

Best Of 2024 PREPS

We celebrate
and honor the
accomplishments
of the
2023-2024 high
school student
athletes!



STUDENT-ATHLETE AWARDS



MOUNT AIRY
REGIONAL MEDIA GROUP PRINT • ONLINE • & MORE

SECTION A

NC Hugh
Chatham
HEALTH

Orthopedics

The Mount Airy News

THE TRIBUNE

The Yadkin Ripple

THE Stokes News

THE CARROLL NEWS

Muse gives
stirring speech for

BEST OF PREPS *Banquet*



Student-athletes across five counties convene at First Baptist Church in Mount Airy for the 2024 Best of Preps Banquet.

More than 130 high schoolers, coaches, relatives and friends gathered in Mount Airy on May 21 to celebrate some of the best prep athletic performances of the year from a five-county region covered by APG Publishing's local community newspapers.

The annual Best of Preps gathering — put on by The Mount Airy News, Stokes News, Yadkin Ripple, Elkin Tribune, and The Carroll News in Virginia — recognizes the highest athletic achievements and performances of the past school year. Selected by sports writers from those papers, with input from area coaches and athletic directors, the Best of Preps highlights the best athletes in virtually all high school sports played in the five-county coverage area of those papers.

Mike Muse, Director of Player Relations and Community Service for Wake Forest men's basketball

program, gave a stirring speech about GRACE — an acronym he preaches within the Demon Deacons' hoops program. Muse, who also served as Director of Basketball Operations at Wake under the late head coach Skip Prosser, as well as an assistant coach for Dino Gaudio, said GRACE stands for Gratitude, Respect, Accountability, Commitment and Enthusiasm.

"I want to remind you a bit tonight about who you are, where you came from and what is really important is you going forward because you are the best of the best. It's also important to remember of who much is given, much is expected," Muse said. "Grace is the path to our civility and our compassion, and you have to have civility and compassion to continue to be successful, to continue to be the leaders that you are on and off the court, on and off the field, in the classroom and in the community."

Muse said the G stands for Gratitude. None of the award-winning athletes in that room got where they are by themselves. Muse said along the way coaches, parents, teammates, teachers and people in the community helped each honored athlete in different shapes and forms.

"Make sure you are grateful for the people in your life that have made an impact to get you here. And when you leave tonight, take just a moment to thank those people who are important and special in your life," Muse said. "That phone call might mean the difference to them and you never know what kind of impact you might have back on them, so be full of gratitude. Be thankful. Have a readiness to show appreciation and to return the kindness that people have shown to you. Pay it forward. You got here. Give it back. Somebody is watching you."

The R in Grace stands for Respect,

Muse said, which means recognizing the work of a person or a thing. Respect is important and includes how you carry yourself and how you treat people. Muse told a story of a high school baseball coach who instilled respect into him after he struck out and slammed his bat to the ground and threw his helmet.

"The next day of practice he made me pick up my helmet, pick up my bat and I had to go up and down the football field times 25 times, throwing my helmet and chasing it, picking it up again until I was finished. Coach said, 'What did that helmet ever do to you?' You respect that equipment as part of respecting the game. Respect the people around you. Today in society it is going more and more by the wayside. Respect your parents. Don't treat them like something they are not. Honor your elders. That is important."

See BANQUET on page 23A

SPONSORED BY: **HUGH CHATHAM HEALTH**

Sadie Badgett

PREMIER STUDENT-ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY SHE WON:

Sadie Badgett was an accomplished three-sport athlete that earned All-Conference honors every season. She was an impact player all four years of high school, and as a senior she helped all three teams to success they hadn't seen in years.

Badgett did a little of everything for North Surry's volleyball team as an outside hitter. She posted 296 kills, 253 digs, 42 aces and 40 blocks. The Greyhounds won 17 games to tie the program's most wins in six seasons. Sadie was named to both the All-Conference and All-Tournament teams, and helped North Surry to its first playoff victory in six years.

Fast-forward to the spring and Badgett is competing in just her second-ever season of high school soccer. North Surry won just three games last season, but catapulted to 12 this year. It was just the program's second season winning double-digit games in at least 15 years. Sadie was second on the team with 14 goals and third with four assists.

The Greyhound senior made her biggest impact on the basketball

court where she helped North Surry to a 21-6 record, which was the second-most by the program in a decade. Badgett led North Surry in all five major statistical categories by averaging 16 points, 5.3 rebounds, 3.2 assists, 4.1 steals and 1.2 blocks. She also scored her 1,000th career point this season. She was recognized as Foothills 2A Conference Player of the Year, a member of the N.C. Basketball Coaches Association's First-Team All-District, a Triad All-Star, and will compete in the N.C. East-West All-Star Game.

Outside of sports, Badgett was a member of the National Honors Society and National Technical Honors Society. She has a 4.22 GPA and was heavily involved in the Interact Club. She helped put on events such as a Breast Cancer Walk, Red Ribbon week and Haunted Hallway. She volunteered in multiple North Surry kids camps, and was part of a group that stayed after home football games to clean the bleachers and the stadium.

She will continue her academic and basketball careers at the University of Virginia's College at Wise.



GREYHOUND ATHLETICS
Sadie Badgett is pictured with her awards from this past basketball season, including the Foothills 2A Conference Player of the Year trophy.



North Surry's Sadie Badgett, middle, receives the Best of Preps Premier Student-Athlete Award from representatives from Premier Sponsor Hugh Chatham Health and the Mount Airy Regional Media Group.



Sadie Badgett (5) releases a 3-point attempt against Surry Central.

PHOTOS BY CORY SMITH



Fisher Leftwich

MALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY HE WON:

Fisher Leftwich is a three-sport athlete that experienced both individual success and team success across the board. He earned all-conference honors in all three sports – football, basketball and track – and helped two of those teams win conference championships.

Most recently, Leftwich was named Foothills 2A Conference Male Athlete of the Year for outdoor track. He won three individual conference championships in the 100-meter dash, long jump, and ran anchor in the 4x100-meter relay. His 100 meters time of 10.97 seconds set a new school record, and the old record was set by Fisher two weeks earlier. He also closed in on the long jump school record owned by multi-time state champion Jared Hiatt.

In football, Leftwich was the leading receiver on a North Surry team that won its first conference championship since 2017. He caught 44 passes for 658 yards and eight touchdowns. This

included a combined 15 receptions across the team's conference championship victory and first-round playoff game. Leftwich also played defensive back and led his team with nine pass break ups.

Fisher had a breakout year in basketball in which he also earned All-Conference honors. He and teammate Kam McKnight were the only two players that competed in more than two varsity games the previous year, but the pair upheld North Surry's tradition of excellence by leading them to a third-straight conference championship and conference tournament championship. North Surry finished with an overall record of

20-8.

Fisher averaged 14.4 points, 5.2 rebounds, 3.2 assists, 1.8 steals and 1.4 blocks while shooting 47% from the field. Fisher closed the season with his best performance of the year when he posted a stat line of 34 points, 11 rebounds, three assists, five steals and one block.



GREYHOUND ATHLETICS
Fisher Leftwich is pictured with his medals after being named Foothills 2A Conference Male Athlete of the Year for outdoor track.



North Surry's Fisher Leftwich, middle, receives the Best of Preps Male Athlete of the Award from Jessica Tulbert, Practice Support Manager, Hugh Chatham Health – Orthopedics, left, and the Yadkin Ripple's Holly Lamm.



Fisher Leftwich finishes at the rim during a playoff game against Bandys.

PHOTOS BY CORY SMITH

SPONSORED BY: **HUGH CHATHAM HEALTH**

Alyssa Ervin

FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY SHE WON:

The back-to-back Class 3 girls' basketball player of the year in Virginia, Carroll County's Alyssa Ervin is also a back-to-back winner of the Best of Preps' Female Athlete of the Year Award.

After helping lead Carroll County to back-to-back state championships in 2022 and 2023, Ervin averaged 33.5 points per game her senior season, the second-highest single-season scoring average in Virginia state history. Counting the VHSCA state player of the year award her sophomore season, Ervin has been named state player of the year three state seasons in girls' basketball. Carroll County's all-time leading scorer with 2,111 career points, Ervin also led Carroll in rebounding (7.9 per

game), steals (112) and blocks (31).

Basketball is only the start of Ervin's dynamic athletic prowess. This past fall she was also named Three Rivers District Player of the Year in volleyball after leading Carroll to a 16-8 record and the Region 3D playoffs. For the year, Ervin contributed 115.5 blocks (an average of 4.81 per night), 287 kills, 76 digs and 18 aces to also earn first-team all-region honors.

As a senior, Ervin also decided to take up track and field. By April 10 she had already helped set a new school record in the girls' 4x100 relay and had automatically qualified for the state meet in the high jump after clearing five feet.

Ervin will enroll at Elon University this fall on a full basketball scholarship.



Carroll County's Alyssa Ervin receives the Female Athlete of the Year award from sponsor Hugh Chatham Health and Holly Lamm (right) of The Elkin Tribune.



Carroll County's Alyssa Ervin is also a dynamite volleyball player as she was named Three Rivers District Player of the Year.



This year's Female Athlete of the Year, Carroll County's Alyssa Ervin turned in the second-highest single-season scoring average in the history of the Virginia High School League in 2023-2024, averaging 33.5 points per game.



Molly Swaim

WOMEN'S COMMUNITY SERVICE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY SHE WON:

In addition to being a three-sport athlete, Molly Swaim made an impact off the court/field as an outstanding member of her school and her community.

A standout on the basketball court for the Rams, Swaim led the Northwest 1A Conference in points per game with 14.6. She only finished with fewer than 10 points twice, and scored a season-high 34 in a crucial win over Alleghany. Swaim also led Starmount in rebounds (4.6), assists (1.8) and steals (2.0).

In softball, Molly batted .423 with 33 hits and 32 runs scored. This included eight home runs and 15 doubles.

She was also an All-Conference selection in volleyball.

Swaim is just as involved off the field with her community as she is in athletics. She has volunteered at multiple events with her basketball team, including reading at area elementary schools,

churches and youth camps and clinics. Additionally, she helped shop and wrap gifts for a local family in need, participated in Collide Church Blessing at Christmas time, and helped run multiple camps and clinics at both Starmount High and Forbush Elementary.

Her coaches say Molly is always the first one to volunteer to do something for the community, school or athletic programs.



Molly Swaim launches a 3-point attempt from the corner.



Molly Swaim lunges to receive a serve.

PHOTO BY ZACH COLBURN



Molly Swaim looks to drive along the baseline in a game against Elkin.

PHOTOS BY ZACH COLBURN



Surry-Yadkin Electric Membership Corporation

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Surry-Yadkin Electric Membership Corporation is proud to support its local school systems through programs such as career days, field trips and summer camps.

Every year Surry-Yadkin EMC is a proud sponsor of the Bright Ideas grants and awards \$7,020 to area teachers who submit innovative ideas.

Funding creative classroom projects across North Carolina for over 25 years.



Bright Ideas

EDUCATION GRANTS

Do you have an idea for
an innovative learning project?

Apply for a Bright Ideas grant.

Applications due by September 15, 2024.

Early Bird applications due by August 15, 2024.

