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Commissioners balk at supporting new gas tax

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A motion to endorse and support a proposed new gas tax in Alabama died for lack of a second at the Franklin County Commission's February 19 meeting.

Commissioner Rayburn Massey made the motion to approve a resolution sent to the commission from the Alabama County Commission Association that would have supported the proposed tax in a blanket manner, even though lawmakers are debating many different proposed tax amounts and distributions.

Proceeds from the gas tax would be used, in large part, for road and bridge improvements across Alabama. But there is a debate in Montgomery about how the tax revenue would be divided among Alabama's 67 counties.

Although commissioners did not publicly oppose a possible gas tax, they hesitated to support legislation they have yet to see.

Massey made a motion to add to the meeting agenda a resolution supporting the legislative gas tax. But that motion died when none of the remaining commissioners seconded the motion.

Proceeds from the gas tax would be used, in large part, for road and bridge improvements across Alabama. But there is a debate in Montgomery about how the tax revenue would be divided among Alabama's 67 counties. Although commissioners did not publicly oppose a possible gas tax, they hesitated to support legislation they have yet to see.

Alabama's current gas tax is 18 cents per gallon, a figure that hasn't been increased in more than 25 years.

See 'TAX,' Page 3



We're All Ears!
Have an opinion? **256.332.0255**
Story idea?
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Winborn investigation still a 'high priority' for local police

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Although there hasn't been an arrest, the death investigation of a young Russellville woman remains high on the priority list for the Russellville Police Department.

Casie Winborn, 29, was found dead near Road Gear in Russellville on the morning of July 2, 2018. Winborn's body was found by employees of the Russellville Electric Board at the board's drop-off location for brush and debris, located behind Road Gear off of Highway 43.

"Through this whole investigation we've been hoping for an arrest, but, as of right now, we're still putting the pieces and timelines together," Tompkins said. "We're aggressively working on it all hours of the day."

RPD lieutenant investigator Jake Tompkins said he continues to interview individuals regarding the case, and he is in daily contact with Winborn's family.

After the February 18 Russellville City Council meeting, Tompkins interviewed two individuals at the police station in hopes of gleaning more information relevant to Winborn's death.

RPD chief Chris Hargett said the Alabama Department of Forensic Science's autopsy report indicated a preliminary cause of death as non-determined, and law enforcement officials continue to wait for the toxicology report. Although Winborn's cause of death was non-determined, police are investigating the matter as a homicide and have interviewed a man described as a "person of interest" on more than one occasion.

See 'POLICE,' Page 10

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Anthony "Tony" Banks, Phil Campbell, age 60
 Died Saturday, February 16, 2019. Memorial service held at Witness Outreach Church in Spruce Pine. Spry Memorial Chapel of Russellville was directing.

Jean Voncille Cooper Fisher, age 70
 Died Thursday, February 21, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel in Russellville. Interment in Tharptown Cemetery.

Danny Oneal Gravitt, Haleyville, age 64
 Died Wednesday, February 20, 2019. The family was planning to have a memorial service at a later date. Spry Memorial Chapel of Russellville was directing.

Helen J. Hines, Camden, AL (formerly of Phil Campbell), age 86
 Died Sunday, February 17, 2019. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home in Russellville. Interment in Shady Grove Cemetery in Phil Campbell.

Charlton Lance Malone, Russellville, age 30
 Died Sunday, February 17, 2019. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home. Interment in Tharptown Cemetery.

Linda Dianne Mims, Russellville, age 60
 Died Sunday, February 17, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Bethlehem Cemetery.

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Council approves plans for building renovation

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Council approved preliminary plans for a major renovation of a partially collapsed downtown building at the council's February 20 meeting.

The council unanimously approved plans submitted by Greg Hovater for 127 North Jackson Avenue. Hovater purchased the building from the City of Russellville in December after it was deeded to the city by Wayne Miller last year after it partially collapsed.

The council authorized the city to accept bids on the building, and Hovater's was the high bid. Hovater now has six months to complete the renovations from the date the plans were approved.

According to Russellville Building Inspector Bill Fuller, plans call for the building interior to be completely gutted, followed by construction of corner steel columns and a metal roof system. A wrap-around balcony and side stairs will also be constructed, according to the plans submitted to the city.

"These are the preliminary drawings, and they will meet the code of the city," Fuller said. "The building will be gutted all the way to the basement."

Fuller would not comment on plans for how the building will be used, but, according to a source, Hovater tentatively plans to renovate the building for use as a pharmacy.

In other action, the council:

- Approved a Bicentennial celebration resolution recognizing March 1, 2019, at the official kickoff of the City of Russellville Bicentennial, to include an unveiling that day of the "birth of a town" monument on the east side of Sloss Lake, where the City of Russellville was originally founded. Franklin County Archives director Chris Ozbirn was recognized for her efforts with the Bicentennial.

- Approved a claim in the amount of \$78.40 from Karen Phillips for purchase of a new tire. Phillips' tire was damaged when she ran over pieces of brick from a broken flower pot at the Russellville Senior Center.

- Approved facility use requests and the waiver of the A.W. Todd Centre rental fee for Russellville High School baseball for its annual Valentine's Dinner on February 16, 2019, and the Cultura Garden Club for an event on February 21, 2019

The next regular scheduled meeting for the Russellville City Council will be Monday, March 4, with work session at 6 p.m. and meeting to follow.

Eight local eateries receive satisfactory ratings

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

All of the eight Franklin County establishments that received health ratings during the week of February 11-15 had scores that fall into the "satisfactory compliance" range.

Health ratings are required to be prominently posted in all food/lodging establishments. Scores are graded by the Alabama Department of Public Health inspectors on a 100-point scale.

Establishments with scores of 85 to 100 are considered to be in "satisfactory compliance" and are routinely inspected. Establishments scoring between 70 and 84 will be inspected again in 60 days, and those scoring between 60 and 69 will have another follow-up within 48 hours. Any establishment scoring below 60 will be immediately closed.

Areas of inspection by ADPH include management and personnel; food storage, preparation and service; equipment; utensils; linen cleanliness; plumbing and waste; poisonous or toxic material storage; and an inspection of the physical facility or property.

All eight of the Franklin County businesses listed in the most recent food and lodging establishment ratings scored 85 or above, within the satisfactory compliance range. The highest score was 97, received by Frosty Inn Drive Inn, 12805 Hwy. 43 South, Russellville.

Inspections of Franklin County businesses, with critical item violations

noted, resulted in the following scores:

- Jack's #148, 13640 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 86. (Various toxic items stored in cabinet with and above single service, no soap available at handsink in men's restroom).

- McDonald's, 15254 Highway 43, Russellville, 87. (Grill cleaner stored on top of grill, No backflow preventer on outside hose).

- Legacy Chevron, 13518 Hwy. 43 South, Russellville, 88. (No soap at handsink in men's restroom, Date marking, no dates on pans of chicken Alfredo and chicken and rice casserole).

- Chevron Food Mart, 3515 Broad Street, Phil Campbell, 90. (Toxic items stored with food, single service and clean dishes, no handsoap and handsink).

- Tokyo Sushi and Steakhouse, 14001 Hwy. 43, Suite 17, Russellville, (Cooked rice in cooler not date marked).

- Panaderia Adonai, 311 South Jackson Ave., Russellville, 93. (No soap in men's restroom).

- Phil Campbell Senior Center, 135 Sherry Brice Dr., Phil Campbell, 94. (No proof of foodhandlers' employee reporting agreement form).

Of the 27 inspections done in Colbert County from February 11-15 all received scores falling in the range of satisfactory. The high score of 100 was received by Publix Dairy, 3220 Woodward Ave., Muscle Shoals.

Health ratings are available at www.foodscores.state.al.us and may be viewed by city or county.

'TAX' from page 1

The proposed new tax could be up to 20 cents a gallon if some legislators have their way.

The commission left the door open to revisit a resolution once more details of the proposed gas tax are made available to the public.

In other action, the commission:

- Appointed Franklin County Emergency Management Agency director Mary Hallman-Glass as the county's Safety Coordinator.

- Approved a budget amendment for the Franklin County Coroner's Office that shifted \$3,270 of funds allocated for the coroner's annual health insurance premiums to supplies and equipment (\$1,320), contract labor for deputy coroners (\$1,000), mileage reimbursement (\$500) and registration for state conferences (\$450). The action did not increase the coroner's overall budget nor the compensation of Franklin County coroner Charles Adcox.

- Approved a loan proposal in the amount of \$300,000 by Valley State Bank for a 10-year note with interest rate of 3.35 percent. The funds will be used to purchase a pothole patching truck and asphalt tank for the Franklin County Highway Department.

- Approved the hiring of eight full-time employees in the Franklin County Highway Department: Chase Holland, Jyrán Darby, Barry Walker, Ronnie Gaston, Joey Tyra, Geoff Cooper, Tim McKinney and Shane Harbin.

- Approved a professional engineering contract in the amount of \$22,357 for projects on County Roads 6 and 77. Eighty percent of those funds will be reimbursed to the county.

- Approved a resolution that authorizes Franklin County probate judge Barry Moore to accept resignations of administrative personnel and department

heads and authorizes Moore to advertise for the positions. The reasoning for this action was the current delay when there is a resignation like the recent one from EMA director Jody Hitt.

The commission left the door open to revisit a resolution once more details of the proposed gas tax are made available to the public.

Moore said this will allow the process of replacing departed department heads and administrative employees to begin much sooner.

- Appointed Scott Mugno to the Franklin County Water Authority to replace Ken Dobbs, who resigned.

