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High School Sports Report

Our Goal: Recognizing The Achievements Of Young Athletes

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Taking a deep dive into the 2027 football class as May evaluations near

By Billy G. Baker
Publisher

Moncks Corner—Major college football recruiters will soon be visiting within the majority of South Carolina high schools, focused on finding some big-time players in the 2027 class that help elevate their respective programs in future years.

Before we go any further, we always stop to thank **Mark Grainger** and the fine folks at **Modern Turf** in Irmo and Rembert for their sponsorship of this recruiting page.

Last year the state of South Carolina hit the magic number of “50” football players in the 2026 class signing on with major college football. The Palmetto state has been one of the few states in the nation that has not seen a drop-off in yearly numbers of players signed due to so many colleges using the transfer portal to fill immediate needs.

The *HSSR* feels like the 2027 Class will be just as strong. It appears to be an above average year for wide receivers, defensive backs and even defensive lineman.

There are already two players from the 2027 class in South Carolina committed to major college football. Irmo defensive end **Jaiden**

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A Message From The
 Publisher
Billy G. Baker
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Saluting the 2026 Basketball Champions!

Moncks Corner—The winter sports season for basketball concluded with the SCHSL crowning six boys' and six girls' championship teams from across South Carolina (March, 5-7), marking the first time in five years since the championships had been hosted at the spacious and very accommodating Colonial Life Center at the University of South Carolina, home to the "Lady Gamecocks" who are among the best women's college basketball program in the nation.

On the boy's side of the state finals, congratulations are extended to the **Ridge View** boys' basketball team for winning the Div. I AAAAA state title with a 65-44 win over **Ashley Ridge**. It was Ridge View's third straight title win, and they have also earned seven titles in the past nine years. Adding a sentimental angle to the game was the fact Ridge View head coach **Joshua Staley** was coaching his senior son "**Talan**" for the last time in a Ridge View uniform. Coach Staley will coach his son for the final time in a post-season all-star game. By the way, his son had 10 points in the win.

In Div. II AAAAA boys' finals, congrats to **Westwood** (25-3) who defeated last year's champion, **Greenville** (23-7) 67-55. On a side-note, **Goose Creek** head coach **Blake Hall** complained about the disparity in the fouls called against his team versus Greenville in the state finals a year ago. Well, one year later Westwood nails 25-of-32 free throws in the win. Greenville now understands what Coach Hall was talking about. The Raiders were 12-of-20 from the free throw line.

In AAAAA boys, congrats to **North Augusta** (27-3) as they finally won the first boys' basketball state title in school history, after cheering on the girl's teams at the school for their numerous titles, with their thrilling double overtime, 64-56 win over **South Pointe** (20-9). This was easily the most competitive

game of the three-day event. In boy's AAA, congratulations are extended to **Christ Church** (26-1) who defeated **Fox Creek**, 52-49 in a highly competitive game. In boy's AA, congratulations are with newcomer **Phillip Simmons** who defeated frequent finalist **High Point Academy** 50-46 for the school's first boys' basketball title since the school was founded 9 years ago. The **HSSR** also extended congrats to C.A. Johnson for their 72-64 win over Bethune-Bowman in the in the Class A boys on March 7.

The girls' competition was just as exciting to watch. In Div. I AAAAA congrats go the way of **Blythewood** who defeated **Wando** 68-44 on March 6 to win their second straight state title. In Div. II AAAAA high fives are extended to a school located five miles from where I live; give it up for my neighbors the mighty Berkeley Stags who repeated with a 54-50 win over **Greenville**. (Can u surmise if any of the Stag players live on my street in Moncks Corner?)

In AAAAA girls, congrats to **North Augusta** (28-1) who added yet another state title to the school's trophy case with a 63-50 win over **Westside** (27-2). In AAAA competition, how about a high five for repeat winner Wallhalla (26-2) who defeated Keenan 70-58. In Class AA, we salute the **Landrum** (25-7) girls for getting the three-day event off to a winning note on March 5 with a 45-43 win over **Atlantic Collegiate Academy**. In girl's Class A, we salute **Military Magnet** for repeating this season with the most dominant win in any game over the event when they defeated Great Falls 70-21 on March 7.

This writer has always day-dreamed about what if you were starting a brand new college boy's and girl's college basketball program in the state of South Carolina, and you were only allowed to sign, or make an offer, to players who played in the SCHSL state finals regardless of grade. So, there you are sitting at the

state finals, as the boy's head coach, with your fellow girl's head coach sitting by you busy observing the talent before you. Both of you are even sharing a box of pop-corn making comments like, "This is going to be easy!"

If you based your choices simply on stats in the game, you might be surprised how some top-flight players do not always have their top games in title games. Often a hardworking teammate might step up and have their best game of the season.

There were only five girls who scored 20 or more points in the state finals. They were **Ashlyn Frick** (23) from Wallhalla, **Taelor Lee-Sutton** of Keenan (20), **Alaina Carter** (29) of Berkeley, **Mariah Brown** (25) of Military Magnet, and **Chase Thomas** of Blythewood (28). I have no problem at all offering all five of these players a full ride to come on a new journey to a brand-new college.

There were only four girls in the state finals with 10 or more rebounds. They were **Messiah Williams** (12) of North Augusta, **Ava Owens** of Greenville, **De-laney Caldwell** of Landrum (12), and **Miley White** of Walhalla. We are going ahead and offering these four players also. We now have 9 scholarship players to work with.

On the boy's side there were eight players who pumped in 20 or more points during the state finals in Columbia. They are **Clayton Everett** (20) of Ashley Ridge, while **Terrence McFadden** of Bethune-Bowman had (31), tops over the three-day period. Others included **Aassic Germany** and **Javrius Wyche** of CA Johnson and they both scored 24 points. The remaining four players are **Treven Raymon** (22) of South Pointe, **Qub'Mareon Webb** of North Augusta, **Jayden Crews** (23) of Westwood, and **D'Marcus Thomas** (26) of Westwood. With little hesitation all 8 players were extended full rides to this new college

See Editorial, pg. 78

Williamsburg, continued from pg. 64

7.7. Burrows said Balder, who was the quarterback and safety on the school's Class A football state championship team, led the hoops team as well. "Micah was the quarterback of the team, the engine," Burrows said. "He had a lot of experience playing a certain level of basketball and the others followed. He was familiar with what was needed as

Barnwell, continued from pg. 54

double. Freshman pitcher/outfielder **John Huiggins** is also at .333 with two RBI's. Senior outfielder/first baseman **Jackson Beddingfield** has two RBI's while sophomore outfielder **Colton Smith** has contributed wo RBI's. The top pitchers, who starts wise after three games, include Davis who is 1-0 with 8 strikeouts and an ERA of 1.00. He has 8 strikeouts in seven innings of mound duty. Zissett has worked 4.2 innings with 10 strikeouts and he

Gaffney, continued from pg. 20

"Our two captains, as voted on by the team are seniors **Brady Smith**, a two-year captain, and first year senior captain **Jace Bradbury**," said Coach Mages. "They both lead by example." As of March 6, the Indians are 3-3 on the young season. They defeated **Woodruff** 11-3, in a 9-inning game, to start the season. They have also defeated **Union County** twice (8-1 and 7-1). Their three losses were against **Chapman**, **Eastside** and **Chesnee**. In the first game of the season against Woodruff the Indians pounded out 12 hits. Senior right fielder **Sam Carroll** and five-year senior catcher, and lead-off batter **Brady Smith**, led the team with three hits each against the Wolverines. Senior third baseman **Brody Bright** contributed two hits including an RBI double. Two-time senior all-region left-fielder **Jace Bradbury**, who bats clean-up, had one hit and two RBI's. "Jace is among our most versatile players on the team," said Coach Mages. "He is going on to play col-

Spartanburg Day, continued from pg. 66

ledge Wall returns at the quarterback and free safety positions. Sammy Crain will see action at center once again and flip to the defensive line as well. "We are confident we will have several seniors on the team as well," said Coach Moffitt. "We also feel like we will have several players from the area transferring into the program and as a new varsity program

a leader. He was certainly important to our success." Junior **Ethan Jones** led in scoring at 10.4 Other key contributors were freshman **Rylan Berry** (8.4), sophomore **Wyatt Dennis** (5.5), junior **Al Casselman** (6.9), junior **Marlin Morris** (5.3) and junior **Sammy Tomlinson** (4.5). Burrows is hoping the success enjoyed this year will carry over to next season.

has an ERA of 1.50. Huggins is also 1-0 after three innings of work. Mead has worked 2.1 innings, and Proctor has pitched for two innings thus far in the season. Other hard-working members of the team include junior outfielder **Vincent Gibson** who is batting .500 with only two officials at bats and he has scored two runs. Junior Caiden Roland will play in the outfield while junior **Joe Huggins** will contribute as a catcher and pitcher. Junior **Traven Wilson** will see duty at first base.

lege baseball at **Catawba Valley Community College** in North Carolina next season. He is just a great natural athlete. He can pitch, play the outfield, or play at first if we need him to."

Junior relief pitcher **Jaxon Peeler** also had a hit against Woodruff along with starting senior first baseman **Ethan Harvey**. Senior second base starter **Gage McDaniel** is starting his 5th year on the team, and he had two stolen bases against the Wolverines.

Brady Smith was the starting pitcher against Woodruff, working two innings with four strikeouts and allowing one hit with no runs scored. The Indian pitching staff recoded 17 strikeouts during the Woodruff win. Harvey, Gage McDaniel, Peeler, **Reed McDaniel**, Carroll, Wheeler, and **Tucker Wheelchel** all pitched during the game. Wheelchel closed out the game with three strikeouts.

After six games, the top hitters are Caroll (.429 & 2 RBI's), **Brady Smith** (.400 & one RBI) and **Gage Mc-**

"Next year we're really excited about making to the second round of the playoffs," he said. "We just missed it by three points this year (reaching the semifinals). The guys got a taste of what it is to play in that environment against other top athletes. That was good as far as development going forward next year."

Barnwell is scheduled to play a double header against **Lake Maron** on March 10. They are at **Pelion** on March 11 and go to **Bridges Prep** on March 13. They host **Bridges Prep** on March 21. The team travels to Greenville on March 21. They host **Hampton County** on March 24 before playing at rival **Bamberg-Ehrhardt** on the 26th. They go to **Hampton County** on the 26th, before closing out the month of March with a home game against **Edisto** on March 31.

Daniel (.308). Carroll and senior shortstop/pitcher **Sam Smith** are the top two pitchers on the team to date with 10 and 8 strike-outs, respectively. Smith is a senior playing for his third season on the varsity, and he bats second in the line-up at .273 with one RBI.

Other members of the team include sophomore utility infielder **Jackson Harris**, back-up junior outfielder **Jae-don Paulino**, back-up catcher **Bryson Johnson**, junior outfielder/relief pitcher **Trevor Smith**, and senior back-up first baseman and relief pitcher **Seth Phillips**.

The team will play a home-and-home two game series against region foe Wade Hampton on March 10 and 13. They follow up those two games on the road at **York** on the March, 16. Then on March 17 they begin a two games series against region rival **Byrnes** that concludes on March, 20.

Coach Mages is assisted by Colby Crow, **Camrion Forley**, and **D.J. Jefferies**.

you are always challenged to build depth on your team. We will have to have a lot of players both ways this season."

Currently, Coach Moffitt is assisted by Andy **Vaught** who mentors the offensive and defensive lines. **Chris Cormiek** works with wide receivers and defensive backs while **Justin Crain** coaches running

backs and the defensive line. As a former college quarterback, Coach Moffitt will work with quarterbacks and manage the offense for the Griffins.

"We hope to be adding two additional coaches to our program by the time we start Spring practice in May," said Coach Moffitt. "Their hire will be based on a best fit situation."

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SCISA AAAA Girls, continued from pg. 10

key shots in the second half. "Maliyah has been playing in state championship games since the 8th grade," said Coach Curtis. "She knew she had to step it up when Bates left with the injury.

"I felt like we deserved to win the championship based on our body of work all season," said Coach Curtis. "Life can deal you unexpected things and you just have to deal with it under the circumstances. I am so proud of our team putting it all on the line tonight when one of our top players left the game with an injury in the second period.

"Our goal will always be to win the state championship," said Coach Curtis. "We'll be back next season."

Northwood Academy will lose Bates and Tocco to graduation so they return three starters that should put them in a position to make a run next year also. Prior to the championship their lone loss this season was to the highly regarded Bolles School from Jacksonville,

SCISA AAAA Boys, continued from pg. 11

With the return of Green, Parris and Eidson to the team next season expect the Panthers to be favored to repeat next season.

Heathwood Hall was led on offense by 8th grader Jackson Dickerson with 10 points followed by senior guard Deuce Claxton and soph Hunter Colins with 9 points each. Senior forward Xander Pertile

AAAAA Div. 2 Girls, continued from pg. 5

into the last eight minutes.

Other point producers for Berkeley included Kennedy Caldwell (5), Demi Gray (3) and Madison Thomas had two points and three rebounds.

Additional scorers for Greenville included

AAA Girls, continued from pg. 7

hand out assists on 18 of their 24 field goals.

"I think that's definitely what separates us from other teams," Frick said. "It's our ability to pass the ball. Each and every one of us on the court, whether it's off the bench or a starter, everybody can score, and that's what separates us from other teams."

The ability to move the ball through the pass allowed WHS to handle the defensive pressure Keenan likes to bring. The Razorbacks were so successful against it, KHS had to back out of it.

"We've all grown up around the sport, and last year we had people who really stepped up," Roach said. "I feel like it's kind of crazy because we have so many people who play in different ways. We play so different, and I feel when all those different ways of play come together, it runs so smoothly.

"It's amazing and I feel like our team, no matter what press they put on us, each one of us has so much confidence we don't care who we pass it to. We can all handle the ball and the pressure."

AA Girls, continued from pg. 8

had five rebounds and two steals. The remaining points producers for The Armada included junior guard Zaniya Blackmon (2 pts & six steals), while junior guard Cayleigh Johnson closed out the scoring index with one point.

After the game, Atlantic Collegiate Academy head coach Jordin Anderson told the HSSR, "This team has accomplished so much this season and I am very proud of them," said Coach Anderson. "We are going to miss senior Micah Davis, and she has been the face of our program, and she is everything you can ask for in a leader and a captain. She is just an amazing athlete and an amazing person."

Editorial, continued from pg. 2

program to be located somewhere at some time in the future.

There were only three boys' form among the 12 teams competing for state titles who had 10 or more rebounds. This was a bit of a surprise. Terrance McFadden not only had 31 points in the big moments, but he took the time to grab 13 rebounds in the same game! Aassic Germany, playing against McFadden in the same game was not going to be outdone. He matched his 24 points with 17 rebounds. (The new

Florida. During the season Northwood played one of the toughest schedules of any team in the state claiming wins over Berkeley, Wando, Keenan, Bishop England, Oceanside Collegiate, Ashley Ridge and Stratford. Some of these teams will be playing for state titles in the SCHSL next week.

First Baptist began the game playing very loose as they built a 21-12 first quarter lead. Northwood came back and played stronger in the second period to trail 33-29 at the break. At the half, First Baptist was led in scoring by Pojani with 9 points and senior forward Ellie Blitch had 8 points followed by junior guard Gabby Moore and senior guard Paige Pouyat with five each.

At the break Bates had 13 points for the Chargers followed by senior Isabella Heaton with 8 points and Birch had three points. Birch scored 17 second half points to help keep the Chargers in the game.

contributed 8 points and senior Ryan Pfister, soph Peyton Souter, and junior Keon McKinley each scored two points.

Heathwood Hall led 14-11 after the first period. However, the Panthers rallied to lead 20-18 at the half. The pace picked up in the third period when the Panthers outscored Heathwood 18-14 to take a

Drawhorn Wilson (5), while Miracle Cheeks and Jazaria Jones each had four points. Emily Jaminet finished with three points and A'Keyra Harris rounded out the scoring with one point.

One of the key teams in the game was Berkeley

The Raiders trailed 62-44 entering the fourth quarter. They got some defensive stops and a 3-point basket by senior Xalesha Dwyer pulled them within 68-56 with 4:51 still remaining in the game.

KHS kept Walhalla off the scoreboard for basically another 2 1/2 minutes. The only problem was Keenan didn't score agains until just 1:05 was left on the clock.

"We missed a lot of layups and shots around the basket right there," McClain said. "If we'd have hit a few more of those we could have made it more of a game."

Frick was 8 of 15 from the floor, including 3 of 7 from behind the 3-point line, and hit all four of her free throws for her 23 points. She also grabbed nine rebounds and blocked three shots.

Cannon had 19 points, going 8-for-13 from the floor, to go along with three assists and six rebounds. Roach had 12 points, seven assists, six rebounds and two steals. White just missed a double-double, snag-

Down 9 points at the half, Coach Anderson made an important adjustment to her defense for the final two quarters. "We needed to get away from the man defense and use more zone in the second half because two of their best players were great outside shooters," said Coach Anderson. "In the first quarter we were man the entire quarter. I do think we made the necessary adjustments we needed to in the second half, but we just came up a little short."

Down by two, with the ball Coach Anderson called time-out with 16.7 left in the game. "So, the play was supposed to be going for an easy lay-up to tie the score," said Coach Anderson. "I do not know

college program is looking forward to having these two rim-rockers on the same team on the new State-U team).

In all honesty, what if all these players could end up on the same team in the near future? I guess we will never know.

A week earlier, at the Sumter Civic Cener, the SCISA organization crowned four boy's and four girls' champions, and we extend congrats to all 8 teams. On the boy's side we salute Pinewood Prep,

The third quarter was fast paced and First Baptist went into the final period up by only one, 46-45. In the final period the lead changed hands several times and the game was last tied at 60 with 1:56 left in the contest. First Baptist scored the final four points of the game at the free throw line.

Pojani's 22 points for First Baptist was followed up by Blitch (12), senior Clemson signee 6-6 Dyarri Braddick (10), Moore (9) and Pouyat (8). Braddick had several blocks in the paint during the game also.

Northwood was led by solid prospect Birch (20), Bates (13), Heaton (12), and Tocco (7). Clarke and Lauren Cosman each had four points.

The SCISA girl's AAAA all-tournament team consisted of Braddick, Moore, and Pojani of First Northwood was represented by Birch and Bates. The final member of the team was Lauren Majurkiewicz of John Paul II.

38-32 lead into the final period.

The SCISA AAAA boys all-tournament team was represented by Zy Dennis of Laurence Manning, along with Chip Ravenell and Keon McKinley from Heathwood Hall. Pinewood Prep was represented by Green, Parris, and Eidson.

making six of their 15 three-point attempts while Greenville was only two of 12 from the three-point arc.

ging 12 rebounds while scoring eight points.

Medlin finished with six points and eighth-grader Peyton Williams had two.

Lee-Sutton led the Raiders with 20 points to go with four assists, six rebounds and two steals. Senior Kristin Brown had 14 points and five steals, while senior Aareonna Caughman had 13 points, eight rebounds and two assists.

Junior Khloe Williams and junior Tylee Robinson both had four points. Robinson led KHS in rebounding with nine. Dwyer finished with three.

When Wimpshrie took over the program, he admits he thought a bright future might lay ahead.

"I felt they could be special," he said. "After my first year we just continued to get better and better. This is the result of the process and running the program. When you believe in what you're doing, this is what happens."

if some of the players were not paying attention or they saw something different as the play were happening. They were playing man defense, so the plan was to go for an easy lay-up. With everyone running around the three-point shot from the corner did not go in and the game was over.

Some key team stats in the game were Landrum out-rebounding Atlantic Collegiate 44 to 33 with their height advantage. Both teams were 10-of18 from the free throw line. Atlantic Collegiate was 1 of 11 on three-point shots while Landrum made five of 25 three-point attempts.

Greenwood Christian, Cathedral and Ragin Prep, from AAAA on down to Class A.

On the girls, from AAAA to Class A, we salute winning teams First Baptist, Florence Christian, Dorchester Academy and Wildlaw.

Now it is on to Spring sports and time to PLAY baseball and softball!



Boys Basketball

SCORING

Table with 2 columns: Player Name, Points. Includes Christian Rivera (453), Oliver Barnes (421), Tre Green (390), etc.

THREE POINTERS

Table with 2 columns: Player Name, Points. Includes Chesnee (64), Jonathan Slawson (59), Westside (57), etc.

ASSISTS

Table with 2 columns: Player Name, Assists. Includes James F. Byrnes (168), Jonathan Slawson (128), Colt Layton (107), etc.

REBOUNDS

Table with 2 columns: Player Name, Rebounds. Includes Zakarion Simpson (225), Lauren (225), Phillip Deveaux (204), etc.

STEALS

Table with 2 columns: Player Name, Steals. Includes Grafton Eiff (76), Zion Clark (64), Jonathan Slawson (63), etc.

BLOCKED SHOTS

Table with 2 columns: Player Name, Blocked Shots. Includes Tripp Eidson (77), Z Zakarion Simpson (66), Brayden Husband (51), etc.

Girls Basketball

SCORING

Table with 2 columns: Player Name, Points. Includes Lailah Singletary (409), Chase Thomas (348), Chloe Hudson (339), etc.

THREE POINTERS

Table with 2 columns: Player Name, Points. Includes Nathaya Phoenix (218), Teonna Draughn (216), Reagan Rivers (216), etc.

ASSISTS

Table with 2 columns: Player Name, Assists. Includes Kaleigh Lucas (88), Mylayja Thompson (85), Abby Livingston (81), etc.

REBOUNDS

Table with 2 columns: Player Name, Rebounds. Includes Ameerah Conyers (219), Terianna Richardson (191), Stella Eichhorn (186), etc.

STEALS

Table with 2 columns: Player Name, Steals. Includes Kailen Grant (94), Kaydin Sullivan (90), Zimariqa Moorer (89), etc.

BLOCKED SHOTS

Table with 2 columns: Player Name, Blocked Shots. Includes Ameerah Conyers (85), Terianna Richardson (63), Ava Rush (50), etc.

For complete stats, please visit us online at www.HSSR.com

AAAAA Division 1 Girls Basketball State Championship

Blythewood girls take out Wando to repeat as state champs

By WORTHY EVANS
Staff Writer

COLUMBIA—Blythewood's girls basketball team fell behind early against Wando Friday night at Colonial Life Arena.

That deficit didn't bother the Bengals for long. They quickly overcame an 8-point deficit and used their pressure defense to finish with a 68-44 victory that clinched the team's second straight 5A Division 1 state championship.

"It's definitely surreal. This group deserves it," third-year Blythewood coach **Emily McElveen-Schaeffer** said. "They've worked hard for four years. These girls and these coaches, trusted the program, trusted the process and they deserve this moment more than anything else."

South Carolina State signee **Chase Thomas** led the way for the Bengals with 28 points and 11 rebounds. USC-Beaufort signee **India Williams** scored 20 points and pulled down 10 boards.

"Both of them are very good players. They've put their name in the history books of Blythewood High School. They both stepped up at the right moment, as they told me they would. They've been here before, and I



2026 Blythewood Bengals Girls Basketball

trust them."

Two other seniors were key in securing the victory. Hayley Hightower, the veteran point guard and Purdue track and field signee whom McElveen-Schaeffer said has sparked the defensive effort for years, had eight steals and five assists on top of five points. **Madison Thomas**, Chase's sister, had two steals and two assists with four points.

After last year's state title win, the seniors on the team were dead set on winning another before they graduated.

"That was their goal, to go back-to-back," McElveen-Schaeffer said. "They decided themselves, we're tired of losing, we don't want to lose anymore."

Makenna Reynolds, who finished the night with 19 points, scored nine points over the first eight minutes to vault Wando to a 17-9 lead.

"We weren't really aggressive on defense," McElveen-Schaeffer said. "We get motivation from defense, adrenaline, and it turns into capitalization on offense. We're small. We don't

have any size, so we have to pressure their play so we can get a return on the offensive end."

Blythewood's defense awakened in the second quarter, and stepped up the pressure. From that point on, the Bengals points flowed.

Hightower made three of four free throws and Thomas sank a 3-pointer to get the Bengals to within 17-15 at the 6:36 mark of the second quarter.

The game stayed close up to half-time. Williams broke a 27-27 tie with a

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AAAAA Division 1 Boys Basketball State Championship

Ridge View boys claim seventh title in nine seasons

By Roger Lee
Staff Writer

Columbia – Ridge View defeated Ashley Ridge 65-44 in the 2026 5A, Division 1 Boys Basketball Championship.

With the impressive win at Colonial Life Arena March 6, the Blazers captured their seventh state championship in the past nine years and have now won three straight titles.

"It's definitely not easy," Ridge View coach **Joshua Staley** said of the feat. "It's more humbling than it is anything because it takes a lot of things going your way. God really blessed us. We have a great administration, athletic director and a lot of people behind the scenes helping us get to this point."

Ridge View (27-3) built a three-point lead at the end of the first quarter into a 13-point halftime lead. Things didn't get any better for the **Swamp Foxes** (23-8) after the break.

Ashley Ridge scored 13 points in the third to have its most productive quarter of the game. However, Ridge View scored 28 points to take all the momentum and a 60-32 lead into the final eight minutes.



2026 Ridge View Blazers Basketball

The game was a reunion for the head coaches as when he was in high school, Staley played for current Ashley Ridge coach **Brad Dobbels**.

"Coach Dobbels does such a great job," Staley said. "Them being here tonight is a testimony as to how great a coach he is. We knew they do a good job of getting downhill and **Clayton Everett Jr.** is a great player so we just wanted to get in the gaps and make them take the tested 2s all game."

Ashley Ridge struggled stopping

Ridge View in transition.

"They just shot layup after layup after layup," Dobbels said. "Then a couple of times when they shot their 3s and missed they were able to get rebounds and put backs. We got some open looks, but they are a very good, athletic and disciplined team with a good coach. I'm proud of him and you have to give that team credit."

Junior **DJ Wylie** led the Blazer shooters with 14 points. Junior **RJ Davis** added 11 points while both

senior **Talan Staley** and junior **JT Vankallen** added 10. Senior **Jourdin Mack** and junior **Chris Horton** both scored 6.

Everett, a senior, scored a game-high 20 points for the Swamp Foxes. Senior **Shayne Pinckney** added 13 points. Seniors **Gerald Garner** and **Ben Duncan** and juniors **Javion Gathers** and **Nate McKee** rounded out the Ashley Ridge scoring.

AAA Boys, continued from pg. 7

sprinted to the other end of the court by the Christ Church bench with his teammates chasing him. When he finally ran out of room to run, the team jumped up and down in jubilation around him.

"Oh yeah, oh yeah, it felt good," Dixon said of the winning bucket. "I was confident I had it. It means a lot. People dream about those moments all throughout their childhood, all throughout their careers."

"To hit that shot in the last game of my career, my last game playing for Coach Butler and winning a state championship, it was huge."

Dixon's make was the only one in four 3-point attempts. He snagged three rebounds and had two blocked shots.

Senior **Jonathan Perry** was the only other double-figure scorer for the Cavaliers, finishing with 10 points to go with six rebounds and four assists. However, CCES got plenty of points from other sources.

Hipp, also a senior, finished with nine points and six rebounds, Senior **Anthony Atkins** had eight points and seven rebounds, senior **Jude Hall** had

AA Boys, continued from pg. 8

ball inside, they did a good job of covering us and again were there some fouls missed on the inside tonight? Regardless, we need to be able to play that contact."

Coch Sartor is very high on the potential next level opportunity of his 6-7 junior big man **J'Sean Sanders**. "He has a chance to be a major college basketball player if he continues to work hard," said Coach Sartor. "The biggest thing with him, and lot of our players, is preparation. You are going to play like you practice so it is important to play the game as much as you can."

"The road to getting here wasn't easy," said Coach Sartor. "In every playoff game it seemed like a different player stepped up for us and that is the mark of a good team. However, in this game things didn't go our way at crucial times. I am proud of our effort and the fact that we have played for a state championship back-to-back. Our goal in the near future is to win one."

The Iron Horses won the second period 20-11 to take a 30-28 lead at the half. In the second period senior Hopper **Afman** hit the first three-point swish for Philip Simmons at the 6:50 mark and then senior teammate **Dylan Morris** hit consecutive moon shots cutting the deficit to 25-19 with 3:58 left in the first half. Then big man **Jack Mevold** scored in the paint to make the score 25-21. Next Morris bombed another three to cut the deficit to 25-24 and High Point called time-out to slow down the Iron Horse rally. By the half, Philip Simmons was up two points.

After the first quarter, Philip Simmons played a

AAAAA Div. 1 Girls, continued from pg. 4

3-pointer with 23 seconds left in the first half to give the Bengals a 30-27 lead at the half.

The Blythewood defensive pressure took a higher level the rest of the way.

The Bengals' pressure clamped down on Wando. They outscored the Warriors 38-17 and held them to just 7-for-24 in shooting.

Wando opened the third quarter with a **Bella McKeivitt** free-throw and a basket from Reynolds to tie the game at 30, and after Hightower made a basket, **Emry Crawford** tied the game again at 32.

Blythewood scored seven points in quick succession in the space of a minute. After the 5-minute mark of the third, Williams made one of two foul shots, Thomas drained a 3, and Williams returned to the basket for a 3-point play with 4:04 left.

The Bengals finished the third quarter leading 48-36, and outscored Wando 20-8 in the final eight minutes.

eight points, four rebounds and two blocks, and freshman **Ty Young** had five points and three rebound.

Junior **Randy Robinson** led Fox Creek in both scoring and rebounding with 13 points and eight boards, respectively. Junior **Justin Vining** had nine points, while Atwell, a senior, finished with eight.

Sims and Allen, who were averaging a combined 27 points a game, were held to just 10 points. Allen had six points and seven rebounds, while Sims had four points, three assists and three rebounds.

Junior **Chuck Schwarz** had six points, six rebounds and two blocks, while senior **Jason Rogers** had three points.

There was a bit of back and forth in the early going of the game. However, Fox Creek began to open things up a bit. The Predators scored seven of the last eight points in the first quarter with a Robinson layup with three seconds left making it 19-12.

FC took its biggest lead of the game at 21-13 on a Schwarz layup with 5:39 left in the second quarter. It led 23-16 with 3:45 to go in the first half following a Vining layup.

very tight zone defense which limited High Point Academy's big men from getting easy baskets in the paint.

At the half, Morris was the top scorer for Philip Simmons with 11 points while Miller led the Grizzlies with 10 points.

The third period was a defensive battle with High Point Academy outscoring Philip Simmons 10-7 to take a narrow 38-37 lead into the final period. Afman scored a bucket at the 7:45 mark to put the Iron Horses up 39-38. Chris Copeland answered with a put-back basket to give the Grizzlies a 40-39 lead with 7:10 left in the contest.

Around this time, High Point Academy 6-7 big man **J'Sean Sanders** was called for his 4th foul, and he went to the bench for nearly three minutes. While he was out, Philip Simmons had success driving to the basket and they led 44-41 with 1:56 left in the game. With three minutes left in the game Sanders returned to the Iron Horse line-up and he soon was whistled for what appeared to be his 5th foul. However, High Point head coach **Lee Sartor** asked the person keeping the official book at the game if he had Sanders down for five fouls and he said, "only four." Sanders was allowed to stay in the game and several Philip Simmons fans started touting Sanders, and Sanders actually gestured back to them (right or wrong).

So, when Sanders picked up his true 5th foul with 1:33 left, it sent Morris to the line with Philip Simmons up 44-41 on a driving lay-up by Hopper. With 1:32 left, Morris made both free throws to give his

Wando, which rallied against **Lexington** from a 28-15 halftime deficit to beat the Wildcats 53-52 in the lower state final, had its season end with a loss, but 11th-year head coach **Jeff Emory** said that his Warriors proved critics wrong all year and finished high.

"Nobody wants to lose the last game, they want to win it and that's what we prepare for all year," Emory said. "We'll be back. We have a young team, but if you call this year a failure, you're not paying attention. We weren't ranked at the beginning of the year, nobody ever seems to give us credit at the beginning of the season. Two or three weeks in we beat a ranked team and we kept going and going and going, and from there we stayed in the top 10 all year long. I couldn't be more proud of them. I think they've earned everybody's respect."

McElveen-Schaeffer impressed to her team that Wando's ability to play hard and rally illustrate that

Then it was practically nothing for a very long time.

Christ Church tied the game at 23-23 on a 3-pointer by Young just four seconds before halftime. Fox Creek actually scored the first bucket of the second half, an Atwell layup with 7:27 remaining in the third quarter.

The Predators didn't score until Schwarz hit two free throws with 1:44 left in the third quarter. That meant they had gone 10 minutes of game clock scoring just two points.

"We just didn't make shots," Fox Creek's Butler said. "We kind of got out of character a little bit. Shots we normally make, we didn't make. A couple of shots could have made the difference."

Christ Church's Butler had a different view.

"What you saw was two good defensive teams going at each other," he said.

FCHS trailed 37-31 entering the final quarter and gnawingly cut the deficit until tying the game on Atwell's 3.

team a 46-41 lead.

Miller then hit a three-point shot with 1:07 left to cut the deficit to 46-44. **Palmer Driggers** went to the foul line for the Iron Horses with 1:01 left and he converted one free throw to make the score 47-44. With 43.6 to go **Travis Freeman** of High Point converted two free throws to cut the deficit to 47-46. In the final 43.6 seconds of the game Philip Simmons got two free throws from Driggers with 16 seconds left to go up 49-46 and then with 2.8 seconds left Hopper got the last point of the game making one-of- two free throws.

For the game, Philip Simmons was led on the scoring index by Hopper (15 pts, 7 rebounds, 2 steals) along with Morris (13 pts, 4 rebounds, 4 steals, & 4 assists). Junior forward Jack Mevold added 9 points for the Iron Horses followed by **Gavin Johnson** (6 pts & 8 rebounds), Alex **Tchoryk** (4 pts), and Driggers rounded out the scoring with three points.

High Point was led in scoring by Miller, a senior, with 15 points and five rebounds. Sanders, a junior, had 14 points and 9 rebounds. Seniors **Deylin Whitaker** and **Chris Copeland** each scored seven points for the Grizzlies. Copeland also had a team high 12 rebounds. **Breylin Pertell** and **Travis Freeman** rounded out their team's point totals with two- and one-point contributions.

In just 9 years of existence Philip Simmons has now won 19 state titles in various sports which is quite an accomplishment over a short period of time.

strong seasons and state championships are earned, not just expected.

"That's what I challenged them with," she said. "Wando in their last game came from behind to beat Lexington, and I told them that they could come back. That's a good basketball team and that we can't stop. ... You've got to compete every day. You don't just walk on the court and beat somebody."

Three years ago, McElveen-Schaeffer took over a program that went 0-19 in 2021-2022 and had little history of success. With the program that has back-to-back state championships, she said attracting talented players to come to Blythewood will be a stronger sell.

"Winning breeds winning," she said. "When people see what we've done, they're more eager to come here. They want to be a part of that, they want to see that."

SCISA AA Girls, continued from pg. 12

the Raiders a 37-34 lead.

Then with 19.1 seconds left, **Lexxan Maldonado** scored a putback shot in close to cut the deficit to 37-36. Down one, the Cross School fouled Kizer with 14.4 seconds left. Calm and relaxed (are you kidding?) Kizer made both free throws to put the Raiders up 39-36 and the Sumter Civis Center was loud and proud with happy Raider fans. Then with 1.5 seconds left in the game Mayers was fouled, missed the first shot, and then it looked like she was trying to miss her second shot on purpose, possibly hoping for a quick kick-out three-point attempt. However, to her surprise the ball hit the rim, balanced for a moment, and then went through the net to make the final score 30-37 and that is how the game ended.

The Cross School head coach is first-year coach **Jill Brunori** who signed a basketball scholarship to **Wake Forest** after earning *HSSR* all-state honors as a star guard on the **Hilton Head Prep** team in the 2011 and 2012 seasons. She played all four years for the Demon Deacons and was a four-year

Northwood Academy, continued from pg. 56

injuries, had ever opportunity to win the game, and the Chargers tied the score at 60 with 1:56 left in the game on a free throw by **Alyvia Tocco**.

“We had our chances late in the game, but we just did not value our possessions that gave us a chance to win had we converted,” said Curtis. “We should have been more patient.”

When Bates went down, she had already scored 13 points in the game. Junior guard **Maliyah Birch**, the leading scorer on the team at 20 points a game, stepped up her game, dribbling through double teams with the skill of a globe trotter” while finishing with 20 points on several key shots in the second half.

“Maliyah has been playing in state championship

Florence Area, continued from pg. 29

Defensive Player of the Year. Spears averaged 4.2 steals per contest to go with 3.7 rebounds and 10.9 points.

Senior **Zoey Miller** was named to the first team. She was Wilson’s leading scorer with a 14.0 average. She also averaged 3.5 steals,

Senior **Jordan Nelson** was a second team selection. She averaged 7.4 points and 4.7 rebounds.

Another key contributor was junior **Logan Murray**, who averaged 13.1 points to go with 6.7 rebounds and 2.9 steals,

Nadia Brooks was **West Florence’s** selection to the Region 5-AAAAA All-Region squad.

WILSON’S LEONARD PILES UP ACCOLADES**Florence Christian**, continued from pg. 29

way with 19 points. Junior **Bailey Johnson** had eight, junior **Charlotte Granger** had five, senior Leah Lambert had four and senior **Anna Kate Huggins** had three and senior **Demi Greene** both had three.

Poston, Huggins, Johnson and Greene were all members of the Region 3-AAA All-Region team. FCS won the region with an 8-0 record.

Poston averaged 11.9 points per game, 6.3 rebounds and 3.9 assists, all team highs. She also had 3.9 steals. Poston was named the region tournament most valuable player and was selected to the AAA

Woodland, continued from pg. 50

“that we must stay locked in,” said Coach Reeves. “We also have to stay healthy. Our pitching is strong, our hitting is strong, and our defense is strong, so what we have to do is not let one error, here or there, get the entire team down.”

Woodland showed their potential, not only with

member of the ACC Academic honor roll.

After the game she told the *HSSR*, “We got into foul trouble early, and that has been a consistent theme all season, so we went to a 2-1-2 to start the second half to protect some of our players,” said Coach Brunori. “On offense, some of our set plays were not getting positive results in the first half so we put in some screens to help get better ball movement with a focus of setting up **Ryan Mayers** for some high percentage shots.

“We came into game feeling the key things we needed to do were to attack the rim, press them to hopefully get some steals and quick transition buckets, and we also wanted to get them in four trouble,” said Coach Brunori. “We had played them twice before during the season and we knew stopping number five (Weathers) and number 10 (McClure) from having easy lanes to the basket was critical. Our zone defense helped with that also.”

Coach Brunori took time to salute only two seniors on the team who helped the Stingrays finish

games since the 8th grade,” said Coach Curtis. “She knew she had to step it up when Bates left with the injury.

“I felt like we deserved to win the championship based on our body of work all season,” said Coach Curtis. “Life can deal you unexpected things and you just have to deal with it under the circumstances. I am so proud of our team putting it all on the line tonight when one of our top players left the game with an injury in the second period.

“Our goal will always be to win the state championship,” said Coach Curtis. “We’ll be back next season.”

In addition to the graduation of Bates, the Chargers

The Wilson boys’ 6-foot-7-inch junior 5-star recruit **Josh Leonard** has been picking up plenty of individual postseason hardware.

Leonard was not only selected to the AAAA All-State team, but he was also deemed to be the **AAAA Player of the Year**. He was also chosen as the Region 5 Player of the Year.

Leonard averaged a double-double for the Tigers, who went 21-7 and reached the quarterfinals of the state playoffs. He averaged 22.3 points and 12.9 rebounds to go with 2.5 assists, 1.5 blocked shots and 2.8 steals.

Senior **Kiauj Allen** was also an All-State pick as well as being first team All-Region. Allen, who will play in the **North-South All-Star Game** on March 28, averaged 10.0 points and 5.6 rebounds.

Junior **Isaiah Addison** and senior **Jayden Ger-**

All-State Tournament team. She was joined by Huggins on both teams while Lambert was selected to the All-Region Tournament team and Johnson to the All-State Tournament team.

Huggins averaged 7.3 points, 5.8 rebounds, 2.4 assists and a team high 4.2 steals, Johnson averaged 7.7 points, 3.7 rebounds and 3.2 steals, and Greene averaged 4.7 points.

TAYLOR GEENE BOYS PLAYER OF YEAR

Florence Christian’s **Taylor Greene** was selected

their 3-0 win over Branchville, but they tied AAAA power **Stratford** 2-2 in a pre-season scrimmage.

The team will play Colleton County on March 9. Last year the Wolverines finished second in the region to **Andrews**.

22-8 this season. “First of all, Ryan Mayers has had a tremendous career and she will be missed,” said Coach Brunori. “Our other senior, **Reyannah Maldonado** has been a solid player for us as well and she played great defense today before fouling out.”

For the game DA was led in scoring by McClure and Weathers and McClure with 14 and 13 points, respectively. Kizer was next with six points, while **Alysaa Groomes**, **Rylee Matthews**, and **Madison Downey** each contributed 2 points.

The Cross School was led by Mayers with 16 points, followed by Lexxan Maldonado who had six points Reyannah Maldonado with four points, along with Savannah Hollings and Sydney **Hollings** with six and four points, respectively.

The SCISA AA All-Girls tournament team consisted of Kizer, Weathers and McClure of DA, **Sadie Bruyere** of Laurens Academy, along with Mayers, and Hollings of Cross Schools.

will also graduate **Alyvia Tocco** who contributed 8.6 points and 5.1 rebounds a game. Senior forward **Isabella Heaton** will also be missed after averaging 4.8 points and four rebounds a game. Birch and Clark will get help from the return of freshman guard **Lauren Cosman** who averaged five points a game.

It truly was an outstanding season for the Lady Chargers, despite not winning the state title. One has to feel strongly that winning the state title next year has an excellent chance of happening for a team that will play anybody anywhere.

ald were also All-Region first team. Addison averaged 11.7 points, while Gerald averaged 10.9 points, 3.9 rebounds and 2.6 assists.

Junior **Josh Gamble** was a second team selection. He averaged 9.1 points and 3.6 rebounds.

South Florence finished the season with a 13-13 record and lost to Gray Collegiate in the first round. The Bruins were led by **Zion Johnson**, who was second team All-Region.

Johnson, a senior, averaged 13.5 point, 2.6 rebounds, 2.7 assists and 1.9 steals.

Junior **Adrian Singletary** averaged 10.9 points and 9.3 rebounds.

West Florence’s **Bryant Graham** was selected to the Region 5-AAAAA All-Region team.

as the Region Player of the Year.

Greene had a tremendous season for the Eagles, who reached the semifinals of the AAA state tournament and finished with a 21-5 record. Greene averaged 21.8 points and 3.7 assists, both team highs. He also grabbed 4.9 rebounds and had 2.0 steals.

Joining Greene, a senior, on the All-Region team were sophomore **Riley Minton** and sophomore **Brayden Berry**. Minton led FCS in steals with a 2.7 average while scoring at a 10.2 clip to go with 2.3 assists and 2.5 rebounds. Berry led the way in rebounding at 9.3 while averaging 6.5 points.

“We play Andrews at home on March 24, and two days later we go to them,” said Coach Reeves. “We need to keep working hard and be ready for them in a few weeks.”

Coach Reeves is assisted by **Adam Canady** and **Philip Paradise** this season.

AAAAA Division 2 Girls Basketball State Championship

Carter’s 29 points leads Berkeley girls to back-to-back titles

By Rob Gantt
Special To The HSSR

COLUMBIA - A sophomore guard from the Lowcountry had a simply scintillating night inside Colonial Life Arena during the Class 5A Div. II state championship basketball game Thursday, March 5, between defending champion **Berkeley High School** and **Greenville High School**. Berkeley’s **Alaina Carter** hit 11 of 15 shots from the field and knocked down five 3-pointers in powering the Lower State champion Stags to a 54-50 victory.

The Stags finished the 23-5 season and became the first Berkeley team, in any sport, to successfully defend its state title the following season. As a school, Berkeley has nine team titles (5 in baseball, 2 in football and 2 in girls’ basketball).

“This is very special,” said Berkeley head coach **Crystal Peace**. “We had goals from the very beginning of the year. Resilient has been our word all season. We got some bumps and bruises along the way. My job as the leader is to keep them believing in what we do.”

Peace’s team also got eight points from forward **Amani McCray** and

seven more from forward **Imani Levey**.

Greenville ended the season with a very solid 22-7 mark and earned an Upper State title a week earlier.

The Red Raiders received 19 points and 12 rebounds from guard **Ava Owens** and 14 more points from forward **Makyala Assemians**. Assemians also chipped in five boards and two blocks. Carter’s final 3-pointer with better than four minutes left in the contest gave Berkeley a 43-32 lead, but the Red Raiders continued to fight on.

Greenville twice cut its deficit to three points with under a minute left, but Berkeley answered with points from the charity stripe to hold on.

Both squads played tight defense all night, too. Together, they totaled 40 turnovers - combining for 48 points off those turnovers - and Berkeley shot 41.9 percent from the field (18 of 43), while Greenville shot 46.3 percent (19 of 41).

While it wasn’t always pretty, Peace’s team was able to get the repeat with a gritty, determined effort. “We knew what we wanted from day one,” she said. “We just got a humble group of girls. We don’t go out there



2026 Berkeley Stags Girls Basketball

boasting and bragging about anything. It’s always one game at a time.” Each team went on nice runs in the first half. After Berkeley took a 5-2 lead in the opening minutes, Greenville scored 10 of the next 11 points of the first quarter to lead, 12-6, going into the second quarter.

McCray got a 3-pointer to fall less than a minute into the next period and it sparked a 15-3 surge by the Stags. McCray’s jumper from just below the free-throw line put the Stags back on top, 16-15, with 4:11 remaining in the first half. Carter followed with a steal

and layup, then swished a 3-pointer from the wing with 2:03 left to give Berkeley a 21-15 advantage.

Owens scored a pair of buckets to bring the Red Raiders within two points at the break, but Greenville would never hold the lead again. The Red Raiders did cut their deficit to one, 23-22, on a 3-pointer by guard **Emily Jaminet** in the third quarter, but Berkeley always maintained a lead.

Carter’s 3-pointer at the third-quarter horn put the Stags up, 34-27, going See **AAAAA Div. 2 Girls**, pg. 78

AAAAA Division 2 Boys Basketball State Championship

Westwood defeats Greenville to claim AAAA-Div. 2 title

By WORTHY EVANS
Contributing Writer

COLUMBIA — **Greenville** broke out to an 18-4 lead on the **Westwood** basketball team in the first quarter of the 5A Division 2 state final.

By the second quarter at **Colonial Life Arena** Thursday night, the Redhawks were well into turning the tide.

Westwood rattled the defending 5A Division 2 champion Red Raiders with a full-court press, while **Jayden Crews**, **D’Marcus Thomas** and other teammates piled up points to shake off the deficit and close out the school’s first boy’s state championship with a 67-55 victory before a packed crowd at the **University of South Carolina’s** home court.

Third-year head coach **Trent Robinson**, who succeeded **John Combs** after coaching the junior-varsity team, said his team’s start was getting eerily typical of the veteran team. He noted his team’s first-quarter deficits in the last three road playoff games at **Conway, St. James**, and for the lower state championship against **Goose Creek** in Florence.

“When I saw that (Greenville’s run), I said I think we’ve been playing

the same guys all year,” Robinson joked. “I trust my guys. I knew once we started our pressure our shots would come. Honestly, we’ve never started off a game good this year. ... That’s pretty much how we’ve played. Do I want to go through that again? Never, Never. But that’s a strong group, seven seniors, 14 solids. I’m so proud of them.”

Coaches and players alike felt the win was payback for the team’s first loss of the season. Greenville beat Westwood 50-45 at the Magic City Holiday Invitational tournament at **Wilson High School** in Florence Dec. 20.

Thomas finished with 26 points and Crews had 23 points, including four 3-pointers, and nine rebounds to fire the Redhawks (25-3).

“We were just playing our game. That’s our style. They say we’re the best backcourt in SC and we just proved that.” Crews, who signed with **Converse University**, said. “I had that chip on our shoulder when we lost 50-45 in Florence (Dec. 20) at Wilson. That really hurt. That was our first loss of the season.”

Thomas, who signed with **Southern Wesleyan University**, said he and Crews worked hard all season to become the scoring and defending tan-



2026 Westwood Red Hawks Boys basketball

dem that helped bring Westwood its first state boys championship home, two years after the Redhawks girls track team won a share of the 4A state title three years ago.

“That’s really my brother, man,” he said. “I told him at the start of the season that we had to get us one, me and him, in the gym, day and night, every single day, we just lived in the gym.”

Those team brothers had their work cut out for them on the lighted University of South Carolina floor.

Moments after the tipoff, Greenville (23-7) got started with **Caden Coleman’s** basket

and **Keshun McCoy’s** 3-pointer after a Westwood turnover.

Thomas sank a quick field goal from just beyond the foul line for Westwood’s first score, and later Crews hit a pair of soul shots to make it 10-4, but by **Gavin Griffin’s** layup at the 2:02 mark, the Red Raiders looked in complete control of the Redhawks.

Greenville finished the quarter leading 20-10, but that point was just beyond the Red Raiders’ high-water mark. Led by Crews and Thomas, the Redhawks climbed back into the game

See **AAAAA Div. 2 Boys**, pg. 74

AAAA Girls Basketball State Championship

North Augusta goes back-to-back with 63-50 win over Westside

By Neill Kirkpatrick
Special to the HSSR

Columbia – Saturday afternoon at Colonial Life Arena was a rematch of last season's girls AAAA state final between North Augusta and Westside, won by North Augusta 49-35, in fact this was the third time in the past five years that this two teams have met for the state championship Westside won the first meeting 44-40 in OT so you could say that this was the rubber match.

The Yellow Jackets had two big runs, one to begin the game (6-0) and one at the end of the third quarter (7-0) that coincidentally was the final margin of their 63-50 victory over the Rams of Westside. While this made it back-to-back, it was also the Yellow Jacket's seventh title in the last 10 years.

North Augusta head coach Al Young said, "We needed to come out with a lot of intensity and play hard especially on the defensive end. They have a really good team that is well balanced with the big girl inside and shooters all over the court. I just that is would take a lot of heart and hard work to defend them. We also did a good job of not making mistakes."

Coach continued, "Going into games we always find out who the scorers are and it is our goal to take them away. I thought we did a good job of that and we did a good job all

year with taking away their scorers." Westside head coach **Jackie Roberts** said, "They executed their game plan very well. We have faced that type of defense all year with one girl behind Khalia and one in front but they made it extremely difficult on us all night."

North Augusta finished the year 28-1 winning their final 27 games in dominating fashion. They outscored their opponents by over 1000 points and in the playoffs they were just as dominate outscoring their five opponents by 141 points.

