

Sports

The fabric of Bertie County since 1832

# Gracen

From B1  
25,000 students.

For someone who has grown up in small town and whom has attended a small school her whole life, the thought of becoming a Pirate was a daunting proposition.

"East Carolina was never really an option because I don't play travel ball. I played travel ball when I was younger, but the only time I play now is in-season," she said.

"I stopped thinking about ECU at all when I stepped to the side and looked at the size," Rogers added. "I am not used to a big school ...ECU has twenty-some thousand, and Barton has a little more than a thousand (students). The thought of ECU just scared me."

So, Rogers turned her attention and focus to Barton.

Rogers sent updated stats and other information to Bailey with help from her (now) former head coach at LA, Kristin White.

Bailey sent her a list of his prospect camps, and Rogers attended one of them in October.

Shortly thereafter, a face-to-face meeting with Rogers and her parents led to Bailey offering her a scholarship to play for the Bulldogs.

"He said he could really tell that I know the game," she said. "He said I have speed, and said he wanted speed

on his team." Rogers still can't believe she is getting this opportunity.

"I was very surprised at how quickly this all came together," Rogers said. "I still haven't really taken it in yet."

Rogers started playing softball at 5 years old and loved the sport ever since, despite adding volleyball and basketball to her athletic pursuits in middle school - first at Terra Ceia Christian School (fifth through seventh grades) and at Lawrence (eighth grade-present).

Rogers considers softball her best sport.

"Softball has been a part of my life since I was 5 or 6 years old; I used to play it when I was little and I loved it," she said. "Ever since I was young, it became a way of life because I got so used to playing it all the time that it became natural to me."

"I don't even know what I would do without it," she added. "I don't know how I would even live without it. It's been my favorite sport, for sure."

Rogers has started on the varsity team at LA since eighth grade, has earned numerous All-TIC awards and has been a key cog in the Warriors' recent string of TIC championships and state tournament appearances. This past season, she helped Lawrence reach the North Carolina Independent Schools Class 1A state championship series against Halifax Acade-

my before the team finished second.

While she has enjoyed both positions, Rogers likes being behind the plate because, "I can see everything going on on every single play."

"Being in the outfield, you have other people you have to rely on to communicate with. As a catcher, you have to communicate with your pitcher but primarily it's all you because you're calling pitches and have a lot more control of what can happen," she said.

She credits her coaches and teammates for their support and help throughout the years.

"The people I've played with and coached me have been very supportive of me, especially since I decided to play college ball," Rogers said. "They have always tried to make me a better player and better person, and they have. And, I have a very strong friendship with all of my teammates and I think that comes from being at a small school."

Rogers, a consistent honor roll student at Lawrence, plans to study nursing at Barton.

## Event

From B1

up) for both days of the tournament.

Full concessions will be available, and Tournament T-shirts will be sold for \$12 each.



Bertie defenders XXX (No. 3) and XXX (No. 10) close in against a Northeastern runner.

# Bertie football's season ends at Northeastern

BY THADD WHITE  
Bertie Ledger-Advance

ELIZABETH CITY – Bertie High School's football season came to a close Friday night.

The Falcons, who finished 4-8, dropped a 55-0 decision to Northeastern High School in the opening round of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association 2A playoffs.

While the Falcons suffered a first round defeat for the second consecutive year, Bertie football boss Grantley Mizelle has guided his team to the first consecutive playoff appearances since 2007 and 2008 when current BHS Assistant Principal Tony Hoggard was directing the Falcons' football fortunes.

Bertie started the season with a change dictated by circumstances. The Falcons' returning quarterback moved out of the district, leaving the team in the hands of sophomore quarterback Isaiah Williams.

A victory over Martin County neighbor Riverside High School started the season, but overall the Falcons struggled to gain their feet in the non-conference slate, finishing 2-4.

An upset over highly regarded First Flight and a win the following week over Pasquotank gave the Falcons a 4-4 overall

mark and a tie atop the league standings.

A loss the following week to perennial league heavyweight Northeastern was followed by an injury-riddled close to the campaign that saw the Falcons still nearly end the 10-year drought against arch rival Hertford County.

Despite the struggles of rebuilding a program that has two state titles – 1995 and 2000 – to its credit, Mizelle was able to lead his team back to the postseason for the second time in his two years at the helm.

While the Falcons were back in the playoffs, their foe was the state's top-ranked team in Northeastern High – and the Eagles looked like it Friday night.

On the first drive from scrimmage, Northeastern went 60 yards on three plays for the night's first score.

J.R. Walker broke free for a 26-yard scoring run with 10:35 to play in the first quarter. The conversion by Parker Betts was good, and the Eagles led 7-0.

Following a Bertie punt, the Eagles set up at their own 37-yard line, and fumbled on the first play from scrimmage, but an alert Damar Sutton got the ball back for Northeastern. Five plays later the Eagles struck paydirt again when Walker scampered 12 yards for a score. The two-point conversion was successful, and Northeastern led 15-0 with 7:18 to

play in the first quarter.

Bertie picked up seven yards on runs by senior Lacurtis Askew as the second drive for the visitors began. Unfortunately for the Falcons, Askew was stopped on third down and the Falcons were forced to punt.

As the Eagles appeared ready to score again, the Falcon defense stopped them on fourth down at the Bertie 4-yard line.

The Falcons couldn't move field position, however, and punted the ball away providing excellent field position for the host team.

Northeastern took advantage, scoring on its third play from scrimmage when Traveon Freshwater carried the football in from 19 yards out. Freshwater added the conversion, and Northeastern led 23-0 with 11:15 remaining in the second quarter.

The Eagles scored three more times in the first half – on a run by Holden Hodge, an interception return by Wade Staten and a 50-yard touchdown pass as time expired in the second quarter. Northeastern led 43-0 at halftime.

The host team added two more scores in the final half of play to advance to the second round of the playoffs.

The Falcons finished their season and will say goodbye to just over a dozen seniors as they look to build on the successes of 2017.

## Fourth

From B1

ny Williams. Against UNI, Williams fought through screens, dove for loose balls, moved his feet more than his hands and found someone to box out every time a shot went up. If these two, along with the ultra athletic Seventh Woods, expend as much energy and focus on the defensive side of

the court as they do the offensive side, they will wreak havoc on opposing backcourts.

Should an opposing guard manage to get past their defender and make it into the paint, they are likely to find themselves amongst the trees. The Tar Heels frontcourt is long with six players over 6'8" on the roster.

I'm not suggesting that any of you fly to Vegas and put your child's

college tuition on North Carolina to win it all. Just don't be shocked if you read a column of mine in April titled "I Told You So."

David Friedman is a longtime sports writer and columnist. A Bertie High School graduate, he and his family currently reside in Wilmington. David can be reached via e-mail at fourthandlongcolumn@gmail.com.

## Baggett

From B1

takes on Ridgcroft at 7:15 p.m., followed by Northeast vs. Bethel at 8:45 p.m.

The final day (Saturday) features seven contests.

The schedule is as follows: JV boys con-

solation at 10 a.m.; varsity girls consolation at 11:15 p.m.; varsity boys consolation at 12:45 p.m.; JV girls championship at 2:15 p.m.; JV boys championship at 3:30 p.m.; varsity girls championship at 4:45 p.m. and varsity boys championship at 6:15 p.m.

After the tournament, the awards will be presented, including the scholarships given out in memory of Baggett.

Admission is \$5 for adults and \$3 for students.

Concessions will be served throughout the event.

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