

FALL
SPORTS
SPECIAL
EDITION



2025

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THE PENDULUM

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CORRECTIONS

There are no corrections from the last edition of The Pendulum.

2025 FALL SPORTS HOME SCHEDULE

MEN'S SOCCER

RUDD FIELD

	USC UPSTATE 9/13 7 p.m.		DAVIDSON 9/16 7 p.m.		CAMPBELL 9/26 7 p.m.
	UNCG 9/30 7 p.m.		UNCW 10/11 7 p.m.		WILLIAM & MARY 11/1 7 p.m.

WOMEN'S SOCCER

RUDD FIELD

	SOUTH CAROLINA STATE 9/10 5 p.m.		UNCW 10/2 7 p.m.		DREXEL 10/16 7 p.m.
	TOWSON 10/19 1 p.m.		COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON 10/26 1 p.m.		

VOLLEYBALL

SCHAR CENTER

	HAMPTON 9/19 6 p.m.		HAMPTON 9/20 2 p.m.		NC CENTRAL 9/24 6 p.m.		NORTHEASTERN 10/11 7 p.m.
	NORTHEASTERN 10/12 3 p.m.		NORTH CAROLINA A&T 10/24 3 p.m.		NORTH CAROLINA A&T 10/25 6 p.m.		UNCW 11/8 7 p.m.
			UNCW 11/9 3 p.m.				

FOOTBALL

RHODES STADIUM

	HAMPTON 9/27 2 p.m.		RHODE ISLAND 11/8 2 p.m.
	VILLANOVA 10/11 2 p.m.		NORTH CAROLINA A&T 11/22 2 p.m.



Members of the Elon football team get ready to run out onto the field before their season opener against Duke on Aug. 28 at Duke's Wallace Wade Stadium.

MILES HAYFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Football team looks to carry last season's momentum after key offseason losses

Elon lost key defensive players to the transfer portal

Miles Hayford
Elon News Network

After starting last season 1-5 with four losses at home, the Elon University football team bounced back and won their last four games. Head coach Tony Trisciani said the team is hoping to carry that momentum into this season.

"I expect us to be highly competitive," Trisciani said at the Coastal Athletic Association Football Media Day on July 24. "We got a lot of juice, a lot of energy in our building, and these guys are ready to go."

Trisciani also cited the team's perseverance in the stretch of wins in the final four games of last season as a reason for why they can execute and find success this year.

"I'm very fortunate that we've got a group of players and staff that are resilient. We can bounce back from adversity," Trisciani said.

"The fact that these guys came to work every week and prepared and competed to win the back half of that season speaks volumes to our players, our coaches and just the culture in this building. So, we got a bunch of fighters, and this is a hungry, competitive, highly motivated group."

Elon will have to adjust to a depletion of talent, however. Not only did the Phoenix lose key offensive weapons Chandler Brayboy '25, Rushawn Baker '25 and quarterback Matthew Downing '25 to graduation, but a number of standouts on defense also left through the transfer portal. The most significant losses to the portal include former All-American safety Caleb Curtain, linebacker Marco Patierno, edge rusher Cazeem Moore and defensive lineman Chuck Nnaeto.

Moore was crucial for Elon's defense last year — amassing 51 tackles and six sacks and earned Second Team All-CAA recognition. Curtain, a team captain last year, led Elon with 75 tackles and had two interceptions.

However, Trisciani filled in these gaps by

adding eight scholarship transfers, including defensive tackle redshirt senior Marcus Mauney from Norfolk State, who racked up 26 tackles and two sacks last season. Another key addition is quarterback transfer redshirt sophomore Marco Lainz, who competed with redshirt freshman Landen Clark for the starting job. Lainz hails from Iowa University, which belongs to the Big Ten, one of the four major conferences in collegiate sports. Lainz's time at Iowa brings experience to the quarterback room, but Clark ended up starting the first game of the season.

Redshirt senior Jeff Yurk acknowledged the losses the team sustained over the offseason but said he believes the current roster has the weapons to be successful.

"We've got the guys to do it this year," Yurk said at CAA Football Media Day. "We've got a young team, explosive offense and a really sound defense and one of the best special teams in the nation. I don't think there's any reason why we wouldn't be able to compete at that level. I think everybody's bought in for the season."

Despite some losses to the portal, Elon will be returning a few players that are hoping to build on impressive freshmen campaigns. Sophomore defensive lineman Kahmari Brown was named an honorable mention to the Preseason All-CAA list after a freshman year where he finished second on the team in tackles for loss and sacks.

Sophomore running back TJ Thomas Jr. also had a hot start to his career at Elon last season, earning Freshman All-American honors after having a season where he rushed for 588 yards and five touchdowns. He had three games of at least 100 rushing yards. Injury cut Thomas' season short, but Trisciani said he has high hopes for both Thomas and Brown this year.

"I expect big jumps from those guys," Trisciani said. "It's another year of physical development, another year in our system. So more confident, playing faster, thinking less, developing their skillset."

Elon additionally saw some coaching changes in the offseason, including the promotion of the inside linebackers coach and defensive run game coordinator to defensive coordinator. The move comes

after 2024 defensive coordinator Dovonte Edwards left Elon for a coaching position at Sam Houston State University in Texas. Vance has been with the program since 2022 and redshirt senior Jake Louro said this experience with Elon made the transition easier.

"Having coach Edwards leave was a big blow to our defense, but having coach Vance just come right up from the linebackers was incredible for us," Louro said. "Having someone new in the mix isn't always the best, but having someone come up from the ranks really was beneficial for us."

Elon kicked off the season with a marquee matchup against Power Four opponent Duke University on Aug. 28, losing 45-17. Elon tied the game multiple times and trailed by a touchdown early in the fourth quarter, but a 35 point second half from Duke was too much for the Phoenix to overcome.

Trisciani said the key to preparation for a game against an opponent like Duke is to work on avoiding self-inflicted mistakes.

"When you go into those games, you need to be the best version of you," Trisciani said. "You got to make sure you don't beat yourself before we can beat Duke. So protect the football, be efficient, limit the explosive plays defensively."

Trisciani pointed out that they did a good job of stopping the run in last year's 26-3 loss to Duke, but a couple of mistakes led to the occasional explosive play, which ultimately made the difference. Trisciani said he believes the team's conditioning is better this year and the team worked on pushing themselves more in the offseason. He said this allows them to avoid running out of gas in games, like against Duke.

Elon followed the loss up with a dominating performance against Davidson College, winning 55-7 in their home opener.

Trisciani said he is confident going into the season and that the team believes in their ability to win games.

"The guys in our locker room right now, they know what we're capable of, they know that we can win," Trisciani said. "If we go out and we're the best version of ourselves and we prepare properly and we execute, then there's not a game on our schedule that we can't win."



