

**Sports Review**

by  
**Gerry Gardner**

As this is the last issue of the paper, the column is dedicated to as review of the Blackbird' record-breaking '53-'54 year in sports.

The football team won 7 of 10 games and stood third in the conference standings. Fullback John Warren, end Smokey Lancaster and quarterback Bobby Patterson were consistently good performers.

**Basketball Highlights of Year**  
Basketball proved the highlight of the year as the Blackbirds won the Eastern AAA title and boasted a season of 16-2. Yet in compiling this marvelous record the Birds had definitely burned themselves out. In the state tournament they were stopped cold, beaten by Raleigh and Greensboro. The Blackbirds were led by Smokey Lancaster and Dave Barnes. Both were named all-eastern and Smokey was named all-state.

Baseball had a poor standing, as usual, but the Birds played well and finished second in conference standings. The excellent pitching of Harold Gilbert and the hard hitting of catcher Fred Harris sparked the Blackbird nine.

**Tennis Team Undefeated**  
Dwight Hinton and George Burton sparked a razzle-dazzle tennis team through an unbeaten season. Their most spectacular victory was in stopping Goldsboro, 7-2. It was the first loss in 66 matches for the Quakes and the first victory over them by Rocky Mount since 1947.

Look above. It will be hard to find a team who can match these accomplishments—Not below third in conference standings in any sport—won Eastern AAA basketball title, champions of conference!—unbeaten in tennis! This was simply our year. Who knows? Maybe next year, too!

**High-Flying Blackbirds**



Consistency, performance and good sportsmanship proved valuable to Fred Harris, Smokey Lancaster, and Johnny Warren. These three athletes were selected as the most valuable players of 1954 by The Blackbird sports editors.

Fred Harris boasted the highest hitting average on the baseball team and saw action in every contest.

Smokey Lancaster, who starred in three sports, was most outstanding in basketball. He was the team's highest scorer and was chosen all-eastern and all-state.

Johnny Warren was chosen for his splendid effort in football. He was all-eastern and the leading ground gainer.

**Tennis Team Tops, State HS Champs After Six Years**

After defeating their own teammates in the finals, Dwight Hinton and "Smokey" Joe Lancaster rolled to victory in the state tennis tournament to become North Carolina's high school doubles champions.

Lancaster and Hinton wasted no time in raking up victories in High Point, Charlotte and Durham. The Lancaster-Hinton duo went on to whip the Quakes of Goldsboro in the semi-finals, 6-2, 6-0.

In the first three rounds, Fred Ruben and Bobby Wimberly took wins over Raleigh, Goldsboro and Kinston. In the semi-finals Meyers Park of Charlotte, the team that upset a top-rated Whirlie team, clashed with the Birds. Charlotte's finest came out second best as Ruben and Wimberly licked them, 6-2, 6-3.

**Team Mate Against Team Mate**  
It was team mate against team mate in the final round of the tournament. Ruben and Wimberly won the first set, 7-5. The pace was gruelling as one Blackbird pair met another. The second set saw Lancaster and Hinton as winners in a close but decisive contest. The last leg of the tournament had come.

**Lancaster, Hinton Win**  
Both teams wanted to win, both wanted to bring the doubles crown home, and both teams were good. They were experts in their field and the finest high school tennis players in the state. Dwight and "Smokey" were the winners when the final return was placed.

For the first time since 1943, Rocky Mount had won a tennis championship. The victories on the State College courts were a fitting end for an undefeated season.

George Burton was the only local entry in the singles. Although George put up a fine fight, he was eliminated from tourney play when a Southern Pines boy beat him, 7-5, 6-0. It is likely that the Blackbirds would have copped singles honor too, but contestants were not allowed to enter in both the singles and doubles divisions.

**Birds Defeat Caps, Plac Second**

By overcoming the Raleigh Caps 6-2 and losing to Goldsboro by a score of 9-7, the Birds moved into second place with only one game left in the season.

In the Raleigh game, Bobby Patterson started on the mound for the Birds but was relieved by Harold Gilbert in the bottom of the eighth inning, at which time the score was tied 2-2. After taking over he retired the side, which set the scene for Rocky Mount's big inning—the ninth.

In the ninth inning Bobby Patterson led off with a walk, Deans singled, Harold Gilbert sacrificed them to second and third, and Highsmith then flied out to left field scoring Patterson. Gordon Waters then walked and scored, along with Deans, on a deep fly to centerfield and a single by Bunny Bell.

**Caps Threaten**  
In their half of the ninth the Caps threatened but couldn't score and the game ended with Raleigh holding the short end of a 6-2 score.

The winning pitcher was Gilbert for Rocky Mount. The Birds

top hitter was Bell, who got 3 for 4.

Meeting Goldsboro in their last game of the year, the Birds lost 9-7 in a battle of errors and blunders. Pitching for Rocky Mount was Bobby Patterson 5-2 in their game at Goldsboro earlier in the season.

**Best Mark In Years**  
All in all, however, it was a successful season. The Blackbirds made their best marks in five years as they finished in second place in conference play.

With quite a few lettermen still eligible for one or two more years of playing, the baseball team looks a cinch to even better this year's highly successful season. Coach Cleetwood feels that all the boys played especially good ball and looks forward to good playing next year.

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