has speed to take the top off (and break long runs).”

Running backs who are getting plenty of **Football Championship Subdivision** and **NCAA Division II** attention are **Mah’ky Green of Cross, Trevon Williamson of Gray Collegiate Academy** and **Amire White of Gaffney**.

Green rushed for 1,601 yards and 16 touchdowns in 13 games. He has no offers yet but spent the summer working at several camps.

The 5-10, 170-pounder runs the 40-yard dash in 4.4 seconds. However, he knows he needs to get better at running between the tackles.
“I have to get out of the habit of running outside so much,” Green said. “I want to get better at footwork, leading blocks,”

Williamson had a tremendous junior season for the War Eagles, rushing for 1,662 yards and 26 touchdowns. The 6-2, 210-pounder is hoping to add to that after GCA moves

from AAAA to AAAAA.
“I would say my ability to break tackles, my vision and I have a good burst between the tackles is what makes me a good running back,” said Williamson, who transferred to Gray Collegiate last season after playing at **Gilbert** as a freshman and a sophomore. Williamson said he has offers from **Samford, Chattanooga, The Citadel, Coastal Carolina** and Gardner-Webb.
White is coming off a year in which he rushed for 1,299 yards – for Irmo. He has transferred to Upstate power Gaffney.
“I’m just trying to do better than I did last year, better than I did my sophomore year,” he said. “This year, I’m faster, I’m definitely stronger. I picked up some weight (from 195 to 210).
I focused on my footwork over the summer,” he said. “I’m more shifty.”
White said he has received offers from **Wingate, North Greenville** and **The Citadel**.
Clinton lost a couple of big running backs to graduation but has senior **Angelo Cromer** back. He rushed for 692 yards and seven touchdowns last season.
Caleb Feaster of Chester is back after rushing for 1,381 yards and 18 touchdowns in 13 games.
The *HSSR*’s top junior running back is **Michael Martin of Christ Church**. He rushed for 1,425 yards and 30 touchdowns for the Cavaliers last season.

Martin comes into the 2026 season with offers from **Duke, Georgia Tech, Wake Forest, Syracuse, Cincy, and Miami of Ohio**. **Clemson** is keeping in touch with him also.
“Michael has a 300-plus bench press and a 500 squat giving him some string legs to push through tacklers” said Christ Church head coach **Quinn Hatfield**. “He has an incredible work ethic (Ironman Award Winner), and he didn’t miss a work-out all summer. “He has a quick first step, very quick with great vision and great balance.
“He is a physical runner, and his durability is consistent with his 30th carry as good as his first carry in a game,” said Coach Hatfield. “He also has great hands, making him an effective option in the passing game.”
Brookland Cayce’s Avery King, (5-9,180) is also a highly regarded 2028 RB prospect by the *HSSR* who is getting a lot of college interest at the time.
Note: Billy Baker contributed to this article.



Summerville’s Jayven Williams

Offensive Line Feature

South Carolina touts strong group of offensive linemen for 2027

By WORTHY EVANS

Offenses can't work without the protection and blocking of the Big Uglies up front. South Carolina has a large stock of guards, tackles, and centers in development among high schools at all classifications. Below are just some of the state's top offensive linemen who made the **High School Sports Report's Top 100 Seniors List** and who work at holding the lines so all the pretty plays can develop.

Fifth on the list is the top offensive lineman, **Irmo** veteran and **University of South Carolina** commit **Nate Carson** (6-5, 285 pounds). The left tackle has improved each year he's played, and has been a chief member of a unit that enabled the offense to be productive in both the passing and running games for the last three years.

The Yellow Jackets reached the AAAAA Division 2 state final for the last two years, with both games ending in losses to champion **Northwestern**. This year, in spite of a 24-14 season-opening loss to **Rock Hill** Aug. 21, Irmo looks to end the season with a win.

"It's good that we made it the last two years, but the expectation is to win," Carson said. "The expectation is to dominate and that's what we're gonna do. That's the thing with this group. It's a lot of motivation. Nobody wants to lose three years in a row. We definitely need a ring before we end it all."

Next on the list at No.11 is **Lucy Beckham** OL and **Georgia** commit **Ty Johnson** (6-5, 300). An enormous tackle with an 81.75-inch wingspan, Johnson said he's always looked toward Georgia ever since he can remember.

"I grew up a Georgia fan, those roots were always in me, he said. "I used to go to Georgia football camps growing up and I think it's going to be a little different relationship as I'll be playing for them next year."

Line play appeals to Johnson because he knows it's critical for a team's success.

"I think offensive line is sometimes an overlooked position but I think it's knowing that you're the backbone of the team," he said. "It's pretty awesome and it's pretty fun putting people in the dirt."

Another South Carolina commit, **Ridge View's James Ross** (6-5, 290) is 18th on the list. Ross said he was impressed with the Gamecocks coaching staff enough to say yes for 2027.

"I liked (offensive line) coach Clem (**Randy Clements**) and Coach (**Jason**) **Smith**. I like their relationship with each other, I like how they talked to their players and how they respond to them," Ross said. "It's a good family between the players and coaches. They want to see me playing Center, but they also want me to be able to play the other positions."

Ridge View, 8-4 last year after a second-round appearance in the AAAAA Division 1 playoffs, was supposed to open the season against AAAA state champion South Pointe Aug. 21. The game was originally moved up a day because of possible thunderstorms on gameday, but was ultimately cancelled. Instead the Blazers opened the season playing host to defending AAAAA Division 1 champion **Dutch Fork**.

"We lost a lot of seniors last year and we had to bring some guys up, but we're looking really good," Ross said. "Our chemistry is there and we're looking forward to a great season."

At No. 20 is **James Island** OL and **Liberty University** commit **Israel "Shank" Harris** (6-3, 270). The tackle is well known for his brute strength, and his feet and handwork that brings his strength to bear on opponents. Harris appreciates the idea of blocking for Liberty's run game, among other factors.

