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Ballot breakdown

What will voters see when the March 3rd primaries arrive?

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

When Franklin County residents head to the polls on Tuesday, March 3, voters in the Democratic Primary will complete their ballots a good bit earlier than those voting in the Republican Primary.

With only one contested state race (President of the Public Service Commission) in the Democratic Primary and no local contested races, the Democratic Primary ballot for Franklin County will allow voters to vote for their candidate of choice for the Democratic nomination for President of the United States and for selection of delegates to the Democratic National Convention.

The ballot contains 14 Democratic candidates for President, including several who have withdrawn or suspended their campaigns.

To be eligible to run for Delegate, the candidate must

reside in the Fourth Congressional District.

Voters may select up to three delegates who are pledged to the candidate they vote for on their ballot. If a voter casts an Uncommitted vote for President, he or she may vote for up to three uncommitted delegates.


Both Democratic and Republican ballots will include a proposed Constitutional amendment, Amendment Number One, that would abolish the Alabama State Board of Education and replace it with a new entity, the Alabama Commission on Elementary and Secondary Education.

State board members would no longer be elected. Instead, if the amendment is approved, the governor would have authority to appoint the entire board, subject to Senate confirmation.

Additionally, the governor would appoint the head of the commission, the Secretary of Elementary and Secondary

See 'BALLOT' Page 9


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Local Cattlemen honor Britnell as Lifetime Director

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

As Orland Britnell donned his red jacket preparing to attend the January 18 annual banquet of the Franklin County Cattlemen's Association, he never expected to be part of the evening's program.

So Britnell was shocked when he was asked to come up front by FCCA president Caleb Beason, who presented Britnell with a plaque naming Britnell a Lifetime Director of the Franklin County Cattlemen's Association.

Beason said the organization presented an honorary

See 'BRITNELL,' Page 9



COURTESY PHOTO

Pictured above, from left, are Rep. Jamie Kiel, Orland Britnell and Caleb Beason.

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(L to R) - Shannon Smith, Wynoka Bostick, Brenda Rodriguez, Dr. Steve Hammack, Kelly Powers, and Lauren Sims.

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Richard H. Hasheider, Phil Campbell, age 85
Died Monday, January 20, 2020. Memorial service held at Pinkard Funeral Home in Russellville.

John Paul "J.P." Heaps, Russellville, age 77
Died Saturday, January 25, 2020. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Old Bethel Cemetery.

Prathen Duane Oxendine, Russellville, age 47
Died Wednesday, January 22, 2020. Memorial service held at Pinkard Funeral Home in Russellville.

Floyd William Turbyfill, Spruce Pine, age 65
Died Friday, January 24, 2020. Graveside service held at Mt. Pleasant Cemetery. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.

Nancilu Oakley Underwood, Russellville, age 83
Died Wednesday, January 22, 2020. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel.

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Twelve local eateries receive satisfactory ratings

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

All 12 Franklin County establishments that received health ratings during the week of January 13-17 had scores that fell into the "satisfactory compliance" range.

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

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

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

All 12 Franklin County businesses listed in the most recent food and lodging establishment ratings scored 85 or above, within the satisfactory compliance range.

The high score was 99, shared by three establishments: El Patron Tex-Mex LLC, 13665 Hwy. 43, Russellville, Kelly's Kitchen, 17901 Hwy. 43, Russellville, and B&A Auction, 1385 Cty. Road 77, Russellville.

Other inspection scores and violations of Franklin County businesses included:

- Snack Shack, 3066 Hwy. 43, Phil Campbell, 89. (No toilet paper in restrooms).
- Quick Stop No. 7, Inc., 606 4th Ave. SE, Red Bay, 89. (Gallon jugs of

PC council approves hiring of Burk to follow Bragwell as town clerk

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The look of Phil Campbell City Hall will seem strange when longtime town clerk Ann Bragwell finishes her last day of work and enters the world of retirement March 1, but her successor will already be familiar with the job.

After almost 17 years with the Town of Phil Campbell, Bragwell announced her retirement in December. The town took applications for a new town clerk/magistrate, and mayor Steve Bell said there were more than 50 applicants.

The council recently approved the hiring of Jenny Burk to follow Bragwell. Burk has served as assistant town clerk for five years, working closely with Bragwell and filling in for Bragwell in her absence.

Bell said the biggest advantage Burk had was already having a working knowledge of the job.

"She knows the process and everything Ann has been doing," Bell said. "She's done it when Ann was on vacation, and she already knows the job and what we expect. Plus, we knew her already."

Bell said he and the council would hire a part-time assistant town clerk in March and that person would likely come from the pool of applicants already in hand.

As for Bragwell's retirement, Bell said he had kept her around as long as he could before she decided it was time.

"I jokingly say I got her to postpone her retirement one year at a time for several years, then one month at a time, but it's done now," Bell said. "She turned in her date, and she will certainly be missed."

The Town Clerk/Magistrate is responsible for accepting gas payments for Northwest Alabama Gas, handling the rental of the Phil Campbell Community Center and Splash Pad, accepting fines and court cost payments, issuing building permits and issuing warrants for misdemeanor court.

Burk will attend magistrate training in February to prepare for the job of issuing warrants for offenses committed in the Town of Phil Campbell.



Ann Bragwell

bleach stored with paper handtowels, handsink not accessible).

•Pilgrim's Place BBQ, 1314 N. Jackson Ave., Russellville, 91. (Crockpot of green beans being held at 122 degrees).

•Big Star of Russellville, 314 S. Jackson Ave., 91. (Leak in freezer dripping onto food).

•Taylor's Restaurant, 808 Ronnie McDowell Ave., Russellville, 93. (Date marked food past 7 day time limit).

•Waffle House #2186, 14005 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 96.

•Marty's Meat Market, 85 Scotty Moore Dr., Russellville, 97.

Of the 14 inspections done in Colbert County from January 13-17, all received scores falling in the range of satisfactory. The high score of 99 was received by Chick Fil-A #3561, 511 W. Avalon Ave., Muscle Shoals.

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

Franklin County Census 2020 Positions

- These positions are paid solely from grant funds received from ADECA.
- These positions are on a contract basis and are only for the duration of the Census.
 - Earnings from these positions are subject to 1099 reporting.

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Bilingual Assistant

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Tasks: Help Senior Coordinator

Special Skills: Bilingual, computer skills, people skills

Bilingual Aides

Number of Positions: 4

Tasks: Work events and assist in trainings.

Special Skills: Bilingual, computer skills, people skills

Bilingual Translators and Interpreters

Number of Positions: As needed according to events/need

Tasks: Translating or interpreting

Special Skills: Highly proficient in more than one language

Anyone interested in any of these positions should apply at the Franklin County Commission Office Elizabeth Lucas Annex located at 405 Jackson Avenue North, Russellville, AL 35653 from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Friday. The deadline to apply for these positions is January 29, 2020 at Noon. Please contact County Administrator Leah Mansell at (256)332-8850 with any questions.

Franklin County Census 2020 Complete Count Committee is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability in the employment or the provision of services.

Honey-Do: Early spring?

We'll know for sure on Sunday. Six more weeks of winter, or an early spring. According to the extended forecast, we are in for more of the same mild temperatures we have already been having.

But winter it is in Alabama, and that means there's always a chance of freezing wind, ice and (maybe) snow. Oh yeah, it also means warm days, rain and (maybe) a little sunshine. This is Alabama after all. Just because January is history and we haven't really seen any ice yet, don't get too relaxed.

Just because January is history and we haven't really seen any ice yet, don't get too relaxed.