- Heard from a resident concerned about the narrow shoulder and close proximity of large trees to the road on Highway 83 in the Cherry Hill community. Franklin County engineer David Palmer said he would travel the road and determine whether it's a safety hazard.



Letters to the Editor

We love to hear from you! Send your guest columns, recipes, cartoons, letters to the editor and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.

For updates on news and sports throughout the week, don't forget to check us out online at franklinfreepress.net!

Honey Do: Be prepared

It's the end of February, and already we in north Alabama have seen frigid temps, high winds, tornadoes, dangerous lightning, torrential rain and record flooding. As we envision the advent of spring and nature's rebirth, we will likely be met with more of mother nature's darker side.

This is the time when more attention should be given to severe weather preparedness. Of course, we in north Alabama are not strangers to the dangers of severe weather and the fact that it can occur at any time of the year. But now is certainly a good time to fine-tune your survival plan and emergency equipment.

The first order of business is to formulate a plan. Know what to look and listen for wherever you may be. Severe weather can occur at any time. The worst place to be is outside or in a car. If you are caught outside and shelter is not available, try to get as low as possible. Beware of ditches that may be subject to flash flooding.

If inside, seek shelter in the interior of the building and on the lowest floor possible. Cover up with pillows, quilts or anything to protect from flying debris. Be sure to include

school-age children in your plan, as they will be studying severe weather in class.

Check your severe weather equipment. TV stations go out, cell phones can lose signal and computers can become useless when power is out and wind and rain are strong. Invest in a weather radio or at least a battery-powered FM radio.

Flashlights are a must in your emergency kit. Make sure they work and batteries are fresh. Provide the kids with one and teach them the importance and significance of it. Of course, make sure it is appropriate and safe for their age.

Keep enough food and water on hand to last the family at least three days. Don't forget to put a can opener in your survival kit and make sure everyone knows how to use it.

The most important thing is to always be weather-aware. Pay attention to local forecasts and weather trends. It's too late to prepare when the siren sounds.

Next week, we'll look at the basics of a "family plan for survival." Remember, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.



Doug Green



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Fueling the flame throughout 2019

Did you know that by the middle of February, 80 percent of people give up on their New Year's resolutions? As a certified business coach and best-selling author, I've worked with thousands of women who struggle to stay motivated past the January high—especially when things get hard.

I love what Zig Ziglar says about this: "People say motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing. That's why we recommend it daily." It's so true. We can't expect to stay fueled for 12 months from the excitement of a new year. Instead, we need to be intentional about creating small habits that can fuel the flame in us throughout the year.

If you're struggling to stay motivated this year, here are three things you can do this week to get back on track:

•Remind Yourself of Your Why

When I coach women, the first thing I do is encourage them to define their *why*. Your *why* is the very specific reason for doing what you're doing and what you want to accomplish as a result. If you want to start a side business, for example, your *why* might be that you want to stay home with your newborn while still bringing in an income, and eventually turn it into a full-time job.

When you remind yourself of why you set that goal in the first place, it resets your focus and gives you the boost you need to get back to work.

•Make One Small Change

Sometimes, all it takes to multiply your productivity, which improves your motivation, is to make one small change to your environment or method of work. That could mean decluttering your workspace or moving to a completely new environ-

ment, like a coffee shop, to get better focus.

Or maybe you need to introduce something new into your daily routine. When I started listening to podcasts instead of music while getting ready for work, I multiplied my time by combining two things I wanted to do: Investing in my mind while putting on my makeup. The inspiring content is always a motivating way to start my day.

•Find a Cheerleader

There's nothing like encouragement from someone who cares about you to fire you back up. Grab a friend who could also use some accountability, and commit to being one another's cheerleader. Not only will you serve as their hype person when they need a pep talk, but when you're encouraging them it will energize you as well.

I love what Zig Ziglar says about this: "People say motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing. That's why we recommend it daily." It's so true. We can't expect to stay fueled for 12 months from the excitement of a new year. Instead, we need to be intentional about creating small habits that can fuel the flame in us throughout the year.

The bottom line is this: Staying motivated in 2019 requires you to *make a commitment*. We're all wired differently, so you have to choose what works best for you and then be intentional about injecting those things into each week. You won't achieve your goals by sitting still. And over time, motivation will go from being a once-a-year thing



Christy Wright



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Insurance and savings

Dear Dave,
I just realized our insurance has a health savings account (HSA) option. We've considered dropping this insurance soon and going to a cheaper Christian medical sharing program. We've got about \$19,000 in debt between credit cards and a car payment, and we're on Baby Step 2 of your plan. Our thought was to fund the HSA for a period of time as a means of saving, cancel that policy, then go over to a medical sharing program we found that costs \$600 a month less. After that, we would start paying down debt again. What do you think?

Amy

Dear Amy,
There are two components to an HSA, the insurance component and the savings component. You don't have to participate in the savings component. The insurance component is simply a large deductible, 100 percent coverage after the deductible, cheaper-premium health

insurance plan. If I were in Baby Step 2, I would not do the savings component. I would only do the insurance component, or I'd do the medical sharing program.

I'm not sure why you'd need to jump back and forth if you're going to permanently move to a medical sharing program. I get the idea of saving money, but what you're talking about isn't something I'd recommend for someone who's in debt. I wouldn't fund a savings account of several thousand dollars only for medical when you're not even on Baby Step 3, which is saving an emergency fund of three to six months of expenses. That money needs to be used to pay off debt first.

It's not the end of the world if you don't fund the HSA portion of your current insurance plan. If you went with a medical sharing program, and just saved up a large emergency fund, the only thing you'd really lose out on is the tax deduction associated with an HSA.

Good question!

Dave

**Dave Ramsey is CEO of Ramsey Solutions. He has authored seven best-selling books, including The Total Money Makeover. The Dave Ramsey Show is heard by more than 15 million listeners each week on 600 radio stations and multiple digital platforms. Follow Dave on the web at daveramsey.com and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.*

'FLAME,' from page 4

to being as natural as breathing—or, as Zig Ziglar reminds us, as often as bathing!

About Christy Wright:

Christy Wright is the #1 national best-selling author of Business Boutique, host of the Business Boutique Podcast, a Certified Business Coach and a Ramsey Personality with a passion for equipping women with the knowledge and steps they need to successfully run and grow a business. Since joining Ramsey Solutions in 2009, she has spoken to thousands across the country at women's conferences, national business conferences, Fortune 500 companies and her own sold-out live events. You can follow Wright on Twitter and Instagram @ChristyBWright and online at christywright.com or [facebook.com/OfficialChristyWright](https://www.facebook.com/OfficialChristyWright).

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37th Annual Miss RHS Pageant

Friday, March 1 • 7:00 PM
RHS Auditorium

The RHS Annual Staff will sponsor the 37th annual Miss RHS pageant on Friday, March 1 at 7 p.m. in the RHS auditorium.

The pageant offers an array of talent and beauty. Miss RHS 2019 will be awarded over \$1,300 in cash and prizes. Mrs. Addie Harbin will be emceeing this year's pageant. Miss Ellie Kerby, Miss RHS 2018 and student at UNA, will also be assisting and performing.

The contestants will be competing in judges' interview, evening gown, and talent. Escorts are Carson Reeves, Brayden Bendall, Elijah Lawler, Lazaro Chavez, Juan Lara-Trejo, and Christian Aguirre. Ms. Cindy Smith Coan is the director of the pageant, and Dr. AnnaKay Holland is the coordinator of the pageant and Annual Staff sponsor.

Annual Staff and the Event Planning class assist with the pageant. Tickets will be sold on the night of the pageant. The costs of the tickets are \$10.00. Programs will be available for \$5. This event is one of the highlights of the year. There will be lots of entertainment that you will not want to miss.

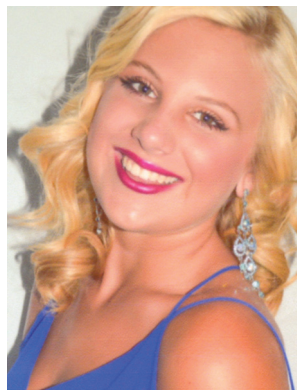
We are so excited to add Rising Stars to our pageant this year. Each contestant in the pageant was asked to select two girls who are students in Russellville City Schools to assist in their performance. The first group of rising stars are the Little Misses. These are girls in grades kindergarten through fifth grade. You will see these little ladies during the evening gown revue.

The next rising star group is the Little Sisters. These are girls in grades six through eight. They will be introducing themselves and the talent for their Big Sister during the talent portion of the pageant. It is hoped that these young ladies will use this opportunity to be in front of this audience and one day want to be contestants in the Miss RHS pageant. We are building a tradition --something we are very good at doing at Russellville City Schools.

Miss RHS Little Misses are Camden Carson, Tinley Cleveland, Emmy Green, Erin Hope Grimes, Macy Hall, Ruby Gist Harbin, Ella Grace Hargett, Rylee Knight, Audrey Oliver, Lily Cate Pace, Mackie Drew Parker, Yaritza Perez, Collin Noelle Pouncey, Grace Rogers, Lily Rogers, Layla Rush, Ranev Susanne Stone, Alexa Nichole Trapp, Bayleigh June Warhurst and Ella-Blayke Wimberley.

Miss RHS Little Sisters are Maggie Bishop, Madilyn Calderon, Karley Fletcher, Halle Reese Grimes, Stella Hill, Melanie Lara-Trejo, Silvie Kaye Miller, Ashlee Moon, Kara Beth Moore, Sarah Ann Morgan, Kinsley Palmer, Peyton Leigh Parrish, Caylin Pinkard, Mylee Pounders, Drew Reed, Allie Scott, Chloe Sheffield, Lexie Wells and Ebony West.