"They run the ball a lot. I like Coach **Bill (Durkin)**, the offensive coach. Coach (**Jamey**) **Chadwell** is an awesome head coach, Harris said. The campus is beautiful."

Harris's work in the trenches vaulted the Trojans to a 12-2 record last year that ended in a loss to Summerville for the AAAAA lower state championship. This year James Island opened the season with a 41-21 win over



SC's Top Offensive Linemen

2025 AAAA state champion **Oceanside Collegiate Academy** Aug. 21.

Gaffney OL and **University of Alabama**-Birmingham commit **Calvin "C.J." Brooks** (6-5, 320) is 43rd. A varsity player for four years and a starter for the last three seasons, Brooks and the Indians opened the season with a 24-20 victory over Spartanburg Aug. 21.

"Gaffney is like a city built on football, so I work my butt off every day," Brooks said about his training up for his final season as an Indian. "I do two workouts a day, I make sure I provide what I need to help us be a state championship football team."

Brooks chose the Dragons over **Charlotte**. He had 18 total offers, including from **Appalachian State**, **East Carolina** and **Army**.

"I feel like I fit their scheme greatly and I like the coaching staff and how they love everybody," he said.

Gray Collegiate's Jack Armstrong (6-2, 265), a **Citadel** commit is 51st. Armstrong, who plays on the offensive line as well, had 37 tackles, eight for loss, two sacks and three hurries as the War Eagles went 11-3 and reached the AAAA lower state championship game.

With Gray moved up to the AAAAA classification, the competition gets tougher, but so have the War Eagles.

"The summer was a lot of working, a lot of practicing, doing some camps, keep working over and over again," the three-year starter said. "We're used to playing teams like this. We've played Dutch Fork for the past two years, We're used to playing big teams so I don't think it'll be much different from past seasons."

Coming in at 53rd is **Daniel** OL and **Army** commit **Brooks Abernathy** (6-2, 265). Abernathy helped lead the Lions to a 37-4 record and a 2023 state championship. With Daniel beating **Wren** 42-28 Aug. 21 to start the season, Abernathy has his senior year under way.

"I just want to thank all of my coaches who have helped prepare me to be in this position: my offensive line coach **Thomas Austin**, offensive coordinator **T.J. Galloway**, my head coach **Chris Stone** and my strength coach **Tommy Hoke**," he said. "They've all played a huge role in my development, and I wouldn't be where I am without them."

Abernathy committed to play for the Black Knights of the Hudson for more than just football.

"The discipline, the structure, and brotherhood really stood out to me, and I wanted to be in an environment that's going to push me every day, not just as a player but as a man," he said. "It felt like the best place for me to grow, be challenged, and represent something more than just myself."

At 64th is **J.L. Mann** OL **Christian Sullivan** (6-1,300). Sullivan and teammate **Luke Penland** 111th) anchor the young Patriots' offensive line as second-year coach **Bryce Smiley** works to rebuild the team coming off an injury-riddled 1-10 record last year. Sullivan received offers from **North Greenville**, **Newberry**, **Lenoir-Rhyne**, **UNC-Pembroke**,

Darlington OL **Jaiden Williams-Green** (6-0, 320) is 82nd on the list. Green, who suffered an ACL injury in July and will not play this year, remains positive on his future.

"I've had surgery and my recovery has been going very well," he said. "No offers right now but I've been talking with **UNC-Pembroke**, **Methodist** (University), **Newberry** and **USC**."

Green said that while he's sidelined, he stands with the team, which opened the season with a 19-14 win over Lamar Aug. 20.

"This year we've got a go-get-it mindset," he said. "These boys have been under Coach Johnson for four years and we know the program, we know what to expect, we know everything. That's what's going to carry us, is how badly do you really want it. We pray to God to make this one of our best seasons Darlington has ever seen. We've got to put in some work too."

Summerville OL and **Navy** commit **Nolan Giet** (6-3, 270) is 88th. In a decision over service academies, Giet chose the Midshipmen over Army. He also had offers from **Charleston Southern**, **Mercer**, and **North Greenville**. He's alternated between center and tackle for the Green Wave, who kicked off the season with a 28-7 victory over Sumter Aug. 21.

At No. 91 is **Central** LT **Brandon Streater** (6-1, 265). Streater has grown steadily in his role on the line, playing for three years on the varsity squad.

"Brandon is a great young man that I have really enjoyed coaching," Central head coach **Jonathan Eason** said. "When I first met him a couple of years ago, he was a tall skinny kid. Since that time, he has busted his butt in the weight room to add muscle. He has probably gained 30 pounds of muscle over the last couple of years. Brandon is also a very good student at Central. He is a great representative of our school."

At 102 on the list is **Carvers Bay** C/DT and **Citadel** commit **Triston Diggs** (6-2, 275). As a 2-way lineman, he helped lead the bears to 12-1 record last year. As an interior lineman, he had 21 tackles, 10 for loss, six sacks, a forced fumble and two fumble recoveries. As an offensive lineman at center, he has shown his capability to stay solid in the middle, whether in run blocking or in pass protection.

"We're coming off a great season last year and the expectations are as high as ever, so we have to work 10 times harder to meet those expectations," he said, adding that his commitment to the SC military college makes it pertinent that he step up his game for his final high school year. "It just means I have to hold myself to a higher standard and elevate my level of play."

At 97th is **Camden** C **Worth Thomasson** (6-0,315). Thomasson has snapped offensive plays into action for two years as a starter as the Bulldogs have reaped success and a state championship appearance in 2023. With his

See **O-Line**, continued pg. 28

Linebackers Feature

Jackson & Ross lead talented group of linebackers into 2027

By Thomas Grant Jr.
Special to the HSSR

Columbia—The juniors and senior linebackers currently make up nine players in both the **High School Sports Report's** **Classes** of 2027 and 2028 football prospects list that can be viewed at hssr.com.