NCBrightIdeas.com



SPONSORED BY: **SLATE FUNERAL HOME**

**MOUNT
AIRY**



Ian Gallimore

MEN'S COMMUNITY SERVICE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY HE WON:

Ian Gallimore was the definition of a well-rounded student-athlete during his time at Mount Airy High School. He was a four-sport athlete that made his biggest impact on the football and baseball fields.

He was a two-way player on Mount Airy's 16-0 State Championship football team. He served as a dual-threat quarterback on an offense that finished No. 4 in state history for both yards rushing and total touchdowns. Ian didn't throw a single interception all season. He was also a captain on a lockdown defense that recorded nine shutouts and held opponents to fewer than six points per game. Gallimore finished No. 32 in the state with 141

tackles, and was voted Defensive MVP of the state championship game.

Ian was also a starter on another historic team in the spring. He helped Mount Airy to a 26-3 season in which the team finished 1A West Regional Runner-up. This year's team broke a 93-year-old record for wins in a season, and tied a school record for consecutive wins.

Gallimore is a leader in the classroom as well. He's an Academic All-American with a 4.49 GPA, is Senior Class President, was inducted into both the National Honors Society and National Technical Honors Society, and is a member of organizations such as Young Life and



Ian Gallimore releases a pitch during the 1A West Regional Championship series.

PHOTO BY CORY SMITH

the Technology Student Association. Ian has served as a Young Life Work Crew volunteer, and also volunteers at Jones Intermediate School, Franklin Heights United Methodist Church, Reeves Community Center, and various camps at the high school.

Gallimore will continue his football career at Washington & Lee University.



PHOTO BY CHARLES LEFTWICH

Ian Gallimore shovels a pass to a teammate in the 1A State Championship game.



PHOTO BY CORY SMITH

Ian Gallimore picks up a tackle for a loss against East Surry.

*Honored to Serve Stokes County
and Surrounding Areas Since 1923*

**Congratulations to Mount Airy Senior High School
Best of Preps 2024 Winners!**

**Men's Community Service Award -
Ian Gallimore
Women's Tennis Athlete of the Year -
Carrie Marion**



Slate Funeral Home

ESTABLISHED 1923

132 East Dalton Road • King, NC 27021 • Phone: (336) 983-5176



Brady Clark

MALE COMEBACK ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY HE WON:

South Stokes' Brady Clark missed his ninth grade year of playing soccer and basketball due to two ACL tears. He rebounded with an impressive sophomore year in both sports. He earned Northwest 1A All-Conference Honorable Mention in soccer from the defensive side of the ball but scored a goal and eight assists with limited time on the offense.

Brady was All-Conference in basketball helping his team to a 29-2 record, winning the Northwest

1A Conference and Tournament Championships, the Franks Spencer Holiday Classic Championship, and 1A West Regional Runner-ups. He averaged 10.5 points per game with 3.4 rebounds, 3.1 assists, 1.4 steals, and shot 41 percent from the 3-point line.

Clark is the recipient of the state-wide 2024 North Carolina Point Guard College (PGC) Heart of a Champion award. He earned a 5-day, 4-night PGC summer course that includes all meals and accommodation that is valued at \$1,295.



South Stokes' Brady Clark receives the Best of Preps Comeback Player of the Year.



South Stokes' Brady Clark brings the ball up court for his team.

PHOTO BY ROBERT MONEY



The Sauras' Brady Clark (22) scores over North Stokes' Will Greer (43).

PHOTO BY ROBERT MONEY



Celebrates You!



JASON SAMMONS



ZEB MATHIS

**Congratulations West Stokes High
SENIOR ATHLETES!**



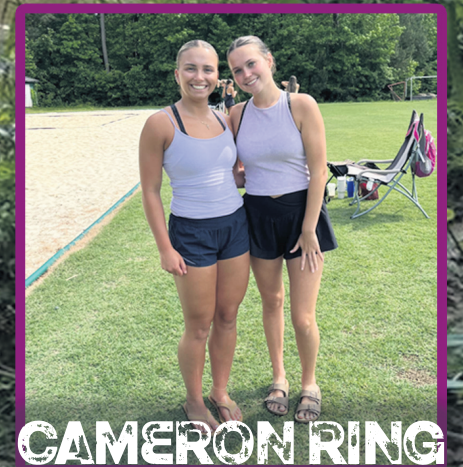
CAM EDMONDS



ALANA BARNEY



RYLEY BOWLES



CAMERON RING

OPT OUTSIDE - FIND ADVENTURE & STAY ACTIVE IN STOKES COUNTY, NC

#StokesCo

WWW.HANINGROCK.COM

#optoutside

SPONSORED BY: **CHATHAM NURSING & REHABILITATION**

**SURRY
CENTRAL**



Ragan Hall

FEMALE COMEBACK ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY SHE WON:

Ragan Hall was a multi-sport athlete her freshman year, but her spring softball season came to an abrupt halt when she suffered a broken ankle. Her injury required surgery, which kept her on the shelf during the summer, but she still attended team events and supported her teammates.

Despite Ragan's untimely injury, she remained positive and battled back to compete in three sports her sophomore year.

Hall participated in golf during the fall and earned All-Conference Honors.

Even though she wasn't cleared to start jogging until October, Hall put the work in to be ready to go by basketball season. She saw the floor for each of Surry Central's first six games – during which the team went 5-1. Ragan then missed a month of action after undergoing a second surgery. She once again fought back to get into shape, and managed to play in a dozen games before the end of the season.

Hall returned to the softball field in the spring and played in almost every game. She even led her team and the entire conference in batting average.



Surry Central's Ragan Hall receives the Best of Preps Female Comeback Player of the Year Award from Holly Lamm.



Ragan Hall pitches against North Wilkes.



Ragan Hall dribbles along the baseline against East Surry.

PHOTOS BY CORY SMITH



*A Family-Owned Company
Helping Your Family*



**Congratulations
2024 BEST OF PREPS
Athletes!**

Improving our neighbors' lives through compassionate residential nursing care and rehabilitation.

***Voted Best Assisted Living Facility and Best Alzheimer/Memory Care in The Tribune's 2023 Readers' Choice Awards!**

700 Johnson Ridge Road, Elkin, NC 28621 • (336) 527-7600 • chathamrehab.com



Deric Dandy

FOOTBALL ATHLETE OF THE YEAR (DEFENSE)

WHY HE WON:

Deric Dandy helped lead Mount Airy to its second-consecutive 1A State Championship.

The senior spearheaded a lockdown Granite Bears defense that recorded nine shutouts, which tied a school record, and only allowed 5.6 points per game.

Dandy led the state with 49 tackles for a loss despite missing two games. He also only played the first half of most regular season games. He posted at least two tackles for a loss in all 16 of Mount Airy's victories, and this included three games – all in the playoffs – with five TFLs.

Dandy also finished the season with 12 sacks, which tied for No. 27 in the state among all classification, and 111 total tackles. He had a season-high 12 tackles in Mount Airy's 1A West Regional Championship victory at Robbinsville.

Dandy and the Granite Bears' defense shut down a powerful Tarboro offense in the teams' second-straight championship meeting. Tarboro, a team that averaged more than 44 points per game entering states, didn't score a touchdown for the first time in more than two years.

The Vikings only recorded 11 yards of total offense in the second half as the Bears recorded six tackles for a loss. Tarboro was held to 48 yards rushing after averaging more than 314



Deric Dandy is pictured at the 2023 Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas.

through its first 13 games.

Following the season, Dandy was selected for the Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas.

Deric finished his high school career with 311 total tackles, 31.5 sacks and 102 tackles for a loss.

He will continue his football career at Virginia Tech.



PHOTO BY CORY SMITH

Deric Dandy (32) sacks Mitchell's quarterback in a playoff game.



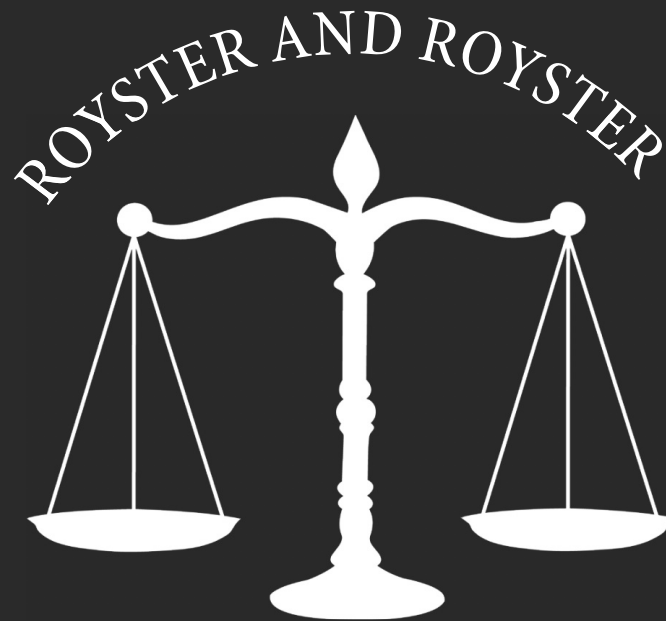
PHOTO BY CHARLES LEFTWICH

Deric Dandy celebrates a defensive stop in the 1A State Championship game.

**Congratulations to
Mt. Airy High School's
Deric Dandy on being
voted Best Defensive
Player for Football in
the 2024 Best of Preps!**



Photo courtesy of Charles Leftwich



851 MARSHALL STREET
MOUNT AIRY, NC
336-789-5127

ATTORNEYS AT LAW
EST. AUGUST 1979

110 S. DAVIS STREET
PILOT MOUNTAIN, NC
336-368-4455

www.roysterlaw.com



Tyler *Mason*

FOOTBALL ATHLETE OF THE YEAR (OFFENSE)

WHY HE WON:

Tyler Mason, a running back, led an explosive Mount Airy offense to its second-consecutive 1A State Championship.

The senior finished the season with 2,313 yards rushing, which ranked No. 3 in school history and No. 12 in the state this season. He led North Carolina and finished fourth in the entire country by averaging 13 yards per carry (minimum 170 carries). He was the leading rusher on a team that finished fourth in state history for yards rushing with 5,873.

Mason's 39 rushing touchdowns, 40 total touchdowns and 240 points scored all rank No. 2 in school history; he holds all three of those school records from his performance in the 2022 season.

Mason recorded 12 games of at least 100 yards rushing this season, including two games over 200 and a season-high 262 in a playoff game against Murphy.

Mason was named Most Valuable

Player of the 1A State Championship game for the second-consecutive year. He recorded 133 yards rushing and scored one touchdown, while Tarboro's entire team finished the game with 67 total yards and no



PHOTOS BY CORY SMITH
Tyler Mason waltzes into the end zone during the 1A State Championship game.

touchdowns.

Mason graduates with Mount Airy's career records for: yards rushing with 6,022, rushing touchdowns with 111, total touchdowns with 120, and points scored with 724.

He will continue his football career at Virginia Tech.



PHOTO BY CHARLES LEFTWICH

Tyler Mason (5) cuts through the Starmount defense.



Tyler Mason outruns the Eastern Randolph secondary en route to a touchdown.



*A Family-Owned Company
Helping Your Family*



**Congratulations
2024 BEST OF PREPS
Athletes!**

Improving our neighbors' lives through compassionate residential nursing care and rehabilitation.

