

# NC Coach

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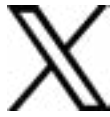
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*News & information for North Carolina high school & middle school coaches.*

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*See you in Greensboro!*

**East-West All-Star  
Football Game  
DEC 21 at 1:00 pm**

**East-West All-Star  
Games &  
Coaching Clinic  
JULY 20-22, 2026**



## NC COACH

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# From the GAMES Desk...



pweaver@nccoach.org

**Phil Weaver**  
**Executive Director, All-Star Games**

Simply put; our society has lost too many long-held standards. The murder of Charlie Kirk prompted me to think more about our standards, or lack thereof. Whether one liked him or not, one would have to agree that Kirk treated his questioners with respect and answered their questions honestly. Putting aside personal beliefs, he was a model of how to engage youth. He did not mince words and said some things to folks which would offend them, but he did it in a non-judgmental and non-threatening manner. If all in our country could function with their opposition in the same manner, we would be a much calmer and more reasonable society. Evelyn Beatrice Hall in summarizing Voltaire famously said, "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." These days, people are shot for saying things with which others disagree.

The erosion of civility goes quickly back to people not valuing their society and therefore they feel they may do anything they choose, regardless of the impact on others. The golden rule has been replaced with the "rusty rule" – old ideas are now useless. Bear with me and the connection to coaching will become evident.

I will never forget my wife's grandfather, 96 years old and in need of a cane to get up and around, standing when our 16 year old daughter entered the room. What a tremendous show of respect for women. Perhaps at work this standard is impractical, but in a social setting; what is wrong with showing that a man respects women?

The ever-present use of foul language is one of the most noticeable losses of a standard. I know many successful coaches use it but I also know many successful coaches who don't tolerate it. From a practical standpoint; if you and your players don't

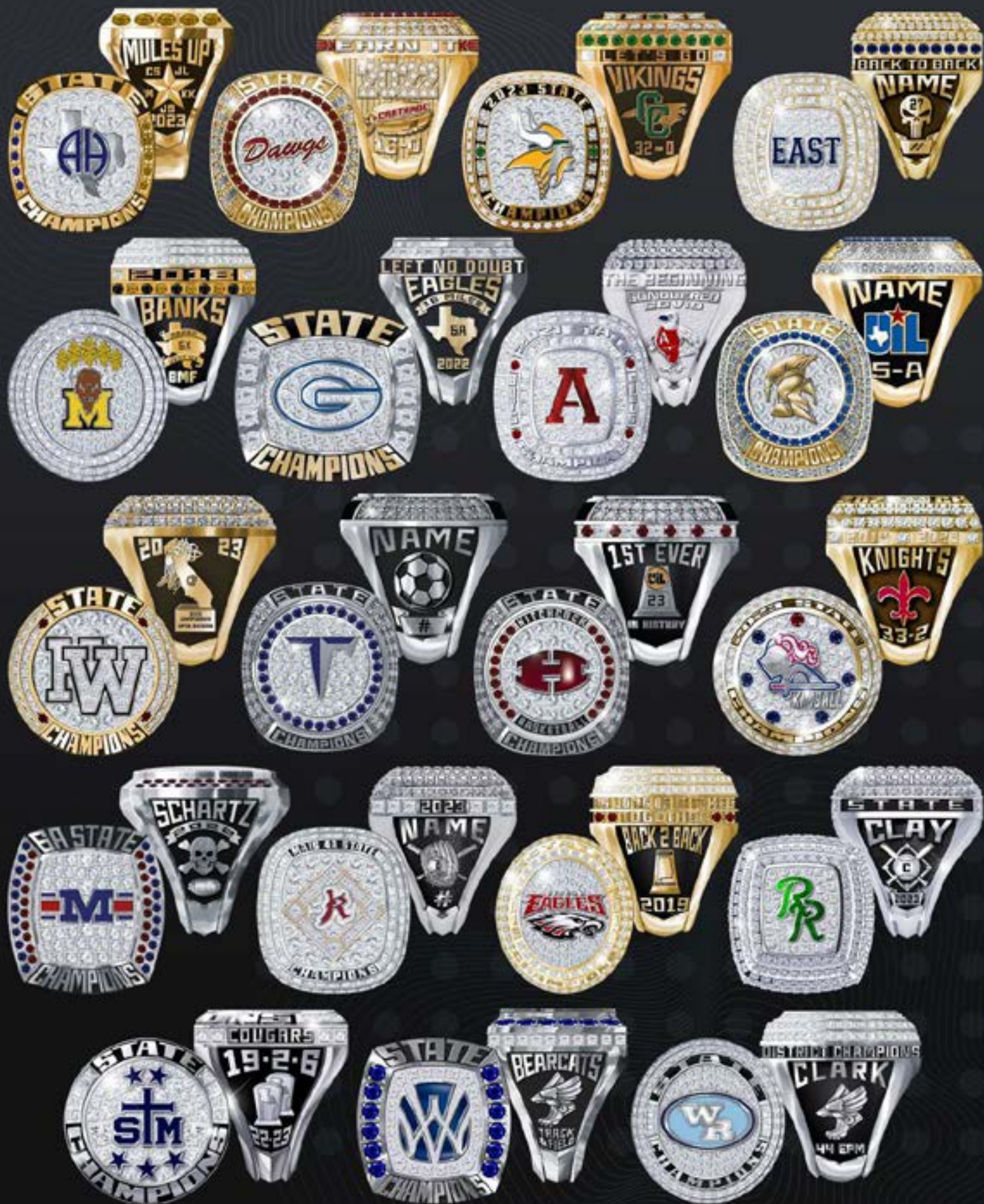
curse, you'll never get penalized for it by game officials. It is more disturbing that some of the worst offenders are girls. I hope I remembered to tell my girls' teams that they set the standard. If they disassociate from a young man who curses, then he will stop quickly if he is interested in her. If he won't stop, then he is not worth having. If the girl curses, then to me, that is a sign that she does not have much self-respect and will not be someone I would want to spend time with.

