

The Mount Airy News ^{THE} Stokes News THE TRIBUNE The Hadkin Ripple

High School FOOTBALL PREVIEW 2026



EAST SURRY



EAST WILKES



ELKIN



FORBUSH



MOUNT AIRY



NORTH STOKES



NORTH SURRY



SOUTH STOKES



STARMOUNT



SURRY CENTRAL



WEST STOKES

WHAT'S *Inside*



Charles Leftwich | Special to the News
Surry Central's Micah Whitley (5) weaves through South Stokes' defense.

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Cory Smith | The News
Mount Airy's Solomon Washington (77) hits Thomasville quarterback Galiesha Murchison (15) as he throws.

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Charles Leftwich | Special to the News
Starmount's Ryley Rodriguez (11) picks up extra yards after making a reception.

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Experienced Elks ready to bounce back

By **CORY SMITH**
csmith@mtairynews.com

HEAD COACH
Cory Rycroft

ASSISTANT COACHES
Kerry Norman (Quarterbacks, Running Backs); Matthew Altemueller (Offensive Line); Daniel Blevins (Wide Receivers); Ethan Creed (Defensive Backs); Tyler Holcomb (Defensive Line)

LAST SEASON
2-9 overall, 0-7 conference, Mountain Valley 2A/3A/4A Conference eighth place, 2A State Playoffs first round, Points for: 14.8, Points against: 45.7

KEY LOSSES
Elkin only graduated four players in the Class of 2026: Luis Serrano, Alex Sotelo, Demetrius Wheeler and Elias Amaya. Serrano and Sotelo both split time as a wide receiver and defensive back. Wheeler and Amaya both played on the defensive line, and Wheeler was a force at tight end. Sotelo was named an all-conference honorable mention. Statistics for the 2025 season were unavailable.

SEASON OUTLOOK
Entering the 2025 season, Elkin had just five returning players with varsity experience. The junior-heavy squad started 2-0 with wins over Surry Central and North Stokes, but the Buckin' Elks' inexperience caught up with them as they entered the tough Mountain Valley 2A/3A/4A Conference. Despite dropping their final nine games of the season, the Elks' young core gained valuable experience that will pay off in 2026. This year's squad, led by new head coach Cory Rycroft, is made up of 14 seniors, five juniors and four sophomores. Two of the team's three 2025 all-conference selections and both all-conference honorable mentions will suit up this fall. "We had a good summer," Rycroft said. "We spent a lot of time in the weight room. We don't have the biggest roster, but the guys are dedicated and showed up just about every day ready to work." The Elks return an experienced backfield that will be the focal point of the offense. While Rycroft is still shuffling things around in the weeks leading up to the season, he highlighted the four players who will likely receive the most touches: seniors Hector Hernandez and Justus Shore, and sophomores Brayden Vestal and Briggs Darnell. Hernandez started at quarterback for Elkin

last season and was effective both running and throwing the ball. The Elks' two other candidates for quarterback, Shore and Vestal, can also be used as dual-threat quarterbacks. Whoever isn't named quarterback will be featured at another offensive skill position. Darnell returns after earning all-conference honors as a freshman. The versatile sophomore will be used as both a running back and a receiver, depending on the situation. Juniors Kayden Mack and Maze Teague will also be utilized as offensive skill players. The offensive line hasn't been set in stone yet. Rycroft said he and the coaching staff have shifted players around to different positions and those roles may change before the season. "That's just part of being at a small school," Rycroft said. "Everyone has to buy in and do what's best for the program, then work to get better week to week." The only offensive lineman Rycroft was ready to name was senior Breighden Swaim at center. Elkin will return seven defensive starters. Senior Fernando Segovia enters his third season as a varsity starter and will lead the defensive line. Cannon Blevins will join him on the three-man front. Many of the players on the offensive line will have to pull double duty on the defensive

line, Rycroft said. Mack and senior Kameron Hall, who was an all-conference honorable mention in 2025, both return as inside linebackers, and Teague will play on the outside. Darnell and Shore will both play safety



Cory Rycroft enters his first season as Elkin's head coach.

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ELKIN BUCKIN' ELKS' ROSTER

2	Hector Hernandez	Sr.	30	Gian Garcia	Sr.
3	Holt Wabel	Sr.	33	Wesley Oakes	So.
4	Braden Bledsoe	Jr.	44	Fernando Segovia	Sr.
6	Avett Simmons	Sr.	45	Kameron Hall	Sr.
7	Soloman Speer	Sr.	52	Karson Phillips	Sr.
8	Brayden Vestal	So.	56	Ryder Russell	Sr.
10	Justus Shore	Sr.	66	Nathan Terry	Jr.
14	Briggs Darnell	So.	70	Carson Shaffner	Sr.
21	Kayden Mack	Jr.	73	Breighden Swaim	Sr.
23	Cannon Blevins	Sr.	75	Carter Murphy	So.
24	Maze Teague	Jr.	77	Colton Wallace	Jr.
27	Caleb Parker	Sr.			

*Position, Height and Weight were not submitted by the team

Sr.
So.
Sr.
Sr.
Sr.
Sr.
Jr.
Sr.
Sr.
So.
Jr.

2026 ELKIN BUCKIN' ELKS' Football Schedule

Kickoff at 7:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted

8/21	SURRY CENTRAL^
8/28	NORTH STOKES^
9/4	OPEN
9/11	FORBUSH
9/18	STARMOUNT*
9/25	ASHE COUNTY*
10/2	WILKES CENTRAL*
10/9	NORTH WILKES*
10/16	WEST WILKES*
10/23	EAST WILKES*
10/30	ALLEGHANY*

*Conference ^7:00 p.m. start
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for the second consecutive season, while Hernandez will play cornerback.
Starters haven't been named for the remaining defensive spots.

BIG GAMES
Elkin goes on the road to Surry Central in Week 1 looking for the program's first victory since Aug. 29, 2025. Surry Central went 0-10 this past season but, like Elkin, the Eagles returned a significant amount of young talent.
Up next is North Stokes, which Elkin has defeated in the teams' past six meetings. North Stokes' most recent win in the

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rivalry was in 2007.
Elkin wraps up nonconference play hoping to end a six-game losing streak against Forbush.
Starmount, which is coming off a 2A West Regional runner-up finish, is Elkin's conference opener. Starmount has won the past five meetings in the Battle of the Bridge rivalry.
The Elks' next four games are against opponents from higher divisions before they finally face another 2A team in Week 10.
East Wilkes, which tied Starmount for the conference title in 2025, will be Elkin's second-to-last opponent of the regular season as part of the annual Battle of the Bypass game, and Alleghany will be the Elks' senior night opponent.



East Wilkes Cardinals

East Wilkes returns experienced core, eyes repeat title in 2026

By Robert Money
 robert.money@thestokesnews.com

HEAD COACH

Travis Walker

ASSISTANT COACHES

Trey Dezern (Offensive Coordinator/Quarterback/B Backs), Weston Miller (Offensive Line), Brannon Church (Offensive Line), Adrian Dezern (Running Backs), Robert Johnson (Wide Receivers), Andrew Elmore (Defensive Coordinator/Inside Linebackers), Preston Perry (Secondary), Levi Sadler (Outside Linebackers), and Ben Moody (Defensive Line).



Courtesy Photo

East Wilkes coach Travis Walker is entering his fourth year as the Cardinals coach.

LAST SEASON

8-4 overall, 6-1 conference, Co-Conference Champion in the 2A/3A/4A Mountain Valley Conference, eliminated in the second round of the State 2A Playoffs by Corvian Community 31-28. Point for: 414 (34.5); Points against: 146 (12.2); Differential: +22.3

KEY LOSSES

The Cardinals enter 2026 tasked with replacing the senior core that fueled one of the most successful seasons in recent program history, a group that captured a share of the Mountain Valley Conference title, advanced to the third round of the NCHSAA 2A playoffs and produced the league's top individual award winner.

East Wilkes closed out 2025 at 8-4, riding a five-game winning streak through the middle of the season and claiming its first share of an MVC championship in ten years before its playoff run ended with a 31-28 third-round loss to Corvian Community. Much of that success came from a senior-dominated backfield, linebacker unit, and offensive line, leaving coach Travis Walker with significant gaps to address.

Middle linebacker and fullback Ayden Guessford wrapped up his career by claiming MVC Player of the Year honors, the conference's premier individual award. A dual-threat contributor in East Wilkes' ground-oriented offense, he found the end zone twice in a 66-7 blowout of Elkin and again scored two rushing touchdowns in the 53-0 win over Wilkes Central that secured the conference title.

Running back Ty Bumgarner, an All-MVC honoree, was a key piece of East Wilkes' rotation-heavy backfield throughout the year. He posted 32 yards against Mount Airy in the opener and turned in a 53-yard, two-touchdown performance against Elkin.

Austin Nash, a first-team All-MVC pick at both running back and defensive back, led East Wilkes in rushing on multiple occasions — including a 73-yard opening-night showing. His standout game came against Wilkes Central, where he piled up 184 yards and three scores in the title-clinching shutout.

Reece Dobbins, also honored at running back and defensive back, added 34 yards in the season opener and exploded for 67 yards and two touchdowns against Elkin — making him the third senior to reach the end zone multiple times in that game alone.

Linebacker Brady Shore, an All-MVC selection at middle linebacker, was a defensive centerpiece for the Cardinals and one of their most reliable run defenders.

Defensive lineman Braylon Walker earned All-MVC recognition up front, helping anchor a defensive line that kept East Wilkes among the conference's toughest units during their five-game streak.

Offensive lineman Sam Nelson was named All-MVC as part of a veteran line that helped power the Cardinals' rushing attack. The team will also graduate wingback/defensive backs Braylen Walker and Dalton Wood, receiver/defensive back Avery Johnson, running back/linebacker Kaydon Oliver, linemen Peyton Mahan and Ryan Ford, tackle Rhett Hudson, and guard/defensive lineman Isaac Collins — a group that provided crucial depth both outside and in the trenches during the championship

season.

With a Player of the Year, four All-MVC honorees, and contributors from nearly every position group all departing, East Wilkes will need its underclassmen to step up in more than just the stat sheet because replacing the leadership this senior class provided will be just as critical as the program looks to build on last year's conference title.

SEASON OUTLOOK

The Cardinals are coming off a share of the Mountain Valley 2A/3A/4A Co-Conference Championship and enter 2026 with five returning starters on both sides of the ball, headlined by a senior class ready to lead the way.

East Wilkes finished 8-4 overall and 6-1 in conference play last season, splitting the league title with Starmount. The junior varsity squad went 7-3, giving the varsity roster a pipeline of talent to draw from this fall.

Quarterback Holden Spicer returns with a full season of varsity experience under his belt. Coaches say his decision-making improved significantly during the offseason, and he's expected to run the offense with more confidence in 2026.

Running back Grant Triplett, an All-Conference performer on defense last season, is set for an expanded role in the backfield after seeing carries as a junior. His physical style has made him one of the team's top leaders on both sides of the ball.

Wide receiver Rye Dobbins has drawn praise for his growth during 7-on-7 competitions this offseason, both physically and mentally.

The offensive line returns All-Conference

EAST WILKES CARDINALS' ROSTER					
1	Holden Spicer	12, 5'10, 170, QB/DB	34	Taitum Walker	9, 5'9, 175, RB/LB
2	Malakai Jackson	10, 5'10, 160, RB/DB	32	Colten Vesta	12, 5'7 150 RB/LB
3	Yosmar Silva	12, 5'7, 150, RB/DB	40	Ian Guessford	11, 5'10, 210, RB/LB
4	Rye Dobbins	12, 6'1, 180, S/WR	44	Mason Cain	10, 5'9, 160, RB/LB
5	Aaron Bahena	12, 5'11, 175, WR/DB	50	Brylee Shore	10, 6'0, 210, OL/DL
6	Andrew Pendry	12, 5'9 185, RB/LB	51	Aiden Irwin	12 6'2 205, OL/DL
7	Joah Long	11, 5'11, 170, WR/DB	52	Skylor Pruitt	10, 6'0, 180, OL/DL
8	Trent Cook	12, 6'3, 180, WR/DL	53	Riley Reeves	9, 5'11, 205, OL/DL
11	Grant Triplett	12, 5'10, 180, RB/DB	59	Andrew Patrick	12, 6'2 200, OL/DL
16	Brinn Walker	10, 5'9, 160, QB/DB	63	Franky Fuentes	12, 5'8 205, OL/DL
17	Isaiah Smith	10, 5'8, 180, RB/LB	65	Evan Mills	11, 6'1, 215, OL/DL
18	Connor Church	12, 5'9, 170, RB/LB	70	Kody Taylor	10, 5'9, 220, OL/DL
20	Levi McCann	11, 5'9, 185, RB/LB	71	Shawn Semones	12, 6'0, 270, NG/G
23	Chris Silva	12 5'9 155 RB/DB	77	La'Bren Mann	12 6'0 280 NG/G

lineman Shawn Semones, whose blocking anchored the rushing attack a year ago. Honorable Mention All-Conference pick Franky Fuentes shifts from right guard to center, where he's expected to lead the unit.

