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Qualifying deadline for primaries set for Nov. 8

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

If you're considering a run for elected office in 2020, you'd better decide well before the new year rolls around, as the deadline for qualifying for party primary elections is Friday, November 8, 2019.

Several years ago the Alabama Legislature voted to change Alabama's primary election during Presidential election years to March, rather than the traditional first Tuesday in June. The 2020 Republican and Democratic primary elections in Alabama are set for Tuesday, March 3.

The 'motivation' behind the move was to make Alabama more relevant in the national Presidential primary picture, but as a solidly Republican state, Alabama's support for President will likely remain strong-

ly with President Donald Trump.

Some critics of the early primary believe it was done to make it more difficult for incumbents to face challengers, some of whom may not be aware of the earlier qualifying period.

Several years ago the Alabama Legislature voted to change Alabama's primary election during Presidential election years to March, rather than the traditional first Tuesday in June. The 2020 Republican and Democratic primary elections in Alabama are set for March 3.

The administrative calendar for Alabama's 2020 statewide election provides that candidates seeking nomination by a party primary must file declaration of candidacy with the state party chairman (for state, circuit, district or legislative office) or the county party chairman

See 'DEADLINE,' Page 9

Local planning and prep in full swing for 2020 census

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Although Alabama residents won't receive their census forms until next March, the planning and preparation in advance of the 2020 census is already in full swing.

The Franklin County Census Committee met May 2 at the Franklin County Courthouse Annex to discuss strategies to maximize citizen participation in the important event, which occurs nationally every 10 years.

"They were here to come together and share what their plan for the 2020 census will be and to get all community leaders involved," said Franklin County probate judge Barry Moore. "Because the census affects so many aspects of our state and county, from Congressional dis-

tricting to federal dollars, we are setting our plan out early so everyone will know what is expected from us."

"Because the census affects so many aspects of our state and county, from Congressional districting to federal dollars, we are setting our plan out early so everyone will know what is expected from us," said Franklin County probate judge Barry Moore.

Most federal programs whose funding allocations are determined by population rely on census data to calculate the division of monies to states. That averages out to about \$1,600 per person in Alabama in federal funding.

Completing a census form will help ensure that Alabama receives its fair share of funding, officials say.

See 'CENSUS,' Page 9

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Alyce Jean "Jeanie" Berry, Sugar Land, Texas
(formerly of Russellville), age 58

Died Tuesday, April 23, 2019. Memorial service held at the Settegast-Kopf @ Sugar Creek Funeral Directors in Sugar Land, Texas.

Royce Dale Frederick, Jr., Russellville, age 46

Died Wednesday, May 1, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Calvary Missionary Baptist Cemetery.

Ruth H. Johnson, Russellville, age 90

Died Sunday, April 28, 2019. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home. Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens.

Nellie Sue McKinney, Russellville, age 91

Died Saturday, May 4, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

Carolyn McWilliams Sockwell, Russellville, age 75

Died Friday, May 3, 2019. Funeral held at Siloam Missionary Baptist Church. Interment in Bethlehem Cemetery. Pinkard Funeral Home assisted the family.

Faris E. Taylor, Russellville, age 90

Died Monday, April 29, 2019. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home. Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens.

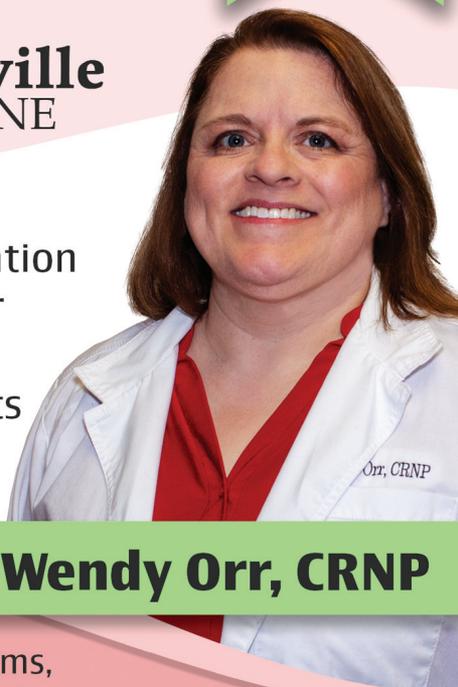


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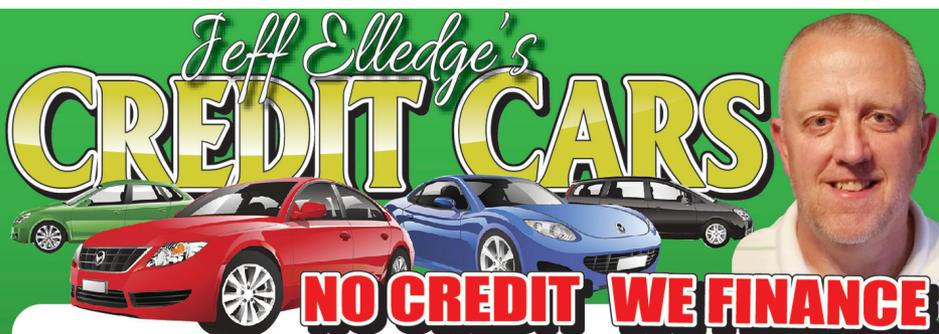


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RCS Board renews contract for PR services

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A short meeting of the Russellville City Board of Education included the renewal of an annual contract with Kellie Singleton to provide public relations services for Russellville City Schools.

The board met April 24 and approved the contract with the same terms and payment as the previous year. Singleton will receive \$20 per hour for public relations services up to a maximum of \$20,000.

In other action, the board:

- Approved trip requests for Russellville Middle School cheerleaders to attend cheer camp at the University of North Alabama from June 11-14.

- Approved a facility use request from the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce to use the RHS auditorium for the annual Franklin County Watermelon Festival Pageant July 19-20.

- Approved the retirement of Sheila Jackson, aide at RES, and Ginger Saylor, RES teacher, both effective June 1, 2019.

- Approved employment in position for the Summer 21st CCLC Program for the following persons: Meredith Dorroh, Debra Lawler, Kelsey Pruitt, Nicole Clingan, Rhena Westmoreland, Rhonda Pounders, Ponda Gordon, Marlena Young-Jones, Carly Hellums, Donna Bolton, Gayla Mills, Jennifer Lindsey, Kendra Howard, Lenita McDaniel, Jennifer Bishop, Katie Bradford, Rebecca Logsdon, Justin Chandler, Nancy Foster, Carol Fretwell, Donna Trapp, Liza Scott, Tiffany Standridge, Lisa Thorn, Heather Godwin, Melissa Greenhill, Karren Sewell, Melissa Espinoza, Paula Pounders, Caitlan Smith, Jamie Oliver, Cortney Green, Rachel Willis, Jacob Wallace, Leah Masterson, Lauren Hellums, Brittany Sykes, Emily Rush, Sharon Robinson and Tiffany Bohannon.

- Approved volunteers including Barry Reach and Peyton Balentine for football spring training and Jennifer Willis, Heather Davis, Karlee Mauk, George Rendon and Alison Bryant for RHS Marching Hundred Auxiliaries.

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Honey Do: Check your deck

The first big holiday of the spring/summer season is almost here. If you are planning outdoor activities, you may need to check your deck for safety, stability and finish.

To ensure the safety of your guests, inspect all railings, steps and supporting wood. Replace or repair any wood that may be loose or show signs of rot, splitting, twisting or maybe excessive wear. Look for any nails that may have popped up and hammer them back in.

Once you are sure of the stability of your deck, take a look at the finish. Is it weathered or faded? Does it need to be resealed?

To ensure the safety of your guests, inspect all railings, steps and supporting wood. Replace or repair any wood that may be loose or show signs of rot, splitting, twisting or maybe excessive wear.

There are a couple of tests you can perform to see if your deck needs waterproofing. Drop several drops of water onto the deck. If the water beads up, the deck is still protected and doesn't need to be waterproofed now. If a drop soaks into the wood, it means the old finish or waterproofing layer has worn away, leaving the wood unprotected.

