

NCHSAA extends football season after Hurricane Helene

BY LANGSTON WERTZ JR.
lwertz@charlotteobserver.com

The N.C. high school football season will extend a week after Hurricane Helene caused severe damages to many schools in the western part of the state.

The N.C. High School Athletic Association announced the change Wednesday, which was approved by its board of directors. The playoffs will begin on Nov. 15 and end with state championships on Dec. 20-21.

Originally, the playoffs were set to start on Nov. 8 and conclude on Dec. 13-14.

In addition, the NCHSAA board approved pushing most playoffs for fall sports back and ap-



JONATHAN AGUALLO

The NC High School Athletic Association announced plans Wednesday of how it will handle fall sports playoffs after Hurricane Helene ravaged the western part of the state.

proved one additional contest for all sports with a season limit. But that additional game — which could be added to avoid an open

week at the end of the regular-season — must be approved by the NCHSAA.

That additional game cannot exceed daily or

weekly game limit rules. It must also exceed the season limit for both participating schools. Lastly, that additional game cannot be entered into MaxPreps and will not count towards postseason qualifying.

The NCHSAA also said that, effective immediately, a minimum of 72 hours must occur between football games, a move that could allow schools to make up some missed contests.

“Changes to the fall calendar are difficult as well as complex but necessary,” said NCHSAA President Dr. Stephen Gainey and NCHSAA Commissioner Que Tucker in a joint statement. “Keeping our student-athletes safe as we try to minimize risk of injury was central to any decisions made. We com-

mend the work of the NCHSAA staff in its research, the Board of Directors in making time to consider these changes and the willingness of our host partners to accommodate any changes and make their venues available.”

Other changes announced:

- The reporting deadline for boys’ soccer was pushed back a week to 11:59 p.m. on Nov. 6. The first round will be Nov. 7, followed by rounds on Nov. 9, Nov. 12, Nov. 14 and Nov. 16. The regionals will now be played Nov. 19 with state finals on Nov. 22-23.

- For girls’ golf, the minimum number of 9-hole scores require to qualify for regionals was revised from five to three.

- The girls’ tennis regionals reporting deadline was extended to 11:59 p.m. on Oct. 14. Originally, that deadline was 3 p.m. Regional play is scheduled for Oct. 18-19. State finals are scheduled for Oct. 25-26.

- The dual team tennis reporting deadline was moved from Oct. 10 to Oct. 17. The first round will begin Oct. 18 with state finals now on Nov. 9.

- The volleyball reporting deadline was moved back to 11:59 p.m. on Oct. 19, instead of Oct. 16. The first round will now begin Oct. 22, instead of the original Oct. 19 date.

The remaining rounds will play on a more condensed schedule: Oct. 24, second round; Oct. 26, third round; Oct. 29, fourth round; Oct. 31, regional round.

The state finals will be held Nov. 2 as originally scheduled.

- Cross-country reporting deadline for regional qualifying was moved back to 11:59 p.m. on Oct. 22. It was originally scheduled for Oct. 19. The regionals will be held Oct. 26 with state finals Nov. 2.

Langston Wertz Jr.:
704-358-5133,
@langstonwertzjr

NC police make arrest in shooting death of former Clemson WR Diondre Overton

BY CHAPEL FOWLER
cfowler@thestate.com

A month after former Clemson football player Diondre Overton was shot and killed in Greensboro, North Carolina, a man has been arrested and charged with murder.

The Guilford (N.C.) County Sheriff’s Office said in a news release late Tuesday that Jeremiah Diago Blanks, 20, has been arrested and charged with felony first-degree murder in the Sept. 7 shooting death of Overton in his hometown.