Senior linebacker Andrew Pendry gives the Cardinals a proven leader on the edge. Pendry earned a starting job in Week 4 last season, went on to earn Honorable Mention

All-Conference honors, and finished the year with 55 tackles and 14 tackles for loss to go with multiple forced and recovered fumbles. He'll line up alongside Aiden Irwin, whose relentless motor and edge-setting ability make him another key piece up front.

La'Bren Mann returns at nose guard after developing into a disruptive interior presence late last season.

In the secondary, senior Chris Silva returns as one of the team's most versatile players. Silva picked off three passes and broke up nine more at cornerback in 2025, while also handling every kicking duty — going 36-for-38 on extra points and perfect on two field-goal attempts. Between offense, defense and special teams, he finished the season with 24 tackles and two interceptions.

With Pendry and Silva anchoring the defense as seniors, Spicer and Triplett leading the offense, and a strong JV class ready to contribute, the Cardinals believe they have the pieces to contend again in the Mountain Valley Conference this fall.

BIG GAMES

Rivalries and conference championship implications once again highlight the East Wilkes schedule, with four games standing out as must-watch contests for the

Cardinals this fall.

The annual showdown with North Wilkes remains one of the biggest dates on the calendar. The county rivals are separated by just a 22-minute drive, and while the series has been one-sided in recent years, rivalry games always bring extra emotion. East Wilkes dominated last year's meeting 42-7, extending its winning streak over the Vikings to five games. Since 2004, the Cardinals have controlled the rivalry with a 19-3 record, and they'll be looking to keep that momentum rolling this season.

Another county rivalry awaits against West Wilkes, located just 30 minutes away. The Cardinals have enjoyed the upper hand in recent seasons, defeating the Blackhaws 27-9 a year ago to claim their fifth straight victory in the series. East Wilkes has also won eight of the last 10 meetings and owns a 12-9 edge since September 2004. With conference positioning often at stake, the matchup has become one of the area's most competitive annual contests.



Courtesy Photo

East Wilkes quarterback Holden Spicer is set to lead the charge for the team this year.

If East Wilkes has its sights set on a conference championship, a trip to Starmount could once again prove pivotal. The Rams clinched a co-championship last season and edged the Cardinals 7-0 in a defensive battle, extending their winning streak in the series to seven games. Starmount owns a 14-4 advantage over East Wilkes since 2004, and the Cardinals' last victory in the series came in 2018. This year's meeting could once again carry major conference implications.

The Cardinals also renew their growing rivalry with nearby Elkin, a school located just eight minutes away. Despite Elkin holding a 16-7 series advantage since 2004, East Wilkes has seized momentum in recent years, winning the last two meetings. Last season's 66-7 victory was the Cardinals' most decisive win in the series in more than two decades and will undoubtedly provide extra motivation for both teams when they meet again.

2026

EAST WILKES CARDINALS'

Football Schedule

Kickoff at 7:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted

8/21	HIBRITEN	
8/28	MOUNT AIRY	7pm
9/4	NORTH IREDELL	7pm
9/11	OPEN	
9/18	NORTH WILKES*	
9/25	WEST WILKES*	
10/2	STARMOUNT*	
10/9	ALLEGHANY*	
10/16	ASHE COUNTY*	
10/23	ELKIN*	
10/30	WILKES CENTRAL*	

*2A/3A/4A Mountain Valley Conference Games

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Forbush Falcons

Falcons look to build on playoff return as Holder enters year two

By Robert Money
robert.money@thestokesnews.com

HEAD COACH
Logan Holder

ASSISTANT COACHES
Holden Poindexter (Co-OC/QB), Tanner Woods (WR), Regan Ramey (RB), RJ Speaks (OL), Joe Sikes (DC/LB), Loudon Hundley (DB),

and Tom Boyles (DL)

LAST SEASON
5-6 overall, 2-3 conference, tied for fourth in the Northwest 3A/4A Conference, eliminated in the first round of the 4A State Playoffs by West Stokes 39-3, Points for: 182 (16.5), Point against: 321 (29.2): Differential -12.7



Forbush coach Logan Holder is starting year two for the Falcons.

Courtesy Photo

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Robert Money | The Stokes News

2026 Forbush Falcon Seniors

KEY LOSSES

The Forbush Falcons are coming off a 5-6 season that included a 2-3 mark in Northwest 3A/4A conference play, and heading into next fall, coach Logan Holder will have to replace a significant chunk of production from a senior class that anchored both sides of the ball.

Leading the list of departures is Alan Benitez, a First Team All-Conference selection

who was one of the most active players on Forbush's defense. Benitez finished the 2025 season with 64 total tackles, including 46 solo stops, and added two interceptions on the back end. He also contributed on offense, catching 10 passes for 105 yards and two touchdowns. Replacing his tackle production and versatility across both sides of the ball will be one of the program's top priorities this

offseason.

Joining Benitez as an All-Conference honoree is Eli Wells, whose presence along the line of scrimmage was a constant disruption for opposing offenses. Wells racked up 35 tackles, but his real impact showed up behind the line, where he posted 11 tackles for loss and 2.5 sacks. He also forced a fumble and returned a punt for a touchdown, giving the Falcons a rare game-changing weapon on special teams that won't be easy to replicate.

Forbush will also lose two Honorable Mention All-Conference performers in Keanu Escalante and Tucker Durham, both of whom were central to the team's identity in 2025.

Escalante was the offensive workhorse, leading the Falcons with 174 carries for 899 yards and a 5.2 yards-per-carry average, scoring nine rushing touchdowns and adding a 10th through the air. He topped the 100-yard mark in five games and finished as Forbush's leader in all-purpose yardage with 1,041 yards. Beyond his work as a runner, Escalante chipped in 22 tackles on defense, underscoring the two-way workload he carried for the Falcons.

Durham, meanwhile, was a fixture in the trenches defensively, totaling 44 tackles with nine coming for loss, and he led the team with four sacks. His ability to consistently win at the point of attack made him a key piece of a Falcons front that helped hold opponents in

check throughout the season.

Between Benitez's all-around production, Wells' pass-rush and special-teams ability, and the physical, two-way contributions of Escalante and Durham, Forbush loses four players who combined for a substantial share of the team's tackles, touchdowns and yardage in 2025. How Holder and his staff fill those roles will go a long way toward determining whether the Falcons can build on last year's five-win campaign.

SEASON OUTLOOK

The Forbush Falcons are entering the 2026 season with a different set of expectations than a year ago, when simply reaching the playoffs was the goal. Now, after ending a four-year postseason drought, the program says it's aiming higher: competing for championships.

Second-year head coach Logan Holder went 5-6 overall in his debut season last fall, and a 2-3 conference mark, good for a share of fourth place in the Northwest 3A/4A Conference. The season ended in the first round of the 4A state playoffs with a 39-3 loss to West Stokes.

"After ending a four-year playoff drought in 2025, we feel good about entering 2026 with momentum, experience, and confidence," Holder said. "The foundation has been established, and the expectation is no longer just making the playoffs, it's competing for



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championships.”

The Falcons’ biggest challenge in 2026 will be closing the gap on defense. Forbush was outscored 321-182 last season, an average margin of 29.2 points allowed to 16.5 scored.

Experience will be at a premium. Forbush returns just three offensive starters and four defensive starters from last year’s squad, leaning on a young roster the staff describes as player-led and hard-working through the offseason. The junior varsity program finished 5-4 a year ago.

Senior Adam Bowman, Devin Brown, and Jonathan Zarate will return for the Falcons. Bowman returns at running back and linebacker after totaling 59 tackles, five tackles for loss and a fumble recovery last season. Brown, also a two-way threat at running back and linebacker, had 44 yards on eight carries while producing 47 tackles, nine tackles for loss and 5.5 sacks on defense, while Zarate, who plays both offensive and defensive line, finished with 49 tackles, three tackles for loss and a caused fumble.

Junior Hunter Wolfe, a two-way starter at wide receiver and defensive back, had nine catches for 81 yards and a touchdown on offense. Defensively, he recorded 69 tackles, three tackles for loss, five pass deflections, an interception, three forced fumbles and a blocked punt. Fellow junior, Kazir Wright, added four catches for 34 yards at receiver and posted 35 tackles, three pass deflections

and a fumble recovery at defensive back. Tyler Bryant returns on both the offensive and defensive lines.

Kicker and punter Luca Casertano provided a steady special teams presence as a freshman last season. He converted 6 of 6 field-goal attempts and 16 of 18 extra points for 34 points, averaged 57.1 yards per kickoff with four touchbacks, and punted 39 times for a 35.8-yard average.

BIG GAMES

The Forbush Falcons will not lack for measuring sticks this season. Four games on the schedule carry rivalry weight, and each one comes with its own history: a season-opening grudge match, a trophy game against a border rival, a border-war matchup that has swung heavily one way in recent years, and a conference opener against a team that has owned the series for more than a decade.

Forbush opens the season against Bishop McGuinness, a series that is just one game old. The Villains won the inaugural meeting last season, 37-20, and the Falcons will look to even the series and start 2026 on a different note.

The annual Unifi Bowl against Starmount remains one of the toughest outs on Forbush’s schedule. The Falcons have dropped



Forbush’s offensive line prepares for the snap against Starmount. Charles Leftwich | Special to the News

four straight in the series, including a 34-0 shutout last season. Forbush is just 6-15 against the Rams since 2004, and its lone win in that stretch came in 2021, a 21-6 decision. Breaking the current four-game skid would be the signature result of the Falcons’ season.

If there is a rivalry trending in Forbush’s favor, it’s this one. The Falcons beat Elkin 41-28 last season and have won six consecutive meetings against the Elks. Forbush now holds a 9-7 edge in the series since 2009, a sharp turnaround from the days when the rivalry ran the other way.

Forbush’s conference opener against West Stokes carries its own recent drama. The Falcons beat the Wildcats 24-17 last season for their second straight win in the series — before West Stokes answered in the first round of the 4A playoffs, routing Forbush 39-3. Despite the recent split, West Stokes still holds a commanding 12-2 career advantage over the Falcons.

Taken together, the four games form a stretch that will test every phase of the program — and go a long way toward defining where Forbush stands in 2026.

2026

FORBUSH FALCONS'

Football Schedule

Kickoff at 7:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted

8/21	BISHOP MCGUINNESS
8/28	WHEATMORE
9/5	STARMOUNT
9/12	ELKIN
9/19	OPEN
9/6	ATKINS
10/2	WEST STOKES
10/9	SURRY CENTRAL
10/16	MOUNT AIRY
10/23	EAST SURRY
10/30	NORTH SURRY

Home

Away

FORBUSH FALCONS' ROSTER					
1	Landon Hughes	11, 6'2, 190, WR/DB	24	Kenan Sloan	10, 5'8, 150, K/P
2	J'Siere Arnold	12, 6'1, 230, RB/LB	50	A'dynn Clark	12, 6'2, 230 OL/DL
3	Kazir Wright	11, 5'10, 165, WR/DB	51	Stevie Knight	12, 5'6, 180, OL/DL
4	Hunter Wolfe	11, 5'10, 175, WR/DB	52	Dakota Miller	12, 5'8, 190, OL/DL
5	Griffin Johnston	11, 6'0, 165, WR/DB	53	Robbie Gumpert	12, 5'22, 225, OL/DL
7	Carter Smith	10, 5'11, 175, QB/DB	54	Jonathan Zarate	12, 5'8, 215, OL/DL
8	Tate Helton	12, 6'1, 185, WR/DB	55	Kaiden Cave	11, 5'9, 200, OL/DL
9	Stephen Mendoza	10, 5'9, 150, WR/DB	58	Eli Triplett	11, 6'5, 270, OL/DL
10	Huston Warden	10, 5'8, 165, RB/DB	59	Noah Gonzalez	10, 5'9, 270, OL/DL
12	Brayden Rayborn	11, 5'10, 155, WR/LB	66	Connor Hunolt	10, 5'11, 265, OL/DL
15	Will Tomlin	10, 5'10, 165, QB/DB	70	Cross Warden	10, 5'10, 245, OL/DL
16	Adam Bowman	12, 5'9, 185, RB/DB	75	Case Taylor	10, 5'11, 170, OL/DL
19	Kamari Strickland	9 5'8, 135, QB/DB	76	Tucker Abell	10, 6'4, 240, OL/DL
20	Jayden Holden	10, 6'1, 175, WR/DB	78	Tyler Bryant	11, 6'8, 285, OL/DL
21	Luca Casertano	10, 5'9, 150, K/P	82	Jaxon Ashley	10, 6'5, 215, DE/DL



Starmount Rams

Starmount returns all-conference core, eyes another playoff run in 2026

By Robert Money
robert.money@thestokesnews.com

HEAD COACH

Josh Pardue

ASSISTANT COACHES

Monty Chipman, Dillon Reaves, Kris Allen, Blake Chipman, J. Max Swaim, Cole Patterson, Chris Brown, Austin Laws, Peyton Mullins, Noah Tomlin

LAST SEASON

11-3 overall, 6-1 conference, Mountain Valley 2A/3A/4A Co-Conference Champions, 2A State Playoffs, Fourth Round, Points

for: 465 (33.2), Point against: 136 (9.7):
 Differential +23.5

KEY LOSSES

Starmount capped an 11-3 season with a Class 2A playoff run, but the Rams now turn to replacing one of the most productive senior classes in program history.