The proceeds from this event will benefit the students by defraying their cost of the yearbook. We hope your schedule will permit you to come and support our RHS students.



**Madeline
Elizabeth Cooper
Contestant #1**

**Sophie
Caroline Hill
Contestant #2**

**Malorie
Brooke Pace
Contestant #3**

**Anna
Joy Byars
Contestant #4**

**Shelby
Allison Carson
Contestant #5**

**Celia
Echeverria
Contestant #6**

Talent: Vocal and Ukulele Performance "Beautiful Thing" by Grace Vanderwaal.

Talent: Musical Theatre Dance "Just Keep Moving the Line" by Megan Hilty.

Talent: Baton Twirling "Greased Lightning."

Talent: Baton Routine to "Sing" by Pentatonix.

Talent: Musical Theatre Dance to "The Greatest Showman" from the movie *The Greatest Showman*.

Talent: Vocal and Piano Performance "Hallelujah" by Pentatonix.

Madeline is the daughter of Matt and Greta Cooper. As a freshman, Madeline is an active member of the Junior Varsity Cheer Squad, Junior Varsity Tennis Team, Musical Theatre, Acapella Ensemble, and Freshman Class President.

Sophie is the daughter of Eric and Tara Hill. Sophie is a freshman at RHS and is an active member of the Junior Varsity Cheer Squad (Co-Captain), Christian Students United, Musical Theatre and Drama Club, Cosmetology Club, along with being an AFTT competitive dancer and instructor.

Malorie is the daughter of Johnathan and April Pace. As a freshman at RHS, she is an active member of the Marching Hundred as a Majorette. She is also a member of the Lady Golden Tiger Volleyball Team, the Junior Varsity Basketball Team, and a competition twirler.

Anna is the daughter of Stratt and Connie Byars. As a sophomore, Anna is active in the Marching Hundred as a majorette, the Annual Staff, Future Business Leaders of America, Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America, and Christian Students United.

Shelby is the daughter of Ken and Denese Carson. She is a sophomore. Shelby is an active member of Varsity Cheer Squad, Student Council – Sophomore Class Secretary, Peer Helpers, Health Occupations Students of America, and Annual Staff.

Celia is the daughter of Aldo and Lissett Echeverria. As a sophomore, Celia is an active member of the Future Business Leaders of America, Health Occupations Students of America, Science Club, Spanish Club, and Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America.



**Alayna
Grace Fish
Contestant #7**

Talent: Piano
Arrangement Walt
Disney's "The Beauty
and the Beast."

Alayna is the daughter of Michael and Mellisa Fish. As a sophomore, Alayna is an active member of the Varsity Girls' Golf Team, the Junior Varsity Cheer Squad, Health Occupations Students of America - Parliamentarian, American History Honors Club, and Student Booster Club.



**Lauren
Mae Sturdivant
Contestant #8**

Talent: Vocal
Performance "One and
Only" by Adele.

Lauren is the daughter of Leslie and Kellie Sturdivant. She is a sophomore at RHS. Lauren Mae is an active member of the Varsity Cheer Squad, the Musical Theatre, Student Booster Club - Vice President, Christian Students United, along with Future Educators Association.



**Kaydee
Don Holland
Contestant #9**

Talent: Hip Hop Dance -
Michael Jackson and
Usher Remix.

Kaydee Don is the daughter of Mark and AnnaKay Holland. She is a junior at RHS. Kaydee Don is an active member of the Varsity Cheer Squad, Varsity Tennis Team, Franklin County Junior Leadership Team, AFTT Company Dance Team, as well as Student Council Vice President.



**Madyson
Grace King
Contestant #10**

Talent: Vocal
Performance "A Change
is Gonna Come" by
Sam Cooke.

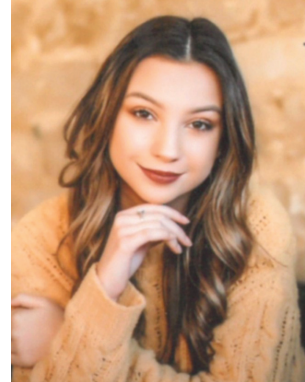
Madyson Grace King is the daughter of Heather King-Love, and the granddaughter of Jeff and Donna King. As a junior, Madyson is active in the Musical Theatre, Acapella Jazz Ensemble, Franklin County Junior Leadership Team and *The Roxy's Legend of Toyland*.



**Sydney
Grace Medley
Contestant #11**

Talent: Vocal Performance
"Think of Me" by Andrew
Lloyd Webber's *The
Phantom of the Opera*.

Sydney is the daughter of Jamie and Cassie Medley. As a junior, Sydney is an active member of The Marching Hundred-Tigerette Danceline, Student Booster Club President, Student Council Junior Class President, Golden Tiger BIGS (Big Brothers Big Sisters), as well as Russellville First Baptist Youth Praise Team.



**Abby Brooke
Montgomery
Contestant #12**

Talent: Vocal
Performance "Part of
Your World" by Disney's
The Little Mermaid

Abby is the daughter of Barry and Samantha Montgomery. Abby is a junior at RHS. She is an active member of The Marching Hundred-Tigerette Danceline, Junior Leadership Team, Annual Staff, Musical Theatre, along with being a member of the All-State Choir and Show Choir.



Emma Reed - Contestant #13

Talent: Baton Twirling to "The Greatest Show" from the movie *The Greatest Showman*.

Emma is the daughter of Amy Reed and the late Steve Reed. As a junior at RHS, Emma is a majorette in The Marching Hundred, a member of the Robotics Team, Rocketry Team, Future Business Leaders of America, and Franklin County Junior Leadership Team.

37th Annual Miss RHS Pageant



**Ashton
Shipley
Contestant #14**

Talent: Vocal
Performance "A Million
Dreams" by the cast of
*The Greatest
Showman*.

Ashton is the daughter of Karri Cummings and Grant Shipley. As a junior at RHS, Ashton is an active member of the RHS A Capella Ensemble, Health Occupations Students of America, and the RHS Chorus.



**Caroline
Touchstone
Contestant #15**

Talent: Tumble and
Dance "Ease on Down
the Road" by Michael
Jackson and Diana
Ross.

Caroline is the daughter of Kevin and Lea Touchstone. Caroline is a junior at RHS. She is an active member of the RCS Youth Leadership Academy, American History Honors Club, 30+ ACT Club, Christian Students United, as well as FCCLA.



**Emma
Claire Bragwell
Contestant #16**

Talent: Jazz Dance -
"Emotions" by Mariah
Carey

Emma Claire is the daughter of Brian and Amy Bragwell. She is a senior at RHS. Emma Claire is Project Chairperson of the National Honor Society, a member of the Varsity Tennis Team, Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Annual Staff, President of SADD, as well as Historian of FBLA.



**Sydney
Holt
Contestant #17**

Talent: Vocal
Performance
"Somebody to Love"
by Queen.

Sydney is the daughter of Dusty and Sherry Holt. As a senior at RHS, Sydney is a member of the Marching 100 Tigerette Danceline, the Christian Students United, the Student Council, along with Franklin County Junior Leadership Team.



**Yaslin
Perez
Contestant #18**

Talent:
Dance Routine
"El Luego Luego"
by La Furia Oazacena.

Yaslin is the daughter of Venustiano Perez and Aurora Cuenca. She is a senior at Russellville High School. Yaslin is involved in the National Honor Society, FCCLA, Book Lover's Club, Spanish Club, and Cosmetology Club.



**Elizabeth
Pierce
Contestant #19**

Talent: Vocal
Performance "My Heart
Will Go On" by Celine
Dion.

Elizabeth is the daughter of Alison Pierce. As a senior, Elizabeth is an active member of National Honor Society, the Tigerette Danceline, Musical Theatre, Marching 100 Percussion, well as the RHS A Capella Ensemble.

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Prescribed fires are beneficial in many ways

Submitted

The months of February, March and April are prime time for prescribed fires across the Tennessee Valley. Hugh Standridge, senior manager, Natural Resources Management, explains how TVA uses fire to improve our region's wildlife habitat.

FEBRUARY 6, 2019—Wildfires, like the devastating fires that swept California in late 2018, are always a threat to forested land. But TVA takes careful steps throughout the year to care for its forests, including "prescribed burns" that are done on purpose.

The months of March and April are prime time for prescribed fires across the Valley because of moisture levels left by winter rains. But unlike deadly wildfires that were seen in the Valley in 2016 and California in 2018, this fire is a prescribed burn on TVA land designed to promote wildlife habitat and recreation.

"Fire is beneficial to the environment if it is managed properly," says Hugh Standridge, senior manager, TVA Natural Resources Management. Standridge leads a team of TVA natural resources professionals that helps to manage 293,000 acres of public lands across seven states.

•Burning for Benefits

Over the next two months, TVA employees will join with various state and federal agency partners to conduct about 20 prescribed fires on its public lands across the Valley. TVA estimates that it will burn about 2,000 acres this spring. As a result, the fires will prepare sites for seeding of

native grasses, control invasive plant species, improve habitat and enhance the aesthetics and access for recreation.

"Safety is our primary focus, and there's a lot that goes into the process before we conduct a prescribed fire," says Standridge.

While wildfire prevention is not the primary goal of prescribed fires, controlled burning reduces underbrush, fallen limbs and other flammable material in wooded areas, which reduces some of the quick-burning fuel that can feed wildfires.

While wildfire prevention is not the primary goal of prescribed fires, controlled burning reduces underbrush, fallen limbs and other flammable material in wooded areas, which reduces some of the quick-burning fuel that can feed wildfires.