No matter what the weather, there are several things homeowners can take care of now. If the temps stay 60 degrees or above for several days, open your foundation vents. This will help dry out your crawl space and could eliminate potential mold growth. Just don't forget to close them back should the temps take a plunge.

Check insulated pipes and areas that may allow cold air to get to them. Weather, pets and varmints can sometimes knock things around

and create air gaps that will freeze when the cold weather arrives. Don't forget hydrants and exterior faucets that should be covered. I've covered mine about three times this year as the temps have fluctuated.

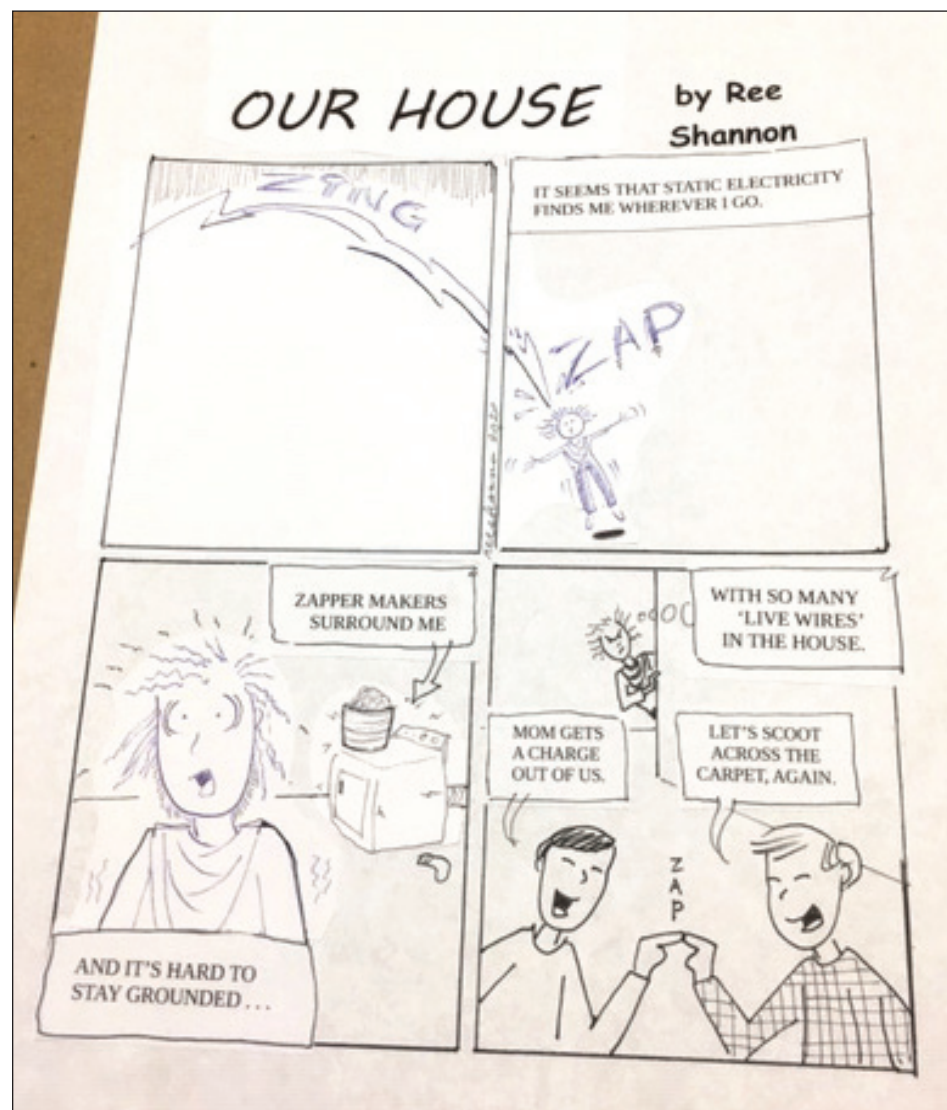
Get outside and take a walk around the yard. Recent storms have naturally pruned a lot of trees, and the limbs need to be picked up before mowing starts in a few weeks. While you are walking the yard, take notice of where water is standing or where the ground is really soft. These are areas that may need a little filling or draining come spring.

Now is a great time to clean out your bird boxes. The new tenants will be arriving shortly. I'm already seeing bluebirds checking out my nesting boxes. I'm sure they will appreciate a little seed in the feeders as well.

So, what will it be, Mr. Groundhog? I vote for the early spring. Don't forget, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.



Doug Green



Emergency fund first, then investing

Dear Dave,
Do you think I should stop making contributions to my 401(k) for a year so I can save up an emergency fund? I'm 28 and debt-free, but I don't have anything saved for emergencies.

Bryan

Dear Bryan,
If you're debt-free and making decent money at your job, it shouldn't take a whole year to set aside an emergency fund. Just make it a priority in your monthly budget. And yes, my advice to you is *temporarily* stop making contributions to your 401(k) until you have a fully funded emergency fund of three to six months of expenses.

I recommend people stop investing, or wait to start investing, until they are debt-free except for their home *and* have a fully-funded emergency fund in place. In some cases, depending on how much debt they have, it can take two or three years to do all this. I know that seems like a long time, but in the grand scheme of things it's not.

If you don't have an emergency fund, but you're contributing to a 401(k), there's a good chance you'll end up cashing out your 401(k) if a large, unexpected expense comes along. Then, when you cash out a 401(k) early, you get hit with a penalty plus your tax rate. That's not a wise plan!

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.*

Dave

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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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The *Franklin Free Press* is published by hometown people, for hometown people. We urge contributions of all kinds, including guest columns, picture submissions, cartoons or letters to the editor. Send any letters to our office via U.S. Postal Service or e-mail, and we will gladly publish them. Letters must be signed and contain the hometown and phone number of the author. The *Franklin Free Press* reserves the right to edit letters for style, length and content.

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**DAVE
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by Dave Ramsey

Keep it small, and budget for it

Dear Dave,
I'm trying very hard to get out of debt. I have my beginner emergency fund in place, and I'm living on a monthly budget. Is it okay to include a little wallet cash in my budget, just in case?

Andrew

Dear Andrew,
It's probably not going to throw you off too much in terms of getting out of debt if you budget \$20 or so just to have some cash in your wallet. I wouldn't recommend much more than that, though. The idea of having \$50, \$100 or \$200 in walking-around money is pretty self-defeating when you're supposedly saving, budgeting and working hard to get out of debt. What really matters is the *amount* of pocket money you allow yourself to have.

Think of it as a safety valve. Sometimes things come up in the course of day-to-day life that are just necessary, unexpected expenses—but not emergencies. Just designate a small amount of cash for it as part of your regular, monthly budget, and stick to that amount!

Dave

PC residents shoot video to wrap up HGTV project

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Residents and supporters of the town of Phil Campbell braved 38-degree temperatures Saturday afternoon to participate in the filming of the final scene of a video they hope will bring national exposure to their community.

Ben and Erin Napier, hosts of HGTV's *Home Town*, will soon select one American town that's in need of a transformation, and Phil Campbell is making a major play to be selected. The winning town will be featured on a six-episode HGTV series, *Hometown Takeover*, scheduled to air next year.



Residents and supporters of the town of Phil Campbell braved 38-degree temperatures to participate in Saturday's event.

'Brooklyn' Phil Campbell, who organized the many Phil Campbells from across the country to first visit their namesake town in 1995, is helping coordinate the effort. Campbell was dubbed 'Brooklyn Phil' when he first visited the town because that's where he lived at the time.

