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07.31.19

Bonds fills principal job at Russellville Middle School

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Tony Bonds admits it will be a strange feeling for him not to be coaching football this year. But as Russellville Middle School's new principal, Bonds won't have much time to dwell on it.

Dating back to his playing days at Russellville High School, Bonds has always been involved in football in one form or another. From RHS he went to the University of Mississippi and played offensive line for the Rebels.

Bonds' first coaching position was at St. George's School in Collierville, TN. He went on to serve on the RHS staff under former coach Doug Goodwin, and later on the staff at Buckhorn High School.

Before he returned to Russellville City Schools last year, Bonds taught and coached at Henry County High School in Paris, TN.

And when he returned to Russellville last year as the new assistant principal at RMS, Bonds became the system's only administrator to coach, as he became offensive line coach under John Ritter.

"This is what I went to school for. I enjoy education, and to be in a leadership role was something I always wanted to do," Bonds said. "In this position [as principal] you have to coach. It's coaching with a different philosophy and a different meaning and purpose."

Bonds follows former principal Karen Thorn, who resigned this summer to become principal at Tharptown Elementary School.

"This is what I went to school for. I enjoy education, and to be in a leadership role was something I always wanted to do," Bonds said. "In this position [as principal] you have to coach. It's coaching with a different philosophy

See 'BONDS,' Page 10

FEMA settlement driving force behind financial turnaround for Franklin County School System

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Carla Knight remembers a time when Franklin County Schools' checks were printed but had to be held in order to wait for deposits that would allow them to clear.

Those times are in the past, and as the system's chief school financial officer, that's a big relief to Knight. With a reserve fund balance of \$3.8 million, Franklin County Schools are in unprecedented financial waters, and Knight hopes to see that continue.

"I've been here 17 years, and we've never been compliant with the one-month reserve fund since the law was

passed in 2003 as part of the School Fiscal Accountability Act," Knight said. "It's nice to be able to pay our bills on time and not hold checks. I've seen it the other way."

"I've been here 17 years, and we've never been compliant with the one-month reserve fund," Knight said. "It's nice to be able to pay our bills on time and not hold checks. I've seen it the other way."

Alabama law requires all public school systems to maintain an emergency fund balance equal to one month's operating expenses, \$2.2 million in the case of

See 'FEMA,' Page 11

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Donald Ray Bailey, Sr., Russellville, age 72
Died Thursday, July 25, 2019. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home.
Interment in Macedonia Cemetery.

Thomas Alton Howard, Russellville, age 74
Died Monday, July 22, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel.
Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens.

Jackie Steward Malone, Russellville, age 59
Died Tuesday, July 23, 2019. The family was planning to hold a memorial service at a later date. Spry Memorial Chapel was assisting the family.

LaShaun Morgan Pilgrim, Russellville, age 50
Died Sunday, July 21, 2019. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home.
Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens.

Linda Dale Badgett Pruett, Russellville, age 60
Died Friday, July 19, 2019. Memorial service held at Branches Church. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.

Kenny Leon Whitlock, Phil Campbell, age 51
Died Friday, July 19, 2019. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel in Russellville. Interment in Liberty Hill Cemetery in Phil Campbell.

Deeann Wofford, Russellville, age 66
Died Friday, July 19, 2019. Funeral held at Akins Funeral Home. Interment in Tri-Cities Memorial Gardens.

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Merrill pleased as state continues to break voter registration records

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

With more than 3.5 million registered voters, the state of Alabama continues to shatter state voter registration records, according to Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill.

Merrill visited Hackleburg July 23 and appeared on WFMH 95.5-FM's morning show. Merrill, in his second term as secretary of state, recently announced his candidacy for United States Senate in 2020. Merrill is among a large field seeking the Republican nomination for Doug Jones' Senate seat.

Although he's been accused of supporting laws that lead to voter suppression, Merrill said the record numbers of registered voters doesn't support such claims.

"Since January 19, 2015, we've registered

1,301,012 new voters," Merrill said. "We now have a state record 3,500,894 registered voters in Alabama. Those numbers are unprecedented and unparalleled in the history of the state, and, per capita, no state in the union has done as much as we've done in that same period, and I'm very, very proud of that."

Since Merrill took office, registrars in Alabama have removed more than 790,000 people from voter rolls due to their having moved away, died or having been convicted of disqualifying felonies.

Merrill said 96 percent of all eligible African Americans are registered to vote in Alabama, with 91 percent of white eligible voters registered. Overall, 94 percent of all Alabama residents eligible to vote are registered.

"For four years, six months and six days, we have made a concerted effort to ensure that each and every eligible United States citizen that is a

resident of Alabama is registered to vote and has a valid photo ID," Merrill said.

Not only is voter registration at an all-time high in the state, Alabama voter participation numbers are also surging. On November 8, 2016, more than 2.1 million Alabamians voted, breaking every record in the state's history for participation in a Presidential general election.

The November 6, 2018 election saw 1.7 million Alabamians cast ballots, another record for a midterm general election.

Merrill also said Alabama is the only state in which the Photo Voter ID Law, after court adjudication, remained intact as written.

"Voter registration is important, but voter participation is better," Merrill said. "Fortunately for our state, there's both. I am proud to ensure that in Alabama, we make it easy to vote and hard to cheat."

RCS Board of Ed approves personnel moves

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Although the agreement that brought the Russellville Parks and Recreation Department under the control of Russellville City Schools was the most discussed agenda item, the Russellville City Board of Education also approved several personnel moves at its special-called July 22 meeting.

Included among those were the hiring of two former Franklin County Schools employees, Jonathan Odom and Richard Maggerise.

Odom was hired as a math teacher at Russellville Middle School and Maggerise as a history teacher at Russellville High School.

Other personnel moves approved by the board included:

- Resignation in Position: Jess Smith, RHS teacher; Caroline Hargett, RMS teacher; Kelly Pouncey, West Elementary teacher; Nicole Clingan, WES teacher; Kathryn Montgomery, RHS teacher; and Katie Bradford, WES teacher.

- Retirement in Position: Tab Smith, RHS teacher, effective August 31, 2019.

- Resignation and Cancellation of Principal Contract: Karen Thorn, RMS

principal, effective July 17, 2019.

- Voluntary transfer: Benjamin Phillips, RES custodian to P.E. Aide at WES, effective August 2, 2019; Tracy Malone, RHS registrar, to Registrar/Attendance Aide at RHS, effective August 2, 2019; and Jacob Wallace, RES teacher, to special education teacher at WES.

- Resignation in Supplement: Monica Moon, girls golf head coach; and Brett Voss, varsity/JV boys tennis head coach.

- Employment in Position: Jay B. Moore, automotive teacher at RHS; Tabitha Handley, RHS math teacher; Hannah Prince, RHS history teacher; and Kayla Thorne, WES teacher.

- Leave of Absence: Jennifer Lindsey, Pre-K auxiliary teacher, WES. Leave of absence from September 11-November 1, 2019.

- Temporary Employment in Position: Addie Harbin, to fill Caitlin Witt's leave of absence from August 22-September 30, 2019.

- Athletic Consultants: Terrell Groce, pro consult for RMS football. Maximum payment shall not exceed \$960, to be paid by Football Booster Club; Bryant Bonds and Chris Boatwright, pro consults for RHS football. Maximum payment not to exceed \$1,380, to be paid by Football Booster Club.

Seven local eateries earn satisfactory ratings

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Each of the seven Franklin County establishments that received health ratings during the week of July 15-19 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.

Each of the eight 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 Piggly Wiggly #87, 3625 Broad St.,

Phil Campbell.

Inspections of Franklin County businesses, with critical item violations noted, resulted in the following scores:

- Stockyard Cafe, 14330 Hwy. 243, Russellville, 85. (Dishes not being sanitized, Employees not washing hands prior to donning gloves and handling ready to eat foods).

- Campbell's Texaco, 3075 Hwy. 237, Phil Campbell, 85. (Stainless steel cleaner stored on table with food items, pizza and chicken tenders being held at 121-122 degrees).

- El Quetzal Buena Vista, 118 East Franklin St., Russellville, 87. (No back-flow preventer on hose in meat market).

- Piggly Wiggly #87 Deli, 3625 Broad St., Phil Campbell, 93. (Open deli case holding potato salad at 43-46 degrees).

- Quinn's Grocery, 9980 Hwy. 48, Russellville, 95.

- Pollo Lo-Quillo, 115 Franklin St., Russellville, 95. (No paper towels in men's restroom).

Of the 27 inspections done in Colbert County from July 15-19, all received scores falling in the range of satisfactory.

The high score of 99 went to Carriage Wine & Market, 320 North Montgomery Ave., Sheffield.

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

Honey Do: Moving out

Very soon, many students will be moving out and settling in strange places for the first time as they prepare for their first days of college. Sad times, nervous times, but certainly exciting times.

