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CAROL MURPHREE
 Board of Education District 4
 Republican Primary Tuesday, May 24

Tharptown Rocketry Team soars to national Top 10 finish

Submitted to the FFP

Students from Tharptown High School earned 10th place at the American Rocketry Challenge.

The team was one of 99 competing at the National Finals, which took place at Great Meadow in The Plains, Va., on May 14. In total, 724 teams from 41 states competed in the 2022 American Rocketry Challenge.

The students, whose team is named Tharptown Rocketry, earned \$1,500 as a result of their achievement and Tharptown HS gets \$500 for a top 10 finish. In addition, as a Top-25 finisher, the team earns an invitation to participate in NASA Student Launch initiative.

Teams from Tharptown have made it to every National Finals since 2018. Three of the eight members of this year's team are new to rocketry. Team members include Jaret Abarca, Presley Laster, Bernardo Castillo, Angie Chavez, Kylee Beard, Destin Martin, Jessie Mitchell, Christian Franco and Danielle Cassel. They are advised by Marsha Inmon.

"We are very proud of these students and their accomplishments. They put a lot of hard work into the event throughout the year practicing, including weekends a lot of the time," THS Principal Bart Moss said. "What this brings them are practical life lessons they can use for potential jobs,

See 'THARPTOWN,' page 3

Russellville Splash Pad set for grand opening on Friday, May 27

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

The City of Russellville will officially open its new splash pad at a grand opening ceremony this Friday, May 27, at 10 a.m.

Russellville Mayor David Grissom will emcee a brief ceremony that will recognize officials from Pilgrim's Russellville and Leisure Creations.

The splash pad is located between the John Blackwell Sports Complex and the west side of Sloss Lake.

As part of its *Hometown Strong* program, Pilgrim's donated more than \$384,000 to the City of Russellville for splash pad construction. Additionally, Leisure Creations, owned by Chris Williams, donated benches, lounge chairs and trash cans, all with a com-



COURTESY PHOTO
 The splash pad is set to officially open on Friday, May 27 at 10 a.m. in a ceremony featuring local officials.

See 'SPLASH PAD,' page 5

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passed away on Friday, May 13th. Interment at
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Jewel Dean Lindsey, 73, of Russellville, passed
away on Friday, May 20th. Interment at Isbell
Chapel Cemetery.

Katherine Sue Nell Williams, 89, of
Russellville, passed away on Sunday, May
22nd. Interment at Franklin Memory Gardens.

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bid and the right to bid.

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‘THARPTOWN,’ from page 1

and the engineering aspect they are learning will help them in any future endeavor.”

The team’s accomplishment follows months of preparation designing, building, and testing a rocket capable of meeting rigorous miAerospace Industries Association (AIA), National Association of Rocketry, and more than 20 industry partners.

To qualify for the National Finals, teams were required to build and launch a rocket that safely carries a payload of two raw eggs with a target flight duration of 41-44 seconds and altitude of 835 feet. At the National Finals, competing teams had to launch the rockets to 810 feet with a flight duration of 40-43 seconds in the first round of competition. The top 42 teams conducted a second launch that was required to reach 860 feet with a flight duration of 42-45 seconds.

Teams at the National Finals represented 27 states from Hawaii to Connecticut and competed for a total of \$100,000 in prize money and scholarships. Winners of the Marketing Competition, Presentation Competition, and Best First Time Finalist were also honored at the National Finals.

2022 marks the 20th year of the American Rocketry Challenge, and the first time since 2019 the top teams competed in a National Finals launch. The National Finals were cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19, and in 2021 teams competed in 10 Regional Finals located in sites across the country - also a precaution implemented as a result of the pandemic.

To date, the American Rocketry Challenge has inspired more than 85,000 middle and high school students to explore education and careers in STEM fields.



COURTESY PHOTO

The Tharptown Rocketry Team, above placed tenth out of 99 competing teams in the American Rocketry Challenge held in Washington D.C.

PUBLIC AUCTION

Absolute Storage Solutions

110 Coffee Ave. SE
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Notice is hereby given that on June 4, 2022 from 10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m., the following units

will be sold by sealed bid. Tenant may satisfy their indebtedness prior to the time of sale. Will be able to inspect units and bid on this date. All units have miscellaneous items, furniture, and boxes.

#39 Amy Stafford

Letter to the editor...

Dear Editor:

Do you believe everything you see on social media? If you thought 'yes' or 'sometimes...maybe,' think of this: There are always two sides to a story.