***Voted Best Assisted Living Facility and Best Alzheimer/Memory Care in The Tribune's 2023 Readers' Choice Awards!**

700 Johnson Ridge Road, Elkin, NC 28621 • (336) 527-7600 • chathamrehab.com



Zeb Mathis

MEN'S CROSS COUNTRY ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY HE WON:

West Stokes' Zeb Mathis earned Mid-State 2A Conference Runner of the Year in cross country with a school record of 16:32.83 during the conference meet. The junior finished third in the Midwest 2A Regionals at Fisher River Park, and sixth at the North Carolina High School Athletic Association 2A State meet that took place at the Ivey M. Redmon Sports Complex in Kernersville, N.C. He earned All-Region and All-State honors by finishing top 10 in both races.

Mathis helped led the Wildcats to their third consecutive conference championship, second as a team at the Midwest Regionals, and seventh at the 2A state meet.



West Stokes' Zeb Mathis finished sixth at the State 2A Championships and made the All-State team



West Stokes' Zeb Mathis receives the Best of Preps Male Cross Country Runner of the Year from Bob Ward.



West Stokes' Zeb Mathis runs during the 2A Midwest Regionals. The junior finished third in the race.



The Wildcats' Zeb Mathis races during the Mid-State 2A Conference Championship.

Ryley Bowles

WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY SHE WON:

West Stokes' Ryley Bowles earned her second Mid-State 2A Conference Runner of the Year award in cross country with a time of 20:25 during the conference meet at Dalton McMichael High School. The sophomore finished fourth at 2A Midwest Regionals at Fisher River Park, and was 17th during the North Carolina High School Athletic Association 2A State meet that took place at the Ivey M. Redmon Sports Complex in Kernersville, N.C. She earned All-Region with her top 10 finish at regionals.

Bowles helped led the Lady Wildcats to their seventh consecutive conference championship, third as a team at the Midwest Regionals, and 11th at the 2A state meet.



PHOTO BY ROBERT MONEY
The Wildcats' Ryley Bowles runs during the Mid-State 2A Conference Championship race.



PHOTOS BY ROBERT MONEY
West Stokes' Ryley Bowles receives the Best of Preps Female Cross Country Runner of the Year award from Bob Ward.



PHOTO BY ROBERT MONEY
West Stokes' coach Benji Knox encourages Ryley Bowles during the 2A Midwest Regional race.



PHOTO BY ROBERT MONEY
The Wildcats' Ryley Bowles earned Mid-State 2A Runner of the Year along with making the Midwest Regional team.



Celebrates You!



DAVID LEE WILLIAMS



GABBI GREER



SIENNA MARTIN

Congratulations North Stokes High SENIOR ATHLETES!

OPT OUTSIDE - FIND ADVENTURE & STAY ACTIVE IN STOKES COUNTY, NC
#StokesCo **WWW.HANINGROCK.COM** **#optoutside**

SPONSORED BY: **MULLINS PAWN SHOP**

Luke Creed

MEN'S SOCCER ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY HE WON:

Luke Creed received statewide recognition when he was voted onto the N.C. Soccer Coaches Association's 2A All-State team. He is the first Surry Central soccer player to receive All-State honors since 2019 and the fourth since 2010.

Creed made his mark as a forward for the Golden Eagles. The junior contributed to more than half of Surry Central's 80 goals this year by scoring 37 and assisting on another

six.

Luke's 37 goals ranked No. 12 in the state among all classifications, and his 80 total points ranked No. 18. He had eight hat tricks on the year.

Creed scored in 14 of Surry Central's matches this season. Central was 11-2-1 in matches Creed scored, and 1-5-1 when he didn't.

In addition to his All-State selection, Creed was voted Foothills 2A Conference Offensive Player of the Year and was named to the NCSCA All-Region Team.



Luke Creed is swarmed by teammates after scoring.



Surry Central's Luke Creed receives the Best of Preps Men's Soccer Award from Bob Ward.



Luke Creed, right, dribbles past a North Surry defender.

PHOTOS BY CORY SMITH

SPONSORED BY: **INTERSTATE SIGN**



Jackson Graves

MEN’S SWIMMING ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY HE WON:

Jackson Graves won hardware at the conference, regional and state levels this season.

The North Surry senior was named Foothills 2A Conference Male Swimmer of the Year. At the conference championship meet, Graves won gold in the 100-yard butterfly with a time of 56.62 seconds and won the 100-yard backstroke at 57.56. He also finished conference runner-up in the 200 freestyle relay with teammates Liam Hazelwood, Ridge Reeves and Kameron Mauldin.

Graves went on to win the Central Regional Championship in the 100 backstroke with a time of 56.02, then won a bronze medal in the 100 butterfly at 55.17. He teamed with Hazelwood, Konnor Mauldin and Kameron Mauldin to finish

11th in the 200-yard medley relay. Graves was one of two state qualifiers for North Surry. He wrapped up his high school swimming career with a state bronze medal in the 100 backstroke, finishing with a time of 54.94.



Jackson Graves stands on the podium with the state bronze medal.



North Surry’s Jackson Graves receives the Best of Preps Men’s Swimming Award from Bob Ward.



Jackson Graves is pictured with his medals at the Foothills 2A Conference Championship.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS

FROM BANQUET ON PAGE 2A

Muse promised the athletes on hand that if they show respect to their coaches and athletic directors, those people will in turn “run through a wall for you and do anything they can.”

“Too many people don’t respect people anymore, so do that. The presence of respect means that you can accept somebody even when they are different from you or they think different from you, and that is important. Everybody likes to hide social media and then disrespect people with no name. Be respectful every day,” Muse said. “Take care of yourself. Take care of others. Be respectful of your teammates, of the equipment you are provided, of the fields you play on. When you leave the locker room of an opposing team, leave it cleaner than when you found it. When you walk into a person’s classroom, be respectful of that teacher and know they worked hard on those lesson plans to give it back to you.”

The A is for being accountable, Muse said, meaning be completely responsible for what you do and having a satisfactory answer for the reason you did it.

“When you say you are going to do something, do it. Be accountable. Don’t wait for the coach to tell you to do it,” Muse said. “And when you do it, do it to the best of your abilities...We really preach this in our program. We want our players to be accountable for their teammates. Too often today you look and you see somebody doing something that you don’t agree with, that goes against team rules that doesn’t fit into where the goals of the team are, and you don’t say anything. If you are the best of the best, which you are, then you are a leader. You stand up and you hold that teammate accountable. You get them out of trouble. You grab your arm around them and you get them headed in the right direction. That is part of being a good person, a successful person, and the best of the best. And you do it in a positive way.”

C is for committed, Muse said, a word that has quickly gone by the wayside in college athletics with the advent of the

transfer portal and NIL. Muse said you can’t have one foot in the door and one foot out and still be committed.

“If you are looking at the next job or the next scholarship or the next play or where you can get more money...Skip Prosser told me this. You work with both feet in the door, you work the job you’ve got. You do it with your head down and you do it with everything you’ve got. You be committed to me and to this program and I promise you what will happen is you will get where you want to go,” Muse said. “And you won’t even have to toot your own horn because people will recognize you were committed and you did what you said you were going to do, and you were accountable as well.”

And finally, Muse said do everything with enthusiasm, the last part of GRACE.

“If you can’t show up every day and have some passion, and if you can’t show up everyday and love what you do, then quit doing what you are doing and find something that you do love. You are going to be more successful, you are going to put yourself into everything and you are going to enjoy everything you got, so do it with some enthusiasm,” Muse said. “Have compassion. Get up everyday and love what you do. Go do it to the best of your abilities. Have fun while you are doing it. Enjoy it. These awards tonight are part of your journey and I hope you enjoy it, but this isn’t the end. For a lot of you it is a springboard to something else. So whatever it is that you do, whether it is college or another year of high school or you are going to work, do it with some enthusiasm.”

After his remarks, members of the staffs of the five papers presented the athletes with awards, ranging from the top male and female athletes in each sport, to the overall top athletes, cheerleaders, coaches, comeback players, and others.

Stokes County Economic Development & Tourism, Slate Funeral Home and Chatham Nursing & Rehabilitation served as Elite Sponsors for this year’s banquet, while Hugh Chatham Health was our Premier Sponsor.

Allen Worrell can be reached at (276) 779-4062 or on X@AWorrellTCN

Congratulations Luke Creed on Your Best of Preps Award!



Photo by Cory Smith

2024 Best of Preps Award for Men’s Soccer



**UP TO
50% OFF
SELECT
JEWELRY**

Get Your Graduation Gifts Here!

MULLINS

PAWN SHOP & JEWELERS

**1911 Caudle Drive • Mount Airy
336-786-6417 • www.mullinspawn.com**

Hours: Mon. - Mon, Tues, Thur, Fri 10am - 5:00pm - Sat 10am - 2pm

Closed Wednesdays



**Voted Best Pawn Shop,
Best Jewelry Repair and Best Gold Buyer!**



**CONGRATULATIONS
JACKSON GRAVES
FOR WINNING BEST
IN MEN'S SWIMMING!**

INTERSTATE

SIGN CO INC

**SERVING THE
COMMUNITY
SINCE
1991**

**Proudly Servicing Mount Airy and the
surrounding communities!**

President - Rick Shelton

**336-789-3069
800-368-7571
www.interstatesign.com
info@interstatesign.com**

- Channel Letters
- Awnings
- LED Gas Price
- LED Message Center
- Church Signs
- Directional
- Monument
- Flag Mount
- Wall Mount
- Vehicle Graphics
- Pump Toppers
- POP Signage
- Billboards (New & Wraps)
- Glass & Window Graphics
- Poster Graphics
- DOT Signage
- Directionals
- C-Store Graphic Packages
- Banners
- Informative & Wayfinding
- Architectural Letters
- Reflective Signage
- Magnetic Signage
- Corporate Identification

Camden Edmonds

MEN’S BASKETBALL ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY HE WON:

West Stokes’ Camden Edmonds sealed his legacy as one of the best basketball players in school history. The senior earned Mid-State 2A Player of the Year, North Carolina Basketball Coaches Association First Team All-District 11, third team All-State, All-County, and played in the East/West All-Star Game.

He averaged 26.7 points per game, 4.5 rebounds, 3.1 assists, 2.9 steals, and shot 39 percent from the 3-point

line. He broke school records in single-game scoring with 47 points against state champion Reidsville, most career points with 1,943, single-season record of 796 points, career steals with 191, single-season steals with 88, and single-season free throw record of 11 made attempts.

Edmonds helped the Wildcats to a 22-8 record and to the third round of the state 2A playoffs. He will continue his basketball career next season at Converse University.



PHOTO BY ROBERT MONEY

The Wildcats’ Camden Edmonds breaks the school record against Patton with most points in a career. The senior finished with 1,943 points.



West Stokes’ Camden Edmonds receives the Best of Preps Male Basketball Player of the Year from Bob Ward.



PHOTO BY ROBERT MONEY

West Stokes’ Camden Edmonds scores against Galax during a Christmas Tournament at North Surry High School.



Gabbi Greer

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY SHE WON:

North Stokes' Gabbi Greer had an outstanding sophomore season earning the Northwest 1A Conference Player of the Year award. She was voted to the All-County team for a second time, and to the North Carolina Basketball Coaches Association third team All-District 11 team.

