

PIGSKIN PREVIEW



**EAST COLUMBUS
GATORS**



**SOUTH COLUMBUS
STALLIONS**



**WEST COLUMBUS
VIKINGS**



**WHITEVILLE
WOLFPACK**



The Original Dale’s Seafood salutes the Columbus County Head Football Coaches



Doug Skipper
East Columbus

Education
High School: South Columbus
College: Coastal Carolina University
Degree: BS Sports Management/Business

Football Coaching Experience
Hallsboro Middle
Williams Township
TownCreek Middle
Mattamuskeet Early College
Heide Trask High School
East Columbus Middle

Name two things that make a great teammate:
Pride and commitment

Name your favorite non-football player pro athlete past or present:
Michael Jordan





Russell Dove
South Columbus

Education
High School: Bladenboro
College: UNC Pembroke
Degree(s): B. A. Physical Education
M. A. Physical Education

Football Coaching Experience
West Columbus assistant: 2003–2008
West Bladen assistant: 2009–2012
West Bladen Head Coach: 2013–2015
South Columbus Head Coach: 2016–present

Name two things that make a great teammate:
Committed and selfless

Name your favorite non-football player pro athlete past or present:
James Worthy





LaMonte Williamson
West Columbus

Education
High School: West Columbus
College: Winston-Salem State University
Degree: B. A. Physical Education

Football Coaching Experience
West Columbus assistant: 2016–2018
West Columbus Head Coach: 2019–present

Name two things that make a great teammate:
Dependable and committed

Name your favorite non-football player pro athlete past or present:
Michael Jordan





Jarrett “JP” Price
Whiteville

Education
High School: South Columbus
College: UNC Pembroke
Degree: B.A. Secondary Social Studies

Football Coaching Experience
South Columbus assistant: 2007–2008
Wallace-Rose Hill assistant: 2009–2016
St. James, S.C. assistant: 2017
Whiteville Head Coach: 2018–present:

Name two things that make a great teammate:
Competitive, readiness, takes ownership

Name your favorite non-football player pro athlete past or present:
Ken Griffey Jr.



Good luck to all Columbus County teams in 2023!



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2023 Waccamaw Conference High School Football Schedules

EAST COLUMBUS

AUG. 18	at Jones Senior
AUG. 25	at Wilson Prep
SEPT. 1	Roanoke Rapids
SEPT. 8	West Bladen
SEPT. 15	Pender*
SEPT. 22	at East Bladen*
SEPT. 29	South Columbus*
OCT. 6	at Whiteville*
OCT. 13	OPEN
OCT. 20	at Trask*
OCT. 27	West Columbus*

SOUTH COLUMBUS

AUG. 18	West Bladen
AUG. 25	at South Brunswick
SEPT. 1	at Loris, S.C.
SEPT. 8	Union
SEPT. 15	at East Bladen*
SEPT. 22	Pender*
SEPT. 29	at East Columbus*
OCT. 6	at West Columbus*
OCT. 13	Trask*
OCT. 20	OPEN
OCT. 27	Whiteville*

WEST COLUMBUS

AUG. 18	Union
AUG. 25	Sandhills Titans
SEPT. 1	at West Bladen
SEPT. 8	at St. Pauls
SEPT. 15	at Trask*
SEPT. 22	OPEN
SEPT. 29	Whiteville*
OCT. 6	South Columbus*
OCT. 13	at East Bladen*
OCT. 20	Pender*
OCT. 27	at East Columbus*

WHITEVILLE

AUG. 18	at Bunn
AUG. 25	at West Brunswick
SEPT. 1	James Kenan
SEPT. 8	Clinton
SEPT. 15	OPEN
SEPT. 22	Trask*
SEPT. 29	at West Columbus*
OCT. 6	East Columbus*
OCT. 13	at Pender*
OCT. 20	East Bladen*
OCT. 27	at South Columbus*

HEIDE TRASK

AUG. 18	Rocky Mount Prep
AUG. 25	Hobpton
SEPT. 1	at Sandhills Titans
SEPT. 8	Dixon
SEPT. 15	West Columbus*
SEPT. 22	at Whiteville*
SEPT. 29	OPEN
OCT. 6	East Bladen*
OCT. 13	at South Columbus*
OCT. 20	East Columbus*
OCT. 27	at Pender*

PENDER

AUG. 18	at Lejeune
AUG. 25	OPEN
SEPT. 1	at Union
SEPT. 8	Wallace-Rose Hill
SEPT. 15	at East Columbus*
SEPT. 22	at South Columbus*
SEPT. 29	East Bladen*
OCT. 6	Hobpton
OCT. 13	Whiteville*
OCT. 20	at West Columbus*
OCT. 27	Trask*