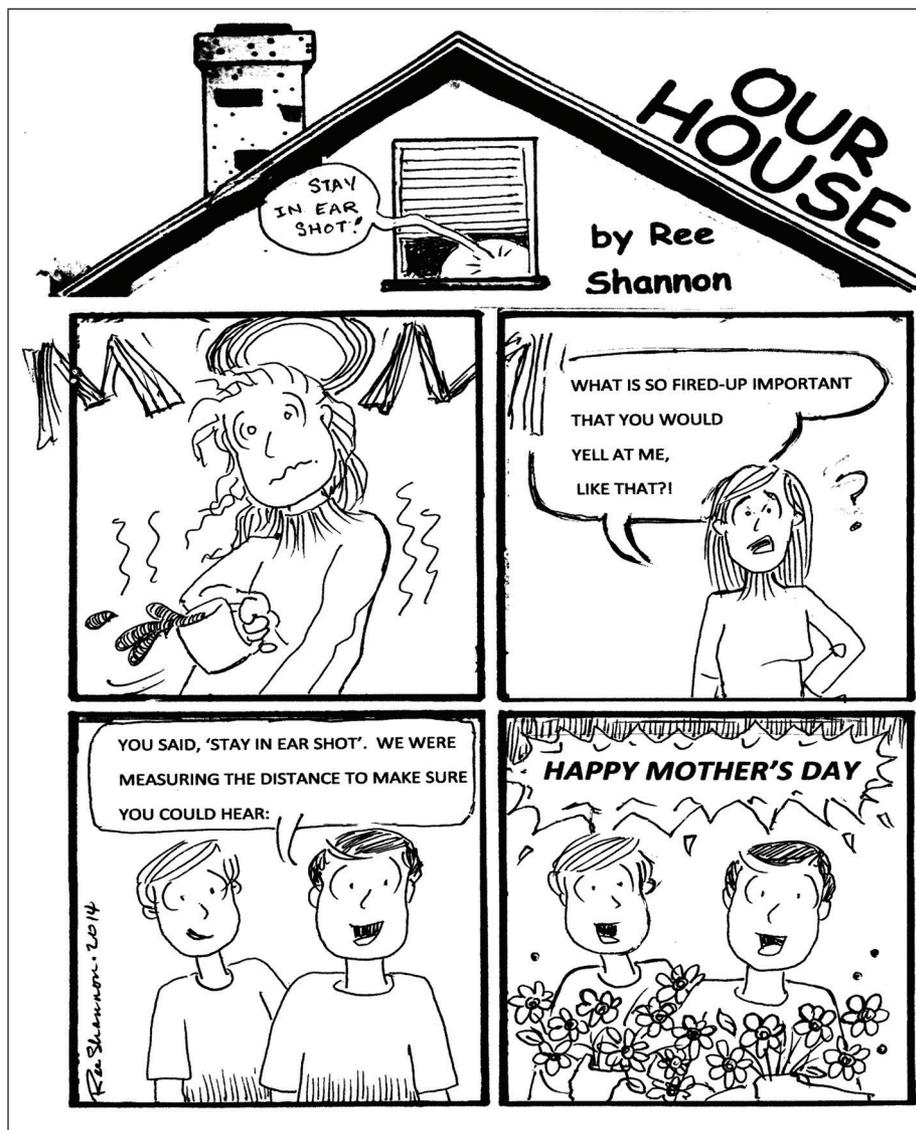
You can also firmly press a piece of tape against the surface to be stained. The presence of old stain or wood fibers on the tape could indicate a potential moisture problem. Remove eroded wood fibers and loose stain by using a wood stripper and then sanding and power washing the surface.

If your deck looks faded and gray, it's time to refinish with some coats of stain. All stains are waterproofing sealants as well, allowing you to stain and seal in one step. If it's time to refinish your deck, consider using a quality stain. All stains protect wood from moisture, but some provide better protection from UV rays. Clear stains only protect wood, while pigmented stains provide a higher degree of UV protection.

Depending on the look you want, you may choose a clear seal, a solid color stain or a semi-transparent stain that will show more of the grain of the wood. Next week we'll look at the steps to take when cleaning, waterproofing or staining your deck. Remember, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.



Doug Green



FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

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Letters to the editor

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She held my hand, she holds my heart

As Mother's Day nears, my mind goes back throughout the years, when my mother had to become a "dual parent" upon the accidental death of my daddy.

She had to learn how to deal with her loss. She no longer had her special someone to lean on for the encouragement, the strength, the financial support nor the comfort that she once had.

How can a broken heart pick up the pieces of one moment in time that changes a mother's responsibility so dramatically?

Losing a spouse changes a person's life and their thought process. For a daddy's girl, losing the best daddy in the world causes an everlasting eternal emptiness. When those two emotions collide, moving forward is not always easy.

We both struggled with our own loss, and we struggled together with a shared loss. We never got it perfect, but we never gave up trying.

My mother had always enjoyed being a mother, but she had never imagined the task of being responsible for a dual parenting role. It was so tough on her, but I had a tough mother. She struggled a lot. She cried and laughed a lot. And she prayed a lot. During all this, her abundance of love never failed.

She had a hard life, but it never hardened her. She was a special, special lady. She was loved by many, but I was the lucky girl who called her my mother and friend.

My mother was a warrior! She fought for everything she believed in. She would fight man, foe or beast to protect her children. She had the biggest heart of anyone I've ever known, but it would change to steel if need be. Her small 5'3" frame could become a mighty giant. She could definitely become a force to reckoned with.

With all this toughness, she carried a beauty from without to within. She could work like a man and then morph into the most beautiful princess in the world. She had character, grace, poise and one of the sweetest smiles, personalities and hearts of any mother I've known. She had a hard life, but it never hardened her. She was a special, special lady. She was loved by many, but I was the lucky girl who called her my mother and friend.

I was fortunate enough to have a mother who didn't shield me from the "real world." As a matter of fact, she prepared me for the worst. She told me life wasn't always easy, and for that I'm thankful most of all. Anyone can exist in a peaceful world without life's lessons, but it takes constant training in preparing for the unexpected circumstances.

My mother never had the opportunity to finish the fourth grade. She was one of the oldest of six siblings, so she had to work and take care of the youngest. She told me often how she would have loved to have gone more years to school, but that wasn't a choice she had. But with the knowledge and wisdom of life's lessons, my mother was equivalent to a graduating student. I was so proud of her. She wasn't limited to book sense. She was the wisest person I've ever known.

As Mother's Day approaches, I want to think God for my mother! She was a blessing to me! We held hands a lot during our years together, and God continued to bless me when He allowed me to hold her hand as she took her final breath.

So, if you still have a mother, would you go hold her hand and tell her what she means to you?

My mother knew!



Gail Motes



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by Dave Ramsey

When to start the process?

Dear Dave,
My husband and I are debt-free, and we have an emergency fund of six months of expenses saved. We'd like to buy a home in the \$250,000 to \$275,000 price range in the near future, and we plan on saving \$60,000 for a down payment.

It should take a little less than two years to save that much money. When should we begin the search for a good real estate agent and start the underwriting process?

Sarah

Dear Sarah,
I'm really proud of you two. You're being very intentional and goal-oriented about getting control of your finances and the home-buying process.

I'd advise starting a conversation with a quality mortgage company when you're about five or six months away from your savings goal date. There's "pre-approval," but there's also something called "certified." That's a step beyond pre-approved, and it basically puts you in a position to make an offer when you're ready for the purchase. So, getting certified as a buyer is very helpful. After that, sit down and talk with a few agents. Interview them, and decide on someone you like and trust. Find an experienced agent you're comfortable with to guide you through the real estate world, and then start outlining your search and buying strategy.

What I would *not* do is jump from agent to agent. There's a tremendous benefit in finding someone you trust and feel good about. I'm talking about a buyer's agent who's

going to fight for *you*. This means someone who will show you several different properties, keep your wants and needs foremost in their mind, and help you get the best possible buy on your new home!

Dave

A home shouldn't leave you house poor

Dear Dave,
My husband and I were listening to your radio show the other day. In it, you were speaking to a lady about buying a home. When you talk about mortgage payments being 25 percent or less of your take-home pay, does this figure include taxes and insurance or just principal and interest?

Ann

Dear Ann,
That figure includes taxes and insurance, too. The whole idea is to make sure your house payment is manageable. You don't want to have so much money going toward your mortgage every month, what I call being "house poor," that you can't take care of your other financial responsibilities or enjoy life.

It's simple. You have more money when you don't have debt. If you want to build wealth, you have to get out of the payment business. When one-third to one-half of everything you bring home is going to creditors, you have less money for other stuff—other *important* stuff.

Trust me, I get it. A home is a huge expense that very few people, especially those just starting out, can afford to pay for in cash. That's why I don't beat people up for getting a 15-year, fixed-rate mortgage. But that's the only kind of mortgage I recommend.

And yes, make sure the monthly payments are just 25 percent, or less, of your take-home pay!

Dave

**Dave Ramsey is CEO of Ramsey Solutions. Follow Dave on the web at daveramsey.com and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.*



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What's Happening

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

 Russellville Masonic Lodge 317 is selling Boston butts for Memorial Day. Butts are \$30 and may be pre-ordered by calling 256-810-1970. Pickup will be Saturday, May 25 from 8-10 a.m. at the Lodge on Coffee Street.

 The Shoals Area Chapter of the Order of St. Luke will meet in the Sheffield Room at Park Place (501 N. Montgomery Avenue, Sheffield) this Thursday, May 9 at 2:30 p.m. Linda Romine will teach on "God Heals and Restores the Broken." We believe that God heals spiritually, physically and emotionally. Prayer for healing will be offered. All are welcome.

 American Legion Post 64 will meet Thursday, May 9 at 7 p.m. at the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.

 The Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert with special guests Andrew and Avery Guinn at the Roxy Theatre in Russellville this Saturday, May 11 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. Call 256-335-4356. 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. Proceeds will benefit the renovation and restoration of the Roxy Theatre.

 The Church of God of Phil Campbell will host a singing this Sunday, May 12, featuring the Sparks Family. The singing begins at 5 p.m. Covered dish supper will follow. The church is located on Highway 13 South in Phil Campbell. For more information, call 256-324-5288. Everyone is invited!