Westside had their 18-game winning streak snapped and finished the year 27-2. Their only loss on the season was to North Mecklenburg (Charlotte area school) in overtime 56-55. They were as dominate as the Yellow Jackets outscoring their opponents by over 900 points, however, they played a couple of tight games in the playoffs.

North Augusta opened the game on a 6-0 run and maintained a lead throughout the quarter and pushed it 19-11 before Westside came storming back with a 6-0 run of their own. The quarter ended with the Yellow Jackets on top 19-17.

Senior **Celena Grant** scored six to lead the Yellow Jackets while senior **MaKyhia Paul** scored six points in the quarter for the Rams to keep them close and helped closed the gap to two



2026 North Augusta Yellow Jackets Girls Basketball

points at the end of quarter.

The second quarter started with Grant hitting a three to stop a Rams 6-0 run. The Rams continued to chip away at the lead and finally tied at 24 when **Monasia Clinkscales** hit one of two free throws.

North Augusta's **Taylor Boney** scored her only basket of the game at the buzzer to give the Yellow Jackets a 26-24 lead at the half.

The Yellow Jackets would start the third quarter by extending their two-point lead to nine at 36-27 two minutes into the quarter. **Ashley Walker** scored a three the old fashion way and **Azaria Sapp** nailed a three to give the Yellow Jackets that nine point lead.

Westside's Paul hit a two and **Harmoni Earn** hit a three to cut the lead to five at 39-34. That would be as close as the Rams would get the rest

of the game as the Yellow Jackets would go on a decisive 7-0 run to end the third and start the fourth quarter.

The run would push the lead to 12 at 46-34. Earn would score under the basket to stop the run and slash the lead to ten but the Yellow Jackets would increase the lead to 57-44 with three minutes remaining. The rest of the game was academic as each team scored to make the final 63-50.

North Augusta was led in scoring by Grant and Sapp with 15 points each. Walker added 11 and **Messiah Williams** and **Kenedi Wright** added 10 points each. Williams had a game high 12 rebounds to go with two blocks.

For Westside Paul and **Tiana Marshall** had 12 points each to lead the Rams with Earn the only other Ram in double figures with 11.

Mullins, continued from pg. 36

piece of the program's future," White said.

Woodberry averaged 12.8 points.

The seniors on the roster were **Naomi Carter**, **Quentia Dickerson**, **Moriah McLeod** and **Autumn**

Ashley Ridge, continued from pg. 27

Katelyn Lim, **Annemarie Ehritz**, **Aliyas Foster**, **Dawn West**, **Jeniah Hunter**, **Ella Reck**, **Hannah Jackson** and **Jeanne Deniel**.

AR Wrestling

Several Ashley Ridge wrestlers qualified for the 5A individual wrestling state tournaments.

Fort Dorchester, continued from pg. 27

Fort Wrestling

Several Fort Dorchester wrestlers qualified for the 5A individual wrestling state tournaments.

Fort Dorchester's **Savon Garrett** placed third in

Recruiting, continued from pg. 41

lows him to pass protect really well. He bends really well and his athleticism is very obvious when you watch him play."

Oceanside Collegiate Academy just might be the top high in the state to visit for skill talent when the college recruiter come calling this May. Long time friend **Brent Laprad** is the head coach of the Sharks who are coming off two back-to-back state titles and looking for more this season.

In this issue the *HSSR* has named Sharks quarterback **Aiden Manavian** (5-11, 185) our first ever Mr. Football as a junior for the first time in our 40-year history. This past season Manavian threw for 4,028 yards completing 244-of-350 passes for a 69 percent completion rate and 41 touchdowns. One year before, as a sophomore, he passed for 3,507 yards completing 224-of-336 passes for 42 touchdowns.

The *HSSR* has this gifted signal called ranked among out top 5 prospects for the 2026 season and colleges should not hold his 5-11 height against him says Coach LaPrad. "Baker Mayfield is a top quarterback in the NFL and he is barely six-feet tall and look what he has accomplished," said Coach LaPrad. "Aiden is like having a coach on the field and he can make all the throws with great check down vision and instincts.

"This kid has a gun for an arm," said Coach LaPrad. "He has rubber bands in his shoulders. He is number three in his class academically with a 5.1 GPA. Don't forget we had **Sam Hartman** at 5-11 in our program a few years ago. Sam went to Wake Forest and played so well that **Notre Dame** gave him \$3 million to come play with them his final year. I witnessed Manavian hit the top of the goal posts on a throw from the 48- yard line the other day."

Currently Manavian's top firm offer is **Miami of Ohio** but Coach LaPrad says that **Wake Forest** has indicated to him that Manavian is about to get an offer from them.

Andrew Jackson, continued from pg. 35

fielder **Mic Beard** starting her fourth season on the varsity and she batted number 8 against Holly Hill along with sophomore **Scarlett Mixon** who started in right field and batted number 9 versus Holly Hill.

Other members of the team include courtesy runners, freshman **Brianna Jacques** who also plays in

Bohachic, continued from pg. 21

additional classes this semester. His plans after high school include studying for a Broadcast Journalism degree, and he hopes to continue playing baseball in college. When asked if he had a dream school to play for at the D-1 level, he said, "That would be **Penn State** but I'm willing to go anywhere to continue playing at the next level. **Francis Marion University** has an outstanding program and it's local."

Referring to the experience taking NETC online

Worley. With Dickerson being the only one to see significant action, White is hoping that experience will pay dividends next year.

White is also hoping the fact that Mullins will be

Ashley Ridge junior **Rahiem Skyers** was just a couple of moves away from claiming a state championship during the 5A Boys tournament. Skyers advanced to the championship match of the 120-pound weight class, where he lost a 9-4 decision to **East-side wrestler Drayton Johnson**.

Grady Brewer placed fourth at 138. **Diego Mil-**

the 285-pound division during the state championships. Other Fort state qualifiers were **Skylar Siegfried** (106), **Dustin Gorman** (120), **Jacob Bannister** (144), **Evan Gates** (150) and **Julyun**

One of the main reasons highly regarded former **Summerville** wide receiver **Jaiden Kelly-Murray** (5-11,175) transferred to Oceanside Collegiate is to play with Manavian. Kelly-Murray is ranked as the number two over-all and top receiver prospect in the state from the 2027 class.

As a freshman Kelly-Murray started as a free safety when he had a ton of interceptions but he has played mainly receiver since his sophomore season. This past season he caught 64 passes for 957 yards and 14 touchdowns. He runs a 4.4 forty and he very hard to cover one-on-one.

"Jaiden currently has 39 offers, all but **Clemson** and **Virginia** in this part of the country," said Coach LaPrad. "I have no idea what they are waiting on. **Florida** offered him as a safety but at 5-11 he feels his NFL opportunity is more at slot receiver and I agree with him."

Manavian will have two top targets to choose from this season as Oceanside rising senior **Anthony Williams** (6-2, 180) returns after catching 64 passes for over 1,000 yards and 12 touchdowns as a junior. "Anthony is super special with great speed and great hands, and he catches the ball at a high point," said Coach LaPrad. "He is a great kid on-and- off the football field. He runs a 4.4 forty. He is getting a ton of recruiting interest right now."

Staying with top flight receivers, Bluffton head coach **Hayden Gregory** describes his 2027 receiver **Amare Patterson** (6-1, 190) as a sure power five offer. Patterson has already taken visits to Georgia, LSU, and Florida and he is drawing serious interest from Arkansas and FSU as well.

"Number one, Amare is a track sprinter champion and he is super-fast," said Coach Gregory. "He had 58 catches for 900 yards last season when he had another receiver sign with **North Carolina**. "I would say he has around 35 offers right now. I would say his top three schools right now are Georgia, Florida and LSU and they have all offered."

the infield and along with freshman **Abby Jacques** who can also play in the infield/outfield.

The team will next play at **Northside Christian** on Friday March 13. They will then play at **Jefferson Davis Academy** on March, 16 before playing Holly Hill Academy once again away on March, 18.

courses, Bohachic commented, "They give you a deadline you must meet, it's college level work, and the NETC program is exactly what I can expect when I get to college," he said. "I like the way the program is run, and it's been an amazing experience." "I know with I'll help me reduce my course load greatly and it will be very helpful getting many of the first-year prerequisite classes completed."

When asked about a memorable moment in his sports career, Bohachic said, "In region play last

in Class A next season following reclassification will help matters as well.

Ian (157), **Gabriel Jager** (126), **Luca Phillips** (132) and **Talon Campbell** (175) were also state qualifiers.

During the 5A Girls tournament, **Yongshan (Mondo) Tie** placed third at 120. **Marisa Marsar** was also a state qualifier.

(Juu) Bonneau (165).

Everyone was impressed with the quarterback play of Bamberg-Ehrhardt **Brian McMillian** in the Class A state title game where he led his team to victory. McMillian is just 5-11, 165 and after throwing for nearly 4,000 yards last season his head coach says he is being looked at by colleges as a defensive back.

"Brian is the best athlete on our team and we have a lot of good athletes playing for us," said head coach **Corey Crosby**. "Brin would make someone an outstanding defensive back at the next level. He has great football instincts and he is very coachable."

The **Hammond School** just might have a late blooming prospect in 2027 linebacker **Jackson Ross** (6-3, 215) whom we have always regarded as a basketball prospect. Ross has visited **SC**, **Vandy**, and **Texas Tech** and all three schools are keeping in touch. Ross caught six touchdowns as a TE also last season. He is also drawing interest from **Duke** and **North Carolina**.

The other 2027 commitment to major college football right now is Daniel receiver **Trey Wimberly** (6-0,170) and he pledged to the nearby Tigers back in May of 2025. Wimberly caught 57 passes for 1,072 yards and 14 touchdowns as a junior.

One of the top running backs in the 2027 class is Byrnes High's **Tre Segarra** (5-11, 205). As a junior he rushed for 1,460 yards on 174 carries and scored 17 touchdowns. He has visited **Tennessee**, **South Carolina**, **Indiana**, and **Stanford** with **Alabama** showing strong interest also.

Well, this is about all the space we have for our *Modern Turf* recruiting issue this month. It appears to be another great year for high school prep football talent in South Carolina. We have to thank the great high school football coaches we have amongst us in South Carolina who do a great job of teaching the fundamentals of the game to their players.

Coach Palmer is assisted by **Jeremy Bessinger**, **Monica Beard**, **Bill Johnson**, **Denise Duncan** and **Carmen Mixon**. The Head of School is **Gill Hackney**.

year against Marlboro County, we were no hits for six innings. Then, they made a pitching change and we scored 8 runs. The next inning, it started raining and I got tapped as relief to get us out of the inning. With out bats working, the game was tied at 11 in the final inning. We managed to get a walk off run for the win and it was an incredible come back in the rain."

AAAA Boys Basketball State Championship

North Augusta boys outlast South Pointe, earn first crown



2026 North Augusta Yellow Jackets Basketball

Editor's note: at time of press, the story for this game was not yet written. Please visit us online for the story in the coming days on www.HSSR.com

AAAAA Div. 2 Boys, continued from pg. 5 with a 13-4 scoring run over the first three minutes of the second.

Crews opened the second quarter with a 3. After **Arkies Shell's** layup for Greenville, Thomas countered with a layup and **Cylan McLeod** made two free throws to cut Greenville's lead to 22-17.

A 3 from Thomas got Westwood to within two points, and after two foul shots from the Red Raiders, another 3 from Crews cut Greenville's lead to one by the 5:33 mark of the second quarter.

"One possession at a time, score-stop, score-stop, score-stop," Crews said. "We went three stops in a row, and that's what happened."

Westwood and Greenville battled back and fourth over the next four minutes until Caden Coleman's foul shots and a McCoy layup gave the Red Raiders a 32-26 lead with 1:07 left in the half.

That was the last time the Red Raiders' lead was more than three points. Thomas ended the first-half scoring with a jumper with 23 seconds to go, and Greenville led 32-28 at intermission.

"Coach said that they was going to go on a run at the start of the game, so we handled the run and we kept going on runs," Thomas said.

The second half was pretty much one big Westwood run.

Thomas sparked the Redhawks' second-half surge with a 3 in the first 20 seconds of play, followed by **A.J. Veal's** basket.

Midlands, continued from pg. 40

we're the best backcourt in SC and we just proved that."

Westwood stayed behind Greenville through the first half and trailed 32-28 at intermission. Not long after, the Redhawks broke the game wide open.

Thomas made a putback to put the Westwood up 38-37, its first lead in the game, with 5:08 left in the third. They never looked back.

Westwood outscored Greenville 39-22 in the second half, and 63-37 since Greenville's opening run.

"Since preseason when we were in the gym all day, we always had that chip on our shoulder," Crews said. "A lot of people doubted us, but we just stayed poised and we came out with the dub."

C.A. Johnson tops Bethune-Bowman for 1A crown

It looked as if **Bethune-Bowman** was going to spoil **C.A. Johnson's** moment Saturday afternoon at **Colonial Life Arena**.

After being up by 17 points late in the game, the Hornets halted the Mohawks' 15-1 scoring run in the final stretch and stormed the floor after a 72-64 victory for their first state championship since 2014 and third in school history.

Senior **Aaissacc Germany** scored 24 points and pulled down 17 rebounds and made seven steals.

Senior and **Blythewood** transfer **Javarius Wyche** also scored 24 points and had four thefts. Junior **Milton McCray**, the Class 1A Player of the Year and son of head coach **Robert McCray**, had 14 points.

"We knew it wasn't a big thing, it wasn't us. We knew they couldn't play with us," Wyche said. "We just stayed with what we do, stayed together, and stayed disciplined."

The Hornets were up 22-9 after the first quarter and held a 37-25 lead by the half. They were up 48-32 with a Germany layup at the 3:39 mark of the third, but Bethune-Bowman finished the quarter on a 9-0 run to go into the fourth down just 48-41.

The Hornets held a 64-47 lead with 3:55 left in the game, but Bethune-Bowman rallied hard to cut the lead to 65-62 with 1:39 left.

Germany made a pair of free throws at the 1:22 mark. After the Mowhawks got two foul shots of their own, Germany made his final layup. Odom made one of two free throws and McCray went down the court and made a layup at the buzzer to close out the win.

"That's who we are, we're bulletproof," Coach Mc-

Arkies made a steal and layup at the 6:09 mark, and that was the last Greenville basket for four minutes.

In that time McLeod made good on a jumper and with the Red Raiders' lead to 37-34, Thomas turned the game around.

Thomas hit another layup at the 5:08 mark. Some 28 seconds later Thomas made a putback to get Westwood in the lead for the first time in the game, 38-37. At the 4:13 mark, his layup with an assist from **Daytron Cockfield** brought the crowd noise to a crescendo around the arena.

As if the crowd exploded even louder when Crews drained a 3 with another assist from Cockfield.

Cockfield himself fed the Westwood crowd when he nailed a 3 with an assist from McLeod to give the Redhawks a 46-37 lead.

"One possession at a time," Crews said about his team's second-and third-quarter surge. "Don't worry about scores, you've got to play defense. Defend, defend, defend. One step at a time, Defend, make the right shots, don't turn the ball over."

Coleman's jumper for the Red Raiders broke the momentum briefly, but one of two foul shots from Crews gave Westwood a 48-39 lead going into the final quarter—a quarter-long 20-6 scoring run.

Greenville tried to climb back into the game with a 3 and a basket from Coleman to make it 48-44

Cray said. "They were shooting at us a couple of times, we got hit, we got up and continued to battle. ... We execute and persevere and good things happen."

Girls

Blythewood claims second straight 5A D1 title

Blythewood fell behind early against **Wando** Friday night, but the defending 5A Division I champions didn't sweat it. The Bengals quickly overcame an 8-point deficit and used their pressure defense to finish with a solid 68-44 victory that clinched the team's second straight state title.

"This group deserves it," third-year Blythewood coach **Emily McElveen-Schaeffer** said. "They've worked hard for four years. These girls and these coaches trusted the program, trusted the process and they deserve this moment more than anything else."

Chase Thomas led the way for the Bengals with 28 points and 11 rebounds. **India Williams** scored 20 points and pulled down 10 boards

"Both of them are very good players. They've put their name in the history books of Blythewood High School. They both stepped up at the right moment, as they told me they would. They've been here before, and I trust them."

Two other seniors were key in securing the victory. Hayley Hightower, the veteran point guard whom McElveen-Schaeffer said has sparked the defensive effort for years, had eight steals and five assists on top of five points. **Madison Thomas**, Chase's sister, had two steals and two assists with four points.

After last year's state title win, the seniors on the team were dead set on winning another before they graduated.

"That was their goal, to go back-to-back," McElveen-Schaeffer said. "They decided themselves, we're tired of losing, we don't want to lose anymore."

"We weren't really aggressive on defense," McElveen-Schaeffer said. "We get motivation from defense, adrenaline, and it turns into capitalization on offense. We're small. We don't have any size, so we have to pressure their play so we can get a return on the offensive end."

Trailing 17-9 after the first quarter, Blythewood eventually evened the score. Williams broke a 27-27 tie with a 3-pointer to give the Bengals a 30-27 lead at intermission.

The Blythewood defensive pressure took a higher

level the rest of the way. The Bengals outscored the Warriors 38-17 in the second half and held them to just 7-for-24 in shooting.

Three years ago, McElveen-Schaeffer took over a program that went 0-19 in 2021-2022 and had little history of success. With the program that has back-to-back state championships, she said attracting talented players to come to Blythewood will be a stronger sell.

"Winning breeds winning," she said. "When people see what we've done, they're more eager to come here. They want to be a part of that, they want to see that."

Keenan falls to Wallhalla in 3A final
Tried as they could, the Raiders couldn't keep up with defending 3A champion Wallhalla Thursday. The Razorbacks scored 21 points in both the first and second quarters to take a 42-27 lead at the half, then finished with a 70-58 victory.

For the Raiders (20-7), Class 3A Player of the Year Taelor Lee-Sutton scored 20 points and made four steals and six rebounds, Kristin Brown had 14 points and five steals, and Aareonna Caughman added 13 points and eight rebounds and a block.

"We tried to claw back, but it took a lot of energy out of us," Keenan head coach **Reggie McClain** said. "They're a good team. Once they got in their game plan, we had to get out of what we normally do."

The Raiders reached the state final for the seventh time in school history with a convincing 62-43 victory over Oceanside Collegiate in Florence Feb. 28.

"This group hadn't been there (to state)," McClain said after the victory over the Landsharks. "My seniors were freshman when we lost in the fourth round. We talked about that for the last two or three years. We ended up losing in the third round last year, so this was our last chance for our seniors to go to state."

After falling behind 21-15 in the first quarter the Raiders looked to rally in the second period. Instead, the Razorbacks went on an 11-0 run early in the second to take a 36-19 lead with three minutes left in the half.

Wallhalla outscored Keenan 20-17 in the third quarter to go up 62-45 going into the fourth.

Brown, Caughman, and two other seniors move on from the Raiders. Lee-Sutton, who averaged 22.2 points, 4.8 rebounds, and 4.4 steals per game, returns along with several other key players.

With 3:38 to play, the Redhawks were merely waiting to clear the bench and storm the court. Oddly, Crews fouled out with 2:28 to go after McLeod's basket gave Westwood a 58-44 lead. The rest of the Redhawks scoring was with free throws, and after L.J. Dendy's layup for Greenville with six seconds left, the Westwood bench burst into celebration with its first state championship in hand.

"Since preseason when we were in the gym all day, we always had that chip on our shoulder," Crews said. "A lot of people doubted us, but we just stayed poised and we came out with the dub."

Robinson, standing in the middle of a court that more than a dozen Westwood boys basketball teams could not reach since the school opened in 2012, took in the sights of the fans, Westwood coaches, and players as they celebrated the victory.

"Right now it's such a surreal moment," he said. "Like when you don't know how possible it is until you get closer and closer, and then like man, we have a chance to do it and we did it."

Senior point guard **Kami Roach** echoed Frick's thoughts.

"It's so much more than a win," said Roach, who has started on the varsity since eighth grade and was the 2025 **South Carolina Basketball Coaches Association AAA Player of the Year**. "It's our last game playing with people who are literally my best friends. It's more like a family. To do this again with my best friends is such a surreal feeling."

Walhalla finished the season with a 26-2 overall record and on a 21-game winning streak. The Razorbacks haven't

AAA Girls Basketball State Championship Walhalla defends its AAA girls basketball championship

By **Dennis Brunson**
hssr.com Associate Editor

Columbia – The **Walhalla High School** girls basketball team proved on Friday that last season's AAA state title was not a fluke.

The Razorbacks took control of this year's AAA champion contest early in the second quarter and never looked back as they defeated perennial power **Keenan** 70-58 at **Colonial Life Arena**.

"It means everything, honestly," said WHS junior **Ashlyn Frick**, who led all scorers with 23 points, of repeating as state champion. "This is more than a basketball team. This team, we're almost like a family. There's just something about going back-to-back that makes it so special."

Senior point guard **Kami Roach** echoed Frick's thoughts.

"It's so much more than a win," said Roach, who has started on the varsity since eighth grade and was the 2025 **South Carolina Basketball Coaches Association AAA Player of the Year**. "It's our last game playing with people who are literally my best friends. It's more like a family. To do this again with my best friends is such a surreal feeling."

Walhalla finished the season with a 26-2 overall record and on a 21-game winning streak. The Razorbacks haven't

lost to a AAA school since falling to Wren in the second round of the 2024 state playoffs.

This will be just the fourth state championship trophy going in the school's trophy case. The first was for Class A boys track and field in 1946 and the second was for Class A boys basketball in 1952.

"It means a lot, the way the girls get to go out the way they did, the seniors," said Walhalla head coach **Byron Wimphrie**, who just completed his fifth season in charge of the program. "I think the community is proud of that. To me, I think it's gratitude because this is something that doesn't happen a lot."

The Razorbacks achieved the repeat against a program in Keenan that has won six state titles and played in four more title games since 2007. The Raiders' most recent title came in 2023 when they claimed the AAA crown over **Camden**. It was the final of four consecutive championships and five in six years.

Keenan finished with a 20-7 record. The game was a nip-and-tuck battle through the first six minutes or so. Two free throws by star sophomore **Taylor Lee-Sutton** brought Keenan within 14-12 with 1:48 remaining in the first quarter. Then it started to get away from KHS.

AAA Boys Basketball State Championship Christ Church defeats Fox Creek to claim AAA boys crown

By **Dennis Brunson**
hssr.com Associate Editor

Columbia – Since **Dr. James Naismith** hung that first beach basket in 1891 in creating the game of basketball, billions upon billions of boys and girls have dreamed of hitting that game-winning shot to help his or her team claim a championship. Considering the sheer number of people who have acted out the sports fantasy, relatively few have actually experienced that thrill.

You can add **Christ Church Episcopal School's David Dixon** to that list.

The 6-foot-5-inch Dixon drained a 3-point shot from the right corner with seven seconds remaining in the game and saw a trey from Fox Creek's **Kobe Sims** come up short as the Cavaliers won the AAA boys state championship on Friday at **Colonial Life Arena**.

"It didn't feel real," said Dixon, a senior who ended up leading the Cavaliers in scoring with 12 points with his game-winning trifecta. "It was the biggest bucket ever of my career, no doubt."

CCES finished the season with a 26-1 record. The triumph gave Christ Church its first ever **South Carolina High School League** AAA state

championship in any sport since moving to the classification two years ago due to the multiplier rule.

"It means everything to me," senior **Reid Hipp** said of winning the title, the program's third in four years and fourth in six years. "It's the first AAA championship in anything for our school. It's remarkable."

Hipp actually missed out on an opportunity to help improve CCES' chances of winning when he missed two free throws with 33 seconds remaining in the game to leave the score at 49-46. The Predators' **Chanze Allen** snagged the rebound. They quickly got the ball downcourt and found **Keori Atwell** wide open in the right corner. He too drained a 3 to tie the game at 49-49 with 25 seconds to go.

Both teams had one timeout left, but neither Christ Church head coach **John Butler** nor FC head coach **Tim Butler** chose to use it.

"I was there on the sideline, 'Do I call a timeout or do I let them play,' " John Butler said. "You know the old philosophy if you call a timeout you let the defense get set. We always tell the shooters to get to the corners, the guards to get to the rim, and they did what we've practiced to do every day."

Fox Creek didn't stop the clock,



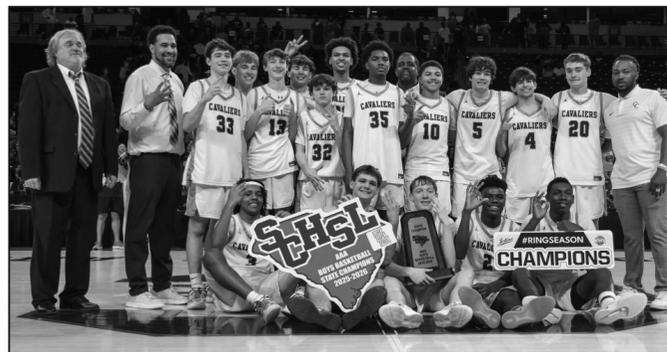
2026 Walhalla Razorbacks Girls Basketball

WHS sophomore **Baylee Cannon** answered the two free throws 15 seconds late, and senior **Miley White** hit a layup with 1:11 left to make it 18-12. Sophomore **Anna Medlin** drained a 3-point shot with 13 seconds to go to push the lead to nine before Lee-Sutton sank a 3-pointer just inside the halfcourt line at the buzzer to make it 21-15 entering the second quarter.

Any hope the long trey would swing the momentum in Keenan's favor quickly evaporated. After the team's traded a pair of baskets each, Walhalla reeled off 11 straight points in less than three minutes to take total control.

"We tried to claw back, but it took a lot of energy out of us," said Keenan veteran head coach **Reggie McClain**.

See **AAA Girls**, pg. 78



2026 Christ Church Cavaliers Basketball

After slowly retrieving the ball and initially struggling to get it inbounds, the Cavaliers pushed the ball up the floor. Hipp got the ball on the third pass. He was to the left of the basket about 15 feet out and had a defender on him. He saw a wide-open Dixon in the right corner in front of CCES' home bench and got the ball to him. Dixon canned the trey with seven seconds to go.

"We were just getting the ball down the floor," Hipp said. "I was thinking about putting it up myself, but I saw David and I knew David wasn't going to miss that 3, so I got it to him."

Fox Creek didn't stop the clock,

instead hurriedly pushing it up the floor. Sims did a great job of creating a 3-point opportunity at the top of the key, but the shot came up short as the buzzer sounded.

Fox Creek's Butler said he was mistaken for not using the timeout after either one of the 3-pointers.

"I made some mistakes," he said. "Those boys did everything they were asked to do for me all year long. Those are tremendous kids. I hate it for my seniors, but we'll be back. I let them down tonight."

Dixon, who was wise enough to get back on defense after hitting the basket, then did his celebrating. He

See **AAA Boys**, pg. 77

AA Girls Basketball State Championship

Landrum wins first girls basketball title in school history

By **Billy G. Baker**
Publisher

Columbia—The **Landrum** girl's (25-7) basketball team built a 33-22 halftime lead over **Atlantic Collegiate** in the SCHSL AA championship game at the USC Colonial Life Center on March 5th, and despite being outscored 21-12 in the second half, the Cardinals hung on to win their first ever girls state title 45-43.

Landrum was led in scoring by 5-10 sophomore **Delaney Caldwell** with 19 points, 12 rebounds, six assists, three blocked shots and two steals.

The game had significant sentimental value for Landrum. In early February head coach **Kali Koenig's** father, a devoted fan and supporter of the team, passed away. His memory was imbedded in the minds of every Landrum player during the game. Caldwell talked about "Kalvin Koenig" after the big win. "Winning today is even more meaningful because he meant so much to the team and he loved everyone of us," said Caldwell. "He was up there (Heaven) cheering hard for us no doubt. We are proud to have won this game for him."

Caldwell, a truly special talent who transferred to Landrum from **Spartan-**

burg Christian this season, also talked about what it meant to have been a key reason Landrum won their first girls' basketball championship ever. "This is an amazing feeling, and I am so thankful to God," said Caldwell. "We played with grit today and we never gave up. We were all out there playing hard for each other."

Coach Koenig was just as excited after the game. "This win was amazing and I am speechless right now," she said. "It is an awesome feeling right now. It has been a nice season and having Caldwell on the team has been a nice asset. The girls have accepted her with open arms, and she is an amazing teammate. I just love how my players put God first and I love how close they are. They want each other to do well, and it is not at all about them."

"They just want to win and that is what we did today," said Coach Koenig. "The second half was nerve racking and nail biting, but we got the job done. They worked so hard to accomplish what they did, and I am very proud of them."

In reference to her beloved father's passing, Coach Koenig said, "My assistant coaches and players have gone



2026 Landrum Cardinals Girls Basketball

through this grief together and that has been comforting," said Coach Koenig. "I know he was cheering us on from heaven today and that is all I can ask for."

Landrum's other scorers were senior **Kylie Fortner** with 10 points and sophomore point guard **Emalynn Bright** added seven points and seven rebounds. Junior **Hazel Cain** and 8th grader **Avery Caldwell** each scored three points in the win. Freshman **Leena Schembra** contributed two points and senior forward **Sullivan Price** rounded out the scoring for the Cardinals with one point.

Atlantic Collegiate (23-3), based

in Conway, got point production from all 8 players who played in the game. The top scorer was led in scoring by senior wing **Micah Davis** with 13 points, seven rebounds and five steals. Sophomore guard **DaZena Capers** had 8 points, four rebounds and three. Freshman guard **Erin Williams** added seven points, five rebounds, and three steals during the game. Sophomore forward **Angellina Collins** added six points and five rebounds for The Armada.

Junior guard **Amanda Garza** and sophomore forward **Ashyra Willis** scored three points while Willis also

See **AA Girls**, pg. 78

AA Boys Basketball State Championship

Philip Simmons rallies to defeat High Point, claim AAA title

By **Billy G. Baker**
Publisher

Columbia—After the **High Point Academy** Grizzlies (28-3) built a 17-10 first quarter lead over **Philip Simmons**, in the AA boys basketball title game, on the strength of consecutive three-point shots by **Joc Miller**, some March, 5th observers on hand at the USC Colonial Life Arena were thinking it just might be the Grizzlies day.

After all, the Grizzlies came into the title game averaging 71 points a game, so if their first quarter scoring pace had continued, they would have finished the game victorious with 68 points. On the other hand, Philip Simmons came into the finals averaging 58.9 points a game, so being held to just 10 points in the first period would have been a bad trend ending up with 40 points which might have led to a loss.

In the end, the game trended more **Philip Simmons** way as the Iron Horses rallied for a 50-46 win. It was the first boys' basketball championship in the 9-year history of the school located in Berkeley County.

Philip Simmons head coach **Garrrett Campbell** talked with the **HSSR** after the game. "Our plan was to take

away the paint from them," said Coach Garrett. "Their strength was number one scoring around the rim. Our plan was to pack it in and make them shoot from the outside. Our guys did a great job of sticking with game plan and following through."

Coach Campbell praised the play of top senior scorers **Hopper Afman** and **Dylan Morris**. "Both of them are elite shooters, and their percentage is in the high 30's on three-point shots," said Coach Campbell. "They are also very good senior leaders on the team."

What were the adjustments at the half up by two points? "Our focus was to stop turning the ball over because that was the reason we got down early in the game," said Coach Campbell. "Coming down on two feet, making good passes, boxing out, and staying under control were some things we stressed to the team at halftime."

"They pressed us three different ways," said Coach Campbell. "They used a man, a 1-2-2, and a 1-3-1 and we did a really good job against all of them. I felt like we did a good job of handling the press all game."

In conclusion, who was the step-up player for the Iron Horses? "Well, number five is our guy, Afman Hop-



2026 Philip Simmons Iron Horses Basketball

per," said Coach Campbell. "He's an all-state player and he is our leader. He has had multiple 20-point games in the playoffs. Wherever we go, he takes us."

High Point Academy head coach **Lee Sartor**, known for being the head coach of **Zion Williamson** at **Spartanburg Day** a few years ago, shared his feelings after the tough loss. "Everybody plays us zone defense, and we knew that coming into the game," said Coach Sartor. "Give them credit. They wanted a half-court game and we just kind of played into that. We didn't make shots when we

needed to and we didn't push the ball

when we needed to.

Coach Sartor was not pleased with the difference in total fouls called on each team. His team had 19 fouls called on them resulting in 11 points for Philip Simmons while his team scored six points off of the 10 fouls called on the Iron Horses. "I just feel like you need to make calls both ways and at times I didn't think that was the case," said Coach Sartor.

"I think at times in the game we were afraid to penetrate gaps in their zone defense and I do not know why this was the case," said Coach Sartor. "To their credit when we did get the

See **AA Boys**, pg. 78

BHP, continued from pg. 67

While the Belton-Honea Path boys were led by a veteran in Bolden, the BHP girls were led by a player who still has another year of education to receive before she is in her school.

Seventh-grader **Ivy Brooks** was named to the Region 1 All-Region team. Brooks averaged 11.1 points, 4.8 rebounds, 3.2 assists and 2.2 steals per game.

The Bears finished the year with a 7-13 overall record and a 2-6 mark in region play. They lost to **Chapman** in the first round of the playoffs.

"We had an up-and-down season, but I can say that we got better as a team as the season pro-

SCISA A Boys, continued from pg. 13

the first half.

"In the second quarter, we finally got it together a little bit," Gardner said. "We got some looks, hit some shots. We just couldn't stand up to it."

Layups from Rutherford and Rose and a trey from Shannon with 55 seconds remaining gave the Rams a 30-10 halftime lead. Jackson said that late push swung the momentum back in the Rams' favor.

"That was extremely big because we can't let those guys stick around because we'll get timid, start shooting shots that are coming off the rim and next thing you know they're right back in the game," he said, "Scott's the kind of coach if he gets any hint of the lead, he'll suck the air out of the ball."

"Hats of to the guys for keeping their focus. Kayschaun Rutherford really stepped up big before the half making sure we put that half away the right way."

RP continued to pour it on in the third quarter. It outscored Newberry 16-4 to push the advantage to

AAAA Wrestling, continued from pg. 15

move with six seconds left. In the third period Butler gained the upper hand, nearly pinning Stevens with 1:23 left in the match. Butler went on to win the 113 class, 11-4 to put the Sharks up 9-0 after two matches. This win gave the Sharks momentum going forward.

Travelers Rest won the 120-weight class, trimming the deficit to 9-3, when **Isaiah Simmons** defeated **Parker Israeo**. 15-9 in a highly competitive match.

May River went up 12-3 after four matches when **Marcus Foulk** defeated **Isaiah Simmons** 7-3 in the 126-weight class.

In the 132-weight class TR's **Jayce Batson** gave his team their second win of the title match with a 6-3 win over **Liam Engblom**. The third period began with a neutral start with Batson holding a 3-2 advantage. His take down with 1:20 left in the final period, along with his escape with seven seconds left gave him and TR the win to cut the deficit to 12-6 at this point.

AAA Wrestling, continued from pg. 15

seemed lopsided on the scoreboard. Several Hawk wrestlers battled the length of three two-minute periods, only to come up short.

"I'm really proud of the way our guys fought each round. We put a couple of guys out there who went the distance and we have a couple of individuals coming up next who will wind up getting a trophy at the end of the year (in the individuals

AA Wrestling, continued from pg. 15

Pisaro (138), **Cullen Bradley** (144), **Thaddeus Gerstenacker** (150), — who won in 15 seconds — **Quinton Gerstenacker** (157.), **Zach Henderson** (165) and ending with **Cristian Barrera** (175).

The run of pinfalls ended with **Cameron Gallejos** outpointing **Michael Charlton** 15-2 at 190. With the score 63-6, Edisto picked up a victory by way of medical decision During the 215-pound matchup, Chesnee's

Timothy Reznickenko lifted **Zachary Robinson** in the air and powerslammed him to the mat. Reznickenko was penalized for the "Rock Bottom" slam and Robinson was awarded the victory as

gressed, and players made major individual improvements," said head coach **Marshall Bolden**, the All-State boys performer's father. "I feel like we did the necessary things to get our program headed in the right direction for the future."

"I'm looking forward to getting started with our offseason activities so that we can make more improvements and become a better team than we were this season."

BHP returns all but two players from its roster.

DAVID CRANE NEW FOOTBALL COACH

46-14 entering the final stanza. Rose and fellow junior **Zymir Robinson-Hill** led the way with six points apiece.

Ragin Prep had three players score in double figures led by Rutherford with 17. Robinson-Hill finished with 13, and Rose had 12.

Shannon added seven, while sophomore **Nasil Frank** and eighth-grader **Oron Brogdon** had three. Senior **Deandre Richardson** and Kelly had two apiece.

Wilbanks had 12 points in a valiant effort to lead NA. Conway added four, **Thomas McLean** had three and **Gavin Rosemond** had two.

Gardner was proud of his team staying the course through a season riddled with injuries and sickness.

"We didn't know who was going to suit up for us from game to game for about five weeks," Gardner said. "We got everybody healthy and ended up winning the region tournament, Then we won three

May River sophomore **Jacob Alfonso** had a dominating 14-1 over **John Stevens** in the 138-weight class to extend the Shark's lead to 16-6. Alfonso held his opponent in a pin position for the final 20 seconds of the first period when he built a 7-0 lead early.

TR's **Jackson McLees** pinned **Oliver Wang** in the 144-weight class, with 1:04 left in the third period of their match, to earn the Devildogs six points to cut the deficit to 16-12 at that point.

In the 150-weight class competition **Ayden Hicks** of TR defeated **Thomas Brough** 13-11 in a three-period back-and-forth match, which trimmed the deficit to 16-15.

In the 157-weight class, May River senior **Blake Butler** demonstrated why SCMat.com ranks him number one in AAAA, when he pinned his opponent 30 seconds into the match to put May River up 22-15.

Travelers Rest then won the 165-weight class and the

tournament," Atkins said. "I'm really proud of our guys. We had a great season. Any year you get a trophy at the end it's a great year," Atkins said. "I'm really proud for our kids. We didn't get the 'W' but they fought their butts off tonight, everybody saw that."

What distinguishes this year's West-Oak team from the other state championship winners Strobel

has coached is the Warriors' resilience over the 2025-2026 season.

"They were a lot of fun," Strobel said. "We had guys who always stepped up, and even when they're not at their best, they were always working hard and battling, fighting. They were a lot of fun."

rest of the season. But it takes off-season workouts. It takes us going to camps.

"Now I feel like we have more support from the parents. The district is really supportive. It's a vil-

lage approach.

I think we'll get there next year and it will be different."

The only thing we do is we wrestle during the

David Crane has been hired by Belton-Honea Path as its new football coach. The announcement was made on February 23.

Crane takes over for **Russell Blackston**, who led Belton-Honea Path to back-to-back AAA Upper State championships and was at the school for 16 years.

Crane comes to BHP after spending seven years at **Seneca**. He led the Bobcats to a 10-2 record this season and finished with a 43-30 record during his stay. Crane's career record is 78-94. That includes a stint at Greenville.

tournament games and made it to the championship. That was a little bit unexpected. That was great for our program and our school."

Robinson-Hill, Rutherford and Shannon made the All-Tournament team for the Rams, while Wilbanks and Rosemond were the Eagles' selections. Joining the quintet was **Deron Ruff** of **Ridge Christian**.

Rutherford said Ragin Prep's success is a benefit of the work the players put in.

"We try hard and we come to work every day," he said.

"I've been going through it with these boys for four years now," Shannon said. "I already knew the chemistry was going to be tight," Shannon said. "They said how do we share the ball with one hour of practice? It's because we be around each other a lot."

175- pound weight class to take the lead 23-22 with three matches left. TR's **William Jenkins** defeated **Andre Cavalheiro** 6-2 in the 165 match and then **Riley Broderick** gave the Devildogs a one-point lead when he defeated **Leandro Larranaga** 15-1.

May River rallied to win the 190 and the 215 weight classes to seal their second straight state title. At 190, the Shark's **Henry Santiz** put his team back in front 28-23 when he pinned Bryce Muchow with 29 seconds left in the first period. Then at 215, the Shark's **Sean McNulty** clinched the title with his 5-2 win over **David Hernandez**. With the match tied at 2, McNulty scored a take down with seven seconds left to earn a dramatic 5-2 win.

At this point, May River led 31-23 and the Sharks forfeited the heavy weight class at 285 to conclude the matches with a 31-29 win.

Carolina Academy, continued from pg. 65

outfield. **Hannah Grace Matthews**, **Jennifer Vargas**, **Savannah McCutcheon** and **Katherine Holliday** round out the squad this spring.

Porter Gaud, continued from pg. 63

Members of the team include **Jonnae Lee**, **Morgan Howell**, **Ellison Hostetter**, **Abigail Handler**, **Caitlin Baden**, **Zoe Molten**, **Addie Legette**, **Julia Gaddy**, **Mackenzie Sellers**, **Emily Manuel**, **Charlotte Speights**, and **Ella Holzer**.

Wrestling is a new and developing sport at

Holly Hill Academy, continued from pg. 70

and will see time at short and will pitch as well.

The lone senior in the starting lineup will be **Steven Murray**, who will play around the middle infield and will pitch as well. Sophomore **Caleb Bell** will take over at first base when Green is pitching.

Junior **Drake Sweatman** will work mostly at second while Kizer and Murray will share time at shortstop. **Shade Snyder** will play a third base as a

SCISA AAA Boys, continued from pg. 11

for coming out on the floor before the game was over. Campbell once again hit a pair of free throws to make it 48-46 with two seconds left.

Again, inbound from halfcourt, SCA's inbound pass was tipped and one of the Warriors tried to retrieve it. Even though the clock sounded, the officials said the ball was dead and the game was still in the progress when the player touched it. Greenwood Christian again received a technical for coming on the floor in the middle of play. Campbell once again hit both free throws to tie the game at 48-48 and bring a second overtime.

Each team scored just two points in the second overtime. Kennedy hit a jumper from the left corner with 1:42 to go to make it 50-48. Spartanburg Christian tied the game with four seconds left, but it didn't come in ordinary fashion.

Wagner was fouled while trying to get to the basket but hurt his knee. He didn't get right up so Wagner was forced to the go to the bench. Enter in

SCISA AA Boys, continued from pg. 12

layup.

Scott led Cathedral in scoring with 21 points. Loucard added 15, Jeter had 11, Tasca had five, and junior point guard **Kobe Grant**, Moody, eighth-grader **Paul Felder** and Thompson had two apiece.

Charleston Collegiate's two senior starters, **Grant Morrison** and **Thomas Reed**, were its leading scorers. Morrison led the way with 18 points, while Reed had 12. Junior **Kani Butler** had

"Offensively we are a work in progress but we have potential," Phillips said. "I think we will be a pretty good defensive team as we move forward.

Porter-Gaud and the numbers continue to increase. In recent events, **Gavin Wiltshire** has been wrestling at 120 pounds and **Oscar Haspel** is working at 126 pounds. **Garland Lynn** is wrestling at 132 pounds and **Henry Tierney** competes at 157 pounds. **Antwan Chisolm** has been impressive at

first-year starter.

Takobe Sweatman will start in left field and **Jaxon Jones** is slated for center. **JP McGriff** will begin the season in rightfield.

"We have pretty good team speed so we have to use that to manufacture some runs," Green said. "I think we can be a good defensive team as we gain more experience. Pitching and defense were huge for us last year so my hope is we can be that type of

senior **Luke Davis**, who had not played. He checked in, stepped to the line and hit nothing but net both times to force the third overtime.

"He was sitting over there for about an hour and a half, cold hands, cold feet, he hadn't sweated yet. Luke's big time," Johnson said. "He's been cold-blooded for us. He's had a huge role this season.

"I looked at the bench, and the refs said I had to get someone in for Luke. I was like, 'Well, I got to go Luke.' It wasn't even a thought. I knew Luke could come in and knock those free throws down."

Davis returned to the bench with Wagner re-entering, but it was to no avail. Almost three minutes went off the clock before anyone scored. The Hawks' **Bryson Dixon** got free for a layup with 1:01 left. Kennedy and Scott-Palacios each hit a free throw, the latter coming with 14 seconds left, to make it 54-50.

Campbell drove for a layup to cut the lead to 54-52 with eight seconds left. Greenwood Christian

five, and junior **Gavin Mullen** and sophomore **Jahmari Powell** both had four.

Cathedral and Charleston Collegiate filled the six spots on the All-Tournament with three selections apiece. The Generals selected were Loucard, Jeter and Scott, while the Sun Devil picks were Butler, Morrison and Reed.

Being that it's his senior year and was the only senior on the team has made this third champi-

onship special to Jeter.

team. We just have so many unknowns right now. We have to be patient and let this team grow together. Some are ready for the challenge and some need to focus more and work harder. How we prepare and practice will determine the type of team we will be."

had to call a timeout with four seconds left because it couldn't inbound the ball. Dixon broke long down the court on the inbounds play and was fouled with less than a second left. He hit both for the final score.

Scott-Palacios led all scorers with 24 points, while Kennedy added 19. Dixon was also in double figures with 11 points, and senior **Leland Reed** had the other two.

Campbell and Wagner led the Warriors with 18 points apiece. Sophomores **Ayden Wagoner** and **J.D. Keel** both had seven points, and Davis had the other two with his off-the-bench free throws.

Kennedy, Scott-Palacios and Reed were named to the All-Tournament team from Greenwood Christian. Campbell and Lake Wagner made it from SCA. They were joined by **Nick Lindsey** of **Calhoun Academy**.

Kennedy, Scott-Palacios and Reed were named to the All-Tournament team from Greenwood Christian. Campbell and Lake Wagner made it from SCA. They were joined by **Nick Lindsey** of **Calhoun Academy**.

onship special to Jeter.

"It means a lot, you know," he said. "Having eight seniors last year and having to step up as a leader of a team that's never been before, having a lot of young guys, it means a lot. I got to express my talents and show what I could do too."

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Class A Girls Basketball State Championship

Military Magnet breezes past Great Falls to claim sixth title in seven years

By **WORTHY EVANS**
Staff Writer

Columbia - Military Magnet's girls basketball team wasted no time earning its second straight 1A state basketball championship.

Eighth-grader **Mariah Brown** had 25 points, freshman **Kaleah Brown-King** had 11 points and seven rebounds, and the team's only senior **Da'Nariyah Williams** had 10 points, eight rebounds, two assists and two steals as the Eagles defeated **Great Falls** 70-21 Saturday at Colonial Life Arena.

After last year's 59-40 state championship win over **Lee Central**, six seniors, including leading scorers **Dream Watson** (14.5 points per game) and **Sabri Mitchell** (11 points) moved on. Rather than use the season as a building block, the young Eagles (26-4) claimed the team's fifth state championship.

"It's kind of unreal. The team is so young, you know," head coach **Nathaniel Taylor** said. "We prepared for it, we worked hard for it, but now we're in the moment, it'll take some time for it to sink in."

Taylor praised this year's team for its growth with last year's senior class, and taking their leadership to heart. Williams was the principle student last season and became the team's leader for this championship run.

"They waited their turn," Taylor said. "They practiced with Dream and Sebri, (**Jada**) **Davis**, the whole time. They understand, especially Da'-Nariyah, to wait your turn. She had to play ball with a whole bunch of young ladies. I appreciate her and her family."

Williams, who averaged 16.4 points and 10.5 rebounds per game, led more on the court than the stat sheet Saturday. Williams opened the game with a 3-pointer and had two 3s in the first quarter, while Brown, Brown-King, Lamaria Brown and Destinee Wilson combined for 16 points in that period.

Up 22-5 after one period, Military Magnet followed up with a 28-point second quarter to take a 50-13 lead on the Great Falls (22-4) into intermission. The second half was played with a running clock.



2026 Military Magnet Eagles Girls Basketball

Just being at the final game was a large accomplishment for the Red Devils, head coach **Deshonia Caution** said.

People said we weren't supposed to be here. They didn't know who Great Falls was. The more we won, the more that people were able to see us coming. We're young, but we're coming. Once we got to 10-0, we lost and they got a taste of it, the bitterness of it, and they didn't want to lose anymore. We were able to build off of that.

In the upper-state championship the Red Devils took it to overtime and

beat **Lee Central** 40-34 in overtime. We weren't supposed to win that game but we won. They didn't give up, and that was a part of the idea of defense and not giving up, and that's what led us here today. We only lose one senior, and we have some more coming down the pipe."

Seventh grader **Makenzie Beatty** led Great Falls in scoring this season with a 19.4 scoring average. Junior **London Williams** averaged eight points per game and Freshman **Grace Page** averaged 8 points and a team-high 8.4 rebounds per game.

Class A Boys Basketball State Championship

C.A. Johnson boys hold off Bethune-Bowman to claim Class A title

By **WORTHY EVANS**

COLUMBIA—For a brief moment, it looked as if the **Bethune-Bowman** boys basketball team was going to spoil **C.A. Johnson's** moment Saturday afternoon at **Colonial Life Arena**.

After being up by 17 points late in the game, the Hornets halted the Mohawks' 15-1 scoring run in the final stretch and stormed the floor after a 72-64 victory for their first state championship since 2014 and third in school history.

Senior **Aaissacc Germany** scored 24 points and pulled down 17 rebounds and made seven steals.

Senior and **Blythewood** transfer **Javarius Wyche** also scored 24 points and had four thefts. Junior **Milton McCray**, the Class 1A Player of the Year and son of head coach **Robert McCray**, had 14 points.

Germany and his teammates said they took Bethune-Bowman's rally in stride, and they showed it with a late scoring surge in the final minute to seal the win.

"When it got close I wasn't worried. We already knew that we were going to come out with a Dub," Germany said.

"We knew it wasn't a big thing, it wasn't us. We knew they couldn't play with us," Wyche added. "We just stayed with what we do, stayed together, and stayed disciplined."

In his third year coaching the Hornets, McCray said that winning on the **University of South Carolina's** home court made it extra special. The **South Carolina High School League** has held state finals week in Aiken and Florence for the past five years.

"It makes it very special. It's right up the street, right in our hometown. It means a lot more," McCray said. "Just seeing all the smiles in the crowd, seeing the joy, seeing the happiness looking over there by the cheerleaders, they've been a big part of it."

The Hornets got on an early surge after a 7-7 tie midway through the first quarter and opened the second period up 22-9. They held a 37-25 lead by the half.

C.A. Johnson (24-7) was up 48-32 with a Germany layup at the 3:39 mark of the third, but Bethune-Bowman (23-4) finished the quarter on a 9-0 run to go into the fourth down just 48-41.

The Hornets built their lead back up to 17 points following a Germany layup with 3:55 left in the game. A 64-47 lead with three starters reaching double figures by that point would seem that the game was in hand, but Bethune-Bowman forcefully tried to flip the script.

Feeling the clock ticking, the Mohawks knocked out a 15-1 run over the next two minutes to cut the lead to 65-62 late in the fourth quarter. **Ter-**



2026 C.A. Johnson Hornets basketball

rance McFadden scored nine points on that run and **Ke'juan Guinyard** sank two 3s, the last one coming with 1:39 left.