EAST BLADEN

AUG. 18	at North Brunswick
AUG. 25	West Bladen
SEPT. 1	at Ashley
SEPT. 8	James Kenan
SEPT. 15	South Columbus*
SEPT. 22	East Columbus*
SEPT. 29	at Pender*
OCT. 6	at Trask*
OCT. 13	West Columbus*
OCT. 20	at Whiteville*
OCT. 27	OPEN



*Waccamaw Conference contests

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A ‘baker’s dozen’ games to pay attention to in 2023

By Franklin Davis
franklindavis@nrcolumbus.com

In the matter-of-factly spoken words of Dalton, a character played in the movie “Road House” by the late Patrick Swayze, “Opinions vary.” I’m certain if you compiled a list of games to focus on, some of my choices would be omitted and other contests added. That’s OK! We can amicably agree to disagree on a subject so trivial. However, in pursuit of a story relevant to the 2023 high school football season, here is my list and a reason or two why I selected each game.

The contests are listed in order of occurrence, not of significance.

AUGUST 18

ECHS AT JONES

Why does a game between two schools who combined to win four games last season, East three and Jones one, make the list? Two reasons. It is Doug Skipper’s first game as Gators head coach and two, it’s winnable.

It’s simple. East needs wins to keep the current roster engaged and to be attractive to future players. There will be a number of games in which the Gators will be decided underdogs. This is not one of them. Take advantage of the opportunity.

WHS AT BUNN

If you have ever made the trip to Five County Stadium in Zebulon, then you have 15–20 more minutes to get to Bunn in Franklin County. I included this game because of the “unknown” factor.

Andre Davis is in his first season as head coach after serving as an assistant at his alma mater. Bunn was 4–7 last season and has not had a winning season since 2017.

Expectations for Whiteville football are always high, and the expectation is to achieve a win in this contest. Still, a new opponent with a new coach can be a little nerve-wracking in a season-opener.

The last meeting between Bunn and Whiteville was in 1994, when the visiting Wildcats came away with a 40–34 win in the second round of the playoffs.

AUGUST 25

SCHS AT SOUTH BRUNSWICK

I expect this week two matchup to be a very good early season test for South Columbus. The Stallions defense will be challenged by a good Cougars offense with returning senior starting quarterback Jameson Prince and senior receiver Jordan Davis.

After having some continuity return to the Stallions weight room routine, all eyes will be on seeing if Coach Dove’s team can return to dominating the line of scrimmage like South teams of previous seasons.

SEPT. 8

WEST BLADEN AT ECHS

What a boost to the East program a win here would be! West Bladen won last year’s game 23–0, but the score was only 3–0 at halftime. Gators mistakes led to a 20-point Knights third period explosion.

Again, not asking Coach Skipper’s team to pull a major upset. Just play mistake-free football and give yourselves the chance to win a game that, on paper, looks promising.

WCHS AT ST. PAULS

The Bulldogs are a tough foe for the Vikings to take on the week before conference play opens. As an outsider, I don’t think a win here is an absolute necessity to propel the team forward, but being competitive for four quarters is.

The Vikings could possibly come into this game 3–0. Who has any idea how good their week two opponent, Sandhills Titans, will be? A win over St. Pauls and an

undefeated non-conference slate would add more coal to the football fire that began burning in Cerro Gordo last season.

CLINTON AT WHS

Dark Horses is certainly an inappropriate mascot for the 2023 Clinton football team. North Carolina high school football specialist Chris Hughes has Clinton as the number-one ranked 2A team in his preseason poll. That is definitely not a “dark horse” contender. Now, he doesn’t consider Whiteville as “chopped liver,” either, placing them fifth statewide.

This game will be a measuring stick for the Wolfpack that could turn into a paddling. However, a win here by Coach Price’s team will send the fans’ expectations for the remainder of the season to the highest level in several years.

Since 1992 (as far as I was willing to venture into yesteryears), Clinton holds a 9–2 edge over Whiteville. The teams have met only twice since 2012 with the home team winning each time. The Wolfpack won 16–6 in 2013, and the Dark Horses won 19–7 in 2014.

CHOPPED LIVER

I have no personal knowledge of this, but that’s what the internet is for. One explanation given for “chopped liver” to mean something inferior is that, on any traditional Jewish dinner or buffet table, chopped liver is either an appetizer or a side dish. It is meant to be a complement to the entrée, but never taking center stage.

SEPT. 15

SCHS AT EAST BLADEN

Welcome back to the conference, Eagles! And you get to open Waccamaw play with the only Waccamaw Conference foe that has a winning record against you. Actually the EB Eagles and the Stallions have split 22 contests. South Columbus has a 6–2 edge over the EB Cougars.

Both schools are looking to reestablish themselves as football teams to be reckoned with come playoff time. A win here is a big step in that direction.