This group consists of impact players on the field who are seemingly at the right places at the right time. The following is a brief look at their resumes that are being revised with every Friday night game they engage in.

CLASS OF 2027
Jackson Ross **HAMMOND SCHOOL** (6-4, 215 lbs.) **South Carolina**

Ranked 10th overall in the HSSR Class of 2027, Ross had 87 tackles, 15 for loss, 17 quarterback back hurries, eight pass breakups and eight sacks last season in leading the Skyhawks to an 8th straight SCISA Class 4A title.

Ross is a verbal commitment to SC. He has been a tackling machine in his high school career. As a junior he had 87 tackles, 15 TFL, 8 sacks, 8 pass break-ups, 13 QB hurries, and one pick. As a sophomore he had 134 tackles, 14 TFL, 12.5 sacks, two picks and one forced fumble.

"He plays extremely hard and possesses a skill set that most do not have in terms of speed, physicality, knack for the ball, at his size of 6'2, 220," said head coach **Jon Wheeler**. "He can kick field goals and punt the ball as well and is a decent wide receiver/tight end threat for us at times on offense with his natural ball skills."

Jackson Conner **INDIAN LAND** (6-0, 215 lbs.) **Committed to Marshall**

Ranked 38th overall by HSSR, Conner had 150 tackles, six tackles for loss, four sacks and three fumbles for the Warriors.

Kendaris Bailey **GAFFNEY** (6-0, 215 lbs.) **North Carolina Central**

In three seasons with the Indians, Bailey has amassed 171 Tackles, 45 Tackles for a Loss, seven sacks, four forced fumbles, three fumble recoveries, 10 pass breakups, an interception and touchdown on defense.

He's ranked 44th overall in the HSSR Class of 2027.

"Kendaris Bailey is one of those talents who comes through a high school about once every five years," head coach **Donnie Littlejohn** said. "He loves the game of football and pours his heart into everything he does. He is a four-year starter for us, and our defense runs through him."

"We knew Kendaris was going to be special when we watched him play in middle school. Last year, we leaned on him heavily, including making a change in the playoffs to give our offense more of an explosive weapon, and he was one of the major reasons we made it to the third round. Our season ended with a close loss to



SC's Top Linebackers

(2-time Class 5A Division II champion **Northwestern**.

"The impact Kendaris has on this team is outstanding. Regardless of which side of the ball he is playing, he can take over a game. If he wants to shut down an offense, he has the ability to do it. If he decides he does not want to be stopped by a defense, he can do that, too. We are excited to watch him play this year and see what the future holds for him."

Malcolm Gordon **BLUFFTON** (6-1, 205 lbs.) **Furman**

As a junior, Gordon had a team-high 130 Tackles, 15 for loss, an interception and fumble recovery. He's ranked 114th by HSSR.

"He is an absolute stud," head coach **Hayden Gregory** said. "One of the best high school linebackers I have ever seen."

Semaj Wilson **ATLANTIC COLLEGIATE** (6-2, 200 lbs.)

Ranked 125th overall by HSSR, Wilson had 77 tackles on defense and rushed for 571 yards and 12 touchdowns last season.

CLASS OF 2028
Heyward Belser **HEATHWOOD HALL** (6-3, 220 lbs.)

Ranked 13th overall for the HSSR Class of 2028, he tallied 136 tackles, four sacks and an interception as a sophomore. He added two rushing TD's on offense. This Fall Belser tells the *HSSR* he will take in college games at **South Carolina**, **Clemson**, **Davidson**, and **The Citadel**. He attended the Spring game at SC.

Belser bench presses 275 with a 415-leg squat and he runs a 4.7 forty,

Belser's top five colleges right now are SC, Clemson, The Citadel, Davidson, and **Charleston Southern**.

"My goal for my junior season is to help my team win a state championship and to continue to work hard and develop the skills I need to become a better all-around football player," said Belser on his football form filled out at the HSSR media day in July.

Phillip Savage **POWDER-SVILLE** (6-3, 210 lbs.)

As a sophomore, Savage had

75 tackles, three sacks and three pass breakups at outside linebacker. He has offers from six schools (Samford, Austin Peay, Appalachian State, Miami-Ohio, East Tennessee State and Cincinnati) and is ranked 20th overall in the HSSR Class of 2028.

"He is extremely athletic and does everything necessary to put his team in the best possible position to be successful," head coach **Robert Mustar** said.

Lavan Perry **CAMDEN** (6-1, 215 lbs.)

A 2-way starter, Perry led the Bulldogs in tackles (140) last season. In the season-opening win over Dillon, he had 10 tackles and an interception. He's already received offers from Liberty and Georgia Southern.

He's ranked 23rd overall in the HSSR Class of 2028.

"He's physically talented with great size and speed, but his wrestling background really shows on the football field as he rarely misses tackles," head coach **Brian Rimpf** said. "When he locks in on a ball carrier they are going to the ground. He collected a couple offers this summer (and is being recruited by many others. He will be a leader for us on defense this year."

DeMarcus King **SUMMERVILLE** (6-2, 226 lbs.)

As a sophomore, King amassed 94 tackles, 26 tackles for loss, 28 pressures, 13 sacks and an interception return TD. He's ranked 33rd in the HSSR Class of 2028.

"Demarcus is arguably the best all-around football player on our team," head coach **Ian Rafferty** said. "He has been a varsity starter since midway through his freshman season and has consistently elevated his game each year. A physical, relentless competitor, Demarcus plays with outstanding effort on every snap and sets the tone for our defense."

"He combines natural ability with an exceptional work ethic, mental toughness, and a relentless drive to become the best defensive player on the field. Demarcus currently holds an offer from Liberty University, and we fully expect his recruitment to accelerate with additional Division I offers following his junior season."