Coach Josh Pardue's team went 6-1 in Mountain Valley conference play and finished the year ranked fourth in the state 2A, powered by a group of seniors who touched nearly every phase of the game on both sides of the ball.

The biggest loss comes at running back,

where senior Jymir Billips rushed for 1,249 yards and 12 touchdowns on 179 carries, averaging 89.2 yards per game. He posted five 100-yard performances and added 82 receiving yards, finishing with more than 100 all-purpose yards per contest.

Cole Freed and Aamir Adams provided a similar dual-threat presence. Freed caught 27 passes for 454 yards and four touchdowns, while Adams added 23 receptions for 393 yards and four scores. Both were also full-time contributors in the secondary, combining for four interceptions, nine pass deflections and three fumble recoveries.

Starmount's pass rush leaned heavily on



Courtesy Photo

Starmount Rams' coach Josh Pardue.

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two other departing seniors. Corey Armstrong recorded 10 sacks and 34 tackles for loss to go with 72 tackles, three interceptions and a blocked kick, while also catching 11 passes for three touchdowns on offense. Sam Shore led the team with 11 sacks, adding 71 tackles and 39 tackles for loss. The pair combined for 21 of the Rams' 39 total sacks this season.

Dornic Adams was a steady presence at the second level, finishing with 66 tackles, 13 tackles for loss, five sacks, an interception and two fumble recoveries.

Additional senior contributors included Savian Billips, who rushed for 209 yards and two touchdowns while adding 21 tackles and an interception on defense, along with reserves Luke Burchette and Axi Gonzalez.

SEASON OUTLOOK

Starmount enter the 2026 season with high expectations after posting an 11-3 overall record and winning a Mountain Valley 2A/3A/4A Co-Conference Championship a year ago, returning a roster stocked with All-Conference performers on both sides of the ball.

Head coach Josh Pardue's squad, which competes in the 2A classification, kept his outlook simple heading into the fall.

"We hope to win some games this fall," Pardue said.

Modest words aside, the Rams bring

back a group that dominated the conference's individual honors last season. Leading the way is senior Keyvon Propst (RB/LB), who was named the Mountain Valley 2A/3A/4A Conference Defensive Player of the Year as well as the "Best of Prep" Defensive award. Propst racked up 147 tackles, 28 tackles for loss, two interceptions and two fumble recoveries on defense, while also contributing 74 yards and two touchdowns on 18 carries and adding a 55-yard touchdown reception on offense.

Senior quarterback Deuce Best (QB/DB) returns after an All-Conference campaign in which he completed 85 of 156 passes for 1,694 yards and 19 touchdowns, while also rushing for 444 yards and nine scores on 119 carries.

Starmount's backfield and front seven remain deep with experience. Senior Brodie Wright (RB/LB) rushed for 178 yards and six touchdowns on 32 carries and posted 19 tackles, four tackles for loss, two sacks and two fumble recoveries defensively. Wright also finished among the top two wrestlers in his weight class in 2A competition during the winter. Senior Cody Hernandez (RB/LB) was equally productive, running for 274 yards and 10 touchdowns on 66 carries while totaling 112 tackles, 20 tackles for loss, three sacks and two fumble recoveries.

The secondary returns a playmaker

in senior Landrey Mathis (WR/DB), who intercepted six passes, broke up nine others and made 29 tackles with two tackles for loss last season.

Up front, the Rams return a trio of experienced linemen in seniors Dakota Holbrook (OL/DL), Brody Pickett (OL/DL) and Hayden Shores (OL/DL). Pickett earned

All-Conference recognition after totaling 43 tackles, eight tackles for loss and two fumble recoveries, while Shores was an Honorable Mention All-Conference selection.

Senior Gavin Brooks (OL/DL) was also an All-Conference pick after a standout year with 91 tackles, 28 tackles for loss, three sacks and two fumble recoveries. Senior Silas



2026 Starmount Rams football seniors.

Courtesy Photo

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Charles Leftwich | Special to the News

Starmount's Keyvon Probst (0) brings Mitchell County's running back down behind the line of scrimmage.

Brown (OL/DL) is working his way back from a torn ACL suffered after Week 6 of the 2025 season. Brown was All-Conference on both sides of the ball as a sophomore and ranked among the top five heavyweight wrestlers in 2A.

The junior class adds another dimension

to the Rams' attack. Ryley Rodriguez (WR/DB/K/P/PR) was an All-Conference selection who did a bit of everything — catching 14 passes for 541 yards and seven touchdowns, intercepting three passes, breaking up six more, and handling all three kicking duties.

Rodriguez connected on 46 of 56 extra

points and 3 of 6 field goals for 55 points, averaged 39.2 yards per punt on 33 attempts, and returned 24 punts for a 13.2-yard average with two touchdowns.

Junior Rylan White (OL/DL) also earned All-Conference honors, and junior Hunner Brown (WR/Slot/DB), a transfer from North Wilkes, adds depth to the skill positions.

BIG GAMES

The Starmount Rams open the season with two marquee non-conference tests, but the heart of the schedule runs through a string of rivalry games that will shape the Rams' season and their standing in conference play.

Games one and two against Mount Airy and East Surry will provide an early measuring stick, but four other matchups carry the biggest stakes on Starmount's slate: the "Battle of the Bridge" against Elkin, the "Unifi Bowl" against Forbush, a rematch with co-conference champion East Wilkes, and a shot at revenge against West Wilkes, the only team to beat the Rams in conference play a year ago.

Starmount has claimed bragging rights

over Elkin for five straight years in the annual "Battle of the Bridge," a series the Rams have dominated in recent history. Starmount owns an 18-4 record against the Elks since 2004, a run that includes a 55-0 rout last season.

The Rams have also had the upper hand against Forbush in the "Unifi Bowl," winning the last five meetings. Starmount beat the Falcons 34-0 a year ago and holds a 15-6 record against Forbush since 2004.

Last season, Starmount edged East Wilkes 7-0 to secure a share of the conference championship with the Cardinals. The Rams have won 14 of their last 18 meetings with East Wilkes dating back to 2004.

The lone blemish on Starmount's conference record last season came against West Wilkes, a 23-20 loss to the rival Black Hawks. Starmount holds a 9-3 record against West Wilkes since 2009, but the series has tightened in recent years — the Black Hawks have won two straight, and the two programs are deadlocked 3-3 over their last six meetings.

With Mount Airy and East Surry setting the tone in weeks one and two, Starmount's path to another conference title — and another year of rivalry bragging rights — will be decided in its games against Elkin, Forbush, East Wilkes and West Wilkes.

2026

STARMOUNT RAMS'

Football Schedule

Kickoff at 7:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted

8/21	MOUNT AIRY	7pm
8/28	EAST SURRY	7pm
9/4	FORBUSH	
9/11	OPEN	
9/18	ELKIN*	
9/25	ALLEGHANY*	
10/2	EAST WILKES*	
10/9	WEST WILKES*	
10/16	NORTH WILKES*	
10/23	WILKES CENTRAL*	
10/30	ASHE COUNTY*	

■ Home

■ Away

STARMOUNT RAMS' ROSTER					
0	Keyvon Propst	12, 6'0, 210m LB/RB	32	Jedrek Wiles	11, 5'10, 160, RB/ATH
1	Deuce Best	12, 6'1, 170, QB/DB	33	Evan Toop	11, 5'9, 160, DL/WR
3	Hunner Brown	11, 6'0, 160, WR/DB	40	Tyler Hernandez	10, 5'11, 155, RB/DB
4	Jere'Mihia Hurt-Bailey	11, 6'0, 180, WR/DB	42	Troy Hernandez	10, 5'11, 150, RB/DB
5	Brodie Wright	12, 5'10, 180, RB/LB	44	Gage Cooper	10, 5'9, 185, LB/RB
6	Derek Thompson	12, 5'9, 150, WR/DB	50	Dakota Holbrook	12, 5'10, 250, OL/DL
7	Kyree Williams	9, 5'9, 170, RB/DB	51	Gavin Sloan	12, 5'10, 245, OL
8	Gavin Brooks	12, 6'2, 195, DE/OL	52	Brody Pickett	12, 5'3, 250, OL/DL
9	Landry Mathis	12, 6'1, 180, WR/DB	53	Hayden Shores	12, 6'3, 240, OL/DL
11	Ryley Rodriguez	11, 6'3, 160, WR/S	54	Silas Brown	12, 6'2, 290, OL/DL
12	Isaiah Strickland	12, 5'11, 185, RB/LB	56	Liam Hazelwood	12, 6'0, 220, OL/DL
14	Brayden Rucker	12, 6'1, 180, TE/DE	57	Bryson Hinshaw	10, 5'11, 245, OL/DL
15	Cody Hernandez	12, 5'11, 230, LB/RB	58	Asher James	12, 5'11, 230, OL/DL
16	Easton Pardue	10, 6'0, 185, LB/ATH	60	Connor Eads	10, 5'3, 190, OL/DL
18	Mason White	10, 6'1, 160, WR/DB	64	Dakota Swaim	10, 5'10, 255, OL/DL
19	Josiah Willard	11, 6'0, 150, WR/DB	65	Austin Wood	11, 6'4, 390, OL/DL
21	Casius Strickland	12, 5'11, 170, WR/LB	66	Kaleb Shinault	11, 5'11, 185, OL/DL
22	Colt Hemric	12, 5'11, 145, DB/WR	70	Braxton Snow	10, 5'11, 185, OL/DL
23	Bryson Cortez	12, 5'10, 155, DB/WR	71	Lucas Brumfield	10, 5'11, 220, OL/DL
25	Collin Crater	10, 6'0, 195, DL/TE	78	Rylan White	11, 6'3, 270, OL/DL



North Stokes Vikings

Vikings Count on Returning Firepower, Experienced Line

By Robert Money
robert.money@thestokesnews.com

HEAD COACH
Kolt Bullington

ASSISTANT COACHES
Stephen Creech (Offensive Coordinator/ Quarterbacks), Nathan Vass (Offensive Line), Levi Smith (Defensive Line), Jayle Bryant (Linebackers), Brock Heck (Offensive Assistant), and Hunter Blose (Trainer)

LAST SEASON
4-7 overall, 4-2 conference, lost in the first round of the 1A NCHSAA State Playoffs to East Columbus. Points for: 149 (13.5);

Points against: 419 (38.1); Differential: -24.6

KEY LOSSES
While North Stokes returns significant experience on both sides of the ball in 2026, the Vikings will be tasked with replacing several key contributors from last season.
Second-year head coach Kolt Bullington identified three players in particular whose absence will be felt this fall.
The biggest hole to fill comes at wide receiver, where Aiden Bennett departs after leading the team with more than 80 receptions and finishing second on the roster with over 600 receiving yards.
"Aiden Bennett led our team last year with 80 plus receptions and was second on the

team with over 600 receiving yards," Bullington said.
On defense, North Stokes loses linebacker Gavin Hernandez, a player Bullington described as one of the team's most vocal leaders.
The Vikings will also need to replace defensive back Talon Cole, whose versatility made him a fixture in the secondary.
SEASON OUTLOOK
North Stokes is leaning on continuity in 2026, returning its starting quarterback, four starting offensive linemen and its top receiver as the Vikings look to build on a 4-7



Robert Money | The Stokes News
North Stokes Coach Kolt Bullington is entering his second season with the school.

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season that included a 4-2 mark in Greater Triad 1A/2A play.

Bullington said the experience returning on offense gives his team a strong foundation heading into the fall.

"We return four starting offensive linemen along with our starting quarterback, which gives us valuable experience and continuity on offense," Bullington said. "We're also bringing back our leading wide receiver, who led the 1A classification in both receiving yards and receiving touchdowns last season."

The Vikings return seven starters on offense and six on defense. North Stokes will lean heavily on senior Jackson Bodenhamer, who enters his final season after catching 62 passes for 633 yards and nine touchdowns a year ago. Bodenhamer, who also plays linebacker, earned All-Conference, All-Region and All-State Honorable Mention honors as a two-way player, and already holds an offer from Hampden-Sydney.

Up front, senior Wyatt Collins (6-foot-2, 295 pounds) anchors both lines. Collins led the team with 79 tackles, 11 tackles for loss and three sacks last season and earned All-Conference recognition.

At quarterback, junior Holden Shelton takes over as the full-time starter after a strong finish to 2025. In three varsity starts, Shelton completed 79 percent of his passes, throwing for 1,048 yards with seven touchdowns and adding another score on the ground.