It was a Guinyard foul on Germany at the 1:22 mark that slowed the rally. Germany made both free throws.

While Bethune Bowman's **Jaedon Bell** later took the foul line and made both shots to cut the lead to 67-64, C.A. Johnson blocked any more scores from the Mohawks the rest of the way.

In the final minute of the game Germany made his final layup, Odom made one of two free throws, and McCray went down the court and made a layup at the buzzer to close out the win.

"That's who we are, we're bulletproof. They were shooting at us a couple of times, we got hit, we got up and continued to battle," Coach McCray said. "We understand adversity. We have

confidence and if we put in the work, it's gonna show. We execute and persevere and good things happen."

McFadden led Bethune-Bowman with 31 points and 13 rebounds. Bell had 16 points, eight rebounds, five assists and two blocks.

Bethune-Bowman made its second straight appearance in the 1A state final. The Mohawks lost to **Denmark-Olar** last year. This year's loss was tough, but head coach **Charles McCray**, no relation to the Hornets' Coach McCray, said he was proud that the Mohawks didn't quit and had an otherwise great season.

"I told them that I loved the way that they fought, they didn't give up, that's been the definition of our season all year long," McCray said. "It's 17 players that believe in each other, and they fought to the end. We're going to keep fighting and keep coming back until we get it done."

SCISA AAAA Girls Basketball State Championship

First Baptist defeats Northwood Academy to claim AAAA title

By Billy G. Baker
Publisher

Sumter—Injuries get in the way of a team's goals like no other factor in team sports; so when top ranked **Northwood Academy** (28-2) lost 2,000 career point scorer **Jada Bates** to a knee injury in her second quarter, of a highly competitive game against rival **First Baptist**, it certainly factored in the Hurricanes going on to win the SCISA AAAA girl's state title 64-60.

The Hurricane won their first state title since 1980. First Baptist head coach **Presley Singleton**, who had won two state titles at Northwood Academy earlier in her career, earned her third career state title with the win.

With a 33-29 lead at the half, Coach Singleton, told her team at the break, "I told my team that Northwood does not go away and that Northwood plays hard for 32 minutes," she said. "Do not think that they are going to roll over because they are not."

"Things went back and forth in this game," said Coach Singleton. "Our biggest key was that we stayed out of foul trouble. Foul trouble has been what has hurt us this season, especially with our interior players."

"It helped us a little bit that the officials let both teams play and that helped us stay out of of four trouble," said Coach Singleton. "Also, they had a very good

player get hurt and that was unfortunate.

"We have seven players who either play travel ball, or live in the gym and that makes a difference also," said Coach Singleton. "We were hungry coming into this game after we were upset last season. This team really wanted it."

First Baptist was led in scoring by soph **Maddy Pojani** who led all scorers with 22 points. "Pojani has a bright future ahead of her," said Coach Singleton. "She is just a great player who is in the gym all the time."

Coach Singleton said she stressed to her team how difficult it was for any team to beat5 a team three times in one season. (First Baptist had lost to Northwood twice this season.)

"It is hard to beat a team three times in one season and I told my kids this very thing," said Coach Singleton. "It's hard to beat a team three times in one season. We went with a completely different game plan, then in our two other games with them this season."

"It helped us a little bit that the officials let both teams play wide open, and that helped us stay out of foul trouble," said Coach Singleton. "Also, they had a very good player who got hurt and that was unfortunate."

"We have seven kids who either play travel ball, or live in the gym all the time, and it makes a difference in your program to have committed players," said Coach



2026 First Baptist Hurricanes girls basketball

Singleton. "We were into this game hungry. We got upset last year and we came this season very hungry and we wanted this game really bad."

Northwood Academy head coach **Ginnell Curtis** was obviously disappointed in the loss and the injuries to two of her better players. "When you lose a player like **Jada Bates** who was our second leading scorer, and second in steals, it changes your game plan for sure," said Coach Curtis. "I just hate that she got hurt for her own well-being."

"When she went down, we picked each other up," said Coach Curtis. "We could have folded at the time we kept playing hard. We also had our number four (**Kylee Clarke**) who played with a braced up torn mimesis, and she had flu-like symptoms all day, and she played off her tail off too."

"I feel like the refs were one-sided but that is a story for another day," said Coach

Curtis. "I am so proud of my girls for pushing through despite the adversity. Everybody in the gym knew who was the better team but we were just unlucky tonight."

Northwood Academy, despite the setback from the injuries, had ever opportunity to win the game, and the Chargers tied the score at 60 with 1:56 left in the game on a free throw by **Alyvia Tocco**.

"We had our chances late in the game, but we just did not value our possessions that gave us a chance to win had we converted," said Curtis. "We should have been more patient."

When Bates went down, she had already scored 13 points in the game. Junior guard **Maliyah Birch**, the leading scorer on the team at 20 points a game, stepped up her game, dribbling through double teams with the skill of a globe trotter"

while finishing with 20 points on several See **SCISA AAAA Girls**, pg. 78

SCISA AAAA Boys Basketball State Championship

Pinewood Prep wins 9th state championship under Eidson

By Billy G. Baker
Publisher

Sumter—The land-mark coaching orbit of **Pinewood Prep** boys' basketball head coach **Pat Eidson** keeps getting closer to 1,000 career wins, as the Panthers (27-6) capped off the 2025-26 season with a SCISA AAAA state championship over **Heathwood Hall** (61-49) at the Sumter Civic Center on February, 27.

The Panthers only led 20-18 at the half against the Highlanders, and Coach Eidson, and his staff made some key adjustments at the half. "At halftime, we decided to speed the game up with a more up-tempo offense and to press a little more to try and force turnovers," said Coach Eidson, who became the state's all-time wins leader with over 944 career wins at the mid-point of last season. Coach Eidson will enter the 2026-27 season needing around 20 wins to hit the 1,000-career win mark.

"We were successful with these adjustments and it ended up being the difference in the game," said Coach Eidson. "They were basically the same team we saw early in the season. They did all the stuff we expected them to."

"This state championship is really sweet," said Coach Eidson. "As you

get older, you learn to appreciate it a whole lot more. I know the amount of effort and work that went into this season so I can appreciate it. Returning all five starters this season, I knew we had a chance to be pretty good and we were."

"I'm really happy for the kids, especially the seniors," said Coach Eidson. "**Jayden Alexander** and **Jonathan Slawson** are senior starters who have done a great job for us and **Bralon Blackwell** made contributions coming off the bench."

"I said all season that this team had Potential to win a state title, and tonight we played up to that potential," said Coach Eidson. "It was one of our better second halves all season."

Over-all, Coach Eidson has now won 12 state titles in his historic coaching career with 9 of these titles coming at Pinewood Prep.

"It has been 15 years, or so since we won out last state title so it feels great to finally get another one for our players, fans and the school," he said. "We are already looking forward to next season."

Heathwood Hall (21-8) head coach **Brian Benator** was proud of his team for all of their hard work also.



2026 Pinewood Prep Panthers boys basketball

"We had a stretch tonight where we struggled to make some shots and they had a stretch where they hit a couple three's to go up on us 8 to 10 points," said Coach Benator. "They also put more pressure defense on us in the second half and that helped them get several transition baskets."

"The lid was on the rim tonight against us," said Coach Benator. "We just had some problems making shots tonight."

"We came into the game off a great week of practice and focus," said Coach Benator. "I felt like we came in ready to play tonight. Our guys have been motivated all season and we had not lost a game since January, 3rd.

"I am proud of the effort of our team tonight and we'll be back next season," concluded the coach.

Pinewood Prep was led on the scoring index by 6-3 junior forward **Tre Green** who had 24 points and 6-7 junior forward **Kais Parris** who had 18 points. Also, 6-8 junior center **Tripp Eidson** had 12 points and directed the defense from the top of the paint all game. Eidson had a monster dunk, off of a steal, with 3:2 left in the game that extended the Panthers lead to 51-39 at the time.

Slawson contributed five points and **Jayden Alexander** closed out the scoring with two points. See **SCISA AAAA Boys**, pg. 78

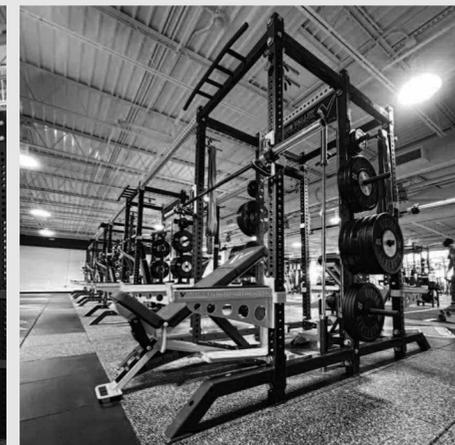
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Holly Hill Academy baseball facing rebuild in '26

By David Shelton
Senior Writer

Holly Hill – Coming off a state championship season in 2025, the **Holly Hill Academy** baseball program faces new challenges this spring.

Most of last year's team has graduated, leaving coach **Andy Green** with a crop of younger, fresher faces. The coach says expecting another state championship run in March is not being fair to the current roster, and no one outside the program is giving the Raiders much thought. But Green says with time, his team could surprise some doubters.

"There's no question, we are a lot younger and less experienced than we have been," the coach said. "We have three returning players. We have guys who will be asked to take on bigger roles. We have to see if they are ready to make that jump. It's a young team but there's some talent. We just need time on the field. We have to gel and find the right chemistry. It's different because last year we were expected to win but this year the expectations are different. But we're going to work hard and make the best of it."

The Raiders will have a small group of leaders to set the example. Junior **Tyler Green** is a returner at first base and will take on increased mound duties this spring. Green pitched game three of the state championship series last May so he has big game



On the softball front, Senior Peyton Strickland and the Lady Raiders are looking to have another big year on the diamond this spring

experience.

Returning behind the plate is sophomore **Jake Kirven**, who also will see increased time on the mound. Junior **Parker Kizer** returns in centerfield

See **Holly Hill Academy**, pg. 72

McIntosh back in charge of Saints baseball

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor

Summerton – He's baaack!!

Well, he never really went anywhere, but **Jackie McIntosh** is once again in charge of the **Clarendon Hall** baseball program.

McIntosh has been a staple in Clarendon Hall athletics for several years, particularly when it comes to baseball and softball. He has alternated back and forth between baseball – serving as both an assistant coach and head coach – and softball, helping head coach **Jeffrey Bays** and the ultra-successful program.

Although the Saints got off to a 1-4 start playing in **Woodland High School's** wood bat tournament, McIntosh likes what he's seen.

"Theres a lot of potential there," McIntosh said. "I think we can have a good season. I feel like the future is very bright. We're going to have ups and downs because we're so young."

The Saints lost to **Colleton Prep Academy** 7-0 and 9-7 in their first two games in the tournament. They followed that with a 3-2 triumph over **Bamberg-Ehrhardt**. Clarendon Hall then dropped a 4-3 decision to **Lowcountry Leadership** before falling to **Colleton County** 8-4.

"We've seen some good arms," McIntosh said. "Our at-bats are getting better. We're heading in the right direction. We're pretty young. We just need to play and get better."

Clarendon Hall has a roster that includes three seniors, three juniors, three sophomores, one freshman and three eighth-graders.

The seniors are **Thomas Shorter**, **Tommy Lei Atkinson** and **Garrett Clayton**, the juniors are **Cole Richurg**, **Zander White** and **Jake Robertson**, the sophomores are **Joey Hatchell**, **Talan Dymond** and **Josh White**, the freshman is **Waylon Geddings**, and the eighth-graders are **Cayden Richburg**, **Jack Wyatt Reynolds** and **Grayson Holliday**.

Unless he's pitching, Hatchell will be starting in

center field. "He's a really good ball player," McIntosh said.

Cole Richburg will be in the pitching mix, especially after tossing six shutout innings in relief in the win over Bamberg-Ehrhardt.

McIntosh expects Zander White, Robertson, Geddings, Cayden Richburg and Reynolds to see plenty of time on the mound as well.

Clarendon Hall will have two eighth-graders holding down the fort up the middle defensively. Reynolds will be the shortstop, while Holliday will handle the catching duties. Josh White will be at second base, Shorter will see a lot of time at third with Dymond rounding out the infield at first base.

Atkinson and Zander White will be vying for time in right with Geddings and Cayden Richburg fighting for time in right.

CLARENDON HALL DROPPING CLASS IN FOOTBALL

After playing in the AA classification for football over the past two seasons, Clarendon Hall will be returning to Class A for the 2026-27 school year.

SCISA's biannual reclassification has Clarendon Hall dropping back down to Class A. The Saints football program played two years at Class A before being moved to AA. Prior to that, Clarendon Hall had played a couple of decades in 8-man football.

Clarendon Hall went 0-10 in each of its two years in AA. Two years ago, it was under **Todd Larimer**, while current head coach **Shane Wallace** was in charge last year.

The program is in the midst of a 21-game losing streak. The Saints lost their final game of the 2023 season to Lee Academy in the first round of the Class A playoffs. They went 8-3 that year.

While there will be changes in football, Clarendon Hall will compete in the AAA classification in all other sports as it has done the past two years.

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SCISA AAA Girls Basketball State Championship Florence Christian defeats Orangeburg Prep to claim title

By Billy G. Baker
Editor
Sumter—Having defeated **Florence Christian** 37-25 back in mid-December, the **Orangeburg Prep** (22-5) girl's were favored to win the SCISA AAA girl's basketball title when the same two teams met at the Sumter Civic Center on Feb., 28. with much more on the line.

When the final buzzer sounded, the Eagles had sprung a mild upset (42-35) on O-P, and Florence Christian head coach **Neil Minton** was asked about his team's improvement over the past two months. "It has all been the result of hard work, determination, and we just kept getting after it," said Coach Minton. "I am so proud of my team and I would like to go celebrate with them after you guys quit talking to me."

"One of our key players today was **Emerson Poston** and she is the best and such a great kid, she's a great person, and she is a great leader," said Coach Minton. "She played very well on both sides of the ball today." (Poston led the Eagles with 19 points in the title game after averaging 11.6 points during the season).

What was the major difference in the team that could only muster 25 points in a loss to the Indians earlier,

versus the team that put 42 points on the score sheet to win a state title? "We grew throughout the season," said Coach Minton. "We had more bench players being able to play today and contributing positive minutes."

"We had more people playing with confidence and they were stronger with the ball," said Coach Minton. "All the little stuff we worked on helped us improve and we rely on our defense. I thought we played great half-court defense today."

Coch Minton gave a shout-out to his three senior starters who will be moving on. "**Leah Lambert** is one of our unsung heroes and she is one of the better passing Post players around," said Coach Minton. "She really knows the game and she played real strong today."

"Senior **Anna Kate Huggins** is one of our most important players defensively as Emerson is to us offensively," said Coach Minton. "She sets the tone for us on defense."

"**Demi Green** is our third senior starter who is also a good leader and she plays well on both sides of the ball also," said Coach Minton.

Coach Minton said he talked about a key adjustment the team to needed to make at the half when the Eagles had a



2026 Florence Christian Eagles girls basketball

19-14 lead. "I felt like if we could make our lead a little bigger, it would eventually force them out of their triangle and two defense, and other zone defenses, and it would give us a little more room to work our offense."

"However, it was important that **Bailey Johnson**, **Charlotte Granger**, and **Demi Green** also hit shots against that tri-angle and two defense that we faced," said Coach Minton. "We also did a better job of getting the ball in the middle of their press break."

Coach Minton, who is also the head football coach at Florence Christian now has four state titles in football and basketball over a 25-year coaching ca-

reer. After a long post- game meeting with her hard-working team, veteran O-P head coach **Jan Stoudenmire** emerged with tears in her eyes. "We didn't play very well today and we have not been held to 35 points all year," said Coach Stoudenmire. We just could not get the ball to go into the basket and that is what happened.

"We made a few mental mistakes also, but you can't take anything away from them," said Coach Stoudenmire. "They have a great team, and a great coach, and they played hard and you could tell that they wanted to win a lot

See **SCISA AAA Girls**, pg. 47

SCISA AAA Boys Basketball State Championship Greenwood Christian defeats Spartanburg Christian in triple overtime

By Dennis Brunson
Hssr.com Associate Editor
Sumter – Winning a state championship in any sport is something that will always remain in, at the very least, the recesses of an athlete's mind as long as there is a smidgen of mental acuity remaining.

What the **Greenwood Christian School** boys basketball team got from the SCISA AAA state championship game against **Spartanburg Christian Academy** on Saturday is massive memory sensory overload.

The Hawks rallied from an 11-point halftime deficit to get the game to overtime and built a 6-point lead only to see it evaporate in the final 12 seconds on three technical fouls and six made free throws by the Warriors to force a second 4-minute extra period to be followed by a third before winning 56-52 at **Sumter County Civic Center**, "Never," was the response of senior standout

Ty Kennedy when asked if he would ever forget the circumstances surrounding GCS' title win in its first trip to the boys basketball finals. "I mean three overtimes just to win a state championship. I'll never forget it."

For junior **Isaiah Scott-Palacios**,

he even had an intriguing side story to go with the drama of winning the crown. The only four games he played all season were in the state tournament. Scott-Palacios tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee on September 3 and wasn't cleared to play basketball until Friday, February 20, the day before Greenwood Christian's first tournament game.

"It's a brotherhood with these guys. I couldn't have done it without them," Scott-Palacios said. "Coming back from my ACL surgery and doing stuff to recover, I kept my head high throughout the journey. To get to play basketball was amazing. It was a great run."

Hawks head coach **Jonathan Davis** compared his team's run to that of the one made by 1983 NCAA national champion **North Carolina State** coached by **Jim Valvano**. The Wolfpack won the **Atlantic Coast Conference** tournament just to get in the NAAs before winning several close games, including the title game against heavy favorite **Houston**.

"There are so many parallels between the two teams," said Davis, who had the team watch ESPN's "Cardiac Pack," a documentary on that team, throughout the week. "Seeing our guys battle, and we've had a roller



2026 Greenwood Christian Hawks boys basketball

coaster season with injuries, with peaks and valleys, with win streaks and loss streaks, and to come out and fight every night for four games, and to come out on top, you can't beat this team. This is an amazing group of guys."

GCS, which came away with a pair of 2-point victories in its first two games, clawed its way back from a 25-14 halftime deficit to get the game to overtime tied at 39-39.

The Warriors drew first blood in overtime on a 3-point basket by senior **Lake Wagner** 19 seconds into the extra period. Scott-Palacios answered with a trey to tie the game back up.

Those were the only field goals of

the first overtime. Greenwood Christian did manage to open a 48-42 advantage by hitting six of 10 free throws. The final one was by Kennedy and came with 12 seconds left, and that's when things got crazy.

That free throw was followed by SCA junior **Eli Campbell** shooting two technical foul shots when Greenwood Christian was called for flopping for a second time. Campbell made both to make it 48-44.

Spartanburg Christian inbounded the ball from halfcourt, but it was stolen. It appeared the Warriors were going to let the clock run out, but GCS received a technical again, this time back up.

See **SCISA AAA Boys**, pg. 72

SCISA AA Girls Basketball State Championship

Dorchester Academy outlasts Cross School in overtime

By Billy G. Baker
Publisher

Sumter—There were many twists and turns in the SCISA AA girl's state championship basketball game, contested at the Sumter Civic Center on February 28, between **Dorchester Academy** and the **Cross School** and it took overtime for the Raiders to earn a hard-fought 39-37 win.

There were more lead changes, fouls, missed free throws, uplifting three pointers swishing the net then there are potholes on most rural roads in Dorchester County. Honesty, this state title game was a knock-down drag-out that left fans of both schools emotionally drained when it was finally over.

DA head coach **Callie McClure**, a former *HSSR Player of the Year*, went she celebrated her senior season at DA with a state basketball title, was asked if there was more stress in winning a title as a Coach, or more as a player? "It is definitely more stressful winning a state title as a head coach," said Coach McClure after the game. "Man, this game was exciting. I knew it was going to be close. I knew it was going to come down to

ball protection. I knew it was going to come down to who was hot at the end. I knew it was going to come down to the officiating.

"It was a real physical game; I am not kidding," said Coach McClure "I am just thankful it is over and that we won. I did not expect an overtime game. I am very proud of my team today for competing and pulling out a win they will remember forever."

DA led 12-8 after the first quarter when junior guard **Rylee Weathers** began the game hitting consecutive three-point shots to put the Raiders up 6-0 early.

By the half, DA was clinging to an 18-16 lead.

Cross scored the first bucket of the third quarter to tie the game at 18 as senior guard **Ryan Mayers** scored on a drive into the lane. Then with 6:15 left in the third, junior **Lexann Maldonado** nailed a three pointer from downtown Sumter to give the Stingrays their first lead of the game 21-18. Neither team held more than a three point lead the rest of the game.

The final period began with DA 22-21. **Emery McClure** extended the lead to 24-21 on a lay-up for the first



2026 Dorchester Academy Raiders Girls Basketball

score of the final period. However, the Cross School went up 29-26 with 2:33 left when Mayers scored on a short jumper. Weathers next hit a clutch three point shot from the top of the key to tie the game at 29 with 1:16 remaining in regulation.

Then with 1:07 left, Mayers was fouled making a basket from short range and she added a free throw and Cross led 32-29 with 46.3 seconds left in regulation. Then **Palmer Kizer** of DA nailed a three-pointer from the elbow with 58 seconds left in regulation to tie the game at 32. Neither team could score over the

next 58 seconds, so they entered a four-minute overtime period,

With 2:23 left in OT, **Lexann Maldonado** put up a skyhook shot in the lane that found the net to put Cross School up 34-32. Then with 1:54 remaining, **Madison Downey** of DA tied the game on a baseline shot at 34, With 49.3 seconds left, McClure went to the line and made both free throws to put the Raiders up 36-34 at that point. After getting the ball off a turnover McClure was fouled with 29.5 seconds left, and she made one of two free throws to give

See SCISA AA Girls, pg. 76

SCISA AA Boys Basketball State Championship

Cathedral claims third straight championship in SCISA AA

By Dennis Brunson
HSSR.com Associate Editor

Sumter – Having lost four starters, eight seniors and 10 players from last season's SCISA AA boys basketball state championship team, the general consensus was **Cathedral Academy** would see its run of consecutive state championships end at two.

The 2025-26 edition of the Generals didn't get the memo.

Cathedral made it three in a row on Saturday at **Sumter County Civic Center**, beating Region 2 foe **Charleston Collegiate** for the fourth time in as many games, this time by a 60-43 count.

"It's really special, losing 10 guys off of last year's team, eight seniors, to win it again," said Generals head coach **Blake Ferguson**. "Nobody gave us a shot. It's special because it's a whole new group. We basically moved up our junior varsity team and had a couple of additions.

"We don't have the star power we've had in the past. It's a real team, not a lot of individuals. We play as a team so well."

Amare Jeter was the lone returning starter and the only senior on the roster. He's in his third year at the **North Charleston** school and has known nothing but being a state

champion. He said he and his teammates felt slighted at the start of the season.

"A lot of people kind of left us out," Jeter said. "We were left out of a lot of rankings, so we had a chip on our shoulder, it lit a fire under us, and we used it to win this game."

Junior **Malachi Scott** is in his first year with the Generals. He said he and his teammates put in the work needed to accomplish this goal.

"We all worked all summer," Scott said. "We all came together, we all committed to the team, we all made each other better, worked all year and now at the end of the year we got what we deserved."

Cathedral indeed put in the work, playing a whopping 43 games, finishing the year with a 33-10 record.

The Sun Devils finished 15-9 with four of the losses coming to the Generals. Cathedral won by the scores of 67-51, 39-37 and 65-39 in the first three meetings.

That familiarity led Ferguson to make the decision to throw something different at Charleston Collegiate on Saturday. Instead of slowing down the Sun Devils, Ferguson said it hindered his team instead.

"I wanted to go with a quick trap on that first pass, rotate and try to get



2026 Cathedral Academy Generals Basketball

some turnovers," he said. We didn't."

That led to the Generals trailing 10-7 after one quarter with Charleston Collegiate scoring the first points of the second quarter to push the lead to five. That's when Ferguson decided to ditch the trap and go back to old tried and true.

"We went back to what we know, what we do well – full-deney, full-court press – and it sparked us," he said. "We went from down five to up 10 in that quarter."

Cathedral limited the Sun Devils to just four points the rest of the quarter while putting up 19 to take a 26-16 lead at halftime.

"We didn't expect them to come out and punch us," said Scott, who scored 10 points in the second quarter.

"Coach made some adjustments and we adjusted perfectly to his plan, and it was all said and done from there."

The Generals continued to pour it on in the third quarter, both offensively and defensively. They limited Charleston Collegiate to just seven points while scoring 17 to take a 43-23 lead into the final quarter.

As to Ferguson's statement about the team concept, six different players scored during the quarter. Junior **Jake Moody**, the only other player besides Jeter to play in last year's title game, started the scoring with a layup. Sophomore **Joel Loucard** had a trey and a layup, junior **Braydon Thompson** had a layup, Scott had three points, sophomore **Dylan Trasca** canned a 3, and Jeter hit a

See SCISA AA Boys, pg. 78

Panthers hoops were stellar down the stretch

By Roger Lee
Special to the HSSR

Summerville – The Pinewood Prep Boys returned to the top of the SCISA ranks this season.

The **Panthers** won 15 of their last 16 games to claim both a region and state championship. Pinewood was nearly perfect in January and February, losing only one game to wrap up its season with a 28-6 record. The one loss during those two months came to **Ashley Ridge**, which finished the season as the 5A, Division 1 state runner-up.

Pinewood played inspired ball in the second half of the **SCISA 4A Championship** Feb. 27 to capture its first boys' basketball state championship since 2010. The Panthers defeated **Heathwood Hall Episcopal** 61-49 to capture the title.

"They were basically the same team we saw early in the season," said Pinewood coach **Pat Eidson**. "They did all the stuff we expected them to. At halftime we decided to speed it up and try to force turnovers. We were successful at that and it ended up being the difference in the game."

Pinewood's talented trio of starting juniors led the way. **Tre Green** finished with a game-high 24 points. **Kais Parris** added 18 points for Pinewood while **Tripp Eidson** added 12. Parris finished with a team-high 13 rebounds while Eidson had 12 and Green 7. All three made the **All-Tournament Team**.

"I wouldn't trade my juniors for any others in the state," Coach Eidson said. "They are tremendous."

Green led the team in scoring this season, averaging 20.5 points per game. Parris averaged 18.2 per game and senior point guard **Jonathan Slawson** averaged 10.9. Slawson led in assists per game (5.9), followed by senior guard **Jayden Alexander** (3.3) and Green (2.8).

Eidson led in rebounds (11.1) as well as in blocks (3.6). Parris averaged 8.8 rebounds and 1.7 blocks while Green averaged 5.2 rebounds.

Other members of the team are **Bralon Black-**



Photo by Roger Lee
Pinewood Prep's Tre Green drives to the basket during the SCISA 4A Boys Championship.

well, **Heyward Moore**, **Caleb Fernandez**, **Donte Paulson**, **Tyler Harper**, **K.J. Robinson** and **Grham Gilmer**.

Pinewood Wrestling

The **Pinewood Prep Wrestlers** were strong this season.

"Pinewood Wrestling is back as a competitive dual team and we are just getting started," said Pinewood coach **Van Collins**. "When I came here last year one of my goals was to get us back to competing in this setting. We started with just a couple of kids and the word started spreading and the team started building. We had a lot more kids come out this year."

First Baptist finishes job, claims AAAA girls title

By David Shelton
Senior Writer

Sumter - After dropping a pair of regular season games to rival Northwood Academy, the third and most important meeting went to **First Baptist**.

The Hurricanes capped their 2025-26 season with a 64-60 win over Northwood on Feb. 27, claiming the SCISA Class AAAA girls state championship. It was the first title since winning it all in 1980.

The championship was the first for Presley Singleton at First Baptist, who lost in the state finals last season. Singleton won two titles at Northwood Academy before moving across town in 2017. First Baptist closes out the season with a 24-12 record while Northwood ends a spectacular season at 28-2.

Sophomore guard **Maddy Pojani** led all scorers with 22 points and paced a balanced attack for First Baptist. **Dyarri Braddick** and **Ellie Blitch** each added 12 points.

Northwood junior guard **Maliyah Birch** scored 20 points to pace the Chargers. **Jada Bates** scored 13 points before getting injured in the second quarter

and did not return to the game.

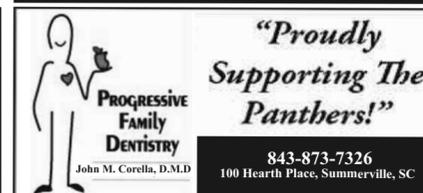
First Baptist ran early on and grabbed a 21-10 lead in the first quarter. Northwood, however, slowly closed the gap and trailed 33-29 by halftime.

Northwood took a 51-50 lead with six minutes left in the game, setting the stage for a series of lead changes down the stretch. Birch's three-pointer gave the Chargers a 55-54 lead. With the game tied at 60, First Baptist guard **Paige Pouyat** hit a pair of free throws with :55 seconds left. With :19 seconds left, Pouyat hit one of two free throws and **Gabby Moore** added a game-clinching free throw with three seconds to play.

"Last year we lost three games but we lost in the finals so in that respect the final record didn't matter much," Singleton said. "This year I put together a much tougher schedule and we ended up losing 12 games, but we won the last one. I think the schedule definitely helped this team understand what it would take to win it all. We were playing our best basketball here at the end of the season."

Pojani finished her sophomore season averaging

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Pinewood Prep Athletic Booster Club Salutes Our Student Athletes!

The **Panthers** were 8-8 overall on the mat and finished fifth in the final SCISA team rankings. The team advanced to the **SCISA State Duals Quarterfinals**, where it fell to **John Paul II**.

Individually, **Jax Kessler** led the way. He had a third-place finish in the 113-pound weight class during the **SCISA State Championships** tournament to earn Pinewood's only state podium finish. Several other wrestlers came within one match of placing at the state tournament, including **Leo Ramsey** (106), **Ian Hoch Iza** (132), **Keegan Stockton** (138) and **Carlie Muckelvaney** (Heavyweight).

The season of growth and competitiveness bodes well for the program's future.

FIRST BAPTIST



21.3 points per game, along with 5.6 rebounds, 4.3 steals and shooting 36 percent from beyond the arc. She scored 40 points on 14-of-16 shooting in a second round playoff win..

Braddick, a 6-6 post player headed to Clemson, averaged 12.6 points and 7.7 rebounds while Moore added 10.2 points, 5.5 assists and 5.7 rebounds per game. Senior Paige Pouyat averaged 7.8 points per game and senior forward Ellie Blitch added 6.1 points and 4.4 boards per game.

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HEATHWOOD HALL

Home of the Highlanders



2025-26 Heathwood Hall boys basketball

Heathwood Hall boys basketball ends season in championship game

By WORTHY EVANS
Special to the HSSR
Columbia - A young **Heathwood Hall** boys basketball team determined to end the season with a state championship fell one game short. The Highlanders (21-8), who won their first region championship since 2016-17 with a 10-0 1-4A mark, fell 61-49 to **Pinewood Prep** in the SCISA 4A state championship game at the **Sumter Exhibition Center** Feb. 27. "We came into the game off a great week of practice and focus," Third-year head coach **Brian Benator** told *The High School Sports Report* after the game. "I felt like we came in ready to play tonight. Our guys have been motivated all season. ... The lid was on the rim tonight against us. We just had some problems making shots tonight." Eighth-grader **Jackson Dickerson** led the team with 10 points, while senior **Deuce Claxton** and sophomore **Hunter Collins** scored nine points apiece. Heathwood Hall led Pinewood 14-11 after the first quarter, but in a defensive second quarter the Panthers outscored the Highlanders 9-4 and took a 20-18 lead into the locker room. From there on Pinewood sped up the game and pressed more on defense. The Panthers

outscored Heathwood 41-31 in the last two quarters to secure their ninth state championship. "We had a stretch tonight where we struggled to make some shots and they had a stretch where they hit a couple three's to go up on us 8 to 10 points," Benator said. "They also put more pressure defense on us in the second half and that helped them get several transition baskets." While the loss ended the Highlanders' season on a sour note, the 2025-26 season marked a turnaround for the boys team. The Highlanders were 6-21 and 0-8 in the region in 2022-23, the season before Benator took the reins. Since then they are 47-36, with this year's first 20-plus win season since 2011-12, when then-head coach **Jeff Whalen** led the team to the last of three straight state championship appearances. "When we put the group together at the end of last year ... we thought this team had an opportunity to be on the top," Benator explained a week before the state championship game. "They've been through so much. They've had their reps, they've been through the ups and downs, they saw a postseason run in the semis and an eight-win increase (from 9-18 in 2023-24 to 17-10 in 2024-25). They set the stage this year with consistency, buying in to what we've been trying to work toward. They're a unified

HEATHWOOD HALL

HABC congratulates our Heathwood Hall Varsity Football players and coaches on an outstanding season.

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group with great energy, and it's been really fun to coach them." For Heathwood Hall, this year likely marks the first of many state challenges. Five seniors—including captains **Henry Morris**, **Deuce Claxton**, and **Xander Pertile**, and **Ryan Pfister** and **Chip Ravenell**—move on, but a sizable bunch of experienced underclassmen remain to keep the program going further. Among them is sophomore **Hunter Collins**, who led the team in scoring with 11.1 points per game. The Heathwood Hall girls basketball team finished the season 15-8 overall and 6-4 in the region. The Highlanders beat **Trinity Collegiate** 60-24 in the first round of the SCISA 4A tournament, but they fell 80-47 to **First Baptist** Feb. 23. Three seniors, **Queseya Rhooms**, **Vivien Cooper**, and **America Spriggs**, depart. Rhooms averaged 10.3 point and 6.6 rebounds per game, but freshman **Dakota Jenkins** led the team in scoring with 13.1 points and 7.5 rebounds per game. The other nine players are juniors and sophomores, with one seventh grader, **Kenzie Williams**, who played in seven games.

SCISA A Girls Basketball State Championship

Wardlaw mounts big comeback to claim SCISA A girls title

By: Gerald Doolittle
Johnston, S.C. - The **Wardlaw Academy Lady Patriots** coached by **Kristina Spurlock** mounted one of the greatest come backs in school history to defeat the **Richard Winn Academy Lady Eagles** 43-39 for the SCISA Class A 2025-26 Championship.

The Lady Eagles led by Senior **Abby Lewis** owned the first quarter to build a 16-4 lead fueled by 12 turnovers by Wardlaw. The Lady Eagles continued the brutal attack into the second quarter building the lead to 22-7 at the 4:12 mark of the quarter when Coach Spurlock called a timeout. "They were frustrated and I called a timeout to calm them," said Spurlock. "I told them the game of basketball is a game of runs. Now was the time to make our run."

Make their run they did. Behind **Taylor Hill**(sr) and **Katherine Trotter** (sr) the Lady Patriots finished the second quarter on a 10-2 run to close the first half trailing 17-24.

The Lady Patriots continued the 23-3 run through the third quarter be-



2026 Wardlaw Patriots girls basketball

hind the fierce play of Hill and Trotter to carry a 30-27 Wardlaw lead into the fourth quarter where the two teams kept trading scores. The Lady Patriots won the quarter 13-12 to make the final score read 43-39 in favor of Wardlaw.

The Lady Patriots brought home the first Title since 2009. For Coach Spurlock it was her third time being a

part of a Wardlaw Championship. She was a part of two Titles during her playing days at Wardlaw. Trotter led the Lady Patriots with 17 points followed by Hill with 15. Hill got 11 of her points from the charity line while Trotter connected on 7 of 8.

Brianna McNeil (sr) had 7 points followed by **Lillie Stocum** (so)

and **Mary Blanche Stark** (8th) with two points each. Hill, Trotter and McNeil were named to the All-Tournament team. I am sure Coach Spurlock is the SCISA Class A Coach-of-the-Year as she led her army of eight to a 14-7 season record.

SCISA A Boys Basketball State Championship

Dominant Ragin Prep repeats as Class A boys state champion

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Senior Writer
Sumter - It didn't take very long to see that **Ragin Prep** was going to defend its SCISA Class A boys basketball state championship on Saturday at **Sumter County Civic Center**.

The Rams scored the first 15 points of their game against **Newberry Academy** and were never really threatened on the way to a 59-21 triumph.

RP head ccoach **Anthony Jackson** is not surprised at the repeat, but he is proud of his team for having the wherewithal to pull it off.

"We knew from the beginning of the season with everything that we had coming back that we needed to work hard and stay humble," Jackson said. "If we did that we knew we could be back in this position today. So hats off to those guys for doing that."

"It feels great to be back-to-back champions," said senior forward **Kayshaun Rutherford**. "I've always wanted to do this with my brothers." "I've been wanting to do this since I came here," said the Rams' other senior, **Kden Shannon**. "It feels great to go out with a win. I already knew there were going to be tears, but they're tears of joy."

Ragin Prep, which finished the year with an 18-12 record, did it in



2026 Ragin Prep Christian Rams basketball

convincing fashion. They used their length and height advantages to be smothering on defense as well as being able to pound the offensive glass.

There weren't many uncontested shots for the Eagles, who finished the year with a 13-8 record. Also, the Rams used a variety of presses to make it difficult for NA to set up its offense, forcing several 10-second calls.

"We like to use different presses in what (**Marquette** head coach) **Shaka Smart** calls 'calculated chaos,'" Jackson said. "We told them to buy in on the defensive end and that's what they did. We can't control what you do defensively. That's a want-to thing. You have to want to do it."

Newberry head coach **Scott Gardner** knew his team faced a major challenge.

"It's hard to replicate their size and speed and length, plus we only had one day to prepare," Gardner said. "They play such a different style than what we're accustomed to. We hadn't seen anything like that all year long, and it showed tonight."

"My hat's off to Ragin Prep and their kids. They do a good job with them and they were hungry tonight."

RP had a 7-0 lead less than two minutes into the contest thanks to a layup and two free throws from junior **Kavontay Rose** and a 3-point basket from senior **Rutherford**. A layup by sophomore **Robert Kelly** and follow-ups by Shannon and Rutherford made

it 13-0 and caused Gardner to use a timeout at the 3:10 mark of the first quarter.

Two more free throws from Rutherford following the timeout pushed the lead to 15-0. NA finally got on the scoreboard when senior **Gavin Wilbanks** converted a 3-point play with 1:50 left. Wilbanks added a 3-point basket before the end of the quarter to make the score 17-6 entering the second quarter.

Newberry actually gained some traction at this point. While scoring only four points in the first six minutes of the second stanza, the Eagles limited Ragin Prep to just six. A layup by sophomore **Javon Conway** pulled NA within 23-10 with 2:51 to go in

See SCISA A Boys, pg. 73

What Do These Schools All Have In Common?



Can you solve the puzzle? Email HSReport@aol.com

SCHSL Wrestling Championships



2026 Clover Blue Eagles wrestling

Clover heavyweight avoids pin to clinch AAAAA Div. 1 state title

By **WORTHY EVANS**
Contributing Writer
LEXINGTON — Clover heavyweight wrestler **Messiah Outing's** mission at the 5A Division 1 state championship match Wednesday night was not to get pinned.

Going into the 285-pound match between Outing and **James Island's Steven Hernandez** at the **Lexington High School** gym, the Blue Eagles held a 34-28 advantage, and a pin by the Trojan wrestler would subject the matchup to tiebreak criteria established by the National Federation of High School

Sports. "We knew it was going to be a tough match," Clover head coach **Michael Fitzgerald** said. "We'd wrestled them earlier in the season, we'd seen them at other places, and it was going to be a grind," Fitzgerald said. "there was a late move there at the end that really put us in a position to win, but yeah it was a nail-biter to say the least."

Outing accomplished the mission and spared the finer points of determining a winner. Through three rounds and six minutes of action, Outing's defensive posture resisted every effort Hernandez exerted to turn Outing's

shoulders to the mat. While Hernandez won with a score of 8-1, his victory brought only three points to **James Island**—while Outing's resistance secured a 34-31 victory and gave the Blue Eagles their first state wrestling championship.

"We talk about it with our guys all the time, it's not necessarily the guy who gets the pin, it's the guy who doesn't get pinned," Fitzgerald said.

Taking points away from their opponent was the strategy for the Blue Eagles from the start.

Keygan Waters avoided a pin from **James Island's Robby Baty** in the 106 match. Even though the Tro-

jans took a 3-0 lead, the Blue Eagles won the next three classes—**Beckham Boggess** pinned **James Baty** at 113, **Luke Hudson** won a technical fall over **Caedman Stoyles** at 120, and **Aiden Santiago** won by decision over **Sam Harris** at 126—to take a 15-3 lead.

James Island's Luke Ridgeway got the Trojans back into it with a pin of **Henry Parker** at 132, and **Trent Collins** followed up with a decision over **Jamison Smithers** at 138 to make it 15-13 Clover.

After that match the teams exchanged victories in each weight class.

Fort Mill tops Lugoff-Elgin to win AAAAA Div. II wrestling title

By **Thomas Grant, Jr.**
Special to the HSSR
Lexington — It was déjà vu to the "fourth" power on Wednesday for **Fort Mill High School** wrestling.

For the second straight year, an undefeated Yellow Jackets squad faced **Lugoff-Elgin** for the AAAAA Division I state title. The Jackets were also seeking to claim a fourth consecutive state title and extend the **Palmetto State's** longest winning streak in the sport to 67.

All of those goals were reached as Fort Mill defeated the Demons 52-11 at the White Knoll Gymnasium to finish 30-0.

"It shows what these kids are capable of," FM head coach **Adam Murillo** said. "This is actually two years in a row they've completed an undefeated season. In the past four years, these guys have lost only three duals.

Lugoff-Elgin took an early 3-0 lead after **Tyler McChesney** won by points over **Cole Warntinger** at in the 132-pound weight class. The Yellow Jackets' 138-pounder **Cooper Van**



2026 Fort Mill Yellow Jackets wrestling

Beynum responded by edging **Cody Wunder** 7-6 to tie the match. Pinfall wins by **Jayden Nguyen** (144), **Keenan Coston** (150) and **Lincoln Greene** (158) and a decision win by **Broden Mitcheson** (165) put Fort Mill up 22-3. Lugoff-Elgin got decision wins by **Jakaleb Robinson** (175) and **Logan Hinton** (215) in the

next three matches to get within 27-11. Fort Mill did not lose again as it closed out a fourth straight title with five straight wins. **Maurice Lawrence** (190) got a 21-5 technical fall victory. Heavyweight **Kristian Villatoro**, **Peter Escudero** (106) and **Luke Van Beynum** (120) were pinfall victors, the latter coming in 18

seconds. "We did not execute tonight," Lugoff-Elgin head coach **Ted Monroe** said. "They're the best team in South Carolina. I'm not talking in this classification. I'm talking about South Carolina – period."

Marlboro County softball seeks rebound season

By **David Shelton**
Senior Writer
Bennettsville — Prior to last season, the softball program at **Marlboro County** was a perennial playoff and region title contender.

Things went south last spring as the program suffered from a lack of consistent pitching, leading to a 5-19 overall record and an 0-12 mark in region play. In the previous three seasons, Marlboro County contended for or won region titles and made a splash in the state playoffs.

Coach **Kevin Inglis** is hopeful that last year's performance was just one of those years when nothing went right. He has assembled a solid group for the 2026 season and the team is off to a 2-2 start.

The roster has several players returning with significant varsity playing experience, led by junior all-state shortstop **Addison Skipper**, who hit .569 with 25 runs batted in last season.

Senior centerfielder **Amir Bridges** anchors the outfield defensively and is a consistent hitter as well. Freshman **Kaylee Sweat** returns at first base after hitting .283 last season, and sophomore **Autumn Sheppard** pitches and plays third and is

showing solid potential at the plate. Looking to bring more consistency inside the circle are freshmen **Ava Green** and **Brandy Driggers**.

Senior **Tessa Chavis** is a solid worker defensively at second base and **Ruthie Grooms** hit nearly .300 as a catcher/third baseman last season.

Look for freshmen **Kara Robinson**, **Kayleigh Polson** and **Zi'eira O'Neal** to make a push for playing time in the outfield. Eighth-grader **Maelee James** will push for time at third base.

Basketball Final
The boys and girls basketball seasons have come to a close. The boys team finished with a 8-16 overall record and lost to Battery Creek in the playoffs.

Junior **Will Jeffcoat** led the team in scoring at 17.6 points per game while **LaQuincy Leach** averaged 10.9 points per game.

The girls season ended with a playoff loss to Keenan, dropping the overall record to 7-16.1. **Iyanna Boatwright** averaged 11.2 points per game. **Jordyn Zimmerman** averaged 8.1 points and 9.5 rebounds per game. **Serenity Bethea** added 8.7 points per contest.

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A Friend of the Bulldogs Salutes Marlboro County Athletics!

Hartsville tuning up for big spring on the diamond

By **David Shelton**
Senior Writer
Hartsville — The spring sports season is action-packed at **Hartsville High** and two of the teams to watch this spring are the baseball and softball teams.

Both teams are coming off great 2025 campaigns that saw each win at least games over the course of the season. Both teams return solid talent and experience and expectations are high for both squads.

The softball program, led by coach **Amber Harvey**, has a few key holes to fill, primarily inside the pitcher's circle where Harvey will be handing over the bulk of the work to a pair of eighth-graders, **Kymer Gainey** and **Hannah Amerson**. If the hitting produces some of the pressure will ease on the young pitching until they get their feet wet.

Anchoring the offensive attack is senior infielder **Myah Harvey**, who hit .522 with eight homers and 25 stolen bases. **Mary Ellyn Hickey**, a senior catcher, hit .395 with three homers last season, while junior second baseman **Emmakate Hudson** hit .342 as a sophomore.

Returning as the anchor in the outfield is junior **Terriney Thompson**, who hit .311 a season ago. Senior **Abby Byrd** also returns, as a utility player and senior **Emma Floyd** and senior **Riley Stephens** will serve key roles defensively.

Sophomore **Zoe Gray** will be a utility player and sophomore **Raven Schaff** will play on the corners.

Hartsville was 23-6 overall last season, finishing 11-1 in region play. They were eliminated by South Florence in the Lower State playoffs.

There will be new leadership at the helm of the baseball program. **Daniel Twitty** is the new head coach, coming over from the successful program at West Florence. The new coach inherits a solid core that went 20-6 overall and 12-0 in region play last season.

Among the top returners is senior **Brandon Anderson**, who went 9-1 on the mound last season while hitting .431 at the plate.

Senior **Jaden Atkinson** hit .473 with 19 RBI last year and was 6-1 on the bump. Junior **Bryce Oliver** batted .526 and was 4-1 on the mound while returning senior outfielder **Dorian Mason** hit .439 with 22 RBI last season.

Senior **Luke Holloway** and sophomore **Ford Wallace** will be key players, along with juniors **Wells Bannister**, **Myles McCoy**, **Bryce Segars** and **Jalen Lewis**.

Hartsville is off to a 3-0 start, earning victories over West Florence, Cheraw and Wilson in a pre-season tournament.

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BHP's Bolden Jr. named AAA All-State selection

By **Dennis Brunson**
hssr.com Associate Editor
Honea Path — Senior guard **Marshall Bolden Jr.** was named to the **South Carolina Basketball Coaches Association AAA boys All-State team** while leading **Belton-Honea Path High School** to the Region 1-AAA championship.

Bolden averaged 15.5 points per game, which was second on the team to sophomore **Eugene Robinson's** 15.9. Bolden also averaged 4.2 rebounds and a team high 3.0 assists.

The Bears were 17-9 on the season but 8-1 in region play, which gave them the region crown.

They rolled to an easy 82-47 win over **Palmetto** in the first round of the state playoffs, but fell to **St. Joseph's** 57-51 in the second round.

Along with leading BHP in scoring, **Robinson** also led in rebounding at 5.6. Other key contributors were junior **Zi Miller-Brown** and senior **Dajuan Walker**. Miller-Brown averaged 11.1 points, 2.7 assists and 2.0 steals. Walker averaged 9.7 points, 2.0 assists and 2.0 steals.

SEVENTH-GRADER IVY BROOKS ALL-REGION

See BHP, pg. 73

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Spartanburg

DAY SCHOOL

Home of the Griffins



2026 Spartanburg Day Boys Soccer

Brewer pulling double duty coaching boys and girls soccer at Spartanburg Day this spring

Billy G. Baker
Publisher

Spartanburg—Due to a recent leg operation to **Spartanburg Day** head girl's soccer coach **Emily Rossi**, Graham Brewer is pulling double duty this Spring as he is head coaching both the boy's and girl's teams this Spring.

"Coach Rossi had hoped to be cleared to coach the girl's team once again, but she was not cleared medically after leg surgery, so I had no problem stepping up and coaching both teams this season," said Coach Brewer, who played high school soccer at **Dorman High School**. "This is my third season as the head boys' soccer coach, but I have been involved with the program for seven seasons."

The boys' team started the season on March 3 with a 2-0 win with wins over **Our Lady of the Rosary** (5-1). Then on March 6 the Griffins also defeated **Greenwood Christian** 3-2 on March 6, to improve to 2-0 early on.

The boys' team employs 4-2-3 formation during competition.

"We feel great about the boy's team start to the season and we have a lot of talented players back with experience from last season," said Coach Brewer. "We have a strong senior group leading the team. We just need to stay focused on steady improvement. We hope to compete for a region title and having a deep run in the playoffs."

The team's top overall player is year-round sopho-

Moffitt looking forward to upcoming varsity spring football

Billy G. Baker
Publisher

Spartanburg—The **Spartanburg Day** Griffins varsity football team will welcome around 25 candidates to the start of Spring football practice beginning on May 4, and head varsity coach **Parick Moffitt** is looking forward to the school's first varsity football team in 42 years, starting with the 2026 season.

For the past two seasons the Griffins have fielded "B" teams and a junior varsity program in 2025, in their steady rise to grow into a varsity program.

"We feel like we have prepared well the past two seasons as we grow into a varsity football program this season," said Coach Moffitt. "The guys we will have on the field this season are all solid high school football players. They have been working hard in the weight room and in conditioning drills in the weight to get ready for this season.

The team will be competing in the SCISA AA clas-

more Forward player **Armin Parker**, a returning all-region performer, who scored two goals in the season opener. He followed that up with a three-goal hat-trick against **Greenwood Christian**. "Armin has the build and soccer back-ground to become a next level player if he keeps working hard and developing," said Coach Graham. "He plays the sport year-round and he is a devoted soccer player with a lot of skills and speed on the field."

The boys' team returns to two other all-region players from last season. They are junior center mid-fielder **Noah Brusch** and senior center defender **Brice Henderson**. Brusch scored a goal against Our Lady of the Rosary.