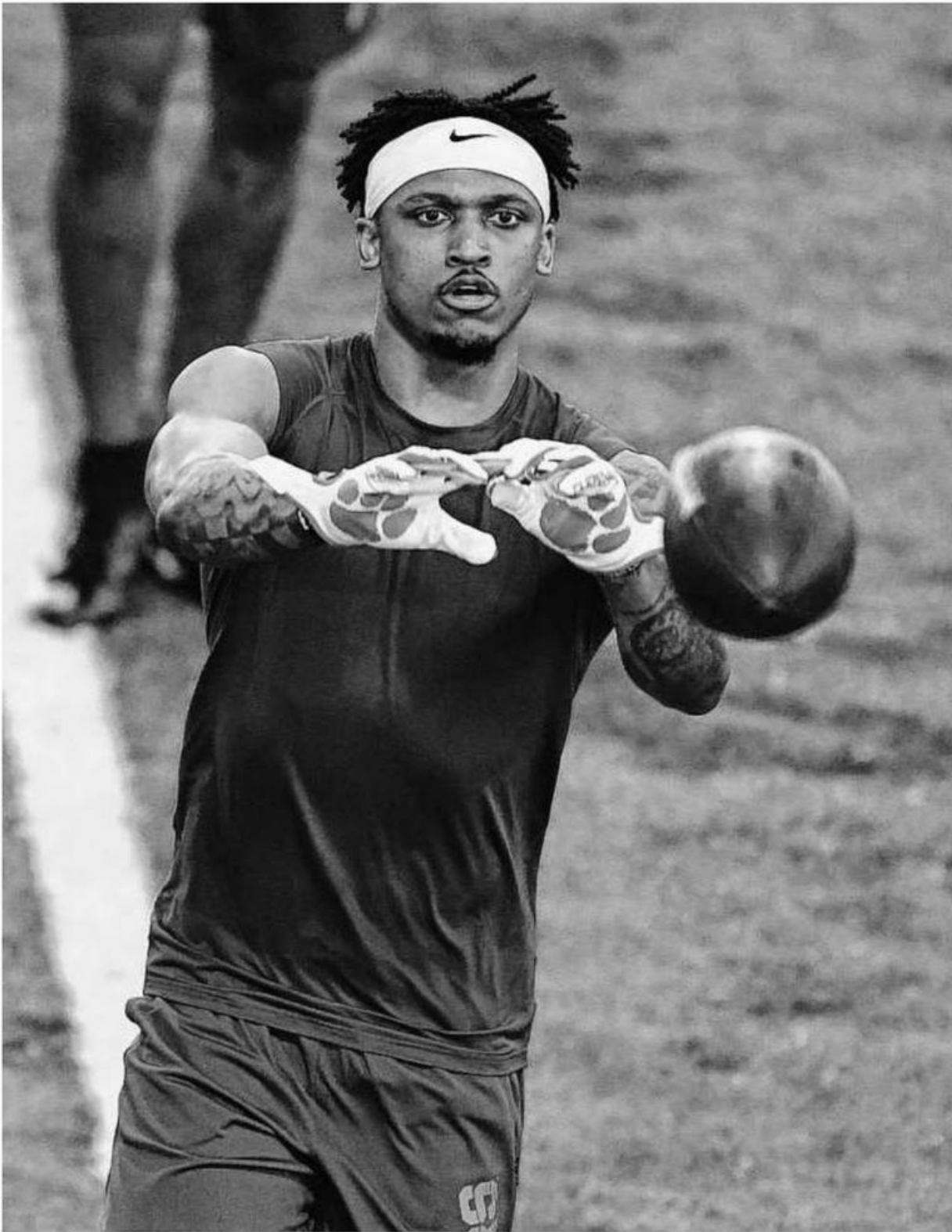
Detectives with the office’s Major Crimes Investigative Unit obtained a warrant for Blanks’ arrest before traveling to Michigan and making the arrest with the help of the U.S. Marshals Service, according to Guilford County Sheriff Danny H. Rogers.

Blanks is being held at the Oakland County Jail in Pontiac, Michigan, pending extradition to North Carolina, according to the news release.

The sheriff’s office noted that the investigation into Overton’s death remains ongoing.

Overton, 26, played for Clemson from 2016-19 and was part of the Tigers’ 2016 and 2018 national championship teams.

He had 52 career catches for 777 yards and seven touchdowns in 51 games (five starts) and also played professionally in the USFL.



