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12.25.19

Madden's request denied

Former county administrator was seeking release from prison into community corrections program

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A judge rejected a request by former Franklin County administrator Crista Madden to be released from prison into a community corrections program.

Circuit Judge Pride Tompkins entered an order on November 27 denying a motion filed by Madden's attorney, Valerie Judah of Dothan.

Madden's motion was filed on August 27. In the motion, Madden asked the court to place her in Dale County Community Corrections so that she could be employed and "earn more money to pay towards her restitution."

Madden entered a plea of guilty to two felony counts of using public office or position for personal gain on June 11, 2018. Tompkins sentenced her to the maximum 20 years in prison on each count, to be served concurrently, and ordered the payment of \$753,889.21 restitution to

Franklin County.

According to her motion, Madden was considered a low risk to re-offend and was a "prime candidate for probation," according to the probation officer who completed the probation report.

Circuit judge Pride Tompkins entered an order on November 27 denying a motion filed by Madden's attorney, Valerie Judah of Dothan.

Madden's motion was filed on August 27. In the motion, Madden asked the court to place her in Dale County Community Corrections so that she could be employed and "earn more money to pay towards her restitution."

Madden's brother-in-law, Shea Madden, is the community corrections director in Franklin County, so Madden submitted her request to be placed into the Dale County

See 'DENIED,' Page 9

Community Development Commission okays grants

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Community Development Commission met December 13 and approved a number of grants to local schools, non-profit agencies and one to the Town of Hodges.

The commission, which includes Brad Bolton, Jeremy Campbell, Chris Wallace and Russellville mayor David Grissom, meets quarterly to review grant applications. The next meeting of the commission will be February 28, 2020 at 8:30 a.m. at the Franklin County Courthouse Annex.

Any grant request for that meeting must be received by

a member of the commission on or before February 21, 2020 at 12 p.m.

With the most recent grants, more than \$1.994 million has been returned to Franklin County since the inception of the funding. The funds come from in lieu of tax payments from the Tennessee Valley Authority.

The Franklin County Legislative delegation (Sen. Larry Stutts, Rep. Proncey Robertson and Rep. Jamie Kiel) each make an appointment to the commission to be their representative.

Grant awards for the December 13 meeting included:
•\$1,497 to Franklin County Emergency Management Agency for purchase of a 7' x 16' enclosed trailer.

See 'GRANTS,' Page 9

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Mr. Muriel Wayne Sandusky, Russellville, age 71 Died Friday, December 13, 2019. A memorial service will be held at 3 p.m. on Saturday, December 28, 2019 at the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witness on County Road 48 in Russellville. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.



Letters to the Editor

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Merry CHRISTMAS and HAPPY NEW YEAR

Franklin County Probate Judge

BARRY MOORE



Former Bulldog QB addresses Civitans

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

As he addressed the Russellville Civitan Club at its December 10 meeting, Matt Wyatt said Russellville has been on his mind, and his heart, recently.

So when former classmate Mark Tucker reached out to him to see if he would be Tucker's guest at the Civitan meeting, Wyatt eagerly accepted.

It was the first time for Wyatt, the former Mississippi State quarterback who led the Bulldogs to a 10-2 record in 1999, in many years to return to the community he still refers to as 'home.'

"We lived in Russellville for six years. I was 14 when we moved to Prattville," Wyatt said. "Eight to 14. Those were my formative years as a child. I get asked all the time where I'm from, and I say I graduated from Prattville but I grew up in Russellville."

Wyatt moved to Russellville in 1984. His father Don served as director of missions for Franklin County, and his mother taught at Phil Campbell School. The family moved to Prattville in 1991, near the end of Wyatt's eighth-grade year. And Russellville's loss was Prattville's gain, as Wyatt would letter all four years as a three-sport athlete.

After considering a plethora of scholarship offers, Wyatt decided on Mississippi State, where he earned All-Southeastern Conference Freshman quarterback honors in 1996. After playing professional football in Germany, Wyatt returned to Mississippi to take a job with the Tupelo NBC affiliate as a sports anchor and host of a hunting and fishing show.

He moved on to a job with CSS-TV and would later host a sports talk show on Jackson's ESPN radio affiliate. Wyatt joined the Mississippi State football broadcast team in 2009 as host of the pre-game and post-game show. He became color analyst eight years ago and still serves in that role on Bulldog broadcasts today. Wyatt also started a production company, Matt Wyatt Media, last year. He and his wife Anna Beth have one daughter.

"We lived in Russellville for six years. I was 14 when we moved to Prattville," Wyatt said. "Eight to 14. Those were my formative years as a child. I get asked all the time where I'm from, and I say I graduated from Prattville but I grew up in Russellville."

Wyatt came to Russellville several hours prior to last Tuesday's Civitan meeting and spent the time driving around his former hometown.

"Russellville has been on my heart lately," Wyatt said. "I think there's a reason God sent me here today. I just haven't seen it yet. But I really believe there's a story to be told here."

Wyatt recalled his childhood in Russellville, including the pickup football games in Hester Heights and the Sunday morning reenactments of *Saturday Night Live* sketches by Tucker before Sunday School at Calvary Baptist Church. Last Tuesday morning, as he drove through the subdivision where he once lived, Wyatt saw his former principal, Joe Pride, drive by.

"Joe Pride was the only person who paddled me as much as my daddy did," Wyatt said.

Wyatt's football career at Russellville began, and ended, with Coach Barry Pace's middle school team his eighth-grade season.

"As a kid, getting to one day put on that black and gold uniform was the ultimate goal for me," Wyatt said.

Wyatt recalled the finest moment of his Bulldog career as the October Saturday in 1999 when he led a second-half comeback as Mississippi State defeated Auburn 18-16 at Jordan-Hare Stadium.