 Revival services with Bro. Marcus Lipscomb will be held at Mt. View Free Will Baptist Church May 13-15 at 7 p.m. Everyone welcome!

  For anyone with the courage to be honest about life's hurts, habits and hang-ups, First United Methodist Church of Russellville will host *Celebrate Recovery!* on Tuesday nights with supper at 6 p.m., large group at 6:30 and small groups at 7:30. Free childcare provided. Church is located at 311 North Jackson Avenue. Come and join us!

 The book *One Taste Too Many* by Debra H. Goldstein of Birmingham will be discussed at the May 15 10 a.m. meeting of the Readers of the Lost Ark Book Club. The club meets at Coldwater Books, 105 West Sixth Street, Tuscumbia. For more info, email nancy537481@yahoo.com.

 Dempsey Cemetery Decoration Day is May 19, 2019. Please have flowers removed from grave sites by Saturday, May 4 to prepare for Decoration Day. For more information, please call Hal Bray at 256-710-1120.

 You are invited to a big gospel singing on Saturday, May 25 at Sloss Lake in Russellville. Singing starts at 12 p.m. There will be local talent from 12-12:30 p.m., Williams Family from 12:30-1:30 p.m., Jeff Sanford from 1:30-2:30 p.m., Marvin Morrow Vernell from 3-4 p.m. and the Freemans from 4-5 p.m. Everyone is welcome, and please bring lawn chairs!

 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 June 4. All members and friends are urged to attend.

 The Russellville Bicentennial Committee will present a series of Saturday history events called "The Way We Were: Historical Demonstrations, Exhibits and Portrayals." Saturday events will be on June 8, July 13 and August 10. There will be different demonstrations, exhibits and portrayals each month. All events will be at the Russellville Canteen at 217 Washington Avenue. For more information, call Doris Hutcheson at 256-332-4085 or Chris Ozbirn at 256-332-8827.

 Attention all young ladies of Colbert, Franklin and Lauderdale counties entering 10th, 11th and 12th grades in the Fall of 2019!!! The Distinguished Young Women Scholarship Program will be held Saturday, August 3, 2019 at Norton Auditorium on the campus of The University of North Alabama. Young ladies entering the 12th grade will have the opportunity to compete for cash scholarships as well as many other scholarships to colleges and universities. Also, each county winner will have the opportunity to represent her county at the state program in Montgomery in January of 2020. Information and registration meetings will be held Wednesday, May 8, Wednesday, May 15 and Wednesday, June 5 from 4-5 p.m. at First Metro Bank, Muscle Shoals. Young ladies entering the 10th and 11th grades have the opportunity to be "DYW Little Sisters." For more information, contact Susan Hargett at 256-710-9239 or Katernia Cole-Coffey at 256-332-8880, or check information on our Facebook page at Distinguished Young Women of Northwest Alabama, or email dshargett@aol.com. Other information and sign up is available at www.DistinguishedYW.org. Please contact us no later than June 23.

 The NACOLG SenioRx Medication Assistance Program supplies free and low-cost medications for anyone in Alabama with a disability or a chronic illness, regardless of age, that requires daily medication. Medicare recipients may also be eligible. For more information, contact NACOLG SenioRx today. There is no charge for this service. Call 1-800-AGELINE (1-800-243-5463) or 256-389-0529 and ask for Paula Pardue. This program is in partnership with the state of Alabama and Alabama Department of Senior Services.

 Mountain Valley Hee Haw features live music every Saturday night. Show time is 6 p.m. Free admission. No alcohol or drugs. From Russellville, take 243 to Hwy. 79, turn right, go 1/4 mile, third building on left. For more information, please call 256-332-5479 or 256-810-4840.

Six local establishments earn satisfactory ratings

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Each of the six Franklin County establishments that received health ratings during the week of April 22-26 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 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.

Six of the seven 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 Big Star Supermarket #345, 406 4th St. NW, Red Bay, and Daily Bread BBQ, 305 South Jackson Ave., Russellville. Inspections of Franklin County businesses, with critical item violations noted, resulted in the following scores:

•The Grind Cafe and Coffee Shop, 13760 Hwy. 43, Suite 1, Russellville, 91. (Chicken in warmer out of temperature).

•Piggly Wiggly Market #93, 518 4th Ave. SW, Red Bay, 93. (Ants in produce market).

•Doe's Eat Place, 114 North Jackson Ave., Russellville, 93.

•Price Less Foods #493, 15160 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 96.

Of the nine inspections done in Colbert County from April 22-26, all received scores falling in the range of satisfactory. The high score of 99 went to Best Western Hotel, 1934 Hwy. 20, Tuscumbia.

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



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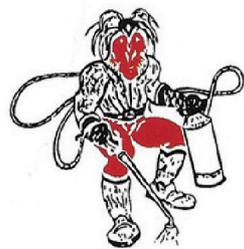
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'CENSUS,' from page 1

The Franklin County Census Committee consists of nine appointees and is chaired by Dick Rowland. Other members include Leah Mansell, David Palmer, Michael Hughes, Mary Hallman-Glass, Jason Miller, Greg Hamilton, Heath Grimes and Katernia Cole-Coffey.

The committee met with Carletta Singleton, a partnership specialist with the Census Bureau, to discuss strategies to encourage participation in the upcoming census. Completing a census form is required by federal law and carries a fine as a penalty. Mayor David Grissom, RPD chief Chris Hargett and other local officials joined the committee at Thursday's meeting.

The assistance programs tied to census data include programs that support children, health care, education, hospitals and rural development.

Another reason to participate is that Alabama is at risk of losing one of its seven Congressional seats if the 2020 Census data shows a decrease in population. That would mean one less voice for Alabama at the federal level.

"Not only is it the law to complete the 2020 Census, it's important for many reasons, including important funding for education," Grimes said.
"Russellville City Schools pledges its full support and assistance to help ensure a maximum community response to the census."

"Not only is it the law to complete the 2020 Census, it's important for many reasons, including important funding for education," said Grimes, Russellville City Schools Superintendent of Education. "Russellville City Schools pledges its full support and assistance to help ensure a maximum community response to the census."

In mid-March of 2020, every Alabama household will receive a packet from the U.S. Census Bureau in the mail. It will include information on how to complete the census form in one of three ways: Online via computer or smart phone; by calling a toll-free number and completing it over the phone with a U.S. Census Bureau employee; or calling a toll-free number and requesting a traditional paper form. Some rural areas (including some in Franklin County) with low internet access will get a paper form in the initial mailing.

Information supplied in answering the census may not be used by other agencies, pursuant to federal law. Therefore, it won't be used against you in any way or for any purpose other than census information.

"If we don't do a good job as a county and state in answering the census in 2020, it will be 2030 until we can make that correction," Rowland said. "Your voice matters. We all have a say. Just complete and return the 2020 census form. It's a simple civic duty."

Rowland also said there are employment opportunities available through the U.S. Census Bureau for Franklin County residents, especially those with bilingual skills. For more information, log onto <https://2020census.gov/jobs>.

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KGB show kicks off busy stretch for Roxy

Submitted to the FFP

This weekend is Mother's Day! The Kerry Gilbert Band has a special show planned at the historic Roxy Theater recognizing mothers. The music will include a blend of gospel along with many of the crowd's favorites. There will be a drawing for some special mother to receive a \$100 gift certificate to Doe's Eat Place. The recipient must be present to win.

The KGB's special guests include Andrew and Avery Guinn. They will be making their debut at the Roxy as the Guinn Brothers. We hope many of their friends and supporters will come out to support them.

June is a busy month for the Arts Council as

many entertaining activities are planned at the Roxy. The KGB will do a special 50s and 60s repertoire of songs on June 8. Plans also include the Cotton Flat Cruisers and other local antique car clubs to bring their antique cars to the show.

Chris Stewart has been a broadcaster since 1988 and is in his 17th season as the University of Alabama's men's basketball play-by-play announcer for the Crimson Tide Sports Network. He also serves as broadcast host for the "The Nick Sabin Show." He will present a fun and entertaining evening on his experiences and inspirations as a broadcaster.

The UNA Starlighters Jazz Band will present an entertaining evening at the Roxy on Friday, June 21. Dr. Terrance Brown, UNA Performing Arts

Department chairman, will present a program on a new project at UNA called CREATE.

Renowned country music singer, songwriter and TV personality Whisperin' Bill Anderson will be in concert at the Roxy on Saturday, June 22. He has been on the Grand Ole Opry radio program in Nashville, TN since 1961.

If you like drama and comedy, then plan on attending the "Wooden Nickel Man" on Saturday, June 29. It is a Blues Stage Play about love and forgiveness of a family. The play is produced by Miz Barbie Dolle Productions of Montgomery and will feature our own Larry Freeman.

Mark these dates to plan on coming out for some good entertainment and supporting the Roxy Theatre.

'DEADLINE,' from page 1

for county offices no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, November 8, 2019.

Several races of interest are expected locally in 2020, including Franklin County Revenue Commissioner (Republican incumbent Veronica Stancil), all four seats on the Franklin County Commission (Republican incumbents Chris Wallace, Jason Miller, Rayburn Massey and David Hester), Franklin County Superintendent of Education (Independent incumbent Greg Hamilton) and Franklin County Board of Education

District Three (Democratic incumbent Pat Cochran).

