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Mills sentenced to life in prison following murder conviction

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

A Phil Campbell man was sentenced to life in prison Wednesday after he was convicted of murder by a Franklin County jury earlier this year.

Jerry Ronald Mills, 65, was convicted of killing his roommate, Jason Floyd Baker, who was 39 at the time of his death.

According to Franklin County District Attorney Joey Rushing, Mills shot Baker after the two men had an argument. Mills and his attorney, Jamie Sumerel of Russellville, asserted the defense that Mills was acting in self-defense when he shot Baker.

A pistol was recovered at the resi-

dence, which was shared by the two men, on January 6, 2019, the day of the shooting.

With Mills' prior criminal history and a conviction involving the use of a firearm, Franklin County Circuit Judge Terry Dempsey had a sentencing range to consider from 20 years to life.

"We were asking for life. He is a dangerous offender who has already killed another person and a jury ruled that case was not in self-defense," Rushing said.

Rushing was referring to a 2012 manslaughter conviction where Mills was sentenced to 20 years for shooting and killing a Russellville man. The Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals reversed the conviction and

See 'MILLS,' page 5

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Kiel receives perfect legislative score from Alabama Policy institute

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

If the people of Northwest Alabama want their elected officials to push a conservative, family-oriented agenda, they should be pleased with the Franklin County legislative delegation's rankings in the new Alabama Policy Institute (API) Watchlist for 2021.

The API, according to its website, is a nonprofit, conservative think tank...dedicated to influencing public policy in the interest of the preservation of free markets, limited government and strong families.

The API released its 2021 watchlist last week as a way for the people of Alabama to know how their lawmakers are complying with the ideals of

being representative, transparent and accountable in government.

It's a scorecard that considers how lawmakers voted on issues that put their conservative values to the test. Each legislator's score is weighted as follows: Key votes (70%); Local bills/Taxes raised at home (10%); Attendance (10%) and Public Accessibility (10%).

The local bills/taxes score (from 0-10 points) is based on whether the legislator introduced or voted for bills that would raise taxes in the legislator's home district.

Attendance for all legislators starts with a perfect score of 10, and then decreases each time the legislator is absent from a vote or when he or she votes "present," meaning they were

See 'KIEL,' page 3

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Janet Baker McAlister James, 75, of Phil
Campbell, passed away on Thursday, July 8th.
Interment at Chesnut Ridge Cemetery.

Hazel Micheal Russell, 79, of Russellville,
passed away on Thursday, July 8th. A memorial
service with family was held.

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'KIEL,' from page 1

there but chose not to vote on the bill.

Public accessibility scores (0-10 points) rewards legislators who are unafraid to make public comments in the media and how visible and accessible the legislator is to his or her constituency.

Rep. Jamie Kiel (R-Russellville) was one of 11 state representatives who received a perfect score of 100. Based on Kiel's vote on gambling legislation, legalizing medical marijuana and expanding government, the API rates Kiel at the top of the legislative rankings. He also received perfect scores of 10 for local bills/taxes, attendance and public accessibility.

Rep. Poncey Robertson (R-Mount Hope) scored well with an 82.5. Robertson's vote to support the legalization of medical marijuana conflicted with the API's position against that legislation. Other than that vote, Robertson's score was perfect, with 10s for local bills/taxes, attendance and public accessibility.

Sen. Larry Stutts (R-Tuscumbia) scored a strong 98 out of 100. Stutts' votes aligned with conservative API's position on all seven key votes. He earned 10s for local bills/taxes and attendance, but only a 7.5 for public accessibility.

All three of the Franklin County delegation members have been and remain accessible to the *Franklin Free Press* when asked for comment or information on an article.

While some critics might say a perfect alignment with API indicates some sort of 'agenda driven' voting, Kiel scoffed at that notion.

"API is a conservative, not-for-profit organization with strong conservative and family values and I happen to align with those same values," Kiel said. "API is not a lobbying or special interest groups. They are more of a think tank. This rating simply shows that I am what I have said all along—a conservative elected official whose voting record will demonstrate that," he added.

The API's President, Caleb Crosby, said this year's watchlist demonstrates that, by pushing legislation to establish gambling, legalizing medical marijuana and expanding government, the Alabama legislature is "not as conservative as we thought."

For more information on the 2021 Legislative Watchlist, visit www.alabamapolicy.org.