"We were down 16-3 with about two-and-a-half minutes remaining. We scored, then our defense held them, forcing a punt," Wyatt recalled. "Coach [Tommy] Tuberville decided to take an intentional safety rather than risk a punt block, and that made it 16-12. We got a good return on the kick and scored with 19 seconds left in the game to make it 18-16. We just took a knee on the extra point, kicked off and held them on the final play."

The Bulldogs finished the season 10-2, which included a win the Peach Bowl over Clemson.



Matt Wyatt led Mississippi State to a 10-2 record in 1999.

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Honey-Do: Holiday safety

The holiday season has officially (and quickly, it seems) arrived with gusto. Are you ready for the hustle and bustle, visiting friends and family, and tons of holiday cheer? Many folks may not be used to having children around on a regular basis, so be sure that your home is child-safe.

INSTALL OUTLET COVERS. These inexpensive plastic covers are easily inserted into electrical outlets, and they prevent small children from sticking anything into the holes.

PUT UP THE POISONS. Everyday cleaners, medicines and household chemicals can be real hazards for children (and pets, too). Be sure they are out of reach or locked away before company arrives. By the way, some natural decorations (such as holly berries) should be displayed out of reach of small

hands, because they are toxic.

TRIP HAZARDS. Does that new rug you purchased slide on the floor? Lay a rug gripper underneath it. Are all electrical cords, especially those used for decorations, tucked away safely and securely? On the outside, be sure to clear the driveways, sidewalks and steps.

PLAN FOR ENTERTAINMENT. Have a few inexpensive, child-safe toys available to occupy little hands. This will keep the child from wandering and being curious in unfamiliar surroundings.

Plan ahead, be prepared and have a wonderfully merry Christmas and happy New Year. Remember, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.

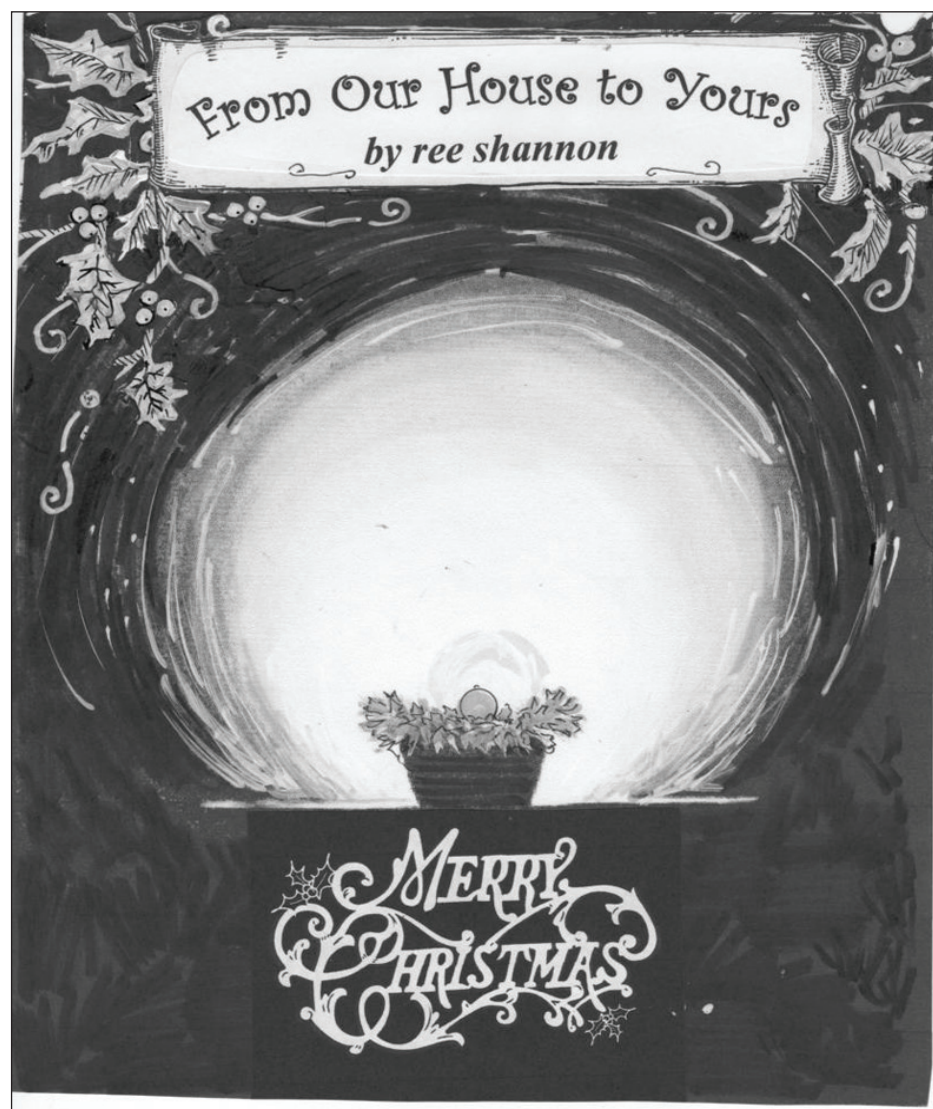


Doug Green

Letters to the Editor

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

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



FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

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Correction Policy

The *Franklin Free Press* strives for excellence and accuracy, and we will be pleased to correct any error in our newspaper. To request a correction or clarification, call or e-mail our office.

Letters to the editor

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DAVE SAYS
Financial Straight-Talk
www.davesays.org
by Dave Ramsey

Great start, but follow the steps

Dear Dave,
I've recently begun living on a budget, and I've got \$1,000 saved. At the moment, I have \$150 left over each month after everything is accounted for in my budget. I also have three debts totaling about \$12,000. Should I use this extra cash to pay off debt, or would it be better to start investing the money?