The starting goalie is junior **Gavin Mason**. Junior **Mitchel Gray** starts in the middle on offense along with 8th grader **David Fisher** who is a starting left back. Senior forward **Reece Cook** starts wide left upfront while veteran senior forward **Matty Lyle** brings experience to the middle.

On defense the starters are sophomore center back **Liam Mezgar** along with 8th grader **Callen Kent** who starts in the defensive mid-field. **Bryce Godfrey** is a starting 8th grade mid-field defender.

Senior **Deuce Williams** earned all-region and all-state honors in boys' basketball this past season. He is playing on the soccer team for the first time and should add depth in several positions on the field. Other key reserves include freshman defender **Tyler Fernanders**, freshman striker **Sutton Smith**, senior defender **Jacob Cochran**, freshman defender, and goalie **Nick Querin**, along with

sification for football this season. Coach Moffitt has announced the team's scrimmage schedule for early August.

"We will hold our first scrimmage on August 1 at **Southlake Christian Academy** on August 1," said Coach Moffitt. "We will conduct our second, and final scrimmage at **Blacksburg High** on August 6. "We have put in a request to SCISA to start the varsity season in week zero on August 14 with a game at **Blacksburg High School**."

The **Spartanburg Day School** is not sure what SCISA AA football region in which they will compete. Most of their other varsity teams compete in the SCISA AAA region. With this being a SCISA realignment the new regions have not been made official yet. Speculation is that the football team is likely to compete in a region with **Greenwood Christian**, **Orangeburg Prep**, **Patrick Henry**, and **Calhoun Academy** but nothing has been made official yet.

Spartanburg

DAY SCHOOL

The alma mater of NBA star Zion Williamson is proud to be joined by our athletic booster club, athletic department and the Spartanburg Day School Administration in proudly recognizing the hard work of our student athletes in the High School Sports Report.

The Spartanburg Day Griffins athletic program is on the move with varsity football coming in 2026

8th grader **Colton Lyle** who is a reserve goalie. Freshman defender **Niles Murphy** broke his leg in the first game of the season and has been lost for the season.

Lyle and Kent also had goals in the season opener. The **Spartanburg girls'** soccer team started the season off with a 5-1 win over **Our Lady of the Rosary**, but they suffered a 6-0 at **Greenwood Christian** recently. "The girl's program graduated two talented seniors from last season and with the injury to their head coach they are going through a transition period while being a very young team," said Coach Brewer. "They have a lot of potential, and they have been working hard."

In the season opener, wide-right offensive starter **Maren Diez** led the team with two goals. Other goals were added by senior mid-fielder **Aiala Diez**, junior forward/left defender **Hannah Vincent**, and senior striker **Leka Motta**.

The goalie is junior **Kaeleigh Huller**. The starting central defender is junior **Aiswarya Tugguden**, junior central mid-fielder is **Maddie Parker**, along with senior attacking mid-fielder **Aiala Diez**. The right defender is senior **Kathryn Spivey** along with freshman wide-right offensive player **Maren Diez** and senior **Mary Franklin Gilman** starting as a right-side defender. **Motta** and **Vincent** are joined in the starting line-up by junior central defender **Aishwarya Trugguden**, senior central defender **Vivi Darr** and 8th grade defender **Lumen Junker**.

Key reserve players include sophomore defender **Belia Cobb**, freshman mid-fielder **Julia Luz**, sophomore mid-fielder **Bentley Cobb**, senior defender **Charlotte Roark**, freshman defender **Clara Matz**, and freshman defender **Lauren Winkler**.

Both teams have an away game at the Christian Academy of Myrtle Beach on March 13 before hosting First Presbyterian Academy at Shannon Forest on March 25. The teams close out the month of March with an away game at rival **Spartanburg Christian**.

Coach Brewer is assisted by **Will Maley** on the boy's team. He is assisted by **Cristian Tirado** on the girl's team. **Polly DeMark** is the team's statistician.

See Spartanburg Day, pg. 79

There are a core group of returning football players for **Spartanburg Day** as they prepare for their first season as a varsity football program. This experienced group of players includes sophomore **Charles Wilson** who will play at linebacker and running back. Junior **Heath Boyd** will see action at running and linebacker while sophomore **Nick Querin** will contribute at offensive tackle, as well as defensive tackle. **Armin Pader** will contribute as a junior wide receiver and free safety. Junior **Gibbes Montgomery** will play at defensive end, and he could flip to the offensive line if needed.

Other key returning players are sophomore wide receiver and defensive back **Camden Teel**, sophomore wide receiver, and defensive back **Tyler Fernanders** along with junior two-way lineman **Cale Willoughby**. Freshman **Charlie Birch** returns to hold down linebackers and tight end positions while freshman **Rut-**
See **Spartanburg Day**, pg. 79

SCHSL Wrestling Championships

May River defeats Travelers Rest to earn repeat crown

By Billy G. Baker
Publisher

Gilbert—May River's second straight AAAA SCHSL wrestling championship, over **Traveler's Rest** (31-29) at **Gilbert High** on February, 11 wasn't nearly as dramatic as the Sharks rallying from a 35-11 deficit against **Laurens** in 2025 to win by one point; but the match had a turning point very early in the competition.

After the state title win, May River head coach **Ashley Powell** shared his feelings with the **HSSR**, "Our senior **Blake Butler** came through for us with a pin at 157, and he has been coming through for us throughout his career and we knew we could count on him," said Coach Powell. "His younger brother (Bryce Butler) was the big win for us at 113 when he defeated a returning state champion and his win helped set the tone for us tonight.

"We feel like we are a very disciplined team and we train very hard," said Coach Powell. "Our goal was to take them to the

third period in every match, and we felt like if we could do this, we could break them. It feels great to come away with our second straight state championship.

"Winning one in a row was special but to now have won two in a row this moment is really special," said Coach Powell. "Most importantly this is a completing different team this season. We had a bunch of different leaders last year. We have 10 seniors on this year's team, and I am so proud of them all for answering the bell tonight."

These same two teams had competed against each other on January 3 with the **Sharks** winning 37-33 earlier.

Traveler's Rest head coach **Ted Henderson** was just as proud of his team who were competing for their first wrestling title in school history. "This is the first time we have made it past the third round," said Coach Henderson. "We overcame a lot of injuries throughout the season, and we battled back to get to the finals, and I am very proud of this team



2026 May River Sharks wrestling

and how they competed tonight.

"You have to give credit to May River, and they are a well put together team," said Coach Henderson. "We had a great season considering all the adversity we overcame to compete for a state championship. I am proud of our kids. We only graduate three seniors, so we expect to be very good next season also."

After May River's **Stephano Calderon's** pin at 106 gave the **Sharks** an early 6-0 lead in the first match of the

event with 8 seconds left in the opening period, it was the 113 pound competition that appeared to favor **Traveler's Rest** when state champion and number ranked **Stiles Stevens** squared off against **Bryce Butler** who is ranked third over-all by **SCMat.com**.

The first period between **Stevens** and **Butler** finished 0-0. At the end of the second period **Stevens** held a 4-2 lead with **Stevens** breaking a 2-2 tie with an escape

See **AAAA Wrestling**, pg. 73

West Oak defeats Hanahan to claim fifth straight crown

By WORTHY EVANS
Contributing Writer

LEXINGTON — The 3A state championship streak for the **West-Oak** wrestling team continues after a 54-15 victory over **Hanahan** Wednesday night at the **Lexington High School** gym.

The **Warriors** overcame two early **Hanahan** pins to secure the school's fifth straight state wrestling championship and 10th since 1994. They finished 33-1.

"We knew they were tough down low, so we knew we had to get through a few early matches," **White-Oak** head coach **Derek Strobel** said. "Then we got to the main part of our lineup with our guys. Give credit to **Hanahan**, they wrestled us tough. They weren't laying down, I can tell you that."

Hanahan got two early victories,

Chesnee defeats Edisto 70-12 to claim AA wrestling crown

By Thomas Grant, Jr.
Special to the HSSR

Lexington — The "Redemption Tour" ended in championship fashion on Wednesday at **White Knoll High School** for **Chesnee** wrestling.

The **Eagles** dominated **Edisto** 70-12 to win the AA state title. It was the program's second championship in three years and helped erase the memory of last year's playoff loss to archrival **Chester**.

"I've got a bunch of seniors on the team, and I knew they would take control," **CHS** head coach **Jon Rentz** said. "We were kind of worried about wrestling on Wednesday than Saturday, especially against **Chester**. It took a lot out of us when we wrestled them, but we had two good practices.

"Our seniors took over the room and we just came in here and said

we're going to line up like we normally do and just do what we do."

As senior **Tyler Henderson** sported his gold medal, he said that was the moment his team began to envision themselves as champions again.

"After we lost to **Chester**, everybody was ready," he said. "We were ready to come into the season. Going into the summer, it was like completely different from prior years. Going into the summer, we had way more practices, were getting more prepared and we started a lot earlier.

"We focused on getting stronger, weightlifting, everything. So, I think, at that point, I knew this team was going to be special."

Having to defeat **Liberty** and **Chester** in the Upper State bracket



2026 West Oak Warriors wrestling

over **K'Von Ingram** at 150, **Drake Smith** pinned **Pedro Afo nso** at 157, **Ryan Driver** pinned **John Kahnel** at 165, **Sy Strobel** won a technical fall over **Tanner Ritchie** at 175, **Wyatt Saxon** won by decision over **Brody Abrams** at 190, **Elijah Weston** pinned **Donovan Manigault** at 215, and **Logan Whitfield** won by deci-

sion over **Joseph Ivey** at 285. "West-Oak has a really good team and they showcased that tonight," **Hanahan** head coach **Roy Atkins** said. "Our guys did come out and fight. We gave them our best match tonight and hat's off to Coach Strobel and his guys."

With **West-Oak** wins in all but three weight classes, the match

See **AAA Wrestling**, pg. 73



2026 Chesnee Eagles wrestling

also bolstered **Chesnee's** confidence. This was especially true facing an **Edisto** team that was making its first-ever appearance in the state final.

The **Eagles' Cranston Crane** picked up a forfeit victory in the opening match in the 106-pound weight class. After a pinfall victory

by **Wayne Felder** at 113 led the match at 6-6, **Chesnee** responded by winning the next 11 matches. It was a succession of pinfalls starting with **Bryson Chappell** (120) followed by **Eli Barnhill** (126), **Kameron Hall** (132), **Taven**

See **AA Wrestling**, pg. 73

HSSR All-State Football Honorees

Note: Virtually every head football coach in South Carolina was sent an all-state football ballot at the end of the season in mid-December. Head Coaches were asked to nominate players from their team and from teams they had played. The HSSR thanks coaches for their input.

2025 HSSR-SCHSL Mr. Football –Aiden Manavian-Oceanside Collegiate
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL Career Mr. Football-J’Zavien Currence-South Pointe
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL Statewide Off. Player of The Year-Aiden Manavian-Oceanside
 2025 Statewide Defensive Player of The Year-Michael Boulware-Gray Collegiate
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL Div. I AAAAA Player of the Year—Jaxon Knotts-Dutch Fork
 HSSR-SCHSL Div. I 5A Offensive Player of the Year—Connor Dantzler-James Island
 HSSR-SCHSL Div. I AAAAA Defensive Player of the Year—Julian Walker-Dutch Fork
 HSSR-SCHSL Div. II AAAAA Player of the Year-Xavier Means-Northwestern
 HSSR-SCHSL Div. II AAAAA Off. Player of the Year- Kason Canupp-Nation Ford
 HSSR-SCHSL Div. II AAAAA Defensive Year of Year-Kam McFadden-Northwestern
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL AAAAA Player of the Year—RJ Brown-South Pointe
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL AAAAA Offensive Player of the Year—Aedan McCarthy-Bluffton
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL AAAAA Defensive Player of the Year—KJ Burg-South Pointe
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL AAAA Player of the Year—Mike Jones-Oceanside Collegiate

2025 HSSR-SCHSL Statewide All-State Offense:
 QB-Xavier Means-Northwestern
 QB-Tristen Lewis-Greenwood
 RB-Jaylen Singletary-Hampton County
 RB-Meliq McGowan-Stratford
 RB-Amari Verner-Seneca
 OL-Zyon Guiles-Carvers Bay
 OL-Desmond Green-Timberland
 OL-Tre Aiken-Clinton
 OL-Bryson Moore-Irmo
 OL-Chris Coleman-Northwestern
 TE-Jamel Howse-Newberry
 WR-Jaiden Kelly-Murray-Summerville
 WR-Carnell Warren-Bluffton
 WR-Kameron Vance-Northwestern
 WR-Stone Furrey-Dutch Fork
 WR-Terence Johnson-Oceanside Collegiate
 Ath.-Caden Ramsey-Cross
 Pk-Alex Bendt-Northwestern

2025 HSSR-SCHSL Statewide All-State Defense:
 DL-Julian Walker-Dutch Fork
 DL-Chris Stewart-Andrews
 DL-Terry Radford-Chester
 DL-Sawyer Arnold-Oceanside Collegiate
 DL-Damarion Roman-Greenwood
 LB-Jaemin Pinckney-Woodland
 LB-Christian Foster-Emerald
 LB-Daniel Capehart-Dillon
 LB-Zyon Ratchford-Gaffney
 LB-Terry Gordon-South Florence
 DB-Kentavious Anderson-Dorman
 DB-Jeremiah Favorite-Boiling Springs
 DB-Tamarion Watkins-Northwestern
 DB-Joshua Dobson-Catawba Ridge
 P-Will Love-Spartanburg

HSSR-SCHSL Div. I AAAAA All-State Offense:
 QB-Connor Dantzler-James Island
 QB-Jachin Davis-Stratford
 RB-Ryan Campbell-Ashley Ridge
 RB-Javyen Williams-Summerville
 RB-Tree Segarra-Byrnes
 OL-Antonio Grant-Stratford
 OL-Zy’Quaz Kelley-Sumter
 OL-Brendan Carson-Spartanburg
 OL-Antonio Grant-Stratford
 OL-Vernen Haires-Irmo
 TE-Jaiden Grate-Boiling Springs
 WR-Raphael Puiu-James Island
 WR-Carter Coleman-Rudge View
 WR-Grayson Crowe-Boiling Springs
 WR-Nick Zincone-Carolina Forest
 Pk-Bradley O-Leary-Dutch Fork

HSSR-SCHSL Div. I AAAAA All-State Defense:
 DL-Luciano Cesario-Dutch Fork
 DL-Christian Waring-Dorman
 DL-Brendan Carson-Spartanburg
 DL-Bristol Biegenzahn-West Ashley
 DL-Jaden Wuerth-Dutch Fork
 DL-Justice Hopkins-Byrnes
 LB-Raleigh Salters-Dutch Fork
 LB-JT Williams-Summerville

2025 HSSR-SCHSL AAA Offensive Player of the Year—Moon Gerald-Loris
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL AAA Defensive Player of the Year—Rhys Meredith-Oceanside
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL AA Player of the Year—Deonte Phillips-Strom Thurmond
 HSSR-SCHSL AA Offensive Player of the Year—Bri-Shaun Lee-Strom Thurmond
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL AA Defensive Player of the Year—Chris Stewart-Andrews
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL Class A Player of the Year—Brian McMillian-Bamberg-Ehrhardt
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL Class A Offensive Player of the Year—Zori Pierce-Lamar
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL Class A Def. Player of the Year—Jalen McGraw-Bamberg-Ehr.
 *25 HSSR-SCHSL John McKissick Coach Excellence Award-Tom Knotts-Dutch Fork
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL Div. I AAAAA Coach of the Year—Tom Knotts-Dutch Fork
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL Div. II AAAAA Coach of the Year—Paige Wofford-Northwestern
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL AAAAA Coach of the Year—Bobby Collins-South Pointe
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL Class AAA Coach of the Year—Brent LaPrad-Oceanside
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL AA Coach of the Year—Andrew Webb-Strom Thurmond
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL Class A Coach of the Year—Corey Crosby-Bamberg Ehrhardt
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL Lifetime Achievement—Victor Floyd-Chester
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL Troy Brown WR Honoree-Zay Robertson-Dillon
 2025 Tommy Mangum Memorial Valor Honoree—TBA
 2025 HSSR-SCHSL School Administrator of the Year-TBA

LB-Malquan Pimentel-Ashley Ridge
 LB-Miquel Pearson-Fort Dorchester
 DB-Jordan Ravenell-Summerville
 DB-Jordyn Best-Ridge View
 DB-Jonah Coleman-Stratford
 DB-Jaydan Alston-Carolina Forest
 P-Elliott Mittag-Fort Dorchester

HSSR-SCHSL Div. II AAAAA All-State Offense:
 QB-Banks Bouton-Gaffney
 QB-Henry Rivers-Berkeley
 RB-Nigel Smith-Northwestern
 RB-Jack Lamonica-Lucy Beckham
 OL-Scotland Dover-Gaffney
 OL-Caden Muskus-Chapin
 OL-Nasir Hannah-Northwestern
 OL-Zion Britt-Berkeley
 OL-Nasir Hannah-Northwestern
 TE-Bryce Seaborn-Greenwood
 WR-Jayden Scott-Nation Ford
 WR- Matthew Hillstock-Easley
 WR-Shamil Saadiq-Lugoff-Elgin
 WR-Jay Duncan-Greenwood
 Ath.-Jordan Jenkins-Conway
 Pk-Noah Hardy-Fort Mill

2025 HSSR-SCHSL Div. II All-State Defense:
 DL-Jahmir Heyward-Berkeley
 DL-Ahmad Scott-Greenwood
 DL-Jamie Williamson-West Florence
 DL-Emari Nance-T.L. Hanna
 LB-Malquan Pimentel-Northwestern
 LB-Antonio Brown-Myrtle Beach
 LB-Gehad Sneed-Berkeley
 LB-Josue Esiki-White Knoll
 DB-Jamarion McKinney-Greenville
 DB-Noah Terry-Indian Land
 DB-Clayton Folsie-West Florence
 DB-Caleb Geronomi-White Knoll
 P-Will Major-Greenville

2025 HSSR-SCHSL AAAAA All-State Offense:
 QB-Xavier Wright-Gray Collegiate
 QB-Roper Wentzky-AC Flora
 RB-Mike Doe-North Augusta
 RB-Trevon Williamson-Gray Collegiate
 RB-Amari Verner-Seneca
 RB-RJ Brown-South Pointe
 OL-Aiden Mack-Crestwood
 OL-Jack Armstrong-Gray Collegiate
 OL-Anthony Baxter-South Pointe
 OL-Kenshon Speaks-Beaufort
 OL-Aaden Starnes-Hartsville
 OL-Nathan Huff-Greer
 TE-Daquan Middleton-Lower Richland
 WR-Corey Gleaton-Gray Collegiate
 WR-Kyson McLeod-South Aiken
 WR-Trey Wimbley-Daniel
 WR-Jayaun Perkins-South Florence
 WR-Dailan Duncan-South Pointe
 Ath.-Messiah Jackson-South Florence
 Pk-Brock Franklin-Laurens

2025 HSSR-SCHSL AAAAA State Defense:

DL-Dexter Johnson-North Augusta
 DL-Chris Doyle-Bluffton
 DL-Bryson Freeman-Daniel
 DL-Miles Wilson-South Pointe
 DL-Josh Bigger-Hilton Head
 LB-Daquan Evans-South Pointe
 LB-Jaxx Wilson-Westside
 LB-Michael Poole-May River
 LB-Andrew Massey-Hilton Head
 LB-Hunter Alex-Bishop England
 DB-Da’Shan Scriven-Crestwood
 DB-Tylin Drakeford-Camden
 DB-Amare Reaves-South Florence
 DB-Rodreon Cranford-Hartsville
 P-Corey Shoemaker-Seneca

2025 HSSR-SCHSL AAA All-State Offense:
 QB- Khayel Sam Fong-Talia-Dillon
 QB-Noah Thomas-BHP
 RB-Michael Martin-Christ Church
 RB- Lorenzo Kitchings-North Charleston
 RB-Aiden Gibson-Woodruff
 OL-Jacoby Castle-Union County
 OL-Kiele Pompey-Dillon
 OL-Carson Taylor-Broome
 OL-Rody Barnett-Christ Church
 OL-Lamareon Thompson-Oceanside Collegiate
 TE-Kameron Taylor-Woodruff
 WR-KD Hainsworth-Mountain View Prep
 WR-Jude Hall-Christ Church
 WR-Amiri Acker-Crescent
 WR-Kori Moates-Woodruff
 PK-Jackson Summey-Oceanside Collegiate

2025 HSSR-SCHSL AAA All-State Defense:
 DL- Jordan Wright-Newberry
 DL-Kylan Dixon-BHP
 DL-Mike Jones-Oceanside Collegiate
 DL-CJ Lovelace-Mountain View Prep
 DL-Landon Connor-BHP
 LB-Shaun Graybill-Woodruff
 LB-Jordan Avinger-Orangeburg-Wilkinson
 LB- Keryien Brown-Dillon
 LB- Damarea Thurmond-Loris
 LB-Jayden Wertz-Powdersville
 DB-Michael Strickler-Oceanside Collegiate
 DB-Tajeh Watson-Martin-BHP
 DB-Malachi Thompson-Woodruff
 DB-Khalil Sherman-Loris
 DB-Anthony Atkins-Christ Church
 P-Jackson McCauley-Woodruff

2025 HSSR-SCHSL AA All-State Offense:
 QB-Dwayne Louallen-Central
 QB-Evan-Reece Lawter-Chesnee
 RB-Amadre Wooden-Batesburg-Leesville
 RB-Tyleek Dukes-Kingstree
 RB-Jevan Cook-Clinton
 OL-Brandon Rollins-Central
 OL-Da’Viyron McNair-Andrews
 OL-Jackson Beddingfield-Barnwell
 OL-Moises Gonzales-Bateburg-Leesville
 OL-Tyreon Summerson-Woodland
 OL-Walker Kirby-East Clarendon



2026 Carolina Academy softball

Phillips looking for Carolina Academy to contend

BY David Shelton
 Senior Writer

Lake City – There are times when Carolina Academy softball coach **Scotty Phillips** wonders why he keeps coming back to coach the Bobcats.

Phillips has spent more than two dozen years in the dugout but admits it get tougher each year in dealing with teenagers. Phillips is old-school and demands things be done in a certain way. Today’s players don’t always walk in line.

But winning a state title is enough to keep the coach coming back. Carolina Academy won the state championship last spring and with most of that team returning, the Bobcats are sure to be a contender once again. But not without bumps along the way.

“They’re a good group of girls but they are teenagers and it’s not as easy as it looks sometimes,” Phillips said. “We’re up and down in terms of intensity. Somedays they show up and really aren’t into playing. I guess what we try to do is focus on when it matters most but I would prefer we come to the field ready to work every day. Last year we ended strong but it took a half a year to get to

Lake City’s Riles chosen for All-State honors

By Dennis Brunson
 hssr.com Associate Editor

Lake City – After making a magical run to the AA Lower State championship game last season, the just completed campaign didn’t go the way the **Lake City High School** girls basketball team had hoped.

After gong 17-8 overall and winning Region 7 with a 10-2 record, the Panthers went a still respectable 14-12 this season and were 6-6 in region play, good for fourth place.

That put Lake City on the road against Chesterfield, which finished second in Region 4. The Panthers put up a good battle, but fell by a 53-50 count.

Despite the early exit, second-year head coach **Shaquetta Cooper** isn’t deterred.

“It didn’t end how we wanted, but we saw a lot of growth in these young ladies this season,” Cooper said. “I’m looking forward to great things in the future.”

One reason Cooper can be so optimistic is she has one **Hannah Riles** for three more years. Riles is just a freshman, but she was named to the **South Carolina Basketball Coaches Association All-State team** as well as the All-Region 7 team.

Riles led Lake City in scoring with a 13.9 points-per-game average and also in assists at 3.2. She also averaged 3.2 steals and 4.0 rebounds.

Riles was rated the second best player in Region 7. She scored 52 points in one game, a 75-32 triumph over Lakewood. Riles connected on nine 3-

where we needed to be.”

The Bobcats have been up and down early on in tournament play but Phillips sees plenty of potential.

“They know what to do, how to play. We just have find a way to get them to play to their potential more consistently,” he said.

Pitching and catching are two critical positions in softball and Carolina Academy has two of the best players in SCISA. Senior **Raeley Frye** is a fifth-year pitcher who is capable of dominating a game. Senior catcher **Carlie Ann Smith** also rates as one of the best in the state.

“As long as have those two, we have a chance,” Phillips said.

Sophomore **Lauren Sims** is back as the starter at third base while freshman **Paisley McCutcheon** is a returning starter at shortstop. Freshman **Natalie Braveboy** returns at second base and sophomore **Ella Ham** shares first base duties with junior **Lexi McCutcheon**. Ham also will pitch some.

Savannah McCutcheon, Emma Amos, Paisley Coker and **Kayla Lyerly** are vying for time in the

See **Carolina Academy**, pg. 73

point shots.

Like Riles, senior **Jada Robinson** was an All-Region selection. Robinson just missed averaging a double-double, pulling down 10.2 rebounds while scoring at a 9.0 clip. She also led in steals at 3.4.

Another key contributor was senior **Trayana Burgess**. She averaged 10.3 and 3.3 steals, both second on the team.

LAKE CITY BOYS FINISH 8-15

The Lake City boys basketball team closed the season with an 8-15 record. The Panthers went 4-8 in region play, which was good for fifth place and a berth in the state playoffs. Lake City went out in the first round, falling to **Hampton County** 74-54.

Senior **Amari Hanna** was selected to the All-Region team. Hanna averaged a team high 13.4 points to go with 3.4 rebounds and 2.1 assists.

Honorable mention selections were senior **Jeffery Burgess**, senior **Da’jon McClary** and freshman **XyKenan Hickson**.

Burgess was the second leading scorer with a 7.9 average. He also averaged 3.7 rebounds and 2.2 steals. McClary led the Panthers in rebounding at 8.4 while scoring at a 6.9 clip. Hickson led in assists at 3.9 while scoring at a 7.3 clip.

Head coach **Seneca Barron** credited his senior class with being good leaders.

“They called us mediocre – but our seniors called

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us to be better,” Barron said. “Through ups and downs, they led with toughness and pride, and because of that leadership we played in the post-season.”

Williamsburg Academy STALLIONS

Williamsburg basketball teams have success

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor
Kingstree – The future is looking bright for both the Williamsburg Academy girls and boys basketball teams because the present turned out to be pretty good.

Both squads picked up first-round victories in their respective SCISA AAA state tournaments in the just completed season. That's the first time that is happened for either program in several years.

The Williamsburg girls beat **Patrick Henry Academy** 57-53 in two overtimes before losing to eventual state runner-up **Orangeburg Preparatory School** 71-22 in the quarterfinals. The Stallions boys topped **Shannon Forest** 34-29 in their opening contest before dropping a 48-45 decision to eventual runner-up **Calhoun Academy** in the quarters.

"When I got here we had not won many games before," said girls head coach **Will Epps**, whose team went 11-17 in his second season after winning just four games the first year. "It's been a work in progress trying to build fundamentals that I believe in."

"I couldn't ask for more out of a group of kids. They've worked hard. We weightlifted three times a week during the summer, we scrimmaged – they'd never done that before. It's been a pleasure. It's been refreshing to be here and have a group of kids that work hard and are eager to learn."

Not only did Williamsburg win a playoff game, it finished tied for second in Region I with then defending state champion **Pee Dee Academy** with 5-3 records. Eventual state champion **Florence Christian School** went undefeated to win the region.

"I don't think anybody expected us to come in second in the region and win a playoff game," Epps said. "I think that was way above everybody else's expectations for us."

The Stallions did it with just one senior, even though that senior was Region Player of the Year **Audrey Wadford**. She averaged 16.4 points per game.

"Audrey is an elite athlete who improved and grew as a basketball player and a leader these last two seasons," Epps said. "Lots of good players can score. It takes a great player to be able to create shots for their teammates consistently, and that's what she learned to do."

"I will always be proud of the tremendous growth she made and am thankful to have had the opportunity to coach her."

Wadford was joined on the All-Region team by

eighth-grader **Corrine Kellahan**, who averaged 5.6 points. Junior **Perry Wise** averaged 5.2 points. She is one of only two juniors, the other being **Blakely Hundley**.

"Our athletes are young at the school," Epps said. "Of course, Audrey Wadford is a terrific player. She's going to be difficult to replace, but there is strength in numbers. We'll have a lot of kids who can compete. I brought some of the eighth-graders up from the JV (junior varsity) team to play with us. They're good athletes and they're going to become good basketball players because they're willing to work."

Epps said the tournament win over Patrick Henry was particularly gratifying for his players. Even though the Stallions blew an 11-point lead from early in the fourth quarter, to come away victorious after seeing Wadford foul out in the fourth quarter meant a lot to the team.

"It was huge. It was a lot of fun," Epps said. "It meant a lot to the girls. Audrey had fouled out – our senior – so we did it with all of the younger players. "It made the girls feel really good. They were so happy and excited. They were proud of themselves, and I was proud of them obviously. It shows the potential that we have here."

Williamsburg had three players in double figures led by sophomore **Abby Ward** with 16. Kellahan added 11 points, and Wadford had 10. Freshman **Avery Belue** had eight, and Wise finished with six.

"I feel like we learned a lot," Epps said of the season. "I feel like we were really a unit this year, like we all got along and cared for each other. That was fun too. This group, they love each other."

The boys had a similar uptick in success compared to the 2024-25 campaign. After winning just four games last season, the Stallions finished 12-12 overall and were third in the region at 4-4.

Head coach **Kevin Burrows** said the growing pains the Stallions endured last season helped them as this season progressed.

"We were at least a minimum of 90 percent improved from last year to this year," Burrows said. "We got a lot of experience last year as sophomores and freshmen. They developed individually and as a team this year."

Senior **Micah Balder** and junior **Charlie Caulder** were Williamsburg's two All-Region selections. Balder averaged 6.7 points while Caulder averaged

See **Williamsburg**, pg. 79

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 WR-Ashton Kellerman-Philip Simmons
 WR-KD Britt-Batesburg-Leesville
 WR-Braylon Blanton-Chesnee
 WR-Kaaarus Hainsworth-Mountain View Prep
 Ath.-Jai Chuniesingh-Pelion
 Pk-CJ Falotico-Phillip Simmons

2025 HSSR-SCHSL AA All-State Defense:
 DL-Crawford Poole-Cheraw
 DL-Donovan Miles-Woodland
 DL-Travis Gates-Batesburg Leesville
 DL-Derion Jones-Timberland
 DL-Anthony Strong-Cheraw
 LB-Bryston Coleman-Strom Thurmond
 LB-Jakari Hollomon-Central
 LB-Jontavious Canty-Manning
 LB-Malik Terry-Hampton County
 LB-Jase Fair-Andrew Jackson
 DB-Kaleb Simpkins-Strom Thurmond
 DB-Taveon Moore-Central
 DB-Shaheed Williams-Strom Thurmond
 DB-Carter Hawkins-Timberland
 P-Tyler Perez-Academic Magnet

2025 HSSR-SCHSL Class A All-State Offense:
 QB-Jayden Johnson-Ware Shoals
 QB-Brayden Franklin-Baptist Hill
 QB-Tyler Harris-Cross
 RB-Darius Riley-Abbeville
 RB-Kenard Heyward-Carvers Bay
 RB-Mah'Ky Green-Cross
 OL-Kameron Jones-Abbeville
 OL-Zack Page-Ware Shoals
 OL-Pierre Fuller-Bamberg-Ehrhardt
 OL-Pierre Fogle-HKT
 OL-Jason Brigham-Johnsonville
 TE-Zack Jordan-Abbeville
 WR-Caden Ramsey-Cross -
 WR-Tyrell Cunningham-Ware Shoals
 WR-Charles Williams-Bamberg-Ehrhardt
 WR-Jordan Bovain-Bamberg Ehrhardt
 WR-Keith Rogers-Scott's Branch
 Ath.-JaCorreun Howze-Lewisville
 PK- Charles Breland-Bamberg-Ehrhardt

2025 HSSR-SCHSL Class A All-State Defense:
 DL-Michael Bennett-Cross
 DL-Danny Ragin-Scott's Branch
 DL-Zamarion Monroe-Latta
 DL-Tristen Diggs-Carvers Bay
 DL-Josh Winbush-Ware Shoals
 DL-Mont Williams-Lamar
 DL-Kevin Smalls-Baptist Hill
 LB-Darian Sease-Bamberg-Ehrhardt
 LB-Collins Brown-Abbeville
 LB-DQ Green-Lamar
 LB-Landon King-Lake View
 LB-Trey Cannon-Lewisville
 LB-William Grant-Cross
 DB-Tyrell Cunningham-Ware Shoals
 DB-Jayden Baylor-Abbeville
 DB-Michael Felder-HKT
 DB-Chris Washington-Bamberg -Ehrhardt
 Ath-Marcus Cann-Bamberg-Ehrhardt
 P-Clark Jones-Carvers Bay

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 Beau Hite-QB-Ath-Emerald
 Tavius Wylie-South Pointe-OL
 Emari Jones-DL-Seneca
 Zion Dawkins-Gaffney-DB
 Xavier Wright-QB-Gray Collegiate
 Gunnar Wells-PK-Chester
 Fra'Jon Bennett-LB-Scott's Branch
 Nathan Good-Ath.-Pinewood Prep
 Caden Morris-QB-FS-Williamsburg Academy
 Skyler Cornelius-East Clarendon-RB

2025 HSSR-SCISA All-State Football Teams:

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 HSSR-SCISA 2025 AAAA Player of the Year—Kevin Johnson-Northwood Academy
 HSSR-SCISA 2025 AAA Player of the Year—Silas Brawner-Pinewood Prep
 HSSR-SCISA 2025 AA Player of the Year—Raleigh Wesley-Bethesda Academy
 HSSR-SCISA 2025 Class A Player of the Year—Grant Small-Williamsburg Academy
 HSSR-SCISA 2025 8-Man Player of the Year – Joseph Morse-W.W. King
 HSSR-SCISA 2025 AAAA Coach of the Year—Johnny Waters-Northwood Academy
 HSSR-SCISA 2025 AAA Coach of the Year—Devonte Holloman-Pinewood Prep
 HSSR-SCISA 2025 AA Coach of the Year—Antwain Turner-Bethesda Academy
 HSSR-SCISA 2025 Class A Coach of the Year—Jeff Furse-Williamsburg Academy
 HSSR-SCISA 2025 8-Man Coach of the Year – Brian Kneece-W.W. King

2025 HSSR-SCISA All-State AAAA Football:

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 Kaven Ford-Northwood Academy
 Drew Wolfe-Northwood Academy
 Kaeden Wagner-Northwood Academy
 MJ Davis-Northwood Academy
 Hill Belser-Heathwood Hall
 Patrick Belk-Heathwood Hall
 Keon McKinnley-Heathwood Hall
 Xander Pertile-Heathwood Hall
 Heyward Belser-Heathwood Hall
 Jackson Ross-Hammond
 Bubba Alexander-Hammond
 B. Muela Kiser-Hammond
 Scoop Dennis-LMA
 Tristen White-LMA
 Zy Dennis-LMA
 Shawn Thomas Moore-LMA
 Daniel Vargas-LMA
 Jackson Shealy-Porter-Gaud
 Allen Chisolm-Porter Gaud
 Huck Nevin-Porter Gaud
 Drake Porter-Ben Lippen
 Zion Gaddist-Ben Lippen

2025 HSSR-SCISA AAA Football:

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 Jayden Alexander-Pinewood Prep
 Lavaris Lucas-Pinewood Prep
 David Harper-Pinewood Prep
 Ford Wilder-Wilson Hall
 Ben McLaurin-Wilson Hall
 Milling Galloway-Wilson Hall
 Walker Wilson-Wilson Hall
 Brooks Poston-Florence Christian
 Hayden Schwab-Florence Christian
 Andrew Miller-Florence Christian
 Davidson Lynch-Trinity Collegiate
 Walker Willcox-Trinity Collegiate
 Garrison Copeland-Trinity Collegiate
 Desmond Williams-Trinity Collegiate
 Reed McCollum-Hilton Head Christian
 John Houpt-Hilton Head Christian
 Kres Langhals-Hilton Head Christian
 Hayne Burden -Hilton Head Christian
 Sean Phalen-John Paul II
 Andrew Boyden-John Paul II
 Jadon Inabinett-John Paul II
 Jace Willaiams-Thomas Sumter
 Sam Petrouschke-Thomas Sumter
 Christian Williams-Thomas Sumter
 Calvin Linville-Thomas Sumter

2025 HSSR-SCISA All-State AA Football:

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 J-syri Parker-Orangeburg Prep
 Malachi Morris-Bethesda Academy
 Jordan Cheever-Bethesda Academy

Keshaun Wright-Bethesda Academy
 Isaiah Redmond-Bethesda Academy
 Reece Bracey-Dillon Christian
 Jordan Blackmon-Dillon Christian
 Tristan Heckman-Pee Dee Academy
 Chandler James-Pee Dee Academy
 Cole Pursley-Pee Dee Academy
 Dor Reichley-St. Johns Christian
 Colt Layton-Calhoun Academy
 Austin Summers-Calhoun Academy
 Dayton Birkland-Calhoun Academy
 Walker McCutchen-Calhoun Academy
 Leland Reed-Greenwood Christian
 Cooper Johnson -Greenwood Christian
 Leighton Davis-Greenwood Christian
 Dor Reichley-St Johns Christian
 Caleb Ware-St. Johns Christian
 Jacob Glover-St. Johns Christian
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 Michael Ard-Williamsburg Academy
 Charlie Caulder-Williamsburg Academy
 Connor Morris-Williamsburg Academy
 Marlin Morris-Williamsburg Academy
 Jay Kellahan-Williamsburg Academy
 Andrew Bowers-Lee Academy
 Cale Owens-Colleton Prep
 Thomas Corbett-Colleton Prep
 Tanner Wolf-Colleton Prep
 Steven Crosby-Colleton Prep
 John Quattlebaum-Dorchester Academy
 Jack Whetsell-Dorchester Academy
 Warren Judy-Dorchester Academy
 Rylen Brunson-Patrick Henry
 Charlie Teal-Carolina Academy
 Ryan Cox-Carolina Academy
 Cole Tanner-Carolina Academy
 Nych Underwood-Beaufort Academy
 Tres Delaney-Beaufort Academy
 Andrew Butterfield-Beaufort Academy
 Hall Sease-Andrew Jackson Academy
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 Jaxon Jones-Holly Hill Academy
 Tyler Green-Holly Hill Academy
 Elijah Hutto-W.W. King Academy
 Joshua Oswald-W.W. King Academy
 Casen Buzhardt-W.W. King Academy
 Dallas Hill-W.W. King Academy
 Garrison Vaughn-Laurens Academy
 Ethan Collins-Laurens Academy
 Caleb Hardy-Laurens Academy
 Nathan Bell-Laurens Academy
 Thomas McLean-Newberry Academy
 Dalton Nix-Jefferson Davis Academy
 Reece Still-Jefferson Davis Academy
 Davison Owens-Jefferson Davis Academy
 Jess Sharpe-Richard Winn
 JT Wilkes-Richard Winn
 Micah Smith-Richard Winn
 Brody Johnson-Wardlaw Academy
 Jake Winn-Wardlaw Academy
 Javon Conway-Newberry Academy
 Simeon Holmes-Cathedral Academy
 Asher Holmes-Cathedral Academy
 Landon Provost-Palmetto Christian
 Jackson Alexander-The Kings Academy
 Cole Turner-The Kings Academy

DILLON HIGH SCHOOL

Dillon girls hoops wins third straight region title

By Billy G. Baker
Publisher
 Dillon—The Dillon Wildcats (23-3) girls' basketball team won a region title for the third year in a row, going 10-0 against region foes, before bowing out of the SCHSL AAA playoffs in the third round, with a 43-35 lost at Keenan on February 24.

Dillon led 21-15 at the half against Keenan and the teams went into the final period tied at 30 before the Raiders out-scored the Wildcats 13-5 over the final four minutes of the game.

"We just fell apart over the last four minutes of the game against Keenan, and it is still bugging me right now," said head coach James McMillian, days later after completing his 10th season with the Dillon program. "In all honesty, Keenan had more over-all team depth, and they kept bringing in fresh players and their press was very effective against us."

"We had one of our top defensive players, (Azariah Ford) miss the Keenan game with an injury she sustained in our win over Orangeburg-Wilkinson, the game before, and we were down to 9 players, and we had to back off our defensive pressure some to stay out of foul trouble," said Coach McMillian. "I just wish if we could have played Keenan with a full squad it might have been a different game. They went on to lose by 20 points to Oceanside Collegiate in the Lower State finals, and several of our players felt like we would have given them a much closer game since we beat them to make it to the state finals last season."

The key to Keenan's win came at the free throw line. The Raiders made 18-of-28 free throws while the Wildcats made only six of 18 free throws at the charity stripe.

"Keenan made just one three point shot while we made three of them, and we were about dead even on field goals, so the free throws were definitely the difference in the game," said Coach McMillian. "This is an area of our game we will certainly work hard on improvement for next season."

Dillon had two very talented players to earn Coaches AAA all-state honors. Sophomore guard **Treasure Davis**, who averaged 23 points, 5.3 rebounds, 5.6 steals and three assists a game, has been starting at Dillon since the 7th grade. Junior guard **Khw-Ny McKinnon** finished the season averaging 18.5 points, 6.1 rebounds, 5.3 steals and 4.6 assists per game and she is a three-year starter.

"We are very proud of both Treasure and McKinnon and they both improved this season," said Coach McMillian. "They are both very unselfish players, and we worked this season trying to get more players involved on the offensive side of the ball to take some of the pressure off them. This will be one of our top goals going into next season."

Coach McMillian is very high on the development potential of 6-0 freshman forward **Nylann Jones**. "Towards the end of the season she had a 9-point game along with 10 rebounds," said Coach



Sophomore Guard
Treasure Davis



Junior Guard
Khw-Ny McKinnon

McMillian. "I keep telling her she has unlimited potential if she will keep working. She could give us a strong inside game to go along with our outstanding guard play." Jones averaged two points and 3.9 rebounds a game over the season.

Ford, only a junior, will return next season after averaging 5.1 points and 2.4 steals a game. The team will graduate four seniors from this year's team. They include 5-10 Alyssa Lee (1.3 pts and 3.7 rebounds) along with forward **Jiana McGill** at (3.7 points) a game. The team's other two seniors were shooting guard **Zynijah Pernell** (4.7 points) and sophomore forward **Kai Bethea**.

Pilar Quick was a freshman guard on the team who will be returning next season.

Dillon began the playoffs with a 56-25 win over North Charleston in the first round. They then defeated Orangeburg-Wilkinson in round two 69-53. McKinnon had 23 and 27 points in the two games while Davis contributed 24 points in the OW win. In the Keenan loss Davis led the way with 17 points, 9 rebounds, five steals and four assists. McKinnon was held to just six points, but she contributed seven rebounds and seven steals during the game. McGill had 8 rebounds. Jones, showing promise for next season led the Wildcats on the boards against Keenan with 10 rebounds and she scored three points.

"I am already working on a more competitive schedule for next season," said Coach McMillian. "We are hoping to participate in the Carolina Invitational in Charleston over the holidays next season. We are focused on competing for a state title next season."

With realignment, Dillon will compete as an AA program next season.

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Porter-Gaud winter sports season hits stretch run

By David Shelton
Senior Writer
 Charleston – The 2025-26 winter sports season has passed the midway point and the athletes at Porter-Gaud are looking to finish out the campaign with a strong effort.

Both basketball teams are competing in region games as of mid-January and both hope to earn a spot in the SCISA AAAA playoffs.

The boys team is the defending AAAA state champion and has opened this season with 12 wins in their first 16 outings. The Cyclones are 2-1 in region play with a loss to Pinewood Prep on Jan. 16.

Head coach **John Pearson** sees the potential for a repeat. However, he says there is much work to be done before February.

"We certainly have the potential but we're not there yet," Pearson said. "We are talented but we're young and immature right now. What this team needs is time on the court to figure things out. Right now, the goal is to make positive strides and develop that potential."

Pearson entered this season with just one returning starter, that being junior guard **Kateaux Miller**. While the roster has seven seniors and seven juniors, along with a sophomore and a freshman, many of the players are taking on new roles this season.

See Porter Gaud, pg. 72

Though changes can and likely will be made as roles are defined, the current starting mix of players includes three seniors, **Sebastian Mendez**, **Wilson Grueneberger** and **Greg Daniels**. Junior **Smith Ferguson** has been highly productive early on in his role as a starter and junior **Jase Howell** is seeing extensive action early on.

Other seniors on the roster include **George Descherer**, **Mike Mazzoli**, **Nate Cappell** and **Kayden Pryor**. Remaining juniors are **Amir Chisolm**, **Andrew Savage** and **Daven Brown**. Rounding out the roster are sophomore **Allen Chisolm** and freshman **Cole Grueneberger**.

"Building a solid rotation and depth is something we are working hard at early in the season," Pearson said. "We will typically play between eight and 11 players. We need to have guys ready to step in when needed and make sure they understand the system."

The girls basketball team has a record of 3-14 as of Jan. 15 but that record is a bit deceiving. The Cyclones have been very competitive with several close losses early on. A total of six losses have come by four points or less, including a one-point loss to Bishop England.

Porter-Gaud competes in a region with state title contenders Northwood and First Baptist.

Ashley Hall basketball building for better future

By David Shelton
Senior Writer

Charleston - The old adage of "learning to crawl before you can walk" certainly applies in many respects to building a successful athletic program. It certainly describes what the basketball program at **Ashley Hall** is working towards as they seek to become a competitive program in the SCISA ranks.

Wins have been hard to come by as Ashley Hall competes in a region that is considered among the most competitive in SCISA with First Baptist and Northwood Academy annually competing for state championships in the largest classification.

Bryan Bednar is in his first season as the varsity head coach and has worked to begin the rebuilding process with a large number of underclassmen. The Panthers finished last season with one win and the 2025-26 team had not won a game as of Jan. 15, but has been competitive in several contests. However, hard work and perseverance paid off in the end. Ashley Hall won two games over the final few weeks of the regular season, beating North Charleston and Charleston Collegiate.

"The region is competitive and experienced at the top. The leading contenders are veteran teams with strong upperclassmen, physical play, and established systems," reports Bednar. "They tend to execute well, defend consistently, and close games late,

which separates them from younger programs. "Overall, it's a region where experience, depth, and discipline matter, and most contenders have been together for multiple seasons."

Bednar has focused on development and gaining experience this season. He has seen improvement in those areas, as well as other aspects of competitive athletic teams.

"This team's potential is in its growth and development," he says. "With three juniors and two freshmen starting, we are a young group gaining valuable varsity experience. While the record isn't where we want it, our focus is on improving fundamentals, competing harder, and building confidence and accountability."

"My expectation is that we get better each day, play with more consistency and effort, and lay the foundation for long-term success. This season is about learning, resilience, and setting the culture for the future."

Forming the starting lineup for most games are three juniors and two freshmen. The junior starters are guards **Molly Mettler** and **Sally Rowson**, and forward **Catherine Perkins**. Freshmen starters include point guard **Camille Marier** and forward **Amelia Lennon**.

Bednar says Marier, Mettler and Perkins are performing as the top leaders within the program. He

Trojans baseball begins defense of state title

BY David Shelton
Senior Writer

James Island – Some say that repeating a state championship run is more difficult than winning the initial title. Winning three in a row almost seems impossible.

The **James Island** baseball program will put that theory to the test in 2026. The Trojans won the AAAA state title in 2024 and won the AAAAA Division I state title in 2025. Title chase number three has begun this spring. James Island enters this season as the top-ranked team in AAAAA.

The Trojans are off to a solid start this spring, winning three of four games as part of the International Paper Classic field of contenders. The Trojans picked up wins over Seneca, Chapin and Southside Christian while dropping a game to AC Flora.

Coach **Matt Spivey** has a roster full of big game

experience so no moment will be too big for the Trojans. Infielders **Taj Marchand** and **Trip Ostergard** are Division I commits and Marchand is considered one of the state's top prospects/.

Senior **Connor Dantzler** is back as a starting outfielder and **Brody Dantzler** will handle catching duties. **Finn Pratt** is a returning starter at first base.

Pitching also will be strong with Marchand, Ostergard, and **Dawson Beldner**. **Charlie Becker** is a transfer from Oceanside Collegiate.

Basketball, wrestling wrap up

The James Island wrestling team advanced all the way to the state duals finals before losing to Clover in the gold medal matchup. As for individuals, **Max Johnson** was the state runnerup at 150 pounds and **Copeland Grooms** was the silver medalist at 190 pounds. **Jacob Rasamee** finished fourth overall at 144 pounds.

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counts on their leadership and experience as player to set the tone and bring the motivation to work and compete.

Seeing time off the bench this winter junior guards **Mary Collins** and **Minka Tang**; sophomore guard **Erica Green**, and freshman guard **Adya Sharma**.

JAMES ISLAND

James Island Charter High School Athletic Department and Booster Club
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The boys basketball team advanced to the third round of the Lower State playoffs before losing to region rival Ashley Ridge, 56-53. The final record was 13-14 overall and 8-2 in region play.

Josh Gladden led the team in scoring, averaging 12.7 points per game. **Jeremiah Triplin** added 6.8 points and **Owen Adler** was at 6.7 points and 2.4 assists. **Matthew Gladden** scored about six points per game.

Dillon Christian boys finish hoops season at 9-12

By Dennis Brunson
 hssr.com Associate Editor
Dillon – A lot of people wouldn't see a 9-12 record as a great season. That's what the **Dillon Christian School** boys basketball team achieved this season in its first year under head coach **Ryan Sampson**.

And while Sampson would be far from satisfied with a succession of such records, he has no problem with the Warriors' accomplishments this year.

"We finished the season with a 9-12 record, but overall I think we overachieved," Sampson said. "With our top three scorers being sophomores and two seniors being a big part of our offense and defense, our record doesn't show how good we really were."

DCS was having to replace **Thompson Stone** and **Jackson Outlar**, both of whom averaged over 20 points per game. While sophomores **McKinnon Sampson** and **Jordan Blackmon** didn't give Dillon Christian 20 a game each, they did give 16 a game, which led to both of them being named to the All-SCISA Region 3-AAA team.

Sampson, the head coach's son, averaged 16.2 points draining 54 3-point shots in the process. He also averaged 5.1 rebounds, 3.3 assists and 1.6 steals. Blackmon was right behind at 16.1 points to go along with 6.0 rebounds and 2.4 assists.

The third leading scorer was sophomore **Gray Easterling**. He averaged 6.9 points, 2.5 rebounds, 2.5 assists and 1.1 steals.

Senior **Reece Bracey** and Braxton Cummings were starters and sophomore **Braylon Hunt** saw a lot of time. Bracey averaged 4.0 points, 6.1 re-

bounds, 3.1 assists and 2.6 steals. Cummings averaged 6.6 points and 6.1 rebounds. Hunt averaged 3.1 points and 5.1 rebounds.