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Introducing: 'Cold Case' files with Dr. Joe Teal

Dr. Joe Teal

According to ColdCaseFoundation.org, home-based in American Fork, Utah and international in scope, "A disturbing study of FBI records found that since 1995, the national average of solved homicides in the United States is only about 64%, leaving 36% of murders unsolved annually."

The foundation went on to say that generally, if sufficient evidence is gathered within 24-48 hours of a crime, the probability of solution and conviction increases.

But, if offenders are not identified and apprehended, they are at liberty to victimize again.

With this in mind, the *Franklin Free Press* and Dr. Joe Teal (Atlanta Press Club member) have dedicated themselves to raise public awareness of regional murder, rape and missing persons cases.

With assistance from local and state law enforcement agencies, they hope to feature at least one different case per month.

As they develop this community program, they will be asking anyone with information about a specific case, however seemingly insignificant the information may appear to be, to share it with the appropriate law enforcement agency. Proper contact information will be provided, and you might be able to help solve an unsolved Cold Case crime.

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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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My take on this... when it rains, it pours!

Well hello again!

Has all the rain this past week been raining down on your parade? I know most of you have heard that rainy days and Mondays can get you down. I hope neither was a problem for you. Just because raindrops have been falling on your head does not mean it's all bad. I'm just thankful can feel it and see it and even hear it.



Gail Motes

Be thankful that you are able to feel, see and even hear it. Now, if that doesn't change your perspective about rain, nothing will!

I even enjoy the smell of rain. It's like an air freshener from God. After all, good things come from God. If you don't know that by now you are missing out on a lot in life and that's such a sad thing.

I'm sure a lot of you have seen rain come down on a cloudy day. That hasn't been the case this past week. More rain than sun. That hasn't surprised me a lot though because my mother said there would be days like this.

Even the forecast had predicted lots of rain. I realize they are wrong from time to time and I have my own thoughts about why this happens.

There are so many new gadgets that have improved the access to so many weather predictions, but none of these are up to God's standards. I think the false predictions are God's way of letting us know he's the one in control and knows all things. Of course, that's just my opinion but I've said that for many years.

It's our job to stay prepared and keep an umbrella in our cars and keep our raincoats handy when rain is in the forecast. God allows the humans to be right a lot, but there are times we need to be put in our place and God knows when.

I've found myself going to take the garbage out wearing my "clodhoppers". Well some people call them that. It isn't the smartest thing to wear when the yard is full of water. They are shoes with holes. Lots of holes! Once I step into the soaked grass and my feet become drenched, I just keep going. After all, it's too late to turn back now.

I've even watered my flowers before the rain began. The sad thing is that I'm like a programmed robot. I'll keep watering while the raindrops keep falling onto my head. I am intelligent like that! Ha ha! I would guess I'm not the only one either.

I've heard you comment to me that you wouldn't

See 'TAKE,' Page 8

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'MILLS,' from page 1

ordered a new trial in that case.
Due to Mills receiving a life sentence in this case, Rushing said he will have to decide whether to move forward with the pending case.
Sumerel gave notice of appeal after the court sentenced Mills Wednesday.
Rushing said he believed Baker's family received the justice they sought with a life sentence.
The case was investigated by the Franklin County Sheriff's Office and investigator Jordan Seahorn.

Send your guest columns, letters to the editor and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com. Visit us online any time at franklinfreepress.net.

Miranda Decker, M.D.

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 **Y**ou are invited to a Gospel Meeting, July 25-30, at Washington Avenue Church of Christ. Speaker will be Dale Robins from Eubank, Ky. Sunday times 9:15, 10:15, 4 p.m. Monday-Friday 7 p.m. Everyone is welcome in study of God's word! The church is located at 309 Washington Ave. NW. Call 256-565-1635 for more information.

 **Y**ou're invited to Mountain Valley Hee Haw, every Saturday evening from 6-10 p.m. Open mic with Hee Haw Band. Travis Wammack will perform July 17 and August 14. Supper Night is held every 3rd Saturday night. Bring a covered dish. Karaoke begins each Saturday night at 10 p.m. Hee Haw is located on Highway 79, just east of Hwy. 243. For more information, call 256-810-4840.