Leland

Dear Leland,
Let's put off investing for the time being. You've done a great job so far by getting on a budget and saving \$1,000. Making mature decisions and telling your money where to go, instead of wondering where it went, is the key to gaining control of your finances.

Now, let's take a closer look at my plan and where you stand. You've already set aside \$1,000 for a beginner emergency fund. That's Baby Step 1. Don't touch that money except in the event of an actual emergency. You're ready now for Baby Step 2, which is to pay off all debt except for your mortgage using the debt snowball system.

To do this, make a list of your debts from smallest to largest. Make minimum payments on all but the smallest debt, and attack it with a vengeance. As soon as you get that one paid off, move on to the next one and then the next one.

Once you finish the debt snowball, and you're debt-free except for your house, you go back to your emergency fund and stash more money away until you have a fully funded emergency fund of three to six months of expenses. This is Baby Step 3. Now you can begin concentrating on investing for retirement, which is Baby Step 4. Start with your employer's 401(k) plan. Then, you can invest the rest into Roth IRAs—one for you, and one for your spouse—if you're married.

Saving and investing are both very important. But it's also important to become debt-free. That's what makes them easy!

Dave

Who will be liable for the debt?

Dear Dave,
My parents are getting up there in years, and they aren't really prepared for when they pass away. They can't afford life insurance at this point, and they also have a lot of debt. When they die, who will be liable for their debt?

Tammi

Dear Tammi,
Any outstanding debt your parents have upon passing will likely go against their estate. If they have a positive net worth—meaning they owned more than they owed—there will be money left over after the debts are paid, and this could go toward an inheritance. If they have a negative net worth, which means they owed more than they owned, everything could be sold off to cover as much of the debt as possible. Regardless, you

See 'DAVE,' Page 8

Help Wanted! Love, Santa!



COURTESY PHOTOS

On December 18, Belgreen Elementary students in Pre-K through fourth grade presented the Christmas program "Help Wanted! Love, Santa!" During the program, Santa, a sweet toymaker, looks for someone to help him make and deliver toys to all the good boys and girls around the world. The cast included Christmas sharks, elves, toy soldiers, pajama girls, dolls, Christmas presents, dancing Christmas trees, penguins, gingerbread men, snowmen, reindeer, reindeer hunters, the Grinch, and Mr. and Mrs. Claus. The production was a wonderful musical extravaganza with musical dance numbers by each group, directed by Susan Crittenden. It was holiday magic come to life! Cookies with Santa, sponsored by Belgreen PTO, followed the production and included a gift basket auction, cookies and hot cocoa or cider for all.



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

You're invited to celebrate with Tharptown Baptist Church at its Outreach Christmas Dinner, to celebrate our Risen Savior's birthday. If you want to enjoy a good meal on Christmas Day, Tharptown Baptist Church invites you to come enjoy a free Christmas meal on Wednesday, December 25 from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Please call the church at 256-332-0063 if you and/or your family plan to attend. The church is located at 5140 Highway 48 in the Tharptown community.

Spruce Pine Historical Society meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Next meeting is January 7. All members and friends are urged to attend.

American Legion Post 64 will meet Thursday, January 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 at the Roxy Theatre on Saturday, January 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 historic Roxy Theater.

Saint Paul CME Church (40 Hamilton Street SW, Russellville, AL 35653) cordially invites you to worship with them on Friends and Family Day on Sunday, January 19, 2020 at 3 p.m. Guest evangelist will be Rev. Benjamin Massey and congregation from New Enoch Missionary Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa. Dinner will be served. For more information, call 256-332-6177.

The Sons of Confederate Veterans, Lt. Col. John W. Harris Jr., Camp #1833 will meet Thursday, February 7 at 6 p.m. at the Russellville Rec Center on Ash Avenue. For more info, call 256-324-2317. Camp #1833 meets the first Thursday of each month EXCEPT January and July. The Sons of Confederate Veterans is the direct heir of the United Confederate Veterans and the oldest hereditary organization for male descendants of Confederate soldiers. Membership is open to all male descendants of any veteran who served honorably in the Confederate Armed Forces. The minimum age for membership is 12. Everyone welcome!

You are welcome to all services at Pleasant Ridge Missionary Baptist Church (Hwy. 48 in Russellville). Sunday service times: Sunday School at 10 a.m., worship service at 11 a.m., Sunday night service at 6 p.m. Wednesday night Bible Study is held at 6:30 p.m. Pastor is Bro. Roger Bond.

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‘DAVE,’ from page 4

would only be held liable for any of their debt if you were a co-signer on the loans. I'd also suggest getting their permission to buy burial policies on them. If they won't agree to this, you might have to save up money for their final expenses yourself. In most areas, \$10,000 to \$15,000 is enough to cover basic burial costs for two people.

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.

Visit us online at www.franklinfreepress.net!

FBLA Toy Drive



COURTESY PHOTO

The Russellville High School Chapter of the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) held its annual toy drive on Friday, December 13. Members collected toys and donations to be given to children in our community who are in need this Christmas. Rev. Richard Parker spoke to the club members on the topic of the importance of giving back and paying forward. FBLA was able to collect several bags of toys along with \$140 in donations. Pictured above with Parker are FBLA officers (from left) Anna Woods (Reporter), Kaydee Don Holland (President), Julianna Wallace (Treasurer), Ellyse Strickland (Secretary) and Lauren Sturdivant (Vice President). Not pictured are Kyra Greenhill (Co-Vice President), Annsley Gault (Historian), Billy Alonzo (Projects Chairperson) and Rachel Tena (Parliamentarian). FBLA sponsor is Dr. AnnaKay Holland.

Merry Christmas
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MERRY CHRISTMAS

'DENIED' from page 1

program to avoid an appearance of impropriety. Madden's attorney stated in the motion that the director of the Dale County Community Corrections was willing to accept Madden into the program subject to court approval.