WCHS AT TRASK

This game did not go well for West Columbus in Rocky Point last season. Frankly, the 28–7 final score did not indicate how Trask dominated the action. Add in some postgame chatter and you can see where Vikings coach LaMonte Williamson would have this game circled on his calendar.

To West’s credit, they bounced back from the loss and played well the remainder of the season.

This contest is definitely one to keep an eye on. Let’s hope everyone can keep their emotions in check.

SEPT. 29

WHS AT WCHS

For most bygone years this game has been the season for West Columbus. The Vikings exhibited their program’s maturation last season by playing well in this game (lost 21–7), but then winning the next four games. Previous West teams had often lost interest in the remaining schedule after a loss to Whiteville.

Both teams will be challenged to be unbeaten when Sept. 29 rolls around, but what a night in Cerro Gordo it would be if they were.

Whiteville has won 20 consecutive games in the series.

OCT. 6

SCHS AT WCHS

Without a doubt, this game will rank in almost

everyone’s top three games to look forward to this season. The Vikings broke a 28-game losing streak with their 54–38 last season. The last-second win by South Columbus in 2021 still does not sit well with some West Columbus faithful.

A good dose of “dislike” between the two football programs has developed over the last couple of seasons. If that attitude doesn’t cross the line, it makes for a great rivalry.

With the rearranging of the Waccamaw Conference schedule, West comes into this contest after playing Whiteville and South after facing East Columbus.

OCT. 13

WCHS AT EAST BLADEN

Forgive me if it appears that I consider a lot of West Columbus games interesting. I think the “Can the Vikings sustain their football success?” story is one of the most interesting this football season.

The last four meetings between the schools have resulted in four wins by the Eagles by a total score of 194–36. The teams did not play from 2009 through 2016 nor either of the last two seasons.

East Bladen’s 11–13 record over the past two seasons does not cause the trepidation in the opposition it once did. The Eagles aren’t bad (but will never be the same without Glenn Frey, oops, wrong Eagles), but they aren’t chopped liver either.

OCT. 27

WCHS AT ECHS

The Vikings have won the last three meetings to tie the all-time series at 16 wins apiece. Depending on the number of 1A East schools fielding football teams, it’s possible both teams will be playoff bound regardless of this contest’s outcome. Entering the playoffs off a win would certainly be a benefit.

WHS AT SCHS

I mean, this game has to make the list. South still holds a significant advantage in the series (20–11), but Whiteville has won four in a row and dominated the last two meetings, winning by a combined score of 112–7. A South Columbus win could be a season-maker. It’s Whiteville and South Columbus, and that is enough reason to make the list.

HONORABLE MENTION

Whiteville had better not look past James Kenan (Sept. 1) to its meeting with Clinton as the Tigers have definitely regrown some claws.

East Bladen and Whiteville will meet for the 53rd time (Oct. 20) with the series tied at 25–25–2. This does not include the games between the Etown Yellow Jackets and Wolfpack that go back many years earlier to the East Bladen consolidation in 1971.

The border battle between South Columbus and Loris, S.C., is always a game to pay attention to. The Stallions will be looking to break a two-game skid against the Lions.

CONCLUSION

There are plenty of interesting games on the schedule, so go out and support your favorite team. If you don’t have a favorite, go anyway. The young men playing, the cheerleaders and the band members will appreciate your presence.

2023 ‘Pigskin Picks’ contest

The News Reporter “Pigskin Picks” contest will open Monday, Aug. 28. A link to the contest will be on the NRcolumbus.com website. Paper entry forms will appear in the Thursday, Aug. 31, print edition of The News Reporter.

Entries may be submitted online at NRcolumbus.com. or by dropping off a paper entry at The News Reporter office by closing Friday of that week’s contest. NO reproductions will be accepted!

Mailed entries must be postmarked by the Friday of that week’s contest and received no later than the following Tuesday.

Wishing all the county players and coaches a great 2023 season!



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Local cheerleaders travel to CheerHawaii Invitational

By Dashuan Vereen
dashuanvereen@nrcolumbus.com

Seven local cheerleaders had the opportunity to attend a cheer camp in a picturesque destination this summer.

South Columbus’ Ryleigh Hayes, Madelyn Benton and Kaylee Waggle; West Columbus’ Lyla Bullard, Jordan Newkirk and Chloe Gordon; and Whiteville’s Carly Sanderson attended the CheerHawaii USA Summer Invitational from June 21–28.

For Newkirk, it was a great experience to take a trip with her fellow cheerleaders, most of whom she’s known since she was younger.

“It was amazing,” said Newkirk. “I learned a lot about leadership and a lot of techniques that I can bring back to my team. The sightseeing was gorgeous as well.”

According to cheerhawaiiusa.com, the event “provides an amazing blend of college prep cheer instruction with an incredible Hawaiian experience,” on the University of Hawaii campus on the Oahu island.