She helped the Vikings to a 23-6 record, the most wins in over 20 years for the school. The team finished conference and conference tournament runners-up, and lost to eventual state champion, Cherokee, in the second round of the state 1A playoffs.

Greer had 16 double-doubles on the season scoring 435 points and



North Stokes' Gabbi Greer was presented the Northwest 1A Conference Player of the Year award at the conclusion of the conference tournament.

grabbing 271 rebounds. She averaged 15 points per game, 9.3 rebounds, 2.7 steals, 1.8 assists, and 1.6 blocks per game.



PHOTO BY ROBERT MONEY
The Vikings' Gabbi Greer (20) shoots over East Wilkes' Kierstin Johnson (22) during the conference tournament championship game.



North Stokes' Gabbi Greer receives the Female Basketball Player of the Year award from Bob Ward.



PHOTO BY ROBERT MONEY
North Stokes' Gabbi Greer (20) fights through a foul against rival West Stokes.



Celebrates You!



**Congratulations
South Stokes High
SENIOR ATHLETES!**



**BRADY
CLARK**



2023-2024 MENS BASKETBALL

OPT OUTSIDE - FIND ADVENTURE & STAY ACTIVE IN STOKES COUNTY, NC
#StokesCo **WWW.HANINGROCK.COM** **#optoutside**



Blake Hawks

MEN'S INDOOR TRACK ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY HE WON:

Blake Hawks won all kinds of hardware during his track & field career at Mount Airy. The seven-time state qualifier – three times in indoor track, and four times in outdoor track – won his first track medals during the 2022 indoor season after no season was held in 2021. Hawks finished third in triple jump at 42-02.50 feet, then took fourth in long jump at 20-05. He returned the following year and won two more medals at the 2023 indoor championship. Hawks' medals were swapped this time as he took third in long jump at 21-01.25, and fourth in triple jump at 41-10. That spring, Hawks won his first state medal in outdoor track by finishing fourth in long jump with a mark of 20-

02.75. He also helped the Bears win the Northwest 1A Conference Team Championship, and the team went on to finish Midwest 1A Regional Runner-up. Hawks began his senior track season by being named Northwest 1A Conference Indoor Track & Field Male Athlete of the Year. He went on to finish fourth at states in triple jump with a mark of 43-11. Hawks was also named NW1A Male Athlete of the Year in his senior outdoor track season. He went on to reach the mountaintop in his final high school meet by capturing the 1A Triple Jump State Championship with a mark of 44-06.25. He also won two 1A State Championships in football. Blake will continue his track & field career at UNC-Asheville.



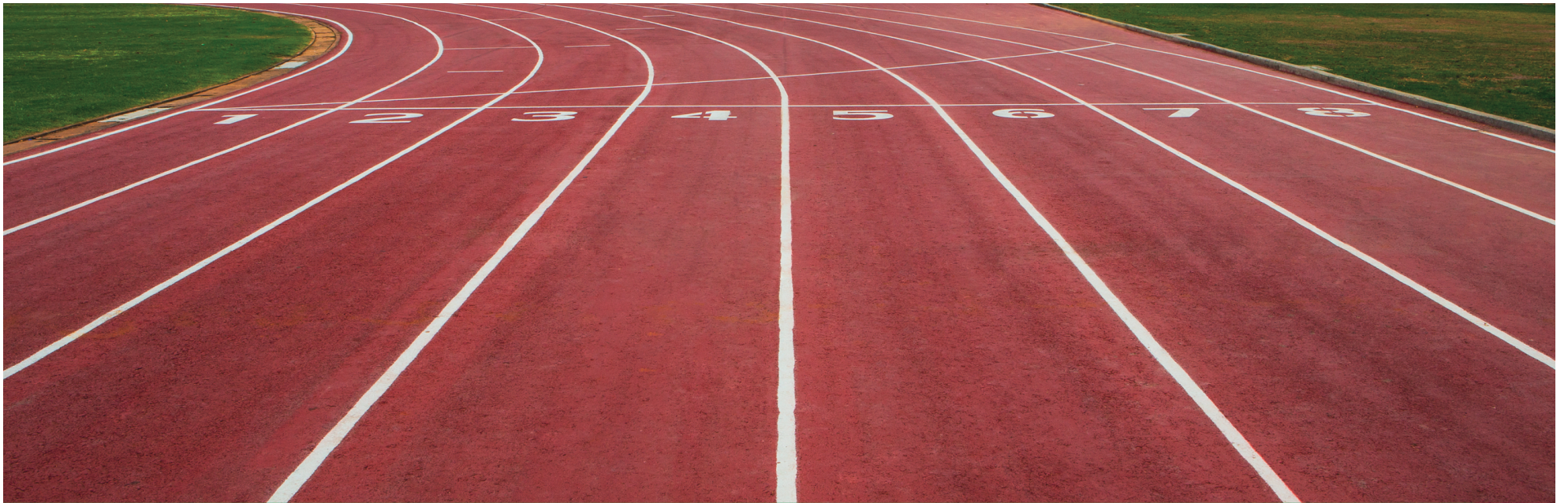
Mount Airy's Blake Hawks receives the Best of Preps Men's Indoor Track Award from Bob Ward.



PHOTO BY CHARLES LEFTWICH
Blake Hawks competes in triple jump at the 1A State Championship meet.



PHOTO BY CHAISTINE SPRAKER
Blake Hawks is pictured with his triple jump gold medal from the 1A State Championship meet.



WHEN AN UNEXPECTED CURVE GETS YOU DOWN

We're here to get you back on your feet.

**SPORTS INJURIES
FRACTURE CARE
FOOT + ANKLE CARE**

**BONE + JOINT CARE
JOINT REPLACEMENT
ACL REPAIR**



Choose Well. **Choose Northern.**

choosenorthern.org/orthopaedics | 336-719-0011

Sienna Martin

CHEERLEADING ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY SHE WON:

North Stokes' Sienna Martin is a four-year captain on the school's cheerleading team. The senior earned All-American Cheerleader status and is a four-year National CCA Cheer Scholar.

The senior was a four-year member of the North Stokes competition team. This season, the squad earned CCA National Grand Champion, two CCA National School Division Champions, and various other All-

Star Cheerleading Championships with other teams. The Vikings were second at the NCHSAA Cheerleading Invitation in the Performance Cheer Varsity Coed Non-Tumbling D2.

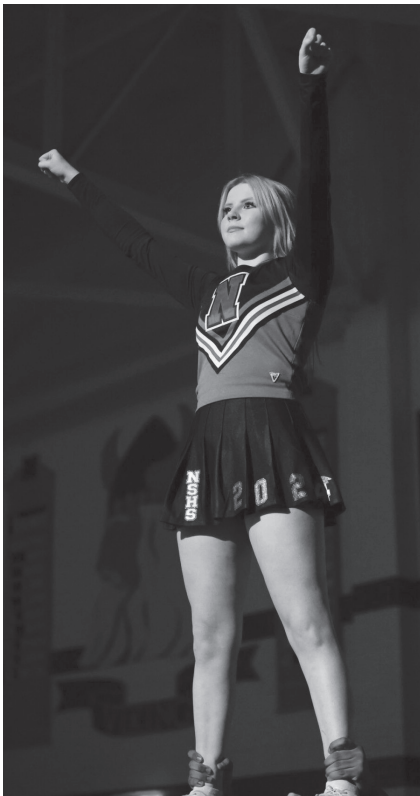
Martin will graduated from Forsyth Technical Community College on May 8 with an Associates of Arts degree and will graduate at North Stokes as Salutatorian. She plans to attend the University of North Carolina at Wilmington in the fall on a \$18,000 Distinguished Merit Scholarship from the school.



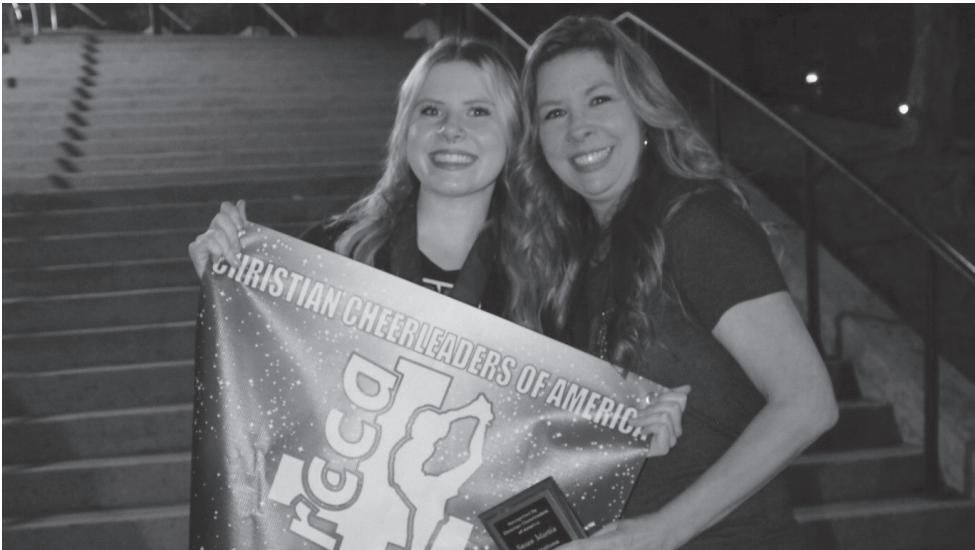
North Stokes' Sienna Martin receives the Best of Preps Cheerleading award from Bob Ward.



COURTESY PHOTO
North Stokes' Sienna Martin performs during a Maximum Cheerleading Competition.



COURTESY PHOTO
North Stokes' Sienna Martin competes during the NCHSAA Cheerleading competition.



COURTESY PHOTO
The Vikings' Sienna Martin and her coach and mother, Susan Martin, holds their championship banner during a CCA Cheerleading competition.

Alana

Barney

LACROSSE

ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY SHE WON:

West Stokes' Alana Barney has proved to be invaluable to head coach Kelly Thomas and the Wildcats' girls lacrosse team.

The junior is a three-year letterman and has served as one of the captains for the past two seasons. Her leadership and defense has grown over the past two years helping the

Wildcats to its' second consecutive playoff appearance.

Barney's is an accomplished player with keen instincts of knowing when to push and when to pump the brakes when it comes to defense. The All-Conference middle defender looks to build on the success of this year's team and return to the state playoffs next season.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL MULLINS

West Stokes' Alana Barney recovers a loose ball in a conference game against Atkins.



West Stokes' Alana Barney is presented the Best of Preps Lacrosse Player of the Year award from Bob Ward.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL MULLINS

West Stokes' Alana Barney steals the ball during a resent home game against Atkins.



LESS PAIN, MORE LIVING.

MOUNT AIRY

1908 Caudle Drive | 336-789-9041

ELKIN

400 Johnson Ridge Medical Park | 336-526-4500

SPARTA

233 Doctors Street | 336-372-3003



Orthopedics

More Information/Request an Appointment: www.hughchatham.org

Best Of 2024 PREPS

We celebrate
and honor the
accomplishments
of the
2023-2024 high
school student
athletes!