As of the end of November, \$127,769.32 has been paid toward restitution, leaving Madden a balance of \$626,514.89. The majority of the restitution, \$84,275.32, came from the proceeds of the sale of Madden's home. Tompkins previously denied a request from Madden's husband to allow him to keep half of the remaining equity from the sale. The home sold in November of 2018 for \$339,000.

At the time of her sentencing hearing, Madden's attorney, Ralph Holt of Florence, told the court Madden was prepared to pay \$76,000 toward restitution that day. After she was denied probation, that money was never paid into the Circuit Clerk's office.

Madden's attorney said the reason she did not pay the \$76,000 at that time was because the court said a separate order as to restitution would be issued and she was waiting until that order was entered.

Madden remains in the custody of the Alabama Department of Corrections. She is housed at the Birmingham Community Work Center but is not working outside the facility due to her classification, according to Madden's motion.

Madden also has a \$200,000 life insurance policy, which her motion states "will be made payable to Franklin County."

At Madden's sentencing hearing, the Alabama Attorney General's office requested that Madden's retirement benefits from her employment in Franklin County be applied to restitution, but the court has not entered an order addressing those benefits.

Community Corrections is a program where the person officially remains in the legal custody of the DOC but the defendant is allowed to work and go home, subject to intense supervision.

In denying Madden's motion without a hearing, Tompkins said in his order that "this Court can not in good conscience grant the defendant's motion." The order suggested that if the State of Alabama agreed to the defendant's request, the court would consider granting the motion, but "there have been no other motions filed to reflect that this matter has been resolved for the Court to consider."

'GRANTS' from page 1

- \$5,000 transferred to a fund to be used for future economic development.
- \$1,000 to Russellville Middle School for purchase of sound equipment.
- \$750 to the Town of Hodges for purchase of planters for a beautification project.
- \$1,000 to Tharptown Elementary School for purchase of furniture in the special education classroom.
- \$1,225 to Red Bay High School FFA String Band for purchase of championship rings.
- \$1,000 to Belgreen High School for purchase of Chromebooks for the second-grade classroom.
- \$1,000 to Belgreen High School for purchase of Multisensory Reading Program.
- \$250 to Tharptown High School for the Arrive Alive Tour Event for juniors and seniors.
- \$1,000 to Tharptown Elementary School for purchase of an automatic electronic defibrillator.
- \$500 to Vina High School cheerleaders for national competition expenses.
- \$1,000 to Belgreen High School for purchase of Chromebooks.
- \$2,500 to Russellville Police Department for purchase of 13 Dell Desktop computers.

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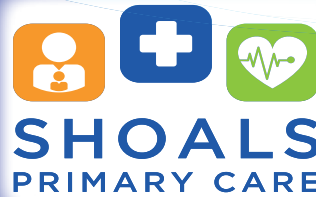
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Cecil Batchelor was recently presented with a certificate honoring his 71 years of service as a Free Mason. The award was presented to Batchelor by fellow Masons at CB&S Bank. Pictured from left: Terry Bolton, Stanley Champion, Mike Boyles, Cecil Batchelor, Greg Batchelor and Wayne Sinclair.

For updates on news throughout the week, visit www.franklinfreepress.net!



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2020 prospects looking positive for local teams

The 2020 football season is shaping up as a potentially special one for several teams in the *Free Press* coverage area.

Russellville has won 17 games the past two seasons, but the Golden Tigers could have their best team yet under third-year head coach John Ritter in 2020. They'll be breaking in a new quarterback, but there is a ton of veteran talent on both sides of the ball.

Edgar Amaya, a 6'4, 290-pound road-grader who has started since his freshman year, will be back to lead the offensive line as a senior. Russellville will be loaded at tight end (with rising senior Peyton Ray and rising junior Nathan Brockway), and tailback Boots McCulloch is poised for a breakout season after rushing for 739 yards and eight touchdowns as a sophomore in 2019.

There are plenty of weapons at receiver as well, where rising seniors Rowe Gallagher (20 catches for 317 yards and six touchdowns) and Cole Barnett (18 catches for 218 yards and one score) will be joined again by T.J. King, who shined late in his freshman season and finished with 240 yards and three touchdowns on eight catches.

King was one of three freshmen, along with corner Bryant Hyde and safety Conner Warhurst, who had earned starting roles by the end of the 2019 season. There are also plenty of reinforcements on the way—and soon—from the junior varsity level and a middle school program that lost just one game this past year.

Russellville should be special on defense in 2020, with rising seniors Angel Moreno (108 tackles, 19 TFL, eight sacks) and Angel Martinez (95 tackles, 12 TFL, four sacks) leading a terrific D-line. Tackle leader Brooks Scott (143 stops as a junior in 2019) will lead a linebacker crew teaming with talent, and rising seniors Ashaad Williams, Grayson Eady and J.D. Bishop lead a deep secondary.

The Golden Tigers could easily improve on this season's 13.4 points allowed per game. They won't miss Jasper (which moved up to Class 6A) one bit as they pursue their first region title under Ritter. The new-look Class 5A, Region 8 includes holdovers Russellville and Lawrence County, plus newcomers Mae Jemison, Lee-Huntsville, St. John Paul II, East Limestone and Ardmore.

Speaking of reclassification and realignment, Red Bay's quest to repeat as region champs in 2020 got tougher when Mars Hill (which went to the Class 1A state title game each of the previous two years, winning it once) moved up to 2A and landed in Region 8. But head coach Michael

See 'POSITIVE,' Page 18



Mike Self
Sports Editor

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

The 2019 football season was a strong one in the *Free Press* coverage area, with four teams (Colbert Heights, Red Bay, Russellville and Vina) earning playoff berths and another team (Phil Campbell) doubling its win total from the previous year.

