We celebrate and honor the accomplishments of the 2021-2022 high school student athletes!
For the first time since 2019, The Mount Airy News Group was able to hold an in-person banquet to honor the best athletes from the five-county, two-state coverage area.

Held virtually the past two years due to the pandemic, the Best of Preps 2022 Banquet was held June 28 at the First Baptist Church of Mount Airy with approximately 175 people in attendance. Refreshments were served by Chick-Fil-A of Mount Airy and athletes, coaches and parents alike were able to come together for the banquet.

With the end of each school year comes the tradition of the Best of Preps awards, an annual celebration of the top student-athletes by the Mount Airy Regional Publishing Group of Adams Publishing. Athletes are nominated from a five-county region covered by the group’s newspapers: Surry, Stokes, Elkin, Yadkin and East Wilkes in North Carolina, and Carroll County in Virginia.

The awards are sponsored by local businesses and by the newspapers themselves. The sports staff of The Mount Airy News, Elkin Tribune, Yadkin Ripple, Stokes News and The Carroll News select the winners from a pool of nominations, based on a consensus of who the top performers, both on and off the field, were during the school year.

Each award winner received a plaque recognizing their achievement, with the Comeback Athlete, Community Service award, Extra Mile coaches and Male and Female athletes of the year also receiving a trophy.

The Premier Student-Athlete of the Year, sponsored by Tri-County Orthopedics & Sports Medicine (Hugh Chatham), goes to the best all-around student-athlete in the region, taking into account both performance in sports, community service, sportsmanship and academic achievement.

This year’s Premier Award goes to Mia McMillen of Surry Central High School.

The Male and Female Athlete of the Year awards, also sponsored by Tri-County Orthopedics & Sports Medicine (Hugh Chatham), went to Folger Boaz of East Surry High School and Bree Spainhour of West Stokes High School.

Guest speaker for the Best of Preps Banquet was Stephen Lyons, head men’s soccer coach at Carson-Newman University in Jefferson City, Tennessee. Surrounded by a room of athletes voted the best in the area in their respective sports, Lyons talked about how that alone would not cut it in college. Nobody is too big or too good for the little things — helping clean up equipment after practice, always keeping a positive attitude and encouraging teammates.

Lyons told the athletes in attendance that his coaching staff looks just as much for character as it does athletic ability. Being a good person and having a good attitude doesn’t cost anything, yet will get you more looks from college coaches than pure talent alone. The Carson-Newman soccer coach also spoke about the work ethics of two of the most famous athletes of our time — Serena Williams and Kobe Bryant — to demonstrate the drive and desire it takes to be successful.
Just like Surry Central’s Eagle mascot, everything Mia McMillen did during her time at the school was Golden. She was a three-sport athlete competed with the state’s best in each, all while putting in work in the classroom as well as her community.

As a senior, Mia: earned All-Conference Honors in three sports, won or shared the Foothills 2A Conference’s top honors in two of those sports, won a team conference championship, reached the 1,000 mark in two major categories, won four individual conference championships, two individual regional championships and capped off her high school career by winning a state championship.

McMillen’s state championship victory came in the spring as part of the outdoor track season.

After finishing state runner-up in the 300-meter hurdles on two occasions, McMillen ran away with the victory thanks to a championship time of 45.08 seconds.

In addition to her gold medal in 300 hurdles, Mia – who was named Female Athlete of the Year for the FH2A Conference – won a bronze medal in 100 hurdles, finished fifth in the long jump state championship and was sixth in the 4x200 relay state championship. She graduates with the school records in the following events: 300 hurdles, 100-meter dash, 200-meter dash, long jump and was part of the record-setting 4x200-meter relay squad.

McMillen was named FH2A Conference Co-Player of the Year in basketball after averaging 21.5 points, 9.1 rebounds, 5.2 steals, 2.8 assists and 0.5 blocks playing more than 31 minutes per game. She had four games of at least 30 points, 14 games of 20 or more points, 18 games of 15 or more points and scored at least 10 points in all 22 games. She also scored her 1,000th-career point as a senior.

Mia was also selected for the East-West All-Star Game, represented the West in the Triad High School All-Star Classic and had the second-most votes in All-District voting.

McMillen earned All-Conference Honors, recorded her 1,000th dig and helped Surry Central reach the second round of the state playoffs as a senior with the volleyball team. In total, she was an All-Conference selection all four years of volleyball.

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Mia plans to continue her volleyball career at Limestone University.

Outside of athletics, McMillen was very successful in academics. She graduated with a 4.3 GPA and has already completed 40 hours of college credit. She was a member of the Math, Science, English and Social Studies Honor Societies, as well as the National Technical Honor Society and the National Honor Society, the latter of which she was vice president.

McMillen was also heavily involved in her community. She volunteered with the Dobson First Baptist Church Camps, assisted with the Eagles Nest Youth Basketball Camps, helped organize two blood drives and helped tutor fifth-grade students at Dobson Elementary.

**MIA MCMILLEN**

Premier Student Athlete of the Year: Mia McMillen of Surry Central sponsored by Tri-County Orthopedic & Sports Medicine-Hugh Chatham Memorial Hospital photographed with Holly Lamm; Publication Manager of The Tribune.

Mia McMillen with Athletic Director of Surry Central Wes Evans.

Mia McMillen leaves the competition out of frame during a home track meet.
Male Athlete of the Year

FOLGER BOAZ

East Surry junior Folger Boaz was a three-sport athlete that helped the Cardinals capture two conference championships, one conference tournament championship and one 2A West Regional Runner-up trophy.

Boaz was named Foothills 2A Conference Player of the Year in two sports: football and baseball.