The Saturday scene, shot with a drone camera operated by Phil Campbell mayor Steve Bell, will be the final scene in a short video to be submitted to the producers of HGTV. With an entry deadline of February 4, 2020, the project had to come together quickly.

Over the last week, Bell was recorded giving an overview of Phil Campbell, which included drone footage over the downtown area. Several Phil Campbells from around the world did short videos in support of the project, and a pep rally held Friday afternoon will also be featured in the video.

The three-minute video will share the story of Phil Campbell, including the 2011 tornado, the community rallying together in its aftermath and the need for HGTV's help. The town selected will see a rehab of multiple individual family homes as well as the revitalization of public spaces, including parks, businesses and outdoor recreation areas.

Bell and Phil Campbell councilwoman Lynn Landers attended Saturday's event, which saw participants holding signs and banners urging Ben and Erin to take over their town. Franklin County revenue commissioner Veronica Stancil, Franklin County commissioner Chris Wallace and Franklin County Board of Education member Terry Welborn also participated in the event.

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What's Happening

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

The Russellville Parks and Recreation Department is now conducting Soccer Registration for boys and girls through Saturday, February 8. The leagues are open to boys and girls ages 3-12 of all skill levels. The fee is \$35, with a discount for sibling registration. For more information, call 256-332-8770.

AARP Tax-Aide is offering FREE income tax preparation at the Department of Human Resources in Russellville on Thursdays from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. beginning February 6 and ending April 9. You do NOT have to be a member of AARP, a certain age or retired to use this service. Call Ben at 256-332-0252 for an appointment.

First United Methodist Church of Russellville will be having their fifth Thursday food giveaway this Thursday, January 30 at 2 p.m. Food will be distributed until supplies run out. The church is located on the corner of Jackson Avenue and Madison Street, and food will be distributed from the ministry center behind the main church building. Please call 256-332-2955 for more information.

Russellville Masonic Lodge 371 is selling Boston butts for Super Bowl Sunday. Butts are \$30. Pre-order by calling 256-810-1970. Pickup will be this Saturday, February 1 from 8-10 a.m. at the Lodge on Coffee Street.

Everyone is welcome to worship services at Duncan Creek Baptist Church, 3925 Duncan Creek Road, Russellville. Service times are Sunday School at 10 a.m., Worship Service at 11 a.m. and Bible Study at 5 p.m. Pastor is Bro. Joe Thorn.

Spruce Pine Historical Society meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Next meeting is February 4. All members and friends are urged to attend.

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

The Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert with special guest Kami Collier at the Roxy Theatre on Saturday, February 8 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 historic Roxy Theater.

You are invited to a singing with Southern Image at St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church (5667 Hwy. 79, Phil Campbell) on Saturday, February 8 at 6 p.m. Bro. Larry Landers and congregation look forward to welcoming you. For more information, call 205-993-4438.

You are invited to a gospel singing featuring the Southern Image Quartet on Sunday, February 9 at 5 p.m. at Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church, 305 Bethlehem Road, Russellville. Everyone is welcome!

American Legion Post 64 will meet Thursday, February 13 at 7 p.m. at the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.

The Shoals Chapter of the Order of St. Luke will meet in the Media Room at Park Place (500 N. Montgomery Avenue, Sheffield) on Thursday, February 13 at 2:30 p.m. Ellen Bryson will lead the study "Healing the Human Spirit" from the book *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.

Spruce Pine Community Center will be the site of a Candidate Supper on Saturday, February 15 at 6 p.m. Plates will be available for \$5, and candidates for local office will speak. Everyone is invited.

The book *Scandalous Women: The Lives and Loves of History's Most Notorious Women*, by Elizabeth Kerri Mahon, will be discussed at the February 19 10 a.m. meeting of the Readers of the Lost Ark Book Club. The club meets at Coldwater Books, 101 West Sixth Street, Tuscumbia. For more information, email nancy537481@yahoo.com.

Everyone is invited to a campaign rally for Tommy Tuberville for U.S. Senate. The rally is scheduled for Sunday, February 23 from 5-7 p.m. at the A.W. Todd Centre, 201 South Washington Avenue in Russellville.

Ronnie McDowell returns to Russellville to celebrate his 70th birthday with a special show at the Roxy Theatre on Saturday, March 21 at 7 p.m. Joseph Baldwin and Johnathan Len will open the show. Tickets are on sale now. Reserved seats are \$20-\$35, and general admission balcony seats are \$15. For ticket information, call 256-415-3270. Proceeds will benefit the Roxy Restoration Fund.

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.

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

Alabama Blues Queen set to perform at Roxy

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Roxy Theatre will come alive Saturday, February 1 when the Alabama Blues Queen takes the stage.

DieDra Hurdle-Rull, known as the Alabama Blues Queen, brings her amazing range to Russellville for a special one-night-only show. The concert begins at 7 p.m., with doors opening at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door.

You can purchase tickets at www.eventbrite.com or by calling 256-443-1297.

DieDra has opened for musical stalwarts such as BobbyBrown, Frankie Beverly and Maze, Al Green and more.

Inspired by legends like Aretha Franklin, Patti Labelle and Whitney Houston, DieDra's album *Overcoming Hurdles* was nominated for several awards in 2009.

Her single *Hip Swingin Blues* went as high as No. 5 on Roadhouse Blues Charts.

She received the 2010 Blue Note Award and was nominated for Best New Artist by Blues Critics.

Opening for DieDra will be singer/songwriter Johnny Holland. Holland has performed with country legends like Gene Watson, Collin Raye, Sammy Kershaw, Gary Baker, Mark Wills, Diamond Rio and more.

Holland co-wrote *Do You Know Me*, released by Sammy Kershaw. Holland continues his songwriting and performing career based out of his home in Nashville.



DieDra Hurdle-Rull

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Circuit clerk Scott makes move to Republican Party

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Franklin County circuit clerk Anita Scott became the third local elected official to switch political parties when she decided to affiliate with the Republican Party after being elected as a Democrat in 2018.

Scott, in her third term as circuit clerk, was reelected without opposition in 2018. Scott said she had contemplated making the move prior to the 2018 campaign season, but she did not want people to think she was making the switch for political benefit.

With five years left in her current term, Scott said this was the appropriate time to make the move. And if she runs again in 2024, it will be as a Republican.

"I have had a difference of opinion with the national Democratic Party for some time now," Scott said. "This is something I have considered for some time, but I did not want people perceiving it as politically motivated."

Scott contacted Franklin County Republican Executive Committee chairman Jerry Mays to request the switch.

"I have had a difference of opinion with the national Democratic Party for some time now," Scott said. "This is something I have considered for some time, but I did not want people perceiving it as politically motivated."

Scott contacted Franklin County Republican Executive Committee chairman Jerry Mays to request the switch, and Mays explained the request would be reviewed and a decision made by a board that includes some committee members as well as other Republicans in the area.

"After I receive a request, we meet to see if we want them in the party or not," Mays said. "The decision is made at the county level, not the state level, because county residents are more familiar with the elected officials and candidates. When we met, it was unanimous, and we welcomed her into the Republican Party."



Ann Scott

"She is a good person, and the only thing we promised her was that she could be the one to release the information about her decision."

As for her future plans, Scott said she has not decided whether to seek another term in 2024.

"It's way too soon to make that decision," Scott said. "The only thing I'm telling people is that if I do run, it will be as a member of the Republican Party."