Jackson Conner **INDIAN LAND** (6-0, 215 lbs.) **Committed to Marshall**

Ranked 38th overall by HSSR, Conner had 150 tackles, six tackles for loss, four sacks and three fumbles for the Warriors.

"He is a leader in our program, and has set a high standard not just on defense but in our entire program," head coach Adam Hastings said. "He is one of our strongest players and also runs track."

Defensive Line Feature

Strong group of defensive linemen in SC led by Irmo’s Bryant

By WORTHY EVANS
Special Writer
Columbia—The 2026 high-school football season in South Carolina is loaded with top-notch defenders, especially the tackles, ends, and edge rushers up front. Among the *High School Sports Report’s Top 100* seniors, several defensive linemen stand out. At number two on the list is **Irmo** DE and **Miami** commit **Jaiden Bryant** (6-4, 246). Bryant, a 5-star recruit, originally committed to **LSU** in January but flipped to the Hurricanes in June.

A four-year starter on the line, Bryant helped lead the Yellow Jackets to back-to-back appearances in the AAAAA Division 2 state championship in his sophomore and junior years. As a sophomore edge rusher, he notched 85 tackles, 10 for loss and an incredible 14.5 sacks in 15 games. The next year he posted 75 tackles, 16 for loss and 10 sacks.

This year Bryant is focused on his intensity at the line as well as his leadership role on the team.

“I’ve grown mentally,” Bryant said at practice last week. “I’ve always been strong and fast, but I had to be mentally tough. To be able to lead guys in tough situations, it’s hard to calm a whole team down by yourself, I have to prepare for that and college. It’s a big mental thing.”

Bryant added that both his and his team’s goal is to finally notch a win in the final game and win a state championship.

“We take it one week at a time, our goal is to get the championship ring and get it over with.”

Ninth on the list is Dutch **Fork** lineman and **Clemson** commit **Jaden Wuerth** (6-2, 270). He committed to the Tigers in April.

“Clemson is just different,” Wuerth said on his commitment. “Wouldn’t want to be anywhere else, and I truly believe Clemson is going to take me where I want to go.”

Wuerth, like Bryant, has been one of the most sought-after line players, receiving 19 offers from NCAA Division I schools, including **Duke**, **Georgia Tech**, **Maryland**, **Miami**, and the **Tigers**.

A relative newcomer to Dutch Fork, Wuerth notched 147 tackles, 38 for loss, and 13 sacks in his sophomore year at Aquinas, Ga. He transferred to the Silver Foxes before his junior year and helped the team win its fourth straight AAAAA Division I state championship in 2025. His stat line for the season was 62 tackles, 12 for loss, four sacks and three caused fumbles. With his college future set, Wuerth looks to make the most of his senior year and maybe earn a second state title.

“We definitely look to the championship game,” Wuerth said. “The expectation here is to win championships, but I think also the expectation is to win practice every day. If we’re not winning practice every day, we’re not winning on Fridays, and it doesn’t mean anything.”

Another Clemson commit, **South Pointe** lineman **Seth Tillman** (6-4, 300) is 15th. Tillman had 61 tackles, 27 for loss, 12 quarterback hurries and 8.5 sacks to help the Stallions win the AAAAA state championship in December.

Tillman said that the team is purposely forgetting the state title win, the team’s eighth in South Pointe’s history since the school opened in 2005.

“We’re keeping our head forward, acting like we lost it so we’re trying to get another one even though we knew we won,” Tillman said in early August. “We’re still trying to get another one.”

Wuerth isn’t the only Dutch Fork player—or even defensive end—on the top 100 seniors list. Silver Foxes end **Peyton Bishop** (6-4, 230) is 21st. Bishop is new to the Silver Foxes this year, as he transferred to the school after his impactful junior year at **A.C. Flora**. As a Falcon,

Bishop recorded 108 tackles, 25.5 for loss, 16 sacks and 79 quarterback hurries. A.C. Flora posted an 11-2 record and reached the third round of the 4A playoffs.

Thus far Bishop has 25 offers, the biggest ones coming from **Virginia Tech**, **Cincinnati**, Georgia, Georgia Tech, and **Kentucky**.

Another edge rusher, **Catawba Ridge** DE **Alex Johnson** (6-4, 230), is a **Boston College** commit and 28th on the list. Johnson made 60 tackles, seven sacks, 23 quarterback hurries and two pass defenses in his junior year. He had 20 other offers, including those from **N.C. State**, **Louisville**, **Vanderbilt**, and **Virginia**.

What convinced him about Boston College was the school’s commitment to finish him both as a player and a young man, as well as being a home away from home.

“I’ll be going there for four or five years for football, but if I got hurt or don’t make it to the NFL, Boston College does a great job of recognizing that I may not always play forever,” he explained. “I want to go somewhere where I can be the best player that I possibly can. And as for family, if I’m going somewhere where I’m 12 hours away from everybody I know, I need to trust my new family. I rely on them and they rely on me.”

Boston College checks all of Johnson’s needs from the college level. In the meantime, Johnson credits Catawba Ridge head coach **Zac Lendyak** in building a strong program full of student athletes who help each other get better.

“Coach Lendyak has built a very good culture and plans to keep it going,” Johnson said, adding that the Copperheads are looking to improve from last year’s 6-6 mark. “Since coach (Chris) Jackson took over the weight room after coach (Shane) Sweeting left last year, we’re all stronger, more explosive, and faster,” Johnson said. “That’s the main thing is the work we’ve put in through the summer.”

Coming in at 32nd is **Dorman** DL and **East Carolina** commit **James Porter** (6-2, 265). Porter received more than a dozen NCAA Division 1 offers before choosing ECU. Last year his presence at the line and behind opponents’ offensive backfields helped lead the Cavaliers to the third round of the AAAAA Division 1 playoffs.