Now that the season is officially in the books, it's time for us to unveil our annual All-Area selections for 2019. We've expanded the list this year to include both first- and second-team honorees. Each of these players distinguished themselves this season with their performance and production on the field every Friday night.

Let's dive right in.

First-Team All-Area

Offense

Quarterback: Jalen Vinson, Red Bay (6'1, 175, Junior)

The Tigers opened up their offense this season, and the fleet-footed, strong-armed Vinson flourished as a dual threat in the new RPO-based attack.

A first-year starter at the position, Vinson threw for 1,715 yards on 52 percent (96-for-186) passing with 12 touchdowns and only five interceptions. He was also a major factor in the run game, rushing 93 times for 594 yards and 15 scores. He accounted for more than 2,300 yards of total offense and 27 total touchdowns, helping Red Bay go 12-1 and reach the state quarterfinals for the first time since 2007.

Vinson's accuracy on downfield throws lent a quick-strike quality to the Tiger offense; five of his touchdown passes covered at least 57 yards.

Running Back: Trey Leindecker, Phil Campbell (5'11, 170, Junior)

The speedy Leindecker was a big play waiting to happen, averaging a stellar 8.9 yards per rushing attempt. Of his 14 rushing touchdowns, nine covered 40-plus yards—including scoring runs of 86 and 82 yards in the same game against rival Phillips on September 27. Leindecker ran for a career-best 327 yards on just 16 carries that night, leading the Bobcats to a 29-0 win.

For the season, Leindecker rushed for 1,234 yards on 138 carries while also catching 21 passes for 240 yards and three scores. He totaled 1,474 yards from scrimmage and scored 17 touchdowns, averaging an eye-popping 48.2 yards on those 17 scoring plays.

Running Back: Gage Pugh, Colbert Heights (5'11, 180, Junior)

A transfer from Cherokee, Pugh thrived as a starting wing back in the Wildcats' old-fashioned, ground-heavy attack. Pugh led the team in rushing attempts (167), rushing yards (1,082) and rushing touchdowns (12), averaging a solid 6.4 yards per

Franklin Free Press 2019 All-Area Football Team



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Vinson accounted for more than 2,300 yards of total offense and 27 touchdowns, leading Red Bay to a 12-1 record.

carry and helping Colbert Heights make the playoffs for a third consecutive season.

Receiver: Arden Hamilton, Red Bay (6'1, 170, Senior)

Tall and athletic with tremendous body control and leaping ability, Hamilton brought a much-needed big-play element to the Tiger passing attack. He was a game-changer, hauling in touchdown passes of 74, 74, 62, 60 and 57 yards. His seven touchdown receptions covered an average of 50.4 yards.

Hamilton had two 100-yard receiving games and three more with at least 90 yards, finishing the season with 40 catches for 880 yards—an average of 22.0 yards per catch.

Receiver: Colyn Humphres, Red Bay (5'9, 160, Senior)

While teammates Hamilton and Mason Holt worked primarily outside the numbers, the versatile Humphres did his damage from the slot and also from the backfield, where he often lined up as the primary ball-carrier in Red Bay's short-yardage formation.

As a receiver, Humphres caught 19 passes for 265 yards and two touchdowns. He was even more productive as a runner, rushing 113 times for

See 'FOOTBALL,' Page 14



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'FOOTBALL,' from page 13

581 yards and 15 scores. He was money down near the goal line, with 13 of those 15 rushing touchdowns coming from inside 10 yards.

Receiver: Austen Baker, Phil Campbell (5'8, 170, Junior)

A dual threat capable of making big plays in both the pass game and the run game, Baker had 354 receiving yards and four touchdowns on a team-best 26 catches. He also rushed 30 times for 185 yards and a touchdown, averaging 6.2 yards per carry.

Baker's best game came on September 20 at Vina, when he caught four passes for 100 yards and three touchdowns and also rushed for a score in a 48-0 win.

Tight End/H-Back: Peyton Ray, Russellville (6'0, 215, Junior)

Ray caught a 65-yard pass in Russellville's first-round playoff game at Scottsboro, but his primary contributions were as a physical blocker in the run game. He finished the season with an overall grade of 90 percent and was credited with 62 pancake blocks, second-most on the team. Ray helped the Golden Tigers rush for 216.1 yards per game and 5.9 yards per carry.

Head coach John Ritter, a renowned proponent of old-school, smash-mouth football, paid Ray the highest of compliments when he said of the junior tight end, "That joker is rough."

OL: Edgar Amaya, Russellville (6'4, 290, Junior)

Amaya, who played both guard and tackle for the Golden Tigers, graded out at 96 percent on the season and was credited with a team-leading 95 pancake blocks. A three-year starter up front, the big and physical Amaya helped Russellville rush for 216.1 yards per game.

OL: Dylan Hester, Red Bay (6'0, 215, Senior)

A starter since his sophomore season, Hester anchored Red Bay's offensive line at center, where he graded out at 90 percent. He served as a team captain for all 13 games, helping the Tigers finish 12-1 and reach the state quarterfinals for the first time in 12 years. Hester started every game over his final three seasons at Red Bay.

OL: Trenton Hollimon, Russellville (6'0, 230, Senior)

After missing his junior season with an injury, Hollimon returned in 2019 to anchor the Golden Tigers' O-line at center. He graded out at 89 percent for the season and was credited with 57 pancake blocks, third-most on the team.

OL: Levi Raper, Red Bay (6'1, 185, Senior)

A two-year starter at guard, Raper was rated by head coach Michael Jackson as the second-best blocker on Red Bay's offensive line.

See 'FOOTBALL,' page 15

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Ray helped Red Bay reach the semifinals of the *TimesDaily* Classic last week. The 6'5 post player had a monster game in the quarterfinals against Lauderdale County on Wednesday, hitting three threes and going 14-for-16 at the foul line on his way to scoring 25 points in a 63-58 win.