Scott becomes the third elected official in Franklin County to change parties while in office, along with Franklin County Board of Education members Terry Welborn (who changed parties in 2013) and Pat Cochran (who changed parties in advance of the 2020 election).

Local Democratic elected officials now include sheriff Shannon Oliver, district judge Paula McDowell, circuit judge Terry Dempsey and Franklin County Board of Education members Ralton Baker and Shannon Oliver.

There are two Independent elected officials—Franklin County Schools superintendent Greg Hamilton and Franklin County Board of Education member Kacey Hester Johnston. All other Franklin County office holders are Republicans.

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Absentee voting underway for March primary

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Absentee voting for the March 3, 2020 Democratic and Republican Primaries is underway.

Franklin County residents who will be unable to vote on March 3 due to qualifying reasons may cast absentee ballots directly at Franklin County circuit clerk Anita Scott's office in the Franklin County Courthouse, or they can apply for an absentee ballot by completing an absentee application and sending it by mail to the clerk's office.

Scott, who serves as Absentee Election manager for Franklin County, said a significant change in absentee voting procedure for 2020 is that absentee voters must send a copy of photo identification WITH THEIR APPLICATION, and not with the ballot.

"This is something new, and without receiving their identification we can not send them an absentee ballot," Scott said. "In the past, the identification was required when the ballot was sent in, so this is a change."

As for the criteria for voting absentee, the Code of Alabama lays out the following situations as proper grounds for absentee voting:

THE VOTER:
• EXPECTS TO BE ABSENT FROM THE COUN-

TY on election day.

• IS ILL OR HAS A PHYSICAL DISABILITY that prevents a trip to the polling place.

• IS A REGISTERED ALABAMA VOTER LIVING OUTSIDE THE COUNTY, such as a member of the armed forces, a voter employed outside the United States, a college student or a spouse or child of such a person.

• IS AN APPOINTED ELECTION OFFICER OR POLL WATCHER at a polling place other than his or her regular polling place.

Scott, Absentee Election manager for Franklin County, said a significant change in absentee voting procedure for 2020 is that absentee voters must send a copy of photo identification WITH THEIR APPLICATION, and not with the ballot.

"This is something new, and without receiving their identification we can not send them an absentee ballot," Scott said.

• EXPECTS TO WORK A REQUIRED SHIFT, 10-HOURS OR MORE, that coincides with polling hours.

• IS A CAREGIVER for a family member to the second degree of kinship by affinity or consanguinity, and the family member is confined to his or her home.

• IS CURRENTLY INCARCERATED in prison or

jail and has not been convicted of a felony involving moral turpitude.

Absentee applications and ballots must be returned by the voter personally or received at the clerk's office by U.S. Mail or commercial carrier.

The last day to vote absentee at the courthouse, or for the clerk's office to receive an absentee application, is February 27, 2020.

Voters wishing to cast their ballots in person at the courthouse must bring photo identification. Voting hours are 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The clerk's office does not close for lunch.

In the case of homes with multiple applicants for absentee ballots, each application must be mailed in a separate envelope. Even applications for a husband and wife must be mailed separately.

If a voter does not know which precinct he or she votes in, the voter may call the Franklin County Board of Registrars at 256-332-8849.

The last day to update or register to vote for the March 3, 2020 primary is February 14, 2020.

Voters may download and print an absentee ballot application at www.sos.alabama.gov, or they are available at the Circuit Clerk's office.

Scott said another change in absentee voting policy is that applicants for mailed ballots will no longer have their names and addresses posted at the courthouse.

'BALLOT' from page 1

Education. This would abolish the position of the State Superintendent of Education, an elected position.

The governor would also have authority to appoint a "team of local educators and other officials" to advise the commission on matters relating to the function and duties of the State Department of Education.

The Republican Primary ballot for Franklin County will take voters considerably longer to fill out.

President Donald Trump will have one opponent on Alabama ballots, Bill Weld.

Weld is the former governor of Massachusetts and the only candidate running against Trump in the Republican Primary.

Voters will also select their choices for Delegates to the Republican Presidential Convention, in both state at-large races and by Congressional District.

There will be seven choices for voters in the United States Senate race, including (in alphabetical order) Stanley Adair, Bradley Byrne, Arnold Mooney, Roy Moore, Ruth Page Nelson, Jeff Sessions and Tommy

Tuberville.

There are contested Republican races at the state level for Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, Place Number 1; Court of Civil Appeals, Place Number 2; Court of Criminal Appeals, Place Number 1, Place Number 2; and President of the Public Service Commission.

Local Republican races include Franklin County Commission Districts 1, 2, 3 and 4, and Franklin County Revenue Commissioner. Stratt Byars and Charlie D. Nelson are challenging incumbent Veronica Copeland Stancil.

In the District One Commission race, Chris Wallace faces Joe Fike. In District Two, Jason Miller is challenged by Terry Prince. In District Three, Rayburn Massey faces Joseph Baldwin, and in District Four, David Hester faces Misty Holcombe.

Republican ballots also contain the proposed Constitutional Amendment Number One related to the State Department of Education.

Sample ballots for all 67 Alabama counties, both Democratic and Republican, may be viewed by logging onto www.sos.alabama.gov and clicking the link for "Sample Ballots."

'BRITNELL' from page 1

Locally, along with Thomas Harbin, Britnell played a large part in creating the Franklin County Cattlemen's Association steak sandwich sales in the 1990s. Those sandwich sales have turned into the organization's largest fundraiser and have generated more than \$180,000. Those funds are used to award scholarships to local high school seniors.

"Orland and Thomas Harbin did so much work to make the steak sandwich fundraiser what it is today," Beason said. "They also made a big push to award local scholarships. Orland has been dedicated to this organization for many years."

Beason said 28 students received scholarships last year, including the Thomas Harbin Memorial Scholarship.

"Orland and Thomas Harbin did so much work to make the steak sandwich fundraiser what it is today," Beason said. "They also made a big push to award local scholarships. Orland has been dedicated to this organization for many, many years."

Britnell, 84, remains active in the local chapter, and he's confident the organization's leadership is doing the right things to keep the 500-member organization growing.

"Caleb is doing a good job, and we are in very good hands," Britnell said.

As for his family and fellow cattlemen keeping mum on his award, Britnell just tipped his cowboy hat to them.

"They really kept me in the dark," he said. "I was shocked when they called my name. I was pleased, honored and surprised at the same time."

The annual Franklin County Cattlemen's Association banquet provides a time of fellowship for members and prospective members and is the organization's primary time to push for membership.

Annual dues for the FCCA are \$50/year or a three-year membership for \$120. Beason said the organization is open to cattlemen as well as Franklin County residents "who have never owned a cow in their lives."



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Council changes voting location for District Two

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The voting location for residents living in the City of Russellville District Two precinct will no longer be College Avenue School, after the Russellville City Council approved a change in the precinct location at the council's January 21 meeting.

Council members voted to relocate the voting place to First Missionary Baptist Church on College Avenue, just north of College Avenue School.

The conditions of the old school building made it difficult for some voters to access the polling place, city officials said.

In other agenda items, the council:

- Approved a resolution commending the Russellville City Schools Youth Leadership Academy.

- Authorized mayor David Grissom to enter into an agreement with the Alabama Department of Transportation for Project No. ACOA63256-ATRP(017), the most recent ATRIP street improvement project in Russellville. The amended agreement changed the amount of federal dollars for the project from the original amount.

- Declared a knuckle boom truck and a New Holland backhoe as surplus property in the Street Department and authorized the sale of the same.

- Hired Noah Daugherty as a firefighter in the Russellville Fire Department.