This year Porter said he’ll be keying off his defensive teammates, including friends LB **Antwone Tarrence** and DB **Jabez Thomas**, in polishing his skills as a player and leader.

“Watching those guys last year and growing up playing with them showed me the things I need to do to be a leader,” Porter said. “It’s going to help me a lot. I haven’t really been that guy yet. This year as a senior I feel like I need to be that guy. It’s a lot of training and a lot of work, and I feel like I’ve got a lot to prove.”

Another ECU commit, **Westwood** DL **A.J. Veal** (6-2, 225) is 34th. Besides helping Westwood to its first winning season in years under first-year head coach **Stephen Burris**, Veal has made big moves in the offseason, showing out in the **Carolinas Coaching Combines** with an 80-inch wingspan and 4.69 speed.

Veal’s self-improvement efforts brought ECU to him, and he liked what he saw.

“As soon as I stepped on the campus, I was home,” Veal said. “I loved the facilities, they have a great coaching staff, everybody’s tight. It’s a great stadium and their player development is great.”

Westwood, which dropped its season opener at **York**



SC’s Top Defensive Linemen

Comprehensive, lost 34 seniors and has gotten young enough to depend on Veal and other seniors for leadership.

“We’ve still got some things to clean up, we’re taking it one day at a time,” he said. “We go to work every day to put the pieces together. Our defensive guys (senior LB) **Kameron Smith**, (senior LB) **Willie Caldwell**, and (senior DE) **A.J. Mobley**, all those guys are hungry.”

Boiling Springs DL and **Rutgers** commit **Dennis Glenn, Jr.** (6-1, 285) is 36th. Glenn had 64 tackles, 21 for loss, six sacks, and 22 quarterback hurries last year. This year Glenn will be a leader among a mix of veterans and young talent.

“Understanding the role that I have is even more exciting, because I get to see the success of my peers and my guys that are a little bit younger,” he said in August. “And that’s always exciting knowing you had a hand in that and just seeing their success and seeing them grow.”

Gray Collegiate’s **Jack Armstrong** (6-2, 265), a Citadel commit is 51st. Armstrong, who plays on the offensive line as well, had 37 tackles, eight for loss, two sacks and three hurries as the War Eagles went 11-3 and reached the AAAAA lower state championship game.

With Gray moved up to the AAAAA classification, the competition gets tougher but so have the War Eagles.

“The summer was a lot of working, a lot of practicing, doing some camps, keep working over and over again,” the three-year starter said. “We’re used to playing teams like this. We’ve played Dutch Fork for the past two years, We’re used to playing big teams so I don’t think it’ll be much different from past seasons.”

Hartsville DT **JaQuan Samuel** (6-2, 290) is 56th.

Last year was his first year on defensive line after moving from the offensive line as a sophomore.

At No. 73 is **Newberry** DE **Dontavias Griffin** (6-1, 235). Griffin started his Newberry career as a safety but has since bulked up enough to be a quick and effective defensive end.

North Augusta DL and **James Madison** commit **Simeon Jones** (6-1, 305) is 89th. Jones had 59 tackles, seven or loss, a fumble return for a touchdown and an interception in last year’s 11-1 effort. He’s at home playing in the middle but has the ability to post on the edge when needed.

Belton-Honea Path DL **Kamarion Glenn** (5-8, 290) is 96th. Glenn had 28 tackles, 11 for loss, three sacks and five quarterback hurries as the Bears reached the AAAAA state championship game for the second year in a row. With his height and stout frame, Glenn is a classic run-stopper in the middle for the Bears.

At 102 on the list is **Carvers Bay** C/DT and **Citadel** commit **Triston Diggs** (6-2, 275). As a 2-way lineman, he

See **D-Line**, continued pg. 28

Wide Receivers & Tight Ends Feature

Oceanside’s Kelly-Murray is state’s top senior prospect

By Roger Lee
Special to the HSSR
Goose Creek - South Carolina has an abundance of talented receivers playing in the high school ranks.

This Summer two talented pass catchers who battled for the **2025 SCISA AAAAA Football Championship** talked to the **High School Sports Report** regarding returning to their teams for the 2026 season.

“We put more work in this Summer because we want to get back there and win it this time,” said **Heathwood Hall** senior **Keon McKinley**. “One of the keys for any receiver is staying composed and not getting frustrated when things don’t go your way.”

His team had to settle for state runner-up after falling to **Northwood Academy** in the championship game. McKinley (5-8, 175) entered this season as one of the **HSSR’s Top Football Prospects** for the state’s Class of 2027, receiving a ranking of 90th overall on the list that includes both athletes in the **South Carolina High School League** and **SCISA** ranks.

Northwood also returns its top receiver from last season in senior **Drew Wolfe** (6-1,165), who promises the **Chargers** will again feature a dynamic offense.

“It will be a show,” Wolfe said. “Me and quarterback **Kevin Johnson** (6-1, 195) work well together and I feel confident about what we can achieve as long as we keep doing that. He’s one of a kind and our chemistry is strong.”

Wolfe is ranked 136th on the list while Johnson is ranked 17th. Their chemistry helped the Chargers win the **Shane Beamer 7 on 7** competition this Summer. His advice to upcoming receivers is to give it their all.

“I run my route full speed even if the ball isn’t coming to me,” he said. “You have to go 100 percent every time or those DBs will catch on.”

The overall top prospect for the Class of 2027 is **Jaiden Kelly-Murray** (5-10, 170), who lines up as both a receiver and defensive back. Before transferring from **Summerville** to **Oceanside Collegiate** for his senior season, the highly recruited receiver had more than 150 catches for the **Green Wave** for more than 2,200 yards and nearly 30 touchdowns.

His willingness to lineup in the slot, out wide or even in the backfield and to work all parts of the field, combined with his acceleration, ball tracking skills and general command of the receiver position make him highly sought by many college recruiters. **South Carolina**, **Arkansas**, **Duke**, **Florida**, **Indiana** and **Stanford** are just a sampling of programs that have expressed interest, but he has verbally committed to **Colorado**.