In three games at the tournament, Ray shot 80 percent (20-for-25) at the line and averaged 15.0 points per game. Through Sunday, he had topped the 20-point mark three times this season and was averaging 17.2 points per game for the 8-3 Tigers, with 19 threes made in 11 games.



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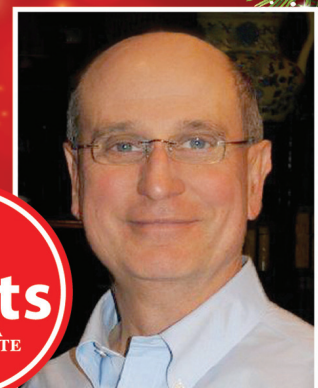
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'FOOTBALL,' from page 14

OL: Logan Simpson, Colbert Heights (5'10, 190, Senior)
 Simpson started at guard and was the Wildcats' best O-line player, according to head coach Taylor Leathers. Simpson graded out at 95 percent for the season and helped Colbert Heights rush more than 2,600 yards in 11 games.

All-Purpose: Carson Shaw, Colbert Heights (6'0, 170, Junior)
 The versatile and athletic Shaw excelled this season after moving from quarterback to wing back, rushing for 1,012 yards and nine touchdowns on 132 carries—an average of 7.6 yards per attempt, best on the team. His best game came early in the season against Wilson, when he ran for 186 yards and two touchdowns on 16 carries in a 28-12 win.

Shaw still played quarterback on occasion based on down and distance, and he was also a factor in the return game.

Defense
DL: Alex Kennedy, Red Bay (6'1, 205, Junior)

A starter since his freshman season, Kennedy recorded 61 total tackles (including 28 solo stops) from his end position and also had one sack. He helped anchor a defensive front that limited opposing teams to just 74.6 rushing yards per game and 2.6 yards per carry during the team's 12-0 start.

DL: Angel Martinez, Russellville (5'10, 260, Junior)
 Martinez excelled in the Golden Tigers' three-man front, finishing fourth on the team with 95 total tackles. He was a disruptive force at times, recording 12 tackles for loss and four sacks.

DL: Angel Moreno, Russellville (5'11, 250, Junior)
 In his second season as a starter up front, Moreno was a beast. He wrecked things at the point of attack, getting into the opposing backfield with regularity and leading the Golden Tigers with 19 tackles for loss and eight sacks. He finished second on the team with 108 total tackles.

DL: Logan Scott, Red Bay (6'2, 260, Junior)
 A force at defensive end with his sheer size and strength, Scott was in on 65 total tackles (including 38 solo stops) this season. He also recorded three sacks and helped lead a Red Bay defense that posted three shutouts and allowed just 12.8 points per game.

LB: Jamal Hubbard, Russellville (6'2, 190, Senior)
 A three-year starter, Hubbard's mental toughness and leadership qualities finally caught up this season with his considerable physical tools. The result was a career-best season in which he finished third on the team with 98 tackles (including seven for a loss) and tied for the team lead with eight sacks.

The athletic and rangy Hubbard split time between outside linebacker and
 See 'FOOTBALL,' page 16



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'FOOTBALL,' from page 15

safety, but his collegiate future likely lies in the secondary.

LB: Cam McKinney, Red Bay (6'0, 240, Junior)

In his third season as a starting middle linebacker, McKinney set a new career-high with 115 tackles (including 69 solo stops). He recorded seven games with double-digit tackles, including 17 in the season opener against Colbert Heights and 16 in a first-round playoff win over Cedar Bluff.

McKinney also had a pick-six in an early-season win over Phil Campbell.

LB: Brooks Scott, Russellville (6'0, 205, Junior)

A starter at inside linebacker since his freshman season, the physical, hard-hitting Scott brought the lumber every week in 2019. He led the Golden Tigers with a whopping 143 tackles (including 11 for a loss) and also had four sacks.

Scott was the most consistent performer on a defense that held opponents to just 202.4 yards per game and 3.9 yards per play.

LB: Logan Simpson, Colbert Heights (5'11, 190, Senior)

A two-way starter for the Wildcats and captain of the defense, Simpson recorded 128 total tackles this season. He made 92 solo stops and also had four tackles for loss.

DB: Brandon Baker, Phil Campbell (5'8, 140, Senior)

Baker was a big-time playmaker for the Bobcats, leading them in solo tackles (35), tackles for loss (8.5) and fumble recoveries (five). He also forced two fumbles and intercepted a pass.

DB: Hunter Burks, Red Bay (6'1, 180, Junior)

Burks ranked among team leaders with 63 total tackles (including 37 solo stops) and was the Tigers' most consistent performer in the secondary, according to head coach Michael Jackson.

DB: Grayson Eady, Russellville (5'11, 175, Junior)

Healthy and able to play a full season at the varsity level for the first time, Eady was the Golden Tigers' top tackler on the back end, ranking fifth overall on the team with 86 total stops.

DB: Ashaad Williams, Russellville (6'2, 160, Junior)

The Golden Tigers' top cover man, Williams was also strong in run support, making 45 tackles on the year. Russellville's defense held opponents to an average of just 83.8 passing yards per game, and the presence of Williams on the outside was a major reason why.

Coach of the Year: Michael Jackson, Red Bay

The typically conservative Jackson tweaked the Tigers' offense in 2019, opening things up a bit and installing a fair amount of RPO's (run-pass options). The result was a more explosive and more balanced attack that averaged 203.4 rushing yards and 146.8 passing yards per game during a 12-0 start.

Red Bay reached the state quarterfinals for the first time since 2007 and won its third region championship under Jackson, who is now 54-15 in six seasons since taking over the Tiger program in 2014. Red Bay has been especially tough at home during Jackson's tenure, going 30-5 at Fred Bostick, Jr. Memorial Stadium.