 **Y**ou are invited to a Revival at My Father's House Church, 104 East Lawrence St., Russellville, starting July 25. Sunday morning service at 11 a.m., then Sunday night at 5 p.m. Monday-Wednesday evening services July 26-28 6:30 pm nightly. Missionary Evangelist Joel Ali from Trinidad will be speaker. Everyone is welcome. Come to receive deliverance, healing and miracles.

 **Y**ou are invited to Summer Revival at Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church, 305 Bethlehem Road, Russellville, from July 18-23. Sunday service at 2 p.m., with Bro. Keith Prince. Monday-Friday at 7 p.m., with Evangelist Bro. Rodney Krick and Pastor Bro. Jeff Fleming. Prayer meeting 20 minutes before each service. Everyone is welcome. For more information, contact Bro. Jeff Fleming at 256-856-5610.

 **R**ussellville, First Baptist Church, 213 Jackson Avenue, North will celebrate 154 years with Homecoming Service on Sunday, August 15, 2021, at 10:30 a.m. Our speaker will be Dr. Rick Lance, Executive Director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions; music by former RFBC member, Paul Lynch, Gainesville, Georgia. Bro. Chase Dowdy is Pastor, (256-332-2065).

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County commission approves multiple local grants

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Community Development Commission met June 25, 2021, and approved a number of grants to local schools and non-profit agencies.

The commission, which includes Brad Bolton, Jeremy Campbell, Chris Wallace and Charlene Fancher, meets quarterly to review grant applications.

The next meeting of the commission will be August 27, 2021, at 8:30 a.m., at Red Bay City Hall.

Any grant request for that meeting must be received by a member of the commission on or before April 16 at noon.

With the most recent grants, more than \$2.230 million has been returned to Franklin County since the inception of the funding. The funds come from in lieu of tax payments from the Tennessee Valley Authority.

The Franklin County Legislative delegation, Sen. Larry Stutts, Rep. Poncey Robertson and Rep. Jamie Kiel, each make an appointment to represent them on the commission.

Grants awarded for the June 25 meeting included:

- \$5,000 transfer to the Future Economic Development Fund.
- \$1,000 to the City of Red Bay for Founders Day sponsorship.
- \$2,870 to the East Franklin Volunteer Fire Department for installation of fire hydrants.
- \$250 to the Red Bay Senior Center for Founders Festival Car Show.
- \$2500 to Red Bay High School football for purchase of helmets.
- \$5,000 to Red Bay Museum for Park Project Historic Water Tower Repair and Move.
- \$1,125 to Red Bay High School for Veterans' monument at flag pole.
- \$800 to Belgreen High School special education classroom for purchase of SmartBoard.
- \$800 to Belgreen High School for science classroom updates for STEM/STEAM.
- \$250 to Franklin County Board of Education for mental health project purchase of student hygiene products.
- \$800 to Franklin County Emergency Management Agency for renewal of county-wide Konexus' Emergency Notification System.
- \$1125 to Russellville Hospital for purchase of two wheelchair scales.
- \$2,500 to Russellville Middle School for purchase of new helmets.

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La nueva ordenanza de animales de la ciudad prohíbe la propiedad de pollos, animales exóticos o salvajes

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Por que la gallina cruzó la pista? Probablemente para salir de Rusellville, después que el Consejo de la ciudad de Rusellville aprobó una ordenanza de limitar el derecho de los residentes de tener ganado, cerdos y animales silvestres, dentro de los límites de la ciudad. La ordenanza fue aprobada en el mitin del 3 de mayo, por 5 a 1 votos.

El representante del distrito Darren Woodruff votó o en contra de la medida. La nueva ordenanza hace ilegal, para cualquier persona que viva dentro de los límites de la ciudad, mantener o tener como propiedad cualquier clase de cerdos -excepto aves exóticas- que sean mantenidos dentro de jaulas en su propiedad, cómo mascotas, o para diversión. Ave de corral es definida como " cualquier ave doméstica, incluidas, pero no limitadas a gallinas, gallos, pollos, conejos de guinea, patos, gansos, pichones, ñandúes, avestruces, emus y pavos reales.

El abogado de la ciudad Danny McDowell, creó un borrador de la Ordenanza, , después que el Consejo de la ciudad recibiera muchas quejas en relación a animales sueltos en las calles de la ciudad. Antes de la aprobación Woodruff, preguntó a McDowell si la propuesta contravenía el derecho a tener gallinas.