- Accepted the resignation of Morgan Stidham as firefighter and declared a vacancy in the department and authorized the Civil Service Board to add an additional name to the current list.

- Hired Jyran Darby as Operator II and Brandon Suggs as Operator III in the Russellville Street Department.

Commission posts jobs

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Commission approved the posting and advertising of the position of Accountant/Payable Clerk at the commission's January 21 meeting, although the vote was not unanimous.

Commissioners David Hester and Rayburn Massey supported the motion, while commissioner Jason Miller voted against the measure. Commissioner Chris Wallace was absent from Tuesday's meeting.

The position has been vacant for a more than a year, since Leah Mansell was hired as County Administrator.

"Since the job has been open for an extended period, I don't believe the timing is right to make the position available right now," Miller said.

The Accountant/Payroll Clerk position assists in maintaining the accounting system for the county, assists in budget preparation, financial statements and paying accounts payable. Franklin County probate judge Barry Moore said he hopes to have the position filled in February.

In other agenda items, the commission:

- Approved the retirement of Pat Williams, Animal Control Technician, and approved advertising for a temporary Animal Control Technician position.

- Approved personnel moves for the Franklin County Sheriff's Office, including hiring Ricky Tharp,

Jonathan Frederick and Dustin Wylie as Corrections Officers/Dispatchers; accepting the retirement of Tim Baggett and Louise Owens effective February 1, 2020; approving the hiring of Renae Halbrooks as a deputy; approving catastrophic sick leave for Dakota Lovett; accepting the resignation of Adam Mitchell, deputy, and Dustin Hargett, Corrections Officer/Dispatcher; approving the hiring of Sherri Crowder as a temporary Corrections Officer/Dispatcher; and authorizing the advertisement of vacancies for Corrections Officer/Dispatcher and Deputy.

- Accepted the retirement of Robert Wolfe from the Franklin County Highway Department.

- Accepted the lowest responsible bid on telephone system upgrades for the Franklin County Courthouse from Ambient Solutions.

- Approved the hiring of Kyle Palmer as Franklin County Mental Health Officer.

- Authorized the advertisement for positions of employment through the Franklin County Census Committee.

- Accepted the request of Miller to be removed from the Census Grant Evaluation Committee and approved the appointment of Katerina Cole-Coffey and Dr. Susan Hargett to the committee.

The committee will be making hiring recommendations to the commission, so Miller felt it would be inappropriate for him to vote on recommendations from the committee as a sitting member.

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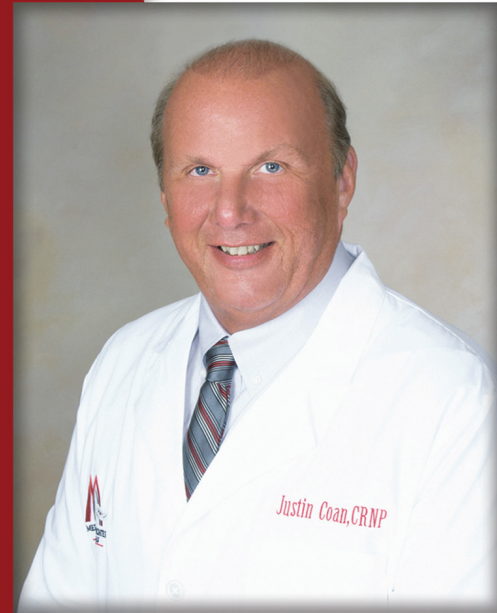


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RHS tennis seniors sign scholarships

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press

RUSSELLVILLE - When you talk to Russellville High School tennis coach Charlotte Dollar about Lady Golden Tiger tennis stars Anna Woods and Ellyse Strickland, there's only one way she describes the two: Hard-working.

It's because of that hard work, along with other contributing factors, that both Woods and Strickland were able to sign scholarships to extend their athletic and academic careers at Central Alabama Community College.

Last Wednesday, January 15, on the top floor of the RHS field house, Woods and Strickland put pen to paper to make their lifelong dreams become a reality.

"Anna and Ellyse both have an exceptional work ethic," Dollar said. "Whatever it is that they're going after, they truly get after it. Whether it's their grades, clubs or sports, they go for it. You can see their motivation in the way they strive to keep the tennis program as high as it can be. They're able to balance school and everything else and still excel in tennis, and that is exceptional.

"I truly believe they could excel in anything they

See 'TENNIS,' Page 16



COURTESY PHOTO

Ellyse Strickland (left) and Anna Woods will continue their tennis careers at Central Alabama Community College.

Absolutely perfect



COURTESY PHOTO

Coach Mason Willis and his eighth-grade team went a combined 40-0 over the course of this season and last season.

RMS 8th-grade boys go undefeated for 2nd straight season under Willis

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press

Whenever a team goes undefeated over the course of an entire season, it is naturally assumed that next season will be different by perhaps suffering a handful of losses.

After all, a team has to lose a game at some point, right?

Well, for Russellville Middle School eighth-grade basketball coach Mason Willis and his team, they're beginning to potentially change that narrative as they went undefeated not only last season, but this one as well.

The biggest difference between this season's team compared to last season's according to Willis is the increase in physicality and basketball IQ his team played with this season.

"Looking back to last year and then looking at this year, our guys were more physical on both ends of the floor," Willis said. "They also got a lot better in cutting back turnovers, improving on mistakes they might have made last year and things like that. Their overall basketball IQ has gotten a lot better, too. Understanding things like, if we're down by ten, you don't have to score all of those ten points right away. They've made a lot of positive strides, and that's a big part of why we've been successful."

Willis said that a majority of the players he had this year have been playing with one another since they were in the second grade, and they

have gotten a feel for playing basketball with one another.

Over the course of this season, which they finished with a record of 19-0 (bringing their record to 40-0 over the past two seasons), the eighth-grade Golden Tigers pulled off some impressive wins. Some of the more notable victories included wins over Hamilton, Madison Academy, Red Bay (in a Christmas tournament championship), as well as beating Florence four times, including an overtime victory.

"Hopefully, with what we've been able to do the past two seasons, we start a culture," Willis said. "In terms of being physical and playing our type of game and not the opponent's type of game. My mindset has always been that you come in every single day looking to get better. Be different from other guys and work harder than other guys, and hopefully we can continue this type of winning for a while."

Willis hopes that the back-to-back unbeaten seasons will not only have an impact on next year's eighth-grade group but also start a different culture throughout the basketball program.

"Hopefully, with what we've been able to do the past two seasons, we start a culture," Willis said. "In terms of being physical and playing our type of game and not the opponent's type of game. My mindset has always been that you come in every single day looking to get better. Be

See 'PERFECT,' Page 16

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Red Bay 7th/8th boys win sixth straight county crown



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Red Bay's seventh-and-eighth-grade boys routed East Franklin and Tharptown to take home another county championship.

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press

BELGREEN - After a first-round matchup where they held East Franklin to just five points, it would have been nearly impossible for Red Bay's seventh-and-eighth-grade boys to duplicate that same level of dominance in the finals of the junior high Franklin County Tournament.

While the defense wasn't able to hold Tharptown to single digits like they were able to do in their previous tournament matchup, the Tigers' offense was exceptional yet again as they took home the county title on Tuesday. Holden Inmon led all scorers with 15 points as Red Bay wrapped up its sixth straight seventh/eighth grade championship with a 54-26 win over the Wildcats.

Red Bay came out of the locker room shooting extremely efficiently to begin the first half while holding the Wildcats to just 10 points for the entire half. Over the course of the first two quarters, the Tigers amassed more points than the Wildcats would the entire game.