The Russellville Electric Board has received multiple attempts to have its name tarnished through a social media platform. While freedom of speech is a valuable right, we must make sure the speech we voice to others is correct and beneficial.

With that said, the speech that Darren Woodruff is voicing is neither correct nor beneficial. This individual's prerogative is to bring shame upon the Russellville Electric Board's name with facts that are entirely false, yet fails to mention his own wrong doing.

For example, members of the Electric Board are required to attend a business trip every summer and are also required to provide the board with itemized receipts of their expenses. Darren Woodruff received a call from auditors after this business trip. Why, you may ask?

Due to twenty-seven thousand dollars spent on Woodruff's account with little to no explanation as to what these funds were spent on. Yet, his accusations primarily focus on supposed tax-payer money that is being mishandled, meanwhile, that is precisely what he has been doing, only to benefit himself.

Jerry McDuffa
Russellville

For updates on news and sports, visit us online at
www.franklinfreepress.net!

FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

113 WASHINGTON AVE. NW
RUSSELLVILLE, AL 35653
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The *Franklin Free Press* is published weekly by
Pilati Investments, Inc.
Our publication is mailed to our readers at no charge.

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Graphic Design

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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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Letter to the editor...

Dear Editor:

In response to a letter to the editor I saw recently on social media.

No, I do not believe everything I see on social media. And yes there are two sides to every story.

Every story I have posted on social media comes from the documents that were requested from the Russellville Electric board. I should know because these documents cost me \$814.00 only to try to deter me and other citizens from actually seeing these documents and making them public.

I served on the Russellville Electric Board for 6 years. There was never a requirement to attend a conference to my knowledge no matter if the conference was at the beach or in Huntsville. Since we are talking about conferences, I attended several in six years. I never went to a conference that was educational or helped me become a better board member. Was it a nice atmosphere at a nice location? Yes, but it was nothing more than a free vacation.

Mr. McDuffa questions my expenses. OK lets talk about that. The Russellville Electric is managed so well that there was not a maximum amount that you were required to stay under. I was told to bring in your receipts and that's what I did. The only time the auditors ever mentioned anything to me about my expenses was in the final audit the final year I was on the on the board. They were instructed by the manager to bring out my expenses simply because I had tried to fire the manager. Yes my expenses were higher than normal. I was the chairman of the board and attended four conferences that year and I took care of another board member's expenses on one trip and put that on my expense account. This is comical to a degree, remember now the Russellville Electric Board had no policy on expenses for board members. In other words there was not a set limit to spend. I have been the owner of Petro Chemical Energy since 1998. I have employees that travel all over the world every week. You better believe that every employee I have knows how much money they are allowed to spend on expenses before they leave town.

Lets go back to me trying to fire the manager. From 2013 to 2018 I was on the Russellville Electric Board. Each year we received two bonus checks. Each year I questioned the manager about the legality of these checks. Each year I was told it has been checked out and is perfectly legal as long as we don't call it a bonus check. So it was called a safety and performance incentive.

In 2018 I learned that Alabama Code 11-50-313 said that a utility board member in Franklin County Alabama could only make \$7,200.00 per year. When I learned of this I was upset because I knew the entire board had been paid a lot more than \$7,200.00 per year. I contacted each board member and notified them of the law and that I thought we were wrong for accepting these bonuses at the manager's recommendation. I told each member that we should repay the money and fire the manager because he was the one that recommended the bonuses. Mr. McDuffa had recently resigned from the board due to health reasons. When I told him of the situation his reply was and I quote, "I ain't giving them s*#t back, if they get any money back from me they will work for it".

I was replaced a few months later off of the board. So Mr. McDuffa says I am only giving transparency to the public to benefit myself? I would say for you to be the judge who is trying to benefit who?

I will say this in closing as well. I know Jerry McDuffa and I know he didn't write the letter to the editor, but he did sign it at the urging of the electric board manager I am sure.

Darren Woodruff
City Councilman District 2
Russellville Alabama.

Send your guest columns, recipes,
cartoon panels, letters to the editor and other creative
submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.

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

FCCDC approves numerous grants to local schools, non-profit organizations

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Community Development Commission met April 15, 2022, 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 June 24, 2022, at 8:30 a.m., at the Franklin County Courthouse Annex.

Any grant request for that meeting must be received by a member of the commission on or before June 17th at noon.

With the most recent grants, more than \$2.335 million has been returned

to Franklin County since the inception of the funding. The funds come from in lieu of tax payments from the Tennessee Valley Authority.