STUDENT-ATHLETE AWARDS



MOUNT AIRY
REGIONAL MEDIA GROUP PRINT • ONLINE • & MORE

SECTION B

HC Hugh
Chatham
HEALTH

Orthopedics

The Mount Airy News

THE TRIBUNE

The Yadkin Ripple

THE Stokes News

THE CARROLL NEWS

Photos from Best of Preps Banquet



PHOTOS BY ALLEN WORRELL
Mike Muse, Director of Player Relations and Community Service for Wake Forest men's basketball program, gave a stirring speech about GRACE - an acronym he preaches within the Demon Deacons' hoops program, during the Best of Preps Banquet held May 21 at First Baptist Church in Mount Airy.



Jessica Tulbert, Practice Support Manager, Hugh Chatham Health - Orthopedics, speaks to award winners, parents, coaches and everyone associated with the Best of Preps Banquet held May 21 in Mount Airy. Hugh Chatham Health served as the Premier Sponsor for the event.



Congratulations
to all 2024
Best of Preps
Winners



 **Brannock & Hiatt Furniture**
APPLIANCES • ELECTRONICS
420-422 N. Main St., Mount Airy, NC
336-786-8659
Service 336-786-4442
www.brannockandhiattfurniture.com

Cody Atkins

EXTRA MILE COACH OF THE YEAR

WHY HE WON:

Cody Atkins and his numerous assistant coaches led three different teams to conference championships, including two teams in his first season as head coach. His three teams finished with a combined record of 58 wins, four losses and two ties.

Atkins took over Mount Airy's boys soccer program this year just a month before the season started. The Granite Bears won the Northwest 1A Conference title, finished with 20 wins, one loss and two ties. The Bears reached the 1A West Regional Championship before falling to the eventual state champion.

Atkins led both the men's and women's wrestling teams in the winter. The women's team finished 15-1 as a team and won a conference championship. Two Mount Airy wrestlers won medals at the state tournament.

The men's wrestling team also won a conference title and posted a 23-2 record. Four wrestlers on the guys side won medals at the state meet,

including one state champion.

Atkins also won his 200th dual team match as the men's coach this season.

What sets Atkins and his assistant coaches apart is their role as mentors, father figures and their impact in the community. He organizes extra practices, film sessions and creates individual training programs for any and all athletes that request it. He helps plan trips to wrestling tournaments nationwide and helps put on free local tournaments. He also maintains communication with his student-athletes in the offseason

to ensure they're keeping up with academics and being good role models in the community.

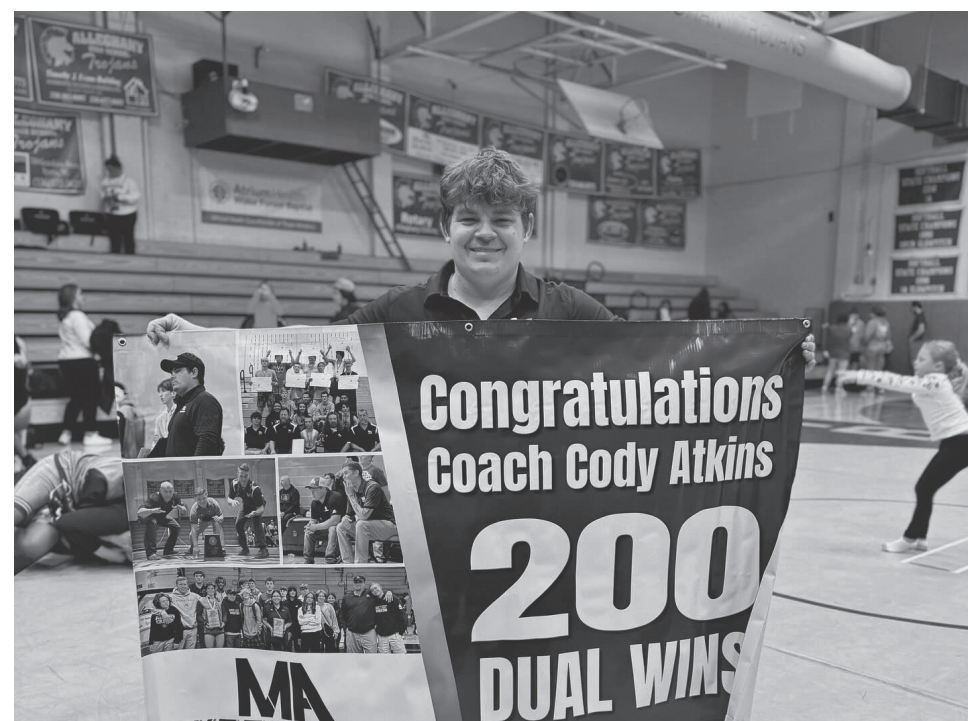
Atkins has said his goal is to raise his student-athletes to be quality young men and women that have a strong character, and that is more important than any trophy.



PHOTOS BY CORY SMITH
Cody Atkins surveys the field during a playoff soccer match.



Mount Airy's Cody Atkins receives the Best of Preps Extra Mile Coach Award from Bob Ward.



GRANITE BEAR ATHLETICS
Cody Atkins is surprised with a banner celebrating his 200th dual team win in men's wrestling.



Gavin Maines

BASEBALL ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY HE WON:

Gavin Maines did a little bit of everything for a Forbush team that won 25 games in 2024.

Maines, a left-handed pitcher, finished the year a perfect 9-0 on the mound. One of Maines' nine victories was a perfect game against Austintown-Fitch (Ohio) in a tournament at Myrtle Beach. The senior had 14 strikeouts and only had to throw 77 pitches in the 5-0 victory.

The perfect game was just one of many pitching highlights for Maines. According to MaxPreps, the Forbush senior tied for the most no-hitters in the nation with three. He also finished 24th in the nation with a 0.12 earned run average, and tied for 65th in the nation with 121 strikeouts.

At the plate, Maines recorded 38 hits and tied for 20th in the state with 39 runs scored. He also had 33 RBIs, 10 doubles, two triples and one home run. Maines finished the year with a .487 batting average, a .585 on-base percentage and a .705 slugging percentage.

Maines was named Foothills 2A Conference Player of the Year after leading Forbush to both the conference regular season and conference tournament championships. The Falcons outscored league opponents 150-19. Forbush earned the No. 4 seed in the 2A West and reached the Sweet 16 of the playoffs.

Maines will continue his baseball career at Western Carolina University.

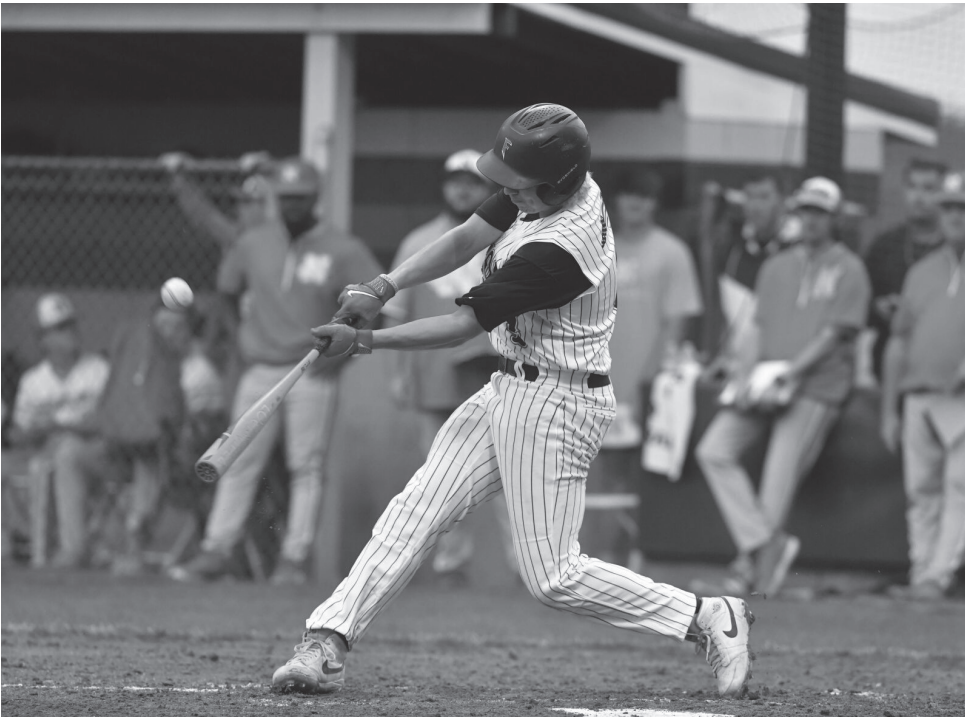


Forbush's Gavin Maines receives the Best of Preps Baseball Award from Holly Lamm.



Gavin Maines makes the catch at first base to force a ground out.

PHOTO BY CHARLES LEFTWICH



Gavin Maines hits a fly ball to the outfield against North Stanly.

PHOTO BY CHARLES LEFTWICH



Surry-Yadkin Electric Membership Corporation

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Surry-Yadkin Electric Membership Corporation is proud to support its local school systems through programs such as career days, field trips and summer camps.

Every year Surry-Yadkin EMC is a proud sponsor of the Bright Ideas grants and awards \$7,020 to area teachers who submit innovative ideas.

Funding creative classroom projects across North Carolina for over 25 years.



Bright Ideas

EDUCATION GRANTS

Do you have an idea for
an innovative learning project?

Apply for a Bright Ideas grant.

Applications due by September 15, 2024.

Early Bird applications due by August 15, 2024.

NCBrightIdeas.com





Elkin Hwy 268, Ronda, NC 28670
(336) 835-4442

Congratulations!



We're so proud of you Chloe!

SPONSORED BY: **SOUTHEASTERN CARS & PARTS**

Chloe Andrews

SOFTBALL ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY SHE WON:

Chloe Andrews helped guide East Wilkes to its first softball state championship in school history.

The East Wilkes junior was an absolute menace both on the mound and at the plate, putting together ridiculous numbers while leading the Cardinals to the promised land.

Andrews finished the season with a 19-2 pitching record. The only teams to defeat Andrews were West Forsyth, a 4A team that won 9-8 in extra innings, and Northside-Pinetown in Game 1 of the 1A State

Championship Series. Chloe finished the championship series with 10 strikeouts, three bases on balls, and allowed eight runs on 14 hits. The junior tossed 229 pitches in 15 innings across the series' three games.

For the season, Andrews struck out 177 batters in 137 innings pitched and allowed an earned run average of just 1.124. Opposing batters managed to hit just .187 against the East Wilkes powerhouse.

At the plate, Andrews was equally as dangerous, batting .343 for the season and driving in 39 runs.



PHOTO BY ZACH COLBURN

Chloe Andrews winds up to pitch during Game 1 of the 1A West Regional Championship.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Chloe Andrews is pictured with the 1A State Championship Trophy.

SPONSORED BY: **MT. AIRY EQUIPMENT****MOUNT
AIRY**

Andrew Meadows

MEN'S WRESTLING ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY HE WON:

Andrew Meadows turned granite into gold during his first year at Mount Airy High School.

One year after finishing fifth in the 2A 160-pound division, Meadows made a move to Mount Airy and captured the 1A 165-pound State Championship. The sophomore's title victory is the 12th in the Granite Bears' wrestling program since 2015. He finished the season with a 47-1 record.

