



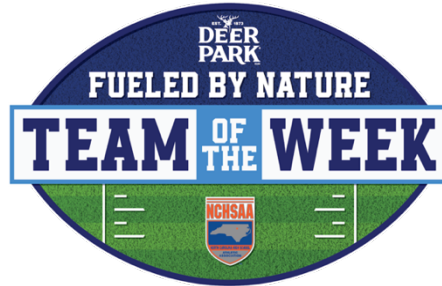
# NCHSAA MEDIA UPDATES

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 6, 2023

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### Deer Park Team of the Week Contest Culminates with Four Overall Winners for 2022



The *Deer Park Fueled by Nature Team of the Week* Contest, in partnership with the North Carolina High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA), has come to a close with 'Teams of the Year' selected in each of the Association's four classifications. This year's overall winners were West Columbus, East Duplin, Northern Nash, and New Bern.

Throughout the football season, one team per classification was designated as The *Deer Park Fueled by Nature Team of the Week*. Each team was spotlighted via NCHSAA social media. Following the football season, a public voting campaign through an online platform was conducted to determine the winning school for Team of the Year honors in each classification.

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### 1A Team of the Year | West Columbus High School

The Vikings of West Columbus High School were named the 2022 1A Deer Park Team of the Year after completing their best season in over 20 years. The Vikings went on to win 9 games, including making it to the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of the playoffs. They were lead on offense by Senior RB Cameron Eady who had 125 carries for 1,288 yards and 18 rushing touchdowns on the season. Eady also impactful on the defense side of the ball adding 62 tackles during the season. Junior QB Unique Kelly also had an impactful year leading the Vikings in passing going 48-86 for 845 yards and 10 touchdowns. Kelly got involved in the rushing game also carrying the ball 77 times for 550 yards and 6 touchdowns.

The defense was led by a handful of players that recorded over 90 tackles on the season. These players include Sophomore Ryder Haynes, Junior DJ Bryant, Senior Nashawn Corbett, and leading tackler with 153 tackles Senior Xander Axelberg. Junior Jaylen Bellamy lead the team with 4 interceptions on the season. The Vikings look to carry their success into the 2023 season with many underclassmen returning to the field.

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### 2A Team of the Year | East Duplin High School

East Duplin High School completed their 2022 Football season with a 24-21 win over Reidsville High School for the 2A State Championship. The state title was the first for East Duplin Football. The Panthers of East Duplin were lead on offense by a pair of senior running backs Nizaya Hall (109 carries for 985 yards and 12 touchdowns) and Avery Gaby (257 carries for 2,195 yards and 41 touchdowns). Under Center for the Panthers all season, Zack Brown leads the team in passing going 55-94 for 1,166 yards and 19 touchdowns.

The Panther's defense was solid all season only giving up 15.8 points per game. Junior Elam Moore (101), Senior Brecken Bowles (123), Senior Jackson Gause and Senior Kade Kennedy (150) all recorded over 100 tackles on the season. Senior Duante Hall and his younger brother Sophomore Jordan lead the team with 7 and 5 interceptions respectively.

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### 3A Team of the Year | Northern Nash High School

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The Knights of Northern Nash had an outstanding season, making it to the 3A State Championship game against East Lincoln High School. The Knights went 15-1 on the season and dominated teams throughout the year, winning games by an average of 28 points per game. The Knights were lead on offense by their outstanding Senior Quarterback Keno Jones. Jones went 176-283 for 2,884 passing yards and 39 touchdowns in the air. He was also dominate on the ground rushing 140 times for 857 yards and 15 touchdowns. All together Jones accounted for 3,741 yards and 49 touchdowns.

Jones' top receiving threat was Junior wideout Randell King who had 48 receptions for 1,144 yards and 18 touchdowns. The top rusher for the Knights was Junior Dywhaun Mitchell who rushed 162 times for 961 yards and 10 touchdowns. On defense Northern Nash was led by Senior Linebacker Carson Jenkins who accounted for 216 tackles, 6.5 sacks and 3 fumble recoveries. The Knights appear to be strong again next season with some young talent returning to the field.

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#### **4A Team of the Year | New Bern High School**

New Bern High School capped of an amazing season by winning the 2022 4A State Football Championship over Grimsley High School. The Bears of New Bern defeated Grimsley 40-28 in an outstanding 4A State Championship game. The Bears won the State Championship Game without attempting a pass in the contest, becoming the first team to accomplish that feat since the 2017 1AA Champions from Tarboro.

New Bern was lead on the ground all year by a 3 headed monster. Senior Arone Herring, Junior Damaree Tucker, and Senior Jayden Wallace combined to account for 4,710 rushing yards and 64 touchdowns. Individually, Herring carried 183 times for 2,141 yards and 31 touchdowns, Tucker rushed 140 carries for 1309 yards and 18 touchdowns, while Wallace ran 143 times for 1260 yards and 15 touchdowns this year. Superstar Senior KJ Sampson led the Bears defense with 96 tackles and 18 sacks on the season. The Bear defense held opponents to just 12 points per game and forced 27 turnovers.

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*Celebrating its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year, Deer Park® Brand 100% Natural Spring Water is sourced from natural springs that span across and around the Eastern Seaboard. Deer Park has hydrogeologists that study and monitor water flows, track precipitation levels, and even study the areas' biodiversity. All of this is to help ensure the springs and surrounding areas are sustainably managed, and to get the highest quality water delivered fresh for you.*