The Cardinal football team finished 6-0 in conference to win the FH2A Championship, and 13-1 overall to end the year 2A West Regional Runner-up. East Surry’s only loss came to the eventual state champion.

Boaz, a dual-threat quarterback, finished the year with 4,435 total yards; this was second in the state among all classifications and No. 26 in the country.

He completed 227-of-324 passes for 3,475 yards and 29 touchdowns in 14 games. Folger was fourth in the state in yards passing, and his .701 completion percentage was the highest of any quarterback in the state that attempted at least 275 passes.

In baseball, Boaz was named a member of the N.C. Baseball Coaches Association’s 2A All-State team and helped East Surry to a 24-2 overall record. The Cardinals won the FH2A regular season and conference tournament championships, and their only division loss came in the fourth round of the state playoffs against the eventual state champion.

According to MaxPreps, the left-handed pitcher finished third in the state among all classifications in wins with an 11-0 record. He led the 2A division and was third in the state with 126 strikeouts, and was one of five players to throw at least 60 innings and have an ERA of .89 or lower.

As a hitter, Boaz tied for the most RBIs in the state with 49 – which set a new school record – and was ninth in the state in home runs with seven. He finished the year with a .390 batting average and a .521 on-base percentage.

Boaz was also a member of East Surry’s varsity basketball team. The Cardinals were 17-8 overall and tied for second in the FH2A Conference. Boaz was named an All-Conference Honorable Mention after averaging 7.9 points, 5.2 rebounds, 2.8 assists, 1.9 steals and 0.3 blocks.

Boaz has received Division-I college offers in both football and baseball. He has verbally committed to play baseball at UNC-Chapel Hill.
West Stokes senior Bree Spainhour is arguably the best female athlete that the Wildcats have had in its’ 22 years of the school being opened. She was the Mid-State 2A Volleyball and Basketball Player of the Year, the Mid-State 2A Soccer Goalie of the Year, the Mid-State 2A High Jump Conference Champion, and is a member of the Mid-State 2A Conference Champion 4X800 Relay team.

In volleyball she collected 374 kills with 205 digs, 49 aces, and a team-leading 35 blocks. Spainhour scored 426 points during her senior basketball season and averaged 16.4 points a game, 7.1 rebounds, three steals and 2.4 assists and helped the team to a second-place finish. She helped the soccer team return to the top of the conference and a third-round appearance in the state playoffs with 107 saves and 11 shutouts. Spainhour’s two individual conference championships in track earned her regional spots in those events and helped the Wildcats secure a Mid-State 2A Conference Championship.

She was All-County and All-Conference in every sport, while being named All-State in both volleyball and soccer. Spainhour signed her national letter-of-intent with Lynchburg University in the fall to play both volleyball and basketball.

Photos by Robert Money | The Stokes News

West Stokes Bree Spainhour was named the Mid-State 2A Goalie of the Year with 107 saves and 22 shutouts.

West Stokes Bree Spainhour scored 426 points during her senior season helping the Wildcats to second place in conference play and a state playoff appearance.

The Wildcats’ Bree Spainhour recorded 374 kills and helped her team to a second place finish in conference play.
North Stokes senior Treyson Mabe was a standout player on the men’s basketball team. He earned All-County and was a Honorable Mention All-Conference selection with 45 drawn charges this past season. He was the valedictorian of his class with a GPA of 4.4. Mabe volunteered as a team leader in his church youth group, collected food for Northern Stokes food pantry, made gift bags and food baskets for people in nursing homes, helped build his church youth center, helped with fundraising with his church and the men’s basketball team, helped cook meals to fund the youth center, helped with youth basketball camps, was the president of the North Stokes Honor Society, member of the Beta Club, president of the senior class and the Student Government Association (SGA), and is the recipient of the North Carolina State Pack Promise Scholarship, a full ride.
Congratulations North Stokes High SENIOR
2022 Community Service Award Male
TREYSON MABE

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Vice President for Forbush’s Health Occupations Students of America organization, Phillips has been part of numerous community projects. An All-Foothills 2A Conference member for girl’s soccer, Phillips took part in a presentation to all first responders and military members in remembrance of the 20-year anniversary of 9/11 prior to last fall’s Unifi Bowl between the Falcons and Starmount.

Also a member of Forbush’s volleyball squad, Phillips has also led a service project called “Cards with Carly.” Phillips and HOSA members come together and assemble Valentine’s Day candy treat bags and handmade Valentine’s Day card to share with residents of long-term care facilities in Yadkin County.

Back in March, Phillip was awarded the HOSA Happening Certificate of Excellence.
Congratulations to all Area Athletes and Carly Phillips of Forbush for The Community Service Award!

Lots of exciting things are happening on the farm!

The Barn at Heritage Farm
Family Farm and Event Venue

Check Out Our Facebook for updates and news on upcoming community events!

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Lane, a multi-sport athlete for East Wilkes, returned to the diamond this spring after being sidelined for nearly nine months with an ACL/MCL tear she suffered last summer during basketball workouts.

After surgery and around eight months of rehab (missing the entire basketball season), according to the Best of Preps submission, Lane returned to the softball field in mid-March of this year.

The sophomore first baseman missed the entire preseason and the first two games of the regular season but returned just before the Lady Cardinals’ Northwest 1A Conference opener against Mount Airy.

In her third game back at Elkin, Lane went 2-for-4 at the plate with four runs batted in. The performance was highlighted by a grand slam.

“She worked very hard and followed doctors orders and has come back to be a key to our team this year,” said East Wilkes head coach Derrick Hill. “She has been flawless at first base and is my number-five hitter.”

