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Group calls on Shelby to support pathway to citizenship

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A rally at Sen. Richard Shelby's Huntsville office asking the retiring senator to support a pathway to citizenship for 11 million immigrants was held Friday afternoon. But neither Shelby, nor any of his staff, was there to hear the message.

The event was co-sponsored by the Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice (ACIJ) and the North Alabama Chapter of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), and featured several Franklin County residents on the agenda.

Organizers of the event said they repeatedly contacted Shelby's office to make an appointment with him, but they never received a response. Shelby's Huntsville office, located in the Huntsville Airport, was closed Friday afternoon when the rally took place.

Russellville resident Rev. Charles Dale prayed asking God for "hope that Senator Shelby's heart moves for all Alabamians and he acts on his values and supports immigrants," according to the event agenda.

Dale was irked that no one from Shelby's office attended the event.

"It's a crying shame that the taxpay-

See 'CITIZENSHIP,' page 7

Russellville High School named in State's Top 25 high schools

Submitted to the FFP

For the first time since the list was instated, Russellville High School has made the U.S. News & World Report's list of the Top 25 High Schools in Alabama.

Coming in at #21 on the list, RHS broke into the Top 25 with an Alabama Education Report Card grade of 90/A, which is a feat unto itself considering the state report card doesn't take into account the high percentage of English Language Learners (students whose first language is not English) at RCS and the 63% of students on free and reduced lunch status, two factors that can typically affect a school's performance on state testing and

college readiness capabilities.

RCS Superintendent Dr. Heath Grimes said he was excited to see RHS receiving this much-deserved recognition.

"What you're seeing is the result of hard work and dedication from our students, our faculty and staff to set their goals high and to do what is necessary to reach those goals," Grimes said. "We make sure our students know there is nothing they can't achieve if they put in the work to make it happen. There are no factors that can hold them back or keep them from succeeding if that's what they want to do. And I know our teachers give them all the tools they need to reach those goals and to be

See 'RUSSELLVILLE,' page 9

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Glen Wesley Demastus, 86, of Russellville, passed away on Saturday, April 24th. Interment at Phil Campbell City Cemetery.

Aldo Mario Echeverria, 76, of Russellville, passed away on Saturday, April 24th. Interment at Spruce Pine Cemetery.

William "Billy" Huckaba, 84, of Russellville, passed away on Saturday, April 24th. Interment at Knights of Pythias Cemetery.

Richard Clayborn Gandy, 75, of Russellville, passed away on Thursday, April 29th. Interment at Tharptown Cemetery.

Rowe William Lindley, 88, of Vina, passed away on Friday, April 30th. Interment at Dempsey Cemetery.

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Franklin schools to offer summer reading camp

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Franklin County Schools Superintendent of Education Greg Hamilton explained his system's new summer reading camp to the Board of Education at the board's April 20 meeting.

The camp, which is required for all public school systems under the Alabama Literacy Act, is for students in kindergarten through third grade who fall below the state average in reading.

The Franklin County Summer Reading Camp will accommodate up to 150 students, Hamilton said. The positions needed to staff the camp have been posted and those individuals will be hired next month. Hamilton said there will be 19 teachers hired.

The camp will begin on June 7 and will run four times weekly, four hours daily, through July 14. Students will be able to leave camp each day and go to the TRACKS program if they are enrolled in it.

Teachers at the camp will receive \$30/hour if they are qualified in science/reading. Buses will transport students to all six campuses hosting the reading camps.

"I feel 100 percent certain the math act version of this law will be here next year, so we will be prepared for that," Hamilton said.

The Alabama Legislature allocated additional funds for school systems to hire employees to operate the camps.

Summer school for seventh grade through twelfth grade students will coincide with the schedule for the reading camp. Hamilton expects larger summer school enrollment as a result of remote learning the past year.

In other agenda items, the board:

—awarded the bid for SAN switches at Belgreen High School to lowest responsible bidder, Clearwinds, at a price of \$30,022.73.

—awarded the bid for SAN switches for Tharptown School to lowest responsible bidder, Clearwinds, at bid price of \$15,661.19.

See 'CAMP,' page 5



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Letter to the editor...