Sophomore Nate Harrison, a Prep Redzone All-State Freshman Team selection at tight end, gives the Vikings another two-way weapon after recording 40 tackles as a first-year

player.

Bullington said the offseason emphasis has been on strength and physicality, particularly on the defensive side of the ball.

"Our players have had an outstanding offseason in the weight room, and they've bought into the standard we've set to become a more physical football team," Bullington said. "Defensively, stopping the run has been a major point of emphasis."

The coach also pointed to newcomers who could factor in immediately.

"We're very excited about the addition of several talented athletes who didn't play football last year but have joined our program, as well as a freshman class that has worked very hard this summer," Bullington said. "Several of those players will make an immediate impact."

With the pieces in place, Bullington said the program is optimistic entering the season.

"With the experience we have returning and the work our players have put in during the offseason, we're excited about the direction our program is heading into the season," he said.

BIG GAMES

The August heat hasn't even broken yet, but around North Stokes, everyone already knows how this season will be measured — not by the win-loss column alone, but by five games circled in red ink long before the pads ever came out for practice.

It starts early. Week two, August 28, brings Elkin to town for a non-conference showdown that's really about pride more than anything else. The two schools go way back,



Courtesy Photo

2026 North Stokes Vikings' football seniors.

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North Stokes' Holden Shelton drops back to pass.

Robert Money | The Stokes News

old conference rivals now meeting outside those lines, but the recent history is lopsided and painful. Five losses in a row, the last one a 39-12 gut-punch that still stings. Across the full history of the series, Elkin owns the Vikings, 29 wins to 4. But hosting them this early gives North Stokes a chance to write a different opening chapter, right at home, right in front of their own crowd.

Then there's Patrick County, a game that doesn't need a conference standing to matter. State line or not, the two schools sit just sixteen miles apart, closer to each other than to anyone else on the schedule. It's a non-conference matchup on paper, but in practice, it's as personal as football gets. The Cougars have taken the last four meetings and hold a 20-7 edge overall, and every Friday night in this series feels less like a game and more like a neighborhood argument settled on a scoreboard. For North Stokes, ending that four-game slide would mean almost as much as anything a conference title could offer.

But conference play brings its own weight, and nowhere is that heavier than the county rivalry with South Stokes. This one is old, deep, and stubborn, the kind of series where records only tell half the story. South Stokes holds a 32-12 advantage across the years, but last season the Vikings finally broke through, grinding out a 14-12 win to snap a four-game losing streak. True to form, it came down to the fourth quarter, same as it almost always does in this rivalry. Nobody in this

series wins comfortably. Every year, it seems, the game is decided in the final minutes, and this year figures to be no different.

Then comes the game everyone in the building already knows is the biggest of all: Bishop McGuinness. The Villains aren't just a rival, they're the defending conference champions, and they've made that status felt against North Stokes in brutal fashion. Four straight losses, the most recent a humbling 50-6 defeat that left little room for moral victories. There's no dressing this one up. Beating Bishop McGuinness would mean dethroning the champs, and for a program looking to prove it belongs at the top of the conference, no single result would carry more weight.

And just when it might seem like the toughest test is behind them, South Davidson waits. The Wildcats aren't just good, they're coming off a 10-2 season, the best in their school's history, and they enter as the conference's clear runner-up. But history says this series doesn't care about records. North Stokes beat South Davidson 7-6 in 2024, then dropped a heartbreaker 22-21 back in 2022. the kind of results that suggest these two teams are never far apart when they meet. South Davidson holds just a slim 7-6 edge over the years, and with the Wildcats trending upward, this game may end up being the truest measure of how far the Vikings have really come.

2026

NORTH STOKES VIKINGS'

Football Schedule

Kickoff at 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted

8/21

CHERRYVILLE

7:30pm

8/28

ELKIN

9/4

JORDAN MATTHEWS

9/11

PATRICK COUNTY, VA.

9/18

SOUTH STOKES*

9/25

CHATHAM CENTRAL*

10/2

WINSTON-SALEM PREP*

10/16

BISHOP MCGUINNESS*

10/23

SOUTH DAVIDSON*

10/30

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*1A/2A Greater Triad Conference Games

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NORTH STOKES VIKINGS' ROSTER

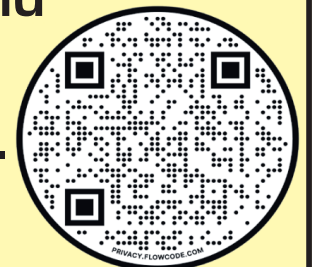
1	Holden Shelton	11, 6'0, 175 QB/DB	25	Mason Delgado	9, 5'7, 130, WR/DB
2	Sully Beavers	11, 5'9, 130, WR/DB	29	Wyatt Bennett	9, 5'7, 135, WR/DB
3	Lantz Fagg	11, 5'9, 160, WR/DB/K	38	Wyatt Lawson	10, 5'6, 165, FB/LB
7	Dalton Whitener	11, 6'0, 160, WR/DB	50	Gavin Umberger	11, 6'0, 200, OL/DL
10	Nate Harrison	10, 6'1, 200, TE/LB	51	Noah McMillian	12, 5'9, 200, OL/DL
11	Ethan Mabe	10, 5'10, 165, WR/DB	52	Andrew Dunlap	10, 6'0, 240, OL/DL
12	Jackson Bodenhamer	12, 6'1, 195, WR/LB/LS	55	Damonte Hargrave	9, 6'2, 252, OL/DL
16	Wesley Horton	10, 5'9, 205, QB/LB	63	Elijah Smith	11, 5'11, 275, OL/DL
19	Zach Taitt	11, 5'10, 215, TE/LB	72	Alex Brown	12, 5'11, 275, OL/DL
20	Mitchell Flinchum	11, 5'9, 165, WR/DB	77	Wyatt Collins	12, 6'2, 295, OL/DL
23	Gage Miller	11, 5'8, 160, RB/DB	85	Ethan Mabe	10, 5'11, 175, TE/DL





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West Stokes embraces new faces after breakthrough finish

By Robert Money
robert.money@thestokesnews.com

HEAD COACH
Trent Lowman

ASSISTANT COACHES
Chris Nelson (Defensive Coordinator/ Inside Linebackers), David Anderson (Outside Linebackers), Travis Gammons (Defensive Backs), Chris Brown (Defensive Backs), Steve Whitt (Offensive & Defensive Lines), Greg King (Quarterback/Wide Receivers), Daniel Lynch (Offensive Line), Mike Grayson (Wide Receiver), Layton Allen (Wide Receiver), and Brandon Dawson (Running Back)



Robert Money | The Stokes News
West Stokes Coach Trent Lowman is entering his third year with the school.

LAST SEASON

5-7 overall, 3-2 conference, lost in the second round of the 4A NCHSAA State Playoffs, winning in the first round 39-3 over Forbush, and losing in the second round to Brevard 41-14. Points for: 20.8; Point against: 25.0; Differential: -4.2.

KEY LOSSES

The Wildcats have holes to fill after graduating a group of decorated seniors, led by All-Conference honorees Charlie Reeves, Ashton Stevens, Nate Akers and Alex Pegram. Pegram's absence looms especially large on defense, he led West Stokes with 120 tackles and 16 tackles for loss a season ago. Reeves paced the receiving corps with 18 catches for 233 yards, and Stevens shouldered a heavy rushing load with 523 yards and five touchdowns on the ground.

Also gone are All-County selections Daniel Innocent, who led the team with four quarterback sacks, and Micah Long, who topped the roster with three interceptions and three pass deflections, along with Ayden Smith (Honorable Mention All-Conference) and Colten Melton (All-County).

SEASON OUTLOOK

West Stokes went 5-7 a year ago, but the Wildcats' season wasn't defined by the record. It was defined by a late-season surge that carried them to a tie for second in the Northwest 3A/4A Conference and a trip to the second round of the NCHSAA 4A playoffs before their run ended.

Now entering his third season leading the program, head coach Trent Lowman likes what he's seeing out of a roster that had to replace a wave of production but returns several players who got meaningful snaps down the

stretch in 2025.

"We made a lot of growth in the back half of the season last year and a lot of young guys were contributors," Lowman said. "We graduated many starters and will have many new starters spread out in all positions. We're excited to get to work and I'm excited to see what our players and coaches can do."

Lowman, who is 15-10 in two seasons at West Stokes and 106-57 for his career after stints at Bandys (2013-17) and East Surry (2018-23).

"Our guys have worked really hard this spring and summer and are as bought in as any team I've coached," Lowman said. "I'm hoping their efforts and chemistry lead us to some wins and allow them to experience the victories and accomplishments of hard work."

Replacing that production starts in the trenches, where senior Omari Graham (6-4, 290) has emerged as one of the state's most coveted recruits thanks to his rare blend of size and athleticism. He's flanked by Dalton East (6-6, 320), a load for opposing linemen to move. Together, the pair figure to set the tone on both sides of the ball before the snap even happens.

Senior Devin Gastley (6-3, 215) returns after accounting for 1,240 total yards and 15 touchdowns, nine rushing and six through the air, in 2025, giving the Wildcats a dual-threat presence at quarterback who's also capable of sliding to tight end or linebacker. He'll have help from senior Dallas Frazier (6-2, 215), a physical mismatch as a receiver and defender.

The receiving corps brings speed to stretch defenses, headlined by Caden Covell (6-1, 160) and brothers Jah'Mari Morris (6-1, 150) and Kari Morris (6-2, 160), who contribute on both sides of the ball. Jah'Mari Morris turned heads as a kick returner in 2025, averaging 35.8 yards per return with a

touchdown on a 99-yard run back, and every kickoff remains a potential game-changer with him fielding it.

In the backfield, Braddox Sumner (5-9, 190) provides a physical, between-the-tackles presence before flipping to linebacker to deliver hits of his own.

Junior Jay Taylor (5-8, 145) enters the year as the reigning Northwest Conference Specialist of the Year after an All-Conference season that saw him produce 1,203 total yards — 372 rushing, 530 receiving and 171 on returns — while also locking down opposing offenses on defense. Quarterback Cole Knox (5-10, 170) continues to develop, and Isaac Boyles (6-3, 210) gives the Wildcats a dependable target on offense and a disruptive presence rushing the passer.

The junior class also features running backs Josh Frasier (6-1, 180) and Tristan Moore (5-10, 180), while brothers Emery McKinney (5-10, 225) and Everette McKinney (5-10, 235) add toughness on the offensive and defensive lines.

Sophomore Na'Zir Chiles (5-8, 150) is already showing off his versatility as a receiver, defensive back and kicker — and some believe he could be the program's next player to draw major college interest.

BIG GAMES

The road to a successful 2026 season for West Stokes won't just be measured by wins and losses—it will be defined by rivalry games and opportunities to prove last season was only the beginning.

The first major test arrives in Week 2 on Aug. 28 when the Wildcats host longtime rival South Stokes. While the series has been one-sided for much of its history, West Stokes won't overlook the Sauras. The Wildcats own a commanding 21-5 advantage



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in the series and have won five consecutive meetings, including last year's dominant 49-0 victory. With few traditional rivals on the non-conference schedule, the matchup with South Stokes provides the first measuring stick of the season as West Stokes looks to avoid another slow start after opening 1-4 a year ago.

Conference play offers another chance for redemption.

Last season, the Wildcats dropped their Northwest Conference opener to Forbush, 24-17, a loss that left West Stokes sitting at 1-5. Just weeks later, however, the Wildcats

flipped the script in emphatic fashion, routing the Falcons 39-3 in the opening round of the NCHSAA state playoffs. That victory restored momentum and reaffirmed West Stokes' place in the rivalry. The Wildcats now hold a 12-2 all-time advantage over Forbush after snapping the Falcons' brief two-game winning streak in the series.

The season's defining stretch comes over the final four weeks when every game carries rivalry implications, a hallmark of the Northwest Conference.

The spotlight first turns to East Surry, where history and familiarity collide. The

Cardinals own a narrow 13-11 edge in the all-time series, but West Stokes has won the last three meetings. Adding another layer of intrigue is the return of longtime Wildcats head coach Jimmy Upchurch to East Surry, where he now serves as the Cardinals' offensive coordinator after leading West Stokes for 18 seasons.

West Stokes will also renew its rivalry with North Surry, a series the Wildcats have controlled in recent years. West Stokes owns a 16-6 advantage and enters the season having won five straight against the Greyhounds.

The Wildcats have enjoyed similar success against Surry Central, holding a 13-4 edge in the series as they continue their pursuit of conference supremacy.

The regular season concludes against Mount Airy, a rivalry that has belonged to the Granite Bears in recent years. Mount Airy owns a 9-3 all-time record against West Stokes and has captured the last five meetings. For the Wildcats, the finale presents one last opportunity to reverse the trend while potentially impacting conference championship and playoff positioning.