Batting behind the league’s Player of the Year, Lane batted .328 with three home runs and 26 runs batted in, according to stats posted on MaxPreps (three postseason games were not accounted for).

Recently, Lane was named to the all-conference team and was an All-District 7 selection by the North Carolina Softball Coaches Association.
Congratulations to All Best of Preps Athletes!

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We are proud of you Kyleigh Lane of East Wilkes!
Zeb Stroup was called to be Mount Airy’s backup quarterback during a 2021 playoff football game after the starting QB went down with an injury. Stroup kept Mount Airy in a very close battle before he too succumbed to an injury. The game was paused for nearly half an hour as officials tried to help Stroup off the field.

Stroup was diagnosed with an avulsion fracture of his oblique muscle off the pelvic bone. An avulsion fracture occurs when a ligament or tendon is torn away from bone and the soft tissue takes part of the bone with it. In Zeb’s case, a bad landing on a turf field resulted in his oblique contracting and tearing off a piece of his pelvic bone.

His injury occurred on April 16. Stroup missed baseball season, after playing his first two years of high school, and recuperated over the summer.

Stroup was ready to go by the time football season rolled around. He started week one on August 20, just over four months after sustaining his injury. Zeb was one of only eight players in the Northwest 1A Conference, and one of just two Mount Airy players, to receive All-Conference Honors on offense and defense.

The Bears won the NW1A Championship and finished the year 13-1.

Stroup was the Bears’ leading receiver with 582 yards and eight touchdowns according to MaxPreps. Defensively, he had 94 tackles, four interceptions, seven pass deflections and two fumbles recovered for a touchdown. He also scored on a kickoff return.

He went on to play basketball for Mount Airy in the winter and receive All-Conference Honors. Stroup averaged 10.7 points, 6.6 rebounds, 2.0 assists, 2.0 steals and 1.8 blocks as Mount Airy finished 19-6.

Zeb Stroup picks up extra yards after making a catch against Starmount.

Zeb Stroup (1) pulls up for a short jump shot against Surry Central.

Male Comeback Player of the Year: Zeb Stroup of Mount Airy High School sponsored by Chic-Fil-A and photographed with Bob Ward.

Zeb will continue his football career at Presbyterian College.
CONGRATULATIONS
Zeb Stroup

Zeb, we are so proud of you and all of your accomplishments. We wish you all the best as you pursue your dreams!!

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West Stokes Travis Gammons just finished his fourth year as the school’s athletic director. The school celebrated one of its best seasons as an athletic department since the school opened in 1999-00. The Wildcats claimed an unprecedented seven conference championships (baseball, softball, men’s tennis, women’s track, men’s track, men’s golf, and women’s soccer) during the spring and 13 (men’s and women’s cross country, men’s indoor track, men’s and women’s swimming, women’s golf) total during the school year. No team finished below fourth place with three (volleyball, women’s indoor track, and women’s basketball) placing second, four finishing third, and three coming in fourth.

West Stokes Travis Gammons completed his fourth year as the school’s athletic director. The Wildcats’ Travis Gammons served as the football team’s defensive coordinator.
Congratulations to West Stokes High School Best of Preps 2022 Winners!

Baseball Athlete of the Year - Kaden Fuller
Cheerleading Athlete of the Year - Zoe Davis
Athletic Director of the Year - Travis Gammons
Extra Mile Coach of the Year

JASON BRYANT

It may be more appropriate to call this award the “Extra Kilometer” Award with Surry Central cross country coach Jason Bryant being the recipient.

Bryant began volunteer coaching at Surry Central in 1995. He became the head cross country coach at the school in 2011, and also coaches track and field. In 2016, he took on the meet director role for Cross Country Regionals and has continued in that role since. In 2018, he became meet director for Track Regionals in the Spring, then Cross Country State Meet Director in the fall, continuing in those roles to present.

Along with co-coach Kevin Pack, Bryant helped coach the Surry Central girls to conference championships in cross country and indoor track. The girls cross country team finished 2A Regional Runner-up. Pack and Bryant were also named the Foothills 2A Conference Coaches of the Year in Cross Country.

In addition to his service at Surry Central, Bryant has also been a Track State Meet Official numerous times since the late 1990s, mainly with pole vault.

Bryant was named the recipient of the N.C. High School Athletic Association’s Special Person Award during the fall of 2021. The Award is presented annually to a person with at least 10 years of experience in education and athletics, is still active in the field and has regularly gone “above and beyond” the call of duty at both the local and the state level.

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The most important aspect of Bryant’s involvement with high school cross country and track is the connection he can build with the many young people he coaches. He is proud of the many young people who continue into college, often making Dean’s and Chancellor’s list at their respective schools.

Bryant has conducted an after-practice study hall once a week for several years now and considers this time with students one of the most important roles he has taken on.
CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL
BEST OF PREPS AREA ATHLETES

Mia McMillen scores a transition layup for the Golden Eagles.

Photo by Cory Smith

Jeremiah Price poses with his gold medal and Most Outstanding Wrestler plaque following the N.C. High School Athletic Association State Championship Tournament.

Photo by Cory Smith

Jason Bryant encourages Surry Central’s Ignacio Morales as he competes in the 3,200-meter run at the 2A State Championship Meet.

Cardinal quarterback Folger Boaz leaves West Wilkes players in the dust as he rushes for a touchdown. (Photo by JR Willoughby Photography)
**Sponsored by:** SURRY-YADKIN ELECTRIC MEMBERSHIP CORPORATION

**Football Athlete of the Year**

**SAM WHITT**

Sam Whitt graduates as one of the most accomplished football players in school and county history.