The Elon University football team run past head coach Tony Trisciani onto the field before their season opener on Aug. 28.

MILES HAYFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sophomore running back embraces high expectations before season



MILES HAYFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sophomore running back TJ Thomas Jr. runs through a gap between defenders during Elon's game against Duke on Aug. 28. The Phoenix lost 45-17.

Running back said he hopes rehab from shoulder surgery will lead to better sophomore campaign

Benjamin Berfield
Elon News Network

Sophomore running back TJ Thomas Jr. enters this season as one of the notable returning skill positions for Elon University football. As a freshman, Thomas made an immediate impact as the second running back on the depth chart behind senior Rushawn Baker, accounting for 696 total yards from scrimmage.

Despite a shoulder injury that cut Thomas' freshman campaign short, he has his sights set on a comeback. Thomas said he has been working hard to come back stronger than last year and looks forward to elevating his skills.

"I want to just do what I do," Thomas said. "Don't even think about anything. Just keep my mind on football and get the job done."

That mindset was similar for Thomas even in his freshman year. Thomas said he arrived at Elon confident in his abilities, and was ready to make an impression. He said he wanted to fully prepare himself for whenever he would get the opportunity to play.

"I've always been someone who wanted to get on the field," Thomas said. "I just had a stay-quiet-and-work mentality, and when the opportunity presented itself I just ran with it."

Thomas proceeded to establish himself as a key contributor for Elon. In the eight games before his shoulder injury, Thomas rushed for 588 yards and five touchdowns.



MILES HAYFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Sophomore TJ Thomas Jr. runs out to catch a pass during Elon's loss against Duke on Aug. 28.

He additionally went over 100 yards in three games.

Running backs coach Nate Harris said he was impressed by Thomas' ability to quickly translate his skills from high school over to the college game. He saw that Thomas was able to maintain his elusiveness, which made him appealing as

a recruit.

"One of his best attributes is just being able to avoid tackles," Harris said. "That was what made him attractive coming out of high school, but someone's game doesn't always translate as fast from one level to the next. It was refreshing to see that he could pull this off in Division I."

Harris was one of many coaches at Elon who trusted Thomas to assume an important role in the offense. Thomas said that it inspired him to continue performing at a high level throughout the season.

"Coaches were telling me I could make an immediate impact, and that just motivated me even more to keep going," Thomas said.

However, a shoulder injury against Hampton University on Oct. 26, 2024, ended Thomas' season after just eight games. He had shoulder surgery in November 2024, and has spent the offseason getting stronger while also rehabilitating his shoulder. Thomas said the recovery process was long, but he was determined to be back in peak physical condition before Elon's first game at Duke on Aug. 28.

"I've really been working in the training room two times a day," Thomas said. "It's been long. I had surgery in November, and didn't get to play in the spring so now is really the time to get as strong as possible to keep my shoulder healthy."

While Thomas was recovering, Elon's offense went through numerous changes after the season. Baker, along with quarterback Matthew Downing '25, wide receiver Chandler Brayboy '25, and offensive lineman Kevin Burkett '25 all committed for the NFL Draft. In addition, Elon hired former Kent State and United

States Football League coach Doug Martin as their new offensive coordinator.

The losses of Baker and Brayboy leave Thomas with more total yards than any returning player on the team last season. With plenty of new starters, Thomas said he still expects everyone to be on the same page. He said he hopes the entire offense will continue to make notable strides each day.

"I expect all of us to come in together and bond each and every day," Thomas said. "Just put our head down and work."

With Thomas being one of the most productive returners on offense, he knows he must take on a bigger leadership role. Thomas said he prefers to lead by example, but he needs to become more vocal.

"I got to play a role in leading the offense," Thomas said. "People know that I'm kind of quiet, but I feel like my actions have to be bigger. One of the biggest things I'm working on is just being more vocal."

Harris echoed a similar sentiment. He said he tries to remind Thomas that players on the team are counting on him. Harris said he has already been impressed with Thomas' maturity at his age and believes he can use that to have a larger voice on the team.

"He's already got that mature demeanor," Harris said. "Now the mental aspect is starting to catch up, and it's been cool to see his evolution."

Thomas said he's excited to have higher expectations placed on him going into the season. He said he now feels even more motivated to build off his early success.

"With the high expectations, it could come with pressure but I love that," Thomas said. "I just got to have the same mindset to just win in whatever I do."

Volleyball team enters season under new leadership

New coach leads team after 22 seasons under former coach

Miles Hayford
Elon News Network

The Elon University volleyball team is entering the 2025 season with a new face at the helm.

Head coach Matt Troy is entering his first season as a coach for the Phoenix after coaching at Johns Hopkins University in Maryland, where he led them to a 2019 NCAA Division III Championship amid a 151-17 record.

Troy said the players immediately welcomed him in at Elon and he didn't feel like a stranger.

"There was already a solid culture coming in, the players are very connected with one another," Troy said. "I just made it a goal to really try and get to know them as best I could between individual meetings or hanging out with them in a group in the gym."

Troy arrived in late January, giving him time throughout the spring to get to know the players on an individual basis, according to co-captain Shannon O'Laughlin. He will succeed former head coach Mary Tendler, who coached Elon for 22 seasons and won more than 300 games.

"It made coming into preseason super exciting since we already had that relationship built with him and then we could focus on creating the culture that we want this team to have," O'Laughlin said.

Since arriving, Troy said he has worked to help improve the non-physical aspects of the players' game. This includes mentality training that works on figuring out how to navigate the emotions athletes have throughout a match and leadership training that helps improve the team's communication and motivation.

Elon has begun the season with a 1-5 start. The team's schedule includes three matchups against 2024 NCAA



COURTESY OF ELON ATHLETICS

Head coach Matt Troy speaks to the team during their match at Appalachian State University on Sep. 2. The Phoenix lost all three of its sets against the Mountaineers.

Tournament teams, but Troy said they aim to treat those matches the same as they do against any other team.

"We want to treat every opponent like they are an NCAA Tournament team and our goal is that every game feels the same as much as possible," Troy said. "We don't want to ebb and flow too much, we want to come out and play our style of volleyball."

This consistency will be crucial to maintain for an Elon team that struggled to stay consistent and keep momentum up last year. The Phoenix began last season with an 11-8 record, but stumbled its way to the finish line, losing their final 10 games.

Sophomore Casey Brower, who is coming off a freshman season where she notched 124 digs — a defensive play where a player keeps the ball from hitting the ground after an attack. Brower also had 15 assists last year and said the team has worked on implementing new offensive schemes and improving the team's passing during the offseason.

"Passing was a big focus for our team and just making sure that we could give our setters and hitters the opportunity to run these new offenses," Brower said.