Dear Editor:

In last week's Franklin Free Press, a Phil Campbell councilman expressed his appreciation to me for a barbecue plate supper for the town's employees, firefighters and council. I wanted to make sure Piggly Wiggly of Phil Campbell, which donated the meat, and my friend William Bishop, who cooked it, were also mentioned. We did 33 plates and Donald Stevenson and I served them. Thanks to everybody working together to help our town.

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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

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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Vouchers for free garden supplies now available to be redeemed

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Franklin County residents who received vouchers for free vegetable garden supplies may redeem those vouchers at Tompkins Farmers Warehouse in Russellville.

The program, which provides free vegetable garden supplies to limited income households, is sponsored by Community Action Agency of Northwest Alabama and is called the Gerald Williams Cooperative Garden Program.

Tompkins Farmers Warehouse is located at 291

Walnut Gate Road in Russellville.

The program is for residents of Franklin, Colbert and Lauderdale Counties who fall below the following household income thresholds:

- Single person household: \$1,595/month.
- Two person household: \$2,155/month.
- Three person household: \$2,715/month.

The program is a partnership of Community Action Agency of Northwest Alabama, Tennessee Valley Authority Retirees, Bicentennial Volunteers, Inc., and several other organizations.

Vouchers were scheduled to be mailed during the month of April.

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'CAMP,' from page 3

—awarded the bid for replacement of the gym floor at Red Bay High School to lowest responsible bidder, Covington Flooring Co., at bid price of \$155,010.

—approved compensation to Andrea Hogan, yearbook sponsor at Phil Campbell Elementary School, in the amount of \$500. PCES will reimburse the Franklin County Board of Education the \$500 plus applicable benefits.

—approved out of state trips including Belgreen fifth grade to Atlanta on May 7, 2021, Franklin County Career Tech to Atlanta May 7, 2021.

—approved the purchase of two 2022 Type "C" 54 passenger (before modification) special needs school buses from Southland Transportation Group at a price of \$99,406.61 per unit.

—heard a report from Assistant Superintendent Johnny Cleveland that the system's mechanics were in the Top 10 Percent statewide for the fewest major deficiencies in school bus maintenance.

"I can't say enough about our transportation fleet and bus shop employees. Our transportation in Franklin County Schools is in great shape," Cleveland said.

—approved personnel moves as follows:

LEAVE OF ABSENCE: Melissa McHenry, special education teacher at PCHS, Family Medical Leave, effective March 11, 2021.

RETIREMENT: Rick Suddith, Industrial Maintenance Position, Franklin County Career Tech Center; Deborah Jones, teacher's aide Belgreen; Beverly Michael, bus driver Phil Campbell; Donna Murray, Belgreen elementary teacher; Nikki Tutich, special education teacher, Belgreen; Michael Jackson, physical education teacher/coach, Red Bay; Kimberley Coker, special education teacher, Red Bay; Lisa Miller and Karen Taylor, elementary teachers Belgreen.

RESIGNATION: Julie Bolton, elementary teacher Red Bay.

RESIGNATION IN SUPPLEMENT: Shannon Benford, resignation as head basketball coach and head baseball coach at Tharptown High School.

EMPLOYMENT: Trevor Allison, science teacher Phil Campbell and Heath Childers, head varsity football coach Red Bay.

TRANSFER: Karen Jones, from Belgreen elementary teacher to Belgreen reading coach.

VOLUNTEER: Bridget Tharp, volunteer assistant cheer coach at Tharptown.



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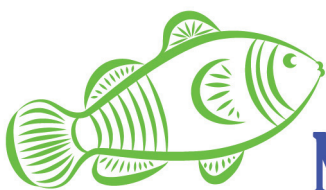


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In preparation for mowing season and before June 1, 2021, please remove all old flowers from the graves in the Mt. Pleasant Cemetery on Highway 724. Donations for upkeep are needed and may be mailed to: Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, 941 Highway 87, Russellville, Al., 35654.

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.

New Life Ministries invites you to join them for Sunday School at 10 a.m. on Sunday mornings and for worship services on Sundays at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. and Wednesday nights at 7 p.m. On the first Sunday of each month, there will be a fellowship lunch after morning services. You and your family are invited to come worship and fellowship with the Lord of Hosts and his children. New Life Ministries is located on Hwy. 24 west toward Red Bay, behind Tompkins Feed.

