

Sharrow named president of new NCC

Northern Carolina Conference to start in the fall

BY LOGAN ULRICH
SPORTS EDITOR

Southern Vance athletic director Joe Sharrow will be the president of the reorganized Northern Carolina Conference starting in the fall.

Sharrow, who's worked at Southern Vance for five years, was elected as president on May 8 as the culmination of a

year's worth of work in creating the new conference.

"I think that it's more of a reflection on Southern Vance than it is on me," Sharrow said. "People look at Southern Vance athletics and see the good things that are happening here."

As president, Sharrow will communicate results and

standings with the North Carolina High School Athletic Association, as well as mediate disputes, organize meetings and set schedules. He'll also be responsible for integrating the four new schools joining the conference — Northern Vance, J.F. Webb, Louisburg and Granville Central.

"I know the athletic director at all four of those schools, we've scheduled them in non-conference like crazy, so the fact that they're joining our conference is a natural fit," Sharrow said. "They're natural rivals with a lot of schools in our conference, and we have a good working relationships."

Current members Southern Vance, Bunn, South Granville, Warren County and

Roanoke Rapids will form the rest of the nine-team conference. Departing are Franklinton, Durham School of the Arts and the North Carolina School of Science and Math, giving the conference a decidedly more local flavor.

While the conference will be classified as a 2A, both Louisburg and Granville Central will compete as 1A

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Oxford Prep golf takes big strides in 2017

BY RICK KENNER
SPECIAL TO THE DISPATCH

On Wednesday, April 26, the Oxford Preparatory School boys' golf team concluded its stint in the Tar Roanoke Athletic Conference with a conference tournament championship to go with its regular season title. The team has achieved both honors for the last two years, the only two years of the program's existence.

In addition, three of the six total TRAC all-conference player positions went to Oxford Prep golfers. Senior Noah Greenway, sophomore Jacob Bliss and sophomore Adam Sizemore earned the honor, with freshman Wesley Aitken just missing it by placing seventh.

Still riding high from their accomplishment, the Griffin golfers consisting of Greenway, Bliss, Sizemore, Aitken and junior Christian Furr rolled in to Washington, North Carolina for the 1A East Regional Competition on Monday, May 1. After a disappointing third-place finish last year and just making it through to the NCHSAA State Tournament, the team was looking to make an improvement on their showing. They did just that, taking the championship as a team and advancing once again to the 1A Men's State Championship — this time as Conference and 1A East Champions.

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Spartans advance to title game on PKs



PHOTO BY LOGAN ULRICH/DISPATCH STAFF

Junior Bonnie Evans (18) races to embrace her teammates and coach after scoring the winning penalty kick. Kerr-Vance defeated Oakwood 2-2 (3-2) to advance to the state title game.

KVA downs Oakwood Academy in semifinals

BY LOGAN ULRICH
SPORTS EDITOR

At first it looked like Kerr-Vance Academy was sick of overtime.

After each of its past two girls' soccer playoff games had gone to extra time, the Spartans made it look easy, scoring two goals in the first half of their state semifinal game against Oakwood Academy (14-5, 7-3).

"2-0 is one of the most

dangerous scores," Kerr-Vance head coach Razvan Tegean said. "It gives you a little bit too much confidence that the game is over, but you're one step away, one goal away from bringing the other team back in the game."

But a team as good as the Eagles wasn't going to let its season end in the semifinals that way. Oakwood stormed back to tie the game at 2-2

before falling in penalty kicks, 3-2.

It was a tale of two halves. Less than ten minutes into the game, Kerr-Vance (18-3, 7-1) struck. Off of a rebound from a corner kick, senior Caroline Hoyle played a graceful, bending cross that freshman Lorena Negron beat the keeper to for the score.

Kerr-Vance had a multitude of other opportunities

in the first half, all of them isolated against the keeper. In the 18th minute, the Spartans capitalized, with junior striker Nicole Dunkley playing a pass through a defender's legs and finishing into the corner.

Dunkley was a terror in the first half. Seconds before her goal, she had slipped behind the defense for

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Back to Boston: James, Celtics meet again in postseason

Superstar has faced Boston 6 times in playoffs

BY TOM WITHERS
ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDEPENDENCE, Ohio — LeBron James is a meticulous dresser on and off the court, so his fashion choice on Tuesday was no accident.

He had worn the sleeveless T-shirt before in practice, but the black cutoff with the picture of a gold-and-green leprechaun throwing a punch had

deeper meaning this time: The Celtics are next.