As an offensive lineman at East Surry, Whitt was a four-year starter and all-conference player for a program that won a state championship, three West Regional Championships, three conference championships and was regional runner-up once.

A founding member of the “Fat Cowboys” offensive line, Sam helped East Surry run one of the state’s most prolific offenses as a senior. The Cardinals finished the year with 5,965 total yards, or more than 426 yards of offense per game. East rushed for more than 2,400 yards, and passed for more than 3,500.

East Surry finished the year 13-1 overall and 6-0 in the Foothills 2A Conference.

Postseason honors flooded in for Whitt. He was one of just 10 offensive linemen in the state to be selected for the 2021 Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas, and one of seven offensive lineman selected to represent the West in the N.C. Coaches Association’s East-West All-Star Game.

Sam was also named a member of the 2021 Carolina Bowl Senior Showcase team for N.C., and was recognized as a member of the N.C. Football Recruiting Blue Sheet Academic All-State team.

In the spring, it was announced that Whitt was one of two recipients of the N.C. High School Athletic Association’s 2022 Clary Medal Scholarship. The Clary Medal recognizes an outstanding male and female varsity student-athlete participating in at least two NCHSAA-sanctioned sports. The award is based on the individual’s excellence in athletic participation, extracurricular activities and community service. Each recipient of this medal exhibits a desire to excel in all areas of life – athletics, education, sportsmanship, teamwork, leadership, honesty and integrity.

Whitt will continue his football career at Lenoir-Rhyne University.

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**Photo by JR Willoughby Photography**

Sam Whitt (52) blocks a Monroe player to create a hole for Cardinal running back Trey Armstrong (5).

**East Surry senior Sam Whitt high fives a young Cardinal fan before taking the field for a playoff game against Maiden.**

**Photo by Charles Leftwich**
Surry-Yadkin Electric Membership Corporation

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*Early Bird applications due by August 16, 2022.*

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Elkin Lopez helped Mount Airy rewrite the history books during the 2021 season.

As a team, Mount Airy finished 26-1 and finished 1A West Regional Runner-up. The Bears’ only loss came against private school that won the state championship. The team’s 26 wins, 12 conference wins and undefeated home records all set school records.

Lopez, a junior forward, paced the Granite Bears’ school-record 156 goals by scoring 45 goals of his own. Lopez’s 45 goals in 2021 tie a school record, tied for the fifth-most of any player in N.C. among all classifications and were tied for 36th in the nation.

Lopez also finished the season with 105 points, which was fifth in the state and tied for 40th in the nation.

Lopez repeated as Northwest 1A Conference Player of the Year as Mount Airy won the conference title, marking the fifth consecutive season the Bears have won at least a share of the NW1A Championship. He was also named to the N.C. High School Soccer Coaches Association 1A All-Region and All-State teams. Lopez was recognized by HighSchoolOT as part of the All-State Third Team, which includes all public school and private school classifications.

For the week of October 11-17, Elkin was the only player to represent North Carolina on the MaxPreps/United Soccer Coaches State Player of the Week. The Bears won three games in four days during this span. In those three games, Lopez scored nine goals and assisted on another.

Songs by Cory Smith

Elkin Lopez breaks through the West Stokes defense.

Elkin Lopez flicks to a teammate in a playoff match against Piedmont Community Charter.
Leann Hooker, Director of Practice Operations at Hugh Chatham Memorial Hospital shares information about Tri-County Orthopedic & Sports Medicine.

Coach Stephen Lyons, varsity men's head soccer coach at Carson Newman University encourages the student athletes as this year's keynote speaker for 2022 Best of Preps.

We would like to extend our sincerest gratitude for recognizing and appreciating our commitment to serving you and your furry family members. We are truly honored and look forward to seeing each of you soon.

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Men’s Basketball Athlete of the Year

Why He Won:

PEYTON COMPTON

A year after being named the Western Piedmont 2A Conference Player of the Year, Compton earned his second straight Player of the Year nod, this time, in the new-Foothills 2A Conference.

The 2021-22 season was filled with accolades and milestones for Compton, who scored double figures in 27 of the Falcons’ 29 games. The senior averaged 23.9 points a game and added 4.5 assists and 1.6 steals per game while shooting 42-percent from the field. Compton had 24 games of 20 or more points and six games with 30 or points all while he led the Falcons to the third round of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association 2A playoffs.

For his body of work, Compton was named to the North Carolina Basketball Coaches Association All-District first team for District 11.
Surry-Yadkin Electric Membership Corporation

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Early Bird applications due by August 16, 2022.

[NCBrightIdeas.com](http://NCBrightIdeas.com)
Jeremiah Price continued his ascent as one of the top wrestlers in the state during his stellar junior campaign.

Price finished the year with a 42-0 individual record, competing primarily in the 152-pound weight class. Out of 42 total matches, Price won: 27 via fall, seven via technical fall, six via forfeit and just three via decision.

All three wrestlers to last a full six-minute match against Jeremiah went on to win state championships: one in 4A, one in 3A and one in 1A. Those three wrestlers finished the year with records of 31-1, 31-1 and 45-2.

Similar to his freshman and sophomore years, Price swept the individual honors in his respective weight class. He won the Foothills 2A Conference Championship, 2A Midwest Regional Championship and 2A State Championship in the 152 class. Jeremiah’s state championship victory makes him the first three-time state champ in Surry Central history, and just the second in Surry County history.

Price’s dominant performance at the State Championship Tournament earned him the title of Most Outstanding Wrestler of the 2A Division. He won his first two matches in a combined 36 seconds, then won his semifinal and championship matches via technical fall (25-10, 26-9).