Senior Clara Simmons, one of two seniors on the roster, said staying in shape has been a focus for her in the offseason so she can avoid injuries throughout the long, 27-match season. Simmons is one of three captains on the team and is coming off a 2024 season where she set a new career-high in aces and amassed 131 kills — third most on the team.

Along with four freshmen, a graduate student transfer joins the Phoenix this year. Simrin Carlsen spent four years at Johns Hopkins with Troy and came along with him once he arrived at Elon. She had 1,000 career kills at Johns Hopkins and was named to the All-Centennial Conference Second Team last season.

Troy said Carlsen knows him well and hopes to be a good resource for her teammates as they adjust to getting to know Troy.

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THERE WAS ALREADY A SOLID CULTURE COMING IN, THE PLAYERS ARE VERY CONNECTED WITH ONE ANOTHER.

MATT TROY
ELON VOLLEYBALL HEAD COACH

"The players have a resource for times that they need to figure out coach. She can probably be like, 'Oh this is what he means or this is what he's saying,' or potential things like that," Troy said.

Troy said the goal is for the team to make the Coastal Athletic Association playoffs. CAA play begins Sept. 19. In order to accomplish this goal, the Phoenix worked on a variety of things in the offseason, such as their offensive tempo. Troy said they specifically worked on improving the team's defense.

"The big thing is defense and our serve receive are the two areas we are focused on the most," Troy said. "The offense has looked pretty good so we have just been trying to hone in on that aspect because we know if our back row is clean and can get a lot of opportunities for our front row, we'll be able to put a lot of pressure on some opponents that we play."

The team's next game is Sept. 11 against Clemson during the Clemson/Wofford Tournament.

Dance team sets sights on maintaining team chemistry

Dance coach, senior aim to elevate team through camaraderie

Benjamin Berfield
Elon News Network

Going into her senior year for Elon University's dance team, Olivia Ferranola said she would love to achieve a first-place finish in next year's hip-hop and pom categories. However, she said that she doesn't want competition to be the team's only measure of success.

She said she hopes everyone can show enough growth to the point where they will be able to make strong adjustments from last year.

"If it does happen, that would mean the absolute world," Ferranola said. "I think it's 100% possible and it just takes more willingness to grow and adapt each year. I do believe that even if we don't reach our goals of first place, we still will have won in our minds because we made those adjustments."

Even with plenty of success at nationals, Elon University's dance team is always looking for ways to elevate their performance. Coach Elly Dirks said she expects the team to sustain a positive mentality, citing that as an opportunity for the team to be even better than the previous year.

"As coaches, me and my coaching staff are looking at how we can improve," Dirks said. "We expect our athletes to have that same mindset of looking into last year and asking, 'What can I do next year to be better as a dancer.'"

That mindset has paid off as Elon has regularly finished within the top three of both the hip-hop category and the pom



COURTESY OF ELON ATHLETICS

The dance team performs at Schar Center during their send off to National Dance Alliance Collegiate National Championship on April 6. The team finished second in the hip-hop category for the third straight year.

category of Nationals over the last three years. This past season, they finished second in the hip-hop category for the third straight year, and improved from third to second in the pom category.

Ferranola said the process to get to nationals begins during the camp and preseason. She noted that it's important for members to establish a positive rapport, not just amongst each other but also with incoming freshmen.

"That all starts from the preseason, and really establishing those relationships with our new girls is what sets the tone," Ferranola said. "They're the ones that need to feel the most ready to go with all of us."

For Ferranola, team camaraderie has been an essential since her freshman year. She said it was helpful to have experienced dancers guide her toward becoming the dancer she is now. Now that Ferranola is

one of the upperclassmen, she said she hopes to be the same type of mentor as her teammates when she first began.

"It was really cool to learn from everyone and see the impact that my captains had on the team," Ferranola said. "As one of the upperclassmen now on the team, I really try hard to make those relationships with girls."

Dirks said it's been remarkable to see how far Ferranola and fellow senior Bella Marrone have progressed since their freshman years. She said she believes both of them have become completely different dancers from when they first started.

When they joined the team in the fall of 2022, Dirks said they were a bit nervous to perform for a roster that just won the hip-hop category. Now, she is impressed by their work ethic both as leaders and dancers.

"It's been very cool to see them get more confident as only dancers, but as leaders and individuals," Dirks said. "They've become more comfortable with knowing that nobody's going to be perfect, and just continuing to work hard to be the best they can be."

Going into this season, Ferranola said she knows she can't expect everything to work out exactly the way it did last year — and that it's going to take time for everyone to perform together. She said it's important to know each person's strengths and weaknesses.

"You can't have the mindset that everything's gonna be the same," Ferranola said. "It's a growing process because each individual comes in with different styles that they present."

The team will also use certain sports, such as football games, as a chance to figure out what works and what doesn't work. Dirks said fall events are especially great opportunities for everyone to get an idea of how to work well with each other.

In particular, Elon's dance team will try certain routines that will maximize everyone's visual flow and choreographic skills, which are important concepts for a dance team.

"A big part of performing at those games is being able to learn how to work together as a team," Dirks said.

Asked about any advice for freshmen, Ferranola said she believes they should aim to just be who they are and not have to worry about going out their way to impress the upperclassman.

"The biggest thing is to just be yourself," Ferranola said. "I feel like they want to have that pressure on themselves to impress us, but they'll fit in over time. We'll learn from them and what they bring to the team."

Women’s soccer uses 2024 turnaround as fuel for fall



The women’s soccer team lines up before their game against NC State on Sept. 4 at Rudd Field. Elon tied 0-0.

BENJAMIN BERFIELD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Coach, players confident in building on 10-win improvement

Benjamin Berfield
Elon News Network

Elon University women’s soccer team saw a huge turnaround during the 2024 season. After winning just three out of 17 games during the 2023 season, they improved their record by 10 games en route to an appearance in the Coastal Athletic Association semifinals.

Looking back at their turnaround season, redshirt junior forward Isa Murdock and junior defender Grace Gelhaus said they believe the team was able to use its mindset to their advantage on a consistent basis.

“The mindset is there now,” Gelhaus said. “It’s more competitive and we’ve learned from our mistakes in the past two seasons.”

Head coach Neil Payne offered a similar opinion. He said he always believed everyone had the skills to win and the team

just needed more experience in order to develop winning habits.

“The increase in wins last year was more to do with experience than anything else,” Payne said. “The quality was always there, it just needed time to develop and cultivate.”

With high hopes for next season, there’s an increased urgency to use last year’s bounce back season as motivation for an even better 2025 campaign.

In practice, they are expecting to improve in multiple areas. Murdock said on offense, the team wants to elevate its ability to put away opponents earlier in games. According to Murdock, the players have taken steps toward translating that mindset in practices and games, such as their first exhibition game against University of South Carolina Upstate.

