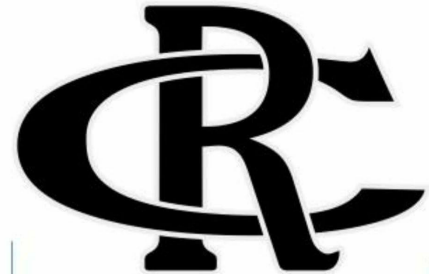


May 23, 2026

By Dennis Garcia
SportsTone.net

ASHEBORO - One of the most successful American Legion programs in the state will have a new look this season as veteran Randolph County Post 45 coach Ronnie Pugh resigned after 21 seasons.

But despite a new head coach, very little will change as Andrew Connor, after serving approximately 15 years as Pugh's assistant, takes over the reins.



With the success of the high school programs in Randolph County in which Post 45 draws from - Uwharrie Charter Academy, Randleman and Southwestern Randolph where Connor is an assistant coach - there wasn't a lot of time to get ready for the season as Randolph County was scheduled to open this past Sunday. But that game with Moore County was postponed because of the weather, delaying the start of the new season until Tuesday night at home against Mocksville.

"We haven't had the whole team there yet, bits and pieces," Connor said this weekend. "With playoffs, school stuff, everything happening, we haven't had everyone there yet. We've had decent chunks of a team."



Post 45 coach Andrew Connor.

Post 45, which defeated Chatham County and Mooresville in the Area III playoffs before falling to Union County in the semifinals last season, placed first in the Northern Division standings and finished 24-10.

This year, Post 45 will compete in the Northern Division of Area III along with Liberty Post 81, Aberdeen Post 82, Chatham County Post 305, Davidson County Post 8 (Hawgs), Hamlet Post 49, High Point-Thomasville Post 87 and Moore County Post 12.

"I feel very thankful for being Coach Pugh's assistant for like 70 years," Connor said. "I have never regretted going back and doing something over because I try and do it right the first time, but if I could go back, I would want to play for him because of the things I learned from coaching with him. He taught me things I was never aware of even when I was playing. The

mental part of the game. Honing in on your focus. As a player, I just enjoyed going out and playing. As a player, you're in a moment. As a coach, you have to look at things overall."

Connor said the first thing he told his team was to go out, work hard and have fun. .

"We are going to be very versatile, a lot of people can do a lot of different things," said Connor when asked to describe this year's team. "It looks like we have some speed and a lot of two-way guys. A lot of people can play all over the field."

SWR advanced to the East Regional championship series and those who will be playing for Post 45 include Brady Armfield, Lucas Connor and Grant Kirk.

Randleman, which has won or tied for its conference championship for 17 straight seasons, has a number of players on the Post 45 roster. Jake Riddle, Jackson Hill, Tate Andrews, Ashton Poe, Kyle Dillow and John Kirkpatrick have all agreed to play as have Wheatmore graduates Caleb Coggins (Guilford College) and Sean Jennison (Methodist).



Brady Armfield.



Jake Riddle.

UCA's Keaton Hill and Wilson Boswell, Asheboro High Schools' Price Kidd and Sam Gore, SWR graduate Jonah Campbell (Brevard), Asheboro Hybrid School's Landon Watson and Rockingham County's Hudson Deel are also on the roster.

"The hardest part is getting the paper work done and making sure all your stuff is turned in with the "I"s dotted and "T"s crossed," Connor said. "I am looking forward to playing because that means all the paper work is done."

Ryan Hill returns as an assistant coach and UCA's Grac Dalton, who missed most of the season because of an injury, will also be listed as an assistant coach. Former ER star Morgan Frazier will also help when he's available.

"It's going to be weird walking into that place without Coach Pugh," Connor said. "We reiterated to him that anytime he wants to put on his uniform he can join us."