I remember when I first moved out to take a job in Corinth, Mississippi. I found a small apartment in the top of a rather old house. I soon found that I had a lot more roommates, (the creepy, crawly kind) that show up after the lights go out. I had a great landlord, and he quickly dispersed these unwelcome guests.

Then there was the night the bird got in and was flying all around the bedroom in the pitch-black dark of night. It could have been any kind of winged demon from anywhere as far as I knew.

With these types of experiences in mind, I have a few suggestions for supplies that could be very useful to anyone setting up housekeeping for the first time.

- A BASIC TOOL KIT consisting of a hammer, screwdriver set (or a multi-bit screwdriver), adjustable wrench, pliers and a retractable utility knife.

- A PLASTIC TOOL BOX to keep all that stuff in.

- DUCT TAPE and a small can of

WD-40. (Just in case something moves, or doesn't move, or squeaks when it does.)

- BATTERIES - an ample supply.

- STORAGE TOTES and a LAUNDRY HAMPER. I suggest clear storage totes because it is easy to see the contents at a glance and they let light shine through into the dark corners of closets to discourage spiders and pests.

- BROOM, MOP, FLOOR CLEANER, TRASH BAGS. (Brooms are great for running birds out at midnight.)

- BUG SPRAY (Yes, you'd be surprised.)

- A POWER STRIP with multiple outlets and with a BUILT-IN SURGE PROTECTOR. Maybe a couple.

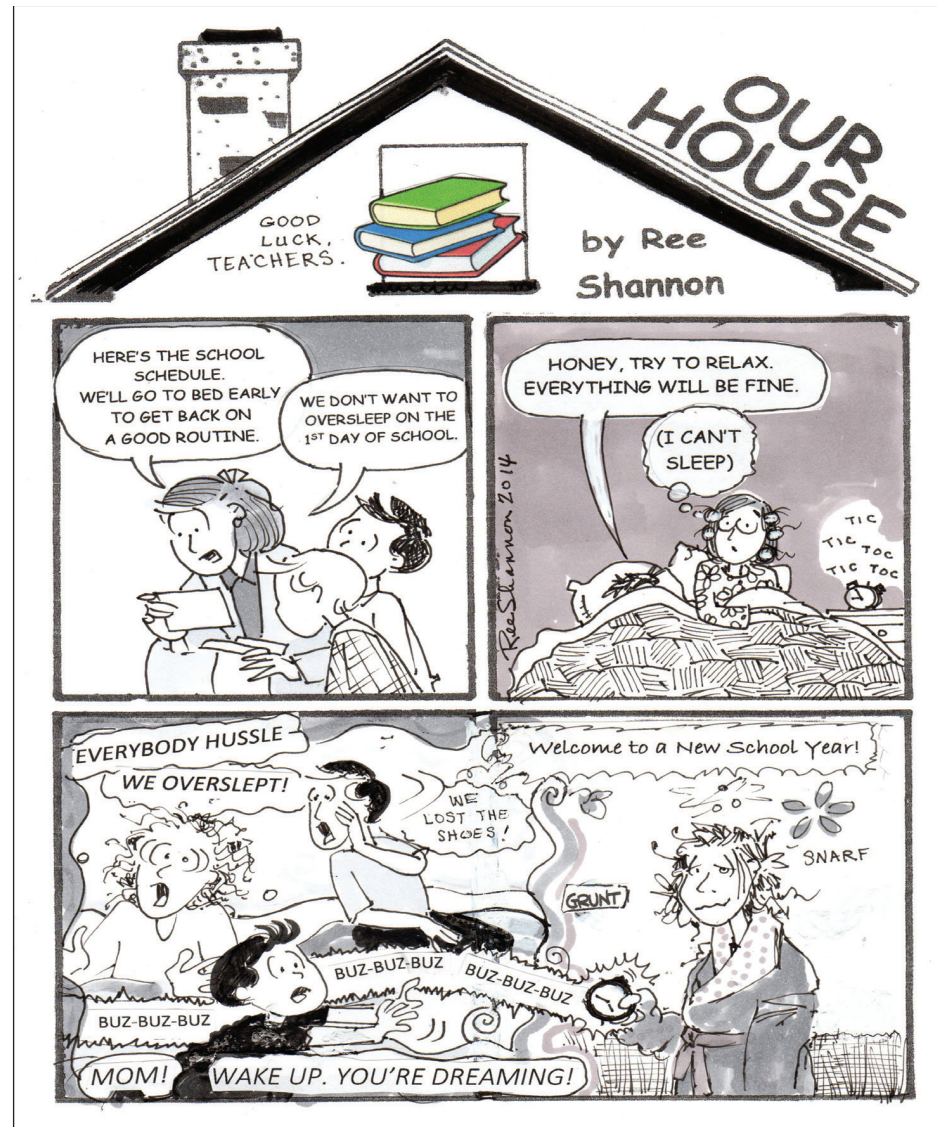
- A GOOD FLASHLIGHT. Many times they are quicker and more dependable in an emergency situation than the one on your phone.

These are just a few things that no person should be without.

Here's to success, adventure and fun in new experiences, and remember, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.



Doug Green



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Publisher

John Pilati

Executive Editor

Mike Self

E-mail: franklinfreepress@yahoo.com

Sales Representatives

John Pilati

Content Contributors

Mike Self, John Pilati, Ree Shannon,
Doug Green, Rebecca Thomason, Sheryl Hamilton,
Ashley Cummins, Gail Motes

Graphic Design

Jason Hill

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Why limited-government conservatives should participate in the 2020 census

Parker Snider
Alabama Policy Institute

It's September 5, 2020. You, like most of Alabama, have been waiting months for this day. As summer slowly faded into autumn, the cool evenings punctuating the still-stifling afternoons, you took heart knowing the long months of faint interest in the NBA and baseball were almost gone. Today, after all this time, the drought is finally over: the first Saturday of college football season has arrived.

Just as you've settled in, the doorbell rings. Wholeheartedly intending to ignore the unscheduled visitor, your heart sinks when one of your guests (a Tennessee fan) opens the door and calls for you.

Confident you will not be inviting this particular friend over again next weekend, you begrudgingly make your way to the door to see a man with a clipboard and a bag with the words "United States Census Bureau" on both sides.

You politely ask if you could respond later, perhaps online or via the mail. He kindly answers that, yes, that was an option, and then points to a stack of unopened mail on your front table that also reads "Census Bureau". Point taken.

Being the gracious Southerner you are, you answer his questions and are back watching the game in less than ten minutes.

The truth is that this scenario will likely occur repeatedly during the 2020 Census. While most will comply with the requests of the Census Bureau, there are always those who successfully skirt the eye of the federal government.

For limited-government conservatives, slamming your door on the person who says, "I'm with the federal government and I'd like to ask you a few questions" may indeed be a natural response. It is not, however, considerably helpful, especially to the conservative cause. In fact, Alabamians failing to be counted in the 2020 Census could fuel debilitating blows to the conservative movement, both in Alabama and across the nation.

That's because the Census is more than an arbitrary headcount. The Census totals, in fact, shape how billions of federal dollars every year are allocated to states for Medicare, SNAP (food stamps), highway construction, and more. In addition, businesses rely heavily on Census data to determine where to build factories, restaurants, and stores. Inaccurate data here could cost jobs and create unnecessary economic hardship.

Perhaps most importantly, however, is that the Census determines how many seats in the U.S. House of Representatives each state gets and, with that number, how votes are allocated in the Electoral College.

Unfortunately, most projections suggest that Alabama will lose a seat in the U.S. House as a result of the 2020 Census. That's because, although Alabama is growing, it is not growing as fast as other states. The 435 seats in the House, as directed in the Constitution, must be allocated to each state so that each member of Congress represents roughly the same number of people. Since the population is increasing quickly in



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Time for fun money?

Dear Dave,
I had about \$12,000 in debt when my husband and I got married three years ago. Since that time, we've been given cash gifts from my parents from time to time, and we keep having discussions on how to use this kind of money when it is given to us. I'd like to put it toward paying off debt, but he would rather treat it as fun money. What are your thoughts on this, please?

Sara

Dear Sara,
If there's something you *need*, and you agree on it together and choose to buy it as a couple, that's cool. I've got no problem with that. But you guys are still just starting out, and you've got debts to pay. I'm sure your husband has a good heart, but I think it's time for him to grow up a little and realize the importance of getting your financial house in order. Did your parents have specific and reasonable thoughts on how they'd like you to use the money? If so, you should honor their intent. If not, then how it gets used is pretty much up to you guys. But in your situation, life's not a birthday party when this kind of thing happens. You should be making mature, responsible decisions *together* regarding any money that comes into your household. It's really no different than a paycheck. You take care of obligations and other important things first.

Adults waste money on play things and fun stuff just because it was handed to them by mom and dad. That's how a 10-year-old behaves. Sit down with your husband, and explain how important it is to start making better decisions with money.