For more information on the 2020 Alabama primary and general elections, log onto www.sos.alabama.gov, Secretary of State John Merrill's website.

Merrill announced Friday that Clay Helms has been officially appointed as Alabama's Director of Elections.

As director, Helms will work with county election officials to help ensure Alabama's elections are

free and fair. Helms has managed the election team that is responsible for breaking every record for voter registration and participation in Alabama's last two election cycles.

"Clay Helms has worked tirelessly over the last six-and-a-half years to modernize antiquated systems, solve problems, and lead the team that has helped ensure it is easy to vote but hard to cheat," Merrill said. "I am excited to continue to work with Clay to change the paradigm for elections in the State of Alabama."



Classifieds

256.332.0255

BUSINESS • LOST & FOUND • GARAGE SALES • PETS • APPLIANCES • HELP WANTED • SERVICES • APPLIANCES • CLOTHING • FURNITURE

YARD SALES

Yard Sale this Thursday-Friday-Saturday, May 9-11, from 8 am-until at 100 Westside Plaza Apartments in Russellville. If rain, sale will be next week. Several families. Lots of household stuff, baby stuff, misc. items.

Community Yard Sale from Russellville Hwy. 48 to 157 this Friday & Saturday, May 10-11.

Huge 5-family yard sale this Friday & Saturday, May 10-11 from 7 am-until at 605 Whitt Store Road off Hwy. 48. Name-brand clothes, shoes, purses, jewelry, home decor, comforters, rugs, misc. men's stuff, all priced to sell. Home of Pat Shelton.

Church Yard Sale. Friday/Saturday, May

10/11. 7 a.m.-until. Praise Tabernacle Church, Hwy. 43 South, across from Southside Baptist Church. Glassware, nice clothing. We'll have a little bit of everything. Come see us! In case of rain, postpone until next weekend.

Woodridge Subdivision neighborhood yard sale this Friday and Saturday, May 10-11. Multiple families!

Yard Sale this Saturday, May 11 from 7 a.m.-2 p.m. 5837 Highway 48. 5 miles east of Russellville. Turn east onto Hwy. 48 and travel 5 miles. Then look for signs. Firefighter items, two-way analog radios, lots of jewelry, different types of bags and other misc. items. Rain or shine.

Yard Sale on Friday, May 17 from 8 am-noon at Terrace Manor Nursing & Rehab. (390 Underwood Road). Proceeds will benefit Alzheimer's research.

LOST AND FOUND

Lost Dogs. Lost from residence at 603 Franklin St. NE in Russellville. Male Sable German Shepherd. About 11 months old. Leather dog collar with rabies vaccination tag. Also, male blond lab mix. Long hair. App. 10 years old. No collar. Beloved family pets. Please call 256-332-1143 with any information on these dogs.

On Monday, April 29, I visited Walmart in Russellville and checked out using the self-serve checkout kiosk. The machine gave out \$60 in change for my purchase, but I forgot to pick up the change and left the \$60 in the machine. When I returned to the Walmart, the money was no longer there. I am asking the person or persons who took the money to PLEASE return it to the service desk at Walmart. There will be NO questions asked. I am not in a financial position to be without this money. Thank You for your help and God bless!

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Changes coming to FCS Child Nutrition Program

Submitted to the FFP

The Child Nutrition Program of Franklin County Schools will experience changes in their breakfast and lunch program beginning the 2019-20 school year.

For the previous four years, FCS has operated under Community Eligibility Provision. FCS no longer qualifies for this grant. Instead, FCS will apply for Provision 2. Under Provision 2, all students will continue to receive free breakfast and lunch.

To qualify for Provision 2, all households MUST submit a Free/Reduced application. These applications will be available on July 1 and mailed to each household that has a student enrolled in any of the six county schools. A self-addressed, stamped envelope will be included.

Also, to ensure all students receive an application, a form will be sent home to allow for student address. FCS asks that these corrections/confirmations be returned to the school by May 23.

Summer meal program starting

Submitted to the FFP

The City of Russellville is participating in the Summer Food Service Program. Meals will be provided to all children without charge.

Acceptance and participation for the program and all activities are the same for all regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability, and there will be no discrimination in the course of the meal service.

Meals will be served at the following locations and times: Canteen 201 South Washington Ave., Russellville; Eastside Apartment Complex, 100 Eastside Plaza, Russellville; Ralph Bishop Community Center, 201 Ash Avenue, Russellville; and Westside Apartment Complex, 100 Westside Plaza, Russellville.

Breakfast will be served at 8:30 a.m. Lunch will be served at 11:15 a.m.

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Ritter excited to get second spring rolling at Russellville

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

For most observers, any conversation about the 2019 Russellville football team begins with the players the Golden Tigers are losing—specifically quarterback Lucas McNutt, 2,000-yard tailback Zaye Boyd and big-play receiver Devin Buckhalter, who combined to score 68 touchdowns last season for an offense that averaged better than 40 points per game.

Second-year head coach John Ritter, however, would prefer to focus on the guys who are returning from last season's 9-2 team, a group that includes eight defensive starters, receivers Rowe Gallagher and Cole Barnett, a handful of offensive linemen with starting experience, and a talented and diverse—if somewhat inexperienced—tailback trio led by senior Austin Ashley.

Factor in senior quarterback Jacob Bishop (a transfer from Muscle Shoals who will join fellow

See 'SPRING,' Page 17

Almost there



PHOTO/KG
LET IT SLIDE - Brett Saint was safe on this play at the plate, scoring one of his two runs in Friday's 11-1 win.

Phil Campbell has had its sights set on Montgomery all year long. After a Game 3 rout of Winfield, the Bobcats are one step away.

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

PHIL CAMPBELL - Baseball, perhaps more than any other game, has always been about fathers and sons. Last Friday night at the Roger Bedford Sportsplex in Phil Campbell was no exception.

On the mound for the Bobcats for the third and deciding game of their Class 3A quarterfinal series with Winfield was sophomore ace Ridge Raper. In the dugout was Ridge's father, Jonathan Raper, now in his seventh season as Phil Campbell's head coach.

Absent in body but present in spirit was Jonathan's father, Billy Raper, a former two-time state champion girls basketball coach at Phillips High School who passed away in February.

"I would love for him to be right here today,"

Jonathan said after the game, voice catching and eyes welling. "I wish he could have experienced it, but he's looking down from heaven."

What Billy Raper saw on Friday was a dominant performance by the Bobcats in general and by his grandson in particular. Ridge Raper was masterful on the mound, striking out 12 batters and walking none in six stellar innings as Phil Campbell punched its ticket to the semifinals with an 11-1 rout of the Pirates.

Raper (8-0) allowed only five hits in his third complete game of the season, deploying his full fastball-curveball-changeup arsenal to record those dozen K's. He threw 68 of his 97 pitches for strikes, and the only run Winfield (34-9) got came in the top of the fourth when Jackson Elkins hammered a 3-2 fastball over the fence in left for a solo



FILE PHOTO

Ritter and the Golden Tigers return no fewer than 15 players with starting experience from last year's 9-2 team.

Russellville's Eady battles through illness to become state champion

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Grayson Eady's journey with the javelin began, oddly enough, with disappointment on the diamond. And it wasn't even his.

Eady was a seventh-grader at Russellville Middle School when his close friend and classmate Brooks Scott tried out—unsuccessfully—for the baseball team. Scott's basketball coach, Michael Phillips, also happened to be an assistant with the track and field program, and he urged Scott to consider spending his spring hurling other objects of various shapes and sizes through the air.

One of those objects was the javelin—though that name didn't mean much at the time to either Scott or Eady, both of whom viewed football as their primary sport.

"I had no clue what it was," said Eady, now a sophomore at RHS. "Coach Phillips invited Brooks to come out and throw and be on the track team, just as something to do and something to keep him in shape. Brooks was looking for a friend to do it with him, and since I don't play baseball or anything, he asked me to do it with him.

"We got out there and started throwing the javelin, the disc and the shot put, and I realized pretty quick that I really enjoyed the javelin. It was pretty fun."

Eady didn't just enjoy throwing the javelin—he *excelled* at it. As a seventh-grader he qualified for the state meet and finished in the Top 25 in Class 5A with a throw of 142'5". The hardest part was explaining to his non-track-and-field friends what this "off-the-wall" athletic endeavor—an endeavor at which he was suddenly very, very good—was really all about.

"Well, everybody gets a good laugh out of it," Eady said on Sunday afternoon, "but a lot of people just call it 'throwing the stick' or 'throwing the pole.'

It's just this long pole that you throw through the air, and everybody always says, 'I could throw that way further than you do.' And I say, 'Well, no, that's not really how it works.'

"Everybody thinks it's easy. Then they try to do it, and they're like, 'Yeah, that is harder than I thought it was.'"

Truth be told, throwing the javelin is extremely challenging; Eady just makes it *look* easy. He set a new sectional record in April with a throw of 175'5" and then bested that mark at the state meet last week in Gulf Shores, throwing 178'11" to win the Class 5A state championship.