The Warriors went 2-6 in Region 3, which wasn't good enough to get them in the state tournament. However, they could have easily turned things in a better direction as four of their overall losses were by five points or less.

Coach Sampson believes Dillon Christian has a chance to take a big step forward next season. One reason is because of the young, experienced talent it will have back. The other reason is because the Warriors will be in a new classification.

"With us moving down to AA next year we have a good chance to have a good season with our top three scorers returning," he said.

After having played at the AAA level in all sports but football the past two seasons, Dillon Christian will be in AA for at least the next two seasons following reclassification. For football, the Warriors will play at the Class A level after having played AA.



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Lee Academy reaches semis for 2nd straight year

By Dennis Brunson
 hssr.com Associate Editor
Bishopville – For the second straight season, the **Lee Academy** girls basketball team saw its season come to an end in the semifinals of the SCISA AA state tournament. And, for the second straight season, the Cavaliers fell to the eventual state champion.

LA, which finished 13-8 and won the Region 1 title with a 7-1 record, beat **Our Lady of the Rosary** 45-37 in the quarterfinals before falling to **Dorchester Academy** 60-23 in the semis.

"This season was a little bit different from last year even though we basically had the same team with the addition of **Kaisley Melton**, a freshman, and **Beth Whiteside**, an eighth-grader. They had a lot to learn, especially Kaisley, because she had the toughest position on the court to learn being the point guard."

Senior **Mazie Tomlinson** was the leader of the team. She was selected as the Region Player of the Year. Tomlinson led Lee in rebounding per game with a 13.8 average, in assists at 4.1 and in steals at 2.5. She also averaged 7.5 points.

"She's just a smart player," Langston said of Tomlinson, who has been a part of the program since third grade when she was a manager. "If we get the ball inside, she's going to make the right decision. She's just got a good head on her shoulders. She's kind of like the glue that holds everything together."

Tomlinson, Whiteside, sophomore **Karagan Melton** and sophomore **Jameson Collins** were All-Region selections.

Karagan Melton was the leading scorer at 10.8, Whiteside averaged 7.2 points and 7.1 rebounds, and Collins averaged 6.2 points and 5.0 rebounds.

Kaisley Melton averaged 3.4 points, 3.0 rebounds and 2.3 steals.

Along with Tomlinson, the other seniors on the team were **Zana Brazell**, **Baylee Catoe** and **Sara Bell**.

LEE BOYS FINISH WITH 4-15 RECORD

The season for the Lee boys basketball team didn't go the way for which head coach **Kemp DeWitt** had hoped. The Cavaliers finished 4-15 overall, 2-6 in region play and missed out on the state tournament.

"Overall, it was a disappointing season from a record standpoint," DeWitt said. "We played some good teams close, but we couldn't quite get over the hump. I was very proud of the way the team played hard even with the bad record we had." Sophomore **Brayden Davis** and senior **Cain June** were selected to the All-Region team. Davis was the leading scorer at 10.6 to go with 3.5 rebounds. June averaged 6.3 points and 4.2 rebounds.

DeWitt believes the future looks bright for LA with its returning players and those coming up from the junior varsity.

"I'm going to miss our three seniors and want to thank them for all their hard work and dedication," Dewitt said.

Along with June, the other seniors are **Paxton Greene**, who averaged 7.3 points, and **Collins Drayton**.

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Baseball and Softball hold high expectations this spring at Lake View

David Shelton
 Senior Writer

Lake View – It should come as no surprise that the baseball and softball teams at **Lake View High** have high expectations for the 2026 season.

More often than not, both teams at Lake View are among the very best in Class A, each contending deep into the state playoffs.

Spring has arrived, thus the baseball and softball teams are hard at work in preparation for the upcoming season.

The softball team is coached by Brandy Huggins, who enters her 15th season with 225 career wins against 100 losses. The Wild Gators were 13-10 last season.

Already the team has faced adversity as senior pitcher **Haley Miller** is lost for the season with a torn ACL. Though a setback, Huggins will turn to junior **Chloe Cox**, sophomore **Hanna Coburn**, sophomore **Sarah Price** and seventh-grader **Addie Elvington** to take on increased innings inside the circle.

Senior **Kayleigh Blackmon** is a returning starter at third base while Cox returns in centerfield. Coburn starts at second base and junior **Maddison Strickland** is working at first base.

Price is the starter in centerfield and sophomore **Carleigh Matthews** starts in right. Freshman **Sophia Rogers** will get a look behind the plate and eighth-grader **Paisley Alford** is getting a look at shortstop.

Eighth-grader **Callie Smith** will work at second and in leftfield. Eighth-grader **Emalee Miller** will see time at second and eighth-grader **Lilly Hatcher** will see time first base. Eighth-grader **Summer Hilburn** will play some in right and freshman **Brilee Schirra** is a returning outfielder. Junior **Katina Genwright** is also a returning outfielder.

Newcomers to watch include senior outfielder **Ally Joye**, seventh-grade outfielders **Kylie Turner** and **Lexie Suggs**; and seventh-grade catcher **Savannah Olmos**.

"Depending on who is in the circle, the defense will change," Huggins said.

Baseball under new leadership

There is an old coaching adage that says it is better for a coach to replace a coach that replaced a legend than to replace the legend. **Will Celmer** will have none of that talk.

Celmer is opting to replace the legend, that legend being long-time head baseball coach **Kip Herlong**. Herlong retired after the 2025 season, ending his 32nd season with more than 600 wins and eight state championships. The Wild Gators were the state runner-up last spring.

Celmer, on the other hand, comes to Lake View having just one stint as a head coach

under his belt. He was the head coach at **Lancaster High** from 2019 through last season.

But Celmer is no stranger to Lake View baseball, having grown up in nearby Dillon and knowing all about the Wild Gators. His mother was the principal of Lake View elementary school for 17 years.

"Someone has to be the next coach so why not me?," Celmer said. "I knew I wanted this job from the moment it came open. I know the huge responsibility and expectations that come with replacing a man like coach Herlong. This community loves athletics and loves to win, but so do I. It's a challenge sure, but I am excited to take this challenge head on!"

Celmer holds himself to a high standard as a coach, as does his supportive family, which includes a wife and three children. Siblings and cousins and everyone related to Celmer has the same expectations.

"I have a lot of people supporting and pulling for me to do well," Celmer said.

The new coach recently had an opportunity to sit and chat with Herlong, who gave him some of the ins and outs of being the baseball coach at Lake View.

"I have the utmost respect for coach Herlong and for him to spend some time with me was really special," Celmer said. "I know if I have a question, I can ask him."

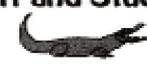
What's important, Celmer says, is to be himself and not try to be Kip Herlong. He has his own style and has firm convictions of what it takes to win. Those ideas are not far off what Lake View is used to under Herlong.

"The kids are gritty. They work hard and they play hard," he said. "We're going to a team that puts a lot of pressure on the defense, bunting and stealing bases. We're going to try to pitch and play defense. I have my own ideas but we aren't reinventing the game."

In addition to his new role as baseball coach, Celmer was able to join the football staff. He has never been a football coach but says being a part of that winning program is invaluable.

"I'm learning a lot and it's been a real pleasure to meet all the coaches," he said.

"This is a close-knit coaching staff. This also puts me around the kids, allows us to get to know each other. About 85 percent of the baseball players also play football. That's huge for me to be out there every day."

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2026 Gaffney Indians baseball

Gaffney baseball focused on success in 2026

By Billy G. Baker
Publisher
Gaffney—With 9 seniors returning to the Gaffney baseball team for the 2026 season, head coach Jeff Mages begins his 4th season as the head coach of the Indians focused on a run at a region title.

“We finally have a large group of seniors with playing experience,” said Coach Mages. “We should be a solid team top to bottom. After our first six games our team strengths are pitching and defense.”

Coch Mages is also pleased with the upgraded baseball facilities at the Midway Sports Complex where his

team plays on the Jerry “Jug” Wallace Field. “Our school district did a made renovation on both the baseball and facilities where the Gaffney High teams play, and the upgrades are fantastic,” said Coach Mages. “We have new locker rooms, a newly sodded field, a new concession stand, new bathrooms, and even the bleachers have been updated to have seat back seating. We have brick walls along the sidelines of the field with new padding and netting added also. We also have a nice new storage facility to keep our athletic equipment stored. Our field is first-class in every way.

See Gaffney, pg. 79

Gaffney girls hoops ends season in semi-finals

By Billy G. Baker
Publisher
Gaffney—For the first time in 40 years, the Gaffney (22-7) basketball team advanced all the way to the SCHSL Div. II AAAAA Upper-State finals before losing a heart breaker to Greenville High to conclude the 2025-26 season at Wofford College on February 28.

First year head varsity coach Julian “Bubba” Wright took over the program after the retirement of Hall of Fame coach Mark Huff last season.

“It was a fun season, and making the Upper State finals for the first time in 40 years was an incredible experience for our players,” said Coach Wright.

“Unfortunately, we played our worst game of the season against Greenville, and I am directly responsible for that. “We had an incredible group of girls this season,” said Coach Wright. “They were talented, selfless, smart, hard-working etc. and they made it a fun season for our fans and our community.”

Coach Wright cited the upbeat play of junior guard Lauren Mathis over the last month of the season. “She played 32 minutes a game for us over the last month or so,” said Coach Wright. “She shot 40 per cent from three-point range, scored and assisted really well, and she was among our top rebounders. She did it all.

“Shiriah Harris and Tianah Hopper were our two best athletes on the floor every game,” said Coach Wright. “Their futures are so bright.”

Coach Wright also cited the play of sophomore guard Kaylin Houze. “Kaylin Houze really turned the corner over the last few weeks of the season,” said Coach Wright. “I am excited for her future in our program also.”

Harris was named to the Coaches Association AAAAA girl’s all state team, as well as making the all-region team. Hopper was named to the all-region team.

In the playoffs Gaffney defeated Woodmont (60-32) in the first round. They then defeated Greenwood (57-53) before losing to Greenville 57-44. Against Greenville High the Indians led 24-20 at the half but Greenville rallied to win the third period 21-3 to take control of that game.

For the season, Harris, a 6-0 senior forward, led the



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NETC Student Athletes of the Month

Honoring Dillon's Morgan Leonard

Dillon — **Morgan Leonard** is a senior student athlete at **Dillon High School**, where she has participated in several team sports since the seventh grade. She's played softball, soccer, Volleyball, and focused on Cheerleading for her junior and senior years.

She is enjoying her senior year and continuing to take NETC online classes to help prepare for college.

Leonard said she enjoyed playing softball and volleyball and that she experienced joy during her time on the sidelines of football, basketball and cheering. After high school, Leonard plans to attend college to study Biology with plans to attend pharmacy school after graduation.

In the classroom, she carries a 4.0 GPA, and she says that after high school she has not finalized which school she will attend but the **College of Charleston, USC, and Claflin** are her top choices.

For all her athletic and academic accomplishments, Morgan Leonard has been chosen the "NETC" **Female 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.

The NETC is currently offering over 44 online dual credit courses for the 2025-26 school year to students in the three counties they serve.

Currently, Leonard is enrolled in dual credit online courses offered by NETC. She just started taking online classes as a junior, and is completing classes that will fill basic requirements for freshman year of college. She has taken American History, English 101, Algebra and will continue taking classes this spring.

When asked what NETC does to help her prepare for college after her graduation, Leonard said taking these classes, "The online experience has

See Leonard, pg. 47



Morgan Leonard

Honoring Dillon's John Bohachic

Dillon — **John Bohachic** is a junior baseball player at **Dillon High School**, where he has played baseball since his parents started him playing in tee-ball at age 4. Some people say he's grown up with baseball, and not surprisingly, it's his favorite sport. On the diamond, he's the team's catcher, plus relief pitcher.

Bohachic looks forward to the start of baseball season. He says that he enjoys playing baseball about three months of the year with his high school team, and devotes time to organized team play. Being in the South, he says the good weather is ideal for playing baseball. Even though he devotes time to baseball it does not stop him from prioritizing his academics and that allows him the chance to play the sport he loves.

Bohachic has been enrolled in dual credit courses with NETC since the ninth grade. He focuses on college prep classes like English 101, College Algebra, and Biology classes so that he completes many of the freshman required classes early. He tries to get most of his homework done at school, or the same day it is assigned, in order to free up time for his NETC classes including assignments.

In the classroom he carries a 5.2 GPA, while maintaining his NETC on-

line course load, and participating in sports.

For all his athletic and academic accomplishments, John Bohachic 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.

The NETC is currently offering over 44 online dual credit courses for the 2025-26 school year to students in the three counties they serve.

Bohachic is currently enrolled in dual credit courses offered by NETC and he just finished College Algebra and he is looking forward to taking

See Bohachic, pg. 75



John Bohachic



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2026 Orangeburg Prep girls basketball - Class AAA State Runner Up!

Orangeburg Prep girls fall in AAA state title game

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor

Orangeburg – For the second consecutive season, the **Orangeburg Preparatory School** girls basketball team proved itself to be one of the two best in SCISA AAA.

After losing to **Pee Dee Academy** in the championship game of the 2024-25 state tournament, the Indians got back to the title game this season as well. However, they once again came up short, falling to **Florence Christian School** 42-35 at **Sumter County Civic Center** on February 28.

Longtime Orangeburg Prep head coach **Jan Stoudenmire** saw the team finish with a 22-5 overall record. She had nothing but praise for the Indians, who returned to the championship game despite losing four seniors and three starters.

“Most of these girls were around the program forever,” Stoudenmire said. “**Hannah (Lambrecht)** and **Mary Legare (Delaney)** played a lot for this team even though we lost four seniors. These other girls have just been right there. They just step up.

“I couldn’t ask for a better group of five starters. Some of them weren’t starters last year, but they have given us every ounce of everything that they have the entire year.”

Delaney, a junior who is also a track and field stand-out, was selected as the Region 1 Player of the Year. Delaney averaged 19.4 points, 4.0 steals and 5.0 rebounds per game.

She was joined on the All-Region team by **Lambrecht**, a senior, senior **Kate Holstein** and senior **Prestan Schurknight**. **Lambrecht** averaged 10.1 points, to go with four steals and three assists per contest. **Schurknight** averaged 9.1 points, but really shined defensively. She grabbed 10.0 rebounds a contest and came up with 6.0 steals a game.

Delaney and **Schurknight** were also picked to the AAA All-Tournament team. Orangeburg Prep opened the tournament with a 71-22 triumph over **Williamsburg Academy** in the quarterfinals before beating **St. John’s Christian Academy** 55-42 in the semifinals.

In the triumph over **Williamsburg**, **Lambrecht** led a balanced scoring attack with 16 points. **Holstein** added 12, while **Delaney**, sophomore **Gee Gee Riley** and **Schurknight** had nine apiece. Freshman **Blakely Garrick** had eight, and senior **Jayme Culler** had four.

Delaney had a monster game against **St. John’s** with 24 points, 15 of them coming in the first half. **Lambrecht** also scored in double figures with 12. **Holstein** added eight, and **Culler** had six.

Against **Florence Christian**, Delaney led the way with 15 points even though the Indians had their lowest offensive output of the season. **Schurknight** had seven

points, while **Lambrecht** and **Culler** contributed four points each. **Holstein** finished with three.

“We got here and I am very proud of that and the hard work from our team all season,” Stoudenmire said following the championship game. “No one thought we would be back to the championship game this year, and our team is like a big family. They are going to come out of this bigger than life and they will be alright.

“Most of the players on this team came to me as fifth-graders in our feeder programs, and we have watched them grow, develop and even make mistakes. We watch them do great things on and off the court also. I feel blessed and so fortunate to be able to coach them and I am proud of every player on this team.”

Stoudenmire anticipates the Indians being right back in the mix next season as well.

“We’ll keep working hard and trust me we will be back next season,” she said. “We are not going anywhere.”

ORANGEBURG PREP BOYS FINISH 9-16

After reaching the semifinals of the SCISA AAA state tournament and posting an 18-5 overall record, the Orangeburg Prep boys basketball team had a regression this season. The Indians finished with a 9-16 record and went out in the first round of the tournament.

Having lost so many key components from last year’s team, head coach **Michael Delaney** was not surprised. That doesn’t mean, however, that Delaney was disappointed with the season.

“It was definitely a rebuilding year for Orangeburg Prep boy basketball,” Delaney said. “Other than senior **Avery Ravenel** and senior **J’Syri Parker**, most of the major contributors were composed of sophomores and a freshman. They all got a lot of valuable experience this season and it will only benefit us in the years to come.”

Ravenel had a tremendous season while earning Region 1-AAA Player of the Year honors. He averaged an even 24.0 points per game to lead the team. He also led in assists at 4.6 and steals at 2.6 to go with 6.0 rebounds.

“We will certainly miss **Avery**, the best point guard to ever come out of Orangeburg Prep, in my opinion,” Delaney said. “He’s just a phenomenal basketball player with a high IQ. It won’t be easy to replace his production and leadership.

“He capped off his career with 46 points against eventual state champion **Greenwood Christian (School)** in a 70-67 loss in the first round). He scored 601 points this season.”

Toddy McElhone was the freshman Delaney made reference to as he was named to the All-Region team as well. **McElhone** averaged 8.9 points and 2.3 rebounds.

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Parker averaged 4.0 points and 7.9 rebounds. Sophomore **Cholly Williams** led the Indians in rebounding at 9.6 to go with 4.8 points. Sophomore **Council Burroughs** averaged 8.0 points and 3.4 rebounds, sophomore **Dakota Boan** averaged 5.9 points and 3.7 rebounds, and sophomore **Aarav Patel** averaged 3.2 points, 4.3 rebounds and 2.2 steals.

With so many your returning players, Delaney is happy with the way the program is situated.

“I’m excited about the future of OPS basketball,” Delaney said. “We have a lot of dynamic players returning and some key contributors coming up for the junior varsity team next season.”

Green Acres Turf Farm Prospects Page



HSSR Top 100 Basketball Prospects

Special Note: This list is a work in progress. Coaches are asked to nominate deserving players in any grade to hssreport@aol.com as soon as possible. Please include stats with nomination.

HSSR SC 2026 Girl’s Senior Prospects (As of 3-5-2026)

1. Celena Grant-North Augusta-G/SF
2. Zara Leamon-Mauldin-5-10-PG
3. Shiriah Harris-Gaffney-6-0-F
4. Chole Hudson-Rock Hill-5-9 PG
5. Morgan White-Dorman-6-5 PF/C
6. Ni’Yonna Asbelle-Andrew Jackson-PG
7. Kami Roach-Walhalla-PG-5-6
8. Lakiara Ayona Alexander-Camden-6-1-F
9. Chase Thomas-Blythewood-5-8- G
10. Shirah Harris-Gaffney6-0-F
11. Danielle Oliver-Greenwood-5-6-G
12. Messiah Williams-North Augusta-C-PF
13. Monasia Clinkscales-Westside-5-7-
14. Ava Rush-Wando-6-3-SF-East Carolina
15. Miracle McLean-Carolina Forest-6-3 PF/C
16. Jaida Johnson-Byrnes-C
17. Kailen Parks-North-5-8-PG
18. Maliyah Williams-Marion-5-9-G-SD
19. Madison Thomas-Berkeley-5-11-SF
20. India Williams-Blythewood-5-8-G
21. Miley White-Walhalla-5-11-F
22. Kyndal Haroski-Riverside-G
23. Tykirea Johnson-Greenwood-6-0-F
24. Autumn Joseph-Darlington-6-0-PF
25. Jada Bates-Northwood Acad -PG-5-7 2026
26. Jhnai Sumter-Lower Richland-5-9-F
27. Ava Owens-Greenville-5-7-PG
28. Teonna Draughn-AC Flora
29. Harmoni Williams-Orangeburg-Wilkinson-
30. Tiffany Helmer-St. Joseph’s-5-7-G
31. Ava Clinkscales-TL Hanna-9th-PG
32. Kyle Fortnet-Landrum-G
33. Caroline Sweet-Powdersville
34. Kamiyah Christian-BHP-9th-PG
35. Micah Davis-Atlantic Collegiate
36. Devyn Burgers-West Oak
37. Caerra Oliver-Greenwood- 5-5- SG
38. Joanna Burree-West Oak
39. Zion Prioleau-Timberland
40. Sophia Powell-North Myrtle beach-
41. Owens-Greenville-5-7 PG
42. Makyhia Paul-Westside-5-10 F
43. Mylayja Thompson-Clinton
44. Da’Nyriah Williams-Military Magnet-
45. Kailya Herman-Loris
46. Paige Pouyat-First Baptist 5-7-G
47. My’Keriyah Holmes-Lee Central-
48. Naomi House-McBee-
49. Kailen Parks-North-PG
50. Kailya Herman-Latta
51. Maddy Pojani-First Baptist-5-9-PG
52. Braelin Cumbee-Daniel-SG

HSSR 2029 Girl’s Players To Watch

1. Ashlyn Evans-Byrnes-5-9 PG
 2. Tiana Marshall-Westside-5-10-G
 3. Madeline Dates-Goose Creek-G
 4. Hannah Riles-Lake City-5-7-CG-9th
- HSSR 2026 Top Boy’s Prospects
1. Levi Ball-Gray Collegiate-SG-6-6
 2. Caden Coleman-Greenville-PG 6-1
 3. Tre Raymon-South Pointe-6-7-F
 4. BJ Brown-Sumter-F-6-6
 5. Sebi Boyogueno-Riverside-SF-6-4
 6. Ja’Quell Brown-Goose Creek-PG
 7. Broderick Anderson Jr Keenan-GF-6-5
 8. Justis Bell-Dutch Fork-PF-6-6
 9. Malik Tinsley-Lancaster-5-9-G
 10. Jonathan Slawson-Pinewood Prep-6-0-G
 11. Terence McFaddeb-Bethune Bowman-6-3-G
 12. Damien Kinloch-Berkeley-6-8,195-PF
 13. Clayton Everett, Jr-Ashley Ridge-
 14. Talon Staley-Ridge View-
 15. Anthony Atkins-Christ Church-6-1-PG
 16. Jonathan Perry-Christ Church-6-2-G
 17. Jayden Baylor-Abbeville-6-1-G
 18. Quh’Mareon Webb-North Augusta-6-3, G-F
 19. Clayton Everett-Ashley-6-3-G
 20. Jayden Crews-Westwood-G
 21. D’Marcus Thomas-Westwood- G
 22. Lucas Wiersma-TL Hanna-
 23. Kendall Mack-West Ashley-PG-
 24. Osaiah Atkins-Bolling Springs-
 25. Aassic Germany-CA Johnson-G
 26. Wallace Vampbell-Fort Mill
 27. Darius Brooks-Hampton County
 28. Jordan Rouse-North Augusta-
 29. KJ Allen-Wilson-
 30. Javrius Wyche-CA Johnson-G
 31. Will Bush-Dorman-PF-
 32. Jayden Crews-Westwood-PgG
 33. Antwon Young-York Prep
 34. Eric Gray-Union County
 35. Khalid Sheerman-Loris

HSSR Junior Girl’s To Watch (2027)

1. Khalia Hartwell-Westside-6-5-C
2. Ashley Walker-North Augusta-5-10-F
3. Tinah Hopper-Gaffney-G
4. Maliyah Birch-Northwood Academy-PG
5. Serenity Williams-Lee Central-507-G
6. Amani McCray-Berkeley-5-7-PG

7. Khur-Nylahi NcKinnon-Dillon-PG-5-8
8. Ellison Silver-Byrnes-G-
9. Gabby Moore-First Baptist-5-6-PG
10. Naydia Shaw-Kingstree-5-10-G-F
11. Janyia Cunningham-South Pointe-F
12. Madison Verrem-North Myrtle Beach-F
13. Adelaide Suddeth-Palmetto Christian-5-1-F
14. Brayin Mingo-South Pointe-G
15. McKinley Beard-Andrew Jackson Academy-F
16. Tralyn Phillips-South Pointe-G

- HSSR Girls Players To Watch (2028)
1. Tiana Marshall-Westside-5-10-G/F-8th
 2. Treasure Davis-Dillon-SG—5-6
 3. Delaney Caldwell-Landrum-G-5-10
 4. Kaleigh Lucas-South Pointe-5-5-CG-
 5. Araina Ross-Sumter-SF
 6. Campbell Childers-Northside Vhristian-G-8th
 7. Logan Murray-Wilson-F 6-0
 8. Alaina Carter-Berkeley-5-11-G
 9. Evie Adams-St. Joseph’s-5-10-G
 10. Jurnee Williams-Emerald-PG-
 11. Kailen Grant-HKT-PG-5-4
 12. Aliyah Tisdale-Latta-F-
 13. Campbell Epting-Daniel-G-

HSSR 2029 Girl’s Players To Watch

1. Ashlyn Evans-Byrnes-5-9 PG
2. Tiana Marshall-Westside-5-10-G
3. Madeline Dates-Goose Creek-G
4. Hannah Riles-Lake City-5-7-CG-9th

36. AJ Washington-Fort Mill-SG
37. Abe Davinroy-Oceanside Collegiate
38. Jordan McGahee-Orangeburg-Wilkinson
39. Eli Brown-Chesnee
40. Ta’Maj Gilliam-Batesburg-Leesville
41. Zakasen Clyburn-Andrew Jackson
42. Tony Odom-CA Johnson
43. Aissaic Germany-CA Johnson
44. Caden Ramsey-Cross-F-6-6
45. Tolan Nabriat-North Augusta-G

HSSR Junior Boy’s Prospects 2027

1. Josh Leonard-Wilson-W-6-6,200
2. Colt Fowler-Byrnes-PG-5-9, 145
3. Bryce Ward-Cathedral-5-11-SG
4. Tripp Eidson-Pinewood Prep-PF
5. DJ Wylie-Ridge View-6-4 G
6. Jalen Culp-Lewisville-G
7. Peyton Jennings-White Knoll-G
8. Jervase Salley-Woodland-F
9. Drey Jackson-Easley-5-11, PG-
10. Christian Rivera-Denmark-Olar-G-
11. Randy Robinson0Fox Creek-6-5 PF

HSSR Sophomore Boy’s To Watch (2028)

1. Antoine Caughman-Keenan-6-4-G
2. Zay Harris-North Augusta-5-11-PG
3. RJ Davis-Ridge View—7 F
4. Jayden Crawford-Green Sea-Floyds-5-8-G
5. Jeremiah Nelson-Fort Mill-PG

HSSR-SCISA Top Boy’s Basketball Players (As of 2-1-2025 Send nominations to hssreport@aol.com)

1. Tiden Riley-Orangeburg Prep-6-5-SF-2026
2. Brayson Stockman-Ben Lippen-6-3-G-2026
3. Tre Freen-Pinewood Prep-F-6-3, 195-2027
4. Jackson Ross-Cardinal Newman-6-3 G-2027
5. Ty Shine-Curtis Baptist-G-2027
6. Bryce Ward-Cathedral Academy-G-2027
7. Tony O’Banner-Thomas Heyward-6-0,PG-2026
8. Bryce Reyieron-Augusta Christian-6-3-F
9. Kais Paris-Pinewood Prep-F-2027
10. Kamauri Hunter-Heathwood Hall-PG-2026
11. Thomas Hester-St. Johns Christian-G-2026
12. Tripp Eidson-Pinewood Prep-6-8-SF-2027
13. Harrison Skinner-Hilton Head Chr-5-80PG-
14. Hall Sease-Andrew Jackson Academy-SG-6-3
15. Bennett Nicholson-Richard Winn-5-10-PG
16. Kirk Trenton-Porter-Gaud-PG-2026
17. Ollie Barnes-Andrew Jackson -PG-5-11,165
18. Nick Lindsey-Holl Hill Academy-8th-G-2028

HSSR-SCISA Top Girl’s Basketball Players (As of 3-5-2026 All Grades)

1. Maliyah Birch-Northwood Academy-CB-2027
2. Gabby Moore-First Baptist-F-2027
3. Emerson Poston-Florence Christian-G-2027
4. Jada Bates-Northwood Academy-PG-5-7 2026
5. Adelaide Suddeth-Palmetto Chr-5-11-F-2027
6. Hannah Lambrecht-Or’burg Prep-PG-5-7-2026
7. Maddy Pojani-First Baptist-5-9-PG2026
8. Gabby Moore-First Baptist-G-2027
9. Mary Legare Delaney-Or’burg Prep-G- 2027
10. Ryan Mayers-The Cross Schools-
11. McKinley Beard-Andrew Jackson Academy-F-5-11 2027

Wilson Hall girls show marked improvement

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor
Sumter – The Wilson Hall girls basketball came into the just completed season feeling it had a point to prove, if not to others, to itself.

“Last year our season record was 9-17,” said veteran Lady Barons head coach **Glen Rector**. “The girls were determined to improve on ball handling and shooting. Their hard work paid off as we improved to 16-10 this season.”

Along with that, the Lady Barons finished second in SCISA Region 3-AAAA in the regular season and made it to the region tournament championship game as well. They earned a No. 3 seed in their half of the bracket in the AAAA state tournament. Unfortunately, WH was upset by No. 6 seed **Northside Christian Academy** 49-45 in overtime in the first round.

Wilson Hall had four players selected to the All-Region team in junior **Caroline Moorman**, sophomores **Grace McArthur** and **Lilly Grace Przybyla** and freshman **Emmie Williamson**.

Przybyla led in scoring with a 13.4=points-per-game average and rebounding at 7.9. McArthur averaged 7.5 points and 3.8 rebounds, Williamson led the team in steals at 3.5 and assists at 2.6 while averaging 5.4 points and 3.0 rebounds, and Moorman averaged 5.6 points, 2.4 rebounds and 1.6 assists.

Along with sophomore **Ellis Coker**, the Lady Barons have their entire starting five returning. Coker averaged 5.7 points, 2.0 steals and 3.5 rebounds.

“We are also excited about the future as we started one junior, three sophomores and one freshman,” Rector said.

The lone senior on the team was **Ella Still**. She averaged 3.7 points, 3.8 rebounds and 1.3 steals.

FORD WILDER BOYS REGION POY

The Barons’ **Ford Wilder** was selected as the Region 3 Player of the Year. The senior averaged 20.2 points and 6.0 rebounds, 1.8 steals and 1.9 assists.

“Ford did a tremendous job on the court for us this year, and he and (fellow senior) **Bryce Hanson** were great leaders. They are leaving some big shoes to fill.”

Junior **Caulder Williamson** was also named All-Region. He averaged 8.9 points and 1.7 steals along with a team high in assists at 3.8.

The Barons went 15-16 on the season. Considering the inexperience on the roster, Ripley had no qualms with the final result.

“I was really proud of our growth throughout the year,” Ripley said. “We lost five of our top six from last year and had a lot of guys having to step up.”

Other key performers were junior **Eric Brown**, sophomore **Nolan Gooch**, sophomore **Nehemiah Dinkins** and junior **Johnny Lauzon**. Brown averaged 6.5 points and 4.5 rebounds, Gooch averaged 6.3 points, 2.0 assists and 3.4 boards, Dinkins averaged 7.6 points, and Lauzon averaged 6.6 points and 2.1 assists.



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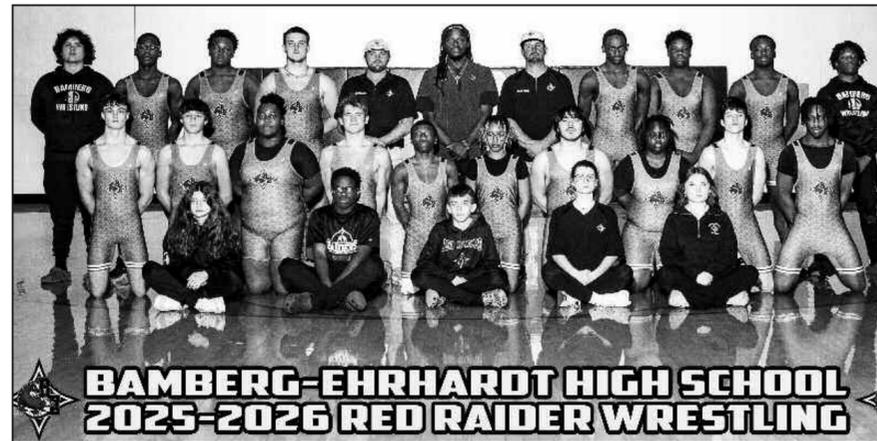


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Bamberg County Feature Page



BAMBERG-EHRHARDT HIGH SCHOOL 2025-2026 RED RAIDER WRESTLING

Red Raiders wrestling ends season in third round

By Neill Kirkpatrick
Special to the HSSR

Bamberg – Since 2005 only one school has wrestled in more state championship matches than the Bamberg-Ehrhardt Red Raiders 13, that school is the state’s all-time leader in wrestling state championships the Eagles of Eastside with 19 and 16 appearances since 2005, so expectations are for the Red Raiders grapplers are always high.

“We had a good season with but we did not meet our expectations,” said head coach Terrell Haynes. “Our goal every year is to compete for a state championship. That is the standard and we strive to achieve it each year.”

Coach continued, “This is a very dedicated group that worked hard all year. We have a brotherhood within the program and they push each other every day to get better for the next match.”

The Red Raiders were led by **Tyler Kittrell**, **Darion Sease**, **Brian Ford**, and **Omarion Wilson**. They all qualified for the state individual state championship as the number one seed from the lower state. Ford (SR) and Wilson (JR) finished as runner ups at 106 and 165, respectively. They finished the year ranked third and fourth in their weight classes.

Kittrell (SO) was ranked seventh in the state at 126 and he placed fourth at the state meet while Sease went 1-2 in his matches. Sease, a junior, enter the year unranked but worked his way up to the top seed from the lower state and ranked number three at 150.

The Red Raiders had three other wrestler make the state individual meet in junior **Keegan Daff** (215), and freshmen **Asiel Graham** (190) and **Rico Parler** (285). Daff had a slow start to the year as he had to recover from an injury he sustained during the Red Raider’s run to the class A football state championship. He was one of the most improved wrestler and qualified for the individual state meet as the number four seed.

Graham was the number three seed in the lower state and went 2-2 at his first state meet appearance while Parler earned a number eight seed.

Blake Gunnells (175) and **Maddox Griffith** (138) were also two of the most improved wrestlers.

The rest of the Red Raiders were **Cameron Daniels** (113), **Josh Tackett** (120), **Liam Daff** (132), **Austin Fisk** (144), and **Trey Wilson** (157).

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Johnson sees improvement in Manning girls

By Dennis Brunson
HSSR.com Associate Editor
Manning – Justin Johnson was very pleased with the results of his second season as the head coach of the Manning High School girls basketball team.

“We’ve made major strides in the right direction,” said Johnson, who guided the Monarchs to a 9-17 overall record and a 3-9 mark in Region 7-AA.

Johnson is basing that analysis on the fact Manning went 5-18 overall and won only of 12 region contests in his first season.

After finishing in last place in the 7-team region last year, the Monarchs finished tied for fifth with East Clarendon this year. They were close to earning a much better region mark as they lost five games by nine points or less.

The Monarchs also played a difficult non-region schedule, which Johnson said was intentional.

“We put together a tougher non-region schedule with the bulk of our games being against AAAA and AAAAA teams,” he said.

The AAAAA teams Manning took on were So-castee, Myrtle Beach and St. James, while the AAAA teams were Crestwood and Hartsville.

Manning earned a berth in the AA state playoffs as an at-large team. That led to them having to go on the road to face undefeated Region 7 champion Atlantic Collegiate Academy in the first round.

The Monarchs had faced Atlantic Collegiate in the regular-season finale on February 12, losing 52-46. In the first-round rematch on February 17, the Armada won 77-39.

Atlantic Collegiate ended up winning the Lower State title before falling to Landrum in the AA state championship contest.

Manning was led by freshman center Ameerah Conyers, who was named to the All-Region team. She averaged a double-double on the season, scoring at 15.3 points per game and pulling down 15.4 rebounds.

Johnson said Conyers made steady progress as a player throughout the season.

“Ameerah grew as the season progressed,” he said. “She was a defensive anchor for us this season and a consistent offensive paint presence. For a freshman, she’s got tremendous upside.”

Along with being a force on the boards, Conyers was a shot-blocking machine. Conyers averaged 5.2 blocked shots a game.

Manning only had two seniors on the roster in Tamia Watson and Aniyah James. There were four juniors and a whopping six freshmen.

“We chose to go with a younger roster, and we feel that will pay dividends for years to come,” Johnson said.

Manning will miss Watson though. She was the second leading scorer with a 9.8 average. She also grabbed 6.8 rebounds.

The Monarchs do have a player returning who averaged 9.8 points though in junior A Aysia Moore. Another junior who will be back is Taniya Johnson. She averaged 8.0 points and 6.1 rebounds while handing out a team high 3.6 assists.

Several players saw minutes, playing in a large number of games, including James. Others were freshman Unique Calhoun, junior Nilah Brown, freshman Shamiyah Conyers, freshman A’Zaria Severance and junior Kelis Pressley.

STEVENSON BROTHERS BOYS ALL-REGION

Brothers Lovell Stevenson and Lovon Stevenson were selected to the All-Region boys basketball team. They both are juniors.

Lovon was chosen as the fifth best player in the region by the seven region coaches. Lovon averaged 13.5 points while pulling down 7.1 rebounds.

Lovell had an outstanding season, averaging a double-double. He scored at a 15.1 clip while grabbing 12.4 rebounds. He also averaged 2.1 blocked shots, 2.8 assists and 2.9 steals. He led Manning in each of those categories.

The Monarchs had three players receive honorable mention accolades. They were junior Jordyn Thompson, junior Daniel Robinson and senior Jordan Hayward.

Hayward was the third leading scorer with a 7.7 average to go with 4.0 rebounds. Robinson averaged 6.7 points and 5.0 rebounds, while Thompson averaged 5.9 points and 4.5 rebounds.

Manning finished the season with a 13-13 overall record. The Monarchs were 7-5 in region play which was good for fourth place. Mullins won the region with an 11-1 record while Atlantic Collegiate and Marion finished tied for second with 8-4 records.

Manning had to go on the road for the first round of the state playoffs. It lost to Central 91-69.

The other seniors on the team along with Hayward were Jaden Smith, Kaylin Weeks, Keindre Woods and Trey Beaufort.

WHITE QUALIFIES FOR AA WRESTLING STATE MEET

Sophomore Joshua White qualified for the AA-Class A wrestling individual state meet for the second consecutive season.

After reaching the individuals in the 126-pound weight class last year, White did so at 132 this season. He finished fifth in the Lower State qualifier, and the top eight finishers move on to state.

White defeated Jah’mir Wright of Edisto to take fifth place.

Monarch head coach Richard Schneider said White did his best wrestling at the end of the season. “It was really an up-and-down season for him,” Schneider said of White. “He managed to correct some issues and refocus when it mattered the most to get to be a returning state qualifier. It was a rocky road for him to get back.”

With White being the only Monarch to qualify for state among Manning’s nine wrestlers, Schneider admits there was some disappointment. However, he thinks that might spur the program to new heights.

“I think we didn’t live up to our potential,” he said. “We’ve got a lot of wrestlers who are hungry to come back and make up for their shortcomings this year. I think they’re fired up and ready to keep pushing.”

“We’re returning pretty much everybody except for just one senior. I think the future is pretty bright.”

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Camden basketball teams have successful year

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor
Camden – The Camden High School boy basketball team finished the season with a 17-9 overall record, went 7-5 in the tough Region 3-AAAA and hosted a playoff game for the first time since the 2017-18 season.

Head coach Sterling Council, who just completed his fourth season at his alma mater, hopes this was a foundational season for the Bulldogs.

“We made major progression and set the expectations of how we want to compete going forward,” Council said. “Overall, I felt good about the season. We took good strides and had some big wins.”

CHS doubled its win total, picking up just eight last year. It finished third in the 7-team region after finishing sixth. It also beat defending state champion Lancaster, which lost to region foe South Pointe in the Upper State championship game. Camden lost to South Pointe in both meetings, falling in overtime each time.

The Bulldogs were led by eighth-grader Jayden Lewis. He was selected to the South Carolina Basketball Coaches Association AAAAA All-State team. Along with being named to the All-Region team, Lewis was named the region’s Newcomer of the Year and was selected as one of the region’s top three players.

Lewis led the team in scoring at 14.1 points per game and assists at 2.3. He also had 1.2 steals.

Junior point guard Tyleek Jones was also named All-Region. He averaged 9.9 points, 2.0 assists, 1.0 steals and 2.5 rebounds.

Senior Derrick Loney was the leading re-

bouncer at 5.2 while averaging 4.7 points. Junior Ethan Spittler averaged 5.7 points and senior Jay Cook averaged 5.6 points.

CAMDEN GIRLS FIINISH 23-4

The Camden girls basketball team had another strong season, finishing 23-4 overall and reaching the quarterfinals of the state playoffs. The Bulldogs finished second to defending state champion South Pointe in the region with a 67-64 record.

Camden had easy wins in the first two games of the playoffs, beating Seneca 78-25 and Blue Ridge 78-50. The Bulldogs were eliminated in the quarterfinals by Westside by a 67-64 count.

Westside was playing for the state title after beating South Pointe for the Upper State crown. South Pointe handed Camden two of its other three losses with the other one coming to 16-9 A.C. Flora.

Senior Ayona “LA” Alexander was selected to the All-State team after averaging a double-double of 15.9 points and 10.9 rebounds. She also averaged 3.2 assists, 2.4 steals and 1.5 blocked shots.

She was joined on the All-Region first team by junior Braylin Mungo. Mungo led CHS in assists at 4.7 and steals at 3.8 to go with 10.9 points and 2.4 rebounds.

Juniors Shanaryah Wright, Harmony Jefferson and Jillian Rush were All-Region second team selections. Jefferson averaged 12.2 points and 2.3 steals, Rush averaged 11.4 points, 2.8 steals and 6.9 rebounds, and Wright averaged 6.0 points, 4.9 rebounds and 2.6 steals.

Head Coach Lewis Mungo is happy with where

Carvers Bay hoops teams end seasons in playoffs

By Neill Kirkpatrick
Special to the HSSR

Hemingway – The 2025/26 basketball season for both the boys and girls teams at Carvers Bay was a successful one for both teams as their seasons ended in the class A playoffs which always leaves a bad taste because unless you win a state championship your season ends with a loss.

The girls team finished the season 13-13 overall and they went 1-1 in the class A lower state playoffs beating St. John’s 50-35 and falling to Bethune Bowman 47-26. They went 9-3 in region 6A play to finish second. The biggest win of the year coming in their final region contest at rival Latta where they came from 11 down to start the fourth quarter to win 51-49 securing second place in region play.

Head coach Michael Hogan will say good bye to five seniors in captains Kandace Hutchinson and Mackenzie Collins along with Briana Nesmith, Lillian Bryant, and Erykah Brown. Hutchinson led the team in scoring at 12.3 points per game while Collins knocked down 6.8 points per game and Nesmith scoring 6.3 points per game.

The boys team finished with a sparkling 24-5 record after getting off to a slow start. They were 7-4 thru the month of December before ripping of 17 straight wins once the new year hit. They rode that

winning streak into the lower state finals where they dropped a tough 69-65 game to Bethune Bowman.

Head coach Jeff Mezzatesta said before the season that, “If we can come together and grow we have a chance to have a very special season. We just have to weather the early season with a few football injuries to nurse and bringing the boys back together as a family.”

He also said his team wouldn’t fully gel until after the Holidays and he was correct. His seniors were a big part of the team’s success.

Leading the Bears was two-time All-State guard senior KK Heyward. He entered the season with 1095 career points. He was the teams second leading scorer at 15.6 points per game scoring a total of 391 points to push his career mark to 1486. He also finished his career with 373 rebounds, 181 assists and 263 steals. He led the team in steals this season with 3.3 a game.

Kendall Moore was the other senior in the starting lineup.

Jaden Bell was the team’s defensive stopper and is the reigning region 6A Defensive Player of the year the past two seasons. He finished his career with 593 points, 267 rebounds, 217 assists, and 251 steals.

Three seniors Tyrone Parson, Ian Greene, and

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the program is after his second season in charge, especially with Camden being in the AAA classification for the next two years after the recent reclassification.

“We are losing one senior (Alexander) and returning everyone else,” Coach Mungo said. “Going to AAA will be a boost for us. We will still play a very tough non-region schedule like every other year. The program is in good shape with the youth on the team.”

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Floyd named new football coach at White Knoll

By WORTHY EVANS
Staff Writer
Lexington - Victor Floyd, a longtime coach at **Chester** who led the team to a 3A state championship in 2018, has been named the new head football coach at **White Knoll**.

After 15 years with the Cyclones, Floyd succeeds **Nick Pelham**, who coached the Timberwolves for five seasons after serving as **Dutch Fork's** defensive coordinator and took the head coaching position at the new **Lake Wylie High School**.

Pelham's record with White Knoll over those five years was 38-24.

In 2023 Pelham led the Timberwolves to an undefeated season and a Region 4-5A championship going into the 5A state championship game. The Timberwolves, who beat Dutch Fork in region play, fell to the Silver Foxes in the state final.

White Knoll finished 8-6 the next year and played another region foe, **Irmo**, for the 5A Division 2 lower state championship.

This year the Timberwolves finished 8-4 overall and 3-2 in Region 4-5A in 2025, reaching the second round of the 5A Division 2 playoffs before falling 28-14 to Irmo in the second round.

Floyd, who also coached at **C.A. Johnson, Brunswick, Ga.**, and **Dudley, N.C.**, before going to Chester, said it was hard leaving the Cyclones program that he built and maintained but he's ready to build on the foundation that Pelham left.

"The season theme is the next step," Floyd said. "I look at this program and the great job that coach Pelham did and the position it's in right now, that's

the only thing left is the next step." Floyd calls the next step "The Wolf Way," and involves his five pillars: commitment, discipline, sacrifice, toughness, and unity.

"A lot of that comes from confidence. Confidence comes from winning," he said. "So I think once you get to that point, you just basically battle the challenges of kids being complacent, which that's the easy part with me."

In boys basketball, the Timberwolves finished 12-15 overall and 4-6 in the region, good for fourth place and a No.9 seed in the 5A Division 2 playoffs. White Knoll hit the road to play No.8 **Myrtle Beach** in the first round, beating the Seahawks 52-44.

Junior **Peyton Jennings** led the way with 26 points and seven rebounds in the game. **Tyzai Smith** scored 13 points.

That victory put the Timberwolves on the road again to face No.1 seed **Goose Creek** in the second round. Jennings had 20 points in that game, but the Gators breezed past White Knoll to win 65-39.

White Knoll loses just three seniors from the team. Jennings finished the season with an 18.6 scoring average in addition to averaging 5-6 rebounds, two assists and 2.3 steals per game. Junior **Tyzai Smith** averaged 9 points and 4.4 rebounds per game.

The girls team has nowhere to go but up. Under first-year head coach **Martel Luster**, the young Timberwolves went 4-17 overall and 0-10 in the region. White Knoll loses just one senior in a leadership position, **Sidney White**. The rest of the team was composed of juniors, sophomores and freshmen, who look to improve next season.



2026 Northwood Academy girls basketball - Class AAAA State Runner Up!

Northwood Academy girls rake in special honors

By Billy G. Baker
Publisher
Summerville—It is truly amazing when you study the quality basketball teams that the Northwood Academy Chargers (28-2) girls' team defeated during the 2025-26 basketball season, only to have a knee injury take out one of their best players in the SCISA AAAA finals against rival **First Baptist** at the Sumter Center on February, 28.

Despite the injury, the Chargers doubled up and kept the game very close the entire way losing in the end, 64-60.

The Chargers beat **Berkeley** (55-53), and the Stags went on to win their second straight Div. II AAAA state title. They beat **Keenan** (53-38) and the Raiders played for a AAA girl's state title this season. The Chargers beat Div. I AAAA **Wando** (36-32) and they went on to play for the state title. They beat **Oceanside Collegiate** (75-46) and the Sharks played for the AAA Lower State championship against Keena.

Then the team they beat twice during the regular season, **First Baptist**, (65-59, & 62-44) took full advantage of the Chargers playing short when senior guard Jada Bates went down with a knee injury mid-way through the season period. At the time Bates

scored 13 points and was playing the best game of her senior season at the time.

By all accounts, when you throw in games with the **Bolles School** from Jacksonville, Florida, a 71-61 loss, and wins over **Bishop England** (59-24), **Stratford** (75-18), and **Ashley Ridge** (80-39) one has to ask this question. Did any girls' team, public or private, play a harder schedule during the 2025-26 season? The answer is "probably not."

It is for this reason that the *HSSR* is proud to announce that head Charger coach **Ginnell Curtis**, who won her 200th game at the school during the season, has been named the HSSR-SCISA Co-AAAA Girl's Coach of the Year. We are also naming talented junior guard **Malyiah Birch**, the Co-HSSR-SCISA AAAA Player of the Year.

Birch had an awesome junior season averaging 19.7 points a game including 6.9 rebounds, five assists and 4.7 steals a game.

In addition, **Jada Bates** has earned a well-deserved spot on the HSSR-SCISA AAAA girl's all-state team. Bates averaged 16.9 points a game, 2.9 rebounds, 3.9 assists and 3.9 steals a game. Freshman guard **Kylee Clark** has been named to our statewide all-rookie team comprised of players from both public and pri-

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vate schools. Clark averaged 9.3 points, five rebounds, 3.8 steals and 2.4 assists a game. Clark herself played with a braced-up knee in the state finals after being injured very late in the season.

After the game to First Baptist, Coach Curtis told this reporter, "When you lose a player like **Jada Bates**, who was our second leading scorer, and second in steals, it changes your game plan for sure," said Coach Curtis. "I just hate that she got hurt for her own well-being."

"When she went down, we picked each other up," said Coach Curtis. "We could have folded at the time we kept playing hard. We also had our number four (**Kylee Clarke**) who played with a braced up torn mimesis, and she had flu-like symptoms all day, and she played her tail off too."

"I feel like the refs were one-sided but that is a story for another day," said Coach Curtis. "I am so proud of my girls for pushing through despite the adversity. Everybody in the gym knew who the better team was but we were just unlucky tonight."

Northwood Academy, despite the setback from the

See Northwood Academy, pg. 76

Richardson happy in first season with Wolverines

By Dennis Brunson
HSSR.com Associate Editor
Turbeville – All things considered, the **East Clarendon High School** girls basketball team had a pretty good year.

The Wolverines went 10-15 on the season, finished fifth in Region 7-AA and made the state playoffs. So what's so great about that? We'll let head coach **Bridget Parker Richardson** put it into context.

"I think the first season went well considering I didn't start until September and we lost a key player early," said Parker Richardson, who previously had been the head coach at **Crestwood**.

Upon closer observation, four of EC's losses came by six points or less, so the record could have been even better.

player who was lost early in the season was sophomore **Kiersten Woods**. She played in five games and averaged 12.6 points per game after averaging over eight points a contest as a freshman.