Standridge explains that like other state and federal agencies that use fire to manage public lands, TVA develops an extensive safety plan and habitat management objectives for each parcel or groups of parcels that would benefit from a prescribed fire. Then TVA submits the plan to the appropriate State Division of Forestry for review and to obtain a fire permit. Finally, the prescribed fire area is prepared to ensure all the safeguards and necessary controls are in place—such as fire breaks—to protect the public and property.

"Conditions must be perfect," he explains. "If conditions aren't right—if the ground is too dry, too wet, or if it's too windy—we stop everything until it's perfect."

•Nurturing Wildlife

Some land management practices have suppressed fire which allows invasive plants to out-

compete native grasses. But TVA believes that fire is a natural component in an ecosystem, and uses fire strategically to maximize the benefits for wildlife habitat and recreation.

Each year TVA conducts prescribed fires on public lands to maintain, create and protect some of the most diverse habitats in the Tennessee Valley, like rare prairies and glades, and native pine forests.

According to Standridge prescribed fires rejuvenate the land to support a healthy functioning natural habitat here in the Tennessee Valley.

"If left unchecked, invasive species can choke-out native plant species harming the Valley's ecosystem," Standridge explains. "Warm-season grasses are one of the foundations for the food chain—birds eat the seeds, bats eat the insects and deer graze in the open fields. Fire promotes the growth of these grasses and a healthy food chain."

•Benefits for Recreation

Fire improves habitat for game animals (deer, turkey, quail, etc.) as well as non-game animals, such as songbirds, for birdwatching enthusiasts. Fire also improves the land's aesthetic value by promoting flowering annuals and biennials and creates open spaces for vistas such as a park like setting.

Each year TVA conducts prescribed fires on different parcels of land to ensure each area is properly managed for wildlife habitat and recreational activities.

"TVA's mission is to protect the environment, and it's rewarding to go back after a prescribed

See 'FIRES,' page 10

Open for business



COURTESY PHOTO

The new Belgreen High School Bulldog Branch of Community Spirit Bank celebrated its opening last week with a ribbon cutting. Located on the BHS campus, the student-led branch is a way to increase financial knowledge for Belgreen students.



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'FIRES,' from page 9

fire to see native plants and animals thrive once again," Standridge says. *Safety First* All prescribed fires are permitted by the appropriate State Division of Forestry. The local fire department is notified before a prescribed fire

begins. If you see a fire and are not sure if has been prescribed, immediately report it to your local fire department. If it is happening on TVA land, call the TVA Police at (855) 476-2489.

'POLICE,' from page 1

Winborn's partially clothed body was found at the location of a former landfill, which is now used by the Russellville Electric Board and the City of Russellville to pile debris. Police said Winborn's body appeared to have been there "at least a couple days" when REB employees found her. The location is locked at night but is accessible during the day as electric board employees go back and forth from there. The investigation is being primarily handled by RPD, with assistance from Alabama Law Enforcement Agency and the Franklin County Sheriff's Office, Tompkins said. "Through this whole investigation we've been hoping for an arrest, but, as

of right now, we're still putting the pieces and timelines together," Tompkins said. "We're aggressively working on it all hours of the day." Tompkins said he has received information from the public on Winborn's death, and he asks anyone with information to call RPD at 256-332-2230. "Any information we can get would be greatly appreciated," Tompkins said. As far as naming a suspect or indicating whether an arrest was imminent, Tompkins declined to offer specifics. "As far as names of suspects, we're not releasing any specific information or what direction we're going in the investigation, other than to say it remains a priority for our department," Tompkins said.



We love to hear from you! Send your guest columns, recipes, cartoons, letters to the editor and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com. For updates on news and sports throughout the week, don't forget to check us out online at franklinfreepress.net!

What's Happening

256.332.0255

EVENTS OF INTEREST • FAMILY REUNIONS • PLAYS • CHURCH GATHERINGS • EDUCATIONAL • CLUB MEETINGS

AARP Tax-Aide will be providing FREE income tax preparation at the Department of Human Resources in Russellville on Thursdays through April 11. You do not have to be a member of AARP, retired or a certain age to use this service. Call Ben at 256-332-0252 for an appointment, which is required.

The Alabama Cooperative Extension Office will hold a Gardening Series at the Russellville Public Library from 10:30-11:30 a.m. on the following dates: Wednesday, February 27 - Pruning Fruits and Ornamentals; Wednesday, March 6 - Spring Vegetable Gardening; and Wednesday, March 13 - Seeds & Wildlife.

The Russellville Bicentennial Kickoff will be held this Friday, March 1 at 10 a.m. on the east side of Sloss Lake. A monument commemorating the original site of the town of Russellville will be unveiled, and mayor David Grissom will read a resolution. The public is invited to attend this kickoff event!

East Franklin Volunteer Fire Department will be serving William Earl Bishop's smoked chicken and pulled barbeque pork plates from 4-7 p.m. this Friday, March 1. Proceeds will go toward the purchase of a backup generator. The fire department is located at 10443 Hwy. 81, Phil Campbell, AL 35581. Plates cost \$10 each. Thanks for your support!

The NAACP of Alabama presents its 2019 Gala this Friday, March 1 from 7 p.m.-midnight at the Capital City Club, 201 Monroe Street, Suite 2100 in Montgomery. Cost is \$50 per person. The event is being held in conjunction with the 54th anniversary of the Bridge Crossing Jubilee. For information or tickets, call Patricia Mokolo at 205-534-5204, or log onto www.alnaacp.org.

The gospel group Purpose will be hosting the second annual Russellville Spring Sing/Campmeeting Revival Tour this Saturday, March 2 at 5 p.m. at the A.W. Todd Center in downtown Russellville. Special guests will include Ava Kasich, Epps Family, The Riders and Day Three. Everyone is invited. NO admission fee, but a love offering will be taken. Concessions will be available. For more info, call 256-627-8784 OR go to www.facebook.com/purpose.al.

The Bay Tree Council for the Performing Arts in Red Bay announces auditions for its third production of the season, *They'd Hang You in Nashville* by William and Gleason and directed by Scotty Kennedy. Auditions will take place this Sunday, March 3 at 2 p.m. and Monday, March 4 at 7 p.m. at the Weatherford Centre in Red Bay. The cast calls for seven male and four female parts, with older teens able to play adult parts. The performance dates of the play will be April 25-28 at the Weatherford Centre in Red Bay, with tickets going on sale Monday, April 15. You may contact Beth Hammock at 256-356-9286.

The Franklin County Emergency Management Agency will be hosting a storm spotter class taught by The National Weather Service of Huntsville on Tuesday, March 5 at 6 p.m. at Belgreen Fire Department (4325 County Rd. 524, Russellville, AL 35653). This is open to the public and all local rescue squads, fire departments, police departments, ambulance services and sheriff department personal. Looking forward to seeing all of you at this class. For more info, please call the Franklin County Emergency Management Agency at 256-332-8890.

Spruce Pine Historical Society meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Spruce Pine Community Center in Spruce Pine. Next meeting will be March 5. All members and friends are urged to attend.

The Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert with special guest Billy Lawson at the Roxy Theatre in Russellville on Saturday, March 9 at 7 p.m. General admission seating. Doors open at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for children ages 6-12, and free for children under 6. The KGB will be the featured act at a show sponsored by the Franklin County Arts Council at the Roxy on the second Saturday of each month. Call 256-335-4356.

The next meeting for American Legion Post 64 will be Thursday, March 14 at 7 p.m. at the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.

Osborn Hill Cemetery will meet on Thursday, March 14 at the Littleville Town Hall at 6 p.m. to elect officers for the coming year. Donations are needed to help maintain the perpetual care now and in the future. Please make check payable to the Osborn Hill Cemetery Fund, c/o Mrs. Lana Duncan, 2330 Colburn Mtn. Road, Tuscumbia, AL 35674, or to the Valley State Bank in Russellville, AL 35674. We encourage everyone to come.

Ronnie McDowell and his band will return to Russellville on Saturday, March 16 at 7 p.m. for another benefit for the historic Roxy Theater. Franklin County's own Joseph Baldwin will be the opening act. For ticket information, please call 256-415-3270 or 256-460-8988. Reservations are going fast! Floor tickets are \$20 to \$30, and general admission balcony tickets are \$15.

The 15th annual Relay for Life Open Bass Tournament will be held at Cedar Creek at Slick Rock Boat Ramp on Saturday, March 30 from 7 a.m.-3 p.m. Entry fee is \$70 per boat. \$10 per boat for Lunger (100% payback). \$1,000 guaranteed to first-place winner! Second and third place will pay out based on number of entries. Five-fish limit per boat. Only two contestants per boat. Large mouth, small mouth and spotted bass only will be counted. Fish must measure 12 inches with mouth closed and roll tail. Make all checks payable to American Cancer Society. For more information, contact Rhonda Boyles (4125 Waterloo Road, Russellville, AL 35653 or 256-627-4112) or Jamie Sumerel (256-762-5123).