In 48 matches this season, Meadows won: 36 via fall, six via forfeit and five via decision; three of his five decision victories were major decisions. Meadows pinned his opponent in five of his seven postseason matches across the conference, regional and state tournaments.

He suffered his only loss of the season to a wrestler from Pennsylvania in the championship match of the RJ Reynolds Holiday Tournament. In addition to finishing runner-up at RJR, Meadows won in-season tournaments like the Craig White Invitational and Danny Linker Memorial Tournament.

Meadows began his postseason run to a state title by winning the Northwest 1A Conference 165-pound Championship. He was also named

Most Outstanding Wrestler of the tournament.

Meadows went on to win the 165-pound title at the 1A West Regional tournament, where he won all four of his matches via fall. This included a 76-second win in the regional championship. Only one of his matches went into the second period.

Meadows defeated his first two opponents at the 1A State Tournament via first-period fall, then won the state title by pinning Uwharrie Charter's Alek Millikan. Millikan led 4-2 entering the final period. Meadows scored a takedown to tie things up late in the period, then picked up the fall with just 23 seconds remaining.

Outside of school competition, Meadows earned All-American Honors

by finishing third in the Disney Nationals and third in the Interstate 64 National Tournament. He also competed nationwide in events such as the National High School Coaches Association (NHSCA) Tournament, the Fandetti Richardson Brawl, and various tournaments in Michigan and Ohio.



PHOTOS BY CORY SMITH
Mount Airy's Andrew Meadows has his hand raised after winning the 1A 165-pound State Championship.



Mount Airy's Andrew Meadows receives the Best of Preps Men's Wrestling Award from Bob Ward.



PHOTO BY TABITHA COLLINS
Mount Airy's Andrew Meadows, top, looks to turn Rosewood's Kaleb Davis in the opening round of the 165-pound bracket.



Mike Muse presents Surry Central's Luke Creed with the award for best men's soccer player on May 21 during the annual Best of Preps Banquet in Mount Airy.



Carrie Marion, left, and Ella Brant are pictured with the 1A Doubles State Runner-up trophies.



Mt. Airy Equipment Company, Inc.
1431 West Pine St. Mt. Airy, NC 27030
(336) 786-6240 | www.mtairyequipmentco.com

*Your hometown
Kubota dealer
of choice.*



**#1 SELLING
COMPACT
TRACTOR**

BX SERIES

There are many jobs. And one tractor to do them all.

The versatile BX Series sub-compact tractor is ready for anything with a variety of available attachments, easy-to-use hydrostatic transmission and ROPS height that fits comfortably in a standard size garage.

Visit your Kubota dealer today for a demo!

KubotaUSA.com



*Based on EDA tractor sales data of under 40 horsepower models from 2018 to 2022. © Kubota Tractor Corporation, 2024. Your Kubota Limited warranty gives you specific legal rights. You may have other rights which vary from state to state. Kubota Tractor Corporation does not authorize any person to create for KTC any obligation or liability other than that stated in the limited warranty. This material is for descriptive purposes only. Kubota disclaims all representations and warranties, express or implied, or any liability from the use of this material. For complete warranty, disclaimer, safety and product and incentive offer information, consult your local Kubota dealer and the Owner's Warranty Information Guide for the Kubota limited warranty on all products. Visit KubotaUSA.com/disclaimers for more information.

SPONSORED BY: **MT. AIRY EQUIPMENT**

**MOUNT
AIRY**



Jamie Hearl

WOMEN'S WRESTLING ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY SHE WON:

Jamie Hearl undoubtedly made her mark on the sport of wrestling while at Mount Airy.

Hearl, a senior, was a four-time state qualifier for the Granite Bears. The N.C. High School Athletic Association held a women's wrestling invitational during Hearl's first three years, and she culminated her junior season by finishing state runner-up in the 100-pound weight class.

The 2023-24 school year was the first time North Carolina had a separate sanctioned NCHSAA Women's Wrestling State Championship Tournament, and Hearl

was determined to be part of it. She dominated opposing wrestlers during the regular season and only dropped two matches; both losses came in the Beast of the East National Tournament. She led the Bears to a 15-1 season to win the Northwest 1A Conference Team Championship, and was named both conference wrestler of the year and most outstanding wrestler of the conference tournament in the process. Jamie captured her 100th career win in the

conference championship match.

Hearl began postseason action by winning the 107-pound Midwest Regional Championship. She won all four of her matches via fall, and outscored tournament opponents 16-0 to be named the event's most outstanding wrestler.

At states, Hearl defeated her first two opponents via first-period fall. She faced a 24-1 wrestler in the semifinals that won the Mideast Regional Championship, but Hearl once again pinned her opponent in the opening period. Hearl finished state runner-up after dropping the championship match via 11-8 decision.

Outside of school wrestling, Hearl competed in tournaments across the country. She earned All-American Honors at events such as the Beast of the East Tournament in Delaware, Ohio Tournament of Champions and National High School Coaches Association (NHSCA) Nationals in Virginia.

Hearl was also named an NHSCA Academic All-American.

She will continue her wrestling career at Emmanuel University.



GRANITE BEAR ATHLETICS
Jamie Hearl is pictured with the Most Outstanding Wrestler trophy at the Midwest Regional Championship.



Mount Airy's Jamie Hearl receives the Best of Preps Women's Wrestling Award from Holly Lamm.



PHOTO BY TABITHA COLLINS
Jamie Hearl jumps into the arms of her father, Joey Hearl, after winning her state semifinal match.



Mt. Airy Equipment Company, Inc.

1431 West Pine St. Mt. Airy, NC 27030

(336) 786-6240 | www.mtairyequipmentco.com



BX2380 SERIES

0% APR | UP TO **84^{MOS}**
— OR —

SAVE UP TO **\$3,300*** ON SELECT KUBOTA TRACTORS



KubotaUSA.com



**Based on EDA tractor sales data of under 40 horsepower models from 2018 to 2022. © Kubota Tractor Corporation, 2024. \$0 Down, 0% A.P.R. Financing for up to 84 months on purchases of new Kubota BX2380 series equipment at participating dealers in-stock inventory is available to qualified purchasers through Kubota Credit Corporation USA; subject to credit approval. Example: 84 monthly payments of \$11.90 per \$1,000 financed. Customer instant rebates include Orange Plus Attachment Instant Rebate of \$100 with purchase of the second qualifying new implement and \$200 for the third new qualifying implement. Some exceptions apply. There is no rebate on the first implement purchased. Offers expire 06/30/24. Terms subject to change. For complete warranty, disclaimer, safety and product information see dealer or KubotaUSA.com. Your Kubota Limited warranty gives you specific legal rights. You may have other rights which vary from state to state. 6 years limited powertrain warranty, Kubota Tractor Corporation does not authorize any person to create for KTC any obligation or liability other than that stated in the limited warranty. This material is for descriptive purposes only. Kubota disclaims all representations and warranties, express or implied, or any liability from the use of this material. For complete warranty, disclaimer, safety and product and incentive offer information, consult your local Kubota dealer and the Owner's Warranty Information Guide for the Kubota limited warranty on all products. Visit KubotaUSA.com/disclaimers for more information.

SPONSORED BY: **SLATE FUNERAL HOME**



Pennson Badgett

MEN'S GOLF ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY HE WON:

Pennson Badgett won hardware at the 2A State Championship for the second-straight year.

The East Surry sophomore finished with a 36-hole score of 140 strokes, or four-under-par, at the 2A State Meet held at Stonebridge Golf Club. The only golfer to finish ahead of Badgett at states was Seaforth's Ty Willoughby, who posted the fourth-best individual score in state championship history. Badgett shot an even par on the first day of the state championship, then returned the following day and finished four-under.

Prior to finishing state runner-up, Badgett helped East Surry win the Foothills 2A Conference Championship and finish third at the 2A Midwest Regional Championship. Individually, Badgett was named Foothills 2A Conference Golfer of the Year, was medalist of the conference championship match, and was the medalist of the regional championship.

Badgett set the stage for a stellar sophomore season by dominating as a freshman. In 2023, Badgett: was named FH2A Golfer of the Year, won the FH2A Championship as an individual and helped East Surry win the conference team title, won the 2A

Midwest Regional Title as an individual and helped East Surry win the team title, then won the 2A Individual State Championship and helped East Surry go back-to-back as team champions.



Pennson Badgett is pictured with the 2A State Runner-up Trophy.



East Surry's Pennson Badgett receives the Best of Preps Men's Golf Award from Bob Ward.



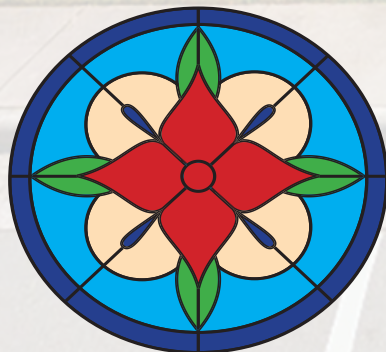
Pennson Badgett chips onto the green at Mount Airy Country Club.

PHOTO BY CORY SMITH

*Honored to Serve Stokes County
and Surrounding Areas Since 1923*

**Congratulations East Surry High School
Best of Preps 2024 Winners!**

**Men's Golf Athlete of the Year -
Pennson Badget
Volleyball Athlete of the Year -
Bella Hutchens**



Slate Funeral Home

ESTABLISHED 1923

132 East Dalton Road • King, NC 27021 • Phone: (336) 983-5176

Madison Akers

WOMEN’S GOLF ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY SHE WON:

Madison Akers hit a hole-in-one less than a month into her freshman season, then never really slowed down from there.

Akers led Mount Airy to its second-consecutive Northwest 1A Conference Championship and Northwest 1A Conference Tournament Championship. She was the medalist

for the conference tournament with a score of 41 strokes, which was nine-strokes better than the runner-up. Akers was also named NW1A Conference Golfer of the Year.

Akers later competed at the 1A/2A Central Regional Championship Match and finished third overall with a score of 87. She later placed 11th at the 1A/2A State Championship.



Madison Akers is recognized as Northwest 1A Conference Golfer of the Year.