Junior **Cherish Cochran** was the leading scorer and was named to the All-Region team. Cochran averaged 18.6 points.

The next three leading scorers were all underclassmen as well. Sophomore **Bailey Hicks** averaged 10.6 points, junior **Payton Hanniford** averaged 6.7 points and sophomore **Tymani Cooper** averaged 5.1 points.

The only seniors on the roster were **Addison Fleming**, who averaged 4.0 points, and **Courtney McFadden**. That has Parker Richardson excited about her second season.

"I look forward to working the girls this summer, and I'm excited for next season," said Parker Richardson, who led Crestwood to a 16-9 record and the quarterfinals of the AAA state playoffs in the 2023-24 season.

EAST CLARENDON BOYS MISS PLAYOFFS

The East Clarendon boys finished the year with a 9-15 overall record, went 3-9 in region play and

Days happy with first season at Scott's Branch

By Dennis Brunson
HSSR.com Associate Editor
Summerton – **Damian Days** had no complaints over the way his first season as the boys basketball head coach at **Scott's Branch High School** turned out.

"We had a great season overall," Days said. "We went 13-12 in my first season, and I feel that is a great accomplishment. We had to implement the defensive strategies and offensive strategies, which took a while with really nine new varsity players. They started to get it around the last two games of the (District 9 Officials) Christmas tournament."

Scott's Branch went on an 8-game winning streak and won 10 of its final 13 games. One of those victories came against **Bethune-Bowman**, which was ranked No. 1 in Class A at the time. The Mohawks would go on to play for the state championship.

The Eagles played **Latta** in the first round of the state playoffs. They dropped a 58-49 decision to the Vikings, who would go on to the quarterfinals of the playoffs.

Sophomore FraJon Bennett was selected to the All-Region team for Region 5-Class A, in which the Eagles finished third with a 7-3 record. Bennett averaged 11.3 points per game and 7.6 rebounds and 1.0 blocked shots.

Junior **Nyren Bowman** was an honorable mention pick. He led the Eagles with an 11.4 scoring average to go with 5.5 rebounds.

Other key contributors for the Eagles were soph-

missed out on the state playoffs. However, the Wolverines were very close to having a solid season.

Six of their losses came by seven points, with four of the defeats being region contests. A couple of victories would have gotten them into the playoffs.

"I hate that the season is over," said EC head coach **Patrick Kelly**. "Being such a young team, I feel that we just ran out of gas toward the end of the season."

Sophomore **James Gamble** was East Clarendon's All-Region selection. He averaged 13.6 points, 7.6 rebounds and 2.5 steals. all of which were team highs. He also averaged 2.5 assists.

Junior **Braylon Hunt**, junior **Ke'Shaun Porter** and sophomore **Rashad Scott** were honorable mention selections. Scott averaged 9.6 points and 3.4 rebounds, Porter led the team in assists with 2.6 while averaging 7.4 points and 4.3 rebounds, and Hunt averaged 7.6 points.

With sophomore **DJ Wilson** and freshman **Mark Kelly**, the Wolverines will be returning their top six scorers next season Wilson averaged 7.0 points and 5.0 rebounds, while Kelly averaged 3.1 points.

"This was a fun group to coach, and I can't wait to have everyone back next year," said Coach Kelly.

4 EC WRESTLERS QUALIFY FOR STATE

East Clarendon had four wrestlers qualify for the AA-Class A individual state tournament by placing in the top eight in the Lower State individuals.

Tryston Underwood had the best finish for the Wolverines, finishing second in the 144-pound weight class to **Brody Nettles** of **Edisto**. **Takoda Cornelius** finished fourth at 157, **Picasso Brown** finished seventh at 150, and **Tyler Royall** was eighth at 126.

None of the four placed in the top four in their respective weight classes in the state tournament.

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Shawn Johnson and Clarendon County School District Athletic Director Reggie Kennedy

SUMMERVILLE GREENWAVE

Summerville girls hoops building for the future

By Roger Lee
Special to the HSSR
Summerville – The way the Summerville Girls Basketball team played the closing weeks of the season shows promise.

The **Green Wave** finished the season with a 12-12 record. However, eight of those losses came in December or the first week of January and Summerville won six of its final seven games.

“When we played at Stall Jan. 30 the girls decided they wanted to show people what they could do,” said Summerville coach **Calvin Davis**. “They took it upon themselves to play better and they bonded together and played hard. Then they continued to learn, work hard in practice and trust their coaches and then they just executed.”

After receiving the No. 4 seed for the **5A, Division 1 Lower State Playoffs** to earn a bye for the first round, Summerville had a slow start in its second-round game against **Wando**. The Green Wave only scored three points in the first quarter and trailed significantly at the half. However, Summerville surged to make a game of it in the second half before falling 62-53.

“We did a lot of what we wanted to do as far as taking some stuff away from them, but we dug a hole for ourselves in the beginning,” Davis said. “Our adrenalin was going and we missed a lot of free throws and layups. Late in the second quarter we started digging our way out of it and we fought but came up short.”

Sophomore **Madelyn Marsaa** led Summerville that game with 21 points and junior **Destinee Grant** had 14. On the season, Marsaa averaged a team-high 10.9 points per game. Junior **Jordan Espinal** averaged 10.1 points and Grant averaged 9.1. Marsaa also led in assists with 2.1 per game. Espinal averaged 1.6 assists per game and senior **Ciara Grant** averaged 1.5.

Destinee Grant averaged a team-high 10.3 rebounds per game while Espinal averaged 7.8 and Ciara Grant averaged 4.3. Marsaa, Espinal and Ciara Grant were the team’s leaders for steals.

Summerville will only graduate two seniors. The contributions of Ciara Grant and **Telissah Johnson** will be missed, but the Green Wave stands to return 11 varsity lettermen. That includes three players who are currently eighth-graders, two freshmen and two sophomores so odds are the team will be able to build on the foundation it started laying during the next several seasons.

Other members of the team are **Addelyn Chapman, Kendall Grant, Abigail Creel, Adaliah Bostic, Da’Nyla Riley, Gabrielle White, Kynadie Palmer** and **Ariel Beeler**.

Green Wave Boys
 The Summerville Boys weren’t that strong coming down the home stretch of the season, but did win a playoff game.

Summerville received the No. 9 seed for the **Lower State**. The Wave went on the road for the first round and defeated No. 8 seed **Lexington** 60-



Madelyn Marsaa is one of several key players expected to return to the Summerville Girls Basketball team next season.

Photo by Roger Lee

52. The Green Wave then played at top seed **West Ashley** Feb. 23 and was eliminated with a 62-45 loss.

Summerville finished the season with a 10-14 record.

Seniors **Damani White** and **Josiah Taylor** and freshman **Reed Robinson** were the team’s leading scorers, all averaging in double digits. Senior **Zavarion (ZJ) Jenkins**, sophomore **Austin Tate** and Taylor led the team in rebounds.

Other members of the team are senior **Kaden Palmer**, juniors **Noah Harrison, Kymani Robinson, Dakaden Ravenell** and **Josiah Deas**, sophomores **Lamell Grant, Austin Tate** and **Yemilier Vazquez** and freshmen **Kaden Husley** and **Micah Jones**.

Green Wave Wrestling

Several Summerville wrestlers qualified for the 5A individual wrestling state tournaments.

Summerville’s **Ridge Rollison** (106-pound class), **DJ Ford** (138) and **Eli Pressley** (175) each placed third in their respective weight class during the state tournament. A week before, Rollison captured a **Lower State Championship** at 106.

Other Summerville state qualifiers were **Austin Stiltner** (126), **Brayden Herman** (132), **Kayleb Pinckney** (144), **Mason Whisenhunt** (150) and **Tytrell Frupp** (165).

Summerville’s **Kristalyn Dandridge**, who had already captured a **Lower State Championship**, placed fourth at 105 during the girls’ state tournament. **Xavi’onna Harley** was also a state qualifier for the Lady Green Wave.

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Kingstree girls having another strong season

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor
Kingstree – For the fourth straight year, the **Kingstree High School** girls basketball team had a strong season. The Blazers posted a 19-5 overall record, went 10-2 in Region 7-AA for second place and reached at least the second round of the AA state playoffs for the fourth consecutive season.

The only detriment to the season for head coach **James Price** and his squad was the fact it ended after just the second round. KHS smoked **Woodland** 64-18 in the first round before having to go on the road and losing to **Timberland** 62-59 in the second round. Still, Price has a justification as to why it was a very good season.

“The season as a whole was successful,” said Price, who has led Kingstree to a 77-22 mark over that 4-year period. “We finished 19-5 overall and 10-2 in the most competitive region in AA. Our five losses were all to teams that made it to the Final Four (semifinals of their respective state playoffs) in **Military Magnet, South Florence, Timberland** and **Atlantic Collegiate**. Two of those teams are in the state finals (Military Magnet and Atlantic Collegiate), so I know we are trending in the right direction with the level of competition we try to schedule each year.”

The Blazers were led by junior center **Nay’Dia Shaw**. She was not only chosen as the Region 7 Player of the Year, but she was also named to the **South Carolina Basketball Coaches Association AA All-State team**.

Shaw led Kingstree in scoring, rebounding, assists and steals. She averaged a double-double of 19.8 points and 11.0 rebounds per game to go with 5.0 assists and 4.7 steals.

Shaw was joined on the All-Region team by senior **Demia Mosley**. She averaged 11.1 points, 2.5

assists, 2.6 steals and 3.0 rebounds. Other top performers were junior **Kamare McCrea**, senior **Nyla Wallace**, senior **Kylee Keity** and senior **Toshanda White**. McCrea averaged 5.3 points, 5.2 rebounds and 3.4 steals, Wallace averaged 6.6 points and 2.5 steals, Keity 1.0 points and 3.0 rebounds, and White 3.3 points and 3.7 rebounds.

Price believes Kingstree is set to have another strong season next year.

“The program is in a strong place, and we are excited to begin preparing for the ’26-27 season,” he said.

WASHINGTON BOYS ALL-REGION PICK

Benjamin “BJ” Washington was named to the boys All-Region team. The senior averaged 7.5 points a game.

Junior **Joshua Brown**, sophomore **Kayden Scott** and sophomore **Paul McKnight** were honorable mention selections. Brown was the leading scorer at 10.0, while Scott averaged 8.4. McKnight averaged 4.4.

The Blazers went 5-18 on the season, winning just one of their 12 region contests. Head coach **Shawn Evans** said his team gave its all throughout the season despite being hindered by injuries.

“This year had an early theme of ‘next man up’ due to the number of injured players coming from football,” Evans said. “Although we never had our full roster, their buy-in increased because of the number of open roles. I’m proud of how hard they fought through all the obstacles.”

“Commitments have already been made for next year by the players on their own. We are turning the page.”

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Chesterfield girls have successful season

By David Shelton
Senior Writer
Chesterfield – Region play is the most important part of the regular season and ramping up the intensity and focus is paramount for any team hoping to contend for a region title and state playoff berth.

To that end, a young but up and coming **Chesterfield** girls basketball team competed quite well in their 2025-26 region 4-AA schedule. The Lady Rams went 8-4 in region play and finished with a 15-11 record overall after just 11 wins last season.

“We are playing pretty well so far,” said head coach **Nick Jolly** earlier this season. “This is a competitive team. We’re still fairly young overall but we have some talented girls. We will make youthful mistakes but we will learn from those mistakes and work hard to correct things as we go. I definitely feel good about the potential.”

Chesterfield regularly starts four sophomores and Jolly’s top two players are sophomores **Reagan Rivers** and **Yaya Robinson**. Rivers was a class AA all-state selection in each of the last two seasons. She averaged 14.9 points, 8.8 rebounds, 3.5 assists and three steals this season. Robinson averaged 15 points per game.

Eighth-grader **Le’Asia Brown** is led 7.6 po the team in rebounds, grabbing 9.9 boards per game while scoring 7.6 points per contest this season.

Sophomore **Ki’Yonna Peurifoy** pulled in 7.9 re-

bounds per contest while senior **Jordan Evans** is adding 2.6 steals and nearly two assists per game.

Sophomore **Alivia Honeycutt** scores about three points and pulls down 4.5 rebounds per game. She also averages close to four blocked shots per outing.

Sophomore **Taylor McCoy** is adding six points per game. Senior **Jaylen Evans**, along with junior **Kaylee Leonard**, see considerable minutes as well.

Freshman **Taylee Clyburn**, sophomore **Ava Knight**, freshman **Kamari Patterson**, freshman **Allison Brown**, and senior **Jenna Kelly** round out this year’s squad.

Jolly says his biggest point of emphasis in the early season has been physical toughness.

“With the youth, sometimes they play a little timid,” the coach said. “I keep telling them we have to play tougher. They are responding well. I’m pretty happy with where we are and I know we are going to continue to grow and improve as we play more. We will compete with most of the teams that we play.”

The boys team finished 4-22 overall and 3-9 against region foes.

Senior leaders and team captains are **Kamron Patterson, Derrick Lockhart, Ronnie Little (9.1 ppg)** and **Josh Miller (6.0 ppg)**.

Juniors include **Amir Pickett, Jackson Dalton (9.5 ppg), Mark Moten, Josh Bittle, Jayden Johnson, Treyvon Smith (6.8 ppg)** and **DJ Mer-**

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riman.
 Rounding out the roster are sophomores **Jamison Dalton** and **Holden Lowry**.

BARNWELL Warhorses



2026 Barnwell Warhorses Softball

Barnwell softball focused on continued success

By Billy G. Baker
Publisher
Barnwell—Despite **Jaidyn Devore's** 660 career strikeouts moving on to the softball team at **Howard University** this season, **Barnwell** head softball coach **Mike Beasley** has a great blend of old and new talent that will start the season at home on Mar5ch, 10 against region foe **Lake Marion**.

Last season the Warhorses finished 21-7 and Coach Beasley is starting his 4th season as the head coach in the program. He starts the 2026 softball season with a career record of 277-115.

"I can say with confidence, for the first time in my 30-year coaching career, that any of the 12 players on my team could start at any time and we would not have a drop-off in talent," said Coach Beasley. "Our new consolidated Barnwell County High School will open in the Fall of 2028, and I am looking forward to these current young players on the team being juniors and seniors when the new school opens.

"We have a lot of talent in grades sixth through nine right now," said Coach Beasley. "The vast majority of our players are year-round committed softball players."

The team performed well, according to Coach Beasley, in scrimmage games against **Colleton County, Edisto** and **Wagener-Salley**. "I thought we played well in all of our scrimmages," said Coach Beasley. "We have three solid pitchers, good contact hitters, and our defense looked solid, so we are looking forward to the season.

"This group is very competitive and skilled, so we hope to defend our region title and make a deep run in the playoffs," said Coach Beasley. "I am excited about the promise of this season."

Stepping in the shoes of Devore in the circle will be number one junior pitcher **Laney Grubbs**. "Laney was All-State last year, and she has been on the team since the 7th grade," said Coach Beasley. "She is 9-2 in the circle for us over the past three years and she has 65 strikeouts also. She hit .341 last year so she is a solid contact hitter."

Junior **Kendall O'Berry** will start in center field after earning all-region honors and batting .325 with 18 RBI's last year. "Kendall is a great defender, and her hitting has really improved over last season," said Coach Beasley.

Junior **Molly Wilson** will start at second base. "Molly has learned to be a slap hitter since last season and she brings solid defense to the second base also," said Coach

Beasley. This year's team has only three seniors. **Brianna Croft** will start at catcher after earning all-region honors as a junior. **Abigail Corley** has now been on the team for six seasons and she will start in left field.

Kinsley Terrapin made the *HSSR* all-state all-rookie team a year ago when she batted .415 as a 7th grade short-stop/pitcher. "Kinsley will be our number two pitcher, and she will start at short where she is an excellent defender," said Coach Beasley.

Genesis Walker is an 8th grader who also earned all-rookie honors last season after batting .417. Walker will play first and catch this season, and she is a real versatile player.

Shalayah Badger returns to an 8th grade third baseman and she will also serve as the team's number three pitcher. Last season she batted .355 with two home runs.

Senior **Shaelyn Badger** will also see action at first and third base this season. Badger batted .444 with 10 RBI's last season. "Shaelyn is our power hitter," said Coach Beasley.

The team has three talented newcomers up from the junior varsity program. **Emily Vanacore** is an 8th grader who will start in right field. **Brinkley Taylor** is an 8th grader who will see action at both third and behind the plate. Sophomore **Braelyn Chavis** is very versatile and can play shortstop or third as well as the outfield.

Barnwell will play 26 games this season. Last year they went undefeated in winning a region title. In the month of March, the Warhorses will play 13 regular season games.

After starting the season at home on March 10 with **Lake Marion** the team travels to **Swansea** on the 11th with Class A power **Branchville** visiting on the 12th. Barnwell travels to **Lake Marion** and **Bridges Prep** on the 13th and 17th respectively. Barnwell will host **Swansea** on the 18th before playing an away game at **Williston-Elko** on the 19th.

On March 20 Barnwell hosts **Bridges Prep**, travel to **Hampton County** on the 24th and then hosts **Silver Bluff** on the 25th. During the final week of March, they are at **Hampton County** (3-27), at **Edisto** (3-30) and then on the 31st they are at **Bamberg-Ehrhardt**.

Coach Beasley is once again assisted by **Rick and Rose Arnold**. **Jenny Raines** has rejoined the program this season also.

Barnwell baseball off to 2-1 start this spring

By Billy G. Baker
Publisher
Barnwell—The **Barnwell** varsity baseball team has started the 2026 season 2-1 under third year head coach **Cody McCollum** who played for the Warhorse baseball team when he was in high school.

"We will rely heavily on our pitching and defense this season," said Coach McCollum. "We are hoping for timely hitting, to play hard, fast, smart and aggressive."

The team consists of only one senior, five juniors, two

sophomores, two freshman and one 8th grader. The top three pitchers starting the season are sophomore prospect **Case Davis**, junior **Jaiden Zissett**, and junior **Jax Meade**.

The Warhorses have two early season wins over **St. Johns** (6-1) and **Branchville** (14-) while they lost to **Academic Magnet** (6-2).

The Warhorses batted .369 as a team after three games. Their top hitters after three games include Zissett, a junior infielder/pitcher who is hitting .600 including

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one double along with Davis, sophomore infielder/pitcher batting .545, with a team leading five stolen bases. Mead, a junior infielder/pitcher, is also batting with 545 with two doubles.

There are four other players on the team batting .300 or higher early in the season. They include freshman outfielder/pitcher **Cooper Boleman** who is at .375 and 8th grade infielder/pitcher **Logan Proctor** is at .333 with one

See Barnwell, pg. 79

What Patriots lacked in size, they made up in grit

By Roger Lee
 Special to the HSSR
North Charleston – It was a pretty successful season for the **Fort Dorchester** Boys basketball team, but players and coaches can't help but think it could have been better.

"There were a couple of region games that we let go, that we should have won," said Fort Dorchester coach **Thomas McElveen**. "We didn't close out those games, but I'm real proud of our guys."

The Patriots ended the season with a 16-11 record with a 5-5 mark in 5A Region 8. That was good enough for a third-place finish in the region.

The Patriots earned the No. 6 seed for the **Lower State** playoffs and defeated **Stratford** 59-54 in the first round. Their season then ended with a 64-50 loss to **James Island** in the second round.

"We could have shot the ball better in our second playoff game, but we were undersized every game and I think we played bigger than we were," McElveen said. "I'm proud of the grit we showed to help us overcome some of that."

The Patriots will lose six seniors including **Maricious Dawson**, a three-year starter and two-time all-region selection. Senior **Jaden Polite** was also named all-region this season. **DeOndre Haynes**, **Myles Brunson**, **Ty'Quez Jenkins** and **Peter Burton** also made valuable contributions their senior year.

"That group matured and played very good this season," McElveen said. "I just wish we had a little more time with them. I think we could have done something special with those guys."

Dawson led the team in scoring, averaging 13 points per game. Polite averaged 12.2 points and Jenkins averaged 10. Junior **Juan Concepcion**, Dawson and Haynes were the assists leaders.



Photo by Roger Lee
 Ty'Quez Jenkins is one of six seniors Fort Dorchester will have to replace next season.

Jenkins led in rebounds per game (7.7) followed by Dawson (4.2) and Haynes (3.5).

Other members of the team are juniors **Jaylen Porter**, **Dominic Brown**, **Ryan Simmons** and **Linster "Bear" Burgess**.

While the seniors will be missed, the Patriots do have athletes anxious to move into their roles next season.

"I expect Juan Concepcion to have a bigger role in scoring next season," McElveen said. "He was more of a facilitator this season. **Javion Morris** wasn't on our varsity this season, but I expect him to join us next season and have a big role as a freshman. We also have some other guys coming up."

Inconsistency didn't stop Swamp Foxes from finals

By Roger Lee
 Special to the HSSR
Summerville – For the first time in program history, the **Ashley Ridge** Boys Basketball team advanced to the state finals.

The **Swamp Foxes** hit a rough patch during region play and finished 4-6 against region opponents. However, the team then won four playoff games, eliminating **Wando**, **Carolina Forest**, **James Island** and **Cane Bay** to capture its first **Lower State Championship**.

Earlier in the season, Ashley Ridge lost to Cane Bay and to James Island. In fact, the **Trojans** defeated Ashley Ridge twice during the regular season.

"I'm really proud of our guys," said Ashley Ridge coach **Brad Dobbels**. "We had some rough stretches and these guys could have packed their bags so you have to give them credit. We figured things out and started to really believe that if we work together we can get it done. That was great to see."

Ashley Ridge then lost to **Ridge View** in the state-title game.

"We knew we had to play really well to come in and beat them and it wasn't our best night," Dobbels said. "Throughout the year, we struggled some times and when we did we tried to force things, press things and not move the ball as much especially when we start missing shots. Ridge View made us pay for that. However there are about five guys on this team who developed some toughness. They became men this year so that's the thing I'm most proud of."

The Swamp Foxes finished the season at 23-8. Senior **Clayton Everett Jr.** led the way, averaging 21.8 points, 8.6 rebounds, 3.2 steals and 2 blocks



Photo by Roger Lee
 Senior Clayton Everett Jr. is the all-time leading scorer for the Ashley Ridge Boys Basketball program with nearly 1,400 career points.

per game. He also led in field goal percentage and three-point percentage on his way to being selected to the **South Carolina Basketball Coaches Association's 2026 5A Boys All-State Team**.

Everett graduates as the team's all-time leading scorer with nearly 1,400 points and as one of its Top 3 all-time rebounders.

Senior **Shayne Pinckney** averaged 10.7 points and junior **Javion Gathers** averaged 9.3. Senior **AJ Ward** averaged 3.5 rebounds and senior **Ben Dun-**

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Fort Girls
 The Fort Dorchester Girls Basketball team finished the season at 11-13 with a 3-7 mark in region play. The team opened the playoffs on the road and fell to **River Bluff**.

Sophomore **Zoey Ferrell** led the team in scoring, averaging 7 points per game. Senior **Malaysia McKinley** averaged 6.9 points and junior **Tatiana Williams** averaged 6.7.

McInley led in rebounds, averaging 9.5 per game. Junior **Shamauriah Bethea** averaged 7.7 and Williams averaged 6.9. Senior **Layla Guillory** led in steals, averaging 2.2 per game. Ferrell averaged 1.8.

Other members of the team were **Ella Semenetz**, **McKinley Tompkins**, **Natalya Wright**, **Sophie Webber**, **Morgan Carter** and **Kourtney Smith**.

See Fort Dorchester, pg. 75

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can averaged 2.9. **Gathers**, **Pinckney** and **Everett** were the assists leaders and steals leaders. **Everett**, **Duncan** and **Maurquis Lee** led in blocks.

Other members of the team are **Evan Terry**, **Javari Walker**, **Jhi Gibbs**, **Nate McKee**, **Grant Riemer**, **Taylen Crutcher**, **Gerald Garner** and **Gabe Geddis**.

AR Girls
 The **Ashley Ridge Girls** also had a strong season, finishing at 16-11. The team went 9-1 in **5A Region 8** to claim the region championship.

After earning the top seed for the **Lower State Playoffs**, the **Lady Swamp Foxes** lost to **Wando** in the second round.

Senior **Andrea Kelly** led the team, averaging 16 points, 9.7 rebounds and 2.7 steals per game. She was named to the **5A Girls All-State Team** and finishes her high-school career with more than 1,300 points.

Junior **Jameson Foley** averaged 16 points and 8.6 rebounds. Sophomore **Samiah Boatwright** averaged 9.7 points and 6.1 rebounds. **LaChar Lawrence**, **Raszy Simmons** and **Kelly** led the team in assists while **Kelly**, **Foley** and **Lawrence** led in steals.

Other members of the team are **Allie Miller**.
 See Ashley Ridge, pg. 75

LAURENCE MANNING ACADEMY SWAMPCATS

LMA boys finish 25-5, reach AAAA semifinals

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor
Manning – The last time **Laurence Manning Academy** won a boys basketball state championship came in the 2011-12 campaign. The Swampcats beat **Heathwood Hall** to claim the SCISA AAA state title. That was also the last time LMA had reached the semifinals of the state tournament – until this year. Led by second-year head coach **Patrick Anderson**, a senior standout on the championship team, Laurence Manning went 25-5 on the season and came within a game of playing for the AAAA state title.

Anderson said he hopes this is the start of a long run of success for the program. “It’s huge,” Anderson said of reaching the semifinals again. “We want to play in big games. I told them in the locker room just now (following the semifinal loss to Heathwood Hall) this is where we expect to be year in and year out. This is where we want to be, and this is going to be the expectation from now on. It’s the best finish we’ve had in 14 years. We expect to win this game next year.”

Laurence Manning won the Region 3-AAAA championship with an 11-1 record and then claimed the region tournament. Three Swampcats were selected to the All-Region team in senior **Zy Dennis**, senior **Charlie Duvall** and junior **Wes Lyles**.

Sophomore **Scoop Dennis**, junior **Ben Sanders**, senior **Whitley Boykin** and junior **Tristen White** were also key contributors.

“They improved every single week in some facet, whether it was offensively or defensively, everybody was improving every game,” Anderson said. “People stepped up every single game. It wasn’t always the same person. It was a lot of fun to coach this team.”

Laurence Manning received a first-round bye in the state tournament and defeated **Hammond** 50-38 in the quarterfinals. Scoop Dennis led Laurence Manning with 14 points with Duvall right behind with 13. White and Lyles both had seven, **Zy Dennis** had four and Boykin chipped in three.

The Swampcats faced eventual state runner-up **Heathwood Hall** in the semifinals, falling by a 52-39 count.

Lyles led Laurence Manning with 13 points. Zy Dennis had nine, Scoop Dennis seven, White five and Duvall three.

“We played hard,” said Anderson, whose team saw the game get away in the fourth quarter. “I’m very proud of our guys. In that fourth quarter we let it slip away a little bit, but I’m proud of these guys, very proud of my seniors. They kind of laid the foundation for what we’re going to be for a long time.”

Along with Zy Dennis, Duvall and Boykin, the other seniors are **Shawn Thomas Moore**, **Camdyn Strickler** and **Walker Cribb**.

LMA GIRLS FINISH 11-12, WIN PLAYOFF GAME

The Laurence Manning girls basketball team finished 11-12 in its second season under head coach **Lisa Ard**. More importantly, the Lady ‘Cats won their first

state tournament game since the 2013-14 season. That being said, Ard felt there was more on the table for Laurence Manning to accomplish, but its inability to do so had nothing to do with the players’ performance. “This season was very frustrating,” she said. “I know we won a playoff game, but I feel if we had everyone well all season we could have achieved more. Between injuries and the flu, after our win over Wilson Hall (53-32 on January 16), we never had our entire team for a game.”

The Lady ‘Cats defeated **Porter-Gaud** 48-39 in the first round. **Ashley Rae Hodge** led the way with 23 points, while **Lyza Prickelmyer** had 15. **Sarah Margaret Ferriell** and **Lily Wellborn** both had four.

LMA didn’t fare as well in the quarterfinals, falling to eventual state runner-up **Northwood Academy** 73-49. Hodge led the way with 20 points, while Prickelmyer had 15 and Wellborn had 11.

Prickelmyer and Hodge, the senior 5-year starters, were both selected to the All-Region team. Prickelmyer averaged 17.6 points, 6.6 rebounds, 2.3 steals and 4.6 assists, while Hodge scored at 13.8 clip with 3.2 rebounds, 4.2 steals and 2.0 assists.

“Lyza and Ashley Rae were our leaders this season,” Ard said. “They are a powerful, dynamic duo. They can score, control the offense, rebound and grab the steal when we need it. They’re great young ladies.”

DAVID RANKIN NEW LMA FOOTBALL COACH

Veteran SCISA football head coach **David Rankin** has been hired as the new head coach at Laurence Manning.

Rankin, who has had various stops at SCISA schools around the state for the better part of the last four decades, comes to LMA after a 2-year stop at **Carolina Academy**. He went 10-11 there, going 5-5 his first year and 5-6 this past season, losing in the first round of the Class A state playoffs both seasons.

Rankin said the fact that Laurence Manning is a member of AAAA, SCISA’s highest classification, played a major role in his decision to make the move.

“It’s AAAA and I’ve always wanted to be at the top and see if I could win up there,” Rankin said. “I just looked at everything and I just thought it was a good place to be.”

Rankin has been the head coach at **W.W. King Academy**, **Thomas Sumter Academy** and **Lee Academy** on two different occasions and one term at both Carolina and **Williamsburg Academy**. During his first stint at Lee, the Cavaliers were in AAA, the highest classification at the time, and went 5-6 both years.

It was during his second stint at Lee where Rankin enjoyed his greatest success. After going 3-8 and 5-5 in the first two years of his 11-year stay that ran from 2013 to 2023, the Cavaliers went 89-26 over the final nine seasons. They won Class A state titles in 2015 and 2022 and played for the state title on four other occasions. For his career, Rankin has coached a state runner-up eight times.

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Hampton County girls becoming AA powerhouse

By Neill Kirkpatrick
Special to the HSSR
Varnville – In the three years that Hampton County has competed in class AA the girls basketball program has become a fixture in the class AA playoffs as they have advanced into the second round twice.

They finished the 2025/26 season 16-7. They finished third in region 5 AA play with a 6-4 record which forced them to travel for the first time in the first round of the playoffs where they fell to Phillip Simmons 52-36. They started the year by winning their first seven games and 9 of their first 11 games.

Like last season the Hurricanes will lose only two seniors in **Tryvaiah Henderson** and **Serenity Jackson**. Henderson was one of the Cane’s two captains. She was second in scoring at 9.8 points per game and third in rebounds at 5.2 a game.

Jackson had a solid year averaging 6.6 points per and 4.3 rebounds per game. She led the team in assists dishing out 3.1 a game and in steals at 3.9 per game.

They will be missed by Canes. The cupboard isn’t bare for head coach **Anthony Elam**’s as he will return one of the top juniors in the state in **Lyric Jones**. She led the team in scoring at 21 points a game which pushed her career point total to 1728 points. She will pass the 2000 point mark sometime next season.

Also back will be the twin towers in junior forward **Faith Brooks** and center **Kaliyah Dobson**.

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They were one/two in blocks and rebounding. Brooks has earned the name “Windex” as she cleaned the glass to the tune of 14.4 a game to lead the team. She also had 18 blocks.

Dobson was second in rebounding at 8.8 per game while she led the team in blocks with 51. The Boys finished with 20-5 record for their third consecutive 20 win season. They also won their third straight region title. They have gone 27-1 in region play over that span.

Their six seniors have been an integral part of them teams success and this season they accounted for over 80% of the Cane’s offense.

The six seniors are guards **Darius Brooks**, **Jaylen Singletary**, **Jaquan Solomon**, **Desmond Mathis**, forward **Tyler Davis** and **Tarell Grant**. Brooks led the Canes in scoring at 16.4 a night and will look to make his second straight class AA All State team. He also became the second Cane in the last three years to pass the 1000 career point mark.

Soloman and Singletary also averaged double figures for the Cane’s with Solomon knocking down 14.3 points per game and Singletary scoring 10.1 a game.

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PHA hoops coaches not happy with seasons

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor
Estill – Neither boys head coach **Claude Terry** nor girls head coach **Anthony Creech** could make any bones about it Neither felt their **Patrick Henry Academy** basketball teams played up to snuff in the just completed season.

“As for the season it definitely wasn’t what I expected,” said Creech, whose girls team finished with an 11-11 overall record and lost to **Williamsburg Academy** 57-53 in the first round of the SCISA AAA state tournament. “We had a ton of talent on this team, and we just couldn’t get it together as a group. We lost some games we should have won, but that comes with it.”

“I was a little disappointed in the season after starting 5-2 and ending 6-16 without a region win and missing the playoffs for the first time in my four years at PHA,” Terry said.

The Patriots girls had three players selected All-Region in Region 4-AAA. They were senior **Emilee Stanley**, sophomore **Sara Guty** and senior **Saquoia Sexton**.

Stanley was the leading scorer with a 9.2 points-per-game average. She also averaged 5.0 rebounds, 2.8 assists and 2.8 steals. Guty averaged 6.5 points and 6.0 rebounds. Sexton was a defensive force with 10.3 rebounds per game and 1.7 blocked shots.

She also averaged 7.4 points.

Daivon Glover and **Tray Adkins** were the All-Region players for Patrick Henry. Glover had a tremendous season, averaging 21.3 points over the

season, 28 points a game in region play. He also average 3.0 steals and 2.9 steals.

Glover, a senior who was selected to play in the **SCISA North-South All-Star Game**, went over 1,000 points for his career. He had a career high 41 points this season.

Adkins, also a senior, averaged 11.4 points. He also averaged 8.5 rebounds, 1.1 blocked shots and 3.1 assists, both team highs.

Junior **Michael Mizell** averaged 9.1 points and 3.6 rebounds, and senior **Jacob Corley** averaged 6.2 points and 5.3 rebounds.

RECLASSIFICATION AFFECTS ALL PHA SPORTS

Patrick Henry will have a different look in both football and its other sports following the release of the reclassification list. And there is an ironic oddity to all of this as well.

After playing Class A football for the past four years and winning the 2023 state title, PHA will move up to the AA level next season.

The other sports will also be moving to the AA level next season. However, that comes after playing at the AAA level the past three years.

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Youth movement will lead to success for Rebels

By David Shelton
Senior Writer

Ridgeland – Small schools often go through cycles where the number of athletes decrease, which leads to a lack of success. But, as the numbers cycle upward, the teams experience more success.

At **Thomas Heyward Academy**, the girls basketball program is in such a cycle when it comes to older and more experienced players. A numbers crunch has forced the girls program to step back from varsity play and focus on the lower levels until the younger players grow and develop into varsity players.

The school is putting together a season this winter, a junior varsity team that is playing a mixture of varsity and jayvee teams. The hope and expectation is that the eight players on the jayvee squad will advance to the varsity level next year.

Natalie Soto is serving as the coach this season. A former high school player in California, Soto took over the program very late, choosing to coach the team when no one else would. She has a daughter, **Lydia Soto**, who plays on the team as an eighth-grader.

The measuring stick for success is not focused on wins and losses this season but more so on growth and development.

“Fundamentals and learning the game. That has been our focus,” said Soto. “We have eight girls and five are eighth-graders with three sophomores. It’s a fun group to coach because they work very hard and have a great attitude. We have come a long way this season in terms of our fundamentals

and knowledge of the game. I’m really impressed with how much we have improved. I took the team because they didn’t have a coach but I have enjoyed this season more than I thought I would.”

The three sophomores on the team this season are **Marlie Needham, Lilly Gant** and **Sophia Arzillo**. The remaining roster of eighth-graders include **McKayla Cormack, Lilly Heath, Sydney Harriott**, and **Paola Estrada**.

“We measure success with small victories and steady improvement,” Soto said. “I want to see improvement every day, every game. Just do things a little better each time out. We don’t have much height so we have to play scrappy and create chaos with pressure. This group has embraced that. It’s been cool to watch us grow this season.”

“We are competing well, more than the record shows. We have some games where we are just over-matched but we compete in most every game. We’re a totally different team than we were when we started and I think we will be a team that is improved from year to year. We will be ready to play a full varsity schedule next season.”



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Beaufort girls basketball posts solid season

By David Shelton
Senior Writer

Beaufort – Knowing the importance of region play as it pertains to the postseason, the Beaufort High girls basketball team took care of business in the drive to make the AAAA Lower State playoffs.

To that end, the **Beaufort** girls basketball team got off to a great start, posting wins in their first two region 7-AAAA contests and winning 11 of their first 15 games overall this season. The team is on track to bettering last year’s win total of 16 while contending for the region title.

BY the time the season ended, Beaufort had posted a 21-5 record overall and went 10-0 in region play to win the region title. The season ended with a playoff loss to South Florence.

Among the top performers this season were junior **Amiyah Brown**, sophomore **Jania Hayward**, freshman **Da’Leah LaBoard**, and freshman **Zaria Coaxum**. Hayward is leading the team in scoring, averaging 19.4 points per game. She also averages nearly five rebounds and three assists per contest. Brown added 15.4 points per game, adding 3.7 boards, while Coaxum is scoring 8.2 points per game. LaBoard is adding just over four points per game.

Coming off a 1-19 season of a year ago, the boys basketball team improved by two wins this

season.

“The sky is the limit for these young guys,” Huff says. “They have been working hard, but with our schedule and region, the competition is tough. We are expecting to be middle of the region and contend for a playoff spot.”

Huff has several returning players and the playing experience gained last season, despite the record, should lead to improvement overall. As the season begins, Huff lists only one senior, guard **Austin Miles**, as starting. Miles is a returner from last season and is a team captain averaging 4.1 points per game.

Junior guard **Kobe Hernandez** averages 4.0 points per game and junior guard **Willis Watson** is averaging 7.4 points and 4.6 rebounds per game. Junior **Qualeek Isnar** is the starting center and averages 7.3 points and 7.2 rebounds per game. Freshman Keaton Layman averages 5.2 points per game. Sophomore forward **PJ Davis** rounds out the starting lineup.

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Florence Area Feature Page

South's Bostick, Wilson's Leonard receive honors

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor

Florence – It was a “pretty good” sseason for the **South Florence High School** girls basketball team.

All the Bruins did was post a 25-4 overall record and go 10-2 to share the Region 5-AAAA title with city rival **Wilson**. They then went on a roll to the AAAA Lower State championship game where they lost to eventual champion **North Augusta**.

South Florence head coach **David Robinson** said hard work in the summer made the difference in the winter.

“I think we had a successful season based on the summer,” Robinson said. “We were able to get kids in the gym and went to some camps to build a winning mindset.”

Being able to have freshman **Harmony Bostick** in those summer workouts as well as on the court during the season helped a lot too. Bostick was selected to the **South Carolina Basketball Coaches Association AAAA All-State team** as well as being chosen as the Region Player of the Year.

Bostick averaged a double-double of 22.3 points per game and 10.1 rebounds. She also averaged 3.0 steals.

“What makes Harmony, to me, such a great player is her willingness to learn and to be coached,” Robinson said. “She is at all non-ball workouts and takes coaching so well.”

Bostick was joined on the All-Region first team by senior **Allyson Watson** and junior **Amari Gamble**. Watson was the second leading scorer at 11.7 while leading South Florence in steals at 4.0 to go with 3.1 assists and 4.7 rebounds. Gamble led the team in assists at 4.5 to go with 2.7 steals, 5.4 rebounds and 5.4 points.

Junior **Madison Randolph** was a second team selection. Randolph averaged 6.9 points and 4.0 rebounds.

Wilson had a pretty good year as well. The Tigers were 20-5 overall with the aforementioned 10-2 region record. They fell to **Gray Collegiate Academy** in the second round of the playoffs.

Senior **Leah Spears** was selected as the Region

See Florence Area, pg. 76

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Florence Christian girls win first ever state title

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor

Florence – The **Florence Christian School** girls basketball team had just two losses going into the SCISA AAA state championship game on February 28 at **Sumter County Civic Center**. One of the losses came against its title game opponent, **Orangeburg Prep**, by a 37-25 count.

That was back on December 12. Things were different this time as the Eagles came away with a 42-35 victory to claim the school’s first girls basketball state title trophy.

“We grew throughout the season,” was head coach **Neil Minton’s** response to what was the difference over the two months.. “We had more bench players being able to play today and contributing positive minutes.

“We had more people playing with confidence and they were stronger with the ball. All the little stuff we worked on helped us improve and we rely on our defense. I thought we played great halfcourt defense today.”

Junior standout **Emerson Poston** led the

See Florence Christian, pg. 76

Lamar boys have first winning season in 20 years

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor

Lamar – The **Lamar High School** boys basketball team had a good year in the just completed season, going 17-10 overall and finishing second in Region 2-Class A with a 13-3 record. Upon taking a glance at the school’s basketball history though, it can be said this was beyond just a good season.

According to the annals of **MaxPreps** that run back to the 2005-06 season, the Silver Foxes had not had a winning season in at least the 19 years prior to this one.

Lamar head coach **Brian Scott** is happy with the way the year turned out and the direction the program is moving.

“I thought we had a pretty good year considering where we’ve been and how we finished up compared to years past,” said Scott, the former **University of South Carolina** standout wide receiver and **McDonald’s All-America** basketball player at **Darlington High**. “We were able to compete with the bigger schools on our schedule and came away with a few victories as well.

“We turned around our record from 10-17 with a first-round (playoff) loss to 17-10 with a first-round victory. Finishing second in the region was a success as well.”

Lamar finished second in the region to undefeated **C.A. Johnson**, which played **Bethune-Bowman** for the state title. The Silver Foxes hammered **Ware Shoals** 74-28 in the first round of the playoffs. The Foxes came up short in the second round, falling

to **Hunter-Kinard-Tyler** 63-57.

Lamont Williams, a 6-foot-6-inch sophomore center, led the way for Lamar. William was a first team All-Region performer, averaging a double-double of 14.5 points and 10.9 rebounds per game. He also led in assists at 3.2, steals at 2.6 and blocked shots at 1.5.

Sophomore **Davaris Lambert** was a third team pick. He averaged 13.5 points, 3.3 rebounds, 2.8 assists and 2.1 steals.

Senior **Kamil McCoy** was the third leading scorer at 9.2 along with 2.0 assists and 2.0 steals. Senior **Zori Pierce** averaged 5.6 points, 2.4 assists and 2.3 steals, and senior **Nygel Eaddy** averaged 5.0 points.

Freshman **Ziggy Durant** averaged 7.1 points and 5.0 rebounds.

Scott hopes better things still await the Silver Foxes.

“The program is trending in the right direction, but we’re still not where we want to be,” he said. “We will continue to work and get better. The players anow believe and are starting to experience what it takes to have success. Now we just have to sustain it.”

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2025-26 Berkeley Girls Basketball

Berkeley girls hoops go back-to-back in '25-26

By David Shelton
Senior Writer

Moncks Corner – After never winning a state title in their history, the Berkeley girls basketball program is making up for lost time.

Berkeley captured their second straight AAAAA Division II state title with a win over Greenville on Mar. 5 in the Colonial Life Arena. The 54-50 win closed out the season with a 23-5 record. Berkeley beat North Myrtle Beach and rival Goose Creek in their run to the Lower State title.

“This is very special,” said coach Crystal Peace, herself a former all-state performer at Berkeley. “We had goals from the beginning of the year. Resilient has been our word all season. We got some bumps and bruises along the way. My job as the leader is to keep them believing in what we do.”

Sophomore all-state guard Alaina Carter led all scorers with 29 points, hitting on 11 of 15 field goal attempts with five three-pointers. Amani McCray added eight and forward Imani Levey scored seven points.

Greenville finished with a 22-7 record.

Carter’s final three-pointer with a little more than four minutes remaining gave Berkeley a 43-32 lead. Greenville cut the deficit to three points twice but

Cane Bay basketball takes the next step in '25-26

By David Shelton
Senior Writer

Summerville – Focused on daily improvement helped lead the Cane Bay boys basketball team deeper into the state playoffs than they have ever been before.

The Cobras competed at a high level all season and ended up as one of the top teams in the Lower State of Division I in Class AAAAA. Cane Bay reached the Lower State finals before the season ended with a 58-56 loss to Ashley Ridge. The final record was 24-5.

The boys team is one of the top teams in the state, ranking as high as fourth in the statewide rankings of Class AAAAA Division I. Coach **Shawn McKeen’s** squad won 17 of their first 19 games overall.

With a bevy of talent and experience returning from a 20-win team of last season, the boys basketball team had high expectations for the 2025-26 season.

“We definitely expect big things from this team,” McKeen said. “We have good talent and we’re very deep. We’re off to a good start but we know that playing our best basketball in February is the goal. We have to continue to put in the work and continue to improve. There’s plenty of things we can improve on for sure.”

the Stags held off the challenge by making key free throws.

Together the teams committed 40 turnovers and combined to score 48 points off those miscues. Berkeley shot 41.9 percent from the field while Greenville shot 46 percent.

“We knew what we wanted, from day one,” Peace said. “We have a humble group of girls. We don’t go out there boasting and bragging about anything. It’s just one day at a time.”

Greenville led 12-6 after one quarter. McCray’s three-pointer early in the second quarter sparked at 15-3 run and pushed Berkeley ahead. Carter followed with a layup and a three-pointer for a 21-15 lead with two minutes left in the first half.

Berkeley made six three-pointers in the game, compared to only two from beyond the arc for Greenville.

Expect the Stags to be a contender again next season, led by Carter, McCray and Levey.

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Cane Bay’s strengths are size, athleticism and depth. McKeen has 12 players back from last season and says every player on the roster could start if needed.

Leading the way is sophomore **Jamel McKinley**, a 6-7 guard who average 10.7 points and 5.9 rebounds per game this season. Junior **Jaleel Sanders** returns at point guard as a third-year varsity player. He fills up the stat sheet with 9.9 points, 4.1 rebounds, 4.6 assists and 2.7 steals per game this season.

The lone starting senior is **Amare Merrell**, good for 8.7 points per game, while junior center **Jackson Lilly** averages 6.5 points and 5.4 boards per game. The fifth starter is 6-4 power forward **Christian Davis**, who is averaging 6.4 points and 4.9 rebounds per contest.

Rounding out the 25-26 roster are seniors **Tristan Ford (6.9 ppg)**, **Jayden Waring**, **Andre Hagler** and **Brayden Vereen**; juniors **Landon Thompson**, **Terry Truesdale** and **Devin Cobbs**; and freshman **Jamerious Dukes**.

“This is a good group to coach because they put in the work,” McKeen said. “We need to become more consistent on the defensive end and that’s the focus right now. We can score points but being consistent defensively will be very important. This is a confident group and they

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SCISA North South All Stars: Emery McClure, Rylee Weathers, Abe Shuler, John Quattlebaum, and Austin Varn participated in the SCISA All Stars games played at Wilson Hall in Sumter. Lady Raiders Coach Callie McClure served as the South All Stars Coach as well. Not pictured - Palmer Kizer & Alyssa Grooms

Dorchester girls get over the hump, win AA crown

By Dennis Brunson
HSSR.com Associate Editor

St. George – After coming close the last few years, the **Dorchester Academy** girls basketball team finally got over that proverbial hump.

It took overtime, but the Raiders defeated defending state champion **Cross Schools** 39-37 to claim the SCISA AA state championship on February 28 at **Sumter County Civic Center**.

It is DA’s first state championship since the 2017 season even though it did play for the crown in 2020.

Head coach **Callie McClure**, who coached Dorchester to the previous championship, was happy her school has another state title trophy for the trophy case.

“It was a real physical game, I am not kidding,” said McClure, who led Dorchester to a 21-5 record. “I am just thankful it is over and that we won. I did not expect an overtime game. I am very proud of my team today for competing and pulling out a win they will remember forever.”

Emery McClure led the Raiders in scoring with 14 points. **Rylee Weathers** had 13 points, **Palmer Kizer** had six, and **Alyssa Grooms**, **Rylee Matthews** and **Madison Downey** each contributed two points.

DA, a regular in the semifinals, rolled to a 60-23 victory over **Lee Academy** in the semifinals. Dorch-

PCA girls win 18 games under first year coach

By Neill Kirkpatrick
Special to the HSSR

Mt. Pleasant – The 2025/26 season for the Palmetto Christian Academy Girls basketball team saw a few changes with a new coach, the graduation of the school’s all-time leading scorer **Cokey Suddeth** and learning a new system, despite all the changes the results were the same as the Eagles won 18 games for the second straight year.

“We brought in a more balanced approach to the program where we didn’t depend so much on one person. It took some time for the girls to get used to the new system we put in but as the season progressed they just got better and better at playing as a team,” said coach **Jimmy Tyson**.

“One of the key things for the girls was each girl figuring out their role on the team. We were a young team as we loss only three seniors so I’m excited to see how much better the girls will be next year,” Tyson said.

The Eagles finished the year at 18-10/5-5. They

ester had three players in double figures led by Weathers with 18. McClure added 16, and Grooms added 10. Kizer finished with eight and Downey had six.

The Raiders opened tournament play with a 53-30 triumph over **Andrew Jackson Academy** in the quarterfinals.

DA led 26-7 after the first quarter, 35-15 at half-time and 47-24 entering the fourth quarter.

The Raiders had three players score in double figures led by McClure with 18. Weathers added 15 and Grooms had 11. Matthews and Kizer both had four.

McClure was named the Region 2-AA Player of the Year. She was joined on the All-Region team by Weathers, Kizer and Grooms.

The Dorchester boys basketball team had three players named All-Region in senior Abe Shuler, senior John Quattlebaum and junior Austin Varn.

The Dorchester boys finished the season with a 17-13 record, going 3-3 in region play. The Raiders went 1-1 in the state tournament. They beat Cross Schools 60-44 in the opening round before falling to **Bethesda Academy** in the quarterfinals.

RECLASSIFICATION DOESN'T AFFECT DORCHESTER

Things will remain the same for Dorchester after

fell in the first round of the SCISA AAAA playoffs 28-14. During the year, the Eagles had five and four game winning streaks.

Leading the team was senior forward **Avery Clark**. She finished her career with over 400 points scored and over 450 rebounds. She saved her best for last as she averaged over six points and six rebounds per game.

Josie Hurley and **Alden Baugh** will be saying good bye along with Clark. Hurley was the teams sixth man and provided quality minutes off the bench.

Adelaide Suddeth, a junior, led PCA in scoring at 8.8 points per games and in rebounds at 6.6 a game. She has over 500 career points and rebounds and with a big senior year she could join her sister Cokey as a 1000 point career scorer..

Ellie Tyson, a junior, has a nice touch from beyond the arc as she is hitting a team high 44 three’s on the year. She was third at 6.8 points per game.

Point guard **Audrey Bright** tied for the team

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SCISA’s biannual reclassification was released. DA will continue to complete in Class A for football and AA in all other sports

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lead in assists at 2.3 a game and is the team’s top free throw shooter at 67%. She scored 5.4 points per game and two steals a night.