That combination of offensive efficiency and defensive aggressiveness is something that head coach Kevin Morrow has come to expect from his squad.

"We've been balanced pretty well the entire season," said Morrow, who has now won 11 county championships with Red Bay's seventh-and-eighth-grade

See 'SIXTH,' Page 17

Post play propels Lady Bulldogs to county title

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press

BELGREEN - In their first tournament matchup against the Red Bay Lady Tigers, Belgreen's seventh-and-eighth-grade girls made it a point to focus on their post play on the offensive side of the ball. That area of focus didn't change in the title game on Tuesday as the Lady Bulldogs were able to utilize standout post player Lily Blackburn effectively yet again in their 36-15 victory over the Phil Campbell Lady Bobcats.

While Blackburn was only able to contribute two points in the first quarter, teammate Dakota Green was able to get the Lady Bulldogs off to a fast start with four points, her total for the night, including two made free throws. Blackburn then picked up her scoring pace in the second quarter with four points, and Allie Reaves chipped in with the first two of her four total points for the game.

The Lady Bobcats were able to keep the deficit at just four points as they entered halftime down just 14-10 as Tasha Trapp led all Phil Campbell scorers with four points.

See 'POST,' Page 17

B-Team Bobcats claim county title with OT win

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

RED BAY - Prior to the B-team county championship game against rival Red Bay, Phil Campbell coach Jordan Benford reminded his players of something he tells them all the time.

"It's one of my sayings: 'Play with emotion, but don't play emotional,'" Benford said.

Just a short while later, that pre-game platitude would become highly relevant for Benford's team.

Leading by 11 at 40-29 after a three-pointer by Sage Raper midway through the fourth quarter, the Bobcats appeared well on their way to claiming the county title. Red Bay's Carson Corum, however, had other ideas.

Corum caught fire, sandwiching a pair of threes around a layup off a steal to score eight quick points and trim the lead to three. A layup by Landon Glover brought the Tigers within one, and then Corum came up with another layup off a steal to cap a 12-0 burst that took less than two minutes and put Red Bay on top 41-40 with 1:40 remaining.

That's when Benford called timeout to try and settle his guys down.

"They made a run there, and our guys were feeling the crowd a little bit," Benford said. "They came over there, and I told them, 'Guys, calm down. It's been a back-and-forth game the whole game. Just calm down. You're playing defense really well. Just run the offense, and don't force anything. We've got a minute-and-a-half to play. That's plenty of time. We're only down one. Don't panic.'

"It was a great example of what we talked about before the game. There were a couple of times there with some fouls, and they hit some shots, and we got emotional. We just tried to calm them down. We always want our guys to have emotion—pride, energy, those types of things. Tonight we just had to reel it in a couple of times."

The Bobcats pulled even at 41-41 when Andrew Green went 1-for-2 at the line with 1:28 remaining. Red Bay ran the clock down but missed on a chance to win in regulation, and the game went to overtime.

Dylan Jeane opened the extra period with a free throw to put Phil Campbell in front, but Glover answered with a three from the left corner to give Red Bay a 44-42 lead. Cam Habada tied the game for the Bobcats with two free throws at the 1:46 mark, and then Jeane made a driving bank shot to put Phil Campbell on top 46-44 with 1:05 to go.

The Tigers missed two shots on their ensuing trip, and John Randle Herring grabbed the rebound for the Bobcats. Raper was fouled and went 1-for-2 at the line to push the lead to three. After calling a couple of timeouts, Red Bay missed a three as time expired, giving Phil Campbell a 47-44 win and a hard-earned county title.

"This is the first county championship for these guys," said Benford, whose team extended its streak to 13 straight wins since a one-point loss to Rogers in the season opener. "It's a big deal for that group right there. I'm proud of them. We got down and had to fight back. We had to lock in to finish. I was

See 'COUNTY,' page 19



COURTESY PHOTO

Phil Campbell's B-Team boys brought home the county title with a 47-44 overtime win over Red Bay.



Winston Nolen Junior Guard, Tharptown

Nolen put together a highlight-filled week for the Wildcats, scoring a career-high 31 points last Tuesday against Hatton and then topping the 1,000-point mark on Thursday at Vina.

In the loss to Hatton, Nolen scored 27 second-half points and finished the night with six threes and nine rebounds. He then scored 15 points in the rout of the Red Devils, reaching 1,000 for his varsity career on a layup in the second quarter. He added eight points Friday in a win over Phil Campbell and was averaging 16.2 points per game through Sunday.



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'PERFECT,' from page 13

different from other guys and work harder than other guys, and hopefully we can continue this type of winning for a while."

The RMS eighth-grade boys roster includes Malachi Duncan, Amir Williams, Brandt Cummings, KJ Murray, Gavin Hyde, Reece Carson, Michael Schofield, Ethan Fretwell, Broc Reathford, Shilo Willis, Austin Ertle, Chandler Price, Martin Thomas, EJ King, Jah Williams and Micah Young.

In terms of what he sees in his current team's future, the sky is the limit

according to Willis.

"Next year, with the way our current varsity team is set up, some of these guys could potentially make their way onto the varsity roster," Willis said. "They could be anywhere from ninth grade to B-team or varsity; it's really up to them and how hard they work and how much they want it. But the potential is definitely there for some of these guys to have an immediate impact at the higher levels."

'TENNIS,' from page 13

choose to do. We're just happy they chose tennis."

Dollar said signing day for Woods and Strickland was the culmination of years of dedication.

"We're just so proud of these girls and excited for them," Dollar said. "They've worked super-hard since the moment they got into high school. They have gone above and beyond to make sure they help the team and represent their school as best as they can."

With their family, friends and faculty looking on as they signed their names, what made it truly special for the teammates was the fact that they were able to sign alongside one another. For Strickland, to sign on the same day to play at the same college as her teammate and friend was a huge source of gratification.

"Anna and I started this journey together years ago, and we've been doubles partners for a couple of years now. so just to see her achieve her goals along with me is just awesome," Strickland said. "We have both worked really hard to improve, and to get here together is really special."

Strickland has had a very accomplished career with the Lady Golden Tiger tennis program, which has included a team state tournament berth every year of her career. In addition to her accomplishments, Strickland was also

the section champion at No. 5 singles and No. 1 doubles as a freshman.

In her sophomore and junior years, she repeated as section champion and was a runner-up both years in the sectional doubles tournament. As a junior, she was named to the TimesDaily 1A-7A second team All-Area squad.

Not only does Strickland excel on the court, but she also is a standout off the court as well. She is a member of the RHS cheerleading squad, multiple clubs and sports a 4.53 GPA.

According to Strickland, the things that were most important to her during her time at Russellville were the victories and friendships she made along the way.

"Winning sectionals was definitely a highlight of my career," Strickland said. "But also getting to hang out with my teammates everyday is something that I'll always look back on. We're like one big family. It's going to be hard to leave these girls after this season, because I love all of the girls. That's probably been my favorite part of my career."

As she looks back on her storied career with the RHS tennis program, there are multiple things that stand out to Woods as she begins her final season with the program.

"The fact that we went to state every year stands out the most to me," Woods said. "That's something that not a lot of players in any sport can say, so the fact that we were able to do that over these years is amazing. One other thing is the relationships I've made. The friends that I've been able to see out here for every practice or match...it's just the little things that are most memorable to me."