“We scored four goals, which is something that we were looking at doing more instead of just winning by one,” Murdock said.

In Elon’s 18 games during the 2024 season, they only won three games by more

than one goal.

Defensively, Gelhaus said everyone is looking to play with even more intensity through working together as a unit.

“Coach talks a lot about being ruthless in front of the goal as well as connections and chemistry on the field,” Gelhaus said. “That’s something that we’ve been working on, and it’s been working for us.”

Defense was particularly one of the hallmarks of Elon’s turnaround. The Phoenix improved from seventh in goals allowed to being tied for the second fewest allowed with only 17.

Gelhaus said for the team to continue its success on that end, they have to stay organized. With two starters in Katie Lowe ’25 and Olivia McManes ’25 now graduated, Gelhaus acknowledged that it will be important for everyone to take on the responsibilities of talking and organizing the backline.

Overall, experience will be an advantage for Elon as a healthy number of their key contributors will be returning next season.

Of the players who played in at least 10 games last year, only three have graduated.

Payne said he was excited to have many players returning. He said he believes it will be important for establishing many of the team’s principles with the season underway.

“It’s vital for the culture, standards and expectations,” Payne said. “This is a group that because they’re experienced, they can self organize, push each other on the field, and hold each other accountable off of it as well.”

Looking ahead to this season, Payne said he believes it’s important for the team to evaluate where they might have fallen short of the CAA Championship the previous season. He said the maturity from everybody has gotten stronger each year, which will be essential against some of the other top teams in the conference.

“They got a good understanding of what it takes to do well in conference play last year,” Payne said. “That’s something we really learned last year and I expect that to follow into this season.”

Men’s soccer team hopes to build on solid 2024 season

Coach, defender cite experience as foundational piece for next season

Benjamin Berfield
Elon News Network

Elon University men’s soccer team is zeroing in on a fresh start, following a year in which they went 10-7-1. Head coach Marc Reeves said in order to repeat last season’s strong performance, they must put aside any talk about the previous year.

Head coach Marc Reeves said everything will be a brand new process heading into the season. He acknowledged the team’s four-win improvement from the year before was something to be proud of, but emphasized the importance of handling expectations.

“It’s a brand new team,” Reeves said. “If we talk about what we did last year and just expect that to replicate, it won’t be the case. You have to reset standards.”

Redshirt junior defender Carlos Levy echoed similar thoughts along with Reeves. He said the team adapted a game-by-game mentality, which proved to be beneficial last season. This year, he said he believes they are fully ready to embrace that mindset.

“Last year, we had an emphasis on taking every game just game-by-game,” Levy said. “Every game has its own importance, and that’s the mentality we’re going to carry into this season.”

As for injecting that approach toward the newcomers, Levy said that occurs before the season starts. He explained how it’s important for the younger players to have experienced guys to look up to because it will make the team stronger as a whole.

While this might involve criticism, Levy stated that it’s aimed toward everybody becoming better by the end of the season.

“Having that level of respect for each other, is understanding our differences and knowing how strong it makes us as a group,” Levy said. “It comes with pushing each other and understanding that when we are criticizing each other, it’s all for a common goal which is just to improve.”

Most of the players will already be accustomed to this approach, as 19 members from last year’s roster are returning this season. That includes 13 out of 18 players who appeared in at least 10 games.

Reeves said it’s great to have so many guys coming back. He noted that it becomes easier to coach because there is already a sense of trust and familiarity among the players.

“The longer you’re together with good people, the more trust and mutual respect is built,” Reeves said. “As players gain more experience, they put more on themselves and they want more coaching.”

With a healthy amount of players returning, there are areas where the team looks to improve upon such as their defensive performance. Last season, they were a middle-of-the-pack defensive team, finishing fifth in goals allowed with 12. The Phoenix additionally recorded only three shutouts which was one less from the previous year.

Levy said that everybody has to be better on that end for next season. For Elon to improve defensively, he believes it’s a matter of raising the intensity. He stated that even if the team is struggling to score, they can still control the outcome through



Members of Elon men’s soccer team take the field for a home game against Old Dominion on Aug. 25.

BENJAMIN BERFIELD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

their defense.

“Last year was unacceptable for our standards,” Levy said. “If you don’t get scoring, you can’t lose so defense will definitely be an emphasis of ours this year, and that just comes with intensity and knowing what the game plan is.”

Perhaps the biggest goal, however, is to get back to the CAA championship after two consecutive defeats in the semifinals.

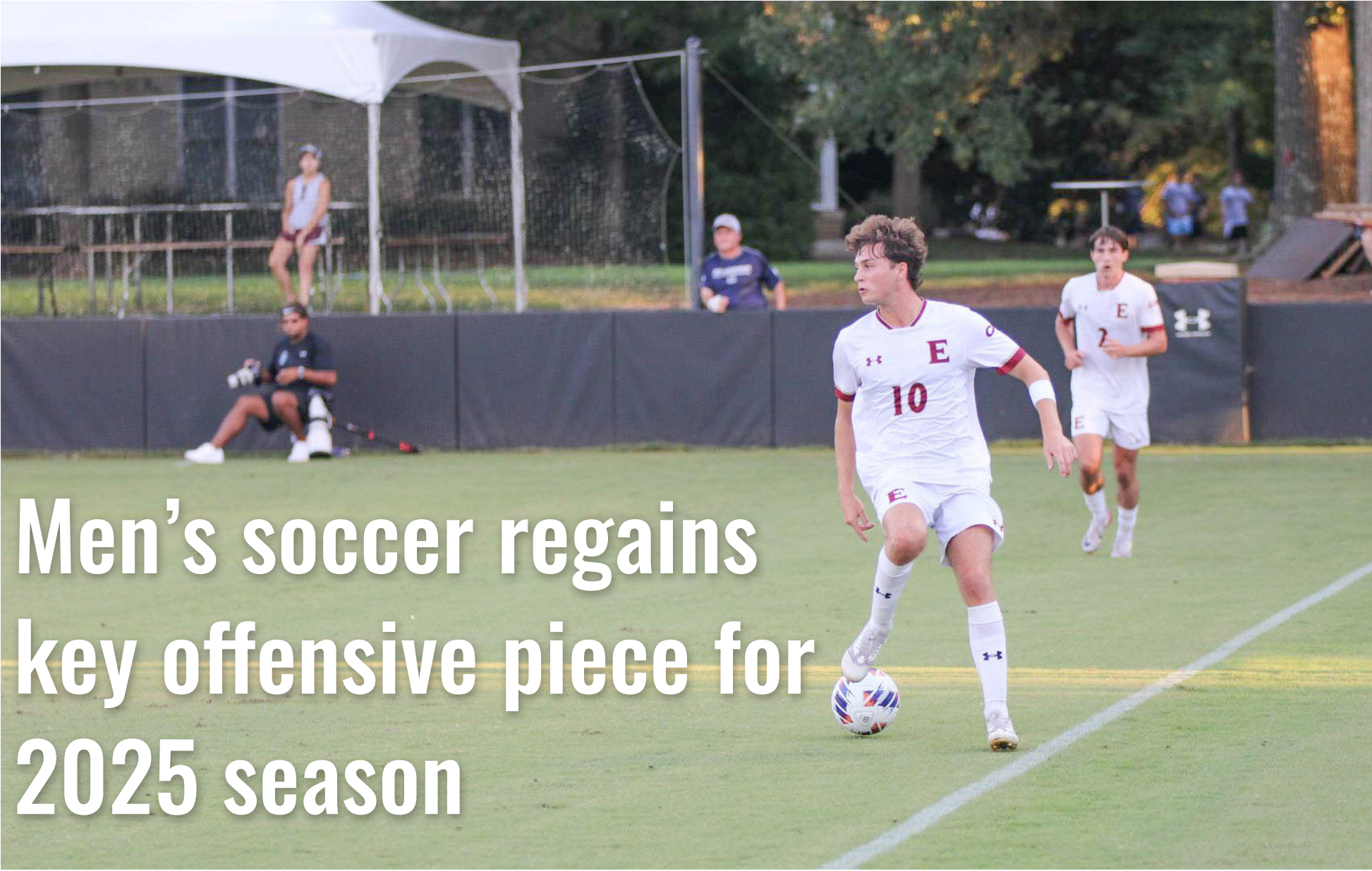
Getting in that position will involve going through a new scheduling format. In June, the CAA introduced two separate divisions for men’s soccer with one being a North Division, and the other being a South Division. Elon is in the South Division which means they must finish within the top three teams of their division before competing amongst the other two teams in order to get back to the championship.