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

Grant awards for the April 15th meeting included:

—\$6,000 transfer to Future Economic Development Fund.

—\$2,500 to Red Bay High School football for helmet reconditioning.

—\$1,500 to Belgreen High School for custodial equipment project.

—\$800 to Phil Campbell Elementary 2nd Grade classroom for purchase of tables and chairs.

—\$1,000 to Tharptown High School softball for purchase of helmets.

—\$6,000 to Red Bay Museum for restoration and painting of railroad caboose for Railroad Park Project.

—\$800 to Belgreen High School Computer Lab for purchase of printer and lab supplies.

—\$2,500 to Red Bay High School Softball for purchase of surveillance equipment, including fiber, cameras and installation.

—\$2,000 to Red Bay High School Football for nutrition program.

—\$3,300 to Russellville Police Department Digital Communications Project for equipment and service to move digital repeater.

—\$250 to Red Bay Senior Citizen Center for Car Show.

—\$2,500 to Franklin County Chamber of Commerce for Watermelon Festival.

—\$1,500 to Red Bay High School Golf for purchase of golf bags and program expenses.

—\$800 to Belgreen High School Science Lab for purchase of whiteboard and TV mount.

—\$1,000 to Phil Campbell High School Cheerleading for purchase of signs and vacuum.

—\$400 to Russellville High School Softball for purchase of Smart Coach radar app.

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'SPLASH PAD,' from page 1

bined cost of \$10,000, to the project.

"This project has taken a while to complete, but this splash pad is going to be something special for our community. I believe it's a place we can be proud of in our city," Grissom said. "And it would not have been possible without the generous support of Pilgrim's and we appreciate Leisure Creations as well."


The splash pad will be open all day May 27th until 6 p.m.

After the grand opening, summer hours of operation will be Tuesday-Sunday, 10 a.m.-8 p.m.

Party rentals are available Mondays and Thursdays, from 4-6 p.m., or 6-8 p.m. Cost is \$50 per rental.

For more information, or to schedule a rental, call 256-332-8770.






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-  It's that time again—Mowing Season. Time to remove all old flowers from graves and headstones at the Mt. Pleasant Cemetery on Highway 724, Newburg. Donations are needed for the upkeep of the cemetery. If you have a loved one buried in this cemetery or want to help by contributing, please send contributions to: Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, 941 Highway 87, Russellville, AL, 35654.
 -  The NACOLG Seniorx – Medicine program is a program for free and low-cost medications for the uninsured, underinsured, Medicare coverage gap or disability waiting period. For more information, contact NACOLG Seniorx today. There is no charge for this service. 1-800-AGELINE (1-800-243-5463) Paula Pardue 256-389-0529.
 -  Russellville Masonic Lodge 371 is selling Boston Butts during Memorial Day weekend. Butts are \$35 and may be pre-ordered by calling 256-810-1970. Pickup is Saturday, May 28, between 8-10 a.m., at the Lodge on Coffee Avenue.
 -  Liberty Chapel Freewill Baptist Church will host Revival Services June 5-8, 2022. The church is located on Highway 81 in the East Franklin Community, just past the Fire Department. Evangelist will be Bro. Jeff Boyles. Pastor is Bro. Brian Galloway. Sunday night services begin at 5 p.m. Monday-Wednesday services at 7 p.m. Everyone is welcome! For more information contact Delmer Duboise at 256-324-8430.
 -  The Woodruff Family Reunion will be held at Cedar Buff Farm, 3449 County Road 78, Russellville, on Saturday, June 11, from 10-2. Please bring a covered dish or dessert of your choice.
 -  Homecoming will be held at Duncan Creek Baptist Church on Sunday, June 5, with service at 10:30 a.m., featuring the music of 'Purpose.' There will be a fellowship lunch at 12 p.m.

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Franklin County, Russellville City Schools to offer Seamless Summer Feeding

Submitted to the FFP

Franklin County Schools AND Russellville City Schools will offer Seamless Summer Feeding during the months of June and July, 2022.

Franklin County Schools will be open for breakfast and lunch at Belgreen School, East Franklin Jr. High, Phil Campbell High School, Red Bay High School, Tharptown High School and Vina High School from June 6TH through June 30TH and July 11TH through July 14TH. Breakfast will be served each day 7:30 – 9:00 AM. Lunch will be served each day 10:00am – 12 noon.

Russellville City Schools will be open for breakfast and lunch at Russellville Elementary May 31st - July 22nd. Breakfast will be served each day from 7:15 am – 9:00 am and lunch from 10:30 am – 12:00 noon.