“At the end of every night we had classes,” said Newkirk. “And our director — we called him ‘Uncle Alvin’ — would teach us life lessons. It was a great experience.”

Jordan’s mother, Frankye Boone-Newkirk, also added a special thanks for the community support and donations the team received during the buildup to the trip.

According to cheerhawaiiusa.com, CheerHawaii focuses on three areas: “building cheer skills and preparing for the college level, growth in leadership, and experiencing the Hawaiian culture.”

Activities provided to the campers included beach time on North Shore and Waikiki, a visit to the Pearl Harbor USS Arizona Memorial, shopping at the famous Aloha Stadium Swap Meet, canoe paddling, hula dancing, a Waikiki Trolley Ride and visiting the Polynesian Cultural Center Hawaiian Luau and Show.



Submitted photo

Seven local cheerleaders earned the opportunity to travel to the CheerHawaii USA Summer Invitational this summer. From left, they are Chloe Gordon, Lyla Bullard, Jordan Newkirk, Carly Sanderson, Ryleigh Hayes, Kaylee Waggle, Madelyn Benton.

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Randy Coleman 910-207-2370
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Football

Schedule

2023 ACC FOOTBALL COMPOSITE SCHEDULE			
WEEK 1	WEEK 5	WEEK 11	IT'S FOOTBALL SEASON!
Thursday, Aug. 31 Elon at Wake Forest	Friday, Sept. 29 Louisville at NC State	Thursday, Nov. 9 Virginia at Louisville	
Friday, Sept. 1 Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game Louisville at Georgia Tech (Atlanta, Ga.) Miami (OH) at Miami	Saturday, Sept. 30 Virginia at Boston College Clemson at Syracuse Notre Dame at Duke Bowling Green at Georgia Tech Pitt at Virginia Tech Open: Florida State, Miami, North Carolina, Wake Forest	Saturday, Nov. 11 Virginia Tech at Boston College Georgia Tech at Clemson Duke at North Carolina Miami at Florida State NC State at Wake Forest Pitt at Syracuse (The Bronx, N.Y.)	
Saturday, Sept. 2 Northern Illinois at Boston College Duke's Mayo Classic (Charlotte, N.C.) North Carolina vs. South Carolina NC State at UConn Wofford at Pitt Colgate at Syracuse Virginia at Tennessee (Nashville, Tenn.) Old Dominion at Virginia Tech	WEEK 6	WEEK 12	
Sunday, Sept. 3 Camping World Kickoff LSU vs. Florida State (Orlando, Fla.)	Saturday, Oct. 7 Boston College at Army Wake Forest at Clemson Virginia Tech at Florida State Georgia Tech at Miami Notre Dame at Louisville Syracuse at North Carolina Marshall at NC State William & Mary at Virginia Open: Duke, Pitt	Thursday, Nov. 16 Boston College at Pitt	
WEEK 2	WEEK 7	WEEK 13	
Thursday, Sept. 7 Murray State at Louisville	Saturday, Oct. 14 NC State at Duke Syracuse at Florida State Louisville at Pitt Miami at North Carolina Wake Forest at Virginia Tech Open: Boston College, Clemson, Georgia Tech, Virginia	Friday, Nov. 24 Miami at Boston College	
Saturday, Sept. 9 Holy Cross at Boston College Charleston Southern at Clemson Lafayette at Duke Southern Miss at Florida State South Carolina State at Georgia Tech Texas A&M at Miami App State at North Carolina Notre Dame at NC State Cincinnati at Pitt Western Michigan at Syracuse James Madison at Virginia Purdue at Virginia Tech Vanderbilt at Wake Forest	WEEK 8	Saturday, Nov. 25 Clemson at South Carolina Pitt at Duke Florida State at Florida Georgia at Georgia Tech Kentucky at Louisville North Carolina at NC State Wake Forest at Syracuse Virginia Tech at Virginia	
WEEK 3	Saturday, Oct. 21 Boston College at Georgia Tech Clemson at Miami Duke at Florida State Virginia at North Carolina Pitt at Wake Forest Open: Louisville, NC State, Syracuse, Virginia Tech	ACC FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP GAME	
Thursday, Sept. 14 Bethune-Cookman at Miami	WEEK 9	Saturday, Dec. 2 ACC Football Championship Game Bank of America Stadium Charlotte, N.C.	
Friday, Sept. 15 Virginia at Maryland	Thursday, Oct. 26 Syracuse at Virginia Tech		
Saturday, Sept. 16 Florida State at Boston College Florida Atlantic at Clemson Northwestern at Duke Georgia Tech at Ole Miss Louisville at Indiana Minnesota at North Carolina VMI at NC State Pitt at West Virginia Syracuse at Purdue Virginia Tech at Rutgers Wake Forest at Old Dominion	Saturday, Oct. 28 UConn at Boston College Clemson at NC State Duke at Louisville Florida State at Wake Forest North Carolina at Georgia Tech Virginia at Miami Pitt at Notre Dame		
WEEK 4	WEEK 10		
Friday, Sept. 22 NC State at Virginia	Thursday, Nov. 2 Wake Forest at Duke		
Saturday, Sept. 23 Boston College at Louisville Florida State at Clemson Duke at UConn Georgia Tech at Wake Forest Miami at Temple North Carolina at Pitt Army at Syracuse Virginia Tech at Marshall	Friday, Nov. 3 Boston College at Syracuse		
	Saturday, Nov. 4 Notre Dame at Clemson Florida State at Pitt Georgia Tech at Virginia Virginia Tech at Louisville Miami at NC State Campbell at North Carolina		