BART BOATWRIGHT

Former Clemson wide receiver Diondre Overton (14)

He played for the USFL’s Philadelphia Stars in the 2022-23 seasons and was on the Memphis Showboats’ roster at the time of his death.

A native of Greensboro, Overton was a top 200 national recruit coming out of Page High School before he signed with Clemson. He graduated from the school with a sports communication degree in summer 2019.

MORE DETAILS ON DIONDRE OVERTON DEATH

Reports initially

emerged of Overton’s death early the morning of Saturday, Sept. 7, and the Clemson football team confirmed his death in a statement that day before a home game against App State.

Rogers, the Guilford County sheriff, said in an initial news release that around 2:30 a.m. Sept. 7 his deputies responded to a call “regarding a loud party and noise disturbance” at a residential address in Greensboro.

“As they made their way to the scene, deputies received updated informa-

tion indicating that a shooting had occurred,” Rogers said.

Upon arrival, deputies located the shooting victim and identified him as Overton.

“Despite immediate medical aid, Mr. Overton was pronounced deceased at the scene,” Rogers said.

Coach Dabo Swinney’s program honored Overton during its Sept. 7 home game against App State and invited his parents to the team’s next home game against N.C. State on Sept. 21. Swinney also attended and spoke at Overton’s funeral last month, as did a number of his former Clemson teammates.

Swinney described Overton’s death as “senseless.”

“He truly was just one of the sweetest spirits and kids that we’ve had come through here,” Swinney said Sept. 7. “And again, truly a great teammate. My heart hurts, and my prayers are with his family.”

SHERIFF’S OFFICE PROVIDES UPDATE

The Guilford County Sheriff’s Office held a brief news conference Wednesday morning in Greensboro to address the arrest with Overton’s parents in attendance.

“I hope to provide some closure and allow them to begin the healing process while continuing to seek justice for their son,” Rogers said of Overton’s family.

Sergeant Jason Wright from the office’s Major Crimes Investigative Unit said detectives obtained a warrant for Blanks’ arrest on Sunday, Oct. 6, traveled to Michigan on Monday, Oct. 7, and took Blanks into custody on Tuesday, Oct. 8.

The investigation indicates that Blanks’ city of residence was Detroit.

Wright said he couldn’t disclose any possible motive for the shooting since it’s an active investigation. Wright said at this point there is “no information to suggest” that Blanks and the victim, Overton, personally knew each other.

Wright also said the shooting occurred at a home in Greensboro (3205 Spring Mill Road) that was being used as an Airbnb rental. The person subleasing the house was renting it out as an Airbnb, he said, and the original owner of the house was not aware it was being used as an Airbnb.

The Guilford County Sheriff’s Office also encouraged people who may have seen the shooting to come forward and did not rule out more charges for Blanks or charges for other people in connection with Overton’s death.

“This event did occur at a party,” Wright said. “We believe there are several individuals who may have seen it happen. We encourage them to come forward.”

FROM PAGE 1B

NASCAR

spectators in the grandstands. Cars will be moving in opposite directions, and the entire course should be viewable from any seat — the only road course where that’s the case.

In addition to the much heavier braking zone established by the new Turn 7, there is now a much sharper apex in the final chicane on Turn 16.

Coming out of the traditional Turn 4, cars will need to slow down to make an even more difficult turn as they continue moving toward the start/

finish line. It’s the spot where Johnson and Martin Truex Jr. spun out during the final lap of the inaugural Roval race.

“It’s almost as if this is a brand-new course for these drivers to run in the playoffs,” Walter said. “That’s why you’re finding it so unsettling, it’s because they have no idea what to expect. We’ve even made some changes since the first simulation came out.

“But (the Turn 16 changes were) designed to be like in baseball: ‘Bottom of the ninth. Bases



MELISSA MELVIN-RODRIGUEZ | mrodriguez@charlotteobserver.com

Men work on new anchors for the placement of raised kerbs on the course for the upcoming Roval 400 this weekend at Charlotte Motor Speedway.

loaded. Two outs.”