McDowell contestó " si, la ordenanza, hace ilegal tener cualquier de los animales descritos."

Woodruff dijo que votó en contra de la Ordenanza porque consideró que era restrictiva. No quiero decir a nadie que no pueden tener huevos frescos. Pienso que podemos pedir que las gallinas estén en jaulas, limitar el número de animales que uno puede tener, mientras se pida que no los tengan sueltos. Woodruff dijo " Podemos tener un límite de algunas aves, sóloamente para que la gente pueda tener nuevos frescos. La nueva Ordenanza prohíbe prohíbe tener cerdos, chivos, ovejas, y conejo, y limitar la cantidad de caballos domesticados o ganado. Estas limitaciones incluyen un mínimo de terreno de cinco acres o más y los pastizales deben tener cercas permanentes, en buenas condiciones. Los corrales están limitados a un mínimo de áreas de 10,000 pies cuadrados para el primer animal y adicionalmente 1,000 pies cuadrados mínimo, para cada animal adicional. Todos los corrales y establos deben estar, por lo menos a 150 pies de la línea de propiedad, de la persona dueña de los animales.

Ganado incluye: " caballos domesticados, vacas, toros, sin importar la edad o el tamaño. Los comederos son también ilegales bajo esta nueva Ordenanza. La Ordenanza provee la excepcion en áreas ya designadas para la agricultura o pastizales, establos o corrales, establecidos antes del 3 de mayo del 2021, si han sido usados continuamente.

La Ordenanza también incluye animales salvajes y exóticos, incluyendo a los que están en " su entorno natural, o que viven en forma silvestre, que no pueden ser vacunados contra la rabia, con la excepción de conejitos de guinea, hamsters, conejos mascota, o cualquier animal usado por una institución educativa o un laboratorio médico.

Animales exóticos se definen como : " cualquier clase de monos, caimanes, cocodrilos, raccoons, zorrinos, zorros, osos, mamíferos acuáticos, serpientes venenosas, miembros de la familia de felinos, no gatos domésticos, miembros de la familia de los caninos - no perros domésticos- o cualquier otro animal que puedan ser mascotas domésticas, vendidas por tiendas de mascotas o por granjas de animales domésticos". Ningun animal exótico o silvestre, puede ser mantenido en lugares comprendidos dentro de los límites de la ciudad, sin considerar si el animal nació o creció en cautiverio.

El cumplimiento de la Ordenanza, estará a cargo de del Departamento de Policía de la ciudad de Rusellville, que en la actualidad lo está. Los violadores tendrán tres días, después de recibir una notificación escrita de la ciudad, para remediar la violacion. Si la violacion continúa en el cuarto día, el infractor deberá pagar \$500.00 de multa y/o cárcel por hasta 60 días.

El cumplimiento tomará efecto inmediatamente después de su aprobación, el lunes por la noche.

Russellville receives clean financial bill of health following audit

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The City of Russellville received a clean financial bill of health for fiscal year 2019-2020, after an audit of all city accounts by Stack & Blair, LLC, of Florence.

The Russellville City Council heard the report from Certified Public Accountant Van Stack at the council's July 6th meeting. Stack said the audit was clean, with no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies as a result of the audit.

"As stewards of the City of Russellville's funds, we strive to be professional and honest in our dealings with monies," said Mayor David Grissom. "A clean audit is something we expect, and it's important to the public to have confidence in how we manage city government.

Grissom expressed his appreciation to the city's Administrative Department for an excellent job working with the auditor and to the various department heads.

"Our department heads deserve all the credit for staying within budget and we know they will continue to do an excellent job. We appreciate their integrity and work ethic, and this audit evidences the quality job each is performing," Grissom said.

In other action at the council's July 6th meeting, the council: —declared two copiers as surplus property and agreed to sell the said property.

—authorized Grissom to sign an agreement with the Alabama Department of Corrections to resume the city's use of state inmates for labor. The city will have four inmates assigned to the Street Department, one to the Russellville Police Department and two to the Parks and Recreation Department.

—approved an insurance settlement in the amount of \$160,646.58 on claims related to weather damage at the John Blackwell Sports Complex and Russellville Municipal Airport.