Optimism high as area schools approach new year

By Dashuan Vereen
dashuanvereen@nrcolumbus.com

All of our area high schools have reasons to be optimistic about the potential of their 2023 campaigns as they race into week one of the football season.

As teams concluded their offseason and set their sights on the start of the season, the four area head coaches gave their thoughts on this year's rosters and added what they're the most excited about for the upcoming season.

Whiteville

A team with high aspirations this upcoming season, the Wolfpack return a deep varsity class following a solid 2022 season.

"Our experience should be our biggest strength," said Head Coach JP Price. "We have a big senior class. We return nine starters on offense and eight on defense. Having that returning experience should be huge for us."

Similar to last season, the Wolfpack will play a tough non-conference slate as they look to gain valuable experience and an upper hand in the playoff seeding.

"Our goal, of course, is to go 4-0 in non-conference," said Price. "But it's also important for us to be healthy and to make the correct adjustments based on what we did good and what we did bad. Those games are important — they're only going to help our playoff seeding."

Along with returning Waccamaw Conference Offensive Player of the Year Luke Odham at quarterback, the Wolfpack have an arsenal of halfbacks at their disposal to help lead their attack.

"We're fast-paced," said Price. "We run a no-huddle offense — we operate in a hybrid wing-T. We're going to run the football, but we have some players on the outside that are going to stretch the field in the passing game to open it up."

West Columbus

Following a strong 2022 season, West Columbus enters this season looking to add to its recent playoff success.

"Our skill-guys will be our biggest strength," said Head Coach LaMonte Williamson. "We have a lot of returning skill-guys from last season. We've got some guys with some speed with the ball in their hands. I think we're going to be in good shape this season."

"I think we're going to be good offensively. Our linemen are going to play a large role for the team this season."

The Vikings will look to return to the playoffs this season after capturing two postseason victories last season.

"Defensively, we're missing our top linebacker in Xander Axelberg. But we have some guys that we feel that can fill those shoes. We still have D.J. Bryant. We can put him at end or tackle and he's going to be a problem against anyone he's lined up against. "Overall, we have a good group of returning players, including Noah Godwin, Jaylen Bellamy and Triston Freeman. We have a lot of guys on that side of the ball that can make some plays."

East Columbus

First-year Head Coach Doug Skipper will look to make his mark on the Gators this upcoming season.

"We're going to have a totally different mindset," said Skipper. "I have a recruiting background from multiple sides, and what I've seen is that we've had so much talent that should be going to the next level and playing college football, but it just wasn't utilized or they weren't put in front of the right people."

"I want to try and change that culture. We

"I feel like our defense is going to be a big strength. We have a great defensive line and a good group of linebackers. We're trying to mold into a really good running team offensively."

ECHS Head Coach Doug Skipper

want to have an aggressive mindset. Our guys seemed to be confused at the different offseason work that we've implemented this season, but there is a grind to running a successful program, and that's what I'm trying to instill in our guys."

Skipper added that he is expecting key plays from his defensive unit this season.

"I feel like our defense is going to be a big strength," said Skipper. "We have a great defensive line and a good group of linebackers. We're trying to mold into a really good running team offensively. We're really young, especially up front, so we're trying to clean up some technical issues, but we have a good group of running backs."

South Columbus

South Columbus Head Coach Russell Dove expects his group of experienced linemen to be a key force to an improved 2023 campaign.

"I'll expect us to be a little faster this year," said Dove. "I also expect us to play a tougher brand of football than we did last year. We have a lot of kids that have bought into what we're doing. We have deeper upperclassmen, and we're expecting some big things from them."

The Stallions boast a run-heavy style, and will look to exhibit a physical brand of football this season.

"Offensively, we want to run the football," said Dove. "Our offensive line is coming back, so I expect for us to improve upfront. We want to stretch the field and we want to sweep. That's our go-to offensively."