Second-Team All-Area Offense

Quarterback: Luke Barnwell, Phil Campbell (5'9, 175, Junior)

Barnwell threw for 1,100 yards this season on 56 percent (77-for-137) passing with 14 touchdowns and six interceptions. He was also a factor in the running game, adding 231 yards and three scores on 75 carries.

Running Back: Austin Ashley, Russellville (5'8, 140, Senior)

Ashley split the workload in the Golden Tiger backfield but still finished the season with 759 yards and seven touchdowns on 134 carries. A sudden and

See 'FOOTBALL,' page 17

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'FOOTBALL,' from page 16

elusive runner, Ashley led the team with 34 runs of 10-plus yards. His most productive game came in Week 3 at Hayden when he rushed for 141 yards and two touchdowns on 20 carries in a 48-20 win.

Running Back: Hunter King, Red Bay (5'10, 160, Junior)

When his older brother, Colbie, sustained a season-ending knee injury in the opener at Colbert Heights, King stepped in to carry the load. He posted five 100-yard rushing games, gaining a season-high 160 on 24 carries in a mid-season win over Sheffield.

Through 12 games, King had rushed for a team-best 997 yards and seven touchdowns on 187 carries.

Running Back: Boots McCulloch, Russellville (5'10, 165, Sophomore)

The Golden Tigers' most explosive runner, McCulloch had an 81-yard touchdown run against Corner in Week 2 and a 54-yard touchdown run in the first-round playoff game at Scottsboro. He finished the season with 739 yards and eight touchdowns on 115 carries, an average of 6.4 yards per attempt.

H-Back: Caleb Seeley, Red Bay (6'0, 205, Senior)

One of the strongest players on a team full of strong players, Seeley was a force as a lead blocker in the Red Bay run game. He helped the Tigers average 203.4 yards per game on the ground.

Receiver: Mason Holt, Red Bay (5'9, 160, Junior)

A precise route runner with good speed, Holt finished second on the team with 31 catches for 502 yards and two touchdowns.

Receiver: Ridge Raper, Phil Campbell (5'11, 180, Junior)

Raper led the Bobcats with 375 receiving yards and six touchdowns on 20 catches, averaging 18.8 yards per reception. He also rushed for 102 yards and two scores on 30 carries and filled in at quarterback occasionally, throwing for 114 yards and a touchdown on 9-for-16 passing.

Receiver: T.J. King, Russellville (6'0, 160, Freshman)

King came on strong down the stretch and had emerged as the Golden Tigers' go-to receiver by the end of the season. Starting with the game against Jasper in Week 8, King had catches of 34, 41, 54 and 65 yards—the last of which was a touchdown in the first-round playoff game at Scottsboro.

Over those final four weeks, the big-play freshman caught six passes for 212 yards and two touchdowns. For the season, King averaged 30.0 yards per reception and had three touchdowns.

Tight End: Skylar Gault, Colbert Heights (6'0, 173, Senior)

The Wildcats rarely threw the football, but Gault was worth his weight in gold as a run blocker. He graded out at 92 percent for the season and helped Colbert Heights average better than 236 rushing yards per game.

OL: Tyler Amos, Tharptown (6'4, 215, Sophomore)

Amos started at left tackle and was the Wildcats' top O-linemen, according to head coach Kevin Lacey.

OL: Zach Davidson, Vina (5'10, 200, Junior)

Head coach Ben Guin singled out Davidson as the Red Devils' most consistent performer up front. He served as the team's pulling guard and also played center when the need arose. Davidson also handled long-snapping duties for Vina.

OL: Johnson Leeth, Phil Campbell (6'0, 260, Junior)

Leeth ranked as one of the Bobcats' top two blockers for a second straight season, according to head coach Kevin Barnwell.

OL: Ethan Seal, Colbert Heights (6'3, 251, Junior)

Seal graded out at 87 percent on the season and helped pave the way for a Wildcat rushing attack that produced nearly 2,700 yards in 11 games.

OL: Eli Smith, Phil Campbell (5'11, 215, Junior)

In his second season as a varsity starter, Smith helped the Bobcats take a

See 'FOOTBALL,' page 18

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'FOOTBALL,' from page 17

big step forward in the run game.

All-Purpose: Jackson Landers, Vina (5'10, 185, Senior)

The versatile Landers totaled 853 yards passing and rushing and accounted for 12 total touchdowns—five through the air, five on the ground, one on a punt return and one on a fumble return. In a 58-8 win over Cherokee, Landers scored on runs of 37 and 51 yards, took a punt 49 yards to the house and also threw a 46-yard touchdown pass to Braden Moomaw.

Defense

DL: Levi Blanton, Red Bay (6'4, 245, Sophomore)

Blanton was an impact player on the interior for the Tigers, totaling 51 tackles (including 27 solo stops).

DL: Jose Gaspar, Russellville (5'9, 240, Senior)

Gaspar was under-sized, but he never under-performed, tying for third on the team with 11 tackles for loss. He totaled 44 stops on the season.

DL: John Randle Herring, Phil Campbell (6'4, 195, Sophomore)

Herring was a playmaker at defensive end, ranking second on the Bobcat defense with 3.5 sacks and tying for second with eight tackles for loss among his 36 total stops.

DL: Braden Parker, Red Bay (6'0, 245, Freshman)

Parker was in on 58 tackles this season, including 34 solo stops.

LB: Marcus Crumpton, Russellville (6'0, 170, Junior)

Crumpton started the year in the secondary, but injuries prompted a move to linebacker. He finished the year with 70 tackles, including four for a loss.