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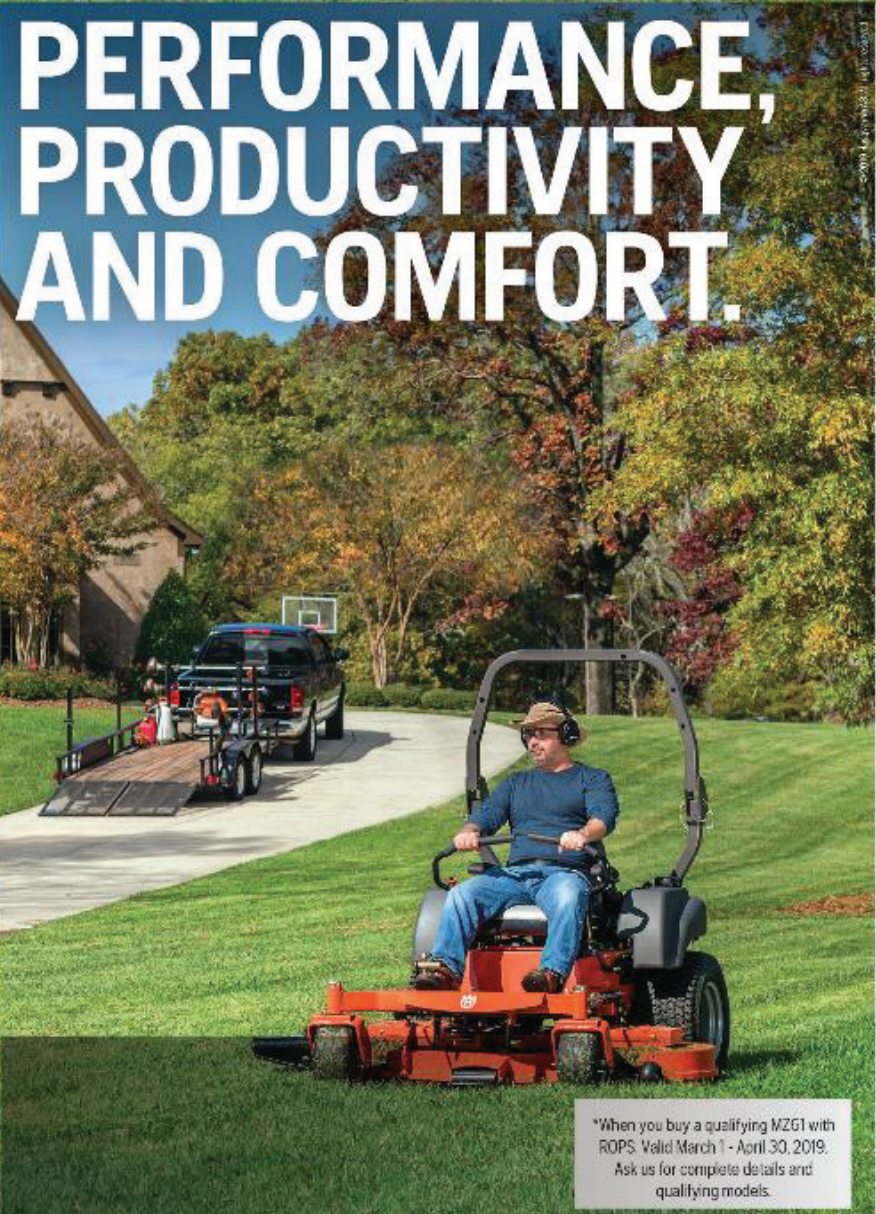
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Tharptown freshman fans 14 in victory over Hackleburg

Staff reports

Tharptown freshman Jayden Mitchell struck out 14 Hackleburg hitters in just 4.2 innings last Monday, helping the Wildcats earn a split of their Opening Day doubleheader with a 10-6 win over the Panthers.

After Tharptown (1-1 through Sunday) staked him to an early lead with two runs in the top of the first, Mitchell went to work in the bottom half. He issued a leadoff walk but then struck out the next three batters. The Wildcats added a run on an RBI single by Greyson Studdard in the top of the second, and then Mitchell struck out the side again in the bottom of the inning to run his strikeout streak to six straight batters.

Tharptown scored twice in the top of the third to make it 5-0, and then Hackleburg (1-1) finally got to Mitchell in the bottom of the third, scoring two runs on a walk and two hits. The freshman struck out the side again, however, giving him nine K's through three innings and keeping it a 5-2 game.

Mitchell struck out all three batters he faced in the bottom of the fourth, and then the Wildcats broke open the game with five runs in the top of the fifth to make it 10-2. Mitchell recorded two more strikeouts in the bottom of the inning but also allowed a walk and three straight singles, reaching the 100-pitch mark.

Sophomore Hunter White relieved to get the final out and preserve the 10-6 win.

Mitchell (1-0) allowed four earned runs on five hits in 4.2 innings, recording all 14 of the outs he got on strikeouts. He walked three, throwing 59 of his 100 pitches for strikes.

White led Tharptown at the plate, going 1-for-4 with four runs and two stolen bases. Studdard went 1-for-4 with two RBIs, and Jessie Mitchell was 1-for-2 with two runs scored. Dawson Higgins was 1-for-3 with an RBI, and Jayden Mitchell walked three times, stole a base and scored a run.

Colton Simmons drove in one run and scored another, and Hunter Motes walked and scored.

Sawyer Lynch and Kaleb Moore each had two hits and two RBIs for the Panthers.

In previous action last Monday:

See 'FRESHMAN,' Page 17

The Ultimate Worker

Leadership.
Character.
Dedication.
All of these
intangibles
helped Red
Bay senior
Kolby
Bragwell
earn a shot
at Shelton.



Bragwell with Shelton State head coach Bobby Sprowl

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

RED BAY - One recent Friday in the weight room at Red Bay High School, Tiger football coach Michael Jackson came across his now-former quarterback and safety, Kolby Bragwell, in the midst of a heavy leg workout.

Now, it's worth pointing out that nobody appreciates the value of pumping iron more than Jackson. Two things in this instance, however, gave the coach pause.

One was the amount of weight Bragwell was squatting—well in excess of 400 pounds. The other was the fact that Bragwell was only 48 hours away from heading down to Shelton State for a baseball tryout that would go a long way toward determining his collegiate future.

With those two things in mind, Jackson raised his eyebrows in the direction of Red Bay baseball coach Richard Maggerise and expressed his concern in the form of a question.

Should he be doing that?

"I went over to Kolby and just reminded him, 'Hey, you know you're going to Shelton in two days, right?'" Maggerise said. "He was like, 'It's okay, Coach, I got this.'"

Maggerise shared this story last Thursday morning in the Tiger Den, the upstairs room of a building/banquet hall that overlooks the football field at Fred Bostick Jr. Memorial Stadium. The place was packed to the gills with Red Bay students, faculty

and administrators, along with teammates, friends, family members and other supporters of Bragwell who had turned out to watch the senior slugger sign a scholarship offer to continue his baseball career at Shelton.

As Maggerise and Jackson both addressed the crowd with remarks on one of the most accomplished two-sport athletes to suit up for the Tigers in quite some time, a few common themes began to emerge. One was Bragwell's leadership. Another was his character. Still another was his dedication—that unwavering commitment to working hard and making the most of his considerable natural gifts.

"He's got bat speed, number one," said Sprowl, a former major league pitcher and 30-year veteran of the coaching ranks. "The ball seems to jump off his bat. He's got good size, too. I think he's the ultimate worker. He wants to get better."

"It's hard work, but it's fun as well," said Bragwell, a strapping 6'2, 215-pound right-handed hitter who earned All-State honors for a second straight season in 2018 after setting career-highs across the board with a .544 average (49-for-90), six home runs, 31 RBIs, 36 runs scored, 17 stolen bases and a .637 OBP in 29 games. "I love baseball, and it's just fun to be around these guys, my teammates. I work hard, but most of these guys are coming up there with me. They push me harder. We push each other each and every day. It's

See 'WORKER,' Page 16

Lady Tigers fall one game short of Final Four



PHOTOS BY KYLE GLASGOW

Miller (23) was one of two senior starters for a Red Bay team that ran the table in Class 2A, Area 13 this season. That perfect 8-0 mark included a road win on December 21 at Winston County (below), where Kuykendall (34), McCollister (middle) and Blackburn (22) helped the Lady Tigers prevail 56-44.

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

HANCEVILLE - Cold Springs entered last Tuesday's Class 2A Northwest Regional final with a well-earned reputation as a prolific three-point shooting team.

Red Bay's girls (capable but prone to streakiness from beyond the arc) actually kept pace with the Lady Eagles on threes Tuesday afternoon.

The one's and the two's, however, gave the Lady Tigers trouble.

Red Bay struggled to finish shots around the basket and went 5-for-14 from the foul line, allowing Cold Springs to pull away and punch its ticket to the Final Four for the first time in 10 years with a 54-36 win at Tom Drake Coliseum.

"I sort of thought we did what we needed to do," said Red Bay coach Holly Kuykendall, whose team matched Cold Springs (26-6) with seven threes on the day but made only five baskets from inside the arc and shot just 21 percent (12-for-57) from the floor overall. "We just missed too many easy shots. Then they just pulled away at the end and got a little lead on us. The game plan pretty much went how it was supposed to go. We just missed too many layups.

"The girls played hard. I couldn't have asked for much more from them—other than a few more layups, and a few more free throws."

Layups and free throws were mere afterthoughts in the first quarter as the two teams bombed away from distance, combining to make eight three-pointers (four by each squad). Seniors Reagan Kuykendall and Mallori Miller hit one three apiece for Red Bay (15-17), and then sophomore guard Macy Faulkner buried back-to-back triples to cap off an 11-3 run by the Lady Tigers that cut Cold

Springs' lead to 19-16 at the end of one.

"Red Bay did a great job tonight," said Lady Eagles coach Tammy West. "They shot the ball well. I've watched them a lot, and I hadn't seen them shoot the ball like that. They came out prepared and shot the ball well. They came out on fire at the start of the game from outside, and that was something I really didn't think was gonna happen."

Faulkner nailed her third three of the game off an assist from Lila Blackburn barely a minute into the second quarter, pulling Red Bay even at 19-19.

"The competition we had throughout the whole season has definitely brought us to this point, helping us finish games," said Kuykendall, one of Red Bay's two senior starters and the only Lady Tiger with any on-court experience in Hanceville prior to last week.