The next regular meeting of the Russellville City Council will be July 19, 2021, with work session at 6 p.m., and meeting to follow.

'TAKE,' from page 1

admit to doing the dumb things you do. That's okay. We all do crazy things from time to time. I just don't mind telling mine. But, I have been told many times that I talk too much. All I say is, "I am who I am."

Some people say, "to know me is to love me" but I can't tell you what others say. If I did, I'd never be allowed to write an article in this paper again. Besides, everyone has a right to their own opinion.

I've enjoyed having freedom of speech today. We need to enjoy all the rights we still have. It seems they are being taken away little-by-little. When it rains it pours, doesn't it?

Always remember to drive carefully when it rains. I'm sure you've been told many times that God gave you a brain, so use it! Well, he made us, so he expects us to have our moments.

As for me, I expect to hear, "if it's going to happen to anyone, it'll happen to Gail". I just expect the unexpected and laugh instead of cry. It's easier to deal with life that way.

I hope you have a great rest of the week, and as always...
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4H STEM summer camp program a big hit with local students

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

With continued efforts in Alabama education to emphasize science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), the recent summer camp hosted by the Franklin County Extension Service offered activities that were fun for kids while helping them learn STEM-related lessons.

Jay Townsend, 4H Youth and Development Services Agent for Franklin, Lauderdale and Colbert Counties, said the one-day camp, held in each of his three counties, focused on STREAM (Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Art and Math) activities.

Approximately 250 kids from Franklin County enjoyed a day of stationed activities, rotating from one station to another. Stations included the 'penny boat' challenge, a bio fuels activity, a rocketry activity and more.

"This has been a wonderful day of STREAM activities to get kids thinking while having fun, yet they may not even realize they are also learning," Townsend said.

Franklin County Extension Service Coordinator Katernia Cole-Coffey said the summer event took place since the annual STEM-expo was postponed due to COVID-19.

"Today is a big day. It takes a lot to bring this event together. We have volunteers here today, along with extension agents from Alabama and from the University of Tennessee," Cole-Coffey said.

Townsend said he focuses on STEM activities, along with an anti-bullying campaign, when he visits classrooms across his three-county area. He also coordinates a health and wellness program for youth.

Students from the Franklin County TRACKS program took part in the camp, which was held at the Ralph Bishop Recreation Center in Russellville.



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

Around 250 kids from Franklin County were able to participate in activities aimed at helping them learn STEM-related lessons.



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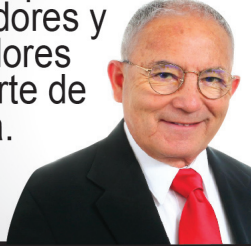
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Must-watch SEC matchups for 2021 season

Brady Petree
 Franklin Free Press



Brady Petree
 Sports Editor

In a normal year, the MLB all-star week would typically mark the last major sporting event that precedes the start of college football coverage. But due to the NBA schedule being pushed back due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the NBA Finals will be one of the final stops in the sports calendar before college football coverage takes center-stage.

But in our opinion, it's never too soon to begin looking ahead to the upcoming season.

And this week we will be taking a look at five of the top matchups involving SEC schools for the 2021 season and we begin with an SEC/ACC matchup in week one that could have playoff implications.

Georgia vs. Clemson, week one, Sept. 4th, 2021

The Trevor Lawrence era is officially over in Clemson and Dabo Swinney will hand the reins of the offense over to D.J. Uiagalelei who looked extremely comfortable in limited time under center. As for the Bulldogs, they will look to build off of J.T. Daniels' success during the one-month run in which he took over the starting job.

The game, which is being played in Charlotte, North Carolina, will undoubtedly have a massive impact on the CFP selection at the end of the year as the winner of this game figures to have one of the biggest boosts in the country to their non-conference resumé.

Alabama at Texas A&M, week six, Oct. 9th, 2021

See 'SEC,' page 14

Aiming for a good shot



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

The Cedar Hill Smokin' Guns team competed in the Alabama Academics, Integrity, and Marksmanship trap shooting competition and received a plethora of awards in the process.

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

Cedar Hill Trap Range is a family-owned and operated business.

And the family's kids did quite well at the recent 2021 Alabama Academics, Integrity and Marksmanship (AIM) trap shooting competition.

The 27 kids who comprise Cedar Hill's Smokn' Guns team aren't range owner Wade Willingham's actual family, but that's how Willingham and his family, who operate the range, consider them.