Adults waste money on play things and fun stuff just because it was handed to them by mom and dad. That's how a 10-year-old behaves. Sit down with your husband, and explain how important it is that you

guys start making better decisions with your money. If you two start working together, you could knock out this debt in a hurry!

Dave

First, catch up!

Dear Dave,
I've had enough of living paycheck-to-paycheck. I'm going to start following your plan, but I have a question. Should I catch up on my past due bills before beginning Baby Step 1?

Simon

Dear Simon,
Go for it! You're sick and tired of being sick and tired, and you're going to get control of your money. I love it!

First, make sure you're up to date with necessities—food, clothing, shelter, transportation and utilities. Next, get current or make arrangements for any other types of debt you have, including credit cards.

You mentioned Baby Step 1, which is getting \$1,000 in the bank for a beginner emergency fund. Baby Step 2, the debt snowball, comes next. Start paying off all debts, except for your home, from smallest to largest. Then, in Baby Step 3 you'll save more and increase your emergency fund to a full three to six months of expenses.

Now, you can really start looking at the future. In Baby Step 4, you'll start investing 15 percent of your household income for retirement. College funding for the kids, if there are any, is Baby Step 5, and Baby Step 6 is a milestone—pay off your house early!

But the real deal is Baby Step 7. This is when all your hard work, sacrifice and smart financial decisions put you in a place where you can build wealth and give with outrageous generosity. At this point, you're securing your family's future and helping others in a big way!

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 16 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.*

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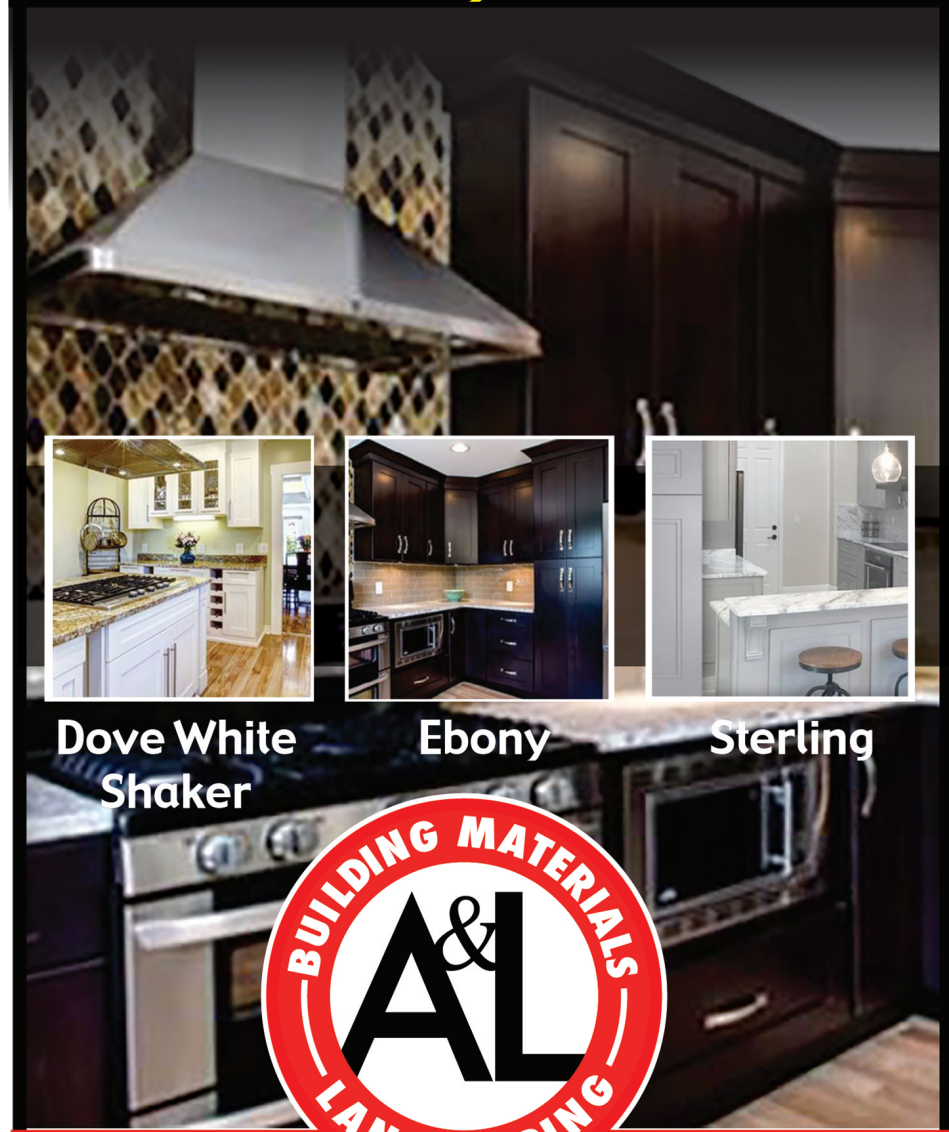
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 **D**ivorceCare, a special help seminar and support group for people experiencing divorce and separation, will be held on Sunday evenings at First Baptist Church Colbert Heights beginning Sunday, July 28 at 5 p.m. DivorceCare features nationally recognized experts on divorce and recovery topics. Seminar sessions include “Facing My Anger,” “Facing My Loneliness,” “New Relationships,” “KidCare” and “Forgiveness.” Meetings will be held at 6000 Woodmont Drive, Tusculum, AL. For more information, call First Baptist Church at 256-383-8016.


 **T**he Sons of Confederate Veterans, Lt. Col. John W. Harris Jr., Camp #1833, will meet this Thursday, August 1 at 6 p.m. at the Russellville Rec Center on Ash Avenue in Russellville. Camp #1833 meets the first Thursday of each month EXCEPT January and July. For more information, call 256-324-2317. Everyone welcome!


 **T**he Northwest Alabama Distinguished Young Women Scholarship Program will be held this Saturday, August 3 in Norton Auditorium on the campus of UNA. Seventeen young ladies entering their senior year of high school from Colbert, Franklin and Lauderdale counties will compete in their respective counties for the title of Distinguished Young Woman of her county, as well as various college-based and monetary scholarships. These contestants have DYW Little Sisters that will introduce them, as well as perform a dance number on stage. Come support these local young ladies, and enjoy watching amazing talent as well! The program begins at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$12 and can be purchased at the door.


 **T**his year’s Phil Campbell High School Alumni Day will be held this Sunday, August 4 in the PCHS lunchroom. Doors will open at noon (immediately after church services), and program will follow shortly after lunch. Each plate lunch is \$10. Each alumnus is asked to bring a dessert to accompany the meal. All PCHS alumni from years past and present, including the Class of 2019, are invited and urged to attend. All PCHS faculty, administration, support personnel, coaches and sponsors (both present and from years past) are also invited. Donations will be accepted the day of the luncheon to cover the costs of this and future reunions. Due to the generous donations of alumni, we have been able to award two (2) \$1,000 scholarships to a PCHS senior boy and girl for the past two years. This cash scholarship is for a senior boy or girl who plans on attending Northwest-Shoals Community College. Your support and donations are welcome in an effort to continue this new endeavor. Feel free to bring your yearbooks and old photos from the past for others to view. For more information, please contact Lynn Landers, PCHS Alumni, at 256-810-4572. We look forward to seeing you there!


 **S**pruce 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 August 6. All members and friends are urged to attend.


 **F**or 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!

 **A**merican Legion Post 64 will meet Thursday, August 8 at 7 p.m. at the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce. Dinner served at 6:30 p.m.

 **T**he Shoals Chapter of the Order of St. Luke will meet in the Sheffield Room at Park Place (501 N. Montgomery Avenue in Sheffield) on Thursday, August 8 at 2:30 p.m. Grace Anderson will lead a study called “Anointed to Heal” by Larry and Audrey Eddings. We believe that God heals spiritually, physically and emotionally. Prayer for healing will be offered. All are welcome.

 **T**he Pebble Bluegrass Festival will be held Friday and Saturday, August 9-10, at the Pebble Community Center, 100 County Road 3423, Haleyville. The event will be held rain or shine. Enjoy some good clean family entertainment with all proceeds going to the Pebble Community Center. Featured artists include Crossing Grass, Lisa Lambert Band and Solid Blue. Weekend pass \$10. Concessions available. Supper served Saturday from 4-7 p.m. Free camping in the rough, and camper hookups available. For more information, call 205-269-2221.

 **T**he Franklin County Baptist Association Ladies Conference will be held Saturday, August 10 from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. at McMurray Baptist Camp, 5315 Old Vina Road, Vina. Bring your favorite salad to share for lunch. Everything else will be provided. Conference theme is “Love Me, Love Me Not.”