One thing young folks still respect is honesty. I think that is one of the main appeals Charlie Kirk had. Students knew where Kirk stood. As coaches, that is a really important trait. Lying or misleading your players cannot be productive. You might be rewarded in the short run but not over the length of the season. I always told my players that I'd be happy to discuss their lack of playing time, but they had to be prepared to hear the unvarnished truth and then to do something to improve. I did not get asked often. I think that was because kids really know what their shortcomings are and, deep down, really do understand why they do not play more.

One standard we have almost totally lost is the respect for authority: whether it be a coach, game official, teacher, policeman, or government official. Granted, there is no question that some of these same people have not acted in a manner to deserve respect but it then becomes the position, not the person, one should make every effort to respect. I remember a congressman yelling at President Obama during the State of the Union speech calling him a "liar." Obama did indeed make a false statement, but that outburst was not acceptable. Game officials

**See "Games Desk" on page 4**





balfour.



# Games Desk

*continued from page 2*

sometimes make mistakes but coaches and players have to respect the decisions and move on. Players who become worried about the officials don't play as well as they should. I admit I had some technicals called and an unsportsmanlike flag thrown on me so do as I say, not as I did. We must teach our players how to appropriately respond to things they disagree with or even know to be wrong.

A favorite memory of mine was an exchange during a basketball game with my favorite official, Colon Starrett. I told him I was sure he had just missed a call and he leaned over and said "Coach, I may have missed it but that's the way I saw it." There's no answer to that except to thank him for listening. If all officials respected coaches as he did there'd be far less penalties for unsportsmanlike behavior from coaches.

When was it seemingly decided that four or five people ganging up and beating the heck out of one person was ok? Not to promote fighting as a way to settle disputes; but at least it was standard practice when I was younger for an aggrieved person to fight the other person alone. "Man-to-man" as we called it. Those standing around were there to break it up once "justice" was served; not to video it and make inane comments. These gangs are nothing but thugs and cowards.

There is a picture of the Vanderbilt Football team's locker room when they left Lane Stadium at Virginia Tech this season. It was spotless. What a great standard for all of us to adopt. It showed me that Vanderbilt has high standards which translated into the discipline to do the right thing. On the field

there is no question that to be successful a football team needs to be disciplined. There's probably no sport where this axiom does not hold true. Some undisciplined teams may win some games on talent, but I'll bet a disciplined team beats them in the playoffs.