TOPS 0155 Russellville is now meeting at the Russellville Hospital Education Room at 4:30 p.m. every Monday. Everyone is welcome to drop in for a free meeting visit. Call 256-446-5962 or 256-412-2855 for more info.

Russellville Al-Anon is meeting at Russellville First Baptist Church at 6 p.m., each Thursday. We are wearing masks and social distancing.

My Father's House invites everyone to a Fellowship Cookout, Sunday, May 16. No Sunday School that day. The Sunday morning service will begin at 10:30 a.m., with cookout right after service. There will be singing and preaching outside in front of the church after lunch. Church is located at 104 East Lawrence St., Russellville. For prayer and information or a ride, call 256-460-1376.

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'CITIZENSHIP,' from page 1

ers pay for an office he never uses," Dale said. "He's using taxpayer monies for these offices and there's no one there for members of the public to talk to, and no one to help them if they need assistance."

The ACIJ is a grassroots, statewide network of organizations and people working to protect and advance the rights of Alabama's immigrant population.

ACIJ Executive Director Ana Espino said the group would not be deterred by Shelby's absence, and the group is sending letters to his Washington, D.C., office in support of three causes: A pathway to citizenship for the nation's 11 million immigrants, inclusive COVID-19 relief for all and the end of deportations.

There is a link on the ACIJ website, www.alimmigrant.org, that members of the public can use to write letters in support of the cause and/or to sign the group's petition. There are samples of letters that can be sent to legislators.

Dale said members of both ACIJ and the NAACP believe this message needed to be shared face-to-face with their senators.

"We felt it was important enough for us to appear before the senator and let him know what we expect he will do. The people put him in office and we expect he will live up to the standard of *for the people*, and not just benefit himself," Dale said.

The issue of immigration and the possibility of pathway to citizenship legislation is of particular interest in Franklin County, which has one of Alabama's largest per capita immigrant populations.

A recent *Politico* poll showed only 43 percent of Americans now support a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. This number is down 14 points from a poll taken in January.

Those numbers are likely lower in Alabama, which has Republicans in every statewide office. Alabamians overwhelmingly supported Donald Trump in the November 2020 election, with one of Trump's campaign pledges being a promise to build a wall along the entirety of the United States/Mexico border.

Poll numbers have consistently shown that most people who support a pathway to citizenship identify as Democrats. The recent poll showed only 25

percent of Republicans support undocumented immigrants having a pathway to citizenship.

Undaunted, ACIJ members held a rally on the steps of the Alabama State Capital last month to show support for immigration reform. Additional events are scheduled for this spring.

Dale said there will be similar rallies at the office of Sen. Tommy Tuberville and Rep. Mo Brooks, a leading candidate to succeed Shelby after he retires next year.



COURTESY PHOTO

Members of the Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice and the NAACP gathered at Sen. Richard Shelby's office for a Friday rally in support of immigration reform for America's 11 million immigrants.



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'RUSSELLVILLE,' from page 1

successful."

The ranking of the 25 Top High Schools in Alabama is based on six different factors:

- College readiness (30%), which includes the proportion of seniors who took and earned a qualifying score on Advanced Placement and/or International Baccalaureate exams at some point during their high school career.
- Reading and math proficiency (20%), from testing in the 2018-19 school year.
- Reading and math performance (20%), calculated as expected performance given a school's student body characteristics.
- Underserved student performance (10%), evaluating how well an underserved subgroup scored on state assessments compared with the average for non-underserved students among schools in the same state.
- College curriculum breadth (10%), calculated as the percentage of seniors in 2018-19 who took and passed multiple AP/IB exams.
- Graduation rates (10%) based on the 2018-19 school year.

RHS Principal Dr. Jason Goodwin said the factors by which these rankings are determined is a testament to how dedicated RHS is to making sure every student is receiving the best education possible.

"With the U.S. News & World Report looking at our achievements and also looking at how well our underserved student population is performing, we hope this sends a message to our community and others that, no matter what, students will receive a quality education at RHS and be prepared for whatever plans they have after high school," Goodwin said. "Last year we were ranked #28 and just missed being in the Top 25. This year, we've moved up seven spots to #21, so it's exciting to see our growth being documented and recognized."