In addition to his MOW win at the state championship, Price was named Most Outstanding Wrestler for the following tournaments: Danny Linkler Memorial, C.H. Necessary Invitational, Big A Memorial and Tiger Holiday Classic.

Price has won 91-consecutive matches dating back to his freshman year, and has a career record of 118-1.

He is verbally committed to wrestle at N.C. State University.
CONGRATULATIONS ATHLETES

We are so proud of all our area athletes who won 2022 Best of Preps.

Congratulations Jeremiah Price of Surry Central for winning Best Wrestler again this year!

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North Surry junior Jared Hiatt jumped to new heights (and lengths) during the 2021-22 Indoor Track and Field season. In his first season competing in indoor track, Hiatt was named Foothills 2A Conference Male Athlete of the Year after winning three gold medals and one silver medal at the conference championship meet. He was the conference champion in high jump, long jump and triple jump, while taking second in the 4x400-meter relay with teammates Talan Vernon, Chuck Powers and Jake Simmons.

Hiatt’s mark of 6-04.00 feet in high jump met the MileSplit U.S. Second Team standard and was the only “Elite Performance” of the meet by MileSplit standards. His strong performance at the FH2A Championship led to Hiatt qualifying for three events at the N.C. High School Athletic Association 2A State Championship meet: high jump, long jump and triple jump. Jared cruised to victory in long jump by posting a mark of 22-06.00 feet; this was more than one foot longer than his qualifying mark and 15 inches ahead of the event’s silver medalist.

Hiatt also medaled in high jump, winning a bronze medal with a height of 6-00.00 feet. He finished just off the podium in triple jump by finishing fifth.

Jared went on to replicate his success in the spring by winning the 2A Long Jump State Championship for outdoor track. He also captured a bronze medal in high jump at the outdoor championship.
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Like the Lady Elks foursome, Zamudio had a banner day at the NCHSAA 1A/2A championships with a trio of medals. The senior captured state championships in both the 100 breaststroke and helped win a title in the 200 freestyle relay. He also helped his team claim third in the 400 freestyle relay. In addition to an all-Northwest 1A Conference nod, Zamudio was a third-team all-state selection by HighSchool OT.

Elkin teammates Marshall Wells (2nd place) and Jack Zamudio (1st place) take the top two spots in the men's 100 yard breaststroke event. Zamudio captured the teams only individual state championship and also received All-American Consideration.

Elkin High School Men's swim team sweep the Central Regional relays, taking gold in all three relay events. Pictured are Jack Zamudio, Troy Snow, Coach Oz Prim, Marshall Wells, and Thomas McComb.
Congratulations to 2022 Best of Preps Athletes!

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Surry Central's Josh Pardue played his first full tennis season as a junior after his freshman and sophomore years were both impacted by the pandemic.

As the Golden Eagles’ No. 1 seed, Pardue led Surry Central to its first conference championship in well over a decade. Central finished the season 14-2 overall and 12-0 in conference play. The Eagles’ only loss in the 2A division came against the eventual State Runner-up. Twelve of Central’s 14 wins were 9-0 shutouts.

Pardue was named Foothills 2A Conference Player of the Year after going undefeated in the regular season. Josh was 14-0 in singles and 13-0 in doubles with partner Jacob Edmonds. He and Edmonds went on to win the FH2A Doubles Championship, then finished 2A Midwest Regional Runner-up and competed in the 2A State Championship Tournament. The pair finished 19-2 as a team.

In singles, Pardue won his match in the first round of the dual-team state playoffs, but suffered his only defeat of the season – which came against the eventual 2A Singles State Champion – in the next round. With a 15-1 singles record, Pardue finished his junior year with a combined record of 34-3.
Way to Go!

Josh Pardue
Men’s Tennis Athlete of the Year

Jason Bryant
Extra Mile Coach of the Year

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2022 Best Of PREPS
STUDENT-ATHLETE AWARDS

We celebrate and honor the accomplishments of the 2021-2022 high school student athletes!
West Stokes junior Kaden Fuller earned his second conference player of the award after leading the Wildcats to a Mid-State 2A Conference championship. He helped West Stokes to the third round of the state playoffs by leading the team in multiple categories. Fuller had a team-leading .390 batting average with 25 runs scored, eight doubles, two triples, and 23 RBIs. He led the team from the mound with a 4-1 record, 51 innings pitched, an opponent batting average of .176, and an ERA of 0.96 with 79 strikeouts. Fuller was All-County, All-Conference, and was awarded All-State.

Photos by Jennifer Cecile | For The Stokes News

West Stokes’ Kaden Fuller was the Mid-State 2A Player of the Year

The Wildcats’ Kaden Fuller led the team with a .390 batting average with 25 runs scored.

West Stokes’ Kaden Fuller was 4-1 from the mound with a 0.96 ERA.
Honored to Serve Our Community

Congratulations to West Stokes High School Best of Preps 2022 Winners!

Women’s Golf Athlete of the Year - Kirstyn Page

Lacrosse Athlete of the Year - Alicia McCoy

Softball Athlete of the Year - Natalie Jones

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East Surry’s Bradley Davis Jr. helped lead East Surry to the promised land after coming up just short on two earlier occasions.

East Surry finished second in the 1A Golf State Championship in both 2019 and 2021. The Cardinals even tied for the state title in 2021, but fell to Community School of Davidson in a 1-hole playoff.

Both East and Community School of Davidson moved up to 2A for the 2022 season, but the competition wasn’t even close Davis’ senior year. The Cards were tied for the lead after the first day of competition, then won by 11 strokes on the second day to win the 2A State Championship.