The Stallions defensive effort will also play a key role for the team as they attempt to re-

turn to the playoffs, where they haven't won a game since 2018.

"Defensively we need to be faster and play more aggressive," said Dove. "We have to play harder and with more effort on both sides of the ball. We need to play a more physical brand of football, and we have to tackle better. If we can do that, I think we'll have a much more successful season."



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9/29 South at East Columbus
10/6 South at West Columbus
10/13 Trask at South Columbus
10/20 Pender at West Columbus
10/27 Whiteville at South Columbus

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Jordan Burney



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Jerome Graham



Matthew George



Levi Zickafoose



Ashton Harrelson



Jaxon Lunceford



Dakarai Porter



Franko Busby



Jacob Stukes



Devon Jenrette



Bryson Mintz



Kaden Best



Josh Jacobs



Brooks Mclean



Alejo Pena-Garcia



Jabri Dixon



Gabriel Green



Kyle Price

Not Pictured

- Dawson Crosby
- Jaquise Smith
- Davonte Marshburn
- Luis Calderon
- Demetrius Dexter



East Columbus senior football players

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2023 East Columbus Gators Cheerleaders



Front L-R: Lakyn Wilson, Myleigh Moore, Melissa Ward, Destiny Robbins, Camryn Kemp, Morgan Best, J'mauria Williams
Middle L-R: Danica Kern, Hayven Jacobs, Shalonda Stanley, Jade Bright, Callie Jacobs, Ryleigh Baldwin, Kyleigh Patrick
Back L-R: Meela Roberts, Kirstin Jacobs, Kelsie Watts, Makayla Carter, Lakatia Brown, Erica Reese Bennet, Serenity Shufford, Rylie Graham
Not pictured: Shamiah Johnson, Brianna Johnson, Tamira Brown, Carlie Jacobs, Ryleigh Owens, Ariel Patrick
Coach-Sloan Deans



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Jared Caines



Craig Behler



Rush Blackwell



Logan Gore



Justin Bianchini



Javon McClaughlin



Randall Duncan



Cayleb Long



Exavior Bellman



Mason Parker



Jace Chestnut



Connor Waggle



Bo Kinlaw



Keyon Phillips



Jake Cribb



Luis Baltazar



Austin Duncan



Josh Wooster



Tyrese Johnson



Cameron Long



Larry Jones



South Columbus senior football players



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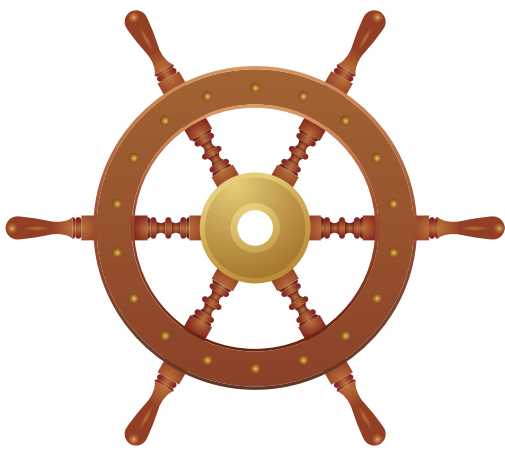
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2023 South Columbus Stallions Cheerleaders



Front L-R: Jaelyn Kinlaw, Lexi Cartrette, Ryleigh Hayes, Kaylee Waggle (co-captain), Lilly Duncan (captain), Madelyn Benton (co-captain), Kyndall Buffkin, Chloe Cribb, Hannah Nobles
Middle L-R: Nyreonna Bryant, Alexis Shepherd, Anna-Grace Phillips, Emerson Tompkins, Hayden Hardee, Kayla Stanley, Emma Parker, Ella Fowler
Back L-R: Marleigh Johnson, JamieLynn Godwin, Azyriah Bush, Kayla Hayes
Coach-Mary Gore



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Ira Warwick



Jason Greene



Justin Hughes



Justin White



Mike Smith



Scott Johnson



Daniel Tisdale

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Looking back at football teams from yesteryear

1966
Whiteville
WOLFPACK
Head Coach
Jerry Cartrette



Photo courtesy of Dean Lewis

Bottom row, left to right: Rodney English, Andy Inman, Mitchell Watts, Sandy McNeill, George Lord, Donnie Strickland, Greg Cameron and Mike Formyduval. Second row: Dick Wyche, Buddy Anderson, Calvin Shearin, Melvin Herring, Jimmy Singletary, Ted Stover, O.C. Stevens, Dickson Skipper and Ed Baldwin. Third row: Bill Viets, Donnie Viets, Dickie Turner, Preston Melton, Bill Seelhorst, Tommy Powell, Ricky Maxwell, Andy Warren and Herbie Smith. Top row: Lawrence Baldwin, Bob Dawson, Chris Suggs, Steve Small, Gary Kramer, Tommy Palmer and Mark Stanley.



