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ASHEBORO - When Uwharrie Charter Academy and Perquimans take the field at Ting Stadium in Holly Springs this weekend, they will be representing the past five 1-A state champions in the state of North Carolina.

After UCA captured the 2019 state championship, the 2020 season was lost to Covid-19. Once play resumed, it was Perquimans which won the title in both 2021 and 2022. UCA then won in 2023 and 2024.

"It's coming down to the two teams that have won the past five state championships," said UCA coach Rob Shore, who led his team to the state championship in his first two years as coach with a chance for a third straight title. "I'm not sure what classification they will be in after this year, but both 1-A powerhouses will be battling."

Perquimans will be 2-A in the new realignment with UCA a 4-A team.

Perquimans' NCHSAA baseball success started early as it won the 1952 and 1954 state A titles when there were three classifications. They also won in 1963. and as mentioned, 2021 and 2022.



*Uwharrie Charter coach Rob Shore.*



*UCA senior Logun Wilkins.*

"Reading and researching and watching them, I got to see them Friday night, they are a lot like us," Shore said. "They play as a team. They were all about them. They didn't let the atmosphere or going to a Game 3 get to them. They went about and did their job. They are not going to quit."

Perquimans (25-6) is averaging 9.4 runs per game. They defeated Jones 14-2, Tarboro 10-0, East Bladen 10-9, Falls Lake 8-4 and Voyager Academy in the East Regional finals, winning Games 1 (5-4) and 3 (6-4).

This is the third straight year UCA will be heading to Ting Stadium in Holly Springs in order to play for a state championship. That should help.

"It's a big advantage because our guys know what to expect going to the same place three years in a row," Shore said.

"Going to the same venue for three years does have an advantage for us. I don't think we're going to be overwhelmed."

For Uwharrie Charter Academy, this year's journey to the state championship has been far different than the ones taken in 2023 and 2024. In 2023, UCA started 5-9 before winning 17 of their final 18 games of the season in winning the title. In 2024, UCA was 6-5 before winning 22 of their last 23 games to capture the state championship.

This year was different. Far different. There were no long winning streaks, no major momentum heading into the playoffs, no assurance that every time Brett Smith, Logun Wilkins or Jake Hunter took the mound it would result in a lopsided win. This year was far more difficult.

But when the Eagles punched their ticket for their third straight 1-A state championship series, which they did with a 12-1 win over Eastern Randolph in six innings last week to capture the West Regional series 2-0, maybe the coaching staff and the players enjoyed it even more than the first two times.

"We were on long winning streaks and we were playing well," said Shore. "It's been back and forth this year. Maybe that makes it a little bit sweeter."

Indeed it has as the fifth-seeded Eagles never enjoyed more than a two-game winning streak in the entire regular season. In finishing 12-11, the Eagles' first winning streak of more than two games came when they swept Southwestern Randolph in the final two-game series of the regular season and then rolled off six straight playoff victories.



*Senior Brett Smith.*



*Eagles junior Jake Hunter.*

"This is a little bigger," said Hunter, who along with Smith and Wilkins are called a three-headed monster on the mound by Shore. "The last couple of years we started out slow and turned it around pretty quick. The first year we were 5-9 and the second year 6-5. This year, we haven't been playing great baseball. We knew we had the talent to do it. If we can come up here and come together as a team, play the ball we have been playing the past two years, we'd be just fine."

Production at the plate has been a huge difference this season. In 2023, the UCA offense averaged 5.75 runs per game. That number increased to 6.8 in 2024. This year, that number is 4.7. However, during the playoffs the team is averaging more than 7.5 runs per game.

"Three of the last four games, we've had at least 10 hits," Shore said. "We are getting big hits with two outs. Anytime you give up two-out hits it puts a damper on you defensively and that's what we've been able to do to some teams."

Smith, Wilkins and Hunter have been the mainstays on the mound. Wilkins is 7-3 with a 0.59 ERA.

The Eagles will take that eight-game winning streak heading into Friday's Game 1 (8 p.m.) Game 2 is set for Saturday at 2 p.m. and Game 3, if necessary, will be Saturday at either 5 p.m. or 8 p.m.

"It all came together as a team," said Hunter, one of the leading hitters on the team. "In the early weeks of the season, we were playing for ourselves and not as a team. We're coming together as a group. All the seniors realized if we lost, this is it for high school baseball forever. You can't get that back."

But you can make it special, something the Eagles are out to ensure occurs for the third straight season.