Murray has shown he is a dangerous runner and explosive kick returner who special teams coaches have to plan for. He also excels as a defensive back. Last season he had 10 tackles, two interceptions and a punt return for a TD.

Don’t think Oceanside is a one-trick pony. This year the **Landsharks** also have **Anthony Williams** (6-1, 170), the HSSR’s No. 7 ranked senior who is also the publication’s second-highest ranked receiver.

Last year he made more than 60 catches to top



SC’s Top Receivers and Tight Ends

the 1,000-yard reception mark, score 12 TDs and help Oceanside win the AAA state championship.

Before transferring to Oceanside from **Fort Dorchester**, as a sophomore he caught 25 passes for 504 yards and three TDs.

He is drawing interest from colleges such as **Georgia Tech**, **Virginia Tech**, **Wake Forest** and **West Virginia**, but is committed to **North Carolina**.

The senior receiver who pulled in the third-highest ranking from the HSSR is **Bluffton’s Amare Patterson** (6-1, 190). Ranked 12th overall for the class, the speedster is drawing interest from colleges such as **Georgia**, **Georgia Tech**, **Arkansas** and **Colorado**, but is committed to **North Carolina**.

Daniel’s Trey Wimberly (6-0, 175), **Westside’s Tajeh Watson-Martin** (5-10,170) and **Dutch Fork’s Maleek Miller** (5-11, 175) are ranked in the overall Top 25.

Other seniors who are top receiving prospects include **Chanin Harris** (Byrnes), **Malik Ratliff** (Northwestern), **Eric Richardson** (Lugo), **Dai’Shian Watkins-Hymes** (Dorman), **Darius Carter** (River Bluff), **Kadin Vassel** (Northwestern), **Kyson McLeod** (South Aiken), **Julian Brown** (Myrtle Beach) **Kelvion Manning** (Dillon), **Jason Youmans** (Bamberg-Ehrhardt), **Peyton Vining** (Northwestern), **Nyren Bowman** (Scott’s Brach), **Nasir Waldrop** (Powdersville), **Kean-dre Allen** (Colleton County), **Kyson McLeod** (South Aiken), **Deion Suber** (Boiling Springs), **Corey Gleaton** (Gray Collegiate), **Nicholas Gordon** (Cheraw), **Xavier Huggins** (Powdersville), **Braydon Simpson** (Broome), **Deondre Allen** (Colleton County) and **Ja’Mere Ross** (Johnsonville).

Juniors

Gaffney defensive back/receiver **Zion Dawkins** (5-11, 181) is the HSSR’s top-ranked player of the Class of 2028. **Teru Davis** (6-0, 170) of Summerville, who is ranked 10th overall for the class, is the highest ranked player whose primary position is receiver.

Davis is looking to lead the Green Wave back to the AAAAA finals. Summerville fell to Dutch Fork in the title game the past two seasons.

Last season Davis, who began his career at **Goose Creek**, made 42 catches for 850 yards and six touchdowns. He is drawing interest from schools such as **Virginia Tech**, **East Carolina**, **Coastal Carolina**, **Liberty** and **Clemson**.

“Teru is an explosive playmaker who catches the ball well,” said Summerville coach **Ian Rafferty**. “He runs good routes and can really stretch the field vertically and give people problems.”

Raphael Puui (6-1, 190) of **James Island**, **DeMarius Arrington** (6-0, 175) of Dutch Fork and **Kenneth Wilson** (6-2, 185) of **Indian Land** round out the Top 5 junior receivers.

Others on the list include **Emerson James** (Byrnes), **JJ Campbell** (Dillon), **Scoop Dennis** (Laurence Manning), **Jeremiah Hunter** (Seneca), **Samaj Parker** (South Florence), **Ziggy Offord** (Lake-wood) and **Holden Lowery** (Chesterfield).

Tight Ends

Will Haunert (6-4, 210) of **Camden** is the top-ranked tight end for the Class of 2027. Ranked 52nd overall, Haunert is a vertical tight end with good

speed who is capable of making contested catches and has good power when he has the ball. He is committed to **Wofford**.

Caleb Sharo (6-3, 220) of **Ashley Ridge** is the second-highest ranked tight end for the class. He is ranked 58th overall. **Marques Skinner** (6-2,265) of **Riverside**, **MiCah McClintontok** (6-3, 215) of **Woodruff** and **Reid Hipp** (6-4, 215) of **Christ Church** round out the Top 5 junior receivers.

JaQuan Hannah (Carvers Bay) also made the list.

Lavar Mills (6-4, 235) of **Darlington** is the top-ranked tight end for the Class of 2028. **Riggs Savage** (6-5, 225) of **Powdersville**, **Nick Sargent** (6-5, 215) of **BHP**, **Will Hunt** (6-3, 275) of Oceanside and **Landon Guyton** (6-3, 205) of **Gilbert** also made the list.



Oceanside’s Jaiden Kelly-Murray

Class A, continued from pg. 11

*****5. McBee**
*****6. Lee Central**
Region 5-A Overview
Central:
Having coached up his alma mater to a 21-5 record over the past two seasons, **Jonathan Eason** also became the schools AD after long time AD **Mitch Laird** retired in June.

The Eagles began the '26 season on the road at **Lewisville**, a team head coached by former Eagle's star **Trent Usher**. **Central's** 56-14 win over the Lions produced 423 rushing yards on 40 carries and five rushing TD's. It was a happy ride home for Eagle fans.
Senior QB **Dwayne Louallen** (6-1, 210) is a true dual threat, as he completed 6-of-8 passing for 68 yards and two TD's while rushing for 66 yards and a TD. RB **Marzavious Allen** picked up where the graduated **Ashten Wilson** left off in '25, with 126 yards and two TD's in the big win. Junior **Jayden Robinson** had 99 yards and a TD also. In all honesty this group defines a triple headed monster attack coming at you on Friday nights in the Sandhills.