Two sophomores **Elsie Newton** and **Anna Grace Works** played well all year. Newton was second on the team in scoring at 7.9 points per game and in assists at 2.3. She led the team in steals with 3.2 thefts per contest. on the team in steals at 2.9.

Works scored six points and grabbed six boards per game.

Freshman **Ripley Suddeth** had a solid first year and provided a spark off the bench chipping in four points and three rebounds.

The Eagles had two members of the boys basketball team, senior **Clay Chakeris** and junior **Will Terry** were chosen to play for South AAAA team in the SCISA North/South All Star basketball game held at Wilson Hall on 3/7/2026.

WOODLAND HIGH SCHOOL WOLVERINES



Brayan Vivas



Gibson Kepley



Jamie McCarthy

Beckwith in love with coaching soccer at Woodland

By Billy G. Baker
Publisher

Dorchester—The Woodland High boys' soccer team has found success early in the 2026 season, with shut-out wins over Branchville (7-0) and Pinewood Prep (2-0) with a strong goal to earn at least one home game in the upcoming playoffs.

The team is once again head coached by DD4 Superintendent **Jeff Beckwith**, a former college soccer player himself. "Coach" Beckwith loves to share his knowledge of the sport with student athletes at Woodland High School, and that also includes younger athletes involved with feeder programs that grow into the varsity.

In the team's two shut-out wins, veteran senior goalkeeper **Gio Hernandez** saved five shots on goal against Branchville, and 10 shots on goal by Pinewood Prep to preserve the shut-out wins for Woodland.

Through five games, the Wolverines are led in scoring by sophomore forward/mid-fielder **Gibson Kepley** and senior mid-fielder **Brayan Vivas**. Vivas and senior D **Jamie McCarthy** also serve as team captains.

Woodland has a 2-3 record heading into a home

match against **Charleston Math & Science** on Monday, March 9. The Wolverines competed well in losing matches against **St. Johns, Hardeeville, and Berkeley** earlier in the 2026 season.

Coach Beckwith is totally focused on the team concept. "All of the guys play a pivotal role on the team, and we are only as good as the whole," said Coach Beckwith. "However, Brayan, Gibson, and Gio in net, and Jamie, will be leaned on a lot because of their experience on the team, and on the field."

Coach Beckwith is very goal oriented with this year's team. "Our goals include reaching double digit wins and securing at least one home playoff game, but we are aiming for two," said Coach Beckwith. "An additional goal is for the team to keep getting better."

Coach Beckwith is pleased with the continued growth of the soccer program at Woodland High School. "As a program, from grades seven through twelve, we continue to see growth in numbers, and growth in skill, which we will continue to build on year after year."

Additional team members include senior D/F **Jaiden Dunning**, senior F **Dez Fink**, senior F **Ismael Silva**, senior D **Jorge Garcia**, junior MF

a junior shortstop who batted .390 with 9 RBI's last season. "Dallas is a great team leader with an awesome glove, and she covers a lot of ground in the field," said Coach Reeves. "She should have an opportunity to play at the next level."

Another all-region returning player is third baseman **Jordan McCarthy** who batted .489 last year with 17 RBI's. "She is one of two starting seniors on the team this season," said Coach Reeves. "She has a solid glove in the field and a strong bat at the plate," said Coach Reeves. "We are counting on her again this season."

The team's top pitcher is all-region performer **Katey Westbury** who won the first game over Branchville. Last year in 43 innings of work in the circle she had 41 K's. Westbury starts at second base when not pitching. She batted .372 last season with five RBI's. "Katey is a dedicated player in our program and she is so versatile," said Coach Reeves. "She is a solid glove at second base when she is not pitching."

Sophomore **Josie Mitchum** is playing first base but has not batted much due to a previous injury she



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Dylan Shuler, junior D **Juan Foreo**, junior goalkeeper **Daniel Garcia**, junior D **Viktors Abols**, sophomore F **James Moorer**, sophomore D **Noah Tome**, freshman D & MF **Aiden Bauerle**, and freshman MF **Paeten Loftis**,

After the match on March 9 with Academic Magnet the team will compete in seven more matches in March. On March, 10 the team will host Andrews in a region match before playing at Goose Creek in a non-region contest on March, 12. Woodland will host Academic Magnet on March, 17 before going to Timberland for a region game on March, 19. Burke comes to Woodland for a region match on March, 23 and then Woodland goes to Andrews on March, 26 for a region game. The team will close out the month of March with an away match at Burke.

Woodland will compete in 9 additional matches in the month of April before concluding the regular season on April 30 with a match at **Hampton County**.

Coach Beckwith is assisted by **Dustin Fitch**. Meanwhile, the Woodland High girls' soccer team is head coached by **Isabella Wendler** and her team is currently 1-2 with a 7-2 win over **Hampton County**.

The girls' team is being led in goal scoring to date by sophomore MF **Pollyanna Rice** with five goals, junior **Vanessa Voloshchuk** and junior **Ciera Albritton** have two goals each, followed by freshman **Victoria Garcia** who has one goal.

is still recovering from. Mitchum batted .375 with 11 RBI's last season.

Alyssa McCellan is an all-region returning catcher who batted .462 with 8 RBI's last season. "Alyssa is a star catcher with a strong arm," said Coach Reeves. "She is not at full strength yet due to an injury sustained to her quad she got sliding into a base in a recent game."

Addisyn Waggoner returns to start in left field after batting .321 with seven RBI's last season. "Addisyn should have a great year at the plate," said Coach Reeves. "She is hitting and playing with a lot more confidence this season."

Jordan Gokey and sophomore **Erin Garvin** will see action in right field this season. Junior **Ke-morah Johnson** is a reserve outfielder. Brihanna Simmons is a junior reserve who sees time in the outfield. Junior **Landyn Ranch** will provide depth at second base and in the outfield. Freshman **Jasmine Robinson** is a pitcher who can also play in the outfield.

"Our goal is to win the region this year, and to
See Woodland, pg. 76

Lady Wolves cap special campaign on hardwood

By Rob Gantt
Special to the HSSR

ST. STEPHEN – The Timberland High School girls basketball team just finished up the program's most memorable season in the past 15 years with an appearance in the Class 2A Lower State championship game.

The Lady Wolves put up a battle inside the Florence Center Feb. 28, falling to Atlantic Collegiate by nine points. Timberland ended the campaign 22-7, having a 13-game win streak snapped by the Armada.

"I'm very proud of them," Timberland coach Kelsey James said. "They put in a lot of hard work and dedication to get us to this point of the season."

The tough loss capped the careers for five Timberland seniors: guard **Zion Prioleau**, senior guard **China Greene**, guard **Saniah Jackson**, forward **Jordyn Milligan** and forward **Samara Scott**. Prioleau led the way this season with 16.8 points per game, while Greene and Scott also averaged double figures with 10 points per contest. Scott was the top rebounder with nine boards a game. Greene led in steals and Prioleau in assists.

"That core was the heart of our offense and the heart of our defense and had tremendous leadership," James said. "That core is the reason why we're here right now because of their heart, their dedication and the time on and off the court they put into the community, too."

In the Lower State championship, Prioleau and Scott tallied 15 points apiece. Greene chipped in eight points.

Timberland had hoped to get back to Columbia, and win, for the first time since 2011. And the first

Cavaliers end season in second round of playoffs

By Neill Kirkpatrick
Special to the HSSR

Moncks Corner – The 2025/26 was a special one for the St. John's Christian Cavaliers boys basketball team as they finished the year at 20-10 which was their first 20 win season since 2013 and they received a bye in the first round of the SCISA AAA state basketball tournament.

Head coach **Bob Winters** about the season, "We thought we would have a pretty good ball club this year and we did. It didn't turn out the way we planned but it was a good season."

"Our six seniors played almost every minute this year and it is going to be hard to replace them.

It will be hard to replace them but we had a very good JV team so we expect to reload not rebuild next year. We had three players that we could have brought up but we wanted them to get game experience."

The Cav's had three players named All Region in **Thomas Hester**, **Tradd Law**, and **Aiden McCoy**. Hester and Law were chosen to play for the South squad in North/South All Star game.

Hester had a career for the ages. He leaves SJCA having scored over 2000 points, over 500 rebounds,



China Greene



Zion Prioleau

part of that goal looked promising for much of the first two quarters.

The Lady Wolves led 19-11 after one period and held a double-digit advantage in the second quarter before Atlantic Collegiate closed the first half on a run to tie the score, 27-27, at the break.

"I think we got complacent a little bit and let them get that run in the second quarter," James said. "We had some ups and downs but that second quarter was the difference in the game."

Timberland last led, 31-29, on a four-point play from the corner by Prioleau with 5:53 remaining in the third quarter.

After Prioleau's bucket pumped some life into the Lady Wolves, the Armada got the ship steadied and went on a 15-4 run go up 44-35 on a pair of buckets in the first two minutes of the final period.

The Lady Wolves never got closer than five points the rest of the way.

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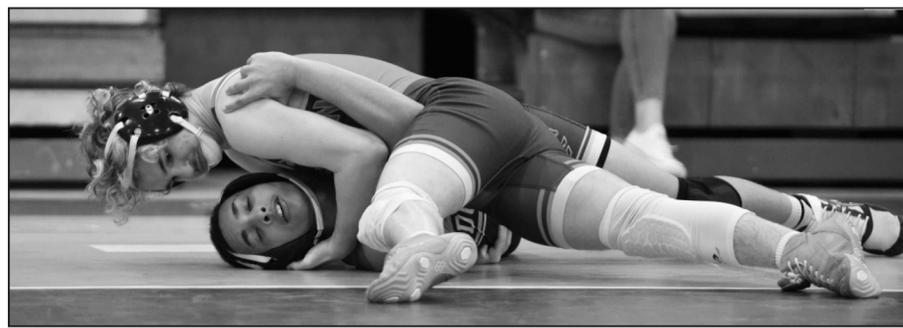
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Senior Jackson Stuckey

Hawks wrestlers have special winter on mat

By Rob Gantt
Special to the HSSR

HANAHAN – The Hanahan High School wrestling program is accustomed to putting together productive campaigns on the mat in terms of victories.

This winter was a cut above some of the others, though.

The Hawks captured region and Lower State crowns before finishing Class 3A state runner-up to perennial power West-Oak. The state championship appearance was Hanahan's fourth since 2011. They won it all in 2011 and 2012 and finished runner-up in 2013.

"We've had a great season," HHS coach Ray Adkins said after the state match. "Any year you get a trophy at the end of the year, it's a great year. I'm really proud of our kids. We didn't get the W, but our kids came out here and fought their butts off. Everybody saw that. Congratulations to West-Oak. They've got a better team, but our kids put up a fight."

After wrapping up the team portion of the schedule, Hanahan moved on to individuals where the Hawks had a strong showing at the Lower State and state levels. Coach Adkins' team produced four Lower State champions: **Andy Avery** (106), **Eddie Yambao** (113), **Owen Miller** (138) and **Jackson Stuckey** (144). Four more placed third: **Jayden Serano** (126), **Trey Holcombe** (132), **Will Hair** (150) and **Pedro Afonso** (157). In all, 13 Hawks advanced to the state tournament in Florence.

Once there, three Hawks made it to championship matches before finishing as a state runner-up: Yambao (113), Miller (138) and Stuckey (144). Avery (106) placed inside the top four.

The Hawks amassed 108 team points to tie for sixth, but were the top Lower State squad in the standings.

Two Hanahan senior wrestlers went on to earn all-star nods and competed in the North-South All-Star matches in North Myrtle Beach. Stuckey and **Landen Ritchie** (175) made the Class 3A-4A South roster.

Cross boys hoops come up short in playoffs

By David Shelton
Senior Writer

Cross – Success in football led to a slow start in boys basketball at Cross High but expectations were for the Trojans to contend for a region title this season.

Most of the basketball team plays football and the Trojans advanced to the Lower State finals in football this season. The month of December was used to condition for basketball and develop chemistry.

Coach **Chaquain Boone** says the team's 4-6 start to the season does not worry him. He knows the talent and experience that he has on this year's roster.

"When fully healthy and when we have everyone available, I feel confident that we will be able to compete with any team we play," Boone said. "Being successful in football is a great thing for our kids to experience. Starting basketball a little later than most teams is okay. I know once we come together and gel as a team, we will be good. We're into region play and I feel good about our chances of competing."

Cross ended with a 10-9 regular season record and posted a 6-3 region record. The season ended with a playoff loss to Bethune Bowman.

This year's team was led by returning all-state

forward **Caden Ramsey**, who also is one of the state's top football prospects. The 6-4, 205-pound Ramsey is averaged 12.9 points and 9.7 rebounds per game but missed time early due to postseason all-star football participation.

Sophomore point guard **Isaiah Wright** is the leading scorer, 13 points, 4.3 assists and 4.6 steals per game. Junior guard **Tyler Harris** averaged 7.6 points and 6.0 rebounds per game and senior forward **Kenji Polite** added 6.7 points and 7.8 rebounds per contest. The fifth starter is sophomore guard **Bernard Middleton**, who added 7.5 points and 4.8 boards per game.

Boone was able to go deep into the bench, which helps his team use defensive pressure to create offensive opportunities. Getting time in reserve roles are seniors **Andrew Mack**, **Micah Dukes** and **William Grant**; and sophomores **Emory Murrell**, **Jerry Sweatman** and **Mike Young**.

"With the style we play, depth is important and we have pretty solid depth overall," Boone said.

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Courtesy Matthew Bradberry, Athletic Director

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Adams hired to direct Colleton County football

By David Shelton
Senior Writer

Walterboro – Never afraid of a challenge, **Bradley Adams** has accepted the challenge of rebuilding the Colleton County High football program.

Adams was named to his new position in late January, replacing Adam Kinloch, who was not retained after three seasons. Adams has spent the last two years out of coaching but served as the Beaufort High athletic director.

"I am excited to have this opportunity to lead this football program," Adams said. "Being away from coaching these last two years has renewed my passion and hunger for coaching and developing young men. We have a lot of work to do but I feel like the program has a lot of what is needed to compete."

Adams brings more than 22 years of coaching experience at the high school and collegiate levels, including successful head coaching tenures at Georgetown (winningest Coach in program history), Woodruff, and Union County high schools.

A proven program builder, Adams has led multiple teams to playoff appearances (13 out of 15 years as a Head Coach) and region championships, compiling over 80 career wins as a Head Coach while revitalizing programs across South Carolina. During his time at Union, he took over a 2-9 team and won back-to-back region championships before accepting the job at Woodruff High School.

Colleton County has suffered in recent years, managing just a handful of wins in the last six seasons. Adams realizes the challenges ahead but is ready to attack head on.

"The important thing is to have a plan, a standard, and never waver," he said. "It's one step at a time and we can't rush it or overlook anything. Every day is another day to move forward and we understand that."

Currently serving as Athletic Director at Beaufort High School, Adams is known for his leadership,



New Head Coach Bradley Adams

commitment to student-athlete development, and emphasis on academics, character, and accountability. His coaching philosophy for Colleton County High School will be centered on the PAW Standard—Preparation, Accountability, and Work Ethic—with a strong focus on building meaningful relationships and lifelong skills.

Colleton County Department of Athletics looks forward to Coach Adams' leadership as he works to build the Cougar football program and positively impact students both on and off the field.

Adams first task is putting together his coaching staff and he hopes that process is complete by the time spring practice starts in May.

"We have a good idea of who we will have," he said. "We have some guys already here that have expressed a desire to help rebuild the program. We'll probably have a few new faces as well. We want everyone in place and on the same page by spring practice. Spring will be very important for us to lay the foundation and establish the culture."

Colleton Prep baseball under new leadership

By David Shelton
Senior Writer

Walterboro – There is a new lead voice for the Colleton Prep baseball program this spring as **Joe Hill** takes the reigns for the 2026 season.

Hill grew up in Walterboro before moving to Michigan for high school and college. He has since moved back to the area and has been involved in the summer travel ball scene for a few years. Having played the game at a high level, Hill feels he can instill a winning attitude through player development, hoping to reverse the fortunes of recent years.

"We have a good group of young men and they have bought in well so far," Hill said. "I feel like we have a good coaching staff and we are all focused on improving in the fundamentals and learning how to win. I think we can surprise some people this year if we can stay healthy and continue to focus on getting better each day. We have some experience and we added a few transfers. Now we just have to gel."

The Warhawks are off to a solid start, winning three of their first four games with the lone loss coming to Hilton Head, 9-8. The Warhawks held an 8-2 lead in that game before faltering late due to walks. Hill says pitching will be key this season.

"So far we have been swinging the bats pretty

well but it all comes down to competing on the mound," he said. "We have a good group of arms but they will have to produce when called upon. We just have to throw strikes and let our defense make the plays."

Among the top arms this season will be freshman **Channing Terry**, junior **Cale Owens**, sophomore **Nick Martin** and freshman **Kaiden Kinard**, who will likely be used as a closer this season.

"We're kind of young in some spots but it's a group with a lot of potential," Hill said.

Junior **Hartman Fisk** will handle the duties behind the plate while **Grayson Martin** and freshman **Baines Pierce** will share time at first base and designated hitter. Terry and Owens are working at second base and junior **Tyler Reasoner** is working at shortstop. Kinard will spend much of his time at third base.

Senior **Tanner Wolfe** is a veteran outfielder and will play in left while sophomore **Fripp Smoak** is working in center. Senior **Gerardo De La Cruz** is working in rightfield.

"I think we have a chance to be pretty solid overall defensively," Hill said. "We have good team speed and athleticism. We have to lean on our strengths and make sure we're helping the pitcher's out."

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Gray boys and girls fall short of playing for titles

By WORTHY EVANS
Staff Writer
Columbia - The **Gray Collegiate** boys basketball team and head coach **Dion Bethea** were both on a mission in the Class 4A playoffs: Capture the 4A championship to go along with Bethea's six 2A crowns.

Unfortunately for the War Eagles, **North Augusta** hit the road to Gray for their third-round matchup Feb. 24. The Yellow Jackets, who lost twice to the Region 4-4A champion War Eagles this season, beat them 67-59.

North Augusta went on to beat **Bluffton** 57-38 for the lower state championship, and played **South Pointe** for the state championship at **Colonial Life Arena** Friday.

Last year the War Eagles went without Bethea, who coached as an assistant at **Georgia Southern**. Under **University of South Carolina** standout **Carlos Powell**, the War Eagles finished second in the region and posted a 19-8 record after North Augusta eliminated them in the third round of the playoffs.

This year, with a bunch of returning standouts, Bethea returned to the Gray bench and the team had been on fire.

"I think we're ahead of schedule," Bethea said about the team's resurgence since his return before playing North Augusta. "Early on it was just buying into the staff that I was bringing back with me from Georgia Southern, keeping the guys healthy and consistently making shots instead of taking shots."

The War Eagles (24-3 overall, 14-0 Region 4-4A) claimed its first region championship since joining Class 4A. They earned a first-round seeding in the 4A bracket, whipped No. 16 **South Florence** 82-39 Monday and 9th seed **Midland Valley** 70-37 in the second round Feb. 21.

That win set up the North Augusta game, and just like last year's team did, the Yellow Jackets

prevailed.

Before the North Augusta matchup, Bethea praised Gray's region for getting his team ready for all opponents.

"I feel like we had the best region in 4A," he said. "North Augusta is really good, and well-coached just like Midland Valley and the Aikens (**Aiken** and **South Aiken**). We didn't get any nights off, man. Good basketball taught us a lot about ourselves."

The Gray boys lose just two seniors, 6-foot, 6-inch forward **Levi Ball** and 6-7 forward **Jaden Rivers**. Ball, who signed with **Kennesaw State**, averaged 15.8 points and 6.8 rebounds per game. Rivers averaged 4.0 points and 2.3 rebounds.

"Everybody has their own opinion, but I think Levi is the best player in 4A," Bethea said. "When you look at the stats and stuff is one thing but his play has gone to a higher level."

Returning next year are several standouts from the 2025-26 team, including juniors **Jayden Rowe** (10.9 points, 3.4 rebounds), **Luis Echevarria** (10.7 points, 2.7 rebounds), and point guard **Rickey Littlejohn** (8.6 points, 3.6 assists). Sophomore 6-7 guard/forward **Mekhi Tyler** will also return.

The Gray Collegiate girls team (22-6, 12-2) also went far in the playoffs, and also fell to North Augusta in the third round of the playoffs in a 62-27 loss Feb. 23. The region champion Yellow Jackets reached the state championship game where they played Westside Saturday.

Junior **Aneya Britt** led the way for a team without seniors with a 19.0 scoring average to go with 10.5 rebounds per game. Juniors **Kiley Freeman** and **Zaria Thompson** were the next highest scorers, with Freeman averaging 9.9 points and 3.2 rebounds per game and Thompson averaging 6.9 points and 6.3 boards.

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Harrison says the biggest threat in the region is Orangeburg-Wilkinson, a team with a lot of experience and athleticism. She feels her team is ready for the pressure games that are coming up over the last month of the season.

"Getting as far as we did last year, I think that experience will help," Harrison said. "We just need to stay focused and take it one game at a time. This group has worked hard and they are ready to earn another shot."

Oceanside girls looking to take next step

By David Shelton
Senior Writer
Mt. Pleasant - The **Oceanside Collegiate** girls basketball program has progressed each year under coach **Mandy Harrison**. Now in her eighth season, the program entered this season with eyes on taking the next step in their progression.

The Landsharks reached the Lower State championship game last season before losing to Dillon on a shot at the buzzer, just missing out on an opportunity to play for a state title. The team ended last year with 22 wins and has won 71 games over the last four seasons.

The 2025-26 season ended the same way as OCA lost 52-43 to Keenan in the Lower state finals.

"Yes, we feel like we certainly have the potential to get to the championship game," Harrison said. "We have some tough competition for sure. Dillon is very good again and there are others that will be tough opponents. But we have the experience, the talent, and the chemistry to advance. Long way to go but the potential is definitely there for us."

The Landsharks are led by three veteran seniors who bring loads of experience and leadership to the table. Guard **Ella Hunter** leads the team in scoring at 13 points per game.

Wing/forwards and twin sisters **Josie and Henley Hanks** are in their fourth year with the varsity and each averages about 10 points per game. Hunter and Henley Hanks were named to the AAA all-state team.

"Their leadership has helped us gel," Harrison said. "They bought into the culture and the others have followed. We rely a lot on them."

A fourth senior starter is **Scarlett Mayer**, a standout lacrosse player who transferred from Porter-Gaud. The fifth starter is junior **Reagan Black**, a transfer from Lucy Beckham.

First off the bench is sophomore standout **Dora Jones**, a transfer from First Baptist and a tenacious defender. Junior **Zione Wilson** also sees considerable playing time off the bench.

"We have good depth and we play a lot of girls," Harrison said. "We don't drop off with our substitutes. Everyone has a role to play."

Rounding out the roster this season are sophomores **Sylvie Davinroy** and **Louise Moore**, senior **Sadie Rice**, and freshmen **Andrea Harnig** and **Sullivan Harrison**.

"We try to set the tone with our defense," the coach said. "We pressure the ball and play man the entire floor. We're pretty athletic and we run the floor. We don't really have a true post presence but we have some shooters and good speed. It all starts with defense though."



Stratford Wrestling won the Region 7-AAAA wrestling title

Knights athletes earn All-Region 7-5A honors

By Rob Gantt
Special to the HSSR
GOOSE CREEK - The winter sports scene gave way to spring sports seasons at **Stratford High School** this month.

Eleven Knights student-athletes garnered selections to the All-Region 7-5A wrestling and basketball teams, headlined by two superlatives from the boys wrestling team. Knights coach **Dave Maningding** was named the region coach of the year for the second straight season after guiding the Knights to the region championship and senior **Tanner Merta** claimed region wrestler of the year honors. Merta won the Class 5A state championship at 165 pounds.

"He is the bread and butter of everything we do," Maningding said of Merta during the season. "He's the leader everybody wants. Over the last year, he's really earned the respect of his teammates, and it's a tremendous joy to have him in the room."

Behind Merta, the Knights went 5-0 in region competition.

More wrestlers tabbed all-region for Stratford are junior 132 **Jacob Lutz**, junior 150 **Jonah Coleman**, senior 157 **Drayton Howard**, junior 175 **Cameron**

Gibbs and junior 215 **Fred Brown**.

The girls wrestling teams placed three grapplers on the all-region squad: sophomore 135 **Isabela DaCosta**, freshman 140 **Myllana DaCosta** and sophomore 170 **Lianne Cotto**. The basketball teams garnered one all-region selection each. Sophomore guard **Averi Johnson** made it for the girls and junior guard **Herman Smith** was chosen from the boys team.

Stratford softball starts 2-0

The Stratford softball team opened the regular season with a pair of wins against Georgetown March 3 and March 6. The Lady Knights defeated the Bulldogs 16-11 and 7-3.

Outfielder **Ilianexis Cotto**, first baseman **Ella Bruorton** and third baseman **Katie Bond** collected three hits apiece in the first victory. Lianne Cotto added two hits. **Kyliegh Malmede** was the winning pitcher for the Knights.

In the second game, Ilianexis Cotto and shortstop **Olivia Wyatt** powered the Knights with three hits apiece. Bruorton and outfielder **Julianne Jashienski** chipped in two hits each. Bond hurled a complete game with nine strikeouts to earn the win inside the circle.

Goose Creek Gators wrap up winter sports

By Rob Gantt
Special to the HSSR
GOOSE CREEK - That's a wrap on winter sports season for the Goose Creek Gators.

There were plenty highlights and exciting moments, with both basketball teams winning region titles and advancing to Lower State championship games and the wrestling team producing a state champion on the mat.

The boys basketball team finished with a 26-3 record after falling to eventual Class 5A Div. II state champion Westwood High School in the Lower State championship Feb. 27 in Florence.

The season was the final one for six seniors: all-state guard **Ja'Quell Brown**, all-state wing **Terrell Johnson, Jr.**, guard **Jarvis Roper**, guard **Brandon Grant**, guard **Davonte Williams** and forward **Taveion Scott**.

"Four of those guys have been with us since fifth or sixth grade," Gators coach Blake Hall said. "Obviously we wanted to play another one, but that's the nature of the beast this time of year. The better team on that night is going to be victorious."

Brown scored 17 against Westwood and Grant added 10 points.

The girls basketball team also had a special season come to an end inside the Florence Center. The Lady Gators ended up with a 25-3 record after falling to eventual state champion Berkeley High



All-State Guard Ja'Quell Brown

School. The season was the last for three seniors: guard **Aiyanna Moses**, forward **Natalia Madison-Ladson** and forward **Arianna Thompson**. They

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GATORS
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can, however, return four of their top five scorers, including freshman **Madeline Dates** (20.4 ppg, 4.5 rpg).

For the GCHS wrestling team, junior **Montero Royal** was dominant in winning his third state title. Royal went 4-0 at state to win the 126-pound weight class. Royal won by fall, technical fall, technical fall and major decision in his four bout and finished the season with a 39-1 record.

He can become only the second wrestler from the Berkeley County School District to win four titles in a career. He won at 106 and 113 as a freshman and sophomore.

Jefferson Davis girls basketball finishes .500

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor
Blackville – As is the case with any team in any sport, sometimes success just stands up and smacks you right in the face. Other times it’s much more subtle.

That’s definitely what **Jefferson Davis Academy** girls basketball head coach **Larry Johnson** experienced this season.

The Raiders went a modest 7-7 in the just completed season and lost in the first round of the SCISA Class A state tournament. That being said, it was the first time since the 2011-12 season that the Jefferson Davis girls didn’t finish below .500.

“I feel as though the season didn’t go as planned,” Johnson said. “Every season the goal is to win region and win a state championship, but you must accomplish small goals before you can accomplish the big goals.

“This was the first sub-.500 season since 2011-12. So that’s great and a step in the right direction for the program.”

The Raiders had three players selected to the All-Region 2-Class A team. They were senior guard **Rynn Fickling**, sophomore center **Raleigh York** and sophomore forward **Riley Williams**.

York averaged a double-double, leading the team in scoring at 15.4 points per game, 12.0 rebounds, 2.4 steals and 2.4 blocked shots.

Fickling averaged 10.7 points, 3.5 rebounds and a team high 2.5 assists as well as 1.3 blocks. Williams averaged 7.9 points and 5.2 rebounds.

Junior **Abby Deering** averaged 7.0 points and 8.9 rebounds, while junior **Emeralda Montejano** averaged 3.2 points.

The only senior on the roster is Fickling, which has Johnson excited about the future, especially with a player coming back from a knee injury to step into Fickling’s spot.

“I’m losing one senior in Rynn Fickling, which will be a major loss,” Johnson said. “. But I do have a guard (rising senior **Brooke Fogle**) who didn’t play this season and will be back next year, so the future is looking bright for the Jefferson Davis girls basketball program.”

JDA BOYS FINISH 5-11

Fox Creek boys reach AAA basketball title game

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor
North Augusta – The **Fox Creek High School** boys basketball team didn’t achieve its ultimate goal this season: winning the AAA state championship. The Predators, however, couldn’t have come much closer.

FCHS dropped a 52-49 decision to **Christ Church** on March 6 at **Colonial Life Arena** in **Columbia**. The Cavaliers’ **David Dixon** hit a 3-point shot with seven seconds, and they survived a **Kobe Sims** 3-point attempt at the buzzer to win.

Fox Creek head coach **Tim Butler** had nothing but praise for his players after the heart-wrenching loss.

“Those boys have done everything they’re supposed to do, and I love them so much,” Butler said.

The Predators, who finished with a 25-6 record, had two players selected to the **South Carolina Basketball Coaches Association AAA All-State team** in senior **Chanze Allen** and junior **Justin Vining**.

Allen averaged 13.2 points per game and led the team in rebounding at 6.2. Vining averaged a team high 4.8 assists while scoring at a 12.2 clip and pulling down 3.5 rebounds.

Allen and Vining were selected to the Region 4 All-Region team along with Sims and junior **Randy Robinson**. Sims was the leading scorer with a 13.5

After losing a ton of athletic talent in the 2025 graduating class, Jefferson Davis football coach **Anthony Reitenour** anticipated something of a rebuilding phase for the 2025 football season. Also the boys basketball head coach, Reitenour anticipated the same for the ’25-26 hoops team.

The veteran head coach was right on both counts. The basketball team finished 5-11 although it did earn a berth in the Class A state tournament.

“We came into this year looking at a rebound kind of year,” Reitenour said. “We had a couple of losses early in the season where we were still dealing with football injuries. Still, we come to the end of the season and we take (defending state champion) **Curtis Baptist** (in a 50-40 loss) to the ropes. It was a 5-point game with a minute and a half left.

“We knew what we were coming into the season, but we saw a couple of good things.”

One of them was sheer numbers on the roster. Jefferson Davis had 13 players, big numbers for a Class A program.

Only three were seniors: **Landon Williams**, **Nolan Craig** and **Tanner Page**. Williams and Craig were both starters with Williams being an All-Region selection.

Williams averaged 5.7 points, 5.5 rebounds and 2.7 blocks. Craig averaged 4.5 points, while Page averaged 1.8 point coming off the bench.

Junior **Reece Still** led the team in scoring with an 18.4 average although he missed a couple of games with an injury. He also averaged 5.0 rebounds and 1.6 blocks.

Junior **Harrison Ray** averaged 5.3 points, and junior **Corbin Perry** averaged 3.5 points and 4.8 rebounds.

Others who will be back after seeing plenty of action are junior **Davidson Owens**, junior **Connor Sandifer**, sophomore **Jake Harrington**, sophomore **Will Stillinger**, junior **Judson Bowers**, sophomore **Leighton Lihan** and junior **Stanse Youngblood**.

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average and averaged 3.2 rebounds and 2.2 assists. Robinson averaged 9.6 points and 5.9 rebounds.

Junior **Gavin Baskett**, senior **Jason Rogers** and junior **Chorsheak White** were honorable mention selections. Rogers averaged 8.1 points, Baskett 4.8 and White 3.4.

Butler believes he has FCHS trending in the right direction.

“My job is to take it to another level,” he said. “I feel like this year we did a good job, and next year we’re going to AAAA (following reclassification). We’ll just have to work a little bit harder.”

FOX CREEK GIRLS HAVE HISTORIC SEASON

While the Fox Creek girls didn’t make a run to the state championship game like the boys, they still had an epic season.

The Predators finished with the best record in school history at 18-10 and won in the playoffs for the first time. They beat **Battery Creek** 58-19 for the first victory and then traveled to **Aynor** to get their first playoff road win by a count of 45-25.

That helped them get to the quarterfinals for the first time. FCHS played host to **Oceanside Collegiate Academy** but lost 43-28.

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Junior **Jada Jennings** was an All-State selection. She averaged 10.2 points and 4.3 rebounds. Jennings was also an All-Region selection along with senior **Avery Schwarz**, junior **Mia Price** and junior **Maya Krystalowych**.

Schwarz averaged 10.3 points and 7.0 rebounds, while Krystalowych led the team in rebounding at 8.8 while scoring at a 6.6 clip. Price averaged 4.9 points, 2.0 assists and 3.3 rebounds.

Saluda’s Springs siblings, Brunson All-State picks

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor
Saluda – The **Springs family** of Saluda has all of the major basketball hardware locked down in Region 2-AA.

Senior **CJ Springs** and his younger sister, sophomore **Ceddrianna Springs**, were selected as the Region 2 Boys Player of the Year and Girls Player of the Year, respectively. On top of that, the **Saluda High School** siblings have been selected to the **South Carolina Basketball Coaches Association AA All-State teams**.

CJ Springs certainly set the pace for the boys team. Springs averaged 25 points a game while grabbing six rebounds and coming up with two steals. This was the second consecutive season he was selected to the AA boys All-State team.

It’s the first go-around for his younger sister. Ceddrianna had a teammate join her on the All-State team in junior **JaBria Brunson**.

Ceddrianna and Brunson helped lead the Tigers to a 17-4 overall record and an 8-0 mark to win the Region 2 title.

The Saluda girls lasted two rounds in the state playoffs. The Tigers rolled over **Central** 53-11 in the first round before having to play host to **Landrum** in the second round. The season came to a disappointing end as they fell to the Cardinals 54-42.

Ironically though, that would be Landrum’s second of five stops on the way to winning the state championship.

“We had an excellent season (despite) falling short in the playoffs to Landrum in the second round of the playoffs,” said veteran head coach **Jeannette Wilder**, who led the Tigers to a state championship in the 2020-21 campaign with a perfect 15-0 record. With two All-State performers returning in Ced-

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drianna Springs and Brunson and only losing one senior from the roster in **Jakiyiha Myers**, Wilder thinks good things might await her team next year.

“I look forward to next season with more experience and the expectation to compete deeper in the playoffs,” said Wilder, whose roster this year also included three juniors, three sophomores and four freshmen.

Wilder was selected as the Region 2 Coach of the Year for the girls. Wilder’s Saluda counterpart, **Jimmy Kinard**, was chosen as the Region 2 Boys Coach of the Year.

The Saluda boys finished the year with a 16-8 overall record. The Tigers had a second-place finish in Region 2 with a 7-3 record, one game behind **American Leadership Academy’s** 8-2 mark. American Leadership would go on to advance to the Upper State championship game.

The Tigers won their playoff opener with a 56-44 home victory over **Mid-Carolina**. However, they saw their season come to an end for the second straight season on the road against Clinton. The Tigers fell to the Red Devils 54-49 in the first round last year. This season it was by a 56-49 count in Round 2.

CJ Springs was joined on the boys All-Region team by younger brother and sophomore **Ceddion Springs** and junior **Jahmeer Myers**.

The Saluda boys also possess a young roster, so Kinard is hoping good things await next season as well.

“CJ Springs and **Jamiyias Myers** were the only two seniors on the team, so the future looks bright for Tiger basketball moving forward,” Kinard said. “Jahmeer Myers will be expected to step into a senior leadership role for the Tigers next season.”

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Leonard, continued from pg. 21

helped me develop my time management skills, got me use to college classes online, and it will help me save money on college because I will have already fulfilled many of prerequisite classes I already completed.

“It’s been a great experience and the professors were easy to talk to about assignments and dead-

SCISA AAA Girls, continued from pg. 11
 more then we did.

“We got here and I am very proud of that and the hard work from our team all season,” said Coach Stoudenmire. “No one thought we would be back to the championship game this year, and our team is like a big family. They are going to come out of this bigger then life and they will be alright.

“Most of the players on this team came to me as 5th graders in our feeder programs and we have watched them grow, develop, and even make mistakes,” said Coach Stoudenmire. “We watch them do great things on and off the court also. I feel blessed and so fortunate to be able to coach them and I am proud of every player on this team.

lines,” said Leonard. “They wanted to help me succeed.”

Leonard rates the overall experience with the NETC online courses as positive, and she says she is grateful that she got to take these classes that will reduce the number of classes needed once she begins college.

“We’ll keep working hard and trust me we will be back next season,” said Caoch Stoudenmire. “We are not going anywhere.”

Coach Stoudenmire said the focus on half-time adjustments was centered around the team shooting better in the second half. “We missed some shots we usually make so we talked about getting good looks on offense and getting the ball to go in the basket,” said Coach Stoudenmire. “Their match-up zone defense played well against our offense too.”

Coach Stoudenmire cited the defensive play of senior leader **Preston Schurknight** who will be joining her older sister in the **Lander College** softball program next season. “Preston was all over the

Leonard reflected on a favorite memory as a cheerleader, “During basketball season, the excitement of the crowd in a close game was intense, but when a player made a half-court shot, it seemed like everyone on the gym was cheering, and in that moment the energy in the gym was unmatched.”

court tonight, busting her behind on defense, and the things she does and she is such an amazing kid. She does so many things on the court that never show up in a stats box.

“I’ll be coaching the softball team this Spring and I can’t wait to see her on the softball field,” said Coach Stoudenmire. “With her leadership and talent we are hoping to make a deep run in softball also.”

“We have a great group of seniors to go along with Prestong ” said Coach Stoudenmire. “

Abbeville basketball comes up short of title goal

By David Shelton Senior Writer
Abbeville – After losing in the state finals last season, it was title or bust for the Abbeville High boys basketball team in the 2025-26 season. The Panthers, as expected, were again one of the top teams in Class A and set their sights on another championship opportunity. Abbeville started well enough, winning 10 of their first 12 games and rolling through the region with an unblemished record. The Panthers finished the season with a 21-3 record. That third loss hurt the most as the defeat to CA Johnson ended the playoff run in the third round. Abbeville finished with a 21-3 record.

Head coach **Doug Belcher** is in his 14th season at Abbeville and says this year has the potential to end better than last season did.

“The way we ended last year certainly hurt and the guys that were on that team that we have back really want to earn another shot,” Belcher said. “It hurt, which it should. We use it as motivation. We didn’t play our best in the biggest game so our goal is to get back and try to play our best game.”

Belcher returned four seniors from last year’s team and relies on a host of underclassmen to contribute.

“Our seniors are good leaders and we need that from them,” Belcher said. “We play a lot of guys and several of them are sophomores. We need depth with the way we like to play pressure man to man defense. We like to run the floor so depth is important.”

Two of the seniors are in the starting lineup. Back as the leading scorer is senior **Jaden Baylor**,

who averaged 18.7 points and 6.3 rebounds per game this season. Senior **Jaylen Baylor** was the leading rebounder last season, pulling down 9.3 boards per game. He is averaged 9.3 rebounds and 10.6 points per game this winter. Sophomore **Jamius McManus** scored 8.9 points and grabbed 5.4 rebounds per game. Junior **Cory Calhoun** averaged 5.3 points per game. Senior **Darius Riley** comes off the bench and contributed 7.9 points per game. The other senior was **Quatavius Silas**.

Sophomore **Jamerion Williams** came off the bench with 14.5 points and 4.1 assists. Junior **Corde Hadden** is averaged 9.6 points off the bench. Sophomores **Jamiere Killingsworth, Jaiden Moss, DeWilliam McCouler** and **Tre Jackson** round out the roster and come off the bench as well.

“This team works hard and they know we have to continue to get better. We’re not where we need to be quite yet and we want to peak at the right time,” Belcher said. “We have to be relentless and focus on one game at a time. We can’t look ahead and we have to be ready for every challenge. We know we will see some good teams ahead so we have to maintain our focus and effort.”

The girls team also is in region title contention. They won six of their first eight region games and are locked in a battle for second as of Jan. 17.

Freshman **Amiya McManus** leads the team in scoring at 10 points per game. Junior **Lauryn Murray** is averaging 8.6 points and 10.3 rebounds per game while junior **Ar’Naisyah Gray** adds 7.3 points and 13 rebounds per game.

Emerald baseball returns numerous key players

By Billy G. Baker Publisher
Greenwood-The **Emerald** baseball team begins year five under the direction of athletic director **Mack Hite**, a former talented football and baseball player at his alma mater **Abbeville**. The Emerald baseball program is tuning up for the 2026 season by hosting the *Emerald City Classic* between February 27 and March 7.

Pool “A” of the event is comprised of **BHP, Clinton, Ninety-Six** and the Vikings. Pool “B” consists of **Laurens, Mid-Carolina, Greenville, and North Augusta**.

As the *HSSR* was preparing to go to press Emerald was 1-1 in the event. They beat **Ninety-Six**, and then lost to **BHP**, to stand at 1-1 before their game against **Clinton**.

The Vikings return a core group of four players from last season led by ace junior pitcher **Finn Howard** who won six games on the mound last year. “He’s our top arm, and he throws three pitches for strikes, and the team usually plays well behind him,” said Coach Hite. “His fast ball moves in the mid-80’s and he can also play shortstop or third when he is not pitching. He’s a very versatile player.”

Last season, in 53 and 2/3 innings pitched, Howard had 67 K’s and he only gave up 8 walks all season. He also batted around .250 with 9 RBI’s.

The team also returns talented catcher **Eli Swancey** who led the team in hitting last season at .394 including four doubles and a triple. “Eli is very versatile and he can play just about anywhere on the field,” said Coach Hite. “He has a pop time in the 2.1 range. He is also a right-handed pitcher.”

Sophomore shortstop **Beau Hite** also returns from an outstanding freshman season where he bat-

ted .309 with 10 RBI’s. Hite was coming off surgery a year ago and did not pitch until late in the season, but he will factor mainly as a reliever this season.

“Beau has a good glove, and good range at short-stop and he led the team last year with 14 stolen bases, so he is fast on the bases,” said Coach Hite. “We are expecting a break-out season for him.”

The fourth returner from last season is junior pitcher/center fielder **Coleson Marino** who was the team’s number two pitcher last season with 29 K’s in 34 innings of work. At the plate, Marino batted .306 with two home runs and 13 RBI’s.

“Coleson has a good bat and hit a home run against Ninety-Six in the tournament,” said Coach Hite. “Finn, Eli, Beau, and Coleson give us a solid group hitting in the front of our line-up and our challenge is to build some good bats at the back of our line-up to compliment them.”

Some other starters include senior **Matthew Ritter** who will be starting for the first time in the outfield. **Luke Mathis** is an 8th grader starting at second base. **Colton Knight** is the designated hitter for Mathis.

Sophomore **Ethan Metts** is the team’s number three pitcher, and he starts at either third base or left field most of the time. **Thomas Hodges** is a first-year newcomer starter mainly at first base and he is also a pitcher. **Holden Styron** is an 8th grader starting in right field and he has good promise and potential as a pitcher also.

Junior outfielder **Bradley Cobb** and outfielder **Jacobe Cade** serve as the team’s pinch runners. **Henry McMillian** is an 8th grade reserve pitcher/outfielder along with 8th grade reserve catcher/outfielder **Rylan Johnson**.

The team was supposed to start the regular season with a three-game series against **Southside** on March 9. However, they decided to not field a team due to lack of numbers. Emerald will now have a

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week to get ready to play region foe **Wren** starting on March 6.

“We have what we think is the most competitive region in 4-A across the state,” said Coach Hite. “Fountain Inn, Laurens, and Wren have just about everyone back and Westside is a good team also. We play in the SEC of 4-A baseball.”

Coach Hite feels like his team has solid pitching, solid hitting in the front of the line-up and solid defense. “We can step up this season if we can develop hitting throughout our line-up, and if we can get a pitcher, or two to match the standards that Finn sets for us when he is on the mound,” said Coach Hite. “When you play a three-game series in the region each week you have to have pitching depth to have success. We are looking forward to the season.”

Coach Hite is assisted by **Payton Smith**, former USC player **Arik Hempy**, and **Ryan Flores**.

AJ ANDREW JACKSON ACADEMY WARRIORS

AJA baseball team starts out 2-0; Palmer takes over softball program this season

By Billy G. Baker Publisher
Ehrhardt—The **Andrew Jackson Academy** baseball team has started off the 2026 season on a positive note, currently 2-0, with wins over **Beaufort Academy** (12-2) and **Holly Hill Academy** (14-4) during action the first week of March.

Head coach **Jason Mathys** is starting his fourth season as the head coach with five years in the program. Last year the Warriors advanced all the way to the state finals before losing a best-of-three game series against **Lee Academy** in the SCISA finals.

“We have five starters back from last’s team that played for a state title, and we have several quality players who have moved up from the junior varsity wo are good hitters,” said Coach Mathys. “I think most of our returning players are better versions of themselves and I can tell that the majority of them have work hard at getting better over last season.”

“I see no reason why we can’t stay focused, keep improving and compete for a state title once again this season,” said Coach Mathys. “We have even better pitching this year. **Landon Johnson** pitched a no-hitter against Beaufort Academy for four innings with seven strikeouts. The next day **Walker Terry** pitched a four-hitter, and he had seven strikeouts against Holly Hill Academy. Our pitching depth will be solid for us this season.”

Against Beaufort Academy, Johnson also had a lead-off home run and two hits to help his own cause on the mound. Gage Risher and Evan Mathys also scored two runs in the game.

On March 7, the Warriors defeated Holly Hill Academy 14-4. With Terry doing a good job on the mound **Eli Mathys** and **Gage Risher** each provided two hits in the win. **Evan Mathys** and Terry also had two RBI’s in the game. In the 4th inning against the Raiders, the Warriors exploded for 11 runs with straight singles being provided by **Eli Mathys, Brad Hightower**, and **Gage Risher**. With the bases loaded Johnson singled in two runs and the big inning was on.

In addition to the return of Johnson, Eli Mathys, and Terry, Coach Mathys also praised the improved play of returning second baseman **Jaxon Brandt**, who bats in the two hole along with the return of catcher and five-hole hitter **Hunter Tucker**. “Both Jaxon and Hunter have improved their over-all game a lot in the past year,” said Coach Mathys. “They are very good contact hitters.”

While line-ups can vary these were the starters and where they played in the 14-4 win over Holly Hill Academy. Johnson led off and played first base, followed by Brandt at second. **Evan Mathys** is the shortstop, and he batted third followed by Terry batting clean-up and on the mound. The number five batter was Tucker the catcher followed by left fielder **Eli Mathys** batting in the six-hole. Hightower played third base and batted 7th while **Gage Risher** battered 8th and played in center field. **Nathan King** played in right field and batted number 9.

The team also has added depth from **Tanner Chassereau, Connor Mount, Jaxon Tucker, Grayson Hay, Colton Davis, and Carter Parnell**.

The team will next play Jefferson Davis on Friday March 15.

Coach Mathys, who played college baseball at **Iowa State**, went on to play for a few years in the Yankees farm system after college. He is assisted by **Austin Risher, Kip Terry, Kenan Wilcox, and Robbie Williams**.

Andy Palmer Coaching AJA Softball Team
 The AJA Warriors softball team will be under the direction of AJA athletic director and head football coach **Andy Palmer** this Spring.

On March 6, the team lost to **Holly Hill Academy** 12-5 in their season opener.

Sophomore infielder/pitcher **Mariya Hiott** pitched four innings against the Lady Raiders giving up five hits. **Carrigan Moore, CJ Ulmer**, and Hiott each collected one hit each to lead the Lady Warriors at the plate.

Moore, Hiott and Ulmer are currently leading the team is batting at .333 each.

Moore is a talented junior catcher and center fielder who plays softball year-round. Last season she batted over .350 with very few errors. She started at catcher and batted number two against Holly Hill. Ulmer is a starting senior first baseman who can also catch. She batted third in the order against Holly Hill. **Nalla Tuten** is a sophomore first-year varsity player and she started at second base in the season opener and batted clean-up in the order against Holly Hill. **Braelyn Hall** is a junior starting at third base and she batted in the 5th slot in game one.

Sophomore **Harlo Sease** begins her third season on the varsity and she is starting at shortstop and batting in the 6th position. **Alex Johnson** is a senior starting in left field and she bats seventh in the order. Rounding out the starting unit is junior center

See **Andrew Jackson**, pg. 75

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Marion girls reach quarterfinals of AA playoffs

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor
Marion – **Justice Gee** thought she had some good pieces to work with when she became the head coach of the **Marion High School** girls basketball team. However, she also knew the transition could be a problem in itself.

“It’s not easy adjusting to a new coach and a new system,” Gee said. “I know this because I’ve experienced it both as a player and a coach.”

The Swamp Foxes came through the transition pretty well. They finished with an 18-11 overall record, but more importantly, reached the quarterfinals of the AA state playoffs for the first time since reaching the state championship game in 2020.

“What I can say about this group is that they were willing to learn and eventually believe in the system,” Gee said. “The coaching staff and I are extremely proud of this group.”

Believing, buying in and playing with confidence is what got us to the third round. It hurt to lose, but it was well deserved to make it that far and no one can take that away from those young ladies.”

Marion had two players named to the All-Region 7-AA team in seniors **Maliyah Williams** and **Sheteira Bethea**. Williams led the Swamp Foxes in scoring at 12.0 points per game to go with 2.3 assists, 3.0 steals and 5.3 rebounds. Bethea led in rebounding at 8.2 while scoring 7.0 points.

Marion had a senior-dominated rotation with **Kristin Shaw**, **Ayoni Malloy** and **Shamya McKelvy** seeing significant time along with Williams and Bethea.

McKelvy averaged 8.2 points and 2.0 steals, Shaw averaged 5.3 points and 5.3 rebounds, and Malloy led in assists at 2.8 and steals at 3.1 while averaging 4.4 points.

Mullins boys fall in AA Lower State title contest

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor
Mullins – In the eyes of **Mullins High School** boys head coach **Eric Troy**, the Auctioneers had an outstanding season with one exception: MHS didn’t make it to the AA state championship game.

Mullins went 22-8 on the season, won the Region 7 championship with an 11-1 record, had two players selected to the **South Carolina Basketball Coaches Association AA All-State team** and reached the Lower State championship game.

“The season as a whole was a success,” said Troy, who was chosen as the Region Coach of the Year. “Region 7-AA was arguably one of the toughest regions in AA this year and to have two players to receive All-State honors this year was huge.”