Coaches are often cited as being a, or the, major influencer in a student's development. I know this was true for me growing up, and I believe is still true today. In fact, it is more important today for us coaches to direct kids because society has so few things it holds valuable anymore. We can never know which player may become a major influencer on the society of the future. Our nation's stability is in jeopardy and coaches may be the best people to hold us together. Coaches must have, demand adherence to, and enforce the standards virtually all of us adhere to.

## Important Update on Balfour Championship Rings

As a reminder, Balfour generously provides free rings for all-star coaches and state champion coaches. However, delays have occurred due to missing ring size information. To ensure timely production and delivery, we are now enforcing strict submission deadlines:

- Fall Sports: January 15
- Winter Sports: April 15
- Spring Sports: July 15

Requests received after these dates will not be processed, and unfortunately, you'll forfeit your free ring.

We aim to present fall and winter rings at the NCCA Clinic each summer. Spring rings will be mailed or presented at the following year's clinic. Please submit your ring size promptly to help us keep things on schedule!

## Carolinas Classic Returns to South Carolina

After a great run in Wilmington, the Carolinas Classic Basketball All-Star Games are heading back to South Carolina! This year's games will be held at Catawba Ridge High School in Fort Mill, a modern facility with seating for 2,500 fans—just across the border off I-77. Practices and operations will be based in Rock Hill, the city where the Carolinas Classic began 27 years ago. The games are scheduled for the Saturday following the state championships.

### New NCSBE Districts Now in Use

*The NCCA has officially adopted the new NCSBE Districts for all-star game selections and for representation on the NCCA Board of Directors. Please note that the NCHSAA has not yet fully transitioned to these new districts, so playoff assignments may differ slightly for some schools. Regardless of your NCHSAA playoff region, be sure to reference the new NCSBE Districts map for all NCCA-related purposes.*

## **School Ads in December 2025 East-West Football Game Program**

If you are interested in purchasing an ad for the December 2025 East-West Football Game Program, please complete the form in the online form in the link below.

**NEW THIS YEAR:** This year's program will be **ALL DIGITAL in FULL COLOR!** This means lower ad prices for you! **REMEMBER: YOU MUST PROVIDE YOUR FINAL ARTWORK.** There is **NO ASSISTANCE** with graphic design. Please make arrangements for someone at your school to create the ad. Please use the link below to complete the online form.  
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Full Page (7.5" W x 9.0" H) -- \$200

Half Page (7.5" W x 4.5" H) -- \$100

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Business Card (3.27" W x 2.75" H) -- \$25

If you have questions, please email [eastwestprogram@gmail.com](mailto:eastwestprogram@gmail.com).

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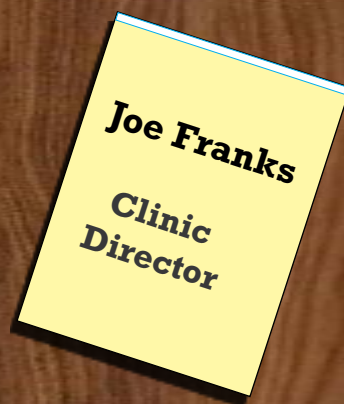
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# From the CLINIC Desk...



jfranks@nccoach.org

**Joe Franks**  
**Executive Secretary, Clinic Director**

I hope that everyone knew that National Coaches Day was October 6 – a day to celebrate what you do for your kids, campuses and communities. As I wrapped up the NCHSAA Regional Meeting swing across NC, I was able to reflect on a very successful 2025 NCCA Clinic/Convention. Our attendance is bouncing back after COVID – we had over 7600 paid registrants. We had an increase in vendors at the trade show from 2024 and we saw really good attendance at the sessions. The new AD orientation and AD breakfast were well attended as were the First Responder sessions and CPR/AED opportunities. The big winner continues to be the afternoon NCHSAA rules sessions. We set the room up for 800 and had fantastic crowds each day. If you like having that opportunity, let us know and we will pass it on to the NCHSAA staff.