"It was tough. You could tell," Buckhalter said. "The kid was out of breath just walking around. It was tough on him. I just hated to see him go through that. You know how bad he wanted to be participating in something. As an athlete, you want to participate, but knowing you can't because you just don't have the energy to do it...that was tough. I hated it for him, just watching him go through that. I prayed he could get back to his normal self and not only compete but compete at a high level."

"If you really want something, you just have to go out and get it," Eady said. "Sometimes you've gotta work harder to get something you really want. It was a great feeling, standing up on that podium and having all the people I was throwing with congratulate me."

In and of itself, winning a state championship is a remarkable accomplishment. But in order to truly appreciate just *how* remarkable this particular achievement was for Eady, you have to turn back the clock and get a glimpse of the hurdles—not track hurdles, but *life* hurdles—he had to clear on his way to reaching that podium.

"It definitely has been a journey," he said.

The journey got off to a promising start with that state meet appearance as a seventh-grader and then got even better the following year, when RHS track coach Tony Buckhalter worked with Eady on a minor mechanical adjustment that made a major difference in his performance when it came to 'throwing the pole.'

"A lot of it is technique," Buckhalter said. "If you look at him, and you look at most of the javelin guys, for them to throw that thing the way they do, you'd think they'd have to be these strong, muscular, outstanding athletes—but not necessarily. It's more about technique. That's what helps you get that thing where you want it to go. We worked that technique and got it to where he can really get it out there.

"One change me and him made after his first year really helped him. It was his eighth-grade year, right before sectionals, and we worked with him on hip movement. His hip was falling back instead of going forwards, and we told him, 'You've gotta move that hip forward.' We worked and worked on that, and once he got that down, that's when he hit that 170 mark. That's when I said, 'We've got something to work with now.'"

Eady returned to the state meet as an eighth-grader and improved his distance by nearly 30 feet from the previous year, making the podium in Class 5A with a third-place throw of 171'5". The future seemed bright, the possibilities endless.

Then, during his freshman year of high school, Eady got sick—and he didn't get well. He had no energy. He lost muscle mass. He dropped 30 pounds. He ran a fever that just wouldn't go away.

Convinced that her son was afflicted with something other than the average flu, Eady's mother Angela—a nurse practitioner—started doing research on more rare and potentially more dangerous illnesses like Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain Fever. She and her husband Michael started their son on a series of antibiotics and took him to see multiple doctors, but it wasn't until six or eight months after his symptoms first appeared that Eady visited a specialist in Mobile and was diagnosed with Lyme disease.

"It's a long-term illness that for most people lasts upwards of two years," Eady said. "I got lucky, because my mom did some research just as soon as I started getting sick. She realized it wasn't the flu, and she started researching Lyme disease and stuff like that. She immediately got me some antibiotics that fight that kind of stuff, and then she read about the Lyme disease specialist in Mobile. I went down there to see him, and we sat down and talked about it. He told us that day it was definitely Lyme disease—one hundred percent, no doubt about it.

"They got me on some more antibiotics. They caught it really quick—way faster than most people catch it. I got lucky on that, because it hasn't been

Emma Dempsey Sophomore Pitcher, Belgreen



Dempsey pitched three complete game shutouts, including a pair of no-hitters, last Tuesday at Belgreen, helping the Lady Bulldogs cruise to the Class 1A, Area 11 title with wins over Vina, Hackleburg and Phillips.

Dempsey finished the tournament with 31 strikeouts, one walk and just two hits allowed in 14 scoreless innings. She is now 15-9 on the season with a 3.08 ERA, 163 strikeouts in 125.1 innings, 17 complete games and eight shutouts.

Belgreen will face Coosa Christian Thursday at noon in the West Central Regional.

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‘EADY’, from page 14

as bad for me as it is for most people.”

Still, early detection or not, Lyme disease is no picnic.

“It’s like having the flu for months,” Eady said, “and it kind of plays with your memory. I ran a fever for over six months. I lost thirty pounds. I lost all my muscle. I didn’t ever hang out with friends or anything. I didn’t feel like doing anything. I pretty much had to quit everything, but I still did track. Just throwing, I could do what I needed to do and not over-do it.”

Eady continued to throw the javelin—as much as his body would allow—in the spring of 2018, but Buckhalter could see the strain it was putting on him.

“It was tough. You could tell,” Buckhalter said. “The kid was out of breath just walking around. It was tough on him. I just hated to see him go through that. You know how bad he wanted to be participating in something. As an athlete, you want to participate, but knowing you can’t because you just don’t have the energy to do it...that was tough. I hated it for him, just watching him go through that.”

“I prayed he could get back to his normal self and not only compete but compete at a high level.”

Somehow, despite his illness and its debilitating effects, Eady still managed to qualify for the state meet as a freshman and remarkably finished seventh in Class 5A with a throw of 159’10”—a drop-off off 12 feet from the previous year but nothing less than a minor miracle given what his body was going through.

To this day, Eady himself isn’t sure how he did it.

“To be honest with you, I don’t really know,” he said on Sunday. “I don’t know that I could do it again. Looking back at Lyme disease and how I used to be...I honestly don’t know how I did it. When I was sick, I was really determined to get back to normal and do what I love to do. Maybe that drive just pushed me over the edge and made me work hard to get back to where I was.”

Eady continued to battle sickness into his sophomore year, but his condition finally started to improve this spring. Little by little, Buckhalter began to see signs that the “Eady of old” might be on the verge of returning.

“At one of our track meets earlier this year,” Buckhalter recalled, “he threw it about 170, and I said to myself, ‘I think he’s making his way back.’ Then he hit the 180 mark at practice one day. And his dad said he hit 180 one time with him when they were just out practicing over the weekend. I’m not sure if the wind helped him or what, but with those numbers, I started thinking, ‘Okay, I think he’s full strength. He’s back. It’s time to work.’”

Getting back to optimal distance on his throws again was a huge step, but Eady was even more encouraged by how he was starting to feel during his training sessions away from the track.

“Honestly, it was more whenever I got back in the weight room and started lifting again and improving the kind of weight I was pushing,” Eady said. “I was probably close to 80 percent [healthy] at the beginning of the season, but then I really started to be able to work out and get some strength back. That’s when I knew I was getting back to my old self.”

The progress was evident and extremely encouraging, but Buckhalter wasn’t about to take any chances in rushing Eady back. The coach was determined to err on the side of caution.

“There were a couple of times this season when he came to me and said, ‘My arm is a little sore.’ And I was thinking, ‘I hope we’re not going through this again.’ So I would give him the day off,” Buckhalter said. “There were a couple of track meets where we didn’t throw him. I just told him, ‘We’re not gonna throw you tomorrow, because I want you to be healthy when sectionals roll around and when state rolls around.’ And he was fine with that. So we held him out.”

“We just wanted to be smart and take care of him. We wanted him to be ready when the time came. And he was.”

Eady set a new record at the sectional meet at James Clemens High School late last month and then headed down to Gulf Shores last week with a rather ambitious goal in mind. A throw of 182 feet would have earned him a spot in the New Balance National Meet in New York.

Buckhalter, for one, thought the mark was definitely attainable. Eady did, too—and with good reason.

“My ninth-grade year [the year when he was most affected by his illness] at

sectionals, Lazarius Decatur [a former Brooks High School athlete who holds the state javelin record with a throw of 199’2”] and me both threw our best throw out of bounds,” Eady said. “We both scratched, but we got a courtesy mark, and we were both in the 180s.”

Eady’s effort at the state meet last week fell a few feet short of earning him a trip to nationals, but his throw of 178’11” still earned him the top spot on the podium and a coveted gold medal.

“We didn’t quite get that 182,” Buckhalter said, “but what we got was good enough to win state, and we’ll take that. Being as young as he is, first of all, is impressive. All the guys that were there [at the state meet] were like, ‘Man, you’re a tenth-grader?’ They were all surprised. And then, on top of that, the health issues he’s overcome—I think it’s remarkable, man. I couldn’t be more proud of a kid than I am of Eady. What he’s had to overcome to get to this point...he wanted it so bad. And I wanted it just as bad for him, due to his health issues.”

“I’m tickled to death for the kid. I’m glad he got the opportunity. He’s been with me a while, since he first qualified for state as a seventh-grader. That’s remarkable.”

Now that he’s healthy again [Eady estimates he was “95 to 100 percent” by the end of track season], the future once again appears bright, the possibilities endless. As an eighth-grader, Eady measured 6’1 and 185 pounds; he’s almost 6’2 now and 175 pounds, meaning that there’s still plenty of room for him to continue adding muscle mass and strength going forward.

More strength and more speed equal more momentum, and momentum is the name of the game in javelin throwing.

“Most javelin throwers weigh a lot more than me—about 210, 220,” Eady said. “It’s all about momentum. The more you weigh and the faster you can move, the more momentum you produce. Basically, you see how far back you can get your arm and your body before throwing it through your hips and flipping around. It’s just a transfer from running into stopping, but you’re putting every bit of your momentum not into the ground but through your javelin.”

The prospect of better health, greater strength and ever-improving technique has Buckhalter thinking big for Eady. The coach already has his eyes set on that mark of 182 feet and another shot at nationals.