Reeves said the team expects to finish within the division’s top three teams. He hopes by the end of the season, Elon will hopefully have a tournament ring rather than a regular season ring.

“The goal, as we talk about it, is to get us into that top three,” Reeves said. “It can get us into that championship game, and then find a way to get a championship tournament ring.”

Levy believes that in order to make a run, everybody has to stay true to the team’s mindset. Right now, they are just focused on the opener against University of Alabama at Birmingham on Aug. 21.

“We know what we want, but we also know what it takes to get there,” Levy said. “We’re worried about our season opener, and preparing as well as we can, while staying true to our values as a team.”



Men’s soccer regains key offensive piece for 2025 season

BENJAMIN BERFIELD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Colin Veltri dribbles up the ball against Old Dominion during a home game Aug. 25. The Phoenix tied 0-0.

All-CAA Second Team forward returns in hopes of winning CAA Championship

Kathan Gandhi
Elon News Network

As Elon University men’s soccer kicks off its 2025 campaign, it’ll be looking to deliver on promising developments from 2024, with contributions from new leaders.

Last year was a hot start for the Phoenix. Through the first eight matches of the season, the team was 7-0-1. During that stretch, Elon was ranked No. 10 in the country, thanks to major contributions from Scott Vatne ’25 and graduate student Victor Stromsten.

Alongside strong play from longtime team members, Elon’s hot start was additionally ignited by a newcomer to the team: then-junior Colin Veltri.

Veltri played at St. John’s University in New York for two years before transferring to Elon ahead of the 2024 season. In his first eight matches for the Phoenix, Veltri scored six goals, totaled three assists and carried a five-match scoring streak.

But in preparation for Elon’s Sep. 28 match

against No. 19-ranked Hofstra University, Veltri’s 2024 campaign suddenly ended.

Veltri fully tore a ligament in his foot, an injury commonly known as “turf toe.”

“I couldn’t play at all,” Veltri said. “Everything I was doing was correct. It was unfortunate, but I just had to deal with it.”

The torn ligament meant Elon was left without one of its most dynamic offensive players. Following Veltri’s injury, the Phoenix went 3-6 on the year, ending the regular season with a record of 10-6-1. Elon earned the No. 1 seed in the Coastal Athletic Association Men’s Soccer Championships before losing to Hofstra University in the semifinals.

Despite playing in less than half of Elon’s matches, Veltri was no. 3 in goals scored for the Phoenix at the end of the year. His hot start even earned him a spot on the All-CAA Second Team, alongside teammates Charlie Kitch, Tomas Wroblewski and Victor Stromsten.

Veltri says his game relies on his ability to play in the flow and keep his opponents on their toes. In the opening matches of the 2024 season, defense couldn’t tell where Veltri was going.

“Being unpredictable is my main strength,” Veltri said. “My teammates know

what I’m doing, but it hurts the other team. I can drift around the field and find great pockets to grab the ball.”

Stromsten and Vatne graduated after the 2024 season, leaving big holes to fill for Elon offensively. As Veltri enters his senior season, he said he hopes to be a part of filling them.

“I want to be a part of helping us get the win,” Veltri said. “If that means changing my role or doing more to help the offense, I’m willing to do that.”

“The biggest difference between Elon and a lot of other teams is that every time somebody gets subbed out, it’s pretty much to play good for the person next to you,” Veltri said. “Nobody wants to just play good for the coach or for themselves. It’s for the team. That’s what everybody cares about.”

When Veltri transferred to Elon in 2024, the team environment was one of the first things he noticed.

“The youngest freshman can talk to the oldest senior, and there’s no drop-off,” Veltri said. “We have a super close team. That’s what helped us last year, and I think that’s what will help us this year too.”

Even with a team-first attitude, Veltri has some secondary aspirations.

“I do want to make the CAA First Team,” Veltri said. “Maybe even offensive player of the year. But none of those things would be possible for me or my teammates if we don’t have a good season.”

After falling short in the CAA Men’s Soccer Championships last year, Veltri says a good season means taking it to the next level.

“Our main goal is winning the CAA tournament so we can get into the NCAA tournament,” Veltri said. “I think we have a really good chance. I think we’re the favorites.”

“

BEING UNPREDICTABLE IS MY MAIN STRENGTH.

COLIN VELTRI
MEN’S SOCCER FORWARD/MIDFIELD

Elon plays with a team-first attitude, which Veltri said affects each of their personal expectations. Vektri said he believes it also could be its greatest strength.

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Cross country enters 2025 with a sense of direction



KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The Elon women's cross country team during the CAA Championship on Nov. 1, 2024, at the Elon Cross Country Course.

Head coach said he hopes balanced rosters will lead to promising seasons

Kathan Gandhi
Elon News Network

After a year defined by both growing pains and promising steps forward, Elon University's cross country team enters the 2025 season with something they lacked in 2024: consistency.