From a clinician standpoint, we continue to bring in great speakers who have been very successful and are really approachable. Even though they have had a tough fall, the Virginia Tech staff did a great job for us. More than anything else, having them here provided some motivation for other staffs to come. Coach Doeren brought the entire NC State football staff and we had reps from App State and Wake as well as a few others. NC State has committed for 2026 and Wake has committed for 2027 to be our football clinicians and we are tickled about that. We are already working on our slate of clinicians for 2026 and have secured Will Wade – NC State men's basketball and Josh Jordan - LSU baseball.

During my interactions with AD's during the Regional Meetings, I enjoy talking to them about ways to get more young coaches to attend and stay around at the clinic. The experienced coaches, "old

heads", often talk about what the clinic meant to them from not just a session experience, but the personal contact with members of their staff and coaches at other schools. If you've been around the clinic for a few years, you know how valuable the time is to swap stories and strategies with coaches in the lobby of the Special Events Center, or back at a hotel lobby or maybe by the pool. There have been many plays drawn up on scrap paper and napkins through the years. It seems to me that many of the younger coaches feel they can get all they need online and on their phone, but I'm still a believer in that personal contact and exchange (yep, I know I'm old too).

One of the things that continues to be an emphasis for the NCHSAA is sportsmanship. It's alarming to see the number of ejections that rise each week and for goodness sakes, we had an official get slugged in a football game this fall. The more we as coaches tolerate during the week, the more we see bad behavior in competition. Hey, I've been there and I know that we can all lose our cool from time to time, but we as coaches MUST do a better job of being good role models and holding our athletes accountable – not just on the field or court, but during the school day as well. I believe that the student athletes should be the positive examples in class and in the hallways during school.

As I always say, don't ever underestimate what a profound effect you have on the young people for whom you mentor, support, challenge and inspire. Thanks for being a coach! Together, we are keeping the title "Coach" one that is respected and admired – and that can last a lifetime.



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## For coaches, by coaches

I've spent my career as a coach and as a coach association director. I started this company to continue my commitment to the coaching profession by helping you with your career as a coach. Better coaches make us stronger and more effective in teaching athletes. I want to help you be a better coach. There is a lot of energy and effort that's been put into this company for your benefit. From your coach association to our dedicated staff to a host of other people that are invested in your success and the success of the coaching profession. Join one of our partner coach associations and register with MyCoachingTree as soon as you can. Do it for our profession. Do it for the association. And most importantly, do it for yourself.

**D.W. Rutledge**  
President and Founder

- Years as a college and high school coach: 27
- Head coaching record over 17 seasons: 190-31-5 with 4 Texas 6A Championships
- Years as Executive Director with Texas High School Coaches Association: 20
- Author of Coaching to Change Lives

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## New Uniform Partnership for East-West Games

*We're excited to announce a new partnership with Riddell as the official uniform provider for the East-West All-Star football games. This deal, negotiated by former West Forsyth head coach Adrian Snow, ensures our teams will be outfitted by one of football's most respected brands for at least the next three years.*

*We are still seeking a new sponsor for basketball uniforms—if you have connections with a manufacturer or supplier, please contact Phil Weaver at [pweaver@nccoach.org](mailto:pweaver@nccoach.org).*

### Bid Now on Champion Football Pants

With our new Riddell football uniform sponsorship in place, we're offering our Champion football pants, complete with sewn-in belts and the East-West logo, for sale through a silent auction.

These pants have been worn 0-6 times and are in great condition. We will not cover shipping costs. If you wish to bid on more than one lot, please submit separate bids. In the case of identical bids, the earliest email received at [pweaver@nccoach.org](mailto:pweaver@nccoach.org) will win. Items can be picked up anytime through the summer clinic.

Please specify whether you're bidding on Lot 1 or 2 (identical) or Lot 3.

***Bidding opens NOW and closes at noon on February 1, 2026.***

	Med	Large	XL	2XL	3XL
Lot 1	10	10	6	6	3
Lot 2	10	10	6	6	3
Lot 3	10	9	6	7	4



### Jim Sands Named NCCA Media Coordinator

Jim Sands, a multi-time North Carolina Press Association award winning journalist, joined the NCCA earlier this year as the new media coordinator. A graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Sands has covered sports in the Piedmont Triad area for well over a decade, and worked as both a reporter and photographer at many East-West All-Star games in the past.