When looking back on her career, Woods will not be hard-pressed to find things to talk about regarding her years at RHS. Beginning with her freshman year, Woods was the section champion No. 1 singles and the runner-up at No. 2 doubles. As a sophomore, Woods was named the TimesDaily Player of the Week and was also named second-team All-Area after winning the section championship at No. 3 singles and No. 2 doubles.

Last season, her junior year, Woods finished as the section runner-up in No. 1 singles and No. 1 doubles. The most impressive things on her resume might be the fact that she was named to the inaugural AHSAA All-Star tennis match this past summer.

Inside the classroom, Woods is no slouch either as she currently ranks ninth in her senior class of 176 with a GPA of 4.76.

There are multiple reasons as to how Woods was able to be such a force on the tennis court, but she attributes her coaches with being the biggest influences on her.

"Everyday at practice, Coach Dollar just constantly had us doing drills and focusing on the basics like forehand and backhand and just really harping on sharpening our fundamentals," Woods said. "Coach Dollar was also very understanding. If we had a long practice and she knew we had homework and things like that, she would help us out. She's just very helpful and just did everything she could to make all of us better."

Woods and Strickland played together on a team that finished runner-up in the USTA 18U Junior Tennis Tournament late last year.

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'SIXTH,' from page 14

boys. "Some nights our guards shoot the ball extremely well, and we've had some games where we've been bigger and forced it inside a lot. For the most part we have been very well balanced in every game we've played this year, and I'm glad we were able to continue that through the county tournament."

Ethan McCoy, Lawson Glover and Cody Carnes each chipped in six points for the Tigers, with Carnes knocking down a three just before the end of the first half. Others scoring for the Tigers included Gage Edgmon with eight points, Brady Bolton with seven points, Kennedy Wilemon with four points and Will West with two points.

Coming into the matchup against Tharptown, Morrow said that his team's primary focus on the defensive side of the ball was to stop the Wildcats' top scorer, Dylan Valdez.

"We knew that Valdez had scored 12 points on us the previous two times we played them, so we really wanted to limit him to the amount of touches he got," Morrow said. "Overall we wanted to take away some things that they normally like to do, and I feel like our guys did a good job on that."

Valdez finished the game leading all Tharptown scorers with ten points. Edwin Vela added eight points to his credit, with Dawson Higgins contributing six points for the Wildcats and Hunter Motes adding two points.

As for next year's seventh-and-eighth-grade boys team at Red Bay, Morrow hopes that this will be a teaching moment and motivator for younger guys that will be coming up through the system.

"Maybe our younger guys will look at this and figure out and say, 'Hey, we have more work to do,'" he said. "And they go into next season ready to take over."

'POST,' from page 14

Belgreen head coach Carlee Robbins knew that the Lady Bobcats had great guard play and that making stops on the perimeter was an integral part of the game plan for the Lady Bulldogs.

"We knew that they had a pretty good athlete and decent guard play," Robbins said. "They move the ball really well, and we just had to make sure our girls talked to each other and make sure we knew where the ball-handlers were at all times."

Hannah Borden put her name in the scorebook at the start of the second half with a deep three-pointer to start off the third-quarter scoring for Belgreen. Blackburn flipped a switch and contributed five points in the third and fourth quarters.

On the defensive side of the ball, Robbins could not have asked for a better performance from her Lady Bulldogs as they held Phil Campbell to just five points the entire half.

Borden added three more points in the second half to finish her night with six points. Blackburn led all scorers with 16 points, while Caitlyn Oliver and Aleksis Archer both finished with two points.

Being able to win the county title on their home court was extremely special for the Lady Bulldogs according to Robbins, and she hopes it will serve as motivation to repeat next season.

"This is the first time we have brought this trophy home to Belgreen in four years, and to be able to do it here at home adds another level to it," Robbins said. "I hope that this will help our girls and make them grow from what they have done this season."

"Hopefully they will enjoy this so much that they continue to want to win everything they take part in."



The Lady Bulldogs were able to clinch the county title in front of their home crowd.

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Bonner out-shines Murr as Bulldogs edge Lions

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

ATHENS - Standing in the crowded lobby just outside the gym at Lindsay Lane Christian Academy in Athens last Tuesday night, Belgreen sophomore Will Bonner went over the particulars of the impending bus ride home with head coach Marty Cooper.

"Are we gonna stop and eat somewhere?" Bonner asked.

"Whatever it is, we're gonna make it quick," Cooper replied. "I'm ready to get home."

"I really don't even wanna eat," Bonner said.

When a local sports writer inquired about his lack of an appetite, Bonner pointed to Cooper and explained.

"He made me eat something before the game," Bonner said. "I don't like eating before a game."

Given how Bonner played last Tuesday night, perhaps Cooper should consider making pre-game meals mandatory.

Sharing the floor with the state's all-time leading scorer in Lindsay Lane senior guard Tommy Murr, a David Lipscomb signee, Bonner stole the show. The 5'11 point guard attacked the paint relentlessly and finished fearlessly at the rim, pouring in a career-high 47 points to help the Bulldogs overcome a typical night (44 points) by Murr to beat the Lions 71-65 in a showdown that was worth the price of admission and then some.

Lindsay Lane fans have long since grown accustomed to seeing such exploits from Murr, who roughly three weeks ago became the first high school player in Alabama history to surpass the 5,000-point mark for his career. But how often have they seen Murr do his thing, only to be out-done by an opposing player in a head-to-head duel for the ages?

"It was almost like one of them got the ball and went down and scored, and then the other one got the ball and went down and scored," Cooper said. "I looked down at Coach [Steve] Murr one time when Will was scoring, and he's like, 'We can't stop him.' And I'm feeling the same thing at the other end. 'We can't stop Tommy.'"

Belgreen (22-5 through Sunday) and Lindsay Lane (16-7) had already split two previous meet-

ing this season, with Murr scoring a total of 91 points and shooting a remarkable 27-for-27 from the foul line. The 6'1 guard knocked down his first two shots—both from beyond the arc—on Tuesday, helping the Lions race out to a 14-2 lead.

At that point, it was looking like the Bulldogs might have spent a little too much time celebrating the county championship they won on Saturday night with an emotionally charged 61-41 win over rival Red Bay. Bonner prevented Tuesday's game from getting entirely out of hand, scoring eight first-quarter points on 4-for-5 shooting from the floor to keep Belgreen in it early. Murr also had eight points in the first (though he missed his final five shots of the quarter), and the Lions led 19-10 at the end of one.

"It was almost like one of them got the ball and went down and scored, and then the other one got the ball and went down and scored," Cooper said. "I looked down at Coach [Steve] Murr one time when Will was scoring, and he's like, 'We can't stop him.' And I'm feeling the same thing at the other end. 'We can't stop Tommy.'"

Bonner blew up in the second quarter, getting to the rim at will—no pun intended—and scoring 17 points on 7-for-9 shooting from the floor and 3-for-3 from the line. Murr struggled in the second, scoring just six points on 3-for-10 shooting, and Bonner capped off his huge quarter by tossing in a 15-foot leaner at the buzzer to send Belgreen into the break with a 37-31 lead.

"I'm just really pleased with our entire team's effort," Cooper said. "Coming off a big high from the other night and coming out and getting smacked in the face early, it could have been over pretty quick. Our guys really did scrap back. We were able to get the lead by halftime, and I was just hoping to get within striking distance by that point."

The first-half ledger showed Bonner with 25 points on 11-for-14 shooting from the floor, compared to 14 points by Murr on 5-for-17 shooting. You don't become the state's all-time leading scorer, though, without learning how to shake off a bad half. Murr scored all 17 of Lindsay Lane's points in the third quarter, shooting 5-for-9 from the floor (with three threes) and 4-for-4 from the foul line. He drilled a 30-footer from right in front of the Lions' bench to beat the buzzer and cut Belgreen's lead to 11 at 59-48 going to the fourth.