 **O**n Saturday, August 10 from 10 a.m.-3 p.m., the Russellville Bicentennial Committee will present the fourth in the Saturday history series called “The Way We Were: Historical Demonstrations, Exhibits, and Portrayals.” Schedule: 10 a.m.-Bob Perry portraying George Colbert and speaking on the Mary Crawley incident; 11 a.m.-Tony Turnbow, author of *Hardened to Hickory*, speaking about Andrew Jackson and the Chickasaw Indians; 12 p.m.-Rickey Butch Walker, author of *Doublehead: Last Chickamauga Cherokee Chief*, talking about Doublehead; 1 p.m.-Tim Kent, author of *The Reckoning*, discussing other aspects of Chief Doublehead; 2 p.m.-Randy Brown portraying Sam Dale, known as the Daniel Boone of Alabama. Authors will have their books for sale. The last event in this series will be September 14. All events are free and 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.

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What's Happening

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

The Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert with special guest Bryan Muse at the Roxy Theatre in downtown Russellville on Saturday, August 10 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 historic Roxy Theater.

The Believers will be in concert at The Church of God on Hwy. 5 South in Phil Campbell on Sunday, August 11 at 5 p.m. Fellowship supper after the singing. For more information, call 256-324-5288.

First Baptist Church Russellville will host its 152nd Homecoming on Sunday, August 11. Worship service will be at 10:30 a.m., with message from previous interim pastor Bro. Danny Knight, Guin. Music by Denise Davis Arnold, singer/songwriter from Nashville. Covered dish luncheon immediately following worship service in Fellowship Building. Our interim pastor is Dr. Gene Balding. Minister of music/senior adults is Bert Fowler. Children's ministry coordinator is Jennifer Willis, and interim student pastor is Bro. Kyler Childers. Church is located at 213 Jackson Ave. North in downtown Russellville.

Auditions for the Roxy's Christmas Spectacular will be held Sunday, August 11 with make-up day Monday, August 12. Children auditions for ages 6-12 will be at 1:30 p.m., females ages 13 and up at 3:30 p.m. and males ages 13 and up at 5:30 p.m. Make-up day auditions will be at 5:30 p.m. on Monday the 12th. Doors open 30 minutes prior to audition time.

Russellville Masonic Lodge #371, located at 416 Coffee Avenue, will be selling fish plates during the Franklin County Watermelon Festival on Friday, August 16 from 5-7 p.m. and Saturday, August 17 from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Eat in air conditioned comfort or take out! Plates cost \$12 and may be pre-ordered by calling 256-810-1970.

Russellville Masonic Lodge #371 will be selling Boston butts during Watermelon Festival weekend. Butts are \$30 and may be pre-ordered by calling 256-810-1970. Pick-up will be Saturday, August 17 from 8-10 a.m. at the Masonic Lodge on Coffee Street.

The book *Furious Hours: Murder, Fraud and the Last Trial of Harper Lee* will be discussed at the August 21 10 a.m. meeting of the Readers of the Lost Ark Book Club. The club meets at Coldwater Books, 101 West Sixth Street, Tusculmbia. For more info, email nancy537481@yahoo.com.

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RCS Board approves new job descriptions

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Board of Education approved four new job descriptions at the board's July 25 meeting, all related to the recent agreement that placed day-to-day operations of the Russellville Parks and Recreation Department under the control of the school system.

Job descriptions for full-time positions of custodian/groundskeeper, secretary/scheduling coordinator, youth sports operations facility manager and site coordinator were posted Thursday, and Russellville City Schools superintendent of education Heath Grimes said the positions will be filled at the board's August meeting.

Grimes said there would be one or two custodian/groundskeeper positions, and the other three would be one employee per position. The remaining job duties for managing the Parks and Recreation Department will be filled by part-time employees and/or already established school system employees, Grimes said.

The salary range for the youth sports operations facility manager will be between \$45,000-\$55,000 per year, which will be the highest-paying of all jobs related to Parks and Recreation.

The school system will begin its management of the Parks and Recreation Department on August 6, 2019.

There were a few personnel moves approved by the board at Thursday's meeting, including:

- Resignation in Supplement: Marlena Young-Jones, Russellville Middle School volleyball coach.
- Employment in Position: Madison Berry, RES teacher; Stacie Givens, RHS Assistant Principal; Alan Willingham, RMS Spanish teacher; and Joshua Graham, RMS teacher.

The board approved the following vendor contracts for the 2019-20 school year: Milk to Purity Dairy, with a 12-month contract and an escalation clause for 12 additional months.

Contracts were rolled over for one additional year for ice cream with Purity Dairy and bread with Flowers Baking Company.

The Colbert County Board of Education, which represents the Quad-System Purchasing Cooperative Group, accepted the produce bid from O.K. Produce with a rollover for the 2019-20 school year.

The next regular meeting of the Russellville City Board of Education will be Thursday, August 22 at 8 a.m., with work session Monday, August 19 at 3:30 p.m.

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'Great Pretenders' show features 26 performers

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Russellville's annual "Evening at the Roxy" featuring "The Great Pretenders" featured 26 performers ranging from Elvis to Dolly Parton.

The event, hosted last Thursday night at the Roxy Theater by the Franklin County Arts and Humanities Council, was part of the annual W.C. Handy Festival. The night began with a mini-concert by Still Here, which includes Rev. William Freeman, Wash Bates, Bryant Bonds, William Nelson, George West, Eric Goodloe, William Buchanan, Ryan Freeman and Larry Freeman.

Katernia Cole-Coffey emceed the evening's festivities and welcomed a packed house to Russellville.

Entertainers included: Sydney Medley, Jayne Wells, Alissa Young, David Phillips, Konner Bendall, Dana Hill, Meletha Walker, Danyelle Hillman, Cassidy Willis and Jacob McCarley, Blaze Bishop, Ashley Cummins, Leah Nix, Jacob Green, Adam Green, Jeff Allen, Becky McDougal, Heather Carmack, Suzanne Wigginton, Gene Grubbs, Jimmie Rowe, Rick Mathis, Ronnie McDougal, Hudson Copeland, John Pilati and Buford Parker.

Sponsors for "The Great Pretenders" included:

•Gold Contributors: Bank Independent, Community Spirit Bank, Alabama Central Credit Union, Valley State Bank, CB&S Bank, First Metro Bank, Burns Nursing Home,



Gene Grubbs entertained the crowd as Elvis Presley at last week's 'Evening at the Roxy.'

Mayor David Grissom, Clark-Pulley, Russellville Electric Board, Russellville Water and Sewer Board and Rhett Bradford, State Farm Insurance.

•Silver Contributors: Sinclair-Lawrence Insurance, Troy and Brenda Oliver, Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, Russellville Florist/Chase Sparks and Franklin County Probate Judge Barry Moore.

•Bronze Contributors: Abstract & Appraisal/Wanda Myrick, Franklin Free Press/WGOL Radio, Campbell's Vision Center, Gary and Barbara Cummings, William and Debbie Nale, Gault Signs, Family Pharmacy, Susie Hovater Malone, Wood-Thompson Insurance, Hester Printing, Sibley Oil Company, Strickland & Barksdale, CPA.

'CENSUS,' from page 4

places like Texas, Oregon, and Florida, the reapportionment of congressional seats will likely benefit their interests over ours.

Since states are given votes in the Electoral College by their number of Congressmen (Senate and House), losing a House district would also mean Alabama loses power to determine the U.S. President. This would be, perhaps, the most discouraging byproduct of a low Census count.

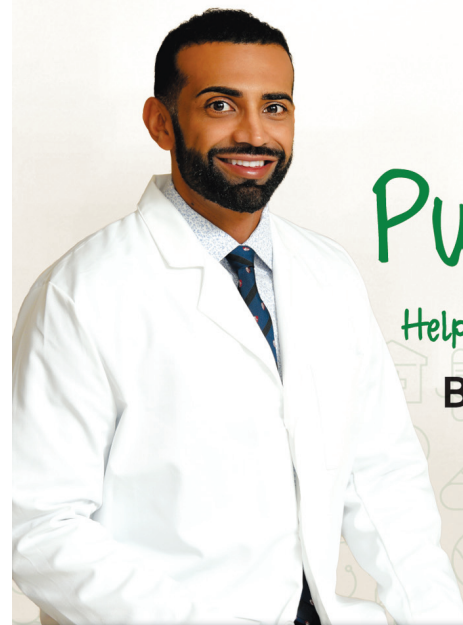
Overall, the results of the 2020 Census could reduce Alabama to a state that has fewer voices in Congress, a lower rate of federal funding, and less power to choose the President. This version of Alabama is not good for the conservative cause.

As one of the most conservative states in the nation, the conservative movement needs a healthy Alabama that has strong, multilayered representation and power in the Electoral College to push a conservative candidate to 270.

The truth is that Alabama just might keep all seven of our congressional districts and all nine electoral college votes. To do so, however, we need a full count of everyone living in the state.

Conservatives (really everyone for that matter), therefore, should make sure they and every person they know are counted in the 2020 Census. Complete it online, mail it in, or risk a Census worker interrupting your football Saturday. If that happens, you'd best respond. You (probably) won't miss another Kick Six.