All children birth to 18 years of age can receive breakfast and lunch at no cost. Children do not have to be a student in Franklin County Schools or Russellville City Schools to receive these meals.

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Franklin County BOE approves numerous personnel moves

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Board of Education approved a number of personnel moves at the board's May 17, 2022 meeting, including hiring Michael Nanney as Red Bay High School Principal.

The personnel moves included the resignation of seven employees, including: Olivia Hardy, Belgreen teacher, Rosalyn Smith, Special Education Aide at Phil Campbell Elementary; Amanda Welborn, Child Nutrition Program Assistant/Cashier, Grant Fancher, Bus Driver, Chris Cantrell, Custodian at Vina High School, Addison Nelson, ELL Aide, PCES and Susan Ezzell, Tharptown Elementary School teacher.

Other personnel moves included:

—Retirement: Libby Devaney, Facilitator, Phil Campbell High School and Bus Driver, Phil Campbell Schools, Kelly Kiser, PCES teacher, Suzanne Borden, TES teacher, Janet Kennedy, Red Bay Elementary teacher, Sherry Hutcheson, Family and Consumer Science teacher, RBHS and Laurel Turbyfill, Bookkeeper, RBHS.

—Employment: Lora Nix, Child Nutrition Bookkeeper, Tess Harbour, Speech Language Pathologist, Lauryn Malone and Amy Rusk, TES teachers, Ashley Young, TES teacher, Anna Cox, RBES teacher, Holly Hardin, BHS teacher, Addison Nelson, EL Teacher and Richie Hester, Summer School Teacher.

—Transfers: Kendra Ward, from TES teacher to Special Education Teacher TES and Kelli Gilbert, from K-6 Physical Education Teacher at TES to K-6 Physical Education Teacher at PCES.

—2021 Seamless Summer Child Nutrition Program Staff: Judy Lawrence.

In other agenda items, the board:

—honored the Tharptown High School Rocketry Team for its 10th place finish at the American Rocketry Challenge.

—approved out-of-state trips including: RBHS Band to Tupelo on July 14, 2022, PCHS Boys Basketball Team to Lipscomb University Basketball Camp on June 10, 2022, BHS, VHS and PCHS 21st CCLC Summer Program Students to Buffalo Park and Zoo in Tupelo on July 14, 2022.

—awarded the bid for a walk-in freezer at Vina High School Cafeteria to low bidder Hotel & Restaurant Supply in the amount of \$53,975.

—approved a compensation agreement paying Patti Swinney, Yearbook Advisor at Vina High School, \$500 in compensation for yearbook supplement for each of the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years. Vina High School will reimburse the Franklin County BOE the \$1,000 plus applicable benefits.

—heard a project update from Assistant Superintendent Johnny Cleveland that the THS Concession Stand is set for final inspection June 7, the Red Bay Band Hall is waiting on fire alarm installation before final inspection and fencing projects at several campuses.

The next regular board meeting is scheduled for June 14, 2022, with work session at 5 p.m., and meeting to follow.

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Walker Dempsey Foundation fundraiser set to take place first weekend of June

Submitted to the FFP

The Walker Dempsey Foundation presents the 2022 community event fundraiser.

Dates: Friday, June 3rd & Saturday, June 4th.
Time: June 3rd from 8:00AM-5:30 PM & June 4th from 8:00AM -12:00 noon.

Located on the Red Bay Hospital campus. We are cordially inviting anyone who would like to participate in this event. There are spaces available for you to sell your items. Just pay a fee of \$25.00 per space. Size of space is 10X20. We have several space available.

There will be a silent auction on Friday only from 8:00 AM - 5:30 PM. Winners will be announced shortly after 5:30 PM. Donated items are currently being accepted.

Ribeye steak sandwich lunches will be available for purchase. Please contact Red Bay Hospital for further information.

The foundation currently sponsors two scholarships per year an aids in helping with the needs of the hospital.

Please consider being a part of this important event.

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Phil Campbell Rescue Squad awarded drone with grant from Alabama Association of RC&D Councils

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

On March 14th 2022, Phil Campbell Rescue Squad received a letter from The Alabama Association of Rescue Squads (AARS) congratulating them on being awarded one of the five Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) provided by Alabama Association of RC&D Councils.

On March 26, 2022, Rescue Squad members Blake Mason and Michael Pounders attended traveled to the Huntsville-Madison County Rescue Squad training facility for a short ceremony and training on the aircraft.