Sands said having the opportunity to have a front row seat to watch some of the best student-athletes and coaches in the state of North Carolina in his new role is a huge honor. He's counting the minutes until the kickoff of the 2025 East-West All-Star Football Game on Dec. 21 in Greensboro.

All-Star Games Executive Director Phil Weaver commented on adding Sands to the team. "We're excited and very lucky to have brought Jim onboard. His experience and talent will help him replace the excellent work David Willoughby did for many years."



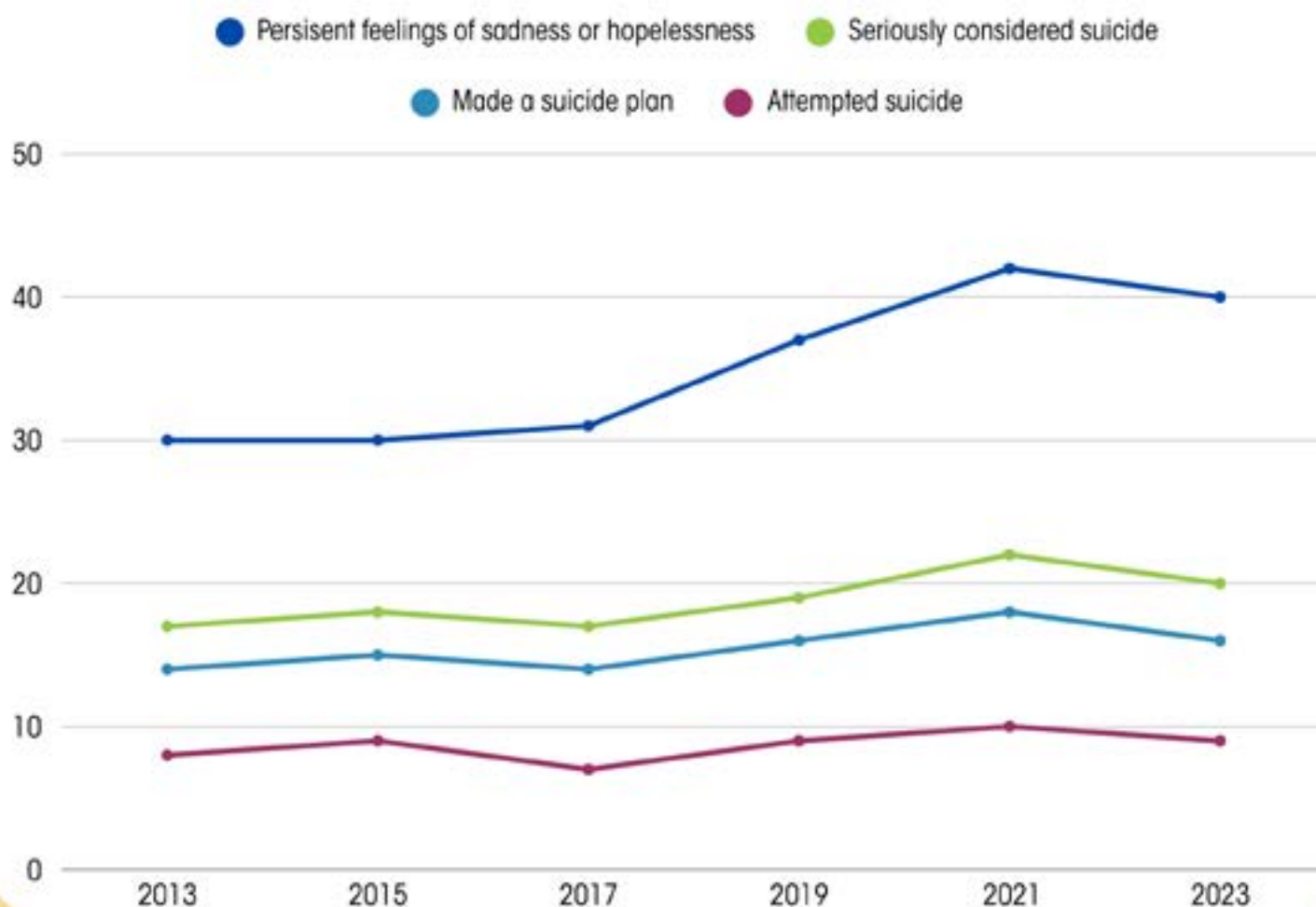




# Mental Health, Suicidal Thoughts & Behaviors

From 2013 to 2023, concerns around youth mental health and suicidal thoughts have grown significantly. More students have shown signs of emotional distress, such as persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness. Reports of thinking about suicide, making a plan, and even attempting suicide have become more frequent.