Parker Snider is the Director of Policy Analysis at the Alabama Policy Institute. API is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit research and educational organization dedicated to strengthening free enterprise, defending limited government, and championing strong families. If you would like to speak with the author, please email communications@alabamapolicy.org or call (205) 870-9900.



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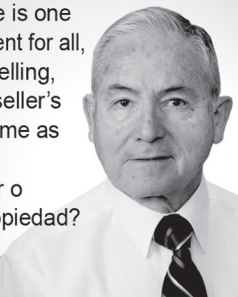
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Man arrested outside First Baptist Church

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A 60-year-old man was arrested Sunday morning as he attempted to enter the church services at Russellville First Baptist Church in downtown Russellville.

Keith Whitman, who lives on Franklin Street in Russellville, was taken into custody by Russellville Police Department officers with assistance from the First Baptist Church security team.

Whitman was charged with two alternating felony counts, Possession of a Pistol by a Violent Felon and Possession of a Pistol by a Habitual Drunkard/Addict. Both charges are Class C felonies punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

Whitman also faces misdemeanor charges of disorderly conduct and resisting arrest. He remained in jail as of Monday morning awaiting a bond hearing in Franklin County District Court.

First Baptist Church employs an off-duty Russellville officer as security during its morning services. That officer, who was stationed on North Jackson Avenue, noticed a vehicle driven

erratically and recognized the individual as Whitman, who has had prior dealings with officers.

According to police, Whitman slammed the vehicle into park in front of the church and moved toward the church entrance holding a video camera and computer. He reportedly told officers he was going to show a video to the church about 'something,' according to RPD Investigator/Sergeant Jake Tompkins. Both the church's regular morning service and a Spanish church service were being held at the time of Whitman's arrest.

Upon inventory of Whitman's vehicle, officers found a pistol. According to Tompkins, Whitman has multiple felony convictions from Georgia that disqualify him from possessing a pistol. Additionally, with his history of alleged drug and/or alcohol use, Whitman was also charged with the alternative count of a habitual drunkard/addict in possession of a pistol.

According to police reports, Whitman fought with officers as they attempted to handcuff him and one officer deployed his taser. Tompkins said the situation was resolved before any church members were put into a dangerous situation.

'BONDS,' from page 1

him," Grimes said. "He feels like he owes this community for the support they poured into his life, and he feels the same way about the kids we have in our schools today."

Bonds' wife Jill is a pre-AP English teacher at Russellville High School. They have two children, Elijah and Annalesa.

He's excited about the upcoming school year at RMS, and Bonds has tremendous faith and confidence in his staff.

"We didn't know what his intentions were," Tompkins said. "Fortunately, we stopped him before he got any closer to the church, and it did not interrupt the church service. It was handled quickly before it escalated too far."

According to police, Whitman told officers he was "working for President Trump." He did not elaborate as to what capacity he was working for the president.

"He made several comments about working for Trump, as well as some off-the-wall stuff," Tompkins said.

Tompkins has contacted officers with the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and there is a possibility Whitman may face federal charges as well.

Tompkins spoke with Whitman Monday morning and said he still doesn't have a clear picture of what Whitman's intentions were.

"Between the officer acting quickly and the assistance of church security members, it got resolved before the church even realized what was going on and before anything else could happen," Tompkins said.

"It's a good situation here. We have a lot of people who support and care about these kids, and that's why we all do what we do," Bonds said.

As far as giving up his coaching duties, Bonds will miss being on the sidelines, but he sees it as a necessary step in his administrative career.

"With the time frame and commitment of doing my job as principal effectively, if I tried to do both, one would suffer, and that's not fair to our students or to our football team," Bonds said.

and a different meaning and purpose."

Bonds' duties as RMS principal begin August 1.

After reviewing applications and conducting interviews, Russellville City Schools superintendent Heath Grimes recommended Bonds to the Russellville City Board of Education at its July 25 meeting. From the first time Grimes met Bonds, he was impressed with his drive and commitment to Russellville.

"It was very evident the first time I interviewed

'FEMA,' from page 1

Franklin County Schools.

Thanks in large part to a \$5.5 million settlement received last year from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for 2011 tornado damage, the school system has seen a dramatic turnaround in its financial picture.

That included a recent budget amendment approved by the Franklin County Board of Education for an additional \$1.2 million in revenue. \$750,000 of that came from the Education Trust Fund to help rebuild the Vina High School Science Lab/Band Hall.

Construction of that project is moving ahead of schedule, and superintendent Greg Hamilton expects students to be able to use the building in the coming school year.

Other additional revenues came from non-matching grants, including \$40,000 from the High Hopes grant program to be used for after-school programs; a \$30,000 grant for the system's gifted program; a \$25,000 middle school computer grant, used to purchase Chromebooks for schools; \$6,332 in robotics grants; and an additional state allotment of \$13,000 towards the career coach position. Those monies, as state grants, will go into the system's general fund.

Additional revenue from federal funding comes in the form of a \$45,000 after-school program dependent care grant that will be placed into the special revenue fund.

"We do a budget amendment each year, but we've never been given \$750,000 to build a building from the state before, so that is a new precedent in itself," Knight said. "Mr. Hamilton went down to Montgomery and worked with our legislators to get that passed."

Franklin County Schools saw minimal enrollment growth last year, and since state earned teaching units are based on the previous year's enrollment, the system finally caught up with its growth.

"We gained a large number of students in 2017 when Russellville City Schools implemented a tuition program," Knight said. "The extra teachers required were not funded until the next school year, because teaching units funded by the state are based on the previous school year."

Both Hamilton and Knight stressed that the system's prior financial constraints are by no means a reflection on past boards or superintendents. Proration resulted in reduced school funding, and the system was placed in further financial difficulty after the damage inflicted by the tornado of April 27, 2011.

"We've never had the funding from the state that it takes to run a school system," Knight said, "and we still don't. But its better now."

Hamilton said a 2018 resolution approved by the board of education led to the development of a plan to establish and maintain the minimum general fund balance.

"We've been trending up with grant money and some cost reductions, but getting three-quarters of a million dollars from the state to build a building is really unheard of," Hamilton said. "We appreciate the support of our legislators and Secretary of State John Merrill in helping get that done."

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5. SKIREFWOR (one word)
6. SFIEL (one word)
7. NOS SECON (two words)
8. SGCOUNR PAM (one word)
9. LABLEBSA (one word)
10. SCPIICN (one word)

Must receive entry by August 16, 2019

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Looking back at SEC Media Days

Last week we took a look at the media's preseason predictions for the SEC East and also made a few picks of our own. This week, we'll dive into the SEC West, which with the ascension of Texas A&M under Jimbo Fisher and the resurgence of LSU as an elite program has reasserted itself as the strongest division in all of college football.



Mike Self
Sports Editor

Alabama SEC Media Pick: First in West

The Skinny: It's not a stretch to call this the most talented offense Alabama has ever had. Of the Crimson Tide's 11 offensive starters, 10 received preseason All-Conference honors from the SEC Media. Quarterback Tua Tagovailoa (43 touchdown passes and only six picks last year) is one of six first-team selections, along with tailback Najee Harris (6.7 yards per carry), receivers Jerry Jeudy (1,315 yards and 14 touchdowns) and Henry Ruggs III (16.1 yards per catch, 11 touchdowns), and tackles Alex Leatherwood and Jedrick Wills, Jr. The title of offensive coordinator has changed hands yet again (back to Steve Sarkisian), but there's no reason to think Alabama won't at least match last year's output of 45.6 points and 522.0 yards per game.

The defense wasn't up to Nick Saban standards last year—particularly in the postseason, when the Tide allowed an average of 35.3 points in games against Georgia, Oklahoma and Clemson. There's a new play-caller on that side of the ball, too, and the D should also be helped by having more experience in the secondary and better health at linebacker.

With the annual marquee opener replaced this year by a "showdown" with Duke in Atlanta, Alabama won't be remotely tested until a trip to College Station on October 12. LSU will present a challenge in Tuscaloosa on November 9, and there's the trip to Auburn on November 30.

Bottom line, the Tide should be a decisive favorite on a weekly basis heading into the post-season—where, once again, those last three games will define the season.

FFP Pick: First in West

LSU
SEC Media Pick: Second in West
The Skinny: Stop me if you've heard this before: LSU, weary of struggling to put points on the board against elite defenses (i.e. Alabama's defense) has hired a new offensive coach to introduce a new system and liven things up. This time the new coach is passing game coordinator Joe Brady (who worked under Sean Payton with the Saints and also under Joe Moorhead when Moorhead was the OC at Penn State), and the new system involves a heavy dose of RPO's (run-pass options).