Against Lewisville 9 different RB's averaged 10.6 yards a carry as group. There is plenty of talent in the Eagles back field.

All-star candidate **Brandon Streater** (6-4, 270) is the lone returner in the OL at LT. TE **Cody Branham** is a solid senior TE and junior DL **Tahir Wise** leads a stout defense. Other current seniors, who were starters as juniors, include DB **Aiden Welch** and DB **Dylan Tomberlin**.

Please see an in-depth feature on the Central football team elsewhere in this issue.

Cheraw:
Head coach **Andy Poole** is very high on the potential of the **Cheraw** Braves for the '26 season.
There is certainly a lot of senior talent and leadership provided by retraining seniors Nick Gordan at WR/DB, Derrick Isaac at WR/DB, Crawford Poole in the DL, and Anthony Strong in the DL. This group could start on any team in the state.

However, the one thing the Braves need as the '26 begins is a place kicker who can make PAT's. **Andrew Jackson** claimed a hard-fought 13-12 win over Cheraw in the season opener, but the Braves will live for another day.

Soph QB **Kobi McDonald** has a strong arm completing 12-of-passes for 167 yards against AJ. Gordan, Derrick Isaac, and Kamari Cue had 61, 48, and 39 yards in receptions. McDonald, showing dual threat talent added 44 yards on the ground, including an 8-yard TD run. Senior RB Justyn Joint added 38 rushing yards and freshman **Darryl Hersey** had 12 yards including a one-yard TD run in the fourth period.

On defense DL Brenden Pace, the stop troops with seven tackles while Poole had five tackles, two TFL and a sack along with Isaac who had five tackles also. DB Hersy and sophomore DB Jarmarcus Frazier each contributed four tackles



2026 Denmark-Olar Vikings

The Brave's OL is comprised of LT Winston Davis, RT Charlie Halter, LG Jayden Horne, RG Lemonte Brown, and center Easton Quick. Sam Philllips is the team's combo kicker.

Please see feature story on Cheraw football elsewhere in this issue.

Lamar:
Lamar was 12-3 and won a region title in **Tyler Boyds** first season back home at his alma mater in 2025.

The Silver Foxes come into the 2026 season needing to replace QB **Zori Pierce** who earned a spot on the North-South all-star team last season.

Lamar lost a hard-fought 19-14 game to county foe **Darlington** in week one.

Jaylen Morris is the new QB and he was 7-of-19 for 52 yards and a TD, plus he rushed for 34 yards and scored one rushing TD. HSSR Top 100 member **Mont Williams** (6-7, 2000) was the top WR with 29 yards in receptions and one TD. **DQ Green** is a stout LB on defense.

Please see feature story on Lamar football elsewhere in this issue.

North Central:
Entering the '26 season North Central head coach **Daniel Sisk** is hoping the Knights can take that next step after going 7-4 last season.

North Central began the '26 season with a loss to **Dreher** (56-13) on August 21.

Coach Sisk said that team speed is the strength of the squad coming into the season and building depth in both lines was a work in progress.

Senior leadership will come from veteran seniors **Brayden Price**, who returns at QB/DB along with WR/LB **Logan Stokes** (6-3,175) who is a versatile athlete.

The majority of the North Central players play both ways. **Tek Boyd** is an RB/DB and **Zayden Burch** is a WR/DB also. **Jake Liabastre** (LT & DL) holds down a spot in both lines as does senior RT **Elijah Smith** (6-3, 202). **Destin Blair** (6-1, 270) is the starting center. Coach Sisk is rotating several players in at LG as the season starts.

A few other key contributors on defense include DL **Tyler Sumpter** (5-10, 230), DL **Logan Stokes** (6-3, 175), and the LB's are **Bryson Eubanks**, **Caleb Egbon** and **Ethan Chappell**. **Jayden Atkins**, and **Zayden Burch** join Boyd and Price in the secondary. Egbon handles punting duties,

McBee:
McBee head football coach **Andy Karcher** has stressed "hard work" as his main goal towards building a solid foundation for his team. The Panthers got a little confidence towards that objective with a 22-8 road win at **Hemingway** in week one of the '26 season.

"Physical play needs to be our focus," said Coach Karchner,
Senior leadership will be counted on from returning

players QB **Lucas King**, RB/MLB **Harlen McLaurin**, OL/DT **Nakai Sinkler**, and TE/DE **Gunnar Brigman**. The junior class is led by OG/DT **Joe Boyle** and TE/CB **McKinley Brigman**. The soph group on the team is led by RB/OLB **Colton Gainey**, and OL/DE **Alshon Sutton**. Two newcomers up from the jayvee team who should see a lot of playing time include RB/CB **Jace Ferguson** and RB/FS **Kemaron Brame**.

Lee Central:
Justin Danner is the head coach at Lee Central. **His team got the season kicked off right with a 48-0 win over Military Magnet Last year Lee Central finished 4-7 and they are focused on a much better outcome in 2026.**

Region 6-A Predicted Finish:
Bamberg-Ehrhardt
Scoot's Branch
Denmark Olar
Branchville
Edisto
Bethune- Bowman

Region 6-A Overview
Bamberg Ehrhardt:
Not many teams ever go 15-0 and win a state title. Coach **Corey Crosby** and the Red Raiders experienced that exceptional accomplishment last year when they beat **Lamar** in the Class A finals at SC State University. With 8 starters back on offense, and 9 back on defense the Raiders will start the '26 season with a choke hold on the top ranking in Div. I Class A.