Robert Money | The Stokes News

2026 West Stokes Wildcats' seniors.



Robert Money | The Stokes News

West Stokes' Jay Taylor dodges a tackle

2026

WEST STOKES WILDCATS'

Football Schedule

Kickoff at 7:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted

8/21	NORTH DAVIDSON
8/28	SOUTH STOKES
9/4	NORTHEAST GUILFORD
9/11	COMMUNITY SCHOOL OF DAVIDSON
9/18	STATESVILLE
9/25	OPEN
10/2	FORBUSH*
10/9	MOUNT AIRY*
10/16	EAST SURRY*
10/23	NORTH SURRY*
10/30	SURRY CENTRAL*

*Northwest 3a/4a Conference Game

Home

Away

WEST STOKES WILDCATS' ROSTER					
0	Jay Taylor	11, 5-8, WR/DB/KR	24	Kayden Sechrist	12, 6-0, WR/DB
1	Devin Gastley	12, 6-3, TE/LB/QB	25	Kyle Childress	11, 6-1, WR/LB
2	Jah'mari Morris	12, 6-1, WR/DB/KR	26	Aidan Pegram	11, 5-10, RB/LB
3	Jah-Kari Morris	12, 6-2, WR/DB	33	Jayden Hernandez	12, 6-0, K/P
4	Joshua Frasier	11, 6-1, RB/DB	50	Deacon Friedrich	11, 6-3, OL/DL
5	Cole Knox	11, 5-10, QB/DB	51	Elijah Bolejack	12, 6-1, OL/DL
6	Braddox Sumner	12, 5-9, RB/LB	52	Hector Alfaro-Vasquez	12, 5-10, OL/DL
7	Morgan Dowdy	12, 5-10, WR/LB/LS	53	Cooper Pratt	11, 6-1, TE/DE/LS
8	Dallas Frasier	12, 6-2, TE/LB	56	Noah Edwards	11, 6-2, OL/DL
9	Tristan Moore	11, 5-10, RB/LB	57	Jayden Hammond	12, 6-1, OL/DL
10	Amari Morris	11, 6-0, WR/DB	58	Omari Graham	12, 6-4, OL/DL
11	Cayden Covell	12, 6-1, WR/DB	59	EJ Howard	11, 6-1, OL/DL
13	Isaac Boyles	11, 6-3, TE/DE	60	Jonathan Carico	12, 5-11, OL/DL
15	Lewis Luzwick	6-0, WR/LB	61	Colton Creson	11, 6-1, OL/DL
18	Na'zir Chiles	10, 5-8, WR/DB	62	Everette McKinney	11, 5-10, OL/DL
19	Kolson Thomas	9, 6-0, QB	63	Emery McKinney	11, 5-10, OL/DL
20	James Brooks	10 5-10, RB/LB	64	Nick Herrera	11, 6-1, OL/DL
21	Tucker Proper	11, 5-7, WR/DB	65	Logan Freeman	11, 6-1, OL/DL
22	Ben Fulk	11, 6-0, RB/LB	72	Dalton East	12, 6-6, OL/DL
23	David Williams	11, 5-10, RB/LB	78	Ethan Smith	12, 6-0, OL/DL



South Stokes Sauras

South Stokes looks to capitalize on returning experience in 2026

By Robert Money
robert.money@thestokesnews.com

HEAD COACH
Josh Mickey



Josh Mickey

Robert Money

ASSISTANT COACHES

Mickey Tuttle (Offensive Line), Chad Amos (Defensive Coordinator/Linebackers), Charles Brewer (Running Backs/Defensive Line), George Blankenship (Wide Receiver), Ja Anderson (Assistant Coach)

LAST SEASON

4-7 overall, 3-3 conference, finished fourth in the 1A/2A Greater Triad Conference, eliminated in the first round of the State 1A Playoffs by Cherryville 55-12. Points for: 12.5, points against: 26.9, differential: -14.4,

KEY LOSSES

South Stokes will have significant holes to fill heading into the 2026 season after graduating one of its most productive senior classes. The biggest losses come from versatile playmakers who contributed on offense, defense, and special teams. The most difficult player to replace will be Tucker Monday, whose impact extended to every phase of the game. Monday led the rushing attack with 387 yards and eight touchdowns while also contributing as a receiver. Defensively, he recorded 70 tackles and two sacks, serving as one of the team's most dependable linebackers. In addition, he handled the team's kicking, punting, and extra-point duties, making him one of the

most valuable all-around players on the roster. His graduation leaves South Stokes searching for replacements at multiple positions rather than just one. The Sauras also lose their top offensive weapon in Jamison Canty. Canty emerged as Luke Amos' favorite target, hauling in 52 receptions for 844 yards and seven touchdowns—more than half of the team's receiving production. He was also a dangerous return specialist and made an impact defensively with 27 tackles and an interception returned for a touchdown. His big-play ability will be difficult to replicate.

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Robert Money | The Stokes News

2026 South Stokes Football Seniors

Another key departure is Nick Turner, who provided consistency on both sides of the ball. Turner finished second on the team with 39 catches for 418 yards and three touchdowns while adding 38 tackles on defense. He also served as the team's primary kickoff returner, averaging more than 21 yards per return. His versatility and reliability made him an important contributor every week.

Frank Kennedy also graduates after contributing as a receiver, defensive reserve, and return specialist. While his offensive numbers were more modest, his experience and depth will still be missed.

Collectively, this senior class accounted for the majority of South Stokes' offensive production outside of quarterback Luke Amos. The graduates combined for 1,319 receiving yards, 10 receiving touchdowns, 387 rushing yards, eight rushing touchdowns, and 135 tackles, while also filling key special teams roles. Replacing that production and leadership will be the Sauras' biggest challenge entering the 2026 season, even with several talented underclassmen returning to build around.

SEASON OUTLOOK

After finishing 4-7 overall and 3-3 in the Greater Triad 1A/2A Conference, South Stokes enters the 2026 season with optimism built on growth rather than just wins and losses. The Sauras were a much-improved football team a year ago, and head coach Josh Mickey believes the culture established by last year's senior class has positioned the program to continue climbing.

"We grew a tremendous amount as a program last year," Mickey said. "We graduated five seniors last year and they helped turn our culture around. We return seven starters on defense and six on offense. Our goal is to continue to improve and

compete in our conference and continue to build on the success and momentum from last season's growth."

South Stokes returns a strong nucleus of experienced players on both sides of the football.

The offense will be led by sophomore quarterback Luke Amos, who gained invaluable experience as a freshman starter. Amos completed 125-of-250 passes for 1,498 yards and 11 touchdowns, giving the Sauras one of the conference's more experienced young quarterbacks entering 2026.

"I'm excited about this upcoming season," Mickey said. "We have had a great summer. Our participation is up from a year ago. My hope is we continue to consistently improve each day. We want to be competitive each week and grow as a team from week to week."

Amos will have several familiar targets back in the passing game. Senior Ethan Newsome caught 12 passes for 87 yards and a touchdown, while Blaine Ellis added two receptions and Isaac Mitchell returns after contributing in the secondary and on special teams. Sophomore running back Joseph Vaughn also returns after rushing for 137 yards and a touchdown while seeing action defensively.

The defense appears to be the strength of the team.

Leading the way is senior linebacker Sawyer Scott, the reigning Greater Triad 1A/2A Conference Defensive Player of the Year and an All-Conference selection. Scott was everywhere last season, piling up 89 total tackles, including 65 solo stops, with five sacks, providing the Sauras with one of the area's premier defensive playmakers.

Joining Scott is fellow All-Conference linebacker Linkin VanRijsewijk, who recorded 76 tackles and two sacks, while All-Conference lineman Michael Brown posted

65 tackles and a team-high six sacks in the trenches. Junior Cameron Bratton contributed 42 tackles, and the secondary returns valuable experience with Newsome, Ellis, Mitchell and John Czerkiewicz all back in the fold.

The offensive and defensive lines should also benefit from the return of All-Conference junior Colten Wilmoth, along with Brown and

Bratton, giving South Stokes experience in the trenches.

While the varsity roster returns significant experience, one area to monitor is depth after last season's junior varsity team finished 0-4. Continued development of younger players will be critical over the course of the season.

Still, the enthusiasm surrounding the program is evident.

With 13 returning starters, an emerging quarterback, one of the conference's top defensive players in Sawyer Scott, and increased offseason participation, the Sauras have reason to believe they can take another step forward. If Amos continues his development, the offense finds replacements for Canty's production, and the veteran defense plays to its potential, South Stokes should once again be in the hunt for a winning conference record and could challenge for a higher finish in the Greater Triad 1A/2A Conference than last season's fourth-place showing.

BIG GAMES

The 2026 season presents South Stokes with several opportunities to change the narrative. Whether it's renewing county rivalries, ending lengthy losing streaks or gaining early momentum, the Sauras' schedule features four games that could define their season.

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South Stokes' Luke Amos drops back to pass.

The season opens with perhaps the most important game on the schedule as South Stokes hosts North Wilkes. While it may not carry the emotion of a rivalry matchup, it could set the tone for everything that follows.

The Sauras have dropped five consecutive meetings to the Vikings, including a stunning 48-0 defeat a year ago, and trail the all-time series 6-3. A victory in Week 1 would not only erase the memory of last season's lopsided loss, but it would also provide the confidence boost a young team with six returning offensive starters and seven returning defensive starters hopes to build upon throughout the fall.

one of the area's best rivalries when South Stokes squares off with North Stokes. Separated by just 16 miles, the county and conference rivals have produced some of the most dramatic finishes in northwest North Carolina. Although South Stokes owns a commanding 32-12 lead in the all-time series, the recent games have been decided by the slimmest of margins. Last season, North Stokes snapped a five-game losing streak in the rivalry with a 14-12 victory after scoring in the closing minutes. The year before, the Sauras claimed a thrilling 22-21 win on a field goal as time expired. With so many recent

meetings coming down to the fourth quarter, another nail-biter would surprise no one.

Another measuring-stick game comes against West Stokes, the other county rival located just 18 minutes away. Since the schools became rivals following West Stokes' opening in 1999, the Wildcats have controlled the series, holding a 21-5 advantage and winning the last five meetings. South Stokes' last victory came in 2019, when the Sauras scored in the final minute to escape with a 12-8 win. For a program looking to continue its upward trajectory, ending that losing streak against a longtime county rival would be another significant milestone.

The Sauras also have unfinished business against McMichael. While South Stokes owns a narrow 22-21 advantage in the all-time series—including a dominant 14-2 record against Madison-Mayodan before McMichael was established—the recent trend has favored the Phoenix. McMichael has won the last four meetings, including a 34-7 victory last season. South Stokes' last win in the series came in 2019, a 27-13 triumph. Reclaiming the upper hand would not only end another frustrating streak but could also prove pivotal in confidence building for the Sauras.

For a South Stokes team that believes it has established a stronger culture and returns the majority of its starters, these games represent more than just dates on the schedule. They are opportunities to erase recent disappointments, restore bragging rights in Stokes County, and prove the program's growth is translating into victories. If the Sauras can reverse the recent trends against these familiar opponents, the 2026 season could mark another significant step forward for the program.

Robert Money | The Stokes News

2026

SOUTH STOKES SAURAS'

Football Schedule

Kickoff at 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted

8/21	NORTH WILKES
8/28	WEST STOKES
9/4	MCMICHAEL
9/11	SURRY CENTRAL
9/18	NORTH STOKES*
9/25	THE COLLEGE PREP & LEADERSHIP ACADEMY*
10/2	BISHOP MCGUINNESS*
10/9	OPEN
10/16	SOUTH DAVIDSON*
10/23	CHATHAM CENTRAL*
10/30	WINSTON-SALEM PREP*

*1A/2A Greater Triad Conference Games

Home Away



SOUTH STOKES SAURAS' ROSTER

0	Cameron Bratton	11, TED/DE	19	Bentley Houston	10, WR/DB
1	John Czerkiewicz	11, WR/DB	22	Ira Justice	9, WR/DB
2	Sawyer Scott	12, WR/LB	24	Linkin VanRijsewijk	12, RB/LB
3	Ethan Newsome	12, WR/DB	50	Andrew Ashburn	9, OL/DL
4	Blaine Ellis	12, WR/DB	52	Michael Brown	12, OL/DL
5	Isaac Mitchell	11, WR/DB	53	Levi Bailey	12, OL/DL
6	Joseph Vaughn	10, RB/DB	55	Colten Wilmoth	11, OL/DL
7	Reid Tilley	12, WR/D	56	Jeremiah Davis	10, OL/DL
8	Isaiah Galloway	11, WR/DB	68	Bryson Neal	9, OL/DL
9	Luke Amos	10, QB	72	Austin Shelton	10, OL/DL
10	Kyman Brown	12, RB/DB	77	Conner Chaney	12, OL/DL
12	Abe Jennings	12, TE/DE/OLB	78	Tristan Guzman	10, OL/DL
13	Kaven Joyce	12, QB/LB	88	Donovan Burgess	11, WR/DB
14	Tristan Brown	12, RB/DL			