James will renew his personal rivalry with the NBA's most storied franchise on Wednesday as the Cavaliers, who have been waiting for an opponent since May 7, open the Eastern Conference finals in Boston. This will be the sixth time that James has faced the Celtics in the postseason, and his

history with them has run from the great to the forgettable.

So while the T-shirt was for his alma mater, Akron's St. Vincent-St. Mary High School, it was also a nod to the Celtics, the team James has played in the postseason more than any other.

And it was a not-so-subtle jab. Remember, this is the same guy who came home from California last June wearing an "Ultimate Warrior" T-shirt

after the Cavaliers shocked Golden State to end Cleveland's half-century title drought.

"They're a worthy opponent," said a rather gruff James, who didn't have much to say about the Celtics or anything else after the Cavs concluded their final practice during a lengthy layoff. "We have to game plan every game. We have to game plan for what

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KVA pitches its way to title game

BY LOGAN ULRICH
SPORTS EDITOR

Kerr-Vance baseball prevailed in an old-fashioned pitching duel, scoring twice in the third inning to give it just enough to advance past Wayne Country Day school into the state championship game.

"It was pretty much a total team effort," head coach Todd Wilkerson said. "We had some base running that helped us score, we had some hits. It was a total team effort really to get the job done."

Facing a top pitcher, Wilkerson knew the Spartans' opportunities to score would be limited. So when runners reached first and third, he had the perfect play drawn up. It drew a balk for one run, and in the same inning junior Wil Short hit a ball to center field to score freshman Colby Wilkerson.

"Sometimes you've got to do those little things to maybe score a run when you're facing a pitcher like that," Wilkerson said.

With his team on the board, it was up to senior Jabe Montgomery to safeguard the Spartans' lead. Fresh off of a perfect game on Friday, Montgomery kept up the hot pitching with 14 strikeouts out of 23 batters he faced.

"I just had that feeling,"



Several players from the Kerr-Vance baseball team celebrate as the girl's soccer team joins them in the state title game. Both teams won on Tuesday in the semifinals, with the Spartans beating Wayne Country Day School by a score of 2-0.

PHOTO BY LOGAN ULRICH/DISPATCH STAFF

he said. "I could throw the ball and put it right where I wanted it."

Montgomery's one-hitter came at a cost, though. With 92 pitches, he's above

a new rule this season that mandates pitchers must have four days of rest if they throw more than 76 pitches.

"We're glad to be there," Wilkerson said. "Jabe can't

pitch ... but we're there. You got to get there before you can do anything else."

With the championship game currently scheduled for Friday, Montgomery has

done all he can do for his team to get them there.

All except hope and pray for two days of rain.

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Hurricanes, Stars get early jump on NHL goalie carousel

BY STEPHEN WHYNO
ASSOCIATED PRESS

When the Carolina Hurricanes traded a third-round pick to Chicago for the rights to Scott Darling, the NHL's goaltender carousel started spinning.

After Carolina signed Darling to a \$16.6 million, four-year deal, the Dallas Stars sent a fourth-round pick to Los Angeles for the rights to Ben Bishop and signed the 6-foot-7 former Lightning starter for \$29.5 million over six years. Carolina and Dallas were willing to give up picks to get the jump on what Hurricanes general manager Ron Francis called an interesting off-season to shop for a goalie.

"There's two different paths you can look at: One is certainly who's going to be available on July 1 and what it may take to get them in terms of years and in terms of salary, and then the other option is you're looking at who might be available in terms of teams not wanting to lose a

goaltender in expansion and willing to make a trade and what it costs you to get that player," Francis said. "When we looked at everything and studied things, we thought this was the best viable option for us."

It looks brilliant now ahead of a goalie shuffle that expected to happen over the next several weeks leading up to the Vegas Golden Knights' expansion draft June 21, the actual draft a few days later and the start of free agency July 1. The Golden Knights, Calgary Flames, Philadelphia Flyers and perhaps even the Winnipeg Jets and Colorado Avalanche are in the market, with Pittsburgh veteran Marc-Andre Fleury, Washington backup Philipp Grubauer and a handful of others in the mix to fill vacancies.

Fleury led the Penguins to the Eastern Conference final but could still be traded with Matt Murray entrenched as the goalie of the future, and his value has

never been higher. Fleury wields power with his no-movement clause that could let him choose his destination.

Grubauer said he has no choice where he goes, but as a restricted free agent he does have some control and could be headed to Vegas. The Golden Knights will get 48 hours to negotiate with any unrestricted or restricted free agents left unprotected for the expansion draft, and the 25-year-old German had a 2.05 goals-against average and .926 save percentage in 24 games this season and is widely considered ready to be a starter.

