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high school previews BOYS TENNIS

# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW THIS SEASON

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## | The Virginian-Pilot

**Dolphin dynasty** The defending state champs are at it again. In addition to Zack Zapatero, Cape Henry has Mason Smith and Chris Armistead, who will be playing collegiate tennis next year. Throw in Conor Somers, who coach George Pilkington says is the best freshman in the state, and the Dolphins are thinking repeat.

**Beware of the Bulldogs** Junior Lewis Goode and freshman Dillon Jacob look to build off first-team All-Tidewater Conference seasons and are joined by seniors Blake Culver, Barclay Freeman and Michael Stoney. Add Cape Henry transfer Scotty Hunter, and the Bulldogs seem poised for a state title run.

**Elsewhere in the Tidewater Conference** New Bishop Sullivan coach Tal Covington is hopeful that three seniors can guide a host of freshmen and sophomores that are coming up through the program. Nansemond-Suffolk coach Randolph Davis returns his No. 2 (Tucker Firnstahl) and No. 3 (Jackson DeMello) from last year and hopes a move to Division II improves his chances at a state tournament berth. Norfolk Christian coach Kevin Kittrell is counting on senior David Cockerill to lead a lineup consisting of five seniors and one junior.

**New-look Cavaliers** After losing three key seniors, including two-time Beach District champ Sam Stearney, Princess Anne is undergoing its first true rebuilding year of the decade. Fredric Lillard, whose only loss last year came to eventual state champion Brett Moorhead of Cosby, is joined by newcomers David Choos, who transferred after playing No. 1 for Bayside, and freshman Robert Levin.

**Elsewhere in the Beach District** Coach Jason Ordonio guided Ocean Lakes to a strong 6-4 mark in his first year and returns junior Greg Neatrou, who could be a dark horse for an Eastern Region berth. Salem returns six players from last year's 0-10 squad, but coach Cindy Allen is hoping the pain of 2012 will result in the SunDevils climbing toward the middle of the district.

**Party like it's 1923?** The Eastern District is a three-team race involving Norview, Granby and Maury, with Norview setting its sights on winning its first boys or girls tennis title in the school's 90-year history. Norview, led by district runner-up Ernesto Angeles, returns its top eight players from last year's region qualifying team. Two-time district champ Laguna Foster Jr. is one of four returning players for reigning district champ Granby. Maury, headlined by junior John Crumpler, went 5-2 in the district last year and defeated Granby 5-4 in Wednesday's season opener.

**Southeastern District logjam** The Southeastern is the hardest to predict. Will Hickory, led by two-time district champ Alex Krupp, repeat as champions? Lots of questions surround the bottom half of the Hawks' lineup. Can Grassfield (8-1 district last year), despite losing its top two players from a year ago, end Hickory's run? Western Branch and Great Bridge have not advanced to the region tournament since playing each other in the 2008 region final – the last year a non-Beach team even made it that far. The Bruins have five of their top seven players back from last year's 7-2 team and coach Tom Anderson believes he has four of the top 12 players in the district in Harry Holtzclaw, Patrick Drum, Ben Eller and Jimmy Timko. The Wildcats, led by Blake Lassiter, return five of their top six players from last year's 6-3 club.

**Elsewhere in the Southeastern** Indian River returns its top two players (Jake Patish and Patrick Shaughnessy). King's Fork coach Andrae Riddick, who has six first-year players in addition to three returning members, is focused on beating the other Suffolk teams this year. New Lakeland coach Eric Jay's only returning player is injured, but he is still "excited to coach a young team with no past tennis experience."

## starting six

1. Cape Henry The Dolphins, led by Davidson-bound Zack Zapatero, will try to give boys and girls coach George Pilkington his fourth state title in the past two years.

2. Norfolk Academy The Bulldogs came up short to Cape Henry in last year's state final, but they handed the Dolphins their only loss last year and are loaded to return to the title match.

3. Princess Anne Defending Beach District and Eastern Region champion Fredric Lillard is a heavy favorite to repeat as champion.

4. Cox Will Timberlake, the Falcons' No. 2 a year ago, will try to lead Cox to a fifth straight state tournament berth. Maria Faircloth takes over as coach.

5. First Colonial The Patriots return two starters (seniors Kyle Patrick and Alex Goldberg) from a team that went 8-2 last year, but should still challenge for a region berth.

6. Western Branch If any team can break up the stranglehold Hickory and Grassfield have on the Southeastern District and Princess Anne and Cox have on the Eastern Region, it's the Bruins – the last non-Beach team to win the region.

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Princess Anne welcomes back Fredric Lillard, the defending Beach District and Eastern Region singles champion.

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