Willingham, who coaches the Smokn' Guns along with Todd Richardson, wasn't surprised to see so many of 'his' kids return home with awards.

"We were planning on them doing well, so I was-

n't surprised," Willingham said. "We felt like we had some of the top ones there, and it turns out we did. The team members do the hard part. All I have to do is show up."

Cedar Hill Trap Range is open to the public and anyone interested in trapshooting. Whether you're a beginner or an expert trapshooter, Willingham said the team is always looking for new members.

The Smokn' Guns will travel to Sparta, Ill, next month for the Grand America competition and an opportunity to compete against the top young shooters around the United States and the world.

And if last month's state competition is any indicator, the Smokn' Guns will return from Sparta with some hardware.

See 'AIMING,' page 15

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'AIMING,' from page 11

Held in Mathews, Al., the AIM competition was comprised of four categories: Pre Sub (11 and under), Sub-Junior (12-14), Junior (15-17) and Junior Gold (18-22). Team awards and individual awards were presented, and the Smokn' Guns were well-represented both ways.

Team award winners were:

Sub-Junior: First Place, Nathan Richardson, Jon Wilson, Levi Bake, Luke Peden and Davis Lindsey.

Junior: Third Place, Emily Hall, Jordan Collum, Jackson Mitchell, Jake Peden and Aaron Lynch.

Junior Gold: First Place, Jake James, Turner Collum, Caleb Clement, Cody Richardson and Tyler Biddle.

Junior Gold: Third Place, Reagan Lindsey, Allison Parson, Abbey Hall, Eddy Jasper and John Blackwood.

In the Singles competition, overall top finishers in the girls' division receive the High Lady Award. Cedar Hill had three members earn this prestigious award.

Pre-Sub High Lady: Heidi Thomason.

Junior High Lady: Emily Hall.

Junior Gold High Lady: Allison Parson.

In Singles scoring, Smokn' Guns team members took home two first place awards and a sweep of the top three finishes in Sub-Junior and Junior Gold.

Pre-Sub: Second Place, Heidi Thomason and Third Place, Layne McGuire.

Sub-Junior: First Place, Davis Lindsey, Second Place, Nathan Richardson and Third Place, Luke Peden.

Junior: Fifth Place, Jordan Collum.

Junior Gold: First Place, Cody Richardson, Second Place, Turner Collum and Third Place, Allison Parson.

To allow shooters with different levels of experience and ability to compete against each other, the Handicap division sees shooters move back from the traditional 16 yards distance to the trap house. Depending on the competitor's experience, he or she moves to somewhere between 17-27 yards from the trap house.

The Smokn' Guns blitzed through the Handicap division as well, taking home two first place awards and a sweet of the Junior Gold top three.

Pre-Sub: Second Place, Heidi Thomason.

Sub-Junior: Third Place, Luke Peden. Fifth Place, David Lindsey.

Junior: First Place, Emily Hall.

Junior Gold: First Place, Cody Richardson. Second Place, Turner Collum and Third Place, Abbey Hall.

Handicap Doubles Results:

Sub-Junior: Second Place, Nathan Richardson.

Junior: Third Place, Emily Hall.

See, 'AIMING,' on page 15

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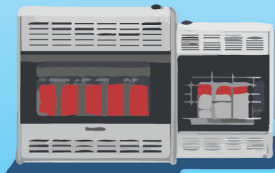
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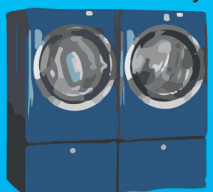
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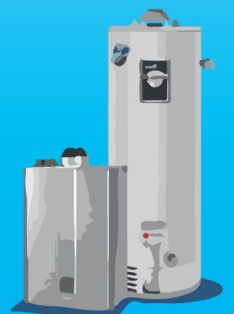
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'SEC,' from page 11

Much like Clemson above, the Tide are turning over the offense to a new quarterback as Bryce Young figures to have the inside track on the starting job. Alabama, as per usual, lost a ton of talent in the NFL draft especially on the offensive side. But of course, no one knows how to get the most talent out of their guys more than Nick Saban.