Davis led East Surry through all 36 holes of play. He shot 75 (+3) on the first 18 holes, then matched it through the second 18. Davis’ two-day score of 150 was good enough for State Runner-up in the 2A division.

Bradley was also East Surry’s most consistent golfer through the 2022 regular season. By posting the lowest combined score through seven conference meets, Davis was named Foothills 2A Conference Golfer of the Year. The Cardinals won the FH2A Conference Championship by 31 strokes, then captured the 2A Midwest Regional Championship with a 19-stroke advantage.

Through three seasons at East Surry – since Bradley’s sophomore season only lasted two weeks before being cancelled – Davis helped East Surry win: three conference championships, two regional championships, two state runner-up trophies and one state championship.

Davis will continue his golf career at Gardner-Webb University.
Best of Preps 2022

HONORING EAST SURRY HIGH SCHOOL WINNING ATHLETES

Men’s Golf Athlete of the Year
Bradley Davis, Jr.

Men’s Outdoor Track Athlete of the Year
Isaac Vaden

Women’s Tennis Athlete of the Year
Tara Martin

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In just her first season running cross country for North Surry, Callie Allen became a conference champion, regional qualifier and state qualifier.

Allen, a senior, ran her first cross country race on September 1, 2021, at Mount Airy’s Veterans Memorial Park. She finished the 5,000-meter run in 23:22.10, which was good enough for fifth place in the Foothills 2A Conference meet. By the time the conference championship meet rolled around on October 18, Allen had cut nearly 2.5 minutes off her 5K time at the same park. She won the FH2A Championship with a time of 20:59.96, more than 18 seconds faster than the silver medalist.

Callie qualified for the 2A Midwest Regional Championship held at Dobson’s Fisher River Park. On the strenuous course, Allen finished fourth out of 93 girls with a time of 21:28.26. At the 2A State Championship, Allen finished the 5,000-meter run in 21:12.97 – good enough for the No. 21 spot out of 133 runners.

Allen was given North Surry’s Don L. Smith Outstanding Female Athlete Award for her success in athletics as well as in the classroom. Callie participated in sports during every possible athletic season of her four years, also playing volleyball, basketball and soccer. As a senior, Allen also received the FH2A Conference’s top honors in basketball by sharing the title of FH2A Player of the Year.
We would like to extend our sincerest gratitude for recognizing and appreciating our commitment to serving you and your furry family members. We are truly honored and look forward to seeing each of you soon.
ISAAC VADEN

Isaac Vaden became the first male outdoor track state champion in East Surry history by winning the 2A State Championship in Discus Throw.

Vaden won the state title in just his second outdoor track and field season. As a freshman in 2021, Vaden qualified for the 1A State Championship in discus throw and finished No. 15 of 16 competitors with a throw of 95-01 feet. His championship-winning distance in 2022 was 50 feet farther than this, and his personal record during a meet this season was 61 feet farther.

Isaac took home gold medals from all three Foothills 2A Conference regular season meets. He threw 126-04 during the opening meet of the year, winning by 10 feet. He increased his mark to 143-10 by the end of the regular season and was winning the event by nearly 30 feet. Vaden won the FH2A Discus Throw Championship by nearly 20 feet.

Vaden hit a new PR in the 2A Midwest Regional Championship with a throw of 156-08 feet. He not only won the regional title by nearly 15 feet, but also met the MileSplit US Second Team Standard; he was one of just three male athletes at the event to meet this standard. Though he didn’t surpass his PR at the state championship, Vaden’s distance of 145-01 won the state title by more than eight feet.

In addition to discus throw, Vaden also competed in shot put throughout the season. He won gold medals in all three regular season meets as well as the conference championship. Isaac qualified for the 2A Midwest Regional Championship in shot put, but finished two spots away from qualifying for states.
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Volleyball Athlete of the Year

BELLA HUTCHENS

A stellar sophomore season from Bella Hutchens helped East Surry reach the West Regional Championship in their first season competing in the 2A division.

Hutchens, an outside hitter, was one of the Lady Cardinals’ go-to players for a momentum-changing attack. The sophomore finished the year with 384 kills, which was the third-most of any sophomore in the state and No. 17 among all classes. She set new personal records for kills in a single match on multiple occasions, concluding with a school-record 41 kills in the Lady Cards’ final match of the season.

In 28 matches, Hutchens had a kill percentage of .397. She played 94 sets for East Surry and racked up 23 aces and 160 digs. East Surry won its first 16 matches of the season and only gave up seven sets in that time. The Cardinals went on to finish 12-0 in the Foothills 2A Conference, win the program’s eighth-consecutive conference tournament championship and finish 2A West Regional Runner-up. Hutchens was named to the FH2A All-Conference team.

East Surry’s only loss to a team in the 2A division came in the West Regional Final against the eventual state champion. East won a total of 80 sets while only dropping 14, which helped the team finish 26-2 overall.
Congratulations to
Clara Willard, East Surry High School Women’s Outdoor Track Athlete of the Year!
Just as she went back-to-back as conference player of the year, Tara Martin is named the Best of Preps Women’s Tennis Player for the second-consecutive season.

Martin, a junior, led East Surry to the Foothills 2A Conference Championship. The Cardinals went undefeated in the conference with a 12-0 record, and Martin went undefeated in both singles and doubles through the regular season.

Tara extended her singles winning streak by going 15-0 in 2021. She has yet to lose a singles match in high school, and only one opponent won more than four games against her this past season. After giving up three games in the first singles match of the 21-22 season, Martin didn’t surrender three games in one set for the remainder of the year.