Photo courtesy of Columbus County Schools

1973 Tabor City Red Devils, Head Coach Jack Holley

Bottom row, left to right: Alpha Smith, Richard Fowler, Brian Harrelson, Sam Rogers, Kenny Fowler, Craig Larrimore, Steve Wright, Donald Alford, Dale Cribb and Tony Larrimore. Second row: Rezell Jordan and Joe Ray (managers), Nicky Fowler, Rodney Fonvielle, Charles Mobley, Mike Broadnax, Ronald Alford, Clark Dorman, Nelson Lee, Glenn Cartrette, Ed Worley, Willie Davis and Richard Gore (manager). Top row: Ron Fowler, Clint Grainger, Mike Stephens, Roger Earp, Darrel Spivey, Bradford Fipps, Lewis Wright, Leonard Jordan, Stan Wright, Alan Wright, Gene Burroughs, Darrell Faircloth and Herbet Bell.



Photo courtesy of West Columbus High School

1979 West Columbus Vikings, Head Coach Jack Gaster

Front row, left to right: Keith Noble, Lewis Shaw, James Martin, Davis Martin, George Reaves, Lester Frink, Ricky Mack, Andre McKoy, Chris Paige, Chris Lee and Gary Bulloch. Second row: Billy Long (manager), Levon McKinnnon, Wendell Chestnut, Steve Hardin, Ricky Hilbourn, Ray Charles Bullock, Robert Pennington, Robert Britt, Pat Coleman, Tony McDougal, Mark Overbie, Greg Haynes and Robert Evans. Top row: Greg Chestnut, Chick Floyd, Bernard Davis, Tim Hardy, Anthony Jones, Reggie Singletary, Ray Bradley, Johnny McDuffie, Emith Gore and Ervin Gamble.



Photo courtesy of East Columbus High School

2008
ECHS
GATORS
Head Coach
Travis Connor

Varsity players included: John Jones, Joecephas Gore, Charles Bowen, Phillip Tyshawna, Demetrius McKelvie, Erick Mercado, Shelton Long, Tony Mitchell, Ricardo Melvin, Albert Demery, A.J. Howard, Daniel Nolan, Dallas Nolan, Donte Mitchell, Varice Graham, Luther Hawkins, Houston Barnes, Travis Campbell, Demetri Anders, Davon Bellamy, Chris Shipman, Carlton Rouse, Isaiah Farris, Derrick Bracey, Luther Hines, Myles Bostic, Garrett Howard, Darrin Jacobs and Andy Tapia.

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Columbus County football players who received 2022 All-Waccamaw Conference recognition

<u>EAST COLUMBUS GATORS</u> Jaquise Smith	<u>SOUTH COLUMBUS STALLIONS</u> Rush Blackwell Demonta Gore
<u>WHITEVILLE WOLFPACK</u> Luke Odham Will Fisher JT Todd Nikotis Gordon* CeeJai Batten-Richardson*	<u>WEST COLUMBUS VIKINGS</u> Xander Axelberg* Cameron Eady* Dwayne “DJ” Bryant
Honorable Mentions	
<u>EAST COLUMBUS GATORS</u> Brison Mintz Jeffrey Robbins*	<u>SOUTH COLUMBUS STALLIONS</u> Austin Duncan D.J. Farmer* Weldon Gore*
<u>WHITEVILLE WOLFPACK</u> Amari Best Jacob Collins* Ashton Hammonds Bryce Freedman Montrez Holland Dante Faulk	<u>WEST COLUMBUS VIKINGS</u> Jaylen Bellamy Ryder Haynes Unique Kelly Ryan Strickland
* Graduated players	

The Eagles have landed ... in the Waccamaw Conference

By Franklin Davis
franklindavis@nrcolumbus.com

After the NCHSAA granted East Bladen’s request to annul its marriage to the 2A classification, the Eagles had to divorce themselves from the all 2A Southeastern Conference. But waiting with open arms was a previous partner, the 1A/2A Waccamaw Conference. East Bladen joins Pender, East Columbus and West Columbus as 1A teams in the split league.

The move increased the number of teams in the Waccamaw to seven. This means each team in the league could have an open date at some point during the final seven weeks of the regular season. Pender is the exception, with an open date in week 2 and having Hobbtton scheduled for week 8. East Bladen, as the new kid on the

block, has week 11 as its open date.

The East Bladen Eagles, nee Cougars, have an overall record of 97–55–3 against the other six Waccamaw conference teams. South Columbus (17–13) is the only league squad to have a winning record all-time against East Bladen. The Stallions won 6 of 8 games with the Cougars and have split 22 meetings with the Eagles.