GRANITE BEAR ATHLETICS

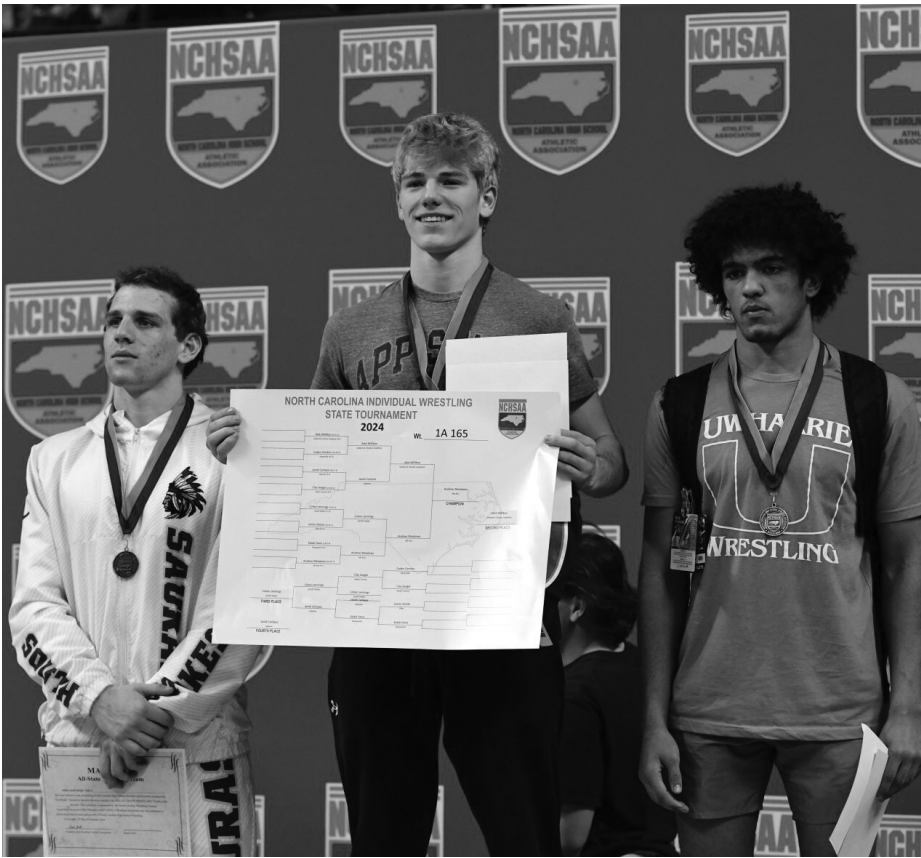


Mount Airy’s Madison Akers receives the Best of Preps Women’s Golf Award from Bob Ward.



Madison Akers chips onto the green at Cross Creek Country Club

PHOTOS BY CORY SMITH



Andrew Meadows stands on top of the podium with his gold medal after winning the 1A 165-pound State Championship.



PHOTO BY CORY SMITH

Jamie Hearl, top, attempts to pin South Brunswick's O'marzria Wright in the 107-pound State Championship match.

CONGRATULATIONS ATHLETES!



SURRY ANIMAL HOSPITAL, PA

926 REEVES DRIVE
MOUNT AIRY, NORTH CAROLINA 27030
SURRYANIMALHOSPITAL.COM

A. RENFROW HAUSER, DVM MARK G. HAUSER, DVM
PHONE: 336-789-9054 FAX: 336-786-9005



FIND US ON FACEBOOK



Jason Sammons

ATHLETIC DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR

WHY HE WON:

West Stokes’ Jason Sammons has made his mark at the school in his first year as the school’s athletic director.

He helped create a vision for remodeling the weight room and was in charge of helping raise most of the \$220,000 cost. Sammons was also in charge of raising money to refurbish the scoreboards at the softball, baseball, and football fields along with building the new batting cages for the baseball and softball fields.

Sammons helped rebrand the campus with the school’s colors and the Wildcat logo at various locations throughout the school and also help create a media platform in using Facebook, Instagram, and X [Twitter] in promoting and recording athletics results.



PHOTO BY ROBERT MONEY
West Stokes’ Jason Sammons helped raise more than \$220,000 for two weight rooms to be built at the school.

The school is set to win its third consecutive Wells Fargo Conference Cup winning nine conference championships, 10 player of the years, and 10 coaches of the year.



West Stokes’ Jason Sammons is presented the Best of Preps Athletic Director award from Bob Ward.



PHOTO BY ROBERT MONEY
The Wildcats’ Jason Sammons marks times for the football program’s annual lineman challenge event.



PHOTO BY ROBERT MONEY
West Stokes’ Jason Sammons (left) and South Stokes Jason Clark during the schools opening football game.

David Lee Williams

MEN'S OUTDOOR TRACK ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY HE WON:

North Stokes' David Lee Williams earned his first North Carolina High School Athletic Association 1A State Championship in the pole vault at North Carolina A&T University with a jump of 15-0.

The junior earned the Midwest 1A Regional Championship with a school record jump of 15-1 and was the pole vault Northwest 1A Conference champion with a meet record of 14-6. He broke Vikings' Sean Nickell's record of 14-0 that was set back in 2010.

Williams was first in the pole vault during the indoor conference season, and third during the indoor state championship meet.



PHOTO BY CHARLES LEFTWICH

North Stokes' David Lee Williams races down the pole vault track during the conference championship.



North Stokes' David Lee Williams was presented the Best of Preps Male Athlete of the Year award from Bob Ward.



PHOTO BY CHARLES LEFTWICH

North Stokes' David Lee Williams breaks a school record that was set in 2010 with a jump of 14-6 in the pole vault event.



PHOTO BY CHARLES LEFTWICH

North Stokes' David Lee Williams wins the NCHSAA 1A Individual State Championship in the pole vault with a jump of 15-0.



Aniya Edwards

WOMEN'S OUTDOOR TRACK ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY SHE WON:

Aniya Edwards is quickly becoming one of the most accomplished track and field athletes Surry County has ever seen.

"Outstanding" may be the only word that can do Edwards' junior year justice, and that's the exact phrasing the N.C. High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA) used. She was recently named Most Outstanding Performer of the 1A Outdoor Track & Field State Championship after capturing three gold medals and one bronze. According to the NCHSAA record book, which dates 1986-present, Edwards is the first female from Elkin to win the MOP award.

Edwards' state titles came in the 100-meter dash, 200-meter dash and 400-meter dash. According to the NCHSAA record book, Edwards is the third female competitor in Surry County history to win three outdoor track state titles in the same year, joining: Surry Central's Sara White in both 1992 and 1993, and Surry Central's Jill Lawrence in 1994. White and Lawrence both won a title as part of a relay team, while Edwards won three individual titles.

She didn't just win though – she dominated. Aniya won the 400 meters with a time of 56.16 seconds. She won the event by more than three seconds, while the No. 2 through No. 10 finishers all finished within three seconds of each other. Edwards' time met the U.S. MileSplit Second Team Standard and set a new record for the 1A State Meet. She also holds the 1A

Midwest Regional record in the event.

Edwards won the 200 meters with a time of 24.50 seconds, which was .57 seconds ahead of the state runner-up. Edwards' time was .25 seconds behind a state record and met the U.S. MileSplit First Team Standard.

Edwards won the 100 meters for her third and final gold medal performance. The junior won the event with a time of 12.02, which met the U.S. MileSplit First Team Standard.

Edwards also ran on a 4x400-meter relay team that won a bronze medal.

In addition to her state and regional records, Edwards holds the Northwest 1A Conference outdoor records in the 100, 200 and 400 meters.

Aniya's three golds and one silver in outdoor track brought her junior year medal count up to seven. She won the indoor track 1A/2A Championships for the 55 meters and 500 meters in February, and both of her times met the U.S. MileSplit First Team Standard. Edwards also finished 1A/2A State Runner-up in the indoor 4x400-meter relay.

Edwards also holds conference records in indoor track for the 55, 300 and 500 meters.



Aniya Edwards, middle, receives the Best of Preps Women's Outdoor Track & Field Award from TC Sports and Rehab's Dr. John Orta, left, and the Yadkin Ripple's Holly Lamm.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Aniya Edwards, right, is pictured with her trainer Chris Attucks after winning 1A State Championships and being named the Most Outstanding Performer of the championship meet.



PHOTO BY CHARLES LEFTWICH

Aniya Edwards, left, competes for one of her gold medals at the 1A State Championship meet.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR AREA ATHLETES

*Proud sponsor of
Aniya Edwards of
Elkin High School,
Women's Outdoor Track
Best of Preps winner.*



Left to Right: Dr. I. John Orta, PT, DPT-Aniya Edwards-Holly Lamm



Dr. I. John Orta, PT, DPT, Chandler Caudill, PTA, Rubi Govea, PTA, Dr. Joleen Brandon, PT, DPT, Jared Smith, Ethan VanHorn

**READY TO GET BACK
TO WHAT YOU LOVE?**

**LET OUR AWARD WINNING
STAFF HELP YOU!**



*Dr. I. John Orta, PT, DPT,
Physical Therapy, Health
Wellness, Certified Dry
Needling Certified Spinal
Manipulation*



*With over 35 years of professional experience, we
treat many injuries and problems that occur to, or
in conjunction with, muscles, ligaments, tendons,
nerves, joints, & other bony or soft tissues.*

2015 N Bridge St, Elkin, NC 28621 | 336 258 8252 | www.tcsportsandrehab.com

SPONSORED BY: **MT. AIRY EQUIPMENT**



Owen Jennings

MEN'S TENNIS ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY HE WON:

Owen Jennings ended his high school tennis career on a high note by leading Elkin to the 1A Dual Team State Championship.

Jennings was the No. 1 seed on a Buckin' Elks squad that decimated opponent after opponent. The team culminated their season with a 5-0 win over Triangle Math & Science in the 1A State Championship. Jennings was voted MVP of the championship match.

Jennings posted a 37-5 individual record as a senior – 13-1 in doubles and 24-4 in singles. His only singles and doubles losses of the regular season came against Page.

Jennings went the singles route in the individual postseason. The senior won the Northwest 1A Conference Singles Championship, and was

also honored as NW1A Conference Player of the Year. He went on to finish fourth at the 1A West Regional Championship, then dropped his opening match of the state tournament to the eventual champion.

Elkin finished the season 19-1 in dual team competition, and the team's only loss came against 4A Page High School. The Elks won 141 individual matches while surrendering 24, and only 14 of those losses were against fellow 1A teams.

Elkin had an overall record of 67-7 during Jennings' four years with the program. The Elks won the 1A State Championship in both 2023 and 2024, and finished 1A West Regional Runner-up in 2022.

Elkin finished 14-0 in 2021, but the season didn't feature dual team playoffs due to COVID.



PHOTO BY REAGAN WHITLEY

Owen Jennings serves in the No. 1 singles match of the 1A State Championship match.



Elkin's Owen Jennings receives the Best of Preps Men's Tennis Award from Holly Lamm.



NCHSAA PHOTO

Owen Jennings, left, receives the trophy for Most Valuable Player of the 1A State Championship

SPONSORED BY: **SLATE FUNERAL HOME**

Carrie Marion

WOMEN'S TENNIS ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY SHE WON:

Carrie Marion, a junior, experienced both team and individual success on one of Mount Airy's best-ever tennis squads.

Marion was the No. 1 seed on a Mount Airy squad that won its third-straight 1A Dual Team State Championship. She was 25-0 in singles competition and was voted both Northwest 1A Conference Player of the Year and MVP of the 1A Dual Team State Championship.

In Mount Airy's 25 dual team wins this season, the Bears won 190 individual matches while only losing eight. Only one team — 4A R.J. Reynolds — took more than one individual match from Mount Airy, and that was in the season opener. Beginning with a Sept. 19 match against South Stokes, Mount Airy closed the season by winning 100 of 101 individual matches — including a streak of 89-straight.

Mount Airy is 68-1 in dual team matches during Marion's tenure as a Granite Bear.

In the individual postseason, Marion finished State Runner-up in doubles with partner Ella Brant. Marion and Brant were 24-3 as a team, and both girls were recognized on the N.C. High School Coaches Association's 1A All-State Team.



Carrie Marion is pictured with the 1A State Championship MVP Trophy.



Mount Airy's Carrie Marion receives the Best of Preps Women's Tennis Award from Bob Ward.