“It is well within reach,” Buckhalter said. “I think we should be able to hit 180 consistently next year in track meets. This will be the first full year where he can work on it. He hasn’t really had one of those yet, because of the illness. He hasn’t had a full year where he can work the javelin. From this point until next year, he can work it. He can go to camps and get more training and continue to get that technique down pat.”

“We’ve already made a bet for next year. We’re going for the repeat.”

Another state championship and a berth in nationals would be remarkable, of course, but Eady has his sights set even higher (or farther, as it were).

“Honestly, my goal next year is to break the state record,” Eady said, referring to Decatur’s mark of 199’2”. “I train with Lazarius a lot, and we’ve talked about it some. He said he would love to see me break his record.”

But is a throw of 200 feet within reason?

“I definitely think that’s doable,” Eady said. “I’m not gonna tell you I wasn’t happy with the number I put up at state, but I still would like to have done better. It was an improvement on what I’ve been throwing, but I’m fixing to really start working hard. My goal is to get bigger, stronger, faster and better at javelin.”

Considering the mountain he’s already climbed to become a state champion, anyone who wants to bet against Eady does so at their own risk. He doesn’t deny that, back during his ninth-grade year when his symptoms were at their worst and merely getting up off the couch was an exhausting challenge, the thought that he might never make it back crossed his mind more than once. But his response to that thought is what inspires.

“It crossed my mind,” he said, “but the thought of that made me want to change the way I do things and make sure I do everything I can do to make a strong comeback. It pushed me to work harder and do more, even though I couldn’t do a whole lot at the time. But as soon as I got to where I could do more, I was gonna do more.”

“Man, just don’t give up. If you really want something, go out and get it. That’s a really good lesson this has taught me.”

Lady Golden Tigers cruise to area title

Staff reports

Madison Murray went 4-for-4 with five RBIs last Tuesday, helping Russellville wrap up the Class 5A, Area 15 tournament title with a 13-0 rout of Hamilton.

Autumn Logan, Chalea Clemmons, Karlie Moore and A.J. Taylor added two hits apiece for the Lady Golden Tigers (20-16-1), who had already clinched a berth in the North Regional Tournament with last Monday's 10-0 spanking of Lawrence County. They picked up right where they left off on Tuesday, out-hitting Hamilton 16-1 and getting four strong innings in the circle from senior pitcher Megan Warhurst.

Murray, a junior shortstop, led off the top of the first with a double and later scored on a base hit by Alivia Clemmons. Warhurst drove in a run with a groundout, and Chalea Clemmons' RBI single made it 3-0.

Russellville went right back to work in the top of the second, adding two more runs on RBI singles by Murray and Logan to extend the lead to 5-0.

Class 5A North Regional at Coffee O'Neal Park in Florence

First-round games on Friday, May 10

Ardmore vs. Boaz

Russellville vs. Brewer

Sardis vs. Scottsboro

West Point vs. Hamilton

*-All games scheduled to begin at noon

The Lady Golden Tigers broke the game wide open with a four-run third inning highlighted by Murray's two-run double, a bases-loaded walk to Alivia Clemmons and an RBI double from Logan.

Murray capped off her huge day with a two-run single in the top of the fourth. Makala O'Neal

added an RBI single in the inning, and then Moore drove in the final run of the game with a base hit in the top of the fifth.

Warhurst (16-6) got the win, holding Hamilton hitless for four innings. The senior lefty struck out three and walked just one before giving way to reliever Krista Sikes, who struck out one and allowed one hit in one scoreless inning.

Murray had two doubles, two stolen bases and three runs scored, and Taylor was 2-for-2 with a double, two steals and three runs scored. Moore and Chalea Clemmons each went 2-for-4 with an RBI and a run, and Logan was 2-for-4 with two RBIs.

Alivia Clemmons went 1-for-3 with an RBI and a run, and O'Neal was 1-for-4 with an RBI and a run. Lauren Rogers also had one hit.

Russellville will travel to Florence on Friday to play in the North Regional at Coffee O'Neal Park. The Lady Golden Tigers will face Brewer at noon.

Red Bay, Tharptown both earn regional bids

Staff reports

Red Bay rallied for two runs in the bottom of the seventh inning last Tuesday, edging county rival Tharptown 8-7 to claim the Class 2A, Area 15 tournament title.

Both teams advanced to play in this week's North Regional Tournament at Coffee O'Neal Park in Florence.

After losing to Tharptown 5-2 earlier last Tuesday in the winner's bracket final, Red Bay (23-10) routed Colbert County 13-3 to clinch a regional berth and earn another shot at the Lady Wildcats (24-14). The Lady Tigers got a tie-breaking two-run homer from Lila Blackburn and beat Tharptown 7-4, forcing a third and decisive meeting with the area championship at stake.

Blackburn, a sophomore, blasted her third home run of the tournament and her seventh of the season in the bottom of the first, giving Red Bay an early 1-0 lead in the championship game. Emma McCollister added a solo shot (her third home run of the tournament) in the bottom of the second, making it 2-0.

Trailing 4-0 in the top of the fourth, the Lady Wildcats got RBI singles from Madison Vandiver, Kyndall Morgan and Shaylee Wieting, rallying for four runs to tie the game. Red Bay reclaimed the lead with a run in the bottom of the inning, but Tharptown got an RBI triple from Wieting in a three-run sixth, surging to a 7-5 lead.

The Lady Tigers scored a run in the bottom of the sixth and then tied the game in the seventh on a sac fly by Annaliese Rogers. They scored the winning run on a wild pitch, walking off with an 8-7 victory and the area title.

Chloe Knoblock (12-7) earned the win in relief, allowing three earned runs on four hits in 3.1 innings. She struck out three and walked one. Blackburn started in the circle for Red Bay and went 3.2 innings, allowing four earned runs on five hits. She struck out five and walked five.

Blackburn went 3-for-3 with three RBIs and two runs scored. The sophomore slugger finished the tournament 12-for-16 with three home runs, three doubles and 15 RBIs in five games. McCollister was 2-for-3 in Tuesday's final game with two runs scored, and Rogers was 2-for-3 with an RBI and a run. Layla Bilstein went 3-for-4 with an RBI, and Emmie Scott was 2-for-4. Madison Wicker went 1-

for-4 and scored three runs.

Wieting led the Lady Wildcats at the plate, going 3-for-4 with two triples and four RBIs. Vandiver was 2-for-4 with an RBI, and Morgan went 2-for-3 with two runs scored. Brooke Daily was 1-for-4.

In previous action at the Class 2A, Area 15 tournament:

Red Bay 7 Tharptown 4

Lila Blackburn broke up a 4-4 tie with a two-run homer in the bottom of the fifth last Tuesday, helping Red Bay hand the Lady Wildcats their first loss of the tournament.

Emma McCollister also went deep for the Lady Tigers, adding a solo shot in the bottom of the sixth to provide the final margin.

Class 2A North Regional at Coffee O'Neal Park in Florence

First-round games on Friday, May 10

Ilder vs. Fyffe

Red Bay vs. Winston County

Collinsville vs. Section

Hatton vs. Tharptown

*-All games scheduled to begin at 3 p.m.

Blackburn went 2-for-3 with four RBIs and two runs scored. She, Emmie Scott and Layla Bilstein each had an RBI in the bottom of the third, helping Red Bay score four runs to take a 4-2 lead. Tharptown scored a run in the fourth and another in the top of the fifth to pull even before Blackburn's blast in the bottom half put the Lady Tigers on top for good.

Blackburn (8-3) worked a complete game to earn the win, allowing three earned runs on seven hits in seven innings. She struck out seven and walked six. McCollister was 1-for-2 at the plate, and Bilstein went 1-for-2 with an RBI. Scott was 1-for-4 with an RBI and a run, and Annaliese Rogers went 1-for-4 with a run.

Brooke Daily was 2-for-4 with an RBI and a run scored for the Lady Wildcats. Catie Dawson went 2-for-3 with a run.

Red Bay 13 Colbert County 3

Annaliese Rogers went 4-for-5 and scored four runs last Tuesday afternoon, leading an 18-hit attack by the Lady Tigers as they eliminated Colbert County and clinched a regional berth.

Emma McCollister also had a big game for Red

Bay, going 2-for-3 with a home run, two RBIs and two runs scored. Lila Blackburn was 2-for-4 with a double and two RBIs, and Emmie Scott went 3-for-4 with a run scored. Chloe Knoblock was 2-for-3 with three RBIs, and Grace Pendegraph went 2-for-4 with a run.

Knoblock earned the win with a complete game, allowing two earned runs on four hits in six innings. She struck out eight and walked three.

Tharptown 5 Red Bay 2

Catie Dawson broke up a 2-2 tie with an RBI double in a three-run fifth inning last Tuesday afternoon, helping the Lady Wildcats clinch a regional berth and advance to the area finals.

Olivia Ergle picked up the win with seven strong innings in the circle, striking out nine and allowing just two earned runs on six hits and three walks.

Dawson finished 3-for-4 with two RBIs and two runs scored. Shaylee Wieting went 2-for-4 and scored twice, and Brooke Daily went 1-for-3 with a double, a run and two stolen bases.