The Aggies finished last season on an eight-game winning streak after a week two loss to the Crimson Tide and averaged a margin of victory of 16.5 points. Texas A&M brings back all but two of their defensive starters from a year ago while the Tide will be dealing with a ton of turnover.

Regardless of the outcome, these two squads figure to be two of the top contenders for the SEC crown.

Auburn at Penn State, week three, Sept. 18th, 2021

There's a new sheriff in town for Auburn and his name is Bryan Harsin. And boy will he kick off his tenure as the head coach of the Tigers in style. After easy matchups with Akron and Alabama State, the Tigers will head to one of the toughest college football environments in the country in Happy Valley while attempting to knock off the Nittany Lions.

Of course this isn't the Penn State team of old. Finishing last season at 4-5, the Nittany Lions started their season at 0-5 and it looks to be another long season in State College.

As for the Tigers, Bo Nix returns as the man under center for the Tigers for his third season. Nix showed a better eye in 2020 as his completion percentage was up from his freshman season but the turnover numbers are still worrisome. Perhaps being in a new system is just the thing Nix needs to help take the Auburn offense to the next level.

Alabama at Florida, week three, September 18th, 2021

For the first time since 2014, the Tide and Gators will matchup in the regular season and Alabama will make the trip into the treacherous waters of the Swamp after beating Florida 52-46 in the SEC Championship in 2020.

Florida, much like Alabama, lost a ton of talent on offense with both Kyle Pitts and Kyle Trask being high selections in the NFL draft and will have to not only replace multiple offensive pieces, but also must work on a defense that allowed over 30 points per game last season as well.

This will be the first true road test for the Crimson Tide since 2019 and the

See, 'SEC,' on page 15



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'AIMING,' from page 13

Junior Gold: First Place, Turner Collum. Second Place, Abbey Hall.

The trophies are nice, but trapshooting is about more than just winning. It's a team competition and an individual competition at the same time, and it's a sport kids can take part in for a lifetime.

"The big thing is trapshooting is available the rest of their lives. The kids make a lot of friends from other states and countries at the Grand America," Willingham said. "Those friendships last a lifetime."

Richardson, whose two sons Cody and Nathan are on the Smokn' Guns, said trapshooting is a great sport to participate in because everyone is at the same starting point when they begin.

"It doesn't matter if you're a certain size or strength. It doesn't matter if you're male or female. Everyone starts out on a level playing field," Richardson said. "Being around guns is appealing to some people, and this allows that in a safe environment."

"Shooting sports are the safest sport there is. We continuously stress safety. It doesn't matter where you are, all ranges are the same when it comes to safety," he added.

For Hartselle's Emily Hall, who won Junior High Lady and Junior Handicap, there are trap teams based closer than Franklin County to her home, but she said the coaching from Willingham and Richardson is the reason she's part of a team based more than an hour away.

As for the competition of winning singles events but also being part of a team, Hall said that's not unique to trap shooting.

"I play softball too. You play as a team, but there's competition for that one position to go to the Division One level. You can use that competition to make you better," Hall said.

Smokn' Guns team members include: Cody Richardson, Abbey Hall, Reagan Lindsey, Jake James, Turner Collum, Caleb Clement, Tyler Biddle, Jackson Mitchell, Jake Peden, Emily Hall, Blake Hickox, Jordan Collum, Clint Phifer, Luke Peden, Nathan Richardson, Davis Lindsey, Levi Baker, Jon Wilson, Aaron Lynch, Chase Hickox, Riley Butler, Jordan Cole, Jenna Suriano, Layne McGuire, Heidi Thomason, Eli Willis and Jake Martin.

For more information on Cedar Hill Trap Range and the Smokn' Guns, visit and like their Facebook page.



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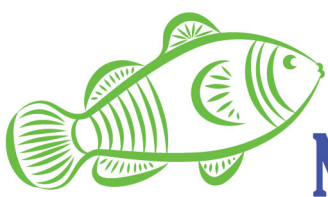
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'SEC,' from page 14

game will be a litmus test for what the rest of the SEC will develop like.

Georgia vs. Florida, week nine, October 30th, 2021

The SEC East figures to run through either Athens or Gainesville. And while both Georgia and Florida attempt to establish an Alabama-like foothold in the division, it's still anyone's guess as to which school will take it and run with it.

The Georgia/Florida rivalry is one of the best in the sport and it figures to once again be must-watch TV.

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