"It felt good, since I haven't been hitting them a lot in practice," said Faulkner, who hit another three in the third quarter on her way to finishing with a team-high 13 points and earning All-Tournament honors. "I got in there and missed my first few, and I was like, 'You're just gonna have to get your head in.' I stopped thinking about it and just let it fly."

The Lady Tigers cooled off late in the first half, however, enduring a scoreless stretch of nearly four-and-a-half minutes. Toni West and Camryn Crider each knocked down a three in an 8-0 run by the Lady Eagles that gave them a 27-19 lead with 2:40 left before the break.

Kuykendall scored on a drive to snap Red Bay's drought, but Elizabeth Hill and Crider each made a pair of free throws to send Cold Springs into the locker room with a 31-21 lead.

"I told the girls at halftime that I felt like [Red Bay]

See 'TIGERS,' page 15



'TIGERS', from page 14

had shot the ball so well," Tammy West said. "And we weren't shooting it bad at the time either. But I felt like we would be able to score with Elizabeth taking the ball to the basket and not having to rely as much on the outside shot."

West was right, as Hill (a 5'11 junior guard) attacked the paint in the third quarter on her way to scoring eight of her game-high 20 points. The Lady Tigers, meanwhile, continued to struggle converting good looks around the basket, shooting just 2-for-12 from the floor in the third and watching Cold Springs open up a 42-28 lead.

Destiny McCollister, a 6'0 sophomore coming off a season-high 14-point outing (on 7-for-10 shooting) against Altamont in the previous week's regional semifinals, shot just 1-for-11 last Tuesday (including 0-for-4 in the third quarter) and finished with three points.

"We had already played them earlier, and we have a little bit of size, so she really didn't hurt us the last time we played her," said West, whose team had beaten Red Bay 42-25 on December 27. "We did want to be aware of where she was, but we felt like she'd have a harder time scoring against us just because of our size."

Despite her offensive struggles, McCollister did finish Tuesday's game with 11 rebounds and three blocked shots. She also got a strong vote of confidence from her head coach moving forward.

"I knew we were gonna have to shoot the ball well today to play with them," Holly Kuykendall said. "We were gonna have to hit outside shots and make our inside shots, too. I thought as soon as we started hitting outside shots, the openings inside would come available. We just didn't capitalize on it."

"I think Destiny felt a little bit of the weight of the world on her," Holly Kuykendall said. "She was feeling like she had to do so much. Just being a tenth-grader, she's gonna continue to be an outstanding player. With just a little more time, she's really gonna bring it on home for us and be a difference-maker."

"I knew we were gonna have to shoot the ball well today to play with [Cold Springs]. We were gonna have to hit outside shots well and make our inside shots, too. I thought as soon as we started hitting outside shots, the openings inside would come available. We just didn't capitalize on it."

Faulkner's fourth and final three of the game late in the third pulled Red Bay within 14 going to the fourth, and the Lady Tigers got a baseline floater from Miller and a bucket from Kuykendall to cut the lead to 11 at 44-33 with 4:15 remaining. Cold Springs went 5-for-6 at the foul line over the next couple of minutes, however, pushing the lead back out to 16 at 49-33 and sealing the deal on a regional championship.

"We've had some big wins down here the last two years, but we haven't been able to get *the* big win," said Tammy West, whose team lost to Phil Campbell in last year's regional final and is now headed to Birmingham for the first time since 2009. "It's a great feeling to get to this point. It's all we've talked about since we lost down here last year."

"Red Bay shot the ball well, but I thought Elizabeth Hill just took over the game with her ability to drive and get to the rim, and we were finally able to get the win."

Hill, who left the floor in the fourth quarter with a sprained ankle and was on crutches after the game, finished with 20 points, five rebounds and four assists, earning Regional MVP honors. West added 11 points and eight rebounds, and Crider had eight points and five boards. Cold Springs shot 39 percent (16-for-41) from the floor and 15-for-21 from the line.

Faulkner led Red Bay with 13 points. Kuykendall joined her on the All-Tournament team and finished last Tuesday's game with 12 points and seven rebounds. Miller added five points and four assists. Sarah Williams scored two points, and Cassidy Kuykendall had one.

The Lady Tigers finished two games under the .500 mark, but Reagan Kuykendall credited a tough schedule with helping her team put together a successful season—one that included a perfect 6-0 record in area play during the regular season, an area tournament title and four straight postseason wins prior to last Tuesday's loss, culminating in an Elite Eight bid.

"The competition we had throughout the whole season has definitely brought us to this point, helping us finish games," said Kuykendall, one of Red Bay's two senior starters and the only Lady Tiger with any on-court experience in Hanceville prior to last week.

Faulkner agreed.

"The tournaments we played in were unreal," she said. "We played some really tough teams."

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ATHLETE of the WEEK

Reagan Kuykendall

Senior Forward, Red Bay

Kuykendall capped off her Red Bay career by earning All-Tournament honors at the Northwest Regional last week in Hanceville.

After totaling 11 points, five rebounds and three assists in a semifinal win over Altamont on February 15, Kuykendall scored 12 points and pulled down seven boards against Cold Springs in the regional final. The 5'8 senior averaged 11.5 points and 6.0 rebounds in two games at Tom Drake Coliseum.

For the season, Kuykendall led the Lady Tigers in scoring with 12.6 points per game.



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'WORKER,' from page 13

fun to see it finally pay off."

Bragwell's willingness to work—along with a few of those aforementioned natural gifts—definitely stood out to Shelton State coach Bobby Sprowl, who attended last Thursday's signing ceremony.

"He's got bat speed, number one," said Sprowl, a former major league pitcher and 30-year veteran of the coaching ranks. "The ball seems to jump off his bat. He's got good size, too. I think he's the ultimate worker. He wants to get better."

Maggerise has seen the fruits of Bragwell's labor over the course of a varsity career that began midway through the 2014 season, when he played his way into the starting lineup as a seventh-grader. He's been a staple in the middle of the order and on the left side of the infield ever since, earning high praise from his head coach for his performance at the plate.

"Outside of Peyton Thomas [a former Class 2A Hitter of the Year at Phil Campbell who is now playing as a freshman at North Alabama], I haven't seen a lot of high school hitters with his ability," Maggerise said of Bragwell, who opened his junior season with 26 hits and five home runs in his first 37 at bats on his way to finishing the year with 16 multi-hit games. "Not just to drive the ball out of the park, but smart hitting. He can hit behind runners. He can drive the ball to the opposite field with power. There are not a lot of things Kolby can't do on the baseball field. He can play all nine positions if needed. He can hit in any situation, in any part of the lineup.

"It's been nice to be able to pencil him in that three-spot for five year now. I don't know what I'm gonna do when he's gone."

Maggerise's loss will be Sprowl's gain, and the long-time coach believes that Bragwell's ability to do different things with different pitches in different situations will serve him well at Shelton State.

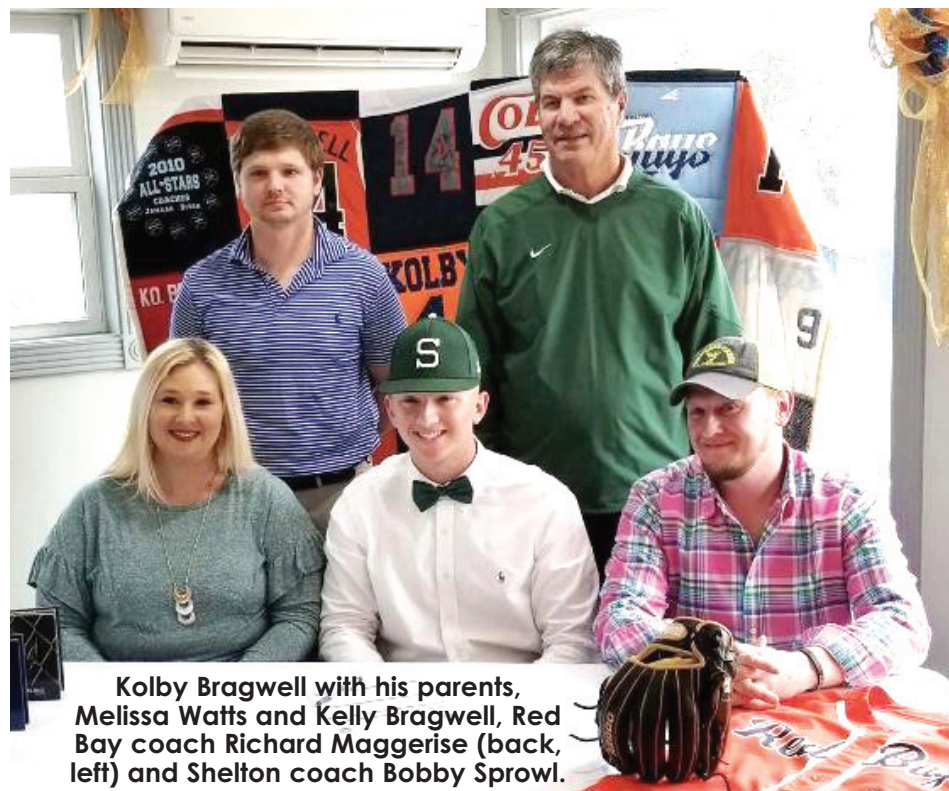
"I think the biggest thing is, all kids wanna cheat to get the fastball now," Sprowl said of the adjustment process that takes place between the high school and the JUCO level. "We're so into hitting fastballs now that we forget that a groundball to second sometimes is just as good as a fly ball to left, with a runner on base. I think the biggest thing that kids have to learn how to do is learn how to situational-hit, to be able to do some stuff, because strikeouts don't do any good.