Lila Blackburn was 2-for-3 with a pair of doubles for Red Bay.

Red Bay 17 Sheffield 0

Lila Blackburn hit a grand slam and finished 3-for-3 with six RBIs and three runs scored in last Monday's tournament-opening rout.

Emmie Scott went 2-for-2 with a triple, two RBIs and two runs scored. Layla Bilstein was also 2-for-2 with two RBIs and two runs scored, and Sarah Eaton was 2-for-2 with an RBI. Chloe Knoblock went 2-for-2 with a run.

Knoblock dominated in the circle, throwing a three-inning perfect game and striking out seven of the nine batters she faced.

Tharptown 14 Colbert County 3

The Lady Wildcats got three hits apiece from Shaylee Wieting, Catie Dawson and Brooke Daily last Monday, cruising past Colbert County in their tournament opener.

Daily was 3-for-4 with a triple, a double, three RBIs and two runs scored. Wieting went 3-for-4 with three runs scored, and Dawson was 3-for-4 with two doubles, two RBIs and two runs. Olivia Darracott went 2-for-3 with a double and a run, and Taylor Cameron had a double and three RBIs.

Olivia Ergle went 1-for-3 with two RBIs, and Kyndall Morgan was 2-for-3 with two runs scored.

Ergle got the win, allowing one earned run on six hits in 4.2 innings. She struck out five.

'SPRING,' from page 13

senior Jacob Davis, sophomore Gabe Amick and freshmen Conner Warhurst and Bryant Hyde in a five-man competition for the starting job), and another nine-win regular season for the Golden Tigers doesn't seem entirely unreasonable—especially considering how much further along the players are mentally and physically in year number two under Ritter and his staff.

"Last year we were introducing two new systems, offensively and defensively, and we were introducing the kids to the new way we expected them to practice from a physicality standpoint," said Ritter, whose team opened ten days of spring drills on Monday of this week and will conclude them with a spring game against Shelby County on Friday, May 17 at 6 p.m. at Golden Tiger Stadium. "This year we're really getting to focus on us as an offense and us as a defense, because everything we do is already in. We get to spend a lot more time on the finer details rather than installing a whole new system."

Ritter said he was pleased with the strides his team made a year ago in terms of embracing a more physical style of football, and he expects them to pick up right where they left off last November.

"We'll know more after Monday," Ritter said on Friday, just a few minutes after he and a couple of his assistant coaches had finished playing in the Chucky Mullins golf tournament at Twin Pines. "But you could kind of tell as the season went along, from April until the first week of November, we came a million miles from that standpoint. We became a pretty physical defense that played good, sound football, and offensively, at times, we imposed our will on people. That's kind of what I want us to be known for—being a very, very physical team."

"That element is lost in today's football. If we can be one of the few teams that do that, then we'll have a chance in almost every game we play. Monday will answer a lot of questions, but I think we're on the right track with our guys as far as how we want to play."

The big-play exploits of McNutt, Boyd and Buckhalter stole the headlines on a weekly basis, but Ritter attributes much of last season's success to his team's steady growth in the area of physicality.

"We probably won six of those games because we were more physical than the other team," said Ritter, who is now 42-25 overall with five playoff appearances in six seasons as a head coach at Red Bay, West Morgan and Russellville. "Jasper [a 42-13 winner over the Golden Tigers in Week 8] was the exception to that. They were more physical than we were. So was Center Point [which handed Russellville a 22-8 loss in the first round of the playoffs]. But of those nine games we won, six or seven of them we won because we were the more physically dominant team."

"That's kind of a lost art. Everybody has gone to the shotgun and the inside zone, that throw-it-around type of offense. Teams that run the option are hard to defend. We were a triple-option team last year. We were in the shotgun, but a lot of what we did was based on triple-option principles. And that had a lot to do with our success."

So, without question, did the game-breaking ability of McNutt, Boyd and Buckhalter, who among them totaled 25 touchdowns of 40-plus yards. Replacing that level of explosiveness will be a challenge, to say the least, but Ritter takes comfort in his belief that the 2019 Golden Tigers will be as good as any team he's ever had along the line of scrimmage.

"We really feel like we are," said Ritter, whose team averaged 292.6 rushing yards per game and 8.2 yards per carry in 2018. "Edgar Amaya [a rising junior] is back for us at left tackle, and Noah Pounders [a rising senior] is back at right tackle. They're both 6'4. Edgar is 290 [pounds], and Noah is 270, so we're big on the edges."

The return to health of rising senior center Trenton Hollimon—who missed all of last season with a knee injury—means that Johnathan Vargas will shift back to guard for his senior year. He'll be joined at the guard spots by rising juniors Luis Domingo and Dakota Andres, giving the Golden Tigers a solid six-man rotation up front featuring plenty of size and experience.

"Luis Domingo was our sixth lineman last year, and Johnathan Vargas started eleven games for us at center," Ritter said. "Dakota Andres is our third guard or third tackle type of guy, but he would start for a lot of the teams we play. Fortunately, for us, he's our sixth lineman. Trenton Hollimon is back at center after missing last year with a knee injury."

"All six of those guys have had outstanding offseasons in the weight room. We're a lot stronger than we were at this time last year."

The same is true on the other side of the ball, where rising senior Jose Gaspar and rising juniors Omarion Jackson and Angel Moreno lead a D-line group that also includes Josh Frederick and Angel Martinez.

The linebacker corps may well be the strength of the entire team, with rising senior Jamal Hubbard (team-leading 119 tackles in 2018) returning on the outside and rising senior Albaro Francisco and rising junior Brooks Scott (107 tackles last season) back to anchor the middle. Rising senior Jaxon Hallmark is in line to replace departing senior Nate Green at the other outside spot, and Ritter expects up-and-coming youngsters Cody Logan, Gavin

Slay, Brody Logan and Carson Hyde to push the veterans for playing time while providing quality depth.

Buckhalter and the hard-hitting Wylie Boyd must be replaced at safety, but the return to health of rising junior Grayson Eady will help fill the void. Ritter said that Eady and fellow rising juniors J.D. Bishop and Marcus Crumpton, along with rising sophomores Emmitt Green and Ashton Boyd, give the Golden Tigers "five or six guys who can come in and make an immediate impact" in the defensive backfield.

"We've got several guys on the back end who we should be able to plug in and play by the time August gets here," Ritter said. "And pretty much everybody else is returning. The defensive unit as a whole has a chance to be really good. That's a unit that, in all honesty, is gonna have to carry us early on, because we do have some young skill guys on offense."

Ashley, a rising senior, leads the way at tailback after rushing for 195 yards and three touchdowns on 48 carries last season in relief of Boyd. Airreon "Boots" McCulloch flashed home-run potential as a freshman in 2018, averaging 11.6 yards per carry on just seven attempts, and rising junior Caleb Matthews is another candidate to receive carries in what should once again be a run-heavy attack.

"All three of those guys bring three different styles to the table," Ritter said. "They all do different things well. Ashley sees the cut that needs to be made and does a great job setting up his blocks on that inside zone. Boots is a stretch guy who's really good at getting to the edge and can make you pay when he gets there. Matthews is kind of a hybrid guy. He runs between the tackles better than the other two, even though he's the same size. He's just wired differently mentally. He runs the power and the counter really, really well."

"All of those guys have had a really good offseason. They've put on 15 to 20 pounds and gotten a lot stronger, a lot leaner. They can do different things for us offensively, and my job is to put those guys in a position to be successful and make sure we don't try to pigeon-hole them and make them do things they're not gonna excel at. The goal is to rotate those guys, not only to keep them fresh but also to make sure our play-calling reflects what they do well."

Gallagher (nine catches for 103 yards and two touchdowns) and Barnett (10 catches for 153 yards and a score) both made an impact as sophomores last season, and rising senior J.D. Price gives the Golden Tigers another weapon on the perimeter.

"We're expecting a lot out of those guys," Ritter said. "Rowe and Cole were thrown in the fire as starters on the baseball team this year, and they played in two rounds of the playoffs. They've got a ton of experience in that playoff environment. We're looking for them to take the next step and be leaders for us and create some big plays out there on the edge."

"As the year went along, J.D. Price played more and more as we started to use Devin more on defense. We're excited about what J.D. brings to the table."

Ritter said Nathan Brockway, a 6'3, 205-pound rising sophomore, has been moved from the defensive side of the ball to the H-back spot, where he'll "bring a different dynamic" to what the Golden Tigers do offensively.

On the whole, Ritter said Russellville's offense probably won't look the same as it did in year number one.

"It's gonna be different," he said. "It's not gonna be the same mindset that we had in a lot of games last year—but that doesn't mean it's bad. We do still have some possibilities over there to help us be a big-play offense."

The spring game against Shelby County on Friday, May 17 will be broadcast live on WGOL-AM 920 and 100.7 FM, with coverage beginning at 5:30 p.m. and kickoff set for 6 p.m.

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'ALMOST', from page 13

homer to cut the Bobcats' lead to 4-1.

Unfazed, Raper struck out the next three batters and then delivered a two-run double in a three-run bottom of the fourth that made it 7-1 and essentially put the game out of reach.