## The Percentage of High School Students Who:





# Press Box Perspective

Earl Vaughan Jr.  
Social Media Coordinator  
on X: @EarlVaughanJr

Next to realignment, the hottest topic the N.C. High School Athletic Association has to cope with annually is the release of the high school football pairings.

This year, the association heard a lot of complaining when it announced that because of a heavy fall sports championship schedule the same weekend the pairings are compiled, it wouldn't be able to release them until the Monday high school teams take to the field to practice for the first round.

I've been in this business since I was fresh out of high school in 1972 and did my first summer internship in the sports department of The Fayetteville Observer. I've seen things come and go with playoffs and their structure and release. One thing I've learned. No plan, no matter how well thought, no matter if it allows every school in the state to play, no matter if it's released two seconds after the last regular season game ends, is going to make everyone happy.

Everybody's got a better idea and everybody thinks it could be done differently.

Me, I'm weary of all the complaining. I'm weary of all the tweaking and tinkering to try and do the impossible of pleasing everybody.

This suggestion will likely fall universally on deaf ears, but do me the favor of just reading it and feel free to disagree.

I think it's time to pull a Marty McFly and go back to the future. We spend too much time and trouble on seeding and RPI and strength of schedule.

Let's agree on a simple fact. Honor the regular season champions. Period. The teams that won some kind of trophy. Everybody else gets treated with respect, but pick teams that finished with more wins than losses to advance. Let's set up a predetermined bracket, plug everybody with winning records in and see what happens.

I'm not entirely alone in this thinking. I reached out to two old coaching friends whose opinions I deeply respect.

One is Mark Heil, who made coaching stops at Douglas Byrd, Burlington Cummings, Cape Fear and Purnell Swett. He's now doing color commentary on Fayetteville's WFNC for the weekly broadcasts of Terry Sanford High School football anchored by Trey Edge.

Another is Dean Saffos. Like Heil, Saffos made multiple stops at Jacksonville, E.E. Smith, Wilmington Hoggard, East Columbus and Pine Forest.

Saffos remembers times when he had to sit home with an 8-2 club while watching other teams advance into the postseason.

But he also agrees that there should not be a place in the postseason for 1-9, 2-8 or 3-7 teams, which is more likely with the new eight-classification NCHSAA alignment approved by its member schools.

Saffos compared it to getting a participation trophy in a recreation league.



**Dean Saffos**

See "Press Box Perspective" on page 12





THE  
BEST  
USE  
THE  
BEST

**GATORADE**



## "Press Box Perspective"

*continued from page 10*

"I don't need to be congratulated or rewarded for going 3-7," he said. "I just want to put on my shoulder pads and work to be at least 5-5 the next year."

When it comes to playoffs, Saffos believes in what he calls the KISS method. Keep it simple stupid.

He told a story shared by legendary coach Ray Durham about two basketball coaches from Rocky Mount flipping a coin over which team with a 4-16 record would advance to the postseason. When the flip was over the winning coach looked at the other one and said, "Want to make it best-of-three?"

"If you've had a bad season, put up the balls, wash the uniforms and get ready for the next one," Saffos said.

Heil thinks the expansion to eight classifications was a mistake. "It seems more complicated than it should be," he said. "Why can't we have five or six state champions?"

One thing the general public may not appreciate is the amount of time coaches take to prepare for a single game, and why moving the first day of learning who your opponent is to Monday of game week creates big headaches.

Heil remembers literally spending all day Sunday breaking down his team's film, then the opponent, then piecing all that information together for a game plan.