"We knew who [Bragwell] was, but he came down and he worked out for us, and he showed us some tools that we think are gonna translate to our level. The one thing about a guy like him—whenever he plays, everybody knows him, and that forces you to have some plate discipline. You learn how to hit pitches other than a fastball. Most kids can hit the fastball now. It's the breaking stuff that's gotten better."

"It's hard work, but it's fun as well," said Bragwell, who earned All-State honors for a second straight season in 2018 after setting career-highs across the board with a .544 average (49-for-90), six home runs, 31 RBIs, 36 runs scored, 17 stolen bases and a .637 OBP in 29 games. "I love baseball, and it's just fun to be around these guys, my teammates. I work hard, but most of these guys are coming up there with me. They push me harder. We push each other each and every day. It's fun to see it finally pay off."

Bragwell, who batted a solid .375 as a sophomore before blowing up last year as a junior, talked about his improvement and growth as a hitter.

"My approach....I just wanna hit a line drive," he said. "I know I'm gonna see a lot of off-speed, because last year I had such a breakout year. I've learned to hit a curveball and off-speed and not just take some pitches and make 'em miss and throw me a fastball so I can get a good opportunity to get a good hit. I just go up there trying to hit a line drive. I don't ever go up there trying to hit a home run, because line drives turn into home runs."



Kolby Bragwell with his parents, Melissa Watts and Kelly Bragwell, Red Bay coach Richard Maggerise (back, left) and Shelton coach Bobby Sprowl.

Sprowl sees the potential for Bragwell to become an impact player for Shelton—both at the plate and on the mound.

"He fills some power, some gap power, some home run power," Sprowl said, "as well as possibly being a two-way guy for us."

Shoulder trouble limited Bragwell to just 20.1 innings on the mound in 2018, but his arm looked plenty lively last Monday when he struck out eight Hamilton hitters in six innings of two-hit ball in his first outing as a senior.

"When healthy, Kolby is as good as anybody," Maggerise said. "He's never focused on [pitching]. It's always been kind of a secondary thing for him. He's never really had to focus on it. When he gets down there in that environment and continues to grow both physically and mentally...there's no telling.

"Right now, he's sitting 84 to 86 [miles per hour] with ease. The other night against Hamilton, he threw six innings, first day of the season, and he's got eight strikeouts. He had some control issues, but he was blowing it by guys. It's the first game of the year, so we're not throwing anything off-speed. They knew fastball was coming, but they still couldn't catch up to it."

Maggerise said that Vina baseball coach Donovan Hand, a former Hatton High School and Jacksonville State star who went on to pitch for two teams in the major leagues, believes that Bragwell's long-term potential may be even higher on the mound than it is at the plate.

"The sky's the limit," Maggerise said.

Fittingly, Bragwell's two favorite memories—thus far—from his high school career include both a big day at the plate and on the mound.

"Last year, we were playing against Lamar County [on April 12], and we had to win that game for the area," Bragwell said. "I hadn't pitched a full game all year because of my shoulder. We went into that game, and I threw a no-hitter. My teammates, we were just ecstatic, because it pushed us into the playoffs. We were all really happy.

"One of our first games last year, we were playing our cross rival Belmont, at Belmont. My first at bat, I hit a home run to center field, and I knew it was gone. We were actually talking in the dugout, and they were like, 'I bet you don't hit two.' My next at bat, I hit one into left field. That's probably one of my best memories from here, hitting those two home runs in one game."

Bragwell finished that early-season game from last February 3-for-3 with five RBIs, setting the tone for what would become a monster year. He's hoping for even bigger things—both for himself and his team—in 2019.

"We're a senior-dominant team," he said. "We have really good leadership and work ethic. We've been around Coach Maggi all these years. Last year, we got put out in the first round of the playoffs. We're hoping to make a deep playoff run."

After that, Bragwell will be headed to Tuscaloosa to continue his career with the Bucs. Beyond that? Bragwell has designs on parlaying his time at Shelton into an opportunity to play in the SEC.

"It's a junior college," he said when asked what appealed to him about Shelton State. "I want to get a good education, and I feel like that'll be a good start, especially coming from a small school like me. They also have a very good baseball program. I have a lot of respect for Coach Sprowl. He's a good coach, and he's been there for a while. I think I'll have a good chance to be successful."

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Hamilton rallies late to knock off Red Bay

Staff reports

Hamilton rallied for five unearned runs with two outs in the top of the seventh inning last Monday, spoiling Opening Day at Red Bay with a 10-6 win over the Tigers.

Senior Kolby Bragwell started on the mound for Red Bay (0-1 through Sunday) and worked six strong innings, allowing five runs (just one earned) on two hits while striking out eight and walking four. He left after having thrown 107 pitches and gave way to reliever Chase Allen, who came on to start the seventh with the Tigers leading 6-5.

Allen (0-1) allowed a base runner but also recorded two quick outs, putting Red Bay one out away from an Opening Day win. What followed was a walk, two errors, a wild pitch, a walk, two more wild pitches, a walk and an error, allowing Hamilton (1-0) to score five unearned runs and take a 10-6 lead.

The Aggies would up winning despite being out-hit by Red Bay 10-3.

Hamilton scored four unearned runs off Bragwell in the top of the first, but Red Bay wasted little time in rallying to take the lead. The Tigers got a two-run single from senior Peyton Green in the bottom of the first to cut the lead in half and then got a two-run triple from Cade McKinney in a four-run second inning, surging in front 6-4. Bragwell put up four straight zeroes before Hamilton got a run off him in the top of the sixth, cutting the lead to 6-5.

McKinney finished 2-for-4 with two RBIs and two runs scored. Green was 2-for-4 with two RBIs, and Bragwell went 2-for-3 with a run and a walk. Trey Daughtry went 1-for-2 with a run, and Allen, Kaleb Sims and Kaleb Bragwell also had one hit apiece.

'FRESHMAN,' from page 13

Hackleburg 11 Tharptown 6

The Panthers rallied to score nine runs over their final three at bats, coming from behind to win last Monday's opener.

Trailing 6-2, Hackleburg tied the game with four runs in the bottom of the fourth before scoring three times in the fifth and two in the sixth to get the win.

Greyson Studdard started on the mound for Tharptown and went 3.1 innings, allowing five runs (just one earned) on one hit. He struck out three and walked five before giving way to Hunter White, who took the loss in relief. White (0-1) allowed six runs (just two earned) on four hits in 2.2 innings, with three strikeouts and two walks.

The Wildcats out-hit Hackleburg 9-5 but were charged with 11 errors in the game.

Hunter Motes led Tharptown at the plate, going 3-for-4 with a run. Jayden Mitchell was 2-for-3 with a double, an RBI and a run, and Studdard went 2-for-4 with a run. Colton Simmons was 1-for-4 with an RBI, and Travis Staten went 1-for-3 with a walk and drove in a run.

Hunter White walked twice and scored, and Carson Petree had a walk and a run scored. Jessie Mitchell also walked and scored.

Sawyer Lynch and Kaleb Moore scored three runs apiece for Hackleburg. Moore had a double, and Lynch went 1-for-4. Ethan Heggy was 1-for-5 with two runs scored.

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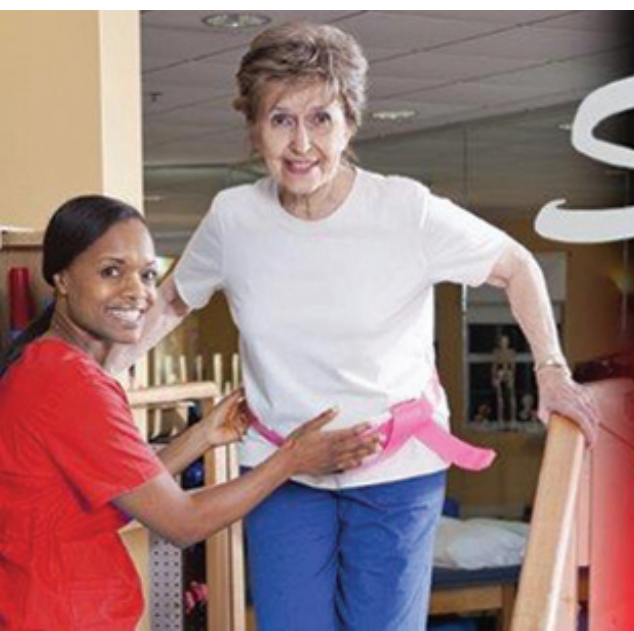
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Golden Tigers jump on AU commit early, but Russell County rallies for 7-6 victory

Staff reports

Russellville jumped on Auburn commit Logan Austin for four early runs last Monday, but Russell County rallied to score four times in its final two at bats and beat the Golden Tigers 7-6 on Opening Day in Oxford.

Austin, a 6'3 junior right-hander with a fastball that touches 94 on the gun, ran into trouble in the top of the first when he plunked leadoff man Cole Barnett and then allowed a single up the middle to Jackson Lindsey. A double-steal put runners at second and third, but Austin righted the ship by striking out Devin Buckhalter and Hunter Briles.

He then hit Peyton Ray to load the bases, and Caden Parker walked to force home the game's first run. Austin struck out Gordon White to leave the bases loaded and keep it a 1-0 game.

Sophomore Rowe Gallagher got the start for Russellville and worked a one-two-three bottom of the first. The Golden Tigers then added three more runs in the top of the second. They loaded the bases with one out on walks to Gallagher and Barnett and an infield hit by Lindsey. Buckhalter then came through with a two-run double to left, making it 3-0.

Briles added an RBI single, stretching the lead to 4-0, before Austin recovered to strike out the next two batters and strand two more runners.