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EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

Bobcats sweep Geraldine, take on Fyffe in quarterfinals

Brady Petree
 Franklin Free Press

Trailing late in a game for the first time in nearly a month, Phil Campbell rallied for two runs in its final at bat to edge Geraldine 3-2 on Friday in the opener of a best-of-three second-round playoff series.

A monster fourth inning—along with another terrific pitching performance by senior Luke Barnwell—ensured there would be no such drama in game two.

Barnwell ran his career record to 13-2 with his fourth shutout of the season, holding Geraldine to just two hits in six innings as the Bobcats finished off the series sweep and advanced to the Class 3A quarterfinals with a 10-0 win.

On the heels of a nail-biter in Game 1, the night-cap was tight, too—until the bottom of the fourth, when Phil Campbell (34-3) staged a monster two-out rally to turn a one-run game into a rout. With two on and two out, Bryant Anthony delivered an RBI single to make it 2-0. After Barnwell walked, Mason Swinney came through with a two-run single to extend the lead to 4-0.

Austen Baker was hit by a pitch to load the bases, and John Miller Lawson drew a walk to force home a run. Ridge Raper followed with a two-run single, and then Bryant Hyde capped off the rally with a two-run triple to right to make it 9-0.

That was more than enough support for Barnwell (8-1), who tossed his second consecutive shutout to open these playoffs. [He blanked Susan Moore with a five-inning one-hitter in round one.] The senior right-hander needed just 66 pitches to get through six innings on Friday, striking out five and walking two. He gave up two hits in the first inning and none thereafter.

Getting such a strong performance out of Barnwell isn't anything new for Phil Campbell. But with the Bobcats number two, Ridge Raper, having yet to throw a pitch during the postseason, Barnwell's performance couldn't have come at a moment too soon.

"Luke is just a bulldog. He's a kid that's going to give you 110% every night out and he's the kind of guy that you want on your side because he's going to give you everything he's got," head coach Jonathan Raper said. "He just has a winning mentality whether he's on the mound or at the plate. He had a great weekend at the plate and did a really good job on the mound by pounding the zone and keeping the hitters off balance with his changeup and breaking ball stuff. He doesn't strike everybody out but he lets his defense play behind him and he's really our unsung hero on our pitching staff."

Geraldine mounted its only threat against Barnwell in the top of the first, putting runners at second and third with only one out. Barnwell

See 'BOBCATS,' page 13

Survive and advance

As they stared elimination from the playoffs in the face last Saturday, Russellville got some much-needed inspiration from their head coach and some timely hitting to advance to the 5A quarterfinals in their quest for a state championship.



PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN MEDINA

The Golden Tigers defeated Corner in game three by an 8-3 final to advance to the quarterfinals for the fifth time in seven seasons.

Brady Petree
 Franklin Free Press

For the first time this season, the Russellville Golden Tigers found themselves in some unfamiliar territory last weekend.

After routing Corner by a 10-2 final to take game one in their 5A second round matchup, the Yellow Jackets stunned the Golden Tigers in game two in an 8-3 win to force a game three on Saturday.

A couple of uncharacteristic errors combined with some untimely outs, as Russellville lined into two rally-killing double plays in game two and the Golden Tigers had their backs against the wall facing adversity on the road in an elimination game.

Heading into game three, the Golden Tigers needed something, anything, to get their mojo back in time for game three on Saturday.

And it all started with a message from their skipper.

"I sent our guys a message early Saturday morning and wanted to remind them that competitive greatness is defined as being your best when your best is needed and there's never been a greater time in our program to demonstrate that than today," head coach Chris Heaps said. "I really felt like the adversity of being number one in 5A and playing on the road, we needed that a little bit. We've talked about how adversity is not what makes you a man but it reveals where you are as a man and I really felt like that adversity was something we needed in order to be tested as to where we were."

Safe to say that message was well-received.

The Golden Tigers managed to get both leadoff runners on in both the first and second innings but couldn't bring them home. Then in the third inning, as the first three batters managed to reach, Nick Smith came to the plate with the chance to put the Golden Tigers on the board early.

And Smith delivered.