If it works (and if stud freshman running back John Emery, Jr. is as good as advertised), then

See 'SEC,' Page 18

Digging DEEP



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Linebacker, where young reserves like Karson Hyde (30) and Gavin Slay (8) demonstrated play-making ability in the spring game against Shelby County, is one of the deepest positions on the Russellville roster.

A lot of top-shelf talent may have moved on, but Russellville coach John Ritter believes his team has superior depth heading into 2019

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

John Ritter, Russellville's second-year head football coach, is more than happy to discuss his team's depth chart—with *depth* being the operative word.

In 2018, when the Golden Tigers won nine regular-season games for just the second time in the last eight years, they did so with a roster that was talented, to be sure, but also a bit top-heavy. All-State performers Zaye Boyd and Devin Buckhalter will undoubtedly be missed, as will dual-threat

quarterback Lucas McNutt, but Ritter feels strongly that this Russellville team has a greater number of players who can and will make meaningful contributions on Friday nights.

That increase in quality depth didn't happen by accident, either. It's the product of design, the result of an approach that dictates investing the same amount of time and energy into every player on the roster—regardless of how far down their name might appear on that aforementioned depth chart.

"Without a doubt," said Ritter, who won ASWA

See 'DEEP,' Page 18

Maggerise leaves Red Bay for Russellville

Class 2A Coach of the Year to serve as assistant for football, baseball

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Back in 2012, roughly a week after being hired as head football coach and athletic director at Red Bay High School, John Ritter interviewed a 24-year-old aspiring educator/coach who was fresh out of college named Richard Maggerise.

“As part of the interview, he asked me three things,” Maggerise recalled last week. “Can you cut grass? Can you weed-eat? And can you start tomorrow?” We laugh about it now. We started working together and cutting grass the following day after I interviewed, and we’ve kept close ties ever since.”

Maggerise got the job at Red Bay as an assistant coach for both football and baseball, and one year later he took over the baseball program from long-time coach Donnie Hastings. In six seasons as head coach, Maggerise led the Tigers to four playoff appearances—including this past season, when they went 20-11, won an area championship and advanced to the state quarterfinals for the first time since 1993. In June, Maggerise was selected by the ASWA as Class 2A Coach of the Year.

Ritter, meanwhile, led the Red Bay football team to a 16-7 record in two seasons—winning Class 2A Coach of the Year honors himself in 2012—before departing to join the Deshler staff. After helping the Tigers reach the Class 4A state title game in 2014, Ritter left Tuscumbia and went to West Morgan, where he served as head coach for three years—earning a second Coach of the Year award from the ASWA in 2016—before taking over the Russellville program in 2018.

So it was that earlier this summer Maggerise, now 31 and married with two young boys, found himself having a flashback as he interviewed again with Ritter, this time for a job at RHS.

“When he called me about this position, I asked him if he was gonna ask me those same three questions again,” Maggerise said with a smile. “He just kind of laughed.”

Specific questions aside, the interview obviously went rather well. Russellville offered Maggerise a job teaching high school history and serving as a football/baseball assistant, and he accepted. The RCS Board approved his hiring at a meeting last week; Maggerise is now officially a Golden Tiger.



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Maggerise led the Tigers to four playoff appearances in six years, including this past season’s state quarterfinal run.

“Hands down, it’s the tradition and the drive for success that Russellville has, both athletically and academically,” Maggerise said. “That was by far the most appealing aspect for me.”

Maggerise will now be reunited with Ritter as Russellville’s running backs coach and will also join the baseball staff of Chris Heaps, who has guided the Golden Tigers to a 210-98 record (.682 win percentage) and three Class 5A state championships in his seven seasons as head coach.

“Being able to work with John again and being able to work with Chris and try to grow as a coach

is something I’m really excited about,” said Maggerise, a Tuscaloosa native who graduated from Northside High School. “Both of those guys are phenomenal head coaches. There were just too many positives to pass up. I know a lot of the guys Coach Ritter has on staff and a lot of the guys Coach Heaps has on staff. It checked all the boxes.

“I wasn’t looking to leave. I felt that we established a really good program at Red Bay. We had some kids coming up that potentially would have been my best group to ever have at Red Bay, and leaving that behind was hard. But from a family standpoint and just being able to get in the Russellville system, I just couldn’t stay away from it.”

Maggerise and his wife Miranda have two boys, three-year-old Easton and one-year-old Camden. The good fit for his family at RHS was one of the many reasons he felt compelled to leave behind a head coaching position—one in which he had been very successful—and become an assistant again.

“I’m sure a lot of people wondered about that,” acknowledged Maggerise, who led Red Bay to a total of 50 wins on the diamond over his final three seasons. “But to go to a system like Russellville and to go into the programs they’ve got, both football and baseball, it made sense. It just made sense. The support that Russellville gives, obviously, both academically and athletically, is great. We’ve got two small boys, and I know a lot of the guys on staff, and they’ve got small kids like I do. It’s an opportunity to not only grow as a person and a coach and a teacher but also to compete for state championships.

“The vision John has for the football team and where he expects them to be in two or three years, and the vision Coach Heaps has for the baseball team and where he thinks they’re gonna be in two or three years...it really aligned with where I want to go and what I want to do.”

Maggerise has long been an admirer of Heaps—particularly of his ability to keep the Golden Tigers among the state’s elite programs despite losing significant talent to the college level on an annual basis.

“I’m an extremely organized person, and I pride myself on being able to develop talent,” Maggerise said. “But, from afar, I’ve always been intrigued by the mental-philosophy side of baseball that Chris provides. That’s one area I really wanted to grow in—not so much how to build a program, but how to sustain a program, how to instill a mindset and a drive to compete at a high level even when you don’t have as much talent as you’ve had in the past.”

To Maggerise’s point, while leading Russellville to back-to-back-to-back state titles from 2015-17, Heaps coached six players (Jacob Green, Austin Bohannon, Austin Kitterman, Reed Smith, Cody Greenhill and Judd Ward) who would eventually play college baseball at the Division I level. With all of those guys gone in 2018, the Golden Tigers still managed to win 30 games and four playoff series before falling to Faith Academy in the Class 5A state finals.

“I wanted to know how he did that,” Maggerise marveled. “This is a way for me to increase my knowledge and my ability as a coach, to go and learn from someone who’s been there and done

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'MAGGERISE,' from page 14

that.”

As he departs to join a juggernaut at Russellville, Maggerise leaves behind a Red Bay program that he believes is well positioned to remain a contender at the Class 2A level.

“I do. Whoever gets that job is set up for success, with the facilities upgrades we’ve made,” he said. “We’ve made \$75,000 in upgrades over the years. They have the resources, the things they need to be successful and to sustain that success. We’ve got multiple pitching machines and cages and bullpens; everything is there for someone to come in and be successful immediately.”

Maggerise leaves Red Bay with no regrets—except, perhaps, for the lingering feeling common among all competitors that he didn’t make the most of the talent he had at his disposal in the early stages of his head coaching tenure.

“Looking back, I always wish I would have done some things differently, especially with the groups I had early on,” he said. “Honestly, as a 24-year-old head coach, I was learning on the job as we went. I had some really, really good players, and maybe we didn’t achieve as much as we should have. There are some things I know now that I wish I knew back then.”

In his six years leading the program, Maggerise coached nine players who signed scholarship offers to play college baseball—an impressive number for a school the size of Red Bay. He’s proud of each of those players, naturally, but he’s just as proud of the lasting relationships he’s been able to build with all of his players, regardless of their skill level.

“Everybody likes to talk about the guys who went on to play at the next level, guys like Kolby Bragwell and Chandler Allen,” Maggerise said. “But I’m just as proud of the guys who are in college right now wanting to become coaches themselves one day. I still talk to them weekly. I see them every time they’re around. I’ve got guys currently serving overseas in Saudi Arabia and places like that who still text me and call me to see how I’m doing. The fact that I was able to influence some of their lives to the point where they think enough of me to still call me, that means a lot.”

“During this transition period from Red Bay to Russellville, the out-pouring of support from former players and parents who have been involved with the program has been phenomenal.”

Ironically, Maggerise credits much of his success with the baseball program at Red Bay to the principles he learned from Ritter while on the football staff. “That’s something I tell him all the time,” Maggerise said. “What he did with football and how he ran that program is exactly what I mimicked when I was trying to build the baseball program. Those same philosophies on how to handle parents and kids are what I did in baseball. I tell everybody that was a lot of the reason for my success. I took the blueprint he had for football, put my own touches on it and adapted it to the baseball program.”

“People thought it was crazy at the time, but it worked.”

Maggerise most admires the consistency and fairness with which Ritter treats each of his players, no matter their perceived ranking on the proverbial totem pole.

“He treats every person the same, whether it’s the seventh-grader who’s not even playing or the senior who’s a three-time All-State player,” Maggerise said of Ritter, who led Russellville to a 9-2 record in his 2018 debut and is now 42-25 overall in six seasons as a head coach. “You treat every individual with the same respect, and you coach every individual as hard as you can coach them. That’s how you get the best out of those players. Then, after three or four years in the program, those players develop into the kind of individuals you strive to have.”