Elon was under the guidance of first-year head coach Mark Rinker in 2024, who was hired from the University of Eastern Michigan after the departure of head coach Kevin Jermyn, who had been in the position for seven years.

Going into 2024, Elon women's cross country lost six of its top seven runners, with two entering the transfer portal and three of them graduating. The Phoenix had won

Coastal Athletic Association Championships for 5 consecutive years from 2018 to 2023, but placed third last season.

"Obviously, we are disappointed to have not won the women's conference championship," Rinker said. "Finishing third is not what we wanted, but we had a really young team and a lot to look forward to."

Entering 2025, Elon only lost two of its top seven women's runners. Rinker said he thinks the return of many contributing members could be one of the team's greatest strengths.

"They are definitely going to have a big part to play for our team," Rinker said.

The returners include juniors Abby Beville and Hannah Weber, who finished 11th and 12th at the 2024 women's CAA Championships respectively. The top-15 finish awarded them All-CAA recognition, alongside graduate student Mikayla Jones.

"They're both really great runners," Rinker said. "They both had great years and

great summers."

In addition to Beville and Weber, the Phoenix also welcomes back senior Katie Blount, who redshirted cross country in 2024. Blount placed All-CAA Cross Country in her sophomore and junior seasons, including a seventh-place finish at the CAA Championships in 2023.

In addition, Blount had an exceptional 2024 season on the track. Blount was runner-up at the Phoenix Invitational, placed bronze in the 10,000 at the CAA Championships and ran a 34:45.04 at the Raleigh Relays, the third best time in program history.

"She had a really good year on the track in 2024," Rinker said. "We are excited to have her back. She projects to be our No. 1 cross country runner."

The roster also includes many other runners with strong potential, including senior Sarah Petitjean, who placed 19th at her first CAA Championships in 2024.

"The depth across our women's roster is going to be the backbone of our success," Rinker said. "We have a lot of good women who compete at the front of the meet, but also give us stability and a little bit of a safety blanket."

women's team, he expects to see continual improvement from the returners to the Elon men's team.

That includes redshirt junior Evan Taylor, who was the only Elon men's runner to place top 15 at the CAA Championships in 2024. His performance broke him into the program's Top 10 career list.

"He's our All-Conference guy," Rinker said. "We hope to keep seeing more from him."

In addition to Taylor, Rinker said he believes senior Caden Strickland and sophomore Jack Kane will be important parts of the team. Strickland placed 20th at the CAA Championships in 2024. Kane broke the freshman 5k record on the track in the spring.

When Rinker became head coach of the men's team, his goal was to keep moving in the right direction. In Rinker's first year as head coach, they placed fifth at the CAA Championships — their best performance since the CAA expanded. He said he believes 2025 is the time for Elon to rise.

"We really feel like it's a great step forward," Rinker said. "In 2023, we were 61 points away from fourth. Last year, we were only 17."

"The goal is to at least reach fourth at conference this year," Rinker said. "I think with the returners we have and the freshmen we brought in, there's a lot of excitement."

Rinker said he expects strong contributions from four members of the incoming freshman class: Max Bixler, Luke Chisum, Franklin Wimbish, and Juan Pablo Castillo-Zima.

As the expectations continue to evolve for the men's team, so does the environment.

"The returners have already been very clear that they can feel a different energy on this team," Rinker said. "The expectations, the excitement, every day at practice, are just different than even last year."

Rinker has season-long goals for both teams. If the energy Rinker described carries through the fall, the Phoenix could make plenty of noise when championship season arrives.

"We need to be excited about executing the goals for each day and not worrying about everybody else," Rinker said. "That's the message we've been preaching to the men and women. If we can love the journey, we'll be ready to race."



KATHAN GANDHI | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Then-redshirt sophomore Evan Taylor competes at the CAA Championship on Nov. 1, 2024, at the Elon Cross Country Course.



THE EXPECTATIONS, THE EXCITEMENT, EVERY DAY AT PRACTICE, ARE JUST DIFFERENT THAN EVEN LAST YEAR

MARK RINKER
CROSS COUNTRY HEAD COACH

With a year under his belt and a quality roster, Rinker says the standard will not change.

"The goal of the program is to win," Rinker said. "We want to win the CAA Championships and have women who compete really well individually."

In line with Rinker's analysis of the



A young child goes down an inflatable slide at the Downtown Elon Block Party on Sept. 5. Town of Elon Downtown Development Director Jill Weston said the block party started three years ago when they launched the social district downtown. “Community events like this just bring everybody together,” Weston said. “And we’re a very unique community. We have senior citizens, we have families and obviously we have students. So this is the type of event that has appeal for everybody.”

KATRINA HOLTZ | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Sophomores Julia Edler, Isabella Johnson, Allie Mateyak and Bilal Turner pour ingredients into meal bags on Sept. 6 in Alumni Gym. Over 170 student volunteers worked together to package more than 21,000 meals for people facing food insecurity and malnutrition around the world. The annual event is held in partnership with Rise Against Hunger and Elon University’s Kernodle Center for Civic Life.

KATE GRAY | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Members of the Town of Elon Fire Department watch a tree removal crane get lowered to the ground Sept. 4 on West Lebanon Avenue. The crane tipped vertically into the air around 2:10 p.m. during tree removal work in a local resident’s front yard. No one was injured, according to Town of Elon Fire Department Chief Landon Massey. Nearby homes were evacuated, a section of West Lebanon Avenue and Lee Street were closed, and Duke Energy cut power to 133 customers while the police and fire departments worked together with a local towing company to safely return the crane to the road. The crane had all wheels on the road at 9:24 p.m., as a crowd of onlookers cheered. The evacuation order ended quickly after and Duke Energy returned power before the end of the night.

SARAH T. MOORE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Freshman Ava Mulchin admires her custom pink, blueberry-themed plant pot she painted during Planting for the Planet on Sept. 5, at Elon University’s Community Garden. The event was hosted by the Office of Sustainability and provided attendees with a way to meet new people, connect with nature and learn about climate change.

BEN SHUMAN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Seniors pose and take pictures with Elon’s mascot, the Phoenix, at the Senior Kickoff Under the Oaks on Sept. 2. “Being a senior is actually kicking in now,” senior nursing major Taylor Girard said.

KATRINA HOLTZ | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Avid readers flock to Friends of the Alamance County Public Libraries' fall book sale



MILES HAYFORD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A shopper pays for her books at the fall book sale on Sept. 5 at May Memorial Library.

Sale runs through Sept. 14 at May Memorial Library in Burlington

Miles Hayford
Elon News Network

Typically the basement isn't the highlight of a library. However, the crowded basement of May Memorial Library in downtown Burlington has been crawling with avid readers, resellers and Burlington residents on a mission to take full advantage of the Friends of the Alamance County Public Libraries' fall book sale.