"He's a beast, dude," said Bonner, who scored 10 points on 5-for-11 shooting in the third and headed to the final period having already matched his previous career-high of 35 points. "He's quick, and he pulls up off the dribble really well. He can finish at the rim, too."

Murr did indeed wow the capacity crowd on

Tuesday night with several fancy finishes on his forays to the rim, but Bonner's uncanny knack for converting at the rim is virtually unparalleled among players his size.

"To look at him, you wouldn't think he's strong," Cooper said of Bonner, whose slight build is deceptive, to say the least. "But that sucker is strong. If he ever really started lifting...he's really strong for his size. He really is."

"There's another thing, too, though," Cooper added, pointing to the left side of his chest. "That heart. When he gets in there, he's just not gonna be denied."

Bonner shot just 1-for-6 from the floor in the fourth quarter, and Lindsay Lane climbed all the way back to within five at 63-58 on a steal and layup by Murr with 1:35 remaining.

Bonner made a pair of free throws to push the lead back to seven, but Murr answered with a driving three-point play to make it 65-61 with 42 seconds left.

Bonner went 6-for-6 from the line from that point forward, sealing Belgreen's sixth straight win since the calendar flipped to January. After missing his first two free throws of the night, Bonner went 13-for-13 from the line the rest of the way, including 10-for-10 in the fourth quarter when not much else was going right for the Bulldogs. [They shot just 1-for-9 from the floor in the final period and turned the ball over eight times.]

"I was worn out," Bonner said, "but Coach kept telling me, 'Slow down, we're gonna get the ball in your hands, and you're gonna make the free throws.' And that's what we did."

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Bonner putting up 47 points is that he did it without making a single three-point shot—practically unheard of for a guard in today's game. He finished 17-for-31 from the floor, and all 17 of those makes—with the possible exception of the buzzer-beater at the end of the first half—came from inside the paint.

"I just try to get in there and control my body," said Bonner, who also pulled down 15 rebounds on Tuesday. "There's always bigger people in the lane. I just try to get in there and control my body and finish. It's always about finishing if you want to win a game."

Cooper counts last Tuesday's win among the Bulldogs' most impressive and hard-earned of the season, given the circumstances.

"I'm just really pleased with our guys to come off that high [of winning the county tournament] and go on the road and get down early but still find a way to win," he said. "It was just a gut-check there in the second half. I don't think we even subbed in the second half. It was a great team effort. Obviously, Will is the catalyst. He makes it go. But that was just a scrappy group out there getting it done. Even getting the rebounds there at the end—it was pretty frantic."

Collin Bonner added 12 points for Belgreen on Tuesday, shooting 6-for-11 from the floor. Senior post player Bryant Hubbert had seven points and seven rebounds, and Scout Bragwell knocked down a third-quarter three in addition to grabbing five boards and handing out two assists. Isaac Willingham had two points and five rebounds.

Murr, meanwhile, scored his 44 points on 16-for-39 shooting from the floor. He made five threes and shot 7-for-7 from the foul line. In three games against the Bulldogs this year, Murr averaged 45.0 points and shot a combined 34-for-34 from the foul line.

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'BONNER,' from page 18

Belgreen ran a lot of different defenders at Murr on Tuesday, including the 6'4 Hubbert, reserve post player Will Donahoe (who goes 6'2) and 6'3 Collin Bonner. Forcing him to miss 23 shots has to be considered a job well done against a player with Murr's offensive capabilities.

"Obviously, he can score at this level just about any time he wants," said Cooper, who spent 21 years coaching JUCO ball in Mississippi prior to taking the Belgreen job last summer. "I think the big thing is, he's such a good passer. I really think he's a good passer. Once he gets at a level where he's gonna have a few guys around him who can really do something, he's gonna have a lot of assists. He's just so quick with the ball in his

hands, and he can create his own shot. The way today's game is, that's important. He's tough.

"Jen [Cooper's wife and assistant coach] and I were talking the last time we played them at the Bracy, and we were just asking ourselves, 'Who have we coached on the college level who could have stopped him?' In twenty-something years, you're talking about three or four guys, and they're all 6'2, 6'3, 6'4 with long arms. That's why we used our post guys and Collin on him tonight.

"Will Bonner wanted to guard him," Cooper added with a grin. "And he can, out on the perimeter. But we need him to score, and it would take so much out of him if you asked him to follow Tommy and score. So that's something we tried to avoid.

A couple of times, Will picked him up on his own, and we had to yell at him, 'You're not guarding him!'"

Tuesday's performance left Bonner just one point shy of 500 for the season and raised his scoring average from 18.1 to a county-best 19.2 points per game. He was more proud, however, of the way his team battled back after such a poor start against the Lions.

"The momentum changed really fast," Bonner said. "They got out on us, and Coach just told us to take our time and get open shots. We slowed down, and we played as a team. My teammates believe in me, and I believe in them. That's how we win."

'COUNTY,' from page 15

proud of them.

"They're really a great group of kids. We played all ninth-graders besides John Randle Herring and Seth Hutcheson. They're the only two tenth-graders we've got. This is a great group, and they mesh well together. They played together their whole lives, and they've got a lot of confidence."

The Bobcats (13-1) got 11 first-half points from Jeane and nine from Habada on Saturday, but they still trailed by one at 23-22 going into the break. Elijah Luster made two free throws to open the second half and push Red Bay's lead to three, but Phil Campbell closed the quarter with an 8-0 run.

Habada hit a three to tie the game 25-25, and a layup by Green made it 27-25 with 3:00 left in the third. Kyle Pace followed with a three at the 1:20 mark, and Phil Campbell led 30-25 after holding the Tigers without a field goal for the entire third quarter.

Jeane had a couple of buckets early in the fourth quarter, and Pace drilled another three with 4:40 left in the game to make it 37-27. Owen Terry scored on a drive for Red Bay, but Raper then buried a three from the right wing to make it an 11-point game and seemingly seal the deal.

The Tigers rallied, but Phil Campbell prevailed in OT.

Jeane finished with a game-high 18 points, and Habada added 14, knocking down a pair of threes and going 4-for-5 at the line. Pace also hit two threes and scored six points. Green finished with five, and Raper had four.

"It was a pretty good night for us all-around offensively," said Benford, whose team hit four big threes in the second half. "In the first half we may have forced things a little bit. Dylan is a great talent, and he had a really good night tonight, especially in those iso situations and coming off screens. Cam

and Sage Raper hit a couple of key outside shots for us, too."

Corum and Glover led Red Bay with 12 points apiece. Bryson Hacker finished with five, and Coby Jackson and Andrew Ray each added four. B.P. Blair hit a three, and Luster and Terry scored two points apiece.

The Tigers hit five threes and shot 5-for-6 from the foul line. Phil Campbell also made five threes and pulled out the win despite shooting just 7-for-18 from the line.

Benford said a defensive adjustment was key to helping his team earn its second win over Red Bay this season in as many tries.

"We played man in the first half, but we knew the last time we played them they struggled some with that two-three," Benford said. "We played man in the first half to put some pressure on them, but they were running a nine-man rotation, and we were running a seven-man rotation. So we pulled off and played the two-three some, because we'd had success with it against them before and we were trying to save our legs a little bit.

"It ended up being the right call, because we were smoked by the end of the game."

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