"He's an outstanding goalie," Capitals starter Braden Holtby said. "What I think I've seen from him the last year especially, his talent is NHL talent, but a lot of guys have that. His mental game, his mental prep — every game he was in he was never out of it mentally. He was always sharp and that shows."

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another one-on-one opportunity that forced Oakwood's keeper to make a brilliant save. Nine minutes before halftime, she again had a one-on-one opportunity, bending a shot away from the keeper, but low and off the left post.

"We work her to death," Tegean said. "She has a great left foot and she has some good skill. She can put herself in good situations to finish."

But in the second half, the Eagles' defense tightened up, and the scoring opportunities dried up for both teams. It was Oakwood that made the most of its limited opportunities.

Seconds into the half, freshman Abbi Adler took a rebound off a corner kick and lobbed it high and above Kerr-Vance's keeper from just outside the box. Then in the 73rd minute, Adler scored again off of a failed clearance in the box that she buried into the near corner.

Both overtimes and both sudden death periods passed, and it was left to the goalkeepers to decide the game. Starting in place of junior Holly Steg, sophomore Mary Richardson made three saves before junior Bonnie Evans buried the winning shot into the left side of the net.

"I can't do this every night," Tegean said, hunched on the ground among his jubilant players after the game. "I swear my heart is not going to make it."

It just has to last one more game.

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BOSTON

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they bring to the table. And we have to mentally focus on our challenges that we have every game."

No team in the East gets James' attention more quickly than the Celtics, who survived an exhausting, seven-game series against Washington to make their first conference final since 2012.

James is aiming for his seventh trip to the Finals — a streak shared only by Bill Russell and other members

of those famed Celtics teams in the '60s — and he'll have to go through Boston again to get there. The last time he lost before the Finals was in 2010 to the Celtics, who eliminated James in six games in the conference semifinals.

On the way to the locker room following that Game 6 loss, he yanked off his Cavs jersey for what many thought was the last time. Two months later, James took his talents to South Beach.

Two years later, he returned to Boston, scored 45 points in Game 6 of the confer-

ence finals and led the Miami Heat to the first of two straight titles.

Cavaliers coach Tyronn Lue, who was an assistant on Doc Rivers' staff for the Celtics in 2012, agreed that James' masterpiece was the turning point in his career.

"We thought we had a chance to win that series," Lue said. "LeBron came in and had 45 points, think he made six 3s and he was just determined that he wasn't going to let his team lose."

Not much has changed since and James, who has averaged 29 points, 8.8

rebounds and 5.8 assists in 29 career playoff games against Boston, is having the best statistical start in league post-season history.

He's the first player to score at least 275 points with 70 rebounds and 50 assists in his team's first eight games, he's scored 30 or more in six straight and, in a sweep of Toronto, he became the first player to score at least 35 in each win.

"He wants to go down as the greatest ever and he's focused on that every day," Cleveland forward Kyle Korver said. "It's amazing, the level of focus

and intensity he puts into his daily habits is something that I don't see people understand how hard it is to do."

The Cavaliers won three of four against the Celtics during the regular season. And while Cleveland was beaten out by Boston for the conference's top seed, James and his teammates served notice with a 114-91 dismantling of the Celtics on their parquet floor on April 5.

"It's two different teams," James said when asked if there was something to be gained from that victory. "We're a totally different team.

They're a totally different team at this point. I don't take nothing away."

James has reverence for the Celtics' history, their mystique and raucous fans. If anyone can appreciate Boston's consistent excellence, it's the three-time champion who has often glanced into the rafters in Boston to admire the retired jerseys and 17 championship banners overhead.

"I've looked up there and seen how cool it was, but I don't think I actually paused," he said. "I haven't paused in my career yet — at all."

GOLF

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The team competed against all 1A team and individual qualifiers at Whispering Pines Country Club in Whispering Pines, NC on May 8-9. The Griffin golfers improved their performance over last year's tournament by finishing tied for 9th,

a two-place jump, and improved their overall stroke count by seven.

Greenway finished his high school career tied for 45th as an individual with a two day total of 177. He's the team's only senior, leaving rising junior Bliss, who led the team in individual scoring at the state and regional competitions, to carry the load next year. Also returning next year are Furr, Sizemore, rising juniors Capers Pendergrass, and Tanner Seay, and Aitken.

SHARROW

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schools and in the 1A playoffs during the postseason. The financial boost from shorter travel times and being closer to other schools, along with not having to worry about

finding other 1A football opponents, outweighed any potential competitive disadvantages.

Sharrow is joined by vice president Erica Wammock, the athletic director at Louisa, and treasurer Wanda Thompson, the athletic director at Warren County.

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