Mount Airy Granite Bears

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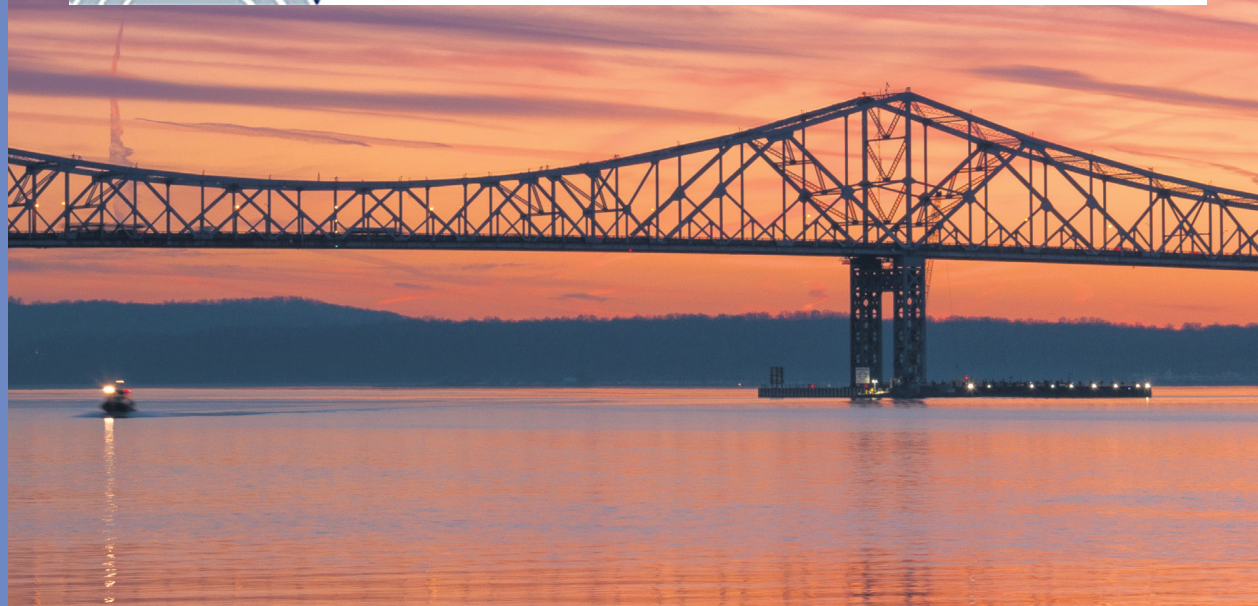
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Bears hungry to defend conference title

By **Cory Smith**
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HEAD COACH
Austin Taylor

ASSISTANT COACHES
Tanner Hiatt (Offensive Coordinator); Darron Taylor (Defensive Coordinator); Caleb Thomas (Special Teams); Tyson Clabo (Offensive Line); Jordon Tucker (Defensive Line); Richard Grissom Jr. (Defensive Backs); Nic Isom (Linebackers); David Carpenter (Safeties); Wes Bowman (Defensive Assistant); Justin Combs (Offensive Line); Mason Hill (Tight ends); Mario Revels (Wide Receivers); Gerald Travis (Gameday Coordinator); Sam Chamberlain (Gameday Coordinator)

LAST SEASON
9-3 overall, 6-0 conference, Northwest 3A/4A Conference Champion, 3A State Playoffs third round, Points for: 35.7, Points against: 20.1

KEY LOSSES
Mount Airy graduated 16 players in the

Class of 2026: Zach Goins, Aidan Pomeroy, Taeshon Martin, Scott Moore, Karson Strickland, Cashtyn Revels, Saul Oakley, DJ Joyce, Janet Ramirez, Bryson Grey, Wyatt Creed, Britton Ward, Ethan Clabo, Haden Goins, Third Floyd and Jackson Byerly.
Six of the graduates will continue their football careers in college: Martin at Campbell University, Goins at Sacred Heart University, Joyce and Clabo at N.C. A&T State University, Floyd at Louisburg College and Oakley at Barton College. Another Granite Bear, Grey, will play collegiate baseball at Bluefield University.
Martin, Goins and Clabo were all-conference selections on both offense and defense. Byerly was named to the all-conference offensive squad, while Joyce, Oakley, Floyd and Creed made the all-conference defensive squad. Martin was the offensive player of the year in the Northwest 3A/4A Conference, and Joyce was the conference defensive player of the year.
Martin graduated as Mount Airy's all-time leading rusher, and Joyce holds the career sack record for the Bears.

SEASON OUTLOOK
The graduation of a large senior class, many of whom were multi-year starters, left

Mount Airy in unfamiliar territory following the 2025 season. While they will have a veteran presence, the Bears had a lot of spots to fill



Austin Taylor enters his third season as Mount Airy's head coach.

Cory Smith | The News



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Granite Bear Athletics

The Mount Airy High School football seniors.

and will feature some new faces.

The Granite Bears will have a mix of youth and experience, and head coach Austin Taylor is ready for the challenges that lie ahead.

"I think it's going to be an exciting season," said Taylor, who enters his third year as head coach. "It's been a while since we've had some question marks around our team, but I think the guys have taken it well. They've been really motivated."

Taylor reported that the Bears had great attendance during summer workouts. As the team looked to form their new identity on the field, they did so with certain principles in mind that have guided the

program for many years.

"We know we're going to play disciplined with great effort and great energy," Taylor said. "When we're on defense we're going to fly around, and when we're on offense we're going to put the ball down and we're going to run at you."

The biggest question mark of the offseason, which Taylor joked that he's been asked about 150 times a week all summer, was at quarterback.

Ahmad Francis and Ty Hemric both played quarterback in 2025, but Francis transferred and Hemric will likely miss the season due to

injuries sustained in a car accident. Hemric was an all-conference selection who threw for 529 yards and nine touchdowns with no interceptions, and Francis would be just a sophomore this season.

Rising senior Alex Spainhour was named the Granite Bears' starting quarterback. Spainhour primarily played linebacker as a junior and was used intermittently as a receiver and on the return team.

"Alex is a competitor and is really excited to have this opportunity," Taylor said. "He's a fantastic athlete that's had success for us and in wrestling. He stepped up and has grown a lot this summer."

Spainhour will have the benefit of playing behind Mount Airy's most experienced unit – the offensive line.

"The offensive line is probably the biggest strength of our team," Taylor said.

Mount Airy returns four starters from an offensive line unit that cleared the way for nearly 2,400 rushing yards in 2025.

McKennon Hiatt is a three-year starter who spent the past two at center. He will play right guard this season, and Riley Leake will move to center. Both Leake and Hiatt were all-conference selections in 2025.

Taylor said Hiatt has stepped up as one of the team's best leaders.

Carson Soriano returns as left guard, and Landon Wood returns as left tackle. The newcomer to the group is Solomon Washington – an all-conference honorable mention who primarily played on the defensive line as a sophomore.

Perhaps the biggest hole the Bears will have to fill is at running back following the graduation of Taeshon Martin, who ran for a record 6,172 yards at Mount Airy.

Kylan Mason will look to continue the program's tradition of strong running backs. With Martin serving as the bell cow, Mason's time on offense was limited a year ago. He still managed to earn all-conference honors on both offense and defense.

"Kylan is definitely our guy," Taylor said. "He's one of those guys that's played on really good football teams behind really good running



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backs. If he played anywhere else he probably would've started multiple years.

"He's made a name for himself already on defense, and I know running the football is going to be really special with him this year."

Mount Airy graduated its leading receiver, Goins, who accounted for nearly half of the team's receiving yards and nine of its 16 touchdowns. Jasper Wilmoth returns as the second-leading receiver from 2025 and is expected to lead the unit as a senior. Taylor called Wilmoth "an anchor for us" at receiver.

Zion Martin, who played some cornerback at the end of the 2025 season, will be an

option at receiver alongside J.D. Bohart.

"There are some other guys that are seniors that are going to play significant minutes and get a chance to prove themselves," Taylor said. "It's stressful to not have a ton of experience back, but it's also fun to see these guys step up and take on the challenge."

The defense took a huge hit with graduation. The six 2026 graduates who are playing college football all had key roles on defense, two of whom were four-year starters and part of the 2022 and 2023 state championship teams.

Mason is Mount Airy's only returning all-conference defensive player. He led the team with 135 tackles, including 89 solo tackles, at linebacker.

Mason will move to safety this season alongside Spainhour, while Zion Martin and Michael Bessent will start at cornerback. Wilmoth and Bohart are also expected to see action in the secondary.

Washington returns as a starter on the defensive line. Hiatt played some defensive line as a junior, but Taylor said the Bears had so much depth at D-line that they were able to save Hiatt for offense.

This year, many of the offensive linemen will have to play both ways.

Taylor also mentioned Miles Fonville as someone who could make an impact at defensive end.

Even with Mason and Spainhour now in the secondary, Taylor feels the linebacker group has a lot of potential this season.

"Cody Byerly is a senior that worked really hard in the weight room, so we're excited to see what he can do," Taylor said. "After that we're super young. There are guys like Brylee Rose, Chance Utt, Zach Erickson and Bates Currin that are going to be really good, we just need time."

Bohart returns as the Bears placekicker following a standout freshman campaign. Over the summer, he attended the Kohl's National Invitational Scholarship Camp that features

the top high school kickers, punters and snappers in the nation.

BIG GAMES

Mount Airy's young team will have to learn on the job as the season begins with a tough nonconference slate.

Three of the Bears' nonconference foes competed for championships a year ago. Watauga went 15-0 and won the NCHSAA 6A State Championship, Starmount went 11-3 and finished 2A West Regional Runner-up, and Jefferson Forest went 11-3 and reached the Virginia High School League Class 4 Final Four.

East Wilkes tied Starmount for the Mountain Valley Conference Championship in 2025. St. Stephens went 6-6 but won a playoff game in the 6A division before being eliminated by Watauga.

Conference play begins on Oct. 2 as Mount Airy chases its sixth consecutive league title. The Bears won each conference game by at least 34 points last year, but the conference is projected to be more evenly matched this season.

The most recent team currently in the Northwest 3A/4A Conference to defeat Mount Airy was East Surry in 2022. West Stokes and Surry Central last beat Mount Airy in 2015, North Surry's last win over its Granite City counterpart was 2006, and Forbush hasn't defeated Mount Airy since 2000.



Charles Leftwich | Special to the News

Mount Airy takes the field in a 2025 home game.

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2026

MOUNT AIRY GRANITE BEARS'

Football Schedule

Kickoff at 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted

8/21

STARMOUNT

8/28

EAST WILKES

9/4

WATAUGA

9/11

JEFFERSON FOREST (VA.)

9/18

ST. STEPHENS^

9/25

OPEN

10/2

NORTH SURRY*

10/9

WEST STOKES*

10/16

FORBUSH*^

10/23

SURRY CENTRAL*

10/30

EAST SURRY*

*Conference

^7:30 p.m. start

Home

Away

MH

MOUNT AIRY GRANITE BEARS' ROSTER

1	Jasper Wilmoth	Sr.	33	Brylee Rose	So.
2	Cody Byerly	Sr.	50	Landon Wood	Sr.
3	Zion Martin	Sr.	51	McKennon Hiatt	Sr.
4	Chance Utt	Jr.	54	Will Vaden	Sr.
5	Kylan Mason	Jr.	55	Riley Leake	Jr.
6	Zach Erickson	Jr.	59	Camdyn Easter	Sr.
7	Alex Spainhour	Sr.	60	Hunter Inman	Jr.
8	Michael Bessent	Sr.	64	Noel Paguada	Jr.
10	J.D. Bohart	So.	65	Caleb Morell	Jr.
11	Miles Fonville	Jr.	66	Alex Diaz	So.
14	Ty Hemric	Sr.	70	Paxton Slate	Jr.
15	Nate Hodges	So.	71	Will Watson	Jr.
19	Bates Currin	Fr.	75	Carson Soriano	Sr.
20	Blake Haynes	So.	76	Corbin Kerley	Jr.
21	Riley Bradley	So.	77	Solomon Washington	Jr.
22	Diego Lopez	So.	78	Alex Escutia	So.