Martin teamed with fellow junior Evelyn Ruedisueli to compete as doubles partners in the postseason. The team of Martin/Ruedisueli, who finished 1A State Runner-up in 2020-21, won the FH2A Doubles Championship and were undefeated as a pair through the conference tournament. The doubles team was runner-up in the 2A Midwest Regional Championship, then reached the semifinals of the State Doubles Tournament.

Both Martin and Ruedisueli were named All-State by the N.C. High School Tennis Coaches Association, and Martin was named an All-State Honorable Mention by HighSchoolOT.

Photos by Cory Smith

Women’s Tennis: Tara Martin of East Surry & Bob Ward of Stokes News- sponsored by Foothills Hardware
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Carroll County sophomore Alyssa Ervin put on a postseason for the ages to help guide the Lady Cavaliers to the first state basketball championship in school history.

The Virginia Class 3 Player of the Year as voted by the Virginia High School Coaches Association (VHSCA), Ervin averaging 19.2 points per game for the season, scoring a grand total of 500 points as Carroll County went 25-1, highlighted by a 51-47 win over defending state champion Meridian in the state final. Ervin led the Lady Cavs with 113 steals (4.34 per game) and she dished out 74 assists while making 32.7% of her 3-point attempts (56-of-171).

Carroll County was so dominant in 2022 it outscored its opponents by 27.1 points per game, resulting in starters like Ervin often sitting early in the second half. That certainly was not the case in the playoffs as Ervin averaged a whopping 30.7 points per game in the Lady Cavaliers’ three state tournament victories.

Ervin led Carroll with 36 points in the state quarterfinal win over Fort Defiance. Her torrid streak continued with 35 points in the state semifinal at Spotswood before scoring a game-high 21 points in the state championship against Meridian.

Ervin was also a first-team all-state selection by the Virginia High School League.

Carroll County’s Alyssa Ervin blows past a Lord Botetourt defender in the Region 3D Playoffs earlier this season. Ervin was voted the Class 3 Player of the Year in Virginia by the VHSCA.
Congratulations to Alyssa Ervin, Carroll County High School, on being Voted the Women's Basketball Athlete of the Year!

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Mia McMillen sprouts wings to fly up and reach an attack. (Photo by Cory Smith)
Edwards made a splash in her first year at Elkin High School. The freshman claimed a pair of state championships at the NCHSAA 1A/2A Indoor championships as she won titles in both the 55 and 500 meter runs. She also claimed 10th in the 300 meters. Edwards won Northwest 1A Conference championships in the 55, 500 and 300-meter events during last winter’s indoor championships.
CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL
BEST OF PREPS AREA ATHLETES

Zeb Stroup (1) celebrates after Mount Airy scores the game-tying PAT against Mit.

Photo by Cory Smith

Mia McMillen poses with her gold medal after winning the 2A 300-meter hurdles State Championship.

Photo by Cory Smith

Congratulations to all the 2022 Best of Preps Athletes!

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Women’s Swimming Athlete of the Year

WHY THEY WON:

MORGAN WILES, SOPHIE WELBORN, AMELIA PRESLEY, MATTIE WELBORN

The quartet of Wiles, Sophie Welborn, Presley and Mattie Welborn were so impressive during the NCHSAA 1A/2A championships that all four of them are taking home the Female Swimmers of the Year award. They were a part of the state championship-winning 100, 200 and 400-yard relay races last February.

In addition to the landmark relay performances, Sophie Welborn, also medaled in the 50 freestyle with her third-place finish. She was also the Northwest 1A Conference Girls Swimmer of the Year.

Wiles also finished state runner-up in the 100 butterfly.

Women’s swimming: Elkin Relay team-photographed Mattie Wells & Sophie Welborn. Not pictured Morgan Wiles & Amelia Presley-sponsored by Garanco

Elkin high school women’s swim team are 1A/2A NCHSAA Central Region runners up for 2022. Swimmers include Sophie Welborn, Mattie Wells, Amelia Presley, Morgan Wiles and Bronwyn Sloop.
Band Member of the Year

AUDRA HORTON

A 2022 graduate of Carroll County High School, Audra Horton is the Best of Preps Band Award winner. Horton was voted 1st Chair Alto Saxophone in the district all four years of her high school band career. Horton plans to attend Liberty University this fall.

Congratulations to all the 2022 Best of Preps Athlete's!

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South Stokes’ senior Jenna Shotton helped the Sauras to a Northwest 1A Conference Championship with a league leading 40 goals, 26 assists, and 106 total points. The team finished 18-5 overall and advanced to the third round of the state 1A playoffs. She is a three-time All-Conference performer earning the player of the year in 2022. Shotton was All-Region for the past three years making the All-State team this year. She will attend and play soccer for Guilford College in the fall.

The Sauras’ Jenna Shotton had 40 goals and 26 assists on the season.

South Stokes’ Jenna Shotton was the Northwest 1A Player of the Year.

South Stokes’ Jenna Shotton was All-County, All-Conference, and All-State this past season.

Photos by Robert Money | The Stokes News

Women’s Soccer: Jenna Shotton of South Stokes sponsored by Stokes County Economic Development photographed w/Bob Ward & Robert Money
Congratulations South Stokes High SENIOR
2022 Soccer Athlete of the Year

JENNA SHOTTON

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West Stokes’ junior Kirstyn Page picked up her third conference golfer of the year award in 2022, while helping her team to a third straight conference championship. During the 2022 1A/2A Central Regional, Page finished third overall with an 83 (+11). She qualified for her third consecutive 1A/2A North Carolina High School Athletic Association State Championship Golf Tournament and finished third with a 161, 17 over par.