LB: Austin Douthit, Phil Campbell (5'11, 165, Sophomore)

Douthit spent more than his share of time in opposing backfields, leading Phil Campbell with 4.5 sacks and tying for second on the team with eight tackles for loss. He made 43 total tackles, including 27 solo stops.

LB: Gavin Edgmon, Red Bay (5'9, 190, Junior)

Edgmon posted four games with double-digit tackles, including a career-high 15 in a win over border rival Belmont. He finished the season second on the team with 102 total tackles, including 38 solo stops.

LB: Ridge Raper, Phil Campbell (5'11, 180, Junior)

A middle linebacker, Raper was the captain of the Bobcat defense. He made 44 tackles on the year, including 26 solo stops and six tackles for loss.

DB: Austen Baker, Phil Campbell (5'8, 170, Junior)

Baker's 46 total tackles tied him for the team lead. He also had 3.5 tackles for loss and two interceptions.

DB: J.D. Bishop, Russellville (5'11, 165, Junior)

A first-year starter at safety, Bishop finished the season with 57 tackles.

DB: Kaleb Bragwell, Red Bay (6'3, 170, Senior)

Bragwell came on strong down the stretch and was a major difference-maker by year's end. He returned an interception 71 yards for a touchdown in a rout of Tharptown and also picked off a pass in the second round of the playoffs against Sulligent.

DB: Gage Pugh, Colbert Heights (5'11, 180, Junior)

Pugh, a starting corner, led the Wildcats with four interceptions on the year.

'POSITIVE,' from page 13

Jackson's Tigers, coming off a 12-1 season, should be well stocked for another deep playoff run.

The offense returns a 1,000-yard rusher in tailback Hunter King, a 500-yard receiver in Mason Holt and a quarterback in rising senior Jalen Vinson who accounted more than 2,300 yards of total offense and 27 total touchdowns in 2019.

On the other side of the ball, the rising senior group of standouts Alex Kennedy (61 tackles in 2019), Logan Scott (65 tackles, three sacks), Cam McKinney (115 total tackles) and Gavin Edgmon (102 tackles) will return to lead an outstanding front seven that should have Red Bay right back in the hunt for another region crown.

Colbert Heights played only a handful of seniors this past season but still managed to win six games and make the playoffs for a third straight year under head coach Taylor Leathers. The young Wildcats should be even better in 2020, with dual 1,000-yard rushers Gage Pugh

and Carson Shaw returning to lead a prolific ground game as seniors.

Colbert Heights was sophomore-heavy this past season, and the development of those young contributors should have the Wildcats right back in the mix for another playoff berth.

Phil Campbell missed out on the playoffs in 2019, but the Bobcats increased their win total from two the previous year to four and were far more competitive. The program is rising under head coach Kevin Barnwell, who will bring back a strong senior class led by quarterback Luke Barnwell (1,100 passing yards, 14 TD), tailback Trey Leindecker (1,474 yards from scrimmage, 17 TD), receivers Austen Baker (26 catches for 354 yards and four TD) and Ridge Raper (20 catches for 375 yards and six TD), and offensive linemen Johnson Leeth and Eli Smith.

Phil Campbell should find itself right in the hunt for that elusive postseason berth.



MERRY CHRISTMAS

& HAPPY NEW YEAR

from the

RUSSELLVILLE

POLICE DEPARTMENT



Russellville Parks & Recreation

would like to wish you a

Merry Christmas

For more information, call us at 256-332-8770

MERRY CHRISTMAS



From your neighbors at the
Russellville Water and Sewer Board.
For emergency and nighttime service, call 256-332-2230.



Merry Christmas

Sheriff Shannon Oliver



Sponsored by
Bedford, Rogers, Bowling
& McReynolds, P.C..

“Beat Brady” is back for bowl season! Fill out the entry form on this page and mail it to us at 113 Washington Ave. NW, Russellville, AL 35653, or email your picks to us along with your name and phone number at franklinfreepress@ yahoo.com. All entries must be received by 11 a.m. on Friday, December 27! Only one entry per person, please. The winner of the “Beat Brady” bowl contest will receive \$50 cash! Everyone is eligible to play!

Bedford, Rogers,
Bowling & McReynolds, P.C.

303 N. Jackson, Russellville
256.332.2880

No representation is made that the quality of the legal services to be performed is greater than the quality of legal services performed by other lawyers

Franklin Free Press Football Picks Contest

Bowl Season	Bailey's Pick	Your Pick
Oklahoma St. vs. Texas A&M	Texas A&M	_____
Memphis vs. Penn State	Penn State	_____
Clemson vs. Ohio State	Clemson	_____
Oklahoma vs. LSU	LSU	_____
Florida vs. Virginia	Florida	_____
Michigan vs. Alabama	Alabama	_____
Minnesota vs. Auburn	Minnesota	_____
Oregon vs. Wisconsin	Wisconsin	_____
Georgia vs. Baylor	Baylor	_____
Indiana vs. Tennessee	Tennessee	_____
Tiebreaker Score:	Michigan	AL
Your Name:	_____	
Phone number:	_____	



Wishing You
All the Blessings
 of This Bright & Beautiful Season
from the City of Russellville

MERRY CHRISTMAS



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year Franklin County. The holiday season is truly my favorite time of the year. As we come together with loved ones let us reflect on how fortunate we are to call Franklin County home. Living in Franklin County comes with a responsibility to be there for one another, not just this time of the year but each and every day. After all, Franklin Countians helping each other no matter the distance separating them is what our county is truly about. This is why I would be honored to be your next Revenue Commissioner. I've been a part of the funeral business for 10 years so I know first-hand about that extra mile in helping my fellow friends and citizens in this county.

I humbly ask for your prayers, support and consideration on March 3, 2020. Again have a blessed holiday with family, friends and neighbors!

Respectfully, Charlie D. Nelson



Elect Charlie D
NELSON

**Franklin County
Revenue Commissioner**