Christine Fisher, a Wilmington resident, has been coming to the book sale since 2016 and said she enjoys looking for authors she likes. This time, she was looking for mysteries, romance novels and poetry. She said the sale is great because you run into many people you know. She said she also enjoys the atmosphere of it.

"This thing is like a hunt," Fisher said. "It's like, 'Oh my gosh, what am I going to find this time?' So, it's fun, and you see people walking out with bulging bags of books."

The book sale is put on by the Friends of the Alamance County Public Libraries, a nonprofit dedicated to advocating for local libraries. It hosts a book sale every fall and spring — thanks to the donations from the community. To donate, community members drop off books at any of the four Alamance County libraries. In between their fall and spring sales, volunteers are constantly coming in to sort and shelve the books.

The proceeds of the sale go to support all four public libraries in Alamance County and

help fund certain programs at those libraries, such as a children's program that involves a sleepover at one of the libraries.

Volunteer Barbara Roberts has been working with the organization for 40 years and said they have about 50,000 books from donations. The sale also includes CDs and DVDs.

Roberts said the book sale has grown so much over time. It started with a group of unorganized boxes on the sidewalk of K-Mart, moved to the Holly Hill Mall and the Burlington Manufacturers Outlet Center and now has a permanent space at May Memorial Library that allows for in-depth organization of the books.

Roberts said the space at the library allows for the volunteers to easily sort the books.

"That allows us to organize the books really well, so when shoppers come in, they've got the different categories like history or religion," Roberts said. "The books are well-organized and shoppers can find what they're looking for. I think that contributes greatly to the success of the sale."

In the basement, books are separated into many different categories, such as history, religion, poetry or children's books. There is a wide variety of categories, including sports, cookbooks, new edition books, book clubs' recommendations and southern literature, according to Roberts.

Roberts said her favorite part of the sale is the bustling activity of opening day — which was Sept. 5 this year. She said opening day is typically filled with avid readers from the local community, as well as resellers and dealers from out of town who come for specific items.

"Our community comes in and shops. We have dealers that come from out of town, but the heart of business is the shoppers in Alamance County," Roberts said.

Walt Brown, a former board member of the organization, said he enjoys coming every year and seeing how the book sale brings the community together.

"It gives everybody a focal point," Brown said. "They sell all kinds of books, I like the variety and that's why I come."

Roberts said the heavy demand and turnout at the sale shows the power of books in today's technology-driven world. Roberts said that although people like herself love to read online through devices such as Kindles, there is something special about a physical book.

"You will talk to people and they will say, 'I really like holding a book,'" Roberts said. "Particularly in the nonfiction area, people like having a volume to read rather than just getting a snippet off of Wikipedia, it's just a whole different research tool to have the reference books. We have some books on technology, of course, but I think our shoppers are mostly here for the actual books."

Roberts encouraged Elon students to attend the book sale, which runs until Sept. 14. In particular, she said education majors at Elon should check out the sale's children's book collection, which has an entire room to itself.

Books can be purchased with cash or checks. Hardback books are \$3, paperbacks are \$2 and children's books are \$1. To see the book sale's hours, visit the Friends of the Alamance County Public Libraries' website.

Alamance County sheriff to seek 7th term, faces first potential opposition in GOP since 2002

Filing for N.C. primary starts
December 2025

Nia Bedard
Elon News Network

As Alamance County and the towns within prepare for municipal elections on Nov. 4, Alamance County Sheriff Terry Johnson sets his sights on his seventh term in the position, running for reelection in North Carolina primary elections March 3, 2026.

First elected as sheriff in 2002, Johnson has now served 23 years in the position. As the 75-year-old incumbent prepares to run for his seventh term, he is potentially facing opposition from his own party — a challenge he hasn't faced since his very first election.

Two potential candidates, Dana Byrd Pasour and Billy Clayton, are attempting to challenge Johnson's seventh run at the role, according to Alamance News. Both potential challengers filed campaign committees, legal entities established by political candidates to raise and spend money on their behalf during an election.

While opponents are not set in stone — with filing for the North Carolina primary starting on Dec. 1, 2025 — Johnson said he is prepared for whatever comes from the upcoming election.

"Anybody has the right, if they're not a convicted felon, to file for sheriff on either Independent, Democrat or Republican," Johnson said. "I hope the people of Alamance County and the citizens will look at what we have accomplished here during my tenure as sheriff."

In Johnson's bid for the sheriff role

in 2022, he obtained 58.8% of the vote against Democrat candidate Kelly White.

Associate professor of political science and public policy Kaye Usry said in her experience multiple candidates within the same party running against each other at the local level is unusual.

"Typically, there are not very many candidates for these local offices, and often they're not even contested," Usry said. "It is interesting and noteworthy that two different people have publicly stated their intentions to run for the Republican nomination."

While Usry deemed the current state of the race for Alamance County Sheriff as unusual, she also said it's difficult to remain informed about local candidates.

"Increasingly, politics is nationalized," Usry said. "The things that are lighting up national politics are the way local people are thinking about politics. Even when there are local issues, they're just not aware of it. Local news is dying. It's not easy to be informed about your local candidates."

Johnson said throughout his time as sheriff, the department has made strides in technological advancements.

In 2018, the department began using drones for search and rescue and reconnaissance missions.

In addition to technological advancements, Johnson said that during his time as sheriff, the Alamance County sheriff's office has developed a working relationship with other agencies across the state, such as the Drug Enforcement Administration and Homeland Security.

Johnson has also partnered with Immigration Customs and Enforcement for over 10 years.



Alamance County Sheriff Terry Johnson speaks at a press conference April 4, 2024, in Graham.

ENN FILE PHOTO

Johnson's time as sheriff has also been marked with numerous lawsuits. This includes the United States Department of Justice suing the Alamance County Sheriff's Office for racial profiling in 2012, which was later dropped in 2015. Johnson also settled another lawsuit in 2023 after two parties sued him for defamation and arrest without probable cause.

Regardless of what has occurred throughout his time as sheriff, Johnson said the reason why he ran for office in the first place — and why he continues to do so — is for the people of Alamance County.

"I love Alamance County, the people here," Johnson said. "Alamance County,

in my opinion, is one of the best counties in the state. And I wanted to see law enforcement continue to progress and work for the future."

While Alamance County prepares for the upcoming municipal elections and as the filing date for the North Carolina primary elections nears, Usry said the power in this situation falls to the people.

"It's up to all of us to decide whether we want him to win or not," Usry said.