The third baseman, who was still looking for his first hit of the series coming into his second at-bat of game two, crushed a 1-1 pitch over the left-centerfield fence for a grand slam to put the Golden Tigers up 4-0 and they never looked back.

"Nick didn't look like himself in that first at-bat and we have a saying that, 'in order to be a successful hitter, you have to have a short-term memory', and he came up in his second at-bat and after missing on a swing, he hits that grand slam and just does a great job," Heaps said.

Corner was able to snag a run in the home half of the fourth inning before Cole Barnett doubled home a run and Casen Heaps came through with an RBI single to extend the Golden Tiger lead to 6-1 after the fifth inning.

Reed Hill worked a bases-loaded walk to bring home another run in the top of the sixth inning before Barnett grounded into a fielder's choice that scored the eighth run of the game for Russellville.

With Gordon White on the mound, the senior righty mowed through the Yellow Jacket lineup through 5.1 innings while allowing only three runs

See 'ADVANCE,' page 14

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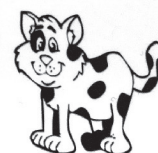
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'BOBCATS,' from page 11

struck out William Rogers and got Bo Harper on a groundout, starting a string of 11 straight batters retired. The Bulldogs didn't put another base runner on until a leadoff walk in the top of the fifth.

By that point, the Bobcats were well on their way to a 15th straight win and a second consecutive quarterfinal berth. They ended the game early in the bottom of the sixth when Lawson walked and later scored on Trey Leindecker's sac fly to make it 10-0.

Barnwell lowered his ERA to 1.09 on the season and 1.35 for his varsity career. He has walked only 11 batters this season while striking out 42 in 51.1 innings.

Raper led the way at the plate in the Game 2 rout, going 2-for-4 with two RBIs and two runs scored. He ranks second on the team with 17 multi-hit games on the year and will carry an eight-game hit streak into the quarterfinals.

Hyde and Swinney each went 1-for-3 with two RBIs, and Barnwell was 1-for-2 with two walks and a run scored. Anthony went 1-for-2 with an RBI, and Baker was 1-for-3 with a run. Lawson walked twice and scored twice, and Sage Raper also scored two runs.

Phil Campbell was in danger of seeing its win streak end in the series opener due to several missed opportunities early in the game. The Bobcats put two on with nobody out in the top of the first, but Geraldine starter Andrew Fowler got Baker to ground into a 6-4-3 double play to escape trouble. Fowler then worked out of a bases-loaded, one-out jam in the second, getting Anthony to ground into a force play at the plate and striking out Barnwell to end the inning.

Fowler worked around a two-out double by Lawson in the top of the third, and Leindecker was thrown out trying to stretch a single into a double in the top of the fourth. Swinney, starting his second straight series opener on the mound, had retired seven batters in a row before yielding a leadoff double to Colton Lusher in the bottom of the fourth. Lusher later scored on an RBI single by Rogers, but Swinney struck out the next two batters to keep it a 1-0 game.

Phil Campbell tied the game in the top of the fifth when Barnwell singled, moved up on a walk to Swinney and scored on an RBI single by Baker. Swinney then struck out two batters in a one-two-three bottom of the fifth, but Fowler pitched around a two-out double by Levi Crittenden in the top of the sixth.

Geraldine (14-14) reclaimed the lead in the bottom of the sixth when Lusher walked, moved to second on a sac bunt and scored on an RBI single by Anthony Martin to make it 2-1.

Three outs away from going down a game in the series, Phil Campbell got a leadoff triple from Barnwell in the top of the seventh. Following a walk to Swinney, Baker brought home Barnwell with a sac fly to tie the game. After a fly-out by Lawson and a walk to Raper, Swinney stole third and scored the go-ahead run on an error by the catcher.

Despite being on the verge of having to hope for a game three, the Bobcats were able to keep their composure and Raper credits that composure to the veterans leading his Phil Campbell squad to keep the game in check.

"We've got so many older guys that have played for years so they've been in positions like that in years past. One thing I told the guys after the game that I was impressed with was, they didn't panic. They weren't worried and they just kept believing that we were going to have that one inning where we'll put some hits together and that's what happened," Raper said. "I think I may have panicked more than they did at some points. But they were calm, cool and collected even going into that final inning and I was really proud of our guys and how they were able to get the job done."