The exchange of game video is streamlined now that most schools have the HUDL digital video system that allows video exchange between schools via a few clicks on a laptop.

That's a far cry from the days coaches filmed games, had it processed overnight by a lab in Wilson, then rendezvoused with the opposing coach to swap film cans.

Even with the advances there is still the time for video review, game planning and working out a practice schedule to put the strategy into play.

While both coaches remember the hard work needed to make the postseason, they think that a playoff berth shouldn't be awarded just for showing up.

"I've always thought participation in high school athletics was a privilege, not a guarantee," Saffos said. "Just because you want to play doesn't mean you get a uniform."

"It's not a reward for going 2-8 and getting your brains beat out."



**Mark Heil**

## IN MEMORIAM

*Harold Robinson*  
*Williamston*

*Bob Sawyer*  
*Grimsley*

*Jim Taylor*  
*Shelby*

*Fred Williams*  
*Page*



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# They Still Call Me “Coach”

## Greg Grantham

**NCC: WHAT SPORTS DID YOU COACH?**

*“ Boys Basketball, Golf, Athletic Director ”*

**NCC: WHERE DID YOU COACH?**

*“ Rosewood HS (5 yrs); SouthWest Edgecombe (4 yrs); White Oak HS (21 yrs). ”*

**NCC: HOW MANY YEARS DID YOU COACH?**

*“ 30 years coaching, 23 years in Athletic Administration ”*

**NCC: ARE YOU STILL INVOLVED IN COACHING AND/OR ATHLETICS?**

*“ No, not actively coaching anymore – I still serve as the leader of the NC Basketball Coaches Association. ”*

**NCC: WHAT WAS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE COACHING EXPERIENCE?**

*“ While I enjoyed many, many positive experiences during my career & have numerous fond memories, Like most coaches, the losses last longer in your memory than the wins. When I was coaching at SW Edgecombe back in 1990 our basketball team had returned from an away game on a particularly rainy, wet Tuesday night. On the way from our school to their homes, a car load of our players hydroplaned off the road and car landed upside down in a swollen creek. Three players*

*escaped the car, 2 did not. Parents and players gathered at the hospital uncertain which players had survived and which were lost. I had to identify the 2 deceased players for the doctors and go out and inform their parents. There is no coaching class, seminar or clinic session that prepares you for it and that experience sticks with you forever. ”*

**NCC: WHAT PART OF COACHING WAS THE MOST REWARDING FOR YOU?**

*“ Seeing young people grow and improve as players, some reaching their fullest athletic potential. But then having players come back to visit after they are grown and have become parents and successful members of society. Knowing that in some small way you positively impacted them and shape the successful adult they became. ”*

**NCC: WHY DID YOU GO INTO COACHING?**

*“ My Dad always told us to find something you enjoyed doing and figure out how to get paid to do it – you’ll never work a day in your life. I enjoyed playing all the sports growing up and played basketball in college. I was not good enough to play for money, but I figured coaching would be almost as fun. My Dad was right – while he worked almost his entire adult life, I never felt like I ever went to work – I went to school or to the gym. It never felt like work. ”*



See “**Grantham**” on page 16





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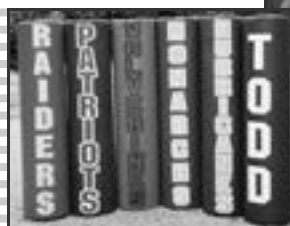


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## **“Grantham”**

*continued from page 14*



### **NCC: WHAT IS YOUR FUNNIEST COACHING MEMORY?**

*“ There were many. One memorable one occurred while I was coaching at White Oak in a basketball game against Northside HS (our in-town rivals). My good friend Tony Marshburn was the Northside head coach and they were definitely better than us that night. I had burned through every time out we had by the end of the 3rd quarter trying to keep the game somewhat close. Midway through the 4th quarter it was really getting away from us and we needed to stop the bleeding. There was a dead ball right near the scorers table. I looked down the sideline toward the Northside bench and yelled at Coach Marshburn, “Cuz, I need a timeout BAD!” So he called one for me. When the ref asked him if he wanted a full or a 30 second timeout, Tony looked down at me and said, “Which one do you want?” I replied, “Give me all we can get.” ”*