"We felt good with Ridge going today," Jonathan Raper said. "We felt comfortable with that. He was good today. This may have been his...you know, you take away the one pitch he left up to the Elkins kid and he hit it out...he was good today."

Junior catcher Rilan Garrison concurred in his post-game assessment of Raper's stuff.

"It was nasty," said Garrison, who went 2-for-3 on Friday and threw out a runner attempting to steal, in addition to handling his usual pitch-calling duties behind the plate. "He pitched good. He hit his spots good, and everything he threw, I was pretty confident in it. I wasn't afraid of [calling] anything."

Raper had struggled with his breaking ball the previous Saturday, battling his way into the sixth inning of an 11-3 series-clinching win over Hanceville in the second round. Pitchers at any level are often prone to shy away from a particular pitch if they don't have full confidence in it, but Jonathan Raper knew that his son would need the full repertoire working on Friday to neutralize a talented Winfield lineup. He told Ridge exactly that in a conversation earlier this week.



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

NATE THE GREAT - Owens picked up his third Game 1 win of this postseason last Thursday, improving to 8-1 on the year. The senior lefty is 3-0 in the playoffs with a 2.19 ERA and 18 strikeouts in 16 innings.

"We were talking, me and him, and you know it's that love-hate relationship between father and son," Jonathan said after Friday's game. "I felt like last week he had no breaking ball. I said, 'Man, you've gotta find a breaking ball. For us to advance, you're not gonna be able to throw your fastball by everybody. And your changeup, you've gotta have that.' And he did some little things this week to work on it.

"He came to me today [before the game] and said, 'My breaking ball is as good as it's been.' I said, 'Okay, I hope you're right. We'll see.'"

Garrison, who reinforced his head coach's instructions to his pitcher during their pre-game bullpen session, could tell that a potentially special performance was coming.

"I told him he needed to throw a good changeup, because we were gonna have to use it this game," Garrison said. "He got it working really good and got several outs on it once the game started. His curveball was working good, too, obviously. His changeup was good, but he threw his curveball to most hitters, and he got 'em. He fooled 'em good with it.

"After we got past the first few batters, I said, 'We got this. It's gonna be on the rest of the day.'"

Raper yielded a one-out double to Brock Hollingsworth in the top of the first but barely blinked, striking out three of the next four batters he faced. He got leadoff man Jack Williamson to chase a curveball for his fifth strikeout of the day in the top of the third and had eight K's by the end of the fourth. He notched number nine to start the fifth and then struck out three batters in the sixth, stranding a pair of runners.

Of Raper's 12 strikeouts on the day, more than a few came courtesy of the curveball—further proof that (on occasion, at least) Father really does know best.

"He's been harping on me a lot this past week, believe it or not, about throwing my curveball and how I should do it," Ridge said, his grin betraying only a trace of annoyed sarcasm. "Because, you know, dads *do* know everything. I finally started listening to him, and I finally started to get it working."

Raper leap-frogged back in front of senior lefty Nate Owens for the staff lead in strikeouts, with 74 (and only 16 walks) in 47.1 innings. He lowered his ERA to 1.79 on the season—not too shabby for a Game 3 starter.

Different coaches have different methods with regard to lining up their pitching rotation for a best-of-three series; Raper is, by all accounts, Phil Campbell's ace, but the sophomore right-hander is yet to see the mound for the opening game of a series in this postseason. [Owens has started Game 1 in each of the first three rounds, going 3-0 with a 2.19 ERA and 18 strikeouts in 16 innings.]

Winning the series opener affords Jonathan Raper the luxury of holding Ridge back for a potential Game 3, by which time the opposing team will likely have exhausted its top options on the mound. That certainly appeared to be the case with the Pirates, whose four pitchers on Friday allowed a total of eight earned runs on 13 hits in 5.1 innings.

Raper, meanwhile, bounced back from his relatively shaky outing at Hanceville six days earlier and returned to the dominant form he has exhibited nearly all season. Afterward, he said he's totally cool with filling the role of Game 3 starter—even though it means that, should the Bobcats sweep the first two games of a series, he won't see the mound at all.

"I like it, because we believe in our teammates, and if we can win the first two, I'm fine with not pitching," Raper said. "I'm totally fine. But if it does come down to me, I'm gonna try my best to shove it down their throat."

The advice from his dad and his catcher certainly paid dividends on Friday, but Raper is not without his own considerable resources when it comes to baseball I.Q. In addition to collecting two hits and four RBIs (including a

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(three-run homer) in last Thursday's doubleheader split. Raper also took the time to compose a mental scouting report on Winfield's hitters.

"Playing third and first last night, I was going through their lineup—more towards the end of the game," Raper said. "I was just going through their hitters, seeing what they struggled with. I picked up on it, and I knew what I was gonna throw today when they stepped in the box."

With Raper in top form on Friday, the Bobcats (33-8) didn't need to score a ton of runs. Their head coach, though, could sense that an offensive breakout was coming after Thursday's uncharacteristic 9-for-49 showing at the plate.

"I felt like we were gonna swing it," said Raper, whose team has now put up double-digit runs 25 times in 41 games. "We've been swinging the bats pretty well, but we hadn't been getting anything to fall our way the last three or four games. And the Elkins kid was just tough on us yesterday [in a 7-2 win by the Pirates in Game 2]. His breaking ball



'ALMOST,' from page 18

was really good. But I thought we were gonna have a game where we started to get those hits and break out. I was just hoping it would be today."

Ironically, Phil Campbell scored twice without the benefit of a hit in the bottom of the first, taking advantage of three straight two-out walks issued by Winfield starter Nolen Miles. The Pirates committed a throwing error on Mason Swinney's slow grounder to third, allowing Owens and courtesy runner Brett Saint to score and stake Raper to an early 2-0 lead.

The Bobcats brought the lumber the rest of the day, scoring twice on three hits in the bottom of the second and then getting four straight hits (infield singles by Owens and Garrison, a two-run double to left by Raper and an RBI single by Swinney) to extend the lead to 7-1 in the fourth.

Cole Motes led off the bottom of the fifth with a single and later scored on Austen Baker's base hit to center. Owens drove in a run with a groundout (his team-leading 50th RBI of the season) to make it 9-1, and then Raper crushed his second double of the game to deep center leading off the bottom of the sixth. Swinney followed with an infield hit, and then senior DH Ty Leindecker came through with exactly the kind of stubborn, grind-it-out at bat that exemplifies the Bobcats' relentless attack.

Leindecker fell behind in the count 1-2, worked it full and then fouled off three straight pitches before reaching to slap an outside offering into right field for a hard-earned RBI single.

"We've practiced that so much this year," said Jonathan Raper, standing along the right-field foul line after the game. "Go this way, go this way, go this way. When you get two strikes, just poke it over here. Give yourself a chance and hit it over here. You don't have to yank it. You don't have to pull the ball.

"We hit one through nine today, and we've done that all year. It's somebody different every time."

Later in the bottom of the sixth, sophomore No. 9 hitter Trey Leindecker finished off the rout with an RBI single to right-center, chasing home pinch runner Bryant Anthony to make it 11-1 and touching off a raucous celebration. As his players mobbed one another near the first-base bag, Jonathan Raper turned his face upward and shared a brief father-son moment of his own.

"I looked at the sky," he would later say, "and told my dad, 'We're almost there.' My dad won two state championships, and I would love for him to be here today. I just told him, 'We're almost there.' Maybe we can get there. One more."

The Bobcats will head to Piedmont Wednesday to take on the Bulldogs, who sport an identical 33-8 record after sweeping Westminster Christian 6-3 and 4-1 in the quarterfinals last week.

"They obviously pitch really good," Raper said after Friday's win. "I don't know a whole lot about them yet. I don't look at anything ahead until we get there. It starts today. I'll go home and start calling people and getting on the phone. They're a good ball club. They've been there several times.

PHOTOS BY KYLE GLASGOW

Clockwise, from top left - Raper had four hits (including a home run and two doubles) and six RBIs in the Winfield series, in addition to his stellar work on the mound; Trey Leindecker drove in the final run to seal Friday's Game 3 rout; Baker (2) hit safely in both of last Thursday's games and also earned the save on the mound in a series-opening 6-5 win; Swinney made a clutch defensive play at second in Game 1 and then went 3-for-4 in Friday's series finale.



They've won thirty-something games. Like I told our kids, when you get here [to the semifinals], everybody can play. We've just gotta show up and give ourselves a chance. If we throw strikes and we don't make errors, we'll have a chance."

Swinney, a freshman, went 3-for-4 with an RBI in Friday's rout. Owens was 2-for-3 with two RBIs and two runs scored, and Raper was 2-for-3 with two doubles and two RBIs. Garrison also had two hits, and Trey Leindecker went 2-for-4 with an RBI and a run. Baker was 1-for-3 with two RBIs, and Motes went 1-for-3 and scored twice.

Ty Leindecker was 1-for-4 with an RBI, and Luke Barnwell walked and scored.

The Bobcats are now two wins away from reaching Montgomery for the first time since 2006.

"These kids believe in themselves," Raper said. "They work hard, and they battle. They deserve this. I thank the good Lord for them. I've been blessed to have these young men and be here at Phil Campbell."



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