Swinney (8-0) then set down the Bulldogs in order in the bottom of the seventh, recording two more strikeouts. He finished with 10 K's, reaching double-digits in a game for the fifth time this season. He allowed just two earned runs on three hits, surviving four walks and throwing 102 pitches to toss his fourth complete game of the season.

Barnwell went 3-for-4 in Game 1 with two runs scored. Hyde was 2-for-4, and Baker went 1-for-3 with two RBIs. Lawson and Crittenden each had a double, and Raper was 1-for-3. Leindecker went 1-for-4, and Swinney walked three times.

"On any given day, one through nine in our lineup, we've hit this year. I feel confident at any time that anyone can get a hit or have a great day. And even with a few younger guys sprinkled in, they feed off of what these older guys do," Raper said. "Even if we happen to lose a game or have a bad game, we still have two more and we feel really good about whoever we have out there on the mound and we feel like we've got a chance to win no matter what. And I believe that makes things easier on us."

The Bobcats will take on Fyffe in the 3A quarterfinals beginning on Friday.

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'ADVANCE,' from page 11

(one earned) and striking out two before giving way to Hill who took over on the mound to close things out the rest of the way.

"We came into Saturday with a good plan and we worked on some stuff for about an hour before we left for Corner and we had a good attitude. And that's what I told our guys. I said 'you have to go down there knowing that you're prepared to do what is needed'," Heaps said. "We just felt like we had the better pitching staff in game three and we put a lot of pressure on them and had some guys that stepped up for us in some big spots."

Now the Golden Tigers will turn their focus towards hosting Alexandria High School for their quarterfinal matchup with games one and two being played this Thursday and game three, if needed, played on Friday.

Russellville does have some familiarity with Alexandria as their final matchup of the pandemic-shortened season last year was against the Valley Cubs and the Golden Tigers were forced to hold their senior night on the road.

"Their head coach, coach Shaw, is one of the best men in baseball that I know and they'll be well-coached with a lot of fight in them. They're going to have some guys that aren't overpowering but can pitch well and they make you earn everything," Heaps said.

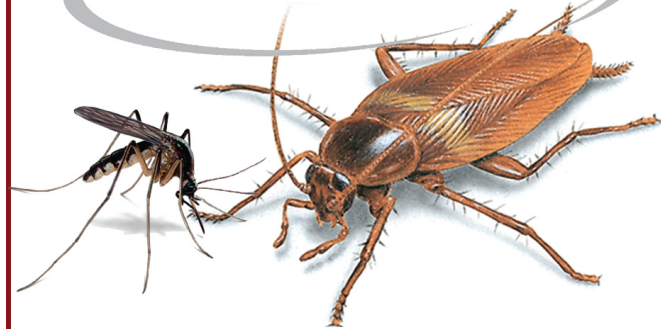
In addition to the aforementioned season finale in 2020, the Golden Tigers have also squared off with the Valley Cubs during playoff runs in recent years as well.

In 2015 and 2016, as Russellville was on their way to the first two of their three-straight state titles, the Golden Tigers swept the Valley Cubs in both series and will be looking for a similar outcome this Thursday night.

And as the Golden Tigers prepare for this weeks games, one thing that will be key to them extending their season beyond the quarterfinals, will be the continuation of sense of "self-coaching", something that the players have taken on and that Heaps and his staff take pride in.

"The beauty of our program is that during the game against Corner, they (Corner) failed to get a bunt down and you hear our guys coaching each other and coaching themselves. And when you hear things that we preach on a daily basis and those guys are saying those things, it's really special," Heaps said. "And to know that those guys have bought into what we're trying to do and that they coach themselves through things sometimes, it's just a beautiful thing."

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Luke Barnwell Senior, Pitcher/IF Phil Campbell

Barnwell had a great day at the plate and on the mound in the Bobcats round two win over Geraldine High School. In game one, Barnwell went 3-4 at the plate with two runs scored and a triple to his credit. Then in game two, the senior righty and infielder for the Bobcats went 1-2 with another run scored but a majority of his work came on the mound in the second game. Going six scoreless innings, Barnwell allowed only two hits and two walks with five strikeouts in the six-inning complete game shutout.



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