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Cape Fear wins major NCHSAA award

by EARL VAUGHAN JR.

Cape Fear High School athletic director Matt McLean isn't the type who struggles to find words when putting sentences together.

But the news that Cape Fear won the Exemplary School Award from the N.C. High School Athletic Association left him grasping for the accurate superlatives to put the honor in perspective.

"It's probably the highest honor professionally I've ever been a part of," said McLean of the award. It was presented to Cape Fear at the annual meeting of the NCHSAA last Thursday at the Dean E. Smith Center in Chapel Hill.

It was the day's second major award for Cape Fear. Also honored was Colt boys and girls golf coach Todd Edge, who was the Region 4 winner of the Eight Who Make A Difference Award.

That honor is presented to one school representative from each of the NCHSAA's eight geographic districts. The award is based on exemplary sportsmanship, dedication and commitment to athletics.

What makes the Exemplary School Award presented to Cape Fear unique is it's not just from the NCHSAA. It is a cooperative effort between three of the state's major high school athletic organizations, the NCHSAA, the N.C. Coaches Association and the N.C. Athletic Directors Association.

Cape Fear receives a \$1,000 cash prize and a banner to display at the school.

Those are the tangible benefits of the prize, but what the title means goes far beyond that in McLean's mind.

"To be called the best by the three organizations that support your mission of educating kids through athletics is a big honor," McLean said.

He noted Cape Fear is coming up on the 50th anniversary of the opening of the school and there have been highs and lows along the way.

The names that have been associated with Cape Fear athletics over the years have been numerous. McLean clicked off a few, like David Pugh, the first

athletic director, and track coach Rita Wiggs, along with Leon Brock, Doris Howard, Fred McDaniel, Mark Heil, Jim Hall, Ronnie Luck and Maria Nessen.

When McLean interviewed for the job at Cape Fear, he talked about making the athletic program reach the same heights as other programs in the school, like the marching band and the fine arts program.

"We have talented kids," he said. "We have hardworking coaches. We have parents and community members that support our school."

"They value the lessons that kids learn through education-based athletics. They value the work our coaches do. Our coaches work incredibly hard. Almost all of our varsity head coaches have completed NCHSAA accreditation and have their scholastic coach certificates. Folks are willing to do the work, and they are being rewarded for that hard work."

McLean added that Edge is an example of the kind of committed coaches Cape Fear has on its staff. "He communicates well with players and parents," McLean said. "He's a problem solver, somebody who has coached multiple sports and coached boys and girls exceptionally well."

In addition to coaching boys and girls golf, Edge oversees the girls' weightlifting program at Cape Fear.

He even does the little things, McLean said. The morning before he went to the Cumberland County Schools central office to be honored locally for winning the Eight Who Make A Difference Award, Edge swept the gym floor while dressed in his suit and tie for the ceremony. "He'll do the extra little thing to improve his teams," McLean said. "Incredibly professional. He's up there on the Mount Rushmore of coaches at Cape Fear, and in Cumberland County as far as I'm concerned."

"If he could coach 20 teams, I would love it." The athletes at Cape Fear clearly appreciate



Chris Matthews



Lauren Adams

the contributions Edge and his fellow coaches make to the school.

Chris Matthews, who played football and wrestled for Cape Fear, said the award lets people know how well-organized and well-staffed the Cape Fear athletic program is. "It speaks volumes for everybody, baseball, softball, football, basketball, volleyball, all the teams at Cape Fear," he said. "It's a major honor and accomplishment, and it definitely puts Cape Fear on the map."

Matthews said the coaches at Cape Fear know their subjects and get players to do what they ask, not just to do it because someone is telling them to. "It's for a greater goal than personal gain," he said. "It's for the gain of an entire organization. That speaks volumes to how good they are. They do a superb job of stating what needs to be done and getting players to do it."

Lauren Adams, who plays volleyball and softball for the Colts, said the award shows how hard both the players and coaches at the school work and how the coaches care for the players on and off the field.

"The coaches for these sports are very encouraging and uplifting," she said. "They are very serious. They make sure we get all of our stuff done on the field and in the classroom. It improves us as players as well."

In a press release on the award, NCHSAA commissioner Que Tucker said Cape Fear was a truly deserving recipient of the honor and had demonstrated a commitment to education and excellence second to none among its peers in North Carolina.

"Athletic director Matt McLean and his staff are truly leading the way in student engagement and achievement," Tucker said. "We are very proud of their hard work and dedication to education-based athletics and the NCHSAA."