A CONTINUED GOAL TO COMBINE THE BEST OF MOTORSPORTS

The Roval has consistently been a road course that provides an entertaining product.

Before the Roval added a chicane on its backstretch by Turn 10, Mario Andretti ran some laps on the road course that Speedway Motorsports was designing. The Formula 1 World Champion

was clear that he’s a purist when it comes to road courses, and that he is certainly not a fan of ones constructed over an infield.

Andretti agreed to make some laps and said he’d only talk about the course if he liked it. He strapped on a GoPro video camera and seemed to become more comfortable as he raced.

His takeaway?

Andretti could tell that cars would end up carry-

ing too much load and force as they headed into the traditional Turns 3 and 4 of the oval, and with the number of road-course turns that now lead into that corner, an addition of another chicane would allow the cars to slow down and potentially increase competition.

It’s been a similar idea now with the advent of these sharper curves in Turns 7 and 16.

Like a dramatic end to a baseball game with the bases loaded and two outs, this year’s Charlotte Roval could wind up concluding with two cars racing side-by-side for the win.

Fans should be able to see all of the action from their seats, or on the brand-new video board with more than five million pixels, and the additions of these tight turns on every lap will only heighten the competition in one of the most unique races in motorsports.

Shane Connuck:
@shane_connuck

SCORES, STATS & ODDS

FIND IT ALL ONLINE

Get the latest standings, stats and scores for local and national pro and college teams in the Sports Stats section of our Edition at charlotteobserver.com/edition or by scanning this QR code.



ON THE AIR

Events may be affected by late programming changes. Listings include those events broadcast via network channels and over the air.

» FRIDAY

AUSSIE RULES

AFL Women's Premiership Football

Brisbane Lions vs. Gold Coast Suns. **2:00 a.m. FS2**

AFL Women's Premiership Football

Fremantle Dockers vs. Carlton Blues. **4:00 a.m. FS2**

BASEBALL

MLB Baseball

New York Mets at Philadelphia Phillies. **4:00 p.m. FS1**

MLB Baseball

San Diego Padres at Los Angeles Dodgers. **8:00 p.m. FOX WIZY**

BASKETBALL

NBA Basketball

Philadelphia 76ers vs. Minnesota Timberwolves. **7:00 p.m. NBA**

NBA Basketball

Sacramento Kings at Golden State Warriors. **10:00 p.m. NBA**

FOOTBALL

College Football

Harvard at Cornell. **6:00 p.m.**

ESPN2 College Football

Memphis at South Florida. **7:00 p.m. ESPN**

College Football

Northwestern at Maryland. **8:00 p.m. FS1**

College Football

UNLV at Utah State. **9:00 p.m. CBSN**

College Football

Prairie View A&M at Arkansas-Pine Bluff. **9:15 p.m. ESPN2**

College Football

Utah at Arizona State. **10:30 p.m. ESPN**

GOLF

DP World Tour Golf

FedEx Open de France, Second Round. **7:30 a.m. GOLF**

PGA Tour Champions Golf

SAS Championship, First Round. **2:00 p.m. GOLF**

Golf

PGA Jr. League Championship, First Round. **3:00 p.m. ESPN2**

PGA Tour Golf

Black Desert Championship, Second Round. **5:00 p.m. GOLF**

LPGA Tour Golf

Buick LPGA Shanghai, Third Round. **11:00 p.m. GOLF**

HOCKEY

College Hockey

Teams TBA. **6:00 p.m. BIGTEN**

HORSE RACING

Horse Racing

America’s Day at the Races. **12:30 p.m. FS2**

RACKET SPORTS

PPA Tour Pickleball

PPA Las Vegas Mixed Doubles. **4:00 p.m. TENNIS**

SOCCER

UEFA Nations League Soccer

Bosnia vs. Germany. **2:30 p.m.**

FS2 Men's College Soccer

Clemson at Louisville. **8:00 p.m. ACC**

The Charlotte Observer

SPORTS

The latest sports news with recaps, commentary and analysis beyond the game. charlotteobserver.com/edition