“Everybody wants D-I athletes walking through the halls, but I really like to see those kids nobody knew about as seventh-, eighth- and ninth-graders turn into success stories.”

As an example, Maggerise points with pride to recent Red Bay graduate Cade McKinney, who went from relative obscurity as a ninth-grader in the Tiger baseball program to an All-State outfielder this past season as a senior after batting .391 with 12 extra-base hits and 30 runs scored.

“Cade is a great case in point,” Maggerise said last Wednesday. “He didn’t even start as a ninth-grader on the jayvee team, then he becomes an All-State player as a senior. That’s how you sustain success. That’s how you build a program. And it’s something I stole from John when I was 24 years old and just starting out as a head coach.”

“I’ve only been at Russellville for two days, but I can already tell he’s doing the same thing here. He knows every kid by their first name, whether it’s the All-State quarterback or the third-string left tackle. He treats every single kid with the same amount of respect and attention.”

Maggerise talked at great length last week about how grateful he is to have the opportunity to join the Russellville City School system and learn from coaches like Ritter and Heaps. In return, the Golden Tigers are getting a teacher and a coach who’s hungry, humble and eager to fill whatever role he’s asked to fill.



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Maggerise worked on the Red Bay football staff for seven seasons under two different head coaches—including his new boss at Russellville, John Ritter.

“An extreme work ethic. A borderline workaholic,” Maggerise said when asked to describe himself and what he brings to the table. “I don’t look at it like, ‘Am I a baseball guy or a football guy?’ I’m a sports guy. I’m coming to Russellville to make Russellville High School the best they can be both in the classroom and on the athletic field.”

“If that means toting water, then that’s what I’ll do. It’s all about, ‘How can I help the program?’”

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'DEEP,' from page 13

Coach of the Year honors at each of his previous two head coaching stops (Red Bay in 2012 and West Morgan in 2016) before arriving at RHS. "That's something I feel like we've done since 2012, when I got my first head coaching job. We coach them all the same. That was a huge emphasis at our first ten staff meetings when I got here—coach 'em all, coach 'em all, coach 'em all. It doesn't matter that one's not a starter on Friday night. He might be a starter on Monday night [for the junior varsity team]. Or he might not be. But next year he may be a starter on Monday night, and your Monday-night guy might be a Friday-night starter. We take a lot of pride in that.

"Our staff does a phenomenal job of developing talent and coaching them all the same regardless of their skill level or label—whether they're an All-Star or a no-star. That's really gonna show up for us this year, because we do have a lot of kids who we think are ready to contribute on offense, defense or special teams. That's big, because the more people we can play, the fresher we'll be."

Nowhere is that depth more evident—or more valuable—than in the trenches, where Ritter expects no fewer than 15 players to see snaps along the line of scrimmage. Tackles Edgar Amaya (a junior) and Noah Pounders (a senior) are expected to anchor an offensive line that also features center Trenton Hollimon (a senior who is healthy again after missing all of last season with an injury) and guards Johnathan Vargas (a senior) and Luis Domingo (a junior). Juniors Dakota Andres and Trevor Franklin, plus freshman Grayson Murray, give the Golden Tigers an O-line rotation that goes eight deep.

"We return three starters on the offensive line, and Luis Domingo played a ton for us last year," Ritter said. "Then you take Trenton Hollimon, who's a senior with a lot of experience even though he didn't play last year, and that's five guys we feel good about. Dakota Andres is a junior who's really gonna push those guys, and Grayson Murray is a ninth-grader who's had a great off-season. Trevor Franklin is a guy we got back out who didn't play last year. So that's eight guys we feel like can rotate in on the offensive line, and those three backups could start for a lot of teams."

The story is much the same on the other side of the ball, where senior Jose Gaspar and juniors Omarion Jackson and Angel Moreno lead a D-line group that also includes reserves Will Calhoun, Junior Rodriguez, Eduardo Vargas and Matt Williams.

"We feel like we've got a lot of spots on our roster where we can go pretty deep and there's not a huge drop-off," Ritter said.

That's certainly true at linebacker, where proven

veterans like Jamal Hubbard (team-leading 119 tackles last season), Brooks Scott (107 tackles) and Albaro Francisco (102 tackles) are supported by fellow starter Jaxon Hallmark and rising reserves Gavin Slay, Karson Hyde, Brody Logan and Cody Logan. The hard-hitting Slay, in particular, shined in the spring game while sharing time with Hubbard and Hallmark at outside 'backer.

"Jamal and Jaxon Hallmark are two more guys who played a ton last year," Ritter said, "and Gavin Slay in the spring game looked the best out of the three of them. We've got four guys inside who are gonna rotate, and we've got four guys outside as well."

Rounding out what should be a stout defense is a secondary led by veteran corners Ashaad Williams (70 tackles and a team-leading five interceptions in 2018) and Caden Watts (84 tackles and three picks), both juniors.

"Ashaad and Caden both played in eleven games last year and pretty much played every snap of every game," Ritter said. "They're two of the best corners in our area. I'll put Caden Watts and Ashaad Williams up against any receiver we face. If they'll do what they're coached to do and play fast, they've got a lot of ability."

Sophomore Ashton Boyd and junior Marcus Crumpton, a converted safety, provide solid depth on the perimeter.

"Our staff does a phenomenal job of developing talent and coaching them all the same regardless of their skill level or label—whether they're an All-Star or a no-star. That's really gonna show up for us this year, because we do have a lot of kids who we think are ready to contribute on offense, defense or special teams. That's big, because the more people we can play, the fresher we'll be."

"Of course, Caden and Ashaad are our main guys there, and we want them to play as much as possible," Ritter said. "But we've moved Marcus Crumpton to corner, and Ashton Boyd will rotate in there for us as well. Ashton has had a phenomenal summer. With Marcus, we moved him [to corner] late, so he's just starting to pick up how we want that position to be played."

Ritter said last Thursday that rising juniors Grayson Eady and J.D. Bishop "have kind of distanced themselves a little bit" as the leading candidates to start at safety, with sophomore Emitt Green and freshman Conner Warhurst also distinguishing themselves.

"We feel really good about those four guys at safety," Ritter said.

Ritter still expects the defense, which returns eight players with starting experience, to carry a heavier load early this season while the offense

adjusts to life without McNutt, Boyd and Buckhalter.

"I do, just because we have so many guys [on defense] who have played live-action," Ritter said. "We're gonna have to play some young kids on offense and play some guys in different roles. They'll need to gain more experience. Those defensive guys have gotten a lot more live game action. If you count the preseason game, a lot of those guys have played in 12 varsity football games, and there's no substitute for that experience. You can't simulate that. This summer stuff has been great, because it allows these young kids to see the speed of the game. But at the end of the day, when you put on those shoulder pads and knee pads and put that mouthpiece in, it's different. When you've got 8,000 people in the stands for a Friday night game...that's an environment you can't simulate.

"So our defense is gonna have to carry us early, but we're okay with that. That's what we hung our hat on at Red Bay, at Deshler [where Ritter was an assistant coach on a Super Six team in 2014] and West Morgan—having a very good defense."

Offensively, Ritter said that senior Jacob Bishop, a Muscle Shoals transfer who rushed for 131 yards and two touchdowns on just four carries while throwing for 79 yards on 4-for-6 passing in the spring game in a 35-14 win over Shelby County, has solidified himself as the Golden Tigers' starting quarterback, with sophomore Gabe Amick settling in as the backup.

"Jacob has really taken on that role as the starting quarterback," Ritter said. "We feel good about what he brings to the offense. But it's very, very nice to have a backup like Gabe, who has the potential to start week in and week out if something should happen.

"Gabe has had a phenomenal, phenomenal summer. He's grown by leaps and bounds. The beautiful thing about that situation is, Gabe is just a tenth-grader. He's still a pup. He's developed and honed in on his skills so much because we've given them equal reps. It's not like one of them gets more reps than the other."

Ritter said Bishop compares favorably with McNutt, who threw for more than 1,000 yards and 13 touchdowns last year and rushed for 691 yards and eight scores while leading an explosive offense that averaged 40.2 points and nearly 400 total yards per game.

"They do have similar skill sets," Ritter said. "Jacob throws the ball better than Lucas, and Lucas was a little faster than Jacob. The one thing they have in common is, they're both leaders, and that's what you want at the quarterback spot. You

'DEEP', from page 16

want that guy taking the snaps to be a leader on your football team. Lucas was a leader for us last year, and he did a lot of things and made a lot of plays simply because he was a gutsy player. He might not have been the best quarterback, but that kid was a winner.

"You can say the same thing about Jacob. He's a winner and a phenomenal kid. He does a lot of things that really fit well and complement what we want to do with our RPO (run-pass option) stuff and with our option football stuff."