East Bladen is 25–25–2 against Whiteville. However, the more recent EB Eagles have bested the Wolfpack 14 of the 22 times they have met.

East Bladen is 29–10–1 against West Columbus and 11–0 as the Eagles. East Bladen leads East Columbus 14–2 and is 10–1 since 2002

when consolidation in Bladen County brought about an East Bladen mascot name change. Pender has won once in 12 tries against East Bladen and is 0–8 against the Eagles. Trask is 0–5 and wasn’t created until after East Bladen took on the Eagles moniker.

Adding East Bladen as a fourth 1A team is definitely a game-changer for East Columbus, West Columbus and Pender. Four 1A schools in a league still only results in one automatic playoff berth.

For Whiteville and South Columbus it only changes a team that regularly appeared on both schedules from a non-conference to a conference game.

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Scrimmage action



Photos by Franklin Davis and courtesy of Sampson Independent

High school football rule changes for 2023



Several rules have changed, but no rule change took place that allows officials to tackle players with the ball.

A change in enforcement for a holding penalty behind the line of scrimmage is the biggest notable change in high school football rules in 2023 by the National Federation of State High School Associations.

The rules revision says that the spot for enforcement of fouls behind the line of scrimmage, such as a holding penalty, is enforced from the previous spot, rather than from the spot of the foul. The exception is current penalties for illegal kicking, batting and participation fouls as well as offensive fouls occurring in the end zone that may result in a safety.

The NFHS Football Rules Committee members approved this rule change unanimously. The rule change is one of several revisions approved by the NFHS Board of Directors for the 2023 high school football season.

Other rule revisions
The NFHS also:

- Added criteria to help identify players who should be defined as defenseless receivers in relation to unnecessary or excessive contact. Forceful contact by an opponent against a receiver or against a person intercepting a pass (if that contact is not incidental to making a play on the ball) would result in a penalty. A penalty would not be enforced if the player making the tackle initiates with open hands or attempts to tackle by wrapping arms around a receiver.
- Clarified the intentional grounding rule change implemented in 2022. The rule change permits the exception for intentional grounding to the first player to possess the ball after the snap ends. If an additional person handles the ball, say on a double pass or reverse, that person could be subject to intentional grounding if they throw the ball away out of the pocket.
- Clarified when a player is back in bounds after being out of bounds. A player has to re-establish in-bounds before touching a ball. A player can't tip a ball to a fellow player while in the air and not have established himself in bounds.
- Decided that player towels may have one manufacturer's logo and/or one school logo. Neither can exceed 2 ¼ square inches. Towels must be a solid color and don't need to be the same color for each player. They can't be the same color as penalty flags or the ball.

Former Columbus County high school players now on collegiate football rosters



Xander Axelberg
Guilford
File photo



Zayvion Braddy
Barton
Photo courtesy of Barton Athletics



Frank Deleon
Guilford
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Cameron Eady
St. Andrews
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Kyan Ganus
Chowan
File photo



Nikotis Gordon
Chowan
File photo



DaNorie Mack
Methodist
Photo courtesy of Methodist Athletics



Ty Moss
East Carolina
Photo courtesy of ECU Athletics



Antonio Odom
St. Augustine
File photo



Ceejai Batten-Richardson
Wingate
File photo



Shaheem Shipman
UNC Pembroke
Photo courtesy of UNCP Athletics



Cameron Smith
Memphis
Photo courtesy of Memphis Athletics



Daejuan Thompson
N.C. State
Photo courtesy of N.C. State Athletics



Brandon Tyson
Elon
Photo courtesy of Elon Athletics



Donnell Wilson
Coastal Carolina
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Kenny Barfield

Kishawn Kelly

Wyatt Powell

Alex Barnes

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West Columbus senior football players



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2023 West Columbus Vikings Cheerleaders



Front L-R: Lyla Bullard (captain), Victoria Burge (captain), Chloe Gordon (captain), Jordan Newkirk (captain)
Middle L-R: Madison Greene, Addisyn Williamson, Brionna Bennett, Alice-Christian Spivey, Taylor Lancaster
Back L-R: Layla King, Abby McCleney, Ariana Britt, Eleshia Long, Morgan Nix, Kynnedee Graham
Coach- Tasha Dyson

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James Powell



Logan Bryan



Preston Worley



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Gabe Young



Jayden Gore



Caleb Jordan



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2023 Whiteville Wolfpack Cheerleaders



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Middle L-R: Jasiyah Brown, Takiyah Davis, Bella Moore, Tarasia Jones, Adryana Etheridge, Daijah Davis
Back L-R: C’Nyia Thompson-Boatwright, Carrie Nicholson, Brenna McPherson, Michael Peyton, Lauryn Singletary,
Laney Bullard, Kamora Ridgeway
Coach-Amanda Tedder Hill



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