*Position, Height and Weight were not submitted by the team

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North Surry Greyhounds

Young Greyhounds are ready to prove themselves

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Jackson Smith

ASSISTANT COACHES
Danny Lyons (Assistant Head Coach, Offensive Line); Daniel Draughn (Defensive Coordinator, Strength and Conditioning Coordinator, Defensive Line); Will Hodges (Offensive Assistant); Jahreece Lynch (Inside Receivers); Carter Phillips (Outside Receivers); Ken Phillips (Running Backs); Chris Johnson (Linebackers/Special Teams Coordinator); Austin Swartz (Corners); Tanner Jackson (Safeties); Tyler Beamer (Statistician/Historian)

LAST SEASON
7-5 overall, 2-3 conference, Northwest 3A/4A Conference fourth place, 2A State Playoffs second round, Points for: 28.3, Points against: 23.4

KEY LOSSES
North Surry graduated 17 seniors in the Class of 2026: Ben Lakey, Fisher Leftwich, Erik Cabrera, Gage Combs, Kyler Cain, David Schuyler, Zamarri Sweatman, Cade Atkins, Gabe Chamberlain, Parker Dunbar, Dillon Shore, Austin Ravit, Matthew Rogers, Jaxton Turney, Orlando Bello, Hayden Mosley

and Jaxson Danley.
Three graduates will continue their football careers in college: Leftwich at Rice University, Ravit at Concord University and Sweatman at Catawba College. Atkins will also play a college sport, signing with Surry Community College for baseball.
Leftwich is North Surry's career leader in receptions (149) and receiving touchdowns (36) while ranking second in receiving yards (2,696).
Sweatman led the Greyhounds' ground game with more than 1,500 rushing yards and 17 touchdowns.
Sweatman, Schuyler and Shore earned all-conference honors on offense, while Cain, Cabrera and Ravit earned all-conference honors on defense. Combs was an all-conference honorable mention linebacker.
The Hounds graduated nine of their 10

leading tacklers, with Cabrera leading the way with 143 tackles and Combs with 107.
SEASON OUTLOOK
North Surry's first season in the 4A division was highlighted by the program's first playoff victory in 21 years.
A foundation has been laid with three consecutive seven-win seasons, but North Surry's pursuit of a fourth such finish – or better – will require a new slate of players to rise to the occasion.
The graduation of 17 seniors left numerous gaps in the Greyhounds' starting lineup. Jackson Smith, who enters his fifth season leading



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the program, has high hopes for the younger players ready to fill those gaps.

"We've been blessed to have the level of talent that's come through North Surry High School, so we definitely went into a bit of a transition period after graduating so many

kids," Smith said. "Attendance has been great this summer, and the kids have worked really hard because they want to maintain the standard that's been set for this program."

The Greyhounds will rely on many of the players who helped the JV team go 9-1 in

2025.

Sophomore Brett Lyons will start at quarterback for the Greyhounds. Lyons got a small taste of varsity football when he filled in against East Surry, but spent most of his time on JV where he threw for more than 1,200 yards and 18 touchdowns.

"Brett had a great summer and won the starting job," Smith said. "He's a very cerebral kid that's very accurate with the ball. We're very confident in his abilities and know he'll continue to get better with more experience and more reps."

Kendall Ring and Damarcus McClure are the only returning players who recorded rushing yards last season, combining for just 51 of the team's more than 2,600 yards.

The Hounds have several options at running back this year. Ty'Mere Brown is a senior transfer, while sophomores Nate Stanley and Kingston Williams led North's JV team in rushing.

"Guys from the last few years like Jake Simmons, Zamarri Sweatman and Fisher Leftwich left some big shoes to fill," Smith said. "Ty'Mere, Nate and Kingston have worked all summer and all have physical gifts that make them strong at that position. We're excited to see what they can do."

Senior Beau Carson will lead a receiving corps of young talent that Smith said he has a

lot of confidence in. Carson had 29 receptions for 534 yards and five touchdowns, highlighted by performances of 125 yards against Mount Airy and 152 yards against Forbush.

In addition to being the JV team's top rusher in 2025, Stanley also led the team in receiving yards and will line up alongside Carson. Doug Sykes will also join the mix, as will first-year varsity player Jhett Tolbert.

"Jhett is a great athlete that will be like a Swiss Army knife for us," Smith said. "He has a lot of great tools we hope to use in his first year."

North Surry's offensive line will be one of the team's few senior-heavy units on the team. The Hounds return three starters from a line that cleared the way for more than 2,600 rushing yards and more than 4,100 total yards.

Wyatt Hooker will play left tackle, Dodger Hodges will be at right tackle and Brody Anderson will be at right guard. Fellow senior Ian Bello joins the starting lineup at left guard, while junior Lane Ramey will play center.

Smith said most of the guys playing offensive line will have to play both ways. Players such as Bentley Nichols, Mason Jones and Cam Jackson will also play on the defensive line.

The Greyhounds plan to utilize a 4-2-5



Cory Smith | The News

Jackson Smith enters his fifth season as North Surry's head coach.



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Greyhound Athletics
North Surry's football team celebrates after winning its first playoff game in 21 years. The Greyhounds look to continue their postseason success in 2026.

defense with multiple hybrid players. There will be a lot of new players in the scheme as North graduated nine of its 10 leading tacklers.

Mason Cornett and Reily Cazares will occupy the two inside linebacker spots. Elijah Jenkins returns at defensive back,

where he racked up 45 tackles – the most of any returning player. McClure, who had 26 tackles and a pair of interceptions, and Carson, who had one interception and five pass defenses, return as well.

Smith also highlighted players such as Tolbert, Williams, Sykes, Stanley and My'Quan

Floyd as difference makers in the defensive backfield.

"We feel like we have a lot of depth there and want to take advantage of that," Smith said.

Sykes will also handle kicking duties for the Greyhounds.

BIG GAMES

All eyes are on Week 1 as North Surry travels to Sparta to take on Alleghany. The Greyhounds' only blemish in nonconference competition a year ago was against the Trojans.

"The big thing I'm looking for is how we match up with them from a physicality and toughness standpoint," Smith said. "Last year, Alleghany was more physical than us and I think that's what cost us the game. I know we have a lot of potential, so seeing if we can be physically and mentally tough for four quarters will go a long way."

North Surry will host its home opener Aug. 28 against West Wilkes, which North outlasted 7-3 in a defensive battle. The Greyhounds scored at least 37 points in their three remaining nonconference games.

Conference play begins against 2025 Northwest 3A/4A Conference champion Mount Airy, then doesn't let up when North Surry hosts 2024 Foothills 2A Conference champion East Surry.

North Surry posted lopsided wins over Surry Central and Forbush a year ago, but both of those teams returned a lot of young talent.

The Greyhounds' closest conference contest came against West Stokes in an 18-12 loss. North has lost its past five meetings against West.

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2026
NORTH SURRY GREYHOUNDS'
Football Schedule

Kickoff at 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted

8/21 ALLEGHANY**

8/28 WEST WILKES**

9/4 PATRICK COUNTY

9/11 NORTH WILKES**

9/18 NORTHWOOD**

9/25 OPEN

10/2 MOUNT AIRY*

10/9 EAST SURRY*

10/16 SURRY CENTRAL*

10/23 WEST STOKES*

10/30 FORBUSH*

*Conference

**7:30 p.m. start

Home

Away

NORTH SURRY GREYHOUNDS ' ROSTER					
0	Damarcus McClure	Jr., WR, DB	19	Zaivan Finley	Jr., WR, DB
1	My'quan Floyd	So., WR, DB	20	Brennan Browder	Jr., WR, DB
2	Ty'mere Brown	Sr., RB, DB	21	Boone Aparicio	Sr., TE, LB
3	Kaleb Stanley	So., WR, DB	23	Brayden Donithan	Jr., WR, DB
4	Jhett Tolbert	Jr., WR, DB	24	Tray'vionne Floyd-Brown	Fr., RB, DB
6	Beau Carson	Sr., WR, DB	28	Kingston Williams	So., RB, DB
7	Bryton Hull	Jr., WR, DB	33	Mason Jones	Jr., TE, DL
8	Reilly Cazares	Sr., TE, LB	45	Mason Marion	Fr., RB, LB
9	Elijah Jenkins	Sr., WR, DB	50	Bentley Nichols	Jr., OL, DL
10	Kendall Ring	Sr., TE, LB	52	Logan Craft	Sr., OL, DL
11	Cam Jackson	Jr., OL, DL	54	Brock Holder	Fr., OL, DL
12	Nate Stanley	Jr., RB, DB	64	Lane Ramey	Jr., OL, DL
13	Douglas Sykes	Sr., WR, DB	65	Kevin Escobar	Fr., OL, DL
14	Brett Lyons	So., QB, DB	67	Ian Bello	Sr., OL, DL
15	CJ Ward	Sr., Q	69	Dodger Hodges	Sr., OL, DL
16	Shane Easter	Jr., RB, DB	75	Wyatt Hooker	Sr., OL, DL
17	Landon Ward	So., WR, LB	79	Brody Anderson	Sr., OL, DL

*Height and Weight were not submitted by the team



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Eagles aim to fly to greater heights

By Cory Smith
csmith@mtairynews.com

HEAD COACH
Jamie Fortner

ASSISTANT COACHES
Wes Evans (Offensive Coordinator, Quarterbacks, Outside Linebackers); Stephen

Priddy (Defensive Coordinator, Linebackers); Sam Nussman (Offensive Line); Donnie Fleenor (Running Backs); Ted Cook (Wide Receivers, JV Offensive Coordinator); Adam Walker (Defensive Line)

LAST SEASON
0-10 overall, 6-0 conference, Northwest 3A/4A Conference sixth place, Points for: 11.5, Points against: 42.6

KEY LOSSES
After graduating more than half of the varsity squad ahead of the 2025 season, Surry Central had seven players graduate in 2026: JJ Longworth, Preston Hall, Will Pardue, Konner Jordan, Anthony Smith, Travon Sawyers and Landon Davis.

Pardue and Sawyers led the offense as Surry Central's two quarterbacks, combining for 900 passing yards and 10 touchdowns. They were also Nos. 2 and 3 on the team in rushing yards. Jordan was the team's leading receiver, and Hall was the team's only graduate who started on the offensive line.

Pardue, Jordan, Smith, Davis and Sawyers played defensive back for the Golden Eagles. Longworth saw time on both the offensive and defensive lines.

Jordan and Pardue were named all-conference honorable mentions.

SEASON OUTLOOK
Despite only graduating seven seniors,

the Golden Eagles will still be a young team this season with four seniors, 10 juniors, 15 sophomores and 19 freshmen.

"We're young, but we're coming around," said Jamie Fortner, who enters his second year as Central's head coach.

Surry Central is coming off an 0-10 season in which only four starters returned from the previous season. The season served as a transition period for the Golden Eagles, but Fortner thinks they're ready to take the next step despite their youth.

"These guys have a little hunger, and morale is a lot better than it was," Fortner said. "The program's really going forward. Culture-wise it's big that everyone's positive, coachable and disciplined."

Fortner named Grant Stanley, a sophomore, the Golden Eagles' starting quarterback. Stanley was Central's JV quarterback in 2025 and passed for nearly 700 yards in eight games.

"He did really well on JV last year and we have a lot of confidence in him," Fortner said. "He really takes control of the huddle. The kids really respect him and his ability to throw the ball."

Another sophomore, Caleb Bean, will serve as backup quarterback. While Bean hasn't played quarterback since middle school, Fortner said he took a lot of snaps during the summer and showed a lot of improvement.

Stanley will be without three of Surry Central's top four receivers from 2025, but

Fortner has confidence in this year's receiving corps.

"We're going to try to get the ball out of Grant's hands as quickly as possible," the coach said. "We're not going to run him much if we can."

Eli Martin led Central in receptions last season with 18 for 161 yards, followed by Micah Whitley with 17 receptions for 102 yards. Fortner mentioned Bean, Easton Byrd, D.J. Sweet and Kaden Johnson as other targets for Stanley.

Whitley primarily played defense for Central and earned all-conference honors as a junior, but he shined on offense when given the opportunity.

The Eagles struggled to run the ball last season, finishing the year with just 434 yards and five touchdowns. Nearly half of those yards came from Whitley, and Fortner expects those numbers to increase considerably this season.

"We tried to keep him just on defense to keep him fresh, but this year he'll have a lot more touches," Fortner said. "Micah runs hard, cuts well and is going to give you all he's got. He can also catch the ball really well in the flats and make something happen."

Fortner called Whitley the team's Swiss Army knife and compared him to 2025 Central graduate Brian Williams, who had more than 1,200 rushing yards, 1,200 receiving yards and nearly 500 return yards in his career.



Jamie Fortner enters his second season as Surry Central's head coach.

Caleb Cruise, who was Central's JV running back as a sophomore, will play alongside Whitley.

One of the Eagles' most experienced units is the offensive line. Last year, the line featured four sophomores and only one senior.

"We're still thin number-wise, but I'm tickled to have some experience up front," Fortner said.

Jacob Blythe and Aaden Amos return at left tackle and left guard, respectively. Caleb Holt and Ezequiel Rayo-Cruz will also play on the line, and Edgar Rivas will fill in to provide some depth.

Fortner said there will be some overlap on the offensive and defensive lines. Holt and Rivas will start at defensive tackle, while Adam Deyab and Bryson Wilson – two of Central's four seniors – will play defensive end.

"Adam had a great offseason and we expect a lot from him," Fortner said. "Bryson really matured last year and has only gotten stronger and quicker."

Whitley returns as Central's star linebacker. He had 124 total tackles, 10 tackles for a loss, three forced fumbles and one interception as part of his all-conference campaign in 2025. Whitley also surpassed 100 tackles as a sophomore.

Byrd, Johnson and Sweet will join Whitley at linebacker.

Martin returns as a cornerback and will play alongside Bean. Cruise will play one

safety spot, while Stanley and Luke McHone will help out in the other.

Rivas will be Central's kicker.