Carrie Marion hits a forehand in the No. 1 singles match of the 1A Dual Team State Championship.

PHOTOS BY CORY SMITH

Ella Riggs

WOMEN’S INDOOR TRACK ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY SHE WON:

Ella Riggs won three track & field state medals this year to bring her high school total up to seven.

Riggs captured her first indoor track state championship and second state title overall in February. The North Surry junior won the 1A/2A Shot Put Title with a mark of 36-08.50 feet, which topped the state runner-up by seven inches and the third place finisher by more than two feet. She is just the fourth North Surry athlete to win an indoor track state championship.

Riggs went on to win two medals at the 2A Outdoor Track State Meet in May. She was shot put state runner-up with a mark of 38-00.25 feet, just 2.5 inches behind the state champion,

and won a bronze medal in discus throw with a mark of 120-09. She met the MileSplit U.S. Second Team Standard in both events.

The 2023-24 school year wasn’t the first in which Riggs won three state medals.

As a sophomore, Riggs finished 1A/2A State Runner-up in shot put at the indoor championship. She posted a mark of 35-00.50 feet. She went on to win the 2A Outdoor Shot Put State Championship that spring with a mark of 40-05, then finished state runner-up in discus throw at the same meet with a mark of 109-11.

Before her run of state titles, Ella opener her high school track career by winning an indoor bronze medal for shot put as a freshman.



North Surry’s Ella Riggs receives the Best of Preps Women’s Indoor Track Award from Holly Lamm.



Ella Riggs release the shot at JDL Fast Track.

PHOTO BY CORY SMITH



Ella Riggs is pictured with her 1A/2A Indoor Track Shot Put Gold Medal.

GREYHOUND ATHLETICS

GARANCO, Inc.

GENERAL CONTRACTOR

***Retail • Commercial • Industrial
Multi-Family • Religious • Civic***

Congratulations to all area School Athletes!

School Sports are one of the strongest building blocks of a great community!
Your athletic dedication is one of the strongest building blocks of your futures!
Continue on that path and you will build a successful life... trust us... we know a lot
about building!

Best Wishes to all our Students!

**Proud Sponsor of Ella Riggs of North Surry High School, Women's Indoor Track
Athlete of the Year!*



Pilot Mountain, North Carolina

(336) 368-2788 • Rick White - ricky@garanco.com

www.garanco.com

Ashlyn Newman

WOMEN’S SOCCER ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY SHE WON:

Carroll County’s Ashlyn Newman assaulted the Carroll County record book in 2024, setting new school records for goals in a game (six, twice), goals in a season (39), and goals in a career (86).

Newman became just the second Cavalier in school history to record 50 career goals in Carroll County’s second match of the season. It would serve as an omen for the rest of the year as she went on to accumulate 39 goals and five assists as the team finished with a 13-4 record and third in Region 3D.

Newman broke the school’s all-time goals record on April 20 with her 72nd career goal against Alleghany, a game in which she tied two more of her own school records for most goals in a game (six) and points in a game (12).

Newman graduated first out of her class of 232 students with a weighted GPA of 4.7. She has also already graduated with an Associates Degree in Applied Science from Wytheville Community College with a 4.0 GPA.

Newman will enroll at Liberty University in the fall with plans of joining the ministry after college.



Carroll County’s Ashlyn Newman receives the Best of Preps Women’s Soccer Award from Bob Ward.



Carroll County’s Ashlyn Newman makes a move against a Galax defender. Newman set several school records in 2024.



Carroll County’s Ashlyn Newman scored 39 goals to lead the Cavaliers to a 13-4 record in 2024.

**CONGRATULATIONS
ASHLYN NEWMAN
FOR WINNING BEST
IN WOMEN'S SOCCER!**

INTERSTATE

SIGN CO INC

**SERVING THE
COMMUNITY
SINCE
1991**

**Proudly Servicing Mount Airy and the
surrounding communities!**

President - Rick Shelton

**336-789-3069
800-368-7571
www.interstatesign.com
info@interstatesign.com**

- Channel Letters
- Awnings
- LED Gas Price
- LED Message Center
- Church Signs
- Directional
- Monument
- Flag Mount
- Wall Mount
- Vehicle Graphics
- Pump Toppers
- POP Signage
- Billboards (New & Wraps)
- Glass & Window Graphics
- Poster Graphics
- DOT Signage
- Directionals
- C-Store Graphic Packages
- Banners
- Informative & Wayfinding
- Architectural Letters
- Reflective Signage
- Magnetic Signage
- Corporate Identification



Sophie Welborn

WOMEN'S SWIMMING ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY SHE WON:

Sophie Welborn put a bow on her accomplished high school swimming career by earning three medals at the 1A/2A State Championship Meet.

Welborn's performance at the state meet was highlighted by a state runner-up finish in the 50-yard freestyle. She posted a time of 23.97 seconds, which was just .57 seconds behind the state champion, and had the highest finish of any 1A competitor.

Welborn earned two more podium finishes as a part of relay teams. She teamed with Sarika Hatcher, Morgan Wiles and Elissa Dickerson to finish third in the 200-yard freestyle relay with a time of 1:44.97. She then teamed with Hatcher, Wiles and Paloma Oliveri to take fourth in the 400-yard freestyle relay with a time

of 3:53.34.

Welborn and teammates Hatcher, Wiles and Mya Brown finished just off the podium in the 200-yard medley relay with a time of 1:58.10.

Elkin finished fifth overall in the state competition, which was the highest of any 1A team. Elkin also had the highest finish of any 1A team in all four of Welborn's events.

Welborn graduates with more than a dozen state medals, including seven state championships as a part of relay teams.

Sophie won two regional championships and had two regional runner-up finishes this season. She was also named Northwest 1A Conference Female Swimmer of the Year – an honor she also won in 2022.

She will continue her swimming career at Catawba College.



Elkin's Sophie Welborn receives the Best of Preps Women's Swimming Award from Holly Lamm.



Sophie Welborn makes the turn off the wall while swimming freestyle at the YMCA National competition last year.



Elkin's 200-yard freestyle relay team is pictured with their bronze medals at the 2024 1A/2A State Championship meet. From left: Sophie Welborn, Morgan Wiles, Elissa Dickerson and Sarika Hatcher.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN BAKER



*A Family-Owned Company
Helping Your Family*



**Congratulations
2024 BEST OF PREPS
Athletes!**

Improving our neighbors' lives through compassionate residential nursing care and rehabilitation.

***Voted Best Assisted Living Facility and Best Alzheimer/Memory Care in The Tribune's 2023 Readers' Choice Awards!**

700 Johnson Ridge Road, Elkin, NC 28621 • (336) 527-7600 • chathamrehab.com

SPONSORED BY: **TC SPORTS & REHAB**



East Wilkes High School Cardinal Pride

Marching Band

HIGH SCHOOL BAND
OF THE YEAR



SPONSORED BY: SLATE FUNERAL HOME

Bella

Hutchens

VOLLEYBALL

ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY SHE WON:

Bella Hutchens walked into East Surry's volleyball program during the shortened 2020-21 season, in which the team only played 11 matches but finished 9-2. That season was just a teaser of the next three seasons of domination.

Beginning with her sophomore season, Hutchens helped lead East Surry to three-straight conference regular season championship, three-straight conference tournament championships, three-straight Elite Eight appearances in the 2A State Playoffs and an overall record of 75-9. During that three-year span, East Surry went 36-0 against conference

opponents and Hutchens was named Foothills 2A Conference Player of the Year in two of those seasons.

As a senior, Hutchens racked up 432 kills, which ranked No. 12 in North Carolina among all classifications. She was one of only two players in the state to record at least 430 kills with a .387 hitting percentage. She had a kill percentage of 51.9%.

Hutchens also recorded 59 aces, 53 blocks and 222 digs.

East Surry finished the season 25-3. Hutchens was named to the N.C. Volleyball Coaches Association's All-State First Team.

She will continue her volleyball career at Appalachian State University.



East Surry's Bella Hutchens receives the Best of Preps Volleyball Award from Bob Ward.



Bella Hutchens rises for an attack against Reagan.



Bella Hutchens, right, celebrates after scoring a point against Reagan.

*Honored to Serve Stokes County
and Surrounding Areas Since 1923*

**Congratulations to Mount Airy Senior High School
Best of Preps 2024 Winners!**

**Men's Community Service Award -
Ian Gallimore**

**Women's Tennis Athlete of the Year -
Carrie Marion**



Slate Funeral Home

ESTABLISHED 1923

132 East Dalton Road • King, NC 27021 • Phone: (336) 983-5176

Cameron Ring

BEACH VOLLEYBALL ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

WHY SHE WON:

West Stokes' Cameron Ring is a pioneer for the school in helping the Wildcats in its inaugural season in beach volleyball.

The senior finished 4-2 during the regular season with partner Presley Barker. The duo finished tied for fifth at the North Carolina High

School Athletic Association State Championships.

She helped the team finish the season with wins over East Forsyth and R.J. Reynolds.

Ring signed her letter-of-intent to play beach volleyball next season at Palm Beach Atlantic University in West Palm Beach, FL.

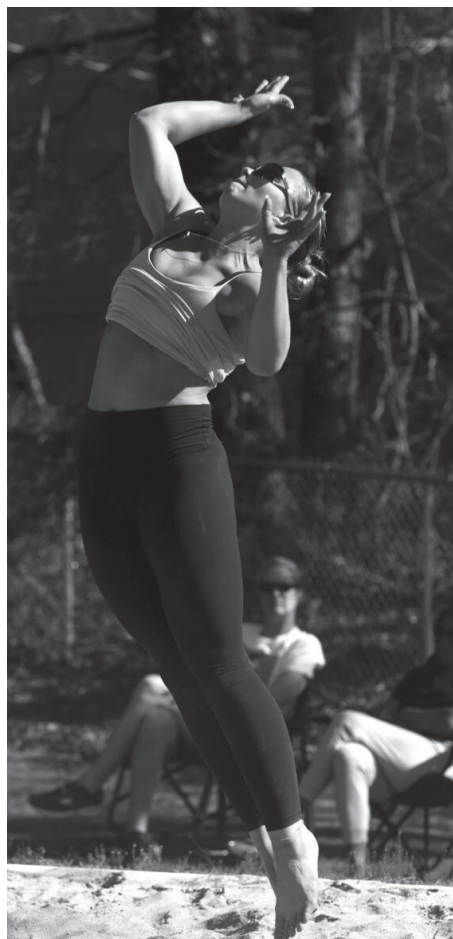


PHOTO BY ROBERT MONEY

The Wildcats' Cameron Ring serves during an early match against Reagan.



PHOTO BY ROBERT MONEY

The Wildcats' Cameron Ring dives to return a volley against Reagan.



West Stokes' Cameron Ring receives the Best of Preps Beach Volleyball award from Bob Ward.



COURTESY PHOTO

West Stokes' Cameron Ring (left) with partner Presley Barker, finished fifth at the NCHSAA Beach Volleyball State Championships.



Urgent Care *Elkin*

**MINOR ILLNESSES | SPRAINS
FRACTURES | DOT PHYSICALS
SPORTS PHYSICALS
WORKER'S COMP EXAMS**

336-366-1072 | 631 CC Camp Road, Elkin, NC 28621
www.hughchatham.org