Cape Fear golf coach Todd Edge

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Updates to high school athletics rules

by EARL VAUGHAN JR.

There's no such a thing as a routine meeting of the N.C. High School Athletic Association's Board of Directors. Last Wednesday's spring session was no exception.

Here's a look at what happened, including a few editorial comments from me about possible results.

One of the things that drew the sharpest and quickest response was a decision to require all regular-season soccer matches next year to be played to a winner. Most schools let regular-season matches end in ties.

Some soccer coaches expressed immediate outrage on social media, but Terry Sanford's Karl Molnar wasn't among them. Molnar said schools in Cumberland County have previously experimented with breaking regular-season ties and added it didn't have a major impact the year it was tried.

"It obviously gives you a better outcome because it gets rid of potential ties in the record," he said. "Aside from a little bit later ball game, it didn't affect it much."

Molnar did add that conferences where travel is an issue might not be as happy with a regular-season game going into overtime and running late.

The board again tweaked the controversial playoff format that uses MaxPrep rankings to determine seeds, clarifying language that says no team can leap frog one that it finished behind in the regular season because of some problem with the MaxPreps rankings.

They also voted to increase the number of teams qualifying in some classifications.

My only comment here is I've been covering the board and playoff formulas for over 40 years and I've yet to see one that made everybody happy. It's impossible to fix this to everyone's satisfaction.

Two hot issues for the board, seven-on-seven competition in the summer for football and the plan to allow home-school students to play on public school teams, will be aired out by special committees this summer.



Both of these issues are critical and need to have clear rules governing them.

Seven-on-seven competition needs to be governed for safety reasons and also to prevent possible negative influences like those associated with Amateur Athletic Union basketball. The home-school issue has a lot of potential for abuse if clear rules aren't established dealing with

residency and which school or schools a home-schooler would be allowed to attend.

It looks like Fayetteville and Greenville will continue to share the Eastern Regional basketball tournament for at least another year, according to East Bladen's Patty Evers, who represents Region IV on the board of directors. But there are problems finding a site in the west, and Evers said the board is possibly looking to move to high school gyms there.

Cost is a major issue as well unless the NCHSAA can find some additional outside funding.

Here are some other items that the board took action on last week.

- The contract of NCHSAA commissioner Que Tucker was extended for two years.
- Errol Daniels was approved as the regional supervisor of basketball officials for the Southeastern Athletic Officials Association. He replaces Brad Allen, who had to step down because of his responsibilities as a full-time official for the National Football League.
- The NCHSAA staff will use video to invoke sanctions and ejections not reported by game officials. Video must be submitted for review within two business days of the contest.
- Acceptance of money or any forbidden award will cause an athlete to lose eligibility in all sports for 365 days.
- For Saturday playoff games, if teams can't mutually agree on a starting time the home team can chose a time between 1-7 p.m., 1-6 p.m. if the visiting team is more than 100 miles away.
- Increased membership dues to \$1 per pupil, the first dues increase in 22 years.

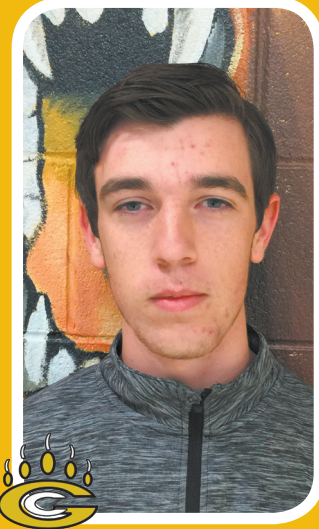


SCHOLAR ATHLETES OF THE WEEK



Lorraine Ross
Douglas Byrd • Basketball/ Soccer • Junior



Ross has a grade point average of 3.79. She is in the Academy of Finance, the National Honor Society, the ROTC color guard and drill team and is a mentor for the Student-to-Student program.



Brandon Bagley
Gray's Creek • Baseball • Junior

As a member of the Bears' baseball team, which advanced to the finals of the Patriot Athletic Conference tournament recently, Bagley has a grade point average of 3.79.

Rocket Fizz Soda Pop and Candy Shop congratulates these amazing scholar athletes of the week and invites them to the Rocket Fizz Store at 1916 Skibo Rd. to receive a **FREE** gift recognizing their achievement!
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NCHS Athletic Assn	NCHSAA	NCHSAA
ALL on WCLN 105.7 FM Airtime 6:45 PM		


MONDAY

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With Trey Edge & Bill Boyette

6-8pm

AM640 WFNC
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April Athlete of the Month (Baseball): Andrew Jayne, Terry Sanford HS