The Golden Tigers also have multiple options at tailback, where Ritter said senior Austin Ashley, junior Caleb Matthews and sophomore Airreon "Boots" McCulloch are still jockeying for snaps as part of a backfield by committee.

"We still need a tailback to step forward and distance himself from the other two," Ritter said on Thursday. "Right now those guys are still kind of neck-and-neck. We're still kind of in the same situation we were in back in the spring, doing it by committee. We can be effective that way. It all comes down to game-planning and making sure we put ourselves in a position to be successful."

"From a play-calling standpoint, it's a lot easier to just call plays and not worry about who's out there. You just do what you do and call what you call. Your play-calling depends more on the situation than it does on personnel. Right now, a lot of our play-calling would be determined by our personnel. That's okay, too; it just means a little more work on Coach [Brett] Voss and myself. But that's what we get paid to do—put these kids in a good position to be successful."

Relative to last year, no position on offense—perhaps on either side of the ball—has developed more depth than receiver, where returning starters Rowe Gallagher and Cole Barnett (who combined to catch 19 passes for 256 yards and three touchdowns as sophomores in 2018) lead a talented group that also includes freshman Bryant Hyde (who caught a touchdown pass in the spring game), speedy senior J.D. Price and rising youngsters T.J. King, Trey Glass and Daniel Juan-Francisco.

"Rowe and Cole both started last year and played every snap," Ritter said. "The one thing different this year as opposed to last year is we've got guys who can push them. We didn't have that last year. Bryant Hyde is gonna be on the field the majority of the time on Friday nights, because he can do so

many things. He plays all three positions [X, Y and Z], he knows them all well, and he makes plays.

"J.D. Price is another guy who can make explosive plays. He has that ability, and we need him to step into that role this year. He runs well and does a lot of good things. He's had a phenomenal summer. J.D. and Bryant have probably had the best summers of any of our receivers. A lot of that is because Cole and Rowe get so much attention, because people know they were starters last year."

"This year [in fall camp], we get to focus on getting better at what we do," Ritter said. "About 95 percent of our offense is in. We'll add some wrinkles here and there, but mainly we'll get to work on what we do. Defensively, it's kind of the same thing. Guys understand the mentality we have to play with here, the mentality we're gonna play with here. Scheme-wise, they understand what we're trying to accomplish. They understand the verbage, how to line up, all that stuff. We can focus on fine-tuning our skills. That's a huge competitive advantage for us, not having to work on install."

The Golden Tigers wrapped up the summer with their annual 7-on-7 and Linemen Camp last Friday on the RHS campus. Russellville will kick off fall camp on Monday, August 5, with an eye toward the preseason game at East Limestone on August 23 and the season opener at Deshler on August 30.

"We're kind of at a cool point," Ritter said, "because last year we had to do so much install in fall camp. The first week, it was slow. Practice was slow-paced, and the kids were playing slow because they weren't exactly sure how to do things. They were still learning. We hadn't done a lot of install last spring or summer, because we were still hammering that toughness home."

"This year [in fall camp], we get to focus on getting better at what we do. About 95 percent of our offense is in. We'll add some wrinkles here and there, but mainly we'll get to work on what we do. Defensively, it's kind of the same thing. Guys understand the mentality we have to play with here, the mentality we're gonna play with here. Scheme-wise, they understand what we're trying to accomplish. They understand the verbage, how to line up, all that stuff. We can focus on fine-tuning our skills. That's a huge competitive advantage for us, not having to work on install."

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PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

The Russellville 10U All-Stars were honored at last Monday's meeting of the Russellville City Council. The team recently won the state championship at the ARPA State Tournament held in Montgomery, where they went undefeated. Team members, pictured above with the council and mayor David Grissom, include Kristyan Huerta, Alexia Groce, Josie Burcham, Haylee Patrick, Chloe James, Kaylee Suggs, Ellie Kate McReynolds, Addison Holcomb, Erin Grimes and Jemma Moore. Head coach was Heath Grimes, and assistant coaches were Terrell Groce, Brandon James, Jason Burcham and Shane Holcomb.

'SEC,' from page 13

LSU should be able to navigate a tough schedule (at Texas on September 7, home dates with Florida and Auburn in October) and remain in the thick of the playoff hunt heading into the November 9 trip to T-Town. The defense, led by preseason first-team All-SEC selections Rashard Lawrence up front and do-everything safety Grant Delpit on the back end, should be as salty as ever—particularly if pass-rushing specialist K'Lavon Chaisson is fully recovered from last year's season-opening knee injury.

FFP Pick: Second in West

Texas A&M

SEC Media Pick: Third in West

The Skinny: The Aggies turned heads early (nearly upsetting Clemson in Week 2) and finished strong (winning their final four games) in year number one under Fisher, setting themselves up as a team on the rise in 2019. Fisher and company are killing it on the recruiting trail, dual-threat quarterback Kellen Mond looks poised for a major breakout, and there is elite talent at receiver and on the defensive line.

There are reasons to believe that A&M might still be a year away, however. First, there's the schedule, which includes a terrifying trifecta of tough road trips—at Clemson (September 7), at Georgia (November 23) and at LSU (November 30). Factor in the home date with Alabama in mid-October, and A&M will undoubtedly be an underdog in at least four of its games.

Then there's the departure of the two most productive players on last year's offense, tailback Trayveon Williams (1,760 rushing yards and 18 touchdowns) and tight end Jace Sternberger (832 receiving yards and 10 touchdowns). Replacing those two All-Americans with players that are talented but also young and unproven could be dicey. There are also major questions at linebacker, where no full-time starters return.

FFP Pick: Fourth in West

Auburn

SEC Media Pick: Fourth in West

The Skinny: At first blush, the Tigers seem more likely to slide into the bottom three in the West as opposed to climbing into the top three. We rated their schedule (which includes road trips to Texas A&M, Florida and LSU, plus home dates with Georgia and Alabama) as the toughest in the division. There is virtually zero experience at quarterback, where two of the top candidates to start are freshmen. And the offensive line was a major problem area last year.

But maybe things aren't as bleak as they seem. Start with the defensive line, which is dotted with future pros (Derrick Brown, Marlon Davidson, Nick Coe) and might be the best in the country. Factor in all the young talent at the skill positions on offense, where playmakers JaTarvious Whitlow (787 rushing yards in 2018), Seth Williams (20.5 yards per reception), Shaun Shivers (5.3 yards per carry) and Anthony Schwartz (16.2 yards per reception and 7.8 yards per carry, with seven total touchdowns) are all sophomores now. That's a lot of options for Gus Malzahn, who is back to calling the plays again.

If that much-maligned O-line, which returns all five starters—all of them seniors—from a year ago, takes a drastic step forward, and if a quarterback (perhaps red-shirt freshman Joey Gatewood or five-star recruit Bo Nix) emerges to take the reins, then maybe this will be the latest Auburn team to greatly exceed expectations.

If. Maybe.

FFP Pick: Third in West

See 'SEC,' page 19



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'SEC', from page 18

Mississippi State
SEC Media Pick: Fifth in West
The Skinny: State is squarely in the middle of the SEC West pecking order—no real threat to Alabama and LSU at the top of the division but clearly ahead of Ole Miss and Arkansas at the bottom. A defense that led the conference in all four major statistical categories must replace a ton of talent on the D-line and in the secondary, which means that an offense that flat-out couldn't score against really good defenses (16 points *total* in losses to Kentucky, Florida, LSU and Alabama) will need to be vastly improved.
FFP Pick: Fifth in West

Ole Miss
SEC Media Pick: Sixth in West
The Skinny: Pretty much the only thing Ole Miss did at a high level last year was throw the football—and now the quarterback and three NFL-caliber receivers are all gone.
 There is also major change on both sides of the ball, with new OC Rich Rodriguez implementing his run-oriented spread option attack and new DC Mike Maclntyre installing a new 3-4 scheme. The defense can't get much worse than last year, when the Rebels ranked last in the SEC in points allowed (36.2 per game), rushing yards allowed (221.8 yards per game) and total yards allowed (483.4 yards per game).
 If, as expected, Ole Miss really starts to feel the pinch of those NCAA penalties and recruiting restrictions this year, the basement awaits.
FFP Pick: Last in West

Arkansas
SEC Media Pick: Last in West
The Skinny: Arkansas was abysmally bad last year, winning only two games—against Eastern Illinois and Tulsa, no less. The Hogs lost by 27 at home to North Texas, gave up 65 points to Alabama, and got out-scored 90-6 by Mississippi State and Missouri in their final two games. Suffice it to say there is nowhere to go but up.
 And up they should go, at least a rung or two, thanks to a productive group of tailbacks led by Rakeem Boyd, a grad transfer at quarterback in Ben Hicks who played two seasons for head coach Chad Morris when both were at SMU, and a badly needed influx of talent at receiver led by speedy 6'5 freshman Trey Knox. Still, there's a long way to go.
FFP Pick: Sixth in West



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