Fortner said Rivas gives the team a lot of confidence and that once they're inside the 30-yard line they feel comfortable sending him in.

BIG GAMES

As the Eagles look for their first win since November 2024, Fortner said the only game they're concerned with is Week 1 against Elkin.

"Getting to play the first game at home is a big deal and will help our confidence for sure," Fortner said. "We're not worried about anything else or anybody else yet, just Elkin."

Central's three highest-scoring

SURRY CENTRAL GOLDEN EAGLES' ROSTER

0	Adam Deyab	Sr.	16	Luke McHone	Jr.
1	Eli Martin	Sr.	19	Colton Walker	So.
3	Bryson Wilson	Sr.	21	Gatlyn Wagoner	So.
3	Caleb Watson	So.	22	Caleb Cruise	Jr.
4	Easton Byrd	Jr.	51	Chase Branch	Jr.
5	Micah Whitley	Sr.	55	Ezequiel Rayo Cruz	So.
6	Kaden Johnson	Jr.	56	Avery (Clay) Matthews	Fr.
7	Grant Stanley	So.	57	Edgar Rivas	So.
8	Caleb Bean	So.	58	Eli Swaim	Jr.
9	DJ Sweet	So.	70	Aksel Brown	Fr.
10	Jase Freeman	Fr.	71	Aaden Amos	Jr.
11	Cole Willard	So.	75	Caleb Holt	Jr.
15	Caleb Watson	So.	77	Jacob Blythe	Jr.

**Position, Height and Weight were not submitted by the team*

performances of the 2025 season came in nonconference play against Elkin, South Stokes and Trinity. All three of those games were played on the road, so the Eagles are hoping they can get some revenge in the newly dedicated Monty J. Southern Stadium.

Central also looks to avenge two shutout losses against North Wilkes and West Wilkes, though both of those will take place on the

road this season.

Large graduating classes across the Northwest 3A/4A Conference mean the field could be wide open in league play. Central's most competitive conference game last season was a 17-6 loss to Forbush.



2026

SURRY CENTRAL GOLDEN EAGLES'

Football Schedule

Kickoff at 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted

8/21	ELKIN
8/28	NORTH WILKES**
9/4	WEST WILKES**
9/11	SOUTH STOKES
9/18	TRINITY
9/25	OPEN
10/2	EAST SURRY*
10/9	FORBUSH*
10/16	NORTH SURRY*
10/23	MOUNT AIRY*
10/30	WEST STOKES*

*Conference **7:30 p.m. start

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East Surry to be led by experienced offense

By **Cory Smith**
csmith@mtairynews.com

HEAD COACH
Caleb Pardue

ASSISTANT COACHES
Rusty Slate (Associate Head Coach, Strength Coach); Jimmy Upchurch (Offensive Coordinator); Andy Jessup (Defensive Coordinator); Eli Williams (Special Teams Coordinator, Linebackers); Garrett Chamberlain (Running Backs, JV Head Coach); Joe Denny (Defensive Backs); Jefferson Boaz (Quarterbacks); Travis Lowery (Offensive

Line); Landon Stevens (Wide Receivers)

LAST SEASON
5-7 overall, 3-2 conference, Northwest 3A/4A Conference third place, 3A State Playoffs second round, Points for: 30.7, Point against: 30

KEY LOSSES
East Surry graduated 15 seniors in the Class of 2026: Pheonix Moser, Dakota Buntin, Peyton Senter, Cameron Allred, Michael Page, Ethan Grimes, Porter Gibson, Logan Moore, Braxton Davis, Zach Keener, Josh Key, Carter Motsinger, Caleb Bowman, Aidan Harpe and Nolyn Myers.

Three of the graduates elected to continue their football careers in college: Logan Moore signed with Bridgewater College, Braxton Davis signed with Davidson College and Cameron Allred signed with Emory & Henry University.

Allred was a three-year starter on the offensive line, while Davis led the Cardinals in receptions, receiving yards and receiving touchdowns. Both earned all-conference honors on offense.

All three of the Cards' all-conference selections on defense, as well as both honorable mentions, graduated in May. Those five players – Gibson, Myers, Key, Bowman and Harpe – led the team in tackles and combined for all but one sack and one interception.

SEASON OUTLOOK
After starting the 2025 season 0-4, East Surry finished the year strong by winning five of its next seven games before falling in the second round of the 3A state playoffs. The Cardinals averaged 18.8 points through four

games then 35.9 points in their final eight games.

Head coach Caleb Pardue, who enters his third season with the program, looks to carry that momentum into 2026.

"I thought we had a great summer. It was really productive," Pardue said. "We dialed back the amount of 7-on-7s we did compared

to past years because I didn't feel like we necessarily had the depth to do as much of that this summer.

"Overall, though, our guys worked really hard. We had a ton of guys meet the goals we set for the summer, so I was really pleased with the work they put in."

The Cardinals didn't return their starting



Caleb Pardue enters his third season as East Surry's head coach.

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JR Willoughby Photography

East Surry's Andrew Boles (60) and Ian Ledesma (70) create an opening for Nathan Kiger.

quarterback or top running back in each of Pardue's first two seasons. This year, he got both back.

J.B. Davis threw for 1,406 yards and 19 touchdowns while adding 502 yards and seven scores on the ground. He was one of three all-conference selections on offense a year ago.

Shouldering the load on the ground was the sophomore duo of Nathan Kiger and Jon Hutchens, who combined for more than 2,000 yards and 21 touchdowns. Kiger averaged 8.6 yards per carry while running for 1,309 yards and 15 touchdowns.

"Returning that much offensive production is huge, especially on the ground," Pardue said. "Over our last six or seven games, I think we were averaging close to 275 yards on the ground and around 150 through the air. Anytime you're around 400 yards of offense, you're going to give yourself a chance to have success."

"More importantly, I've seen those guys mature a lot this summer and during fall camp, both as football players and as leaders. We're really excited about what they bring back."

East Surry also returns four of its five starting offensive linemen from a year ago: Brett

Moser, Ian Ledesma, Knox Galyean and Andrew Boles. Ledesma was all-conference as a junior, and Moser is already committed to play Division I ball at Davidson after

graduation.

Jayden Hester will be the fifth starter on the offensive line. Pardue said Hester probably could've played varsity as a sophomore for a lot of programs, but just happened to be behind a three-year starter in Allred

"We felt like Jayden benefited from getting another year of development and playing JV football, and we're really excited about what he can add to that group," Pardue said.

The one inexperienced group on offense is at receiver. Returning players combined for only 160 yards and one touchdown in 2025.

Pardue highlighted Nolan Withers, Wyatt Robertson and Hunter Reed as strong options at receiver. Withers didn't play football his junior year, but returned to the team this summer following a successful track season.

"He and J.B. have a really good rapport, and I think he's somebody J.B. has a lot of confidence throwing the ball to," Pardue said. "He has elite speed, so he gives us an element that can really stress a defense."

Robertson is a "physically gifted" sophomore who Pardue feels has developed confidence and is getting more comfortable with the varsity level. Reed was a late addition to the team who Pardue said does a lot

of impressive things on offense while making them look effortless.

Pardue mentioned Liam Johnson as a potential player to watch that brings versatility on offense.

The Cardinals also added three new offensive coaches with state championship experience.

Jimmy Upchurch will serve as offensive coordinator. He was an assistant at East Surry in the 1990s and 2000s before becoming the head coach at West Stokes, where he won a state title and accumulated a record of 144-86.

"Coach Upchurch has done a great job with our offense and figuring out how all of those pieces fit together," Pardue said.

Jefferson Boaz will coach quarterbacks and Landon Stevens will coach receivers. Boaz holds numerous passing records at East Surry, and Stevens is the school's all-time leading receiver. Both were seniors on the

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2019 state championship team, and both played football at UNC-Chapel Hill. Defensively, Aaden Wright and T.J. Samples return as senior leaders on the defensive line, and Cason McCall will also get a lot of snaps. Raleigh Smith and Dexter Wiggins are players Pardue expects to work their way into the rotation, as well as some of the guys that start on the offensive line.

"We'll try not to rotate those guys over too much, but there will be times when we need fresh bodies and those guys can help give us some depth," Pardue said.

Wright enters his third season as a varsity starter and has stepped into a leadership role for the group and the team overall.

"Leadership-wise, Aaden has really stood out during fall camp," Pardue said. "He looks like a completely different football player this year. I saw it especially during our first scrimmage. He's become much more vocal, he encourages the guys around him, he knows the defense, and he's helping get people lined up and coached into the right spots.

"The guys are receptive to him because Aaden does things the right way."

Nathan Diamont and Christian Buntin will lead the linebackers as returning starters. The two will help fill the hole left behind by defensive cornerstones like Porter Gibson and Josh Key.

Cam Smith earned a spot at outside linebacker thanks to a strong offseason.

Pardue likened Smith to Wright as players who have transformed their bodies.

"Cam has also done a great job during fall camp learning the details of playing on the edge, and Coach Eli Williams has done a great job working with him," Pardue said. "We're really excited about what he can do."

Kiger, Robertson and Withers are projected starters in the defensive backfield. Pardue said there are a few guys rotating through at the nickel position, but the team is still figuring things out there.

"There's definitely potential there," he said. "It's just going to come down to who steps up."

Joel Gutierrez will handle most of the team's kicking duties. He converted 31 of his 36 PATs as a freshman

East Surry hasn't named a starting punter but is experimenting with a few players.

BIG GAMES

The Cardinals aim to improve on their 0-4 start

a year ago but will be challenged by another tough nonconference slate.

East Surry's first four nonconference opponents combined for 40 wins and only 12 losses. Two of those teams – Starmount and Murphy – reached the 2A

West Regional Championship, with Murphy going on to finish state runner-up.

Walkertown reached the Sweet 16 of the 3A state playoffs, while Statesville competed in the Round of 32 in the 6A playoffs.

The Cardinals went 3-2 in the tough Northwest 3A/4A Conference in 2025, falling to West Stokes and Mount Airy by a combined 60 points. East Surry last defeated West

Stokes in 2023 and Mount Airy in 2022.

Conference play begins against Surry Central and North Surry. East has won its past eight meetings against Central and the past two meetings against North.

East has won 12 consecutive meetings against Forbush, with the Falcons' most recent win in the rivalry coming in 1996.



JR Willoughby Photography

East Surry quarterback JB Davis looks to pass in a 2025 game against Statesville.

2026

EAST SURRY CARDINALS'

Football Schedule

Kickoff at 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted

8/21	STATESVILLE
8/28	STARMOUNT
9/4	MURPHY
9/11	WALKERTOWN
9/18	NORTH FORSYTH
9/25	OPEN
10/2	SURRY CENTRAL*
10/9	NORTH SURRY*
10/16	WEST STOKES*
10/23	FORBUSH*
10/30	MOUNT AIRY*

*Conference

Home

Away

EAST SURRY CARDINALS' ROSTER

0	Wyatt Robertson	11	Cam Foster	51	Dexter Wiggins
1	Nolan Withers	13	Hunter Reid	55	Knox Galyean
2	Tyler Queen	14	Jaxon Melton	59	Riley Smith
3	Sam Freeman	16	Nathan Diamont	60	Andrew Boles
4	Emerson Johnson	19	Nathan Kiger	64	Noah Cagle
5	Liam Johnson	20	Eli Snow	70	Ian Ledesma
6	Jayme George	21	Jon Hutchens	71	Jayden Hester
7	Lucas Gorman	22	Ethan Wilson	75	Aaden Wright
8	Erik Ortega	30	Smith Cook	77	Brett Moser
9	JB Davis	34	Christian Buntin	82	TJ Samples
10	Casen McCraw	43	Joel Gutierrez		

*Grade, Position, Height and Weight were not submitted by the team

*Conference
Home Away



Charles Leftwich | Special to the News
Surry Central's Micah Whitley (5) weaves through South Stokes' defense.



Robert Money | The Stokes News
North Stokes' Jackson Bodenhamer picks up a first down against Winston-Salem Prep.



Robert Money | The Stokes News
South Stokes' Luke Amos drops back to pass.



West Stokes' Omari Graham (58) protects his quarterback.



JR Willoughby Photography
Forbush's defensive line looks to stop East Surry short of a first down.



Charles Leftwich | Special to the News
Starmount's Keyvon Probst (0) reaches out to tackles Forbush's Spencer Foster (3).



Greyhound Athletics
North Surry's football team celebrates after winning its first playoff game in 21 years. The Greyhounds look to continue their postseason success in 2026.



JR Willoughby Photography
Mount Airy's Carson Soriano (75) and Ethan Clabo (99) block for Kylan Mason on a kickoff return against Shelby.



JR Willoughby Photography
Jon Hutchens (21) carries for East Surry against North Forsyth.



Courtesy Photo
East Wilkes quarterback Holden Spicer is set to lead the charge for the team this year.



Charles Leftwich | Special to the News
Forbush's offensive line prepares for the snap against Starmount.



Robert Money | The Stokes News
West Stokes' Jay Taylor dodges a tackle



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