Kirstyn Page

The Wildcats’ Kirstyn Page finished third in the 1A/2A Central Regional.

Photos by Robert Money | The Stokes News

Kirstyn Page was the Mid-State 2A Golfer of the Year.
West Stokes’ Natalie Jones picked up her second pitcher of the year award while helping the Wildcats to its second consecutive league title. The Wildcats finished 20-6-1 overall and was the 2A West Regional Runner-ups, losing to eventual state champion, West Stanly. Jones batted .361 on the year with 10 homeruns and 38 RBIs. She had an ERA of 1.14 with 123 strikeouts in 147 innings pitched. Jones was awarded All-Conference, All-County, and All-District 5 and will attend Radford University to play softball.

**WHY SHE WON:**

West Stokes’ Natalie Jones was 20-6-1 on the mound helping the team to a 2A West Regional finals.

The Wildcats’ Natalie Jones led the team with 10 homeruns and 38 RBIs.

West Stokes’ Natalie Jones earned the Mid-State 2A Pitcher of the Year.

Photos by Robert Money | The Stokes News

West Stokes’ Natalie Jones was 20-6-1 on the mound helping the team to a 2A West Regional finals.
In addition to jumping up into the 2A division for the 2022 track and field season, East Surry’s Clara Willard added nearly 40 feet to her discus throw from her junior to senior year. This led to Willard capturing the 2A Discus State Championship in the spring.

Willard jumped from the No. 11 spot in the 2021 1A State Championship to the top spot in 2A the following year. She placed 11th as a junior with a throw of 79-01 feet. By the time Willard competed in the first outdoor track meet of 2022, she improved her distance to 97-07. One week later, she won first place at a track meet by throwing 108-09.

Clara won the discus throw in all three regular season track meets for the Foothills 2A Conference. Each of her first two victories came by more than 10 feet, and the third came by five feet. She went on to win the FH2A Championship in the event with a throw of 103-02.

Willard set a new PR of 115-06 at the 2A Midwest Regional Championship. She won the Regional Title, and the silver medalist was seven feet behind Clara.

Willard went on to set a final PR of 118-09 at the 2A State Championship. She tied with another competitor, but won the state title based on her second-longest throw.

Clara is just the third female to win an outdoor track state championship in East Surry history, and is the first to do so in 19 years.

In addition to her success in discus, Clara finished in the top three in shot put during all three regular season meets before taking third in the conference championship. She PR’d with a throw of 30-03 on April 21.

Photos by Charles Leftwich

Clara Willard competes in the discus throw at the 2A State Championship Meet.

Clara Willard is pictured with her gold medal after winning the 2A Discus Throw State Championship.

Women’s Outdoor Track: Clara Willard of East Surry sponsored by Royster & Royster, PLLC pictured with Bob Ward
Congratulations to Clara Willard, East Surry High School Women’s Outdoor Track Athlete of the Year!
CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL
BEST OF PREPS AREA ATHLETES

Elkin’s 4 x 400 relay team jumps for joy after a victory at 1A NCHSAA Track and Field Championships.
Lacrosse Athlete of the Year

ALICIA MCCOY

West Stokes senior Alicia McCoy helped the lady’s lacrosse team recover from an 0-9 season in 2021 to a 5-7 overall record in 2022 with a third-place finish in conference play. She was first on the team in ground balls with 42 and second in scoring with 24 goals and six assists on the season. The centerfielder dominated in the middle of the field and was awarded All-Conference and the team Wildcat Award.

Senior Alicia McCoy helped the Wildcats to five wins in 2022 after finishing 0-9 the season before.

West Stokes’ Alicia McCoy scored 24 goals and had six assists for the Wildcats on the season.

The Wildcats’ Alicia McCoy had 42 ground balls on the season.
IGNACIO MORALES

Ignacio Morales burst onto the scene for Surry Central as a sophomore.

In his first race of the year, Morales was one of only five runners in the Foothills 2A Conference to finish the 5,000-meter run in less than 20 minutes, one of two to finish in under 19 minutes and was the only runner to finish in less than 18 minutes. His 5K time of 17:58.20 was 35 seconds faster than the second-place finisher.

Ignacio continued to whittle his time down below 17 minutes throughout the season. He won the FH2A Championship with a time of 17:41.67, but faced extra pressure this time with someone just eight seconds behind him.

Morales had perhaps his best performance of the season by finishing the 5,000-meter run in 17:14.16 at the 2A Midwest Regional Championship. Morales finished Regional Runner-up out of 97 runners in the race held at Dobson’s Fisher River Park. He also helped Surry Central finish fourth overall at Regionals to help the school qualify for the state championship meet.

Ignacio was Surry Central’s top finisher at the 2A State Championship. His time of 17:34.51 was good enough for the No. 15 spot out of 136 total runners. Morales had the highest finish of any sophomore in the state.
Cheerleader of the Year

ZOE DAVIS

West Stokes senior Zoe Davis was a four-year varsity cheerleader and captain for two of those years. She was tagged as an All-Region, All-State, and All-American cheerleader. She is the first and only All-State Cheerleader for the Wildcats. Davis will attend college at Campbell University this fall and cheer for the Camels during both football and basketball seasons.

Photos by Robert Money | The Stokes News
West Stokes’ senior Zoe Davis will cheer at Campbell University in the fall.

West Stokes’ Zoe Davis was a four-year varsity cheerleader.

Zoe Davis was awarded All-Region and All-State Cheerleader.

Cheerleading: Zoe Davis of West Stokes sponsored by Slate Funeral Home.
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Ignacio Morales

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