Russell County got on the board with a run in the bottom of the second, and then Austin retired Russellville in order in the top of the third. Russell County scored twice off Gallagher in the bottom half to cut the lead to 4-3.

The Golden Tigers got one of those runs back in the top of the fourth. Barnett singled, stole second and moved to third on a bunt hit by Lindsey.

Buckhalter then drove in his third run of the day with an RBI groundout to make it 5-3.

Parker relieved to start the bottom of the fourth and worked a one-two-three inning. Russellville put together a walk, a catcher's interference and base hits by Gallagher and Barnett to score another run in the top of the fifth, stretching the lead to 6-3.

Russellville jumped on Auburn commit Logan Austin for four early runs last Monday.

Austin, a 6'3 junior right-hander with a fastball that touches 94 on the gun, got no decision, allowing five earned runs on seven hits in five innings. He struck out 10 and walked four, hitting two batters and throwing 116 pitches.

Russell County mounted a late comeback, however, scoring twice in the bottom of the fifth and twice in the bottom of the sixth to take a 7-6 lead. The Golden Tigers failed to score in their final two at bats and took a tough one-run loss.

Austin got no decision, allowing five earned runs on seven hits in five innings. He struck out 10 and walked four, hitting two batters and throwing 116 pitches.

Parker (0-1) took the loss in relief, allowing four earned runs on four hits in three innings. He struck out three and walked two. Gallagher also worked three innings, allowing three earned runs on five hits. He struck out three and walked three. Both he and Parker threw 57 pitches.

Barnett, a sophomore, finished 2-for-3 in the leadoff spot with a walk, two stolen bases and three runs scored. Lindsey, another sophomore, went 3-for-4 with two steals and a run scored.

Buckhalter, a senior and one of only three returning regulars in the lineup, was 2-for-4 with a double and three RBIs.

Briles, another senior, went 1-for-3 with an RBI and a walk. Gallagher, a sophomore, was 1-for-3 with a run and a walk, and sophomore John David Bishop went 1-for-4. Russellville out-hit Russell County 10-9.

In other action last Monday:

James Clemens 7 Russellville 2
James Clemens pounded out 11 hits, including two home runs, three doubles and a triple, in Monday's win in Oxford.

Sophomore Gordon White started and took the loss for the Golden Tigers (0-2). White surrendered a leadoff home run in the top of the first but then retired the next three batters. Russellville then tied the game with a run in the bottom of the inning. Jackson Lindsey doubled to center with one out and moved to third on a single by Devin Buckhalter. Lindsey scored on a steal of home as Buckhalter was caught stealing second, tying the game 1-1.

James Clemens got three runs in the top of the second to take a 4-1 lead. Caden Parker doubled and scored for the Golden Tigers in the bottom of the second, but that would prove to be their final run of the day.

White (0-1) worked a scoreless third, fourth and fifth inning before allowing a run in the sixth. The sophomore right-hander went six innings, giving up five earned runs on 10 hits. He struck out one and walked two. Senior Tanner James relieved in the seventh and allowed a walk and a two-run homer in one inning of work.

Lindsey, Buckhalter and Parker had Russellville's only three hits.

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Lady Golden Tigers edge Hatton for first win

Staff reports

Megan Warhurst and Chalea Clemmons combined to hold Hatton to four hits on Monday afternoon, and Madison Murray put Russellville ahead to stay with an RBI single in the third inning as the Lady Golden Tigers picked up their first win of the season, 3-2.

Warhurst started in the circle for Russellville (1-1) and worked a scoreless first inning. Hatton took advantage of an error, a walk, a passed ball and a groundout to push across an unearned run in the top of the second and take a 1-0 lead.

The Lady Golden Tigers jumped in front with two runs in the bottom of the inning. Murray and Warhurst started the rally with back-to-back singles, and Murray later scored the tying run on an error. Chalea Clemmons also had a single in the inning and scored the go-ahead run on a double-steal to make it 2-1.

Hatton capitalized on two more Russellville errors in the top of the third, scoring another unearned run to pull even. The Lady Golden Tigers took the lead for good in the bottom half when Jenna Whitfield singled, stole second, moved to third on a groundout and scored on Murray's RBI single to center.

Warhurst gave way in the top of the fourth to Chalea Clemmons, who worked around a walk and a single to keep it a 3-2 game. Clemmons retired Hatton in order in the fifth and then pitched around a one-out single in the sixth with the help of a 4-6-3 double play started by Murray at second base.

Clemmons allowed a leadoff single in the top of the seventh but then retired the next three batters, stranding the tying run at third when Mallory Lane lined out to Karlie Moore at shortstop for the final out.

Warhurst (1-1) picked up the win, allowing two runs (both unearned) on one hit in three innings. The senior lefty struck out three and walked two. Clemmons, an eighth-grader, picked up the save with four scoreless innings of relief. She allowed three hits and a walk, striking out two.

Clemmons also led Russellville at the plate, going 3-for-3 with a run and a stolen base. Murray was 2-for-2 with an RBI and a run scored, and Warhurst also went 2-for-2. Whitfield finished 2-for-3 with a run and a stolen base.

A.J. Taylor went 1-for-3 and stole a base, and Alivia Clemmons also stole a base.

Ward stays hot for AU

Staff reports

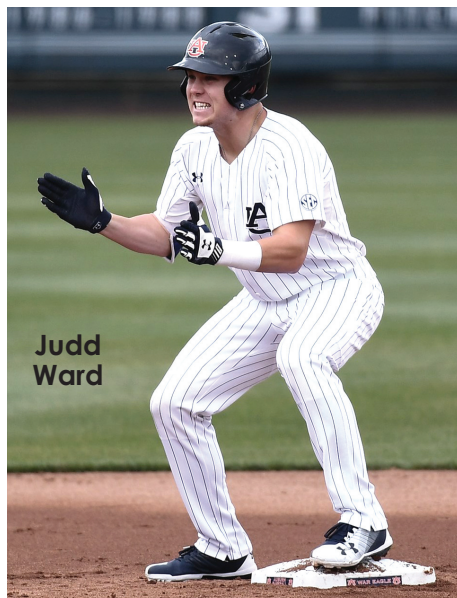
Former RHS star Judd Ward, now a sophomore outfielder at Auburn, continued his hot start to the season on Sunday, stroking a go-ahead two-run triple in the fourth inning to help the Tigers improve to 6-2 with a 13-9 win at Central Florida.

Auburn trailed 6-5 in the top of the fourth before Ward (batting in the leadoff spot) stepped to the plate with two men aboard and delivered his first triple of the season, putting the Tigers on top to stay.

Ward finished Sunday's game 2-for-4 with three RBIs, two walks and two runs scored, raising his average on the season to .323 (10-for-31). The former Golden Tiger great has started each of Auburn's eight games this season and has a .979 OPS, six RBIs, seven runs and seven walks.

Ward also has three extra-base hits on the year, including his first collegiate home run. Last Wednesday, in a 10-2 rout of Alabama A&M at Plainsman Park in Auburn, Ward went 1-for-2 with a homer, two RBIs, two runs, a walk and a stolen base.

Sophomore pitcher Cody Greenhill, who together with Ward helped lead Russellville to three consecutive Class 5A state titles from 2015-17, is also off to a good start for Auburn this season. Greenhill made his third



Judd Ward

appearance on Sunday in Orlando, finishing off the 13-9 win with a perfect inning of work. He also pitched in last Friday's series opener at UCF, retiring all four hitters he faced and picking up his first save of the year in a 4-1 win.

On the season, Greenhill (who earned freshman All-America honors pitching out of the bullpen in 2018) has worked five innings, allowing one earned run on four hits with one strikeout and one walk.

Auburn will return to action with a three-game series at home against Cincinnati starting on Friday.

Ashley Berryman took the loss for Hatton, allowing three earned runs on nine hits in five innings. She struck out four and walked one.

Russellville out-hit Hatton 10-4 on the day.

In previous action:

Buckhorn 10 Russellville 1

Buckhorn broke open a tie game with three runs in the bottom of the fourth and then added six more in the sixth last Monday, pulling away from Russellville on Opening Day of the 2019 high school softball season.

Senior left-hander Megan Warhurst started in the circle and pitched a complete game for the Lady Golden Tigers. Warhurst, a West Florida signee, gave up an RBI double to Morgan Nowakowski in the bottom of the first. Buckhorn loaded the bases, but Warhurst escaped further damage with a strikeout to keep it 1-0.

Warhurst struck out two in a one-two-three second inning and then pitched around a single by Nowakowski in the bottom of the third with the help of an inning-ending 1-6-3 double play.

Russellville rallied with two outs and nobody on to tie the game in the top of the fourth. Jenna Whitfield and Autumn Logan both walked, and senior Karlie Moore delivered an RBI single to left to make it a 1-1 game.

Buckhorn regained the lead for good in the bottom half of the inning, scoring three runs on one hit, one sacrifice, two wild pitches, a walk, a hit batter and a two-out error. Buckhorn then scored six runs in the bottom of the sixth to put the game out of reach.

Warhurst (0-1) took the loss, allowing four earned runs on six hits in six innings. She struck out five and walked eight, throwing 133 pitches (70 strikes).

Moore finished 2-for-2 with an RBI and a walk. Alivia Clemmons had Russellville's only other hit. She went 1-for-2 and got hit by a pitch.

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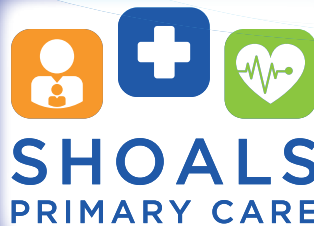
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