### **NCC: WHAT WAS YOUR MOST EMBARRASSING COACHING MOMENT?**

*“ Unfortunately, there were many of those as well. My first year as the varsity head coach*

*at Rosewood we were playing an away game and in the first quarter when I squatted down in front of my team during a timeout, the seat of my pants split wide open. My wife was at the game sitting behind the bench. After the timeout I quickly sat down and looked back at my wife and told her I had split my pants and she needed to go get me another pair. She laughed and told me I better stay seated the rest of the game. I forgot a couple of times and stood up, but fortunately the players on the bench would quickly remind me about the split in the seat of my pants and I would promptly sit back down. My wife, being the wonderful person she is, did slip out during the 2nd quarter, ran to Walmart and bought me another pair of pants and had them for me to change into before halftime ended. ”*

### **NCC: WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE PLAY OR STRATEGY?**

*“ We were always primarily a man to man defensive team. I really felt that we had to use pressure defense to make the opposing team uncomfortable - force them to do things they had not necessarily practiced. But we would almost always change our defense coming out of a timeout for at least one or 2 possessions. ”*

### **NCC: WHO HAD THE TOUGHEST TEAMS YOU COACHED AGAINST?**

*“ When I was a young coach at SouthWest Edgecombe we played against Wilson Fike teams coached by the legendary Harvey Reid and Southwest was in the same league with Hertford County coached by Charles Simmons. Hertford County was one of the toughest places to go play and almost impossible to win there. Tony Marshburn always had really good teams at Northside in Jacksonville. ”*

*See “Grantham” on page 17*

## **“Grantham”**

*continued from page 16*

**NCC:** WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU MAKE TO THE CURRENT RULES IN YOUR SPORT?

*“ If I had the power, I would take us back to time when all HS sports in North Carolina were actually governed by the NCHSAA (which is controlled by the member schools) and remove the political influences that State Legislators have exerted over HS sports. ”*

**NCC:** WHAT ONE PIECE OF ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE A BEGINNING COACH?

*“ Begin with your end in mind. What do you want your legacy to be when your coaching career has ended? What do you want your former players to say about having played for you? Most of us coaches begin worried more about proving ourselves and being successful. It is only later in your career than you begin to truly understand the influence you have over the lives of the players you are privileged to coach. I encourage young coaches to be intentional about creating positive experiences and memories that their players will remember fondly long after their playing days are over. Be honest with your players and trustworthy. Treat the least talented player on your roster with the same respect and show him/her the same concern as you do the best player. Nobody wants to be coached or lead by someone they do not trust or respect. ”*

**NCC:** WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS FOR YOUNG COACHES TO DO IN DEALING WITH:

*“ ATHLETES: Be fair, be honest, be trustworthy, treat every player with respect. ”*

*“ PARENTS: Communicate early with them and often throughout the season (and don't punish a kid for their parent's behavior - kids don't get to pick their parents). ”*

*“ ADMINISTRATORS: Make sure they know and approve of your team policies and expectations. Don't let them get blindsided with problems you knew were coming their way. Don't expect them to have your back if they had no idea what you were doing before it became a problem. ”*

*“ ATHLETIC DIRECTORS: Same advice as with Principals. Also, understand that the AD has a number of other coaches & teams on campus they have to deal with as well. Don't expect the AD to be as focused on your sport as you are. ”*

*“ THE PRESS/MEDIA: Don't expect them to write about your team if you don't provide them with information/stats/scores. And think*

*before you speak to any member of the media - it's not their job to edit your words to make you sound smarter or less controversial. ”*

**NCC:** WHAT DID/DOES THE NCCA MEAN TO YOU?

*“ From my very first year in coaching, the NC Coaches Association has been a tremendous asset. From putting on the annual Clinic where ideas are gleaned from not only outstanding speakers, but coaching colleagues in the hallways as well, to recognizing players and coaches through the All Star Games, and representing the interests of coaches to the NCHSAA, the NCCA has played an important role in my coaching career. I will always feel a great fondness for the NCCA and its thousands of member coaches. ”*





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GOAL  
PASS  
CATCH  
POINT  
SPIKE  
KICK  
WIN

*there*

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