Primary elections

Candidate filing opens Dec. 1 and closes Dec. 14

Voting for N.C. primaries is set to take place on March 3, 2026

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‘You think you’re invincible until you’re not’

Student returns to Elon after medical leave

Elon senior encourages young people to advocate for their health

Charlotte Pfabe
Elon News Network

Lexi Rogers didn’t expect to celebrate her 21st birthday at home.

“Worst 21st birthday ever,” Rogers said. Rogers finished her first round of chemotherapy right before her birthday in February.

She started to feel sick while studying abroad in Sorrento, Italy in her junior year as an Elon University student. She said she noticed swelling on the right side of her throat and thought she had pulled a muscle in her neck. She decided to go to the doctor, who told her it was probably nothing but to get a thyroid scan when she got home to Tennessee.

However, when she lost her voice two days before New Year’s Day, she started to worry that it was something more. She got an ultrasound on her throat, which didn’t show any issues, but later, Rogers would learn that the lump she had been feeling was her thyroid being pushed out by her tumor.

“They were quite literally ultrasounding over my tumor since it grew up into my neck and displaced my thyroid,” Rogers said.

After more doctor appointments and tests, doctors told Rogers her right vocal cord was paralyzed, but she was told time and time again that she most likely had a bad infection that her body was struggling to fight off.

Her gut told her to keep pushing for answers.

“I’m just really not feeling good. My voice still isn’t back. I’m starting to have night sweats, and I’m running unexplained fevers,” Rogers said. “And I had messaged my primary care. I was like, ‘Hey, I think I have lymphoma.’ And she was like, ‘I really don’t think you do.’”

But Rogers did have lymphoma, and she finally got an answer through a message in her MyChart portal while waiting to fly back to Elon for the spring semester.

“

I’M JUST REALLY NOT FEELING GOOD. MY VOICE STILL ISN’T BACK. I’M STARTING TO HAVE NIGHT SWEATS, AND I’M RUNNING UNEXPLAINED FEVERS.

LEXI ROGERS
ELON SENIOR

“I just opened it up and literally the only thing I saw was ‘There is a large impeding mass,’” Rogers said. “I passed out fully in the airport.”

Rogers was later diagnosed with a rare form of non-Hodgkin lymphoma called primary mediastinal B-cell lymphoma. PMBCL makes up 2% to 3% of all cases of non-Hodgkin Lymphoma, according to the Thoracic Cancer journal. In 60 to 70% of cases, tumors are larger than 10 centimeters in diameter.

According to the Thoracic Cancer journal, Lymphoma is a cancer that impacts the lymphatic system of the body, which includes organs, glands and lymph nodes. The lymphatic system is part of one’s immune system. For Rogers, who has B-cell non-Hodgkin lymphoma, her cancer started in her white blood cells — specifically her B-cells — which fight



COURTESY OF LEXI ROGERS
Lexi Rogers makes the Alpha Xi Delta hand sign from a hospital bed in Tennessee. Rogers took medical leave from Elon after getting diagnosed with primary mediastinal B-cell lymphoma in early 2025. After taking summer classes, she is on track to graduate with the class of 2026.

germs.

Now with a diagnosis, she stayed in Tennessee to start six rounds of chemotherapy. Rogers said she was on a 21-day cycle — five days straight of chemo in the hospital with 16 days off.

“I was cripplingly anemic because chemo just destroys red blood cells,” Rogers said. “My white count would be below two. I was neutropenic and couldn’t leave the house because I’d get sick.”

While she received treatment, she said she was the youngest person in the hospital’s cancer unit and turned to social media for a sense of community. Through TikTok, she’s connected with people across the world, including in Australia and in Europe.

“What I really love is all of us kind of got diagnosed around the same time, and we all kind of started posting videos around the same time. So we also all rang the bell around the same time, which is really, really sweet,” Rogers said.

Rogers said it’s a common misconception that ringing the bell means you are cancer-free. She said it only commemorates the end of treatment, and cancer patients, like herself, typically still have other scans to see if they are in remission.

After months of doctors visits and tests, Rogers said she hopes that people who hear her story will advocate for themselves when they feel sick.

“If you’re going to get cancer in college, it’s going to be lymphoma,” Rogers said. “So if I can even help one person just realize that something’s wrong and go to the doctor, even if they don’t have lymphoma, just to go to the doctor and get everything checked out, like that’s all I could really ask for.”

But even during her treatment, Elon University was still in the back of her mind. She was about to start her senior year, so she called her academic adviser and mentor, professor Anthony Hatcher.

“Her worry was, ‘Can I finish on time?’

I want to graduate with my friends,” Hatcher said.

Hatcher, along with other Elon professors, came together to support Rogers, as she took summer classes to make up for her time on medical leave during the spring semester.

“I looked at her OnTrack audit 10,000 times to figure out how to juggle and move the pieces around,” Hatcher said.

Summer classes also posed a challenge for Rogers, as the effects of chemo were catching up. However, she said she was grateful for professors, such as Michele Lashley, who allowed her to have extra time on assignments.

“I couldn’t formulate sentences,” Rogers said. “My short term memory was awful, like I’d retell the story five times. So I was like ‘this will be good, just to kind of get things moving again.’”

This semester, Rogers is a peer educator, or teacher’s assistant, for Hatcher’s Elon 1010 class. She previously worked as his PE during the fall of 2023.

“We communicated and she said, ‘Are you doing Elon 1010 again?’ in fall of 2025,” Hatcher said. “And to be honest, I had not planned to be an educator for Elon 1010, but I decided, ‘If you’re going to be my TA, yeah, OK.’”

Rogers is proud to say she’s now been in remission for three months. She is back on campus with her friends and is set to graduate with the rest of her class. Her close friend, junior Emily Fricker, said she is excited to have Rogers back on campus.

“Now that she’s back at Elon, we hang out all the time, we’re constantly together, we have such a good bond,” Fricker said.

But Rogers said she’s not the same person she was last year. She’s coming back to campus with a different perspective on life.

“You think you’re invincible until you’re not,” Rogers said. “And, I mean, until you’re having to sit there and sign a will at 20 — things like that just really put it into perspective.”



COURTESY OF LEXI ROGERS
Lexi Rogers finished her chemotherapy in the spring and is now in remission. Rogers said she was on a 21-day cycle — five days straight of chemo in the hospital with 16 days off.



COURTESY OF LEXI ROGERS
Lexi Rogers puts a “Lexi Strong” bracelet on a Batman figurine in the hospital. She said she was the youngest person in the hospital’s cancer unit when she was receiving treatment.



COURTESY OF LEXI ROGERS
Lexi Rogers hugs her friend while visiting campus for a wiffle ball tournament organized by some of the Greek life organizations. The tournament was hosted in the spring semester to raise money for Blood Cancer United.



COURTESY OF LEXI ROGERS
Lexi Rogers is in remission after her battle with cancer. She rang this bell when she completed her chemotherapy treatment.