Coach Crosby told the *HSSR* just before the season began: "The strength of our football program lies in its' highly talented, experienced roster, boasting a formidable 90 per cent returning production rate," he said. "The team features explosive offensive weapons, such as all-state quarterback **Brian McMillian**, and a stout defense anchored by defensive back **Jason Youmans** who is an elite player and leader in the secondary. We also return an elite receiving corps."

McMillian (6-2, 290) threw for 3,780 yards last season with 44 passing TD's while rushing for 750 yards and 20TD's. WR **Anthony Williams** returns after hauling in 48 receptions for 1,268 yards and 17 TD's last season. Youmans added 750 receiving yards on 32 catches and 10 TD's.

The OL is anchored by senior tackle prospect **Pierre Fuller** (6-3,295). **Rakeen Walker** is a senior DB prospect (6-2, 295) and MLB **Darian Sease** (5-11, 190) is a solid tackler in the middle.

The top juniors on the team include DE **Saveon Bamberg** (6-0,245), and H-back **Malik Atterberry** (6-3, 210).

The Raiders started off the season with a 62-6 win over **HKT** on August 21.

For details on that game please see feature article on B-E elsewhere in this issue.

Coach Crosby said the team's area of improvement coming into the season will be inexperience in the line-backing unit and a lack of proven depth in the front seven."

All-state senior combo kicker **Charles Breland** returns, giving the Raiders an advantage in the kicking game.

Scotts Branch:
Despite losing a highly competitive game to **East Clarendon** (21-14) in week one of '26 season, head coach **Pat Fleming** is focused on his team taking that next step after improving to 9-3 in his second season in '25, after the Eagles went 4-7 in his first season.

Coach Fleming told **Dennis Brunson** of the *HSSR* over the summer, "We want to continue to take the next step and get to a championship round of the Class A state playoffs," said Coach Fleming who signed with South Carolina after his 1999 season as an outstanding OLB a t nearby **Manning High**. "We're just working on revamping some things but that's the expectations going into the season. It's time to chase to hardware."

See **Class A**, continued pg. 25

NETC Student Athletes of the Month

Honoring Dillon Christian's Lily King

Dillon—**Lily King** is a senior four-sport athlete at **Dillon Christian School**, where she plays Volleyball, Basketball, Soccer, and cheers.

Lily's versatility, dedication, and willingness to challenge herself academically, and athletically, make her an outstanding example of the well-rounded student-athlete experience at the **Dillon Christian School**.

King said she enjoys Basketball, Soccer and Cheer, but Volleyball is her favorite sport. She started playing soccer in the 5th Grade, then both Volleyball and Basketball in the 6th Grade. Looking for more to do, she added Cheerleading in her junior year.

When asked about the commitment for multiple sports, and overlapping seasons, Lily said the biggest lesson was "learning not to procrastinate, or put off getting my school work done."

She's earned All-Region honors twice in both Volleyball and Basketball, plus earned a spot on the North/South Basketball team as a sophomore.

In the classroom he carries a 3.9 GPA, and she says that after high school she doesn't expect to have time for next level sports while pursuing a degree as a Speech Therapist at either Clemson or USC.

For all his athletic and academic accomplishments, King has been chosen the "*NETC*" *Female Student Athlete of the Month.*"



Lily King

This honor is bestowed through a partnership between the Northeastern Technical College and "*The High School Sports Report*" with the publication communicating with athletic directors at high schools in the counties of Dillon, Marlboro, and Chesterfield, where NETC serves the needs of high school students seeking to earn dual credits in various subjects that can be transferred to colleges after a student's high school graduation.

The NETC is currently offering over 44 online dual credit courses for the 2024-25 school year to students in the three counties they serve.

Lily has completed MUS-101 and SOC-101 and is currently enrolled in ENG-101 (English Composition I) and HIS-101 (World History). Through Dual Credit provided by the "NETC", Lily is gaining valuable experience with college-level coursework while earning credits that can fulfill both high school and college requirements. This opportunity allows her to become familiar with the academic expectations and rigor of col-

See King, pg. 23

Honoring Dillon Christian's Ethan Moody

Dillon — **Ethan Moody** is a dedicated senior student-athlete challenging himself academically, and as a football and baseball player for the **Dillon Christian School**.

Moody started playing football in the 6th Grade, and baseball when he was in the 8th Grade. He enjoys both sports, but football wins out as his favorite sport. On the diamond, he's a utility player.

During the fall, Ethan takes the field as a football player and proudly serves as a team captain, demonstrating leadership, both on and off the field. When spring arrives, he trades the football field for the baseball diamond, where he continues to compete as a member of the school's baseball team.

For all his athletic and academic accomplishments, **Ethan Moody** has been chosen the "*NETC*" *Male Student Athlete of the Month.*"

This honor is bestowed through a partnership between the Northeastern Technical College and "*The High School Sports Report*" with the publication communicating with athletic directors at high schools in the counties of Dillon, Marlboro, and Chesterfield, where NETC serves the needs of high school students seeking to earn dual credits in various subjects that can be transferred to colleges after a student's high school graduation.

Through the Dual Credit program offered by the "NETC", Ethan has completed HIS-101 (World History), HIS-201 (U.S. History), and he is currently en-

rolled in ENG-101 (English Composition I). These courses provide Ethan with valuable college-level academic experience while allowing him to earn credit toward both his high school and college education. His participation in Dual Credit has also allowed him to make efficient use of his school-day schedule while preparing for the increased academic expectations he will encounter after graduation.

He began taking Dual Credit courses through **Northeastern Technical College** (NETC) in 2025. He currently holds a 4.45 GPA.

The "NETC" is currently offering over 44 online dual credit courses for the 2026-27 school year to students in the three counties they serve.

Moody is currently enrolled in dual credit courses offered by "NETC" and his plans after high school include studying finance at **USC**. When asked if he considered continuing athletics after high school, he said that was not in his plans.

Referring to the experience taking "NETC" online courses, Moody commented, "The experience has been very

See Moody pg. 23



Ethan Moody

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