The All-State selections were junior **Dakarai Worley** and senior **Deyon Ford**. Worley was selected as the Region Player of the Year, while Ford was chosen as the second best player.

Worley averaged a double-double of 18.8 points and 15.3 rebounds per game. He also averaged 3.3 assists and 3.1 steals. Ford led the team in scoring at 19.5 and assists at 4.3 to go with 5.0 rebounds and 3.0 steals.

“They both had phenomenal years, each scoring over 500 points this season,” Troy said. “Dakari, just a junior, is rapidly approaching 1,000 rebounds as well. Their performance on both ends of the court provided the catalyst needed for team success.”

Junior **KJ Ford** was also named to the All-Region team. He averaged 8.0 points, 2.2 assists and

Sophomore **Ashanti Gause** averaged 7.2 points, and junior **Keamani McClellan** averaged 3.8.

Gee said the success has the returning players already looking toward next season.

“This season has already motivated our underclassmen to put in the work for next year so we can go even further,” she said. “As a coach, I’m excited to have a full summer with three young ladies to work, grow and develop every single day.”

MARION BOYS FINISH 17-11

The Marion boys finished 17-11 overall and were third in the region at 8-4. They also advanced to the second round of the state playoffs, losing to **Central** 78-73 in overtime.

Senior **Charles White II** led the Swamp Foxes in scoring at 20.3 points while pulling down 7.6 rebounds. He was named to the **South Carolina Basketball Coaches Association AA All-State team** and the All-Region team. He was chosen as the third best player in the region.

Junior **Joshaun Grant**, sophomore **Rodrick Dickerson** and freshman **James Nowlin** were honorable mention selections. Grant led in assists at 3.9 and steals at 2.5 while averaging 8.4 points and 4.0 rebounds. Dickerson averaged 6.7 points and 4.0 rebounds, and Nowlin averaged 7.1 points, 8.1 rebounds, 2.1 assists and 2.1 steals.

Ian Gause, a 6-foot-8-inch sophomore, averaged 10.5 points to go with team highs in rebounding at 8.2 and blocked shots at 1.8.

With White and **Willie Cross** the only seniors, Marion sported a very young team.

“This season has been a journey of growth,” said head coach **DJ Kelly**. “This team has shown resilience, dedication and a spirit of excellence to be so young.”

2.4 steals.

Seniors **Andre Littlejohn**, **Braden Hughes** and **Amir Lee** were honorable mention picks. Littlejohn averaged 4.6 points and 3.9 rebounds, Hughes averaged 3.9 points and 3.2 rebounds, and Lee averaged 7.5 points, 6.4 rebounds and 1.3 blocked shots.

“Our defense was and is the cornerstone of our program and this year was no different,” Troy said. “We reached our goal of winning region and advancing to the Lower State finals. We fell short of the ultimate goal, but the experience gained will provide the motivation for next year.”

MULLINS GIRLS FINISH 3-17

The Mullins girls basketball team went 3-17 overall and 1-11 in region play in its first season under head coach **Alex White**. While he would have liked several more Ws, White believes much was accomplished.

“When you’re changing the standard of a program, the record doesn’t always tell the whole story,” White said. “What matters is that our players bought into the way we want Mullins girls basketball to look — how we practice, how we compete and how we represent our school. That foundation is in place now.”

The Auctioneers were led by a pair of sophomores in **Breanna Ford** and **Na’Riyah Woodberry**. Ford, who was selected to the All-Region team, averaged 14.8 points a game.

“Ford’s playmaking ability and competitiveness on both ends of the floor makes her a key

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See Mullins, pg. 75

Wardlaw girls rally to win Class A state crown

By: Gerald Doolittle
Johnston, S.C. – The **Wardlaw Academy Lady Patriots** coached by **Kristina Spurlock** mounted one of the greatest come backs in school history to defeat the **Richard Winn Academy Lady Eagles** 43-39 for the **SCISA Class A 2025-26 Championship**.

The Lady Eagles led by Senior **Abby Lewis** owned the first quarter to build a 16-4 lead fueled by 12 turnovers by Wardlaw.

The Lady Eagles continued the brutal attack into the second quarter building the lead to 22-7 at the 4:12 mark of the quarter when Coach Spurlock called a timeout. “They were frustrated and I called a timeout to calm them,” said Spurlock. “I told them the game of basketball is a game of runs. Now was the time to make our run.”

Make their run they did. Behind **Taylor Hill**(sr) and **Katherine Trotter** (sr) the Lady Patriots finished the second quarter on a 10-2 run to close the first half trailing 17-24.

Knights basketball teams complete seasons

By: Gerald Doolittle
Batesburg-Leesville, S.C. – The **W.W. King Academy Knights** coached by **Dennis Gibson** completed their 2025-26 season with a very competitive season two seasons removed from a 23-6 season under then **Coach Jonathan Davis**.

The 2025-26 season was a season of steady growth for the Knights. The 2024-25 season was the start of the rebuild after losing most of the 23-6 team to graduation and losing Coach Davis moving over to **Greenwood Christian**.

Coach Gibson would come back into coaching the 2024-25 team and start the rebuild. His very young team consisting of mostly freshmen would finish a 0-16 season taking their hard defeats in stride while still developing their skills.

The Knights returned in 2025-26 with the same group, plus several players who moved up from the middle school team, and focused on developing the players already in the program. That approach led to noticeable progress throughout the season and culminated in a **Region Tournament** runner-up finish to **Newberry Academy**.

During the regular season, the Knights split their two games with **Cambridge Academy**, which went on to claim the Regular Season Region Championship. When the teams met again in the Region Tournament semifinals, W.W. King delivered one of its strongest performances of the season, defeating Cambridge Academy

Both Laurens Academy hoops teams reach semis

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor
Laurens – It was a good season for both of the **Laurens Academy** basketball teams this year.

The Lady Crusaders made their usual run to the Final Four of the SCISA state tournament, losing in the AA semifinals to defending state champion **Cross Schools**. The boys also made a push to the semifinals where they fell to now 3-time defending state champion **Cathedral Academy**. This, however, was the Crusaders’ first trip to the semifinals since winning the Class A state title in 2015.

The girls finished with a 24-3 overall record while the boys went 17-12.

The Lady Crusaders reached the semifinals for the fifth consecutive season. They were led by eighth-grader **Braylee Burke**, who was selected as the Region 4-AA Girls Player of the Year.

Burke led Laurens in scoring with a 12.5 points-per-game average, making 56 3-point field goals on the season. She grabbed 6.5 rebounds and had 2.8 assists and 2.5 steals.

She was joined on the All-Region team by sophomore **Sadie Bruyere**, sophomore **Mackenie Runyans** and senior **Madisyn Graham**.

Bruyere, who was also selected to the AA All-Tournament team, averaged 10.2 points, shared the team lead in rebounding with Burke at 6.5 and had a team high 3.5 steals.

Runyans led in assists at 3.9 while averaging 7.5 points and 4.3 rebounds.

Eighth-grader **Brooklyn Senn** was also a key contributor. She averaged 9.0 points and 3.3 rebounds. She connected for 40 treys.”

The Lady Patriots continued the 23-3 run through the third quarter behind the fierce play of Hill and Trotter to carry a 30-27 Wardlaw lead into the fourth quarter where the two teams kept trading scores. The Lady Patriots won the quarter 13-12 to make the final score read 43-39 in favor of Wardlaw.

The Lady Patriots brought home the first Title since 2009. For Coach Spurlock it was her third time being a part of a Wardlaw Championship. She was a part of two Titles during her playing days at Wardlaw.

Trotter led the Lady Patriots with 17 points followed by Hill with 15. Hill got 11 of her points from the charity line while Trotter connected on 7 of 8.

Brianna McNeil (sr) had 7 points followed by **Lillie Stocum** (so) and **Mary Blanche Stark** (8th) with two points each.

Hill, Trotter and McNeil were named to the All-Tournament team. I am sure Coach Spurlock is the **SCISA Class A Coach-of-the-Year** as she led her army of eight to a 14-7 season record.

65-29 to advance to the title game against Newberry.

Coach Gibson said the season reflected the players’ willingness to stay together and put in the hard work.

“This season shows what can happen when players stay committed and keep working,” said Gibson. “Our guys come from families that value determination and dedication, and we have been fortunate to have strong leadership from senior captain Spencer McCormick. Our starting five spent a lot of time with individual workouts last spring and summer, and it made a difference. I am grateful for this group and proud of the way the entire team has represented our school.”

While the Knights did not finish with a championship, their progress from last season to this one was clear. The team became more competitive, more confident, and more consistent over the course of the year to finish 9-10.

For Wyman King Academy, the 2025-26 season stands as an example of how patience, continuity, and effort can lead to meaningful improvement, on the scoreboard, within a program, and in life.

The Knight roster included seniors **Wyatt Burbank** and **Spencer McCormick**. **Landell Anderson** was the only junior. The seven sophomores were **Bubba Buzhardt**, **Whitaker Graham**, **Joseph Morse**, **Colby Buzhardt**, **Joey Bradley**, **Tucker Mayyou** and **Joshua Oswald**. The five freshmen were **Tucker McGinty**, **Drayton Wannamaker**, **Brady Goff**, **Jackson Hutto** and **Jaydan Deese**.

With **Graham** and **Taylor Cagle** the only seniors on the roster, head coach **Jason Marlett** is excited about the future.

“We have a young team, and they had a great season overall,” Marlett said. “They have nothing to hang their heads about. All my girls are multisport athletes, and they will go compete in spring sports so we will try to get better for next year.”

Laurens’ 6-foot-5-inch senior center **Garrison Vaughan** was selected as the Region 4 Boys Player of the Year. He just missed averaging a double-double, scoring at 13.8 points per game while pulling down 9.3 rebounds.

He was joined on the All-Region team by senior **Braydon Burke** and sophomore **Micah Strait**. Burke averaged 11.1 points, 4.9 rebounds and 2.0 assists, while Strait averaged 6.5 points and a team high 4.0 assists.

Other key contributors were junior **Caleb Hardy** and junior **Chancey Watkins**. Hardy grabbed 5.1 rebounds while scoring at a 3.6 clip. Watkins averaged 5.8 points and 3.8 rebounds.

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HHP girls soccer, baseball aim to keep winning

By David Shelton
Senior Writer

Hilton Head – With their collective sights set on continuing their winning ways, the **Hilton Head Prep** girls soccer and baseball programs enter the 2026 campaign looking to defend the state championships won last spring.

The girls soccer team, coached by **Risa McMillan**, enters this season looking for a fourth consecutive state championship. While the roster will have some new faces, McMillan is counting on her five returning starters to set the tone and lead the way this spring.

The five returning starters include keeper **Brooke Heins**, defenders **Madeline Schlieman**, **Sophia Schlieman** and **Alexa Palazzo**, and midfielders **Marisa Mora** and **Riley Wilbert**.

McMillan was a little concerned about replacing some powerhouse performers but feels two eighth-graders, **Adrianna Palazzo** and **Alice Carmines**, will step in and provide positive play.

Seniors **Sammy Rehling** and **Ellie Lorenz** have been on the team since they were freshmen and will both play starting defensive positions.

“With only one scrimmage and one game

behind us, it is hard to predict how we will come together as a team, but with strong leadership on the team with many seniors, I feel confident that the new players will play their positions with confidence,” the coach reports. “I am excited about our schedule as we are playing some new teams that we have never played before, as well as teams we have not played in many years.”

Meanwhile, the baseball team is seeking to repeat as state champions after defeating Orangeburg Prep in the three-game championship series last May.

This year’s team is led by returning starters **JP Pirkey** (OF/P), **Sammy Middleton** (SS/P), **Calvin Middleton** (3B), **Brandon Espinoza** (C/P), **Tyler Britschge** (P/DH), **Brody Hausher** (OF), **Finnian Rooney** (Utility), **Brandon Hunter** (OF).

Head coach **Chris Wells** expects contributions also from first baseman **Paulie Smith**, outfielder **Byron Espinoza**, infielder **Charlie Diamond** and pitcher **Cole Rogers**.

“We should have depth on the mound again this year and the top of our lineup is strong.

Our goal is to compete every time we step on the diamond,” Wells says. “Region play is right around the corner, and we want to defend that.”

Hilton Head Christian boys finish season at 6-18

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor

Bluffton – The **Hilton Head Christian Academy** boys basketball team only won a quarter of its games, posting a 6-18 overall record. That is something that second-year head coach **Bryan Brown** isn’t satisfied with, but he’s sees progress being made.

“It was an up-and-down year,” Brown said. “We had a lot of problems with injuries. But the guys fought hard and had a season with measurable growth.”

The Eagles finished with a 2-8 record in SCISA Region 3-AAAA. That was good enough to get them in the state tournament, but they lost to **Hammond** 70-58 in the first round.

Hilton Head Christian had two players selected to the Region 3 All-Region team. They were junior **Jake Wood** and senior **Finn Ussery**.

Wood almost averaged 20 points a game, coming up just short at 19.7 points per game. Along with leading the Eagles in scoring, Wood also led in rebounding at 5.9 and steals at 2.0.

Ussery also scored in double figures, finishing with a 12.2 average. He also averaged 3.6 rebounds.

Ussery is joined in the senior class by **Thomas Gehm**, **Killian Gibson**, **Maddox Norcross** and **Ethan Maloney**. Each of them made significant contributions, at the very least in terms of minutes played. Norcross averaged 4.9 points and Gibson 3.5.

A couple of sophomores who played well this season are **Brennan Steiner** and **Sam Strum**.

Steiner led Hilton Head Christian in assists with a 2.4 average, and he scored at a 3.6 clip. Strum averaged 5.4 points and 4.4 rebounds.

Two other sophomores who saw significant time were **Chase White** and **Davis Taylor**. White averaged 4.0 points and 2.9 rebounds, while Taylor averaged 2.5 points and 3.6 rebounds.

With a good corps of young players returning who saw plenty of minutes, Brown feels HHCA has the opportunity to get good really quick.

“I feel like we’re in a good spot,” Brown said. “If our young guys and our returners stay bought in and trust the process, their time is coming.”

SISSY THOMPSON GIRLS HOOPS ALL-REGION PICK

Hilton Head Christian girls basketball player **Sissy Thompson** was named to the All-Region team. The sophomore averaged 12 points and nine rebounds a contest.

It was a long season for the Eagles, who finished with a 1-19 overall record. However, first-year head coach **Matt Payton** believes better things await, sooner rather than later.

“We had a really young team this year,” Payton said. “Over half of our team were freshmen (six of the 13 along with one eighth-grader). We are looking to rebuild our program and there will be some bumps along the way.”

“The girls worked hard and improved throughout the year.”

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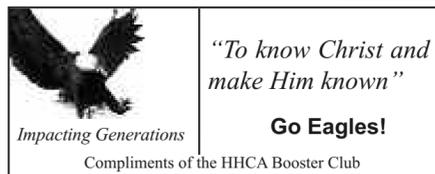
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Right now, we are dealing with some player injuries, so we need to work through that and be healthy come playoff time.”

The Dolphins have opened the season with three wins in their first four outings this spring.

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season, Hilton Head Christian had won six consecutive state championships. The first four were under **Kenny Conroy** while the final two came under the tutelage of **Bobby Thompson**.

RECLASSIFICATION DOESN'T EFFECT HILTON HEAD CHRISTIAN

While SCISA had its biannual reclassification shakeup, it will have no effect on what level the Hilton Head Christian athletic teams will be playing.

The school’s football team will continue to compete at AAA while all of the other sports will be part of the AAAA classification.

Pee Dee girls basketball finishes season at 11-11

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor

Mullins – After winning the SCISA 3A girls basketball state championship last season, **Pee Dee Academy** lost a number of key players to graduation.

While the Golden Eagles didn’t have the gaudy record like the year before, they still had a solid season in 2025-26. PDA finished with an 11-11 record and reached the quarterfinals of the state tournament.

Pee Dee finished tied for second in Region 3-AAA. It also played in the region tournament championship game.

Senior **Sydney King** was named to the All-Region team along with freshman **Addison Hasty**. King and Hasty were also named to the region All-Tournament team along with senior **Nylee Jane Causey**.

King was also selected to play in the SCISA North-South All-Star Game.

PDA beat **Colleton Prep Academy** 30-18 in the first round of the state tournament. The Eagles saw their season end in the quarterfinals with a 43-29 loss to **Florence Christian School**. Four of Pee Dee’s losses came at the hands of FCS, which ended up winning the state title.

PEE DEE BOYS FINISH 4-15

The Pee Dee boys basketball team didn’t win a state title last year, but it did get to the championship game. Like the girls, the Eagles boys lost a lot of talent from that team, so head coach **Kyle Drew** knew this season could be difficult.

Andrews baseball looking to take the next step

By Neill Kirkpatrick
Special to the HSSR

Andrews – The past three years have seen the Andrews baseball team establish themselves as one of the top clubs in the lower state as they won two region championships (23,24), finished second last year in region 6 AA and have been to consecutive lower state final four series (24,25) and last year they won their opening game of the final four series.

As the 2026 season gets underway head coach **Richie Poston** has a veteran squad returning and a veteran rotation so expectation are high but guard because it’s at the plate where the Yellowjackets need to improve to take the next step.

The Yellowjackets return three of their top four pitchers in seniors **Jaxon Baker** and **Riley Jordan** and junior **Brycen Cannon**. Baker won three games last year and had a 3.00 era with 68 strikeouts in 60 innings. At the plate he is a .316 career hitter. Last season he had career high 25 hits and seven doubles.

Jordan was 2-0 last season with a 3.91 era. In the box he hit .269 but led the team in RBI’s with 22 and two round trippers. He was named all-region as a freshman after hitting .439 and is still rounding back into baseball shape after missing his sophomore season due to injury.

The team’s top returning pitcher is Cannon. He

PDA finished with a 4-15 record and missed out on the state tournament. However, **Drew** is looking at the positives of the just completed season.

“All of players are returning,” said **Drew**, who lost seven seniors from the state runner-sdup team. “We look forward to improving next year and getting back to Pee Dee basketball.”

Of the 11-man roster, seven of them were freshmen. There were two juniors and two sophomores. Eight of them played in at least 17 games.

Junior **Lucas Rogers** was easily the go-to player for Pee Dee. Rogers, who was named to the All-Region team, was the team’s only double-figure scorer, averaging 19.1 points per game. He also led the team in rebounding at 6.2.

Rogers was also selected for the North-South Game.

Junior **Jesse Smith** averaged 5.7 points and 3.4 rebounds. Freshman **Neal Byrd** grabbed 5.9 rebounds to go with 3.7 points. Junior **Miles Wiggins** averaged 5.6 points.

NOTHING CHANGES AFTER RECLASSIFICATION

Nothing will change for Pee Dee after the release of SCISA’s biannual reclassification.

The Eagles football team will play for the AA championship. All of the school’s other teams will play at the AAA level.

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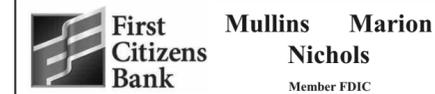


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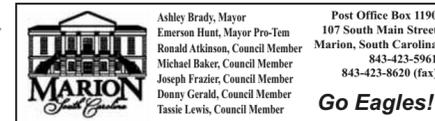
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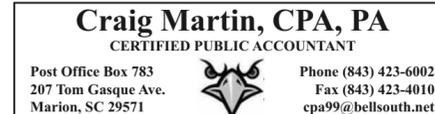
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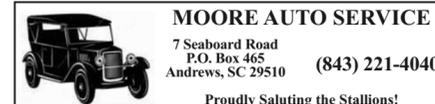
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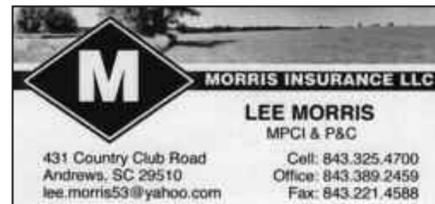
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Central boys basketball makes deep playoff run

By Dennis Brunson
hssr.com Associate Editor
Pageland – It was another outstanding season for the **Central High School** boys basketball team. Plain and simple.

The Eagles posted a 21-8 overall record, tied for the Region 4-AA regular-season title and reached the quarterfinals of the state playoffs for a second straight season.

“Overall, I am proud of what we accomplished this season,” said CHS head coach **Desmond Sowell**. “Finishing the regular season at co-region champions. Although we fell short of the state championship game, we secured back-to-back Elite 8 appearances, which is historic for this program.

“I am especially proud of our achievements considering we had several new additions and no preseason together.”

The reason for a lack of preseason preparation was because most of the Eagles played football as well, and Central played on the Friday after **Thanksgiving** in the Lower State championship game.

The basketball team came close to playing for the Lower State title as well, falling to **Philip Simmons** 62-60 in the quarterfinals. Central went 11-1 in region play, splitting its two games with co-region champion **Andrew Jackson**. The Volunteers got the region’s No. 1 seed in the state playoffs by winning a special game.

Senior **Tahzirr Webber** was the leader of the team as he was selected to the **South Carolina Basketball Coaches Association AA All-State team**. Webber led Central in scoring with a 17.7 points-per-game average as well as in steals at 3.1. He also grabbed 5.3 rebounds and had 3.9 assists.

Webber was joined on the All-Region-4 team by senior **Scot Colyer**, senior **Jakari Holloman** and junior **Jordan Crowder**. Colyer was the second leading scorer at 12.5 on a team that had five players averaging in double figures. He led in assists at 4.0 and had 2.4 steals and 2.8 rebounds.

Holloman, who was also named the Region New-comer of the Year, averaged 12.1 points, 4.4 rebounds, 3.4 assists and 2.7 steals. Crowder led the team in rebounding at 5.7 while averaging 11.7 points.

Honorable mention selections were senior **Demetrius Myers**, senior **Aiden Short** and junior **Dwayne Louallen**. Myers was the other double-figure scorer at 11.2. Louallen averaged 3.6 points and 4.4 rebounds, and Short averaged 3.1 points.

Jordan Caldwell was the other senior along with Myers, Webber, Colyer, Holloman and Short.

“I am thankful for this year’s senior class and ex-



Senior Tahzirr Webber

cited about the future of the program,” Sowell said.

CENTRAL GIRLS REACH STATE PLAY-OFFS AGAIN

Baby steps is an apt term to describe the season for the Central girls in their first season under head coach **JT McManus**. The Eagles went from 4-20 a year ago to 5-18 and won five region contest after winning just four the year before. It was good for a fifth-place finish for a second straight year and a berth in the AA state playoffs where they lost to **Saluda** in the first round.

“I feel like the season was a success,” McManus said. “We accomplished our goal of making the playoffs, and we improved tremendously from Day 1.”

Senior **Jariyah Sowell** was the Eagles’ lone All-Region selection. She averaged 10.1 points. Senior **Tashia Quick** was the second leading scorer at 6.6. Eighth-grader **Brooklyn Seegars** averaged 3.9, and senior **Rielyn Chambers** averaged 3.6.

With Sowell, Chambers and Quick the only seniors, McManus is looking forward with anticipation.

“I’m excited where my program is right now,” he said. “The energy and effort I get from the younger girls is only going to get better once we put some skill with the effort.”

The Seahawks will look to compete in region 6-AAAAA, chasing the likes of North Myrtle Beach, St. James and Carolina Forest. The school will move down to class AAAA next school year.

Basketball wrap up

The boys basketball team at Myrtle Beach closed out its season at 9-12 overall and 4-6 in region play. The Seahawks earned a spot in the Lower State AAAAA Division II state playoffs but lost a first-round game to White Knoll.

Senior **Jamarcus Carroll** set the pace this season, averaging 10.9 points and 3.6 rebounds per game. Junior **Tate Siegmund** averaged 6.6 points and 4.4 rebounds while junior **Christian Alston** added 4.6 points and 5.4 boards per outing. Junior **Julian Brown** averaged 5.1 points per game.

The girls basketball team also made the state playoffs but lost a first-round game to Irmo. The season ended with an 11-19 record overall and the girls team went 1-9 in region play.

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Raiders hoops came up short of expectations

By David Shelton
Senior Writer

Pamplico – Hopes for a strong finish and a deep playoff run never materialized for the Hannah-Pamplico basketball teams. Lack of experience proved to be too much to overcome this season.

Jimmy Williams just completed his eighth season as the boys coach while **Michael Manning** is in his first season directing the girls program.

The boys team finished with a 6-19 record overall and was 2-8 in region play. The Raiders won eight games last season and won five region games.

Scoring points was the major issue for the second consecutive season. The coach kept waiting for his team to gel offensively and but points remained difficult.

“This team is not absent of talent but we aren’t showing up to play (early),” Williams says. “Defensively, we are fine but we are again struggling to score and playing four quarters of basketball. This group went three rounds in the playoffs last year and I expect to make the playoffs again this year once we learn how to play as a team and finish games.”

Williams starts two seniors at forward and three juniors at guard. The forwards are **Va’Shon Washington** and **Dakhi Thomas**. Washington is averaging 6.3 points and 8.1 rebounds this season while Thomas is averaging 5.1 points and 7.9 rebounds per game and is the vocal leader of the team.

Filling starting roles at guard are **De’Auje Bac-**

chus, Kolby Hyman and **Dylan Smith**. Bacchus is the top scoring threat at 11.4 points per game. He also grabbed 4.7 boards per outing. Hyman scored 5.0 points per game.

Seeing time off the bench this season were senior guard **Jordyn Livingston**, senior forward **Chris Eldridge**, junior forward **Matthew Richardson**, and junior guards **Tevin Ellis** and **Kai’den Fortune**. Ellis averages 6.1 points per game.

Rounding out the roster were seniors **Alex Edwards, Stokes Scott** and **Mahkai Eaddy**; and juniors **Jaiden Bostick, Aviary Lyerly** and **Gerald Connor**.

Manning guided the girls team to four wins in his first season, which was three more wins than last season. The team has shown improvement and is more competitive overall. The coach expects improvement as he changes the culture and brings a winning attitude to the team. He lays out the expectations.

“This young varsity girls basketball team is expected to build its identity on strong defense, maximum effort, and a team-first attitude,” he says.

Starters this season are sophomore **Jakayla Davis** and senior **JaKiya Wilson** at guard, senior **Khloe Jones** on the wing, junior **Jalaya Graham** and forward, and sophomore **Genesis Freshley** in the post.

First off the bench are senior guard **Tylaysha Ross**, junior guard **ZaMiyah Jones**, freshman guard

owe so much to them.”

The six seniors are **Naesean Stewart, KD Whitt, Amadr’e Wooden, Cameron Martin, Ta’Maj Gilliam** and **Jaden Millhouse**. Two of them, Gilliam and Stewart, were selected to the All-Region team along with junior **Braylen Davis**.

Gilliam, who was also chosen to play in the **North-South All-Star Game**, averaged 17.2 points per game along with 2.9 rebounds and 2.0 steals. Stewart led the Panthers in rebounding with a 6.9 average while scoring 4.5 per game.

Davis had a big junior season, leading the team in scoring with a 19.2 average. He also led in assists at 2.5 and steals at 2.1 while grabbing 5.9 rebounds.

Millhouse had a solid senior season with a 7.6 scoring average and 5.8 rebounds. Martin averaged 5.0 points and 3.6 boards.

With Davis back in the fold for one more year, Ash is looking forward to what the 2026-27 campaign might bring.

“As for our season, the word that comes to my mind is disappointment,” said Panthers head coach **William Ash**.
Now, wait a minute before you go getting upset. Surely, Ash thought the season could have gone much better, but his disappointment came from the knowledge of the players he’ll be losing.
“That is not just in results, but in the end of the line for six seniors that have meant the world to me and this program,” Ash said. “I coached this group of seniors when I was our middle school head coach and they were seventh-graders. We knew then they had potential to be special. I’m disappointed we didn’t achieve all of our goals. I’m disappointed that I won’t be coaching these guys anymore. I’m disappointed that I didn’t enjoy the ride enough this season.”

“However, I’m also incredibly proud of this group. Every athlete is challenged to leave a program better than they found it. These guys did that. I

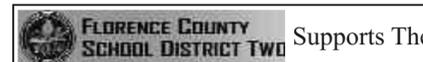
Some of the younger players who saw lots of action were sophomore **Marshon Chaney** and freshmen **Terrance Cook** and **Jordan Hall**. Chaney average 3.5 points and 2.3 rebounds in 23 games, Cook 3.8 points in 21 games and Hall 2.8 points in

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Ava Thomas and freshman post **Alayna Burgess**.

Rounding out this year’s roster are **Zyliria Lewis, Temperance Smith, Lyndsy Wilson, Isabella Dennis, Jadora Shird, Jamauria Mcfadden** and **Quan’Teria Eaddy**.

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Flashes begin 2026 as top-ranked team in A

By David Shelton Senior Writer
Johnsonville – It's not that he doesn't appreciate the love but forgive **Johnsonville High** baseball coach **Carson Carroll** is he is not enthused about his 2026 Flashes beginning the season as the top-ranked team in Class A among SCHSL schools.

After all, somebody has to start the season number one and Johnsonville will have to deal with the early pressure. Count on every opponent to bring their "A" game when they take on the Flashes.

"I honestly was very surprised and I don't know how we ended up No.1" said Carroll, now in his third season. "I'm not sure who put us on top. All I know is we have a lot to prove. I would rather be no. 1 in mid-May. Then we will have earned it."

Whether they warrant a top ranking or not, the 2026 Flashes will certainly be a quality team that is capable of contending for a state title. The Flashes return most of their lineup but must replace their best player from last season, catcher **Landyn Cribb**. Cribb not only produced like a leader but also led the team by his actions and intensity.

"Replacing him will be a challenge because he just did so much for us," Carroll said.

Stepping into the role behind the plate is junior **Larkin Powell**, a third baseman last season but one that always has been a catcher first.

"We had Cribb so we played Larkin at third but Larkin is a quality catcher," Carroll said.

The Flashes will rely heavily on three primary arms, closer **Kayden Jackson**, and

starters **J.C Lyerly** and **Gavin Marlowe**. Jackson will play first base and Lyerly is penciled in at second. **Caleb Tanner** will take on duties at shortstop and Marlowe will nail down third base.

Senior **Spener Brown** has quality experience in left and junior **Zaghe Davis** is starting in center. Junior **Jackson Eaddy** will handle duties in right field.

"I feel like defense will be solid. We have a lot of talent and experience," Carroll said. "We have more team speed than we had last year and we're more mature as a team overall. Certainly we have a lot of potential."

Carroll says he discussed with his team the pitfalls of being ranked number one so early. He feels the team has responded well.

"I told them everyone has circled Johnsonville on their schedule so its up to us to be mentally ready to play every day," he said. "No one is going to take it easy. Every team we play is capable of beating us if we don't play well. We have the potential but we have to perform at a high level. If we think we're too good, someone will knock us down a peg."

Johnsonville has opened the season with four wins. Carroll expects traditional powers Latta and Lake View to be among the teams to beat in region 6-A, and feels the Lower State as a whole is going to be very competitive.

"We have a lot of question marks right now but we have shown the potential to compete," Carroll said. "Competing in early March is different than competing in April. April and May tells the tale in a season."

Latta basketball teams have great seasons

By Dennis Brunson hssr.com Associate Editor
Latta – It was a great season of basketball for **Latta High School** in the just completed season. The girls played for the Class A Lower State championship in the playoffs while the boys reached the quarterfinals for the first time in several years.

The Latta girls finished the season with a 20-5 overall record and went 11-1 in winning Region 6. They beat **Ridgeland**, **Lake View** and **Denmark-Olar** before running into Class A juggernaut **Military Magnet** in the Lower State title game.

"As far as our season, we overachieved this year, which was a great thing due to key players getting injured and some being sick all season" said Latta girls head coach **Bobby Richardson**. "Some days we barely even had five to practice."

The boys posted an 18-6 record and tied for second in the region. They beat **Scott's Branch** and **Branchville** in the first two rounds before falling to **Carvers Bay**.

"This year was a turning point for our program," said Latta boys head coach **Chris Page**, himself a former Viking. "We finished 18-6, but more than the record, I'm proud that we learned to close out games."

The ladies had two players selected to the **South Carolina Basketball Coaches Association Class A All-State team** in sophomore **Aliyah Tisdale** and senior **Kaliya Herman**.

Tisdale averaged a double-double of 14.6 points per game and 13.6 rebounds. She also had 3.2 steals and 1.2 blocked shots per game.

Herman led the team in scoring at 16.9, assists at 3.1 and steals at 5.9. She also averaged 6.4 rebounds.

Tisdale and Herman were also first team All-Region selections. Junior **Jeziyah Page** was a second team selection. She averaged 8.7 points, 3.0 assists and 3.3 steals.

For the boys, **Isaiah McRae** was an All-State selection and was named the Region 6 Defensive Player fo the Year. He averaged 12.0 points and 8.5 rebounds.

Senior **Xy'mari Bethea** was a second team All-Region pick. He averaged 7.8 points, 6.8 rebounds and 2.1 steals.

Junior **Shayon McGruder** was a key contributor, leading the Vikings in scoring with a 12.5 average. Sophomore **Joemaurie Galloway** averaged 7.4 points.

Both Richardson and Page feel good about the future of their programs.

"Making it to the third round of the playoffs showed everyone what we're capable of," Page said. "Looking at the talent currently developing at the junior varsity and middle school levels, I can confidently say, 'The winning way is here to stay.'"

"Our future looks real good," Richardson said. "We have a bunch of youth that stepped up this year, and they're only going to get better. I'm looking forward to making another run at a state championship."

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North Myrtle Beach hoopsters fall short again

By David Shelton Senior Writer
Little River – Few girls basketball teams in the state have had as good a run as the North Myrtle Beach Chiefs, but they have nothing to show for it.

For the third straight season, the Chiefs were one of the top teams in Division II of class AAAAA but there was no trophy at the end of the rainbow.

The girls basketball team won 23 straight games, including a region title. But for the second straight year, the season ended with a loss to Berkeley, the eventual state champion.

The success has not been a surprise as coach **Heather Kearney** returned solid experience from a team that won 22 games last season. Their season ended last year with a loss to Berkeley in the Lower State finals so this year's goal is to take the next step and reach the state finals. North Myrtle Beach is 63-12 under Kearney.

"We want to get better every single day and take one game at a time," the coach says.

The potential to contend for a state title is there as several key players return this season.

The Chiefs had a large senior class last season and there are many new faces on the team this season. But solid talent and experience also returns.

The most experienced performer was junior point guard **Madi Vereen**, now in her third varsity season and an all-state selection. Vereen averaged 16.1 points, 5.2 rebounds and 6.5 steals per game this season.

The starting lineup included two seniors. **Sophia Powell** is a forward and is off to a great start this season. Powell averaged 14.1 points, 6.6 rebounds and 4.9 steals. The other senior starter is **Katlyn Powers**.

Freshman **Aubree Anglin** made an early impact, averaging 7.7 points and 3.6 steals per game. Junior forward **Jurnee Blye** also provided a spark offensively, averaging 10.7 points and 7.7 rebounds per game. Sophomore **KeAisha Bryant** added 6.4 points and 4.3 steals per contest.

Other juniors on the roster this season are **Jailah Livingston** and **Zarionna Watson**. Rounding out the roster are sophomores **Sophie Lewis**, **Kailey**



Coach Heather Kearney was recently named Region Coach of the Year

Vereen, Zoe Costella and Tianna Sweeney.

The boys basketball team opened the 2025-26 season with a roller coaster ride and a lot of close games. The season ended with a 9-17 record overall and a 3-7 mark in region play. Six of their first 11 losses came by eight points or less so the Chiefs have been competitive throughout the season to date. They will need to notch some wins down the stretch to earn their way into the postseason.

Freshmen **Caden Bass** and **Mason Walker** have been two of the key offensive leaders this season. Bass averaged 11.7 points per game while Walker score 10.5 points per contest.

Senior **Primere Lewis** also was productive with 8.5 points per game. He also averaged 4.3 rebounds per outing. Junior **Porter Anglin** has averaged 5.2 points and 6.7 rebounds per game.

Other seniors on the roster include **Eric Lewis**, **Luke Barrett**, **Bricey Gore** and **Owen Phillips**. Juniors on the roster are **Dustin Clement**, **Chance Floyd**, **Jayden Chestnut** and **Reo Stevenson**. Rounding out the roster are sophomore **Tavion Vereen** and freshman **Taron Scott**.

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HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY

Seawell's Midlands Feature Page

Midlands Area teams take 4 out of 5 games at Colonial Life Arena

By Worthy Evans
Special to the HSSR
Columbia - For the first time in five years the **South Carolina High School League** brought state basketball championship week to **Colonial Life Arena** in Columbia. After seeing boys and girls state championships being won at USC-Aiken's arena and the **Florence Center** in Florence for the past five years, teams bused into Soda City to take in state champion ballgames that played out from Thursday March 6 to Saturday March 8.

Five of the 12 title games had a local flair, as three **Richland District Two** teams—the **Ridge View** boys, **Westwood** boys, and the **Blythewood** girls—all won state championships. The area's only 1A boys basketball team, **C.A. Johnson**, won its first state championship in 12 years. The 3A lower-state champion **Keenan** girls tried for a state title but fell short against Wallhalla.

Boys

5AD1 Ridge View breezes past Ashley Ridge for seventh state championship in nine years

No matter where the state championship games are played, Ridge View keeps on winning. This time around, the Blazers handled **Ashley Ridge** 65-44 to claim their second straight 5A Division I championship, third straight state title, and seventh state crown under two coaches in nine years.

"It's definitely not easy," said Ridge View coach **Joshua Staley**, who took over the program after **Yerrick Stoneman** led the team to four state titles before leaving in 2022. "It's more humbling than it is anything because it takes a lot of things going your way. God really blessed us. We have a great administration, athletic director and a lot of people behind the scenes helping us get to this point."

On the court, the Blazers (27-3) helped themselves. **D.J. Wiley** scored 14 points; **R.J. Davis** had 11 points, eight rebounds, and three blocks; **Talan Staley** had 10 points and four assists; and **J.T. Vankallen** had 10 points and two assists.

"I'm more happy for the kids, our school, our administration," Staley said. "The guys put in a lot of work. It's always humbling when you see your work coming to fruition. We're not bragging. We're just grateful, man."

Ridge View and Ashley Ridge played tight in the first quarter, with the Blazers taking a 15-12 lead after the first quarter.

After that frame Ridge View controlled the second and third quarters. The Blazers outscored the Swamp Foxes 17-7 in the second period to take a 32-19 lead into intermission. They then walloped Ashley Ridge with a 28-point third quarter that put Ridge View up 60-32 going into the fourth quarter.

The final stretch was probably the easiest part of the playoffs for Staley

Midlands Boys Top Ten

1. Ridge View (27-3, 11-1 Region 5-5A)
2. Westwood (25-3, 10-2 Region 5-5A)
3. CA Johnson (24-7, 15-0 Region 2-1A)
4. Keenan (23-8, 7-2 Region 4-3A)
5. Gray Collegiate (24-3, 14-0 Region 4-4A)
6. Irmo (20-8, 6-4 Region 4-5A)
7. Dutch Fork (23-4, 9-1 Region 4-5A)
8. Brookland-Cayce (18-9, 9-5 Region 4-4A)
9. Heathwood Hall (21-8, 10-0 SCISA Reg.1-4A)
10. Ben Lippen (22-10, 8-2 SCISA Region 1-4A)

and the Blazers. They played keep-away with the Swamp Foxes, which drained several minutes off the clock, then called it a night with a 65-44 finish.

"Our playoffs were tough. The upper state bracket was brutal, and to play against not just better teams but state championship coaches. Every coach in those last three rounds has played for or won a state championship. They knew what they were doing so we had to really prepare every night."

Ridge View received a first-round bye in the state playoffs and beat **Boiling Springs** 87-64 Feb. 32, **Dorman** 74-65 Feb. 3, and **James F. Byrnes** 84-76 Feb. 24 to reach the state final.

Even before the playoffs, the Blazers were playing top competition, including 5A Division 2 state champion **Westwood**. The Redhawks rallied past Ridge View 64-61 Jan. 5, but the Blazers returned the favor with a 66-47 victory Jan. 27. That win all but clinched the region championship for Ridge View.

Perhaps the most intimidating part about the offseason for other teams who face the Blazers in 2025-2026 is that Ridge View loses just one senior—Coach Staley's son Talan, who hasn't yet signed but has offers from several

schools. The rest of this year's team is composed of juniors and sophomores.

5AD2 Westwood v. Greenville
 Shortly after the tipoff, **Westwood** found itself on the short end of **Greenville's** 18-4 scoring run. The Redhawks settled down soon after and pressed the Red Raiders hard for the next three quarters. Westwood players, coaches, and staff took to the court after a 67-55 victory for the school's first boys state title since the school opened in 2012.

Third-year head coach **Trent Robinson**, said his team's start was eerily typical, and noted first-quarter deficits in playoff games at **Conway, St. James**, and for the lower state championship against **Goose Creek** in Florence.

"I trust my guys. I knew once we started our pressure our shots would come," Robinson said. "Honestly, we've never started off a game good this year. ... Do I want to go through that again? Never, Never. But that's a strong group, seven seniors, 14 solids. I'm so proud of them."

Robinson added that being on the Colonial Life Arena floor with his state

Midlands Girls Top Ten

1. Blythewood (24-5, 11-1 Region 5-5A)
2. Keenan (20-7, 7-0 Region 4-3A)
3. Lexington (22-5, 8-2 Region 4-5A)
4. Gray Collegiate (22-6, 12-2 Region 4-4A)
5. Camden (23-4, 9-3 Region 3-4A)
6. Dutch Fork (18-6, 9-1 Region 4-5A)
7. Lower Richland (16-9, 7-5 Region 5-4A)
8. A.C. Flora (16-9, 9-3 Region 3-4A)
9. Ben Lippen (22-8, 10-0 SCISA Region 1-4A)
10. Irmo (16-11, 4-6 Region 4-5A)

championship team was a unique experience.

"Right now it's such a surreal moment," Coach Robinson said. "Like when you don't know how possible it is until you get closer and closer, and then like man, we have a chance to do it and we did it."

Coaches and players alike felt the win was payback for the team's first loss of the season. Greenville beat Westwood 50-45 at the Magic City Holiday Invitational tournament at **Wilson High School** in Florence Dec. 20.

Senior D'Marcus Thomas finished with 26 points and Senior Jaden Crews had 23 points, including four 3-pointers, and nine rebounds to fire the Redhawks (25-3).

Thomas said he and Crews worked hard all season to become the scoring and defending tandem that helped bring Westwood its first state boys championship home.

"That's really my brother, man," he said. "I told him at the start of the season that we had to get us one, me and him, in the gym, day and night, every single day, we just lived in the gym."

Crews added, "We were just playing our game. That's our style. They say

See Midlands, pg. 74

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Modern Turf Farm Recruiting Feature

HSSR SC 2027-29 Prospects

(Nominate A Player: hsreport@aol.com)

1. Joshua Dobson-Catawba Ridge-DB-6-1,174
2. Jaiden Kelly-Murray-Summerville-WR-5-10,170
3. Jaiden Bryant-Irmo-DE-6-3,245
4. Aiden Manavian-Oceanside Collegiate-QB/SS-6-0,165
5. Jayven Williams-Summerville-RB-5-8,165
6. Trenton Lynch-Spartanburg-RB-5-9,185
7. Chanin Harris-Byrnes-WR-6-1, 165
8. Franklin Richardson-Sumter-QB-6-2,220
9. Seth Tillman-South Pointe-DL-6-3,260
10. Kendarius "P-nut" Bailey-Gaffney-LB-6-0,215
11. David Seqqarra III-Byrnes-RB-FS-5-10,202
12. C.J. Brooks-Gaffney-OL-6-4,320
13. Amare Patterson-Bluffton-WR-6-1,190
14. Israel "Shank" Harris-James Island-OL-6-3,330
15. Michael Strickler-Oceanside Collegiate-FS-6-1,210
16. Christian Chancellor-Daniel-DB-5-9,162-Clemson
17. JaQuan Samuel-Hartsville-OL-6-2, 275
18. Kaiden Watkins-Rock Hill-CB-5-10,172
19. Khsistain Jackson-Ridge-View-WR-5-11, 180
20. Nate Carson-Irmo-OL-6-4,271
21. Jaden Wuerth-Dutch Fork-DL-6-3,270
22. Maleek Miller-Irmo-WR-5-11,175
23. Dwayne Louallen-Central-QB-6-1,205
24. Simeon Jones-North Augusta-DL-6-1,305
25. Tajaj Watson-Martin-BHP-DB-5-10-162
26. Dennis Glenn-Boiling Springs-OL-DT-NG- 6-2, 290
27. Kelvion Manning-Dillon-DB-6-3,190
28. Jaylon Watson-TL-Hanna-DB
29. Kelyn Durham-Eastside-RB-FS-5-9,180
30. Dai'Shion Watkins-Hymes-Dorman-WR-FS-6-1,190
31. Jordan Logan-Orangeburg-Wilkinson-SS-6-1,190
32. Aiden Gibson-Woodruff-RB-6-2,200
33. Malik Robinson-South Florence-WR-6-2, 190
34. William Geddis-Swansea-MLB-6-0,215
35. JaQuan Samuel-Hartsville-OL-6-2,275
36. Sam Holiday-Fountain Inn-QB-6-0,195-
37. Jack Armstrong-Gray Collegiate-OL/DL-6-2,235
38. Josiah Mosely-Wren-RB-5-10,165
39. Marquise Andreson-DL-Emerald-5-10,210
40. Calvin McCoy-Greer-RB-5-10,180
41. Torian Henry-James Island-DL-6-2,210
42. Mari Moody-Demark-Olar-OL-6-4,235-
43. Karrem Shaw-Gaffney-B-RB-5-10,180
44. Henry Rivers-Berkeley-QB-DB-5-10,170
45. Ayden Montgomery-Gaffney-DB-WR-5-10,162
46. Karamion Glenn-BHP-DT-5-10,240
47. Jerimiah Good-Seneca-OL-6-1, 248
48. Johnquis Johnson-South Florence-DB-6-0,180
49. Fredrick Cooper-South Florence-FS-5-11,171
50. Dennis Glenn-Boiling Springs-DT-NG-6-3, 290
51. Makel Stephens-Loris-RB-5-7,190
52. Bryson Bowers-James Island-LB-6-0,200
53. Caleb Sharo-Ashley Ridge-TE-6-3,215
54. Jeffrey Williams-Atlantic Collegiate-DL-6-4,290
55. Xavier Huggins-Powdersville-WR
56. Xavier Means-Northwestern-QB-6-0,165
57. Micah Adams-Stratford-TE-DE-6-2,265
58. Anthony Williams-Bamberg-Ehrhardt-DB-5-11,175
59. Luke Penland-JL Mann-OL-DL-6-3,265
60. William Donato-Bishop England-WR
61. Malcolm Gordon-Bluffton-LB-6-2,210
62. Caleb Feaster-Chester-RB-DB
63. Payton Vining-Northwestern-WR-5-10,160
64. Hayes Lyman-Christ Church-RB-5-10,170
65. Judd Windham-Christ Church-QB-6-4,210
66. Nasir Waldrop-Powdersville-WR
67. Shaun Carvalho-JL Mann-LB-6-2,205
68. Than Portee-Broadwater-Spring Valley-Wr-DB-6-0,170
69. Mehki Quiller-Fox Creek-LB
70. Chandler Guthrie-Gilbert-WR
71. Jonny Chong-Greenville-OL-6-3,300
72. Calvin McCoy-Greer-RB
73. Joshua Simpkins-North Augusta-DL-6-2,250
74. Marquise Anderson-Emerald-DE-5-10,210
75. Charles Williams-Hampton County-DE-6-0,215
76. Dre Brown-Silver Bluff-RB-5-7,160
77. Brandon Streater-Central-OL-6-4,260
78. Cooper Webb-Oceanside Collegiate-WR-5-10,165
79. Myjac McCoy-Marlboro County-LB-6-0,200
80. Keshawn Ray-Dillon-TE-LB-6-0,200

HSSR 2028 Class

1. Zion Dawkins-Gaffney-CB-WR-5-11,181-7 D-1 Offers
2. Beau Hite-Emerald-QB-ATH-6-0,165

HSSR 2029 Class

1. Emarl Jones-Seneca-DL-6-6,325
2. Khayei Sam Fong Talia-Dillon-QB-6-2,205
3. Rasean Brown-South Pointe-RB-5-11,170
4. Taddrick Gibson-Dutch Fork-DB-5-11,160
5. Malachi Watson-Irmo-OL-5-11,290
6. Bishop Allen-WR-5-11, 160 (moved to Arizona?)



Irmo's
Jaiden Bryant



Bluffton's
Amare Patterson



Oceanside's
Jaiden Kelly-Murray

Recruiting, continued from Cover

Bryant (6-3, 245) committed to **LSU** back in January and he appears firm with his pledge at this time.

Bryant had 75 tackles as a junior with 9 TFL including 10 sacks, 9 hurries, two caused fumbles and a blocked punt. Irmo head coach, **Aaron Brand** talks about his prized recruit that the **HSSR** currently ranks as the number three over-all prospect in the 2027 class in the state.

"Jaiden has relentless effort on the field and I have not seen a high school player blocker him yet," said Coach Brand. "He goes 100 per cent in the weight room, the practice field and on the field on Friday nights. He runs a 4.6 to 4.7 forty with a solid 345- pound bench. He has a great first step and he really gets after the quarterback."

"I would say he is firm with his commitment to LSU," said Coach Bryant. "I do not like my players to commit to a college unless, they are sure."

Irmo also has a major college defensive tackle prospect in the 2027 class named **Tyrone Jennings** (6-3, 275). "Tyrone has one power five offer right now from **East Carolina** but I feel like interest will pick up when the college coaches come by Irmo in May," said Coach Brand. "He has the ability to make plays down the line and he moves well for a big man. If I were a power five school I

would take him in a heart-beat. He fights off double teams really well and still makes the play."

Coach Brand got great news when former Cape Fear, NC running back **Tai Phillips** (6-1, 200) decided to transfer to Irmo in mid-year to play for the Jackets this season. Phillips only played in seven games last season but in that time, he rushed for nearly 1,000 yards with 9 touchdowns. He rushed for over 300 yards and scored six touchdowns against rival Terry Sanford High last season.

"Pretty much everybody in the country has offered Tai," said Coach Brand. "He is a 4.3 guy in the forty and he runs with low pad level with great vision. We are excited about him coming to Irmo."

Among Phillip's top current offers are **Alabama, Ohio State, Va. Tech, Penn State** etc.

Irmo's final power five top 2027 prospect is offensive lineman **Nate Carson** (6-4,270) and the **HSSR** currently ranks him the number 8 over-all prospect in the state coming into the May evaluation period.

"Everybody in the country is showing interest in Nate," said Coach Brand. "He currently has offers from **Clemson, Ohio State, Tennessee, South Carolina, and Alabama** among others. He has great feet and flexible hips with long arms that al-

See Recruiting, pg. 75

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