The UAS, also known as a drone, is the DJI Mavic 2 Enterprise. It has over a two-mile range and a 30-minute flight time per battery. It has a 4K Ultra HD camera with 32 times zoom capability. The UAS also has a built-in thermal camera with the ability to measure surface temperatures. The UAS has three accessories. Spotlight, speaker/PA system & beacon/strobe light. The UAS has six battery packs and fly for three and a half hours. It is only limited by the battery in the controller.

The Phil Campbell Rescue Squad has been working for over a year to get this UAS. One of the requirements was the Rescue Squad had to have one person with their FAA Part 107 Remote Pilot License. Last August, Michael Pounders, passed the 107 test and acquired a used DJI Phantom 4 Pro to practice flying a UAS. There are several other members of the Rescue Squad that are studying to take the Part 107 test. It will ensure that there will be a UAS pilot available at all times.

Part of the AARS requirement is that the UAS will be available to the surrounding Rescue Squads and Fire Departments. The primary use of the UAS will search and rescue. However, it can be used in training exercises. Fighting wild fires by locating hot spots and guiding crews to the locations. Identifying hazards such as placards on tankers that have been involved crashes.

The Phil Campbell Rescue Squad would like to thank The Alabama Association of Rescue Squads (AARS) for loaning them the UAS to use in its daily operation. And to thank the Alabama Association of RC&D Councils for providing the funding.



COURTESY PHOTO

After a year of attempting to get one, the Phil Campbell Rescue Squad was awarded one of five drones from the Alabama Association of RC&D Councils.

Send your letters to the editor, guest columns, cartoon panels and other creative submissions to franklinfreepress@yahoo.com.



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Franklin County teams wrap up stellar 2021-2022 season

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press

As the state baseball and softball playoffs wrapped up last week in Oxford and Jacksonville, so did the 2021-22 high school sports season.

And like most seasons as of recent, it was a very productive one for multiple schools within the county.

So as we bid farewell to the 2021-22 season, let's take a quick look back at some of the highlights in sports across the county.

In volleyball, the Belgreen Lady Bulldogs managed to win their area tournament and secured a spot in the regional tournament in Huntsville before falling to the eventual state champion Donoho Falcons.

The Phil Campbell Lady Bobcats and Red Bay Lady Tigers also saw improvement in the early years for both of their programs as well.

On the gridiron, Franklin County showed out once again.

Phil Campbell made the playoffs in consecutive seasons for the first time since the 2014-2015 seasons with talented performances from Bryant Hyde, Boone Swinney and countless others as head coach Kevin Barnwell looks to have the program on a fast trajectory towards being a legitimate playoff contender every year.

The Russellville Golden Tigers won their region and made their way to the second round of the playoffs for their fourth straight season, giving head coach John Ritter a playoff berth in each of his seasons with the Golden Tigers.

Conner Warhurst added another great season to his stellar career with the Golden Tigers while T.J. King had a phenomenal showing in his junior sea-

See 'SEASON,' page 14

Bringing it back home

Golden Tigers walk-off Holtville 12-2 to capture back-to-back 5A state championships



PHOTOS BY CHRISTIAN MEDINA

Hill, above left, went 3-4 in game three with two RBI and a run scored as part of a potent offensive attack from the Golden Tigers that plated 12 runs en route to a state championship. The title is the fifth in the past eight years for head coach Chris Heaps, right.

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press

JACKSONVILLE - It felt a little bit like deja vu. The Golden Tigers had their backs against the wall and were stuck in a low-scoring game three. Sound familiar?

Just one week prior, the Golden Tigers were scoreless through four innings against Madison Academy in a winner-take-all, game three of the series. Of course, the Golden Tigers would win that game by a final of 5-0 and live on to play for a state title.

Russellville won game one of the 5A state championship series against Holtville by 2-0 in a battle of arms in which Banks Langston spun 6.2 innings of shutout ball while striking out six.

The Golden Tigers lost game two by a final of 3-2 to set up a game three with Holtville for all the marbles.

But things didn't go quite according to plan for the Golden Tigers, at least not from the start.

Holtville jumped out to a 1-0 lead in the first inning and later in the fourth tacked on another run to extend their lead over the Golden Tigers by two, all while holding Russellville scoreless.

However, after the top of the fourth inning, after the Bulldogs got that second run, head coach Chris Heaps needed to change the energy and mindset of his squad. And all it took was a glance at the scoreboard beyond right centerfield.

"I stopped our guys in front of the dugout and I

said, 'Listen. Y'all look at that scoreboard. That's the last time y'all are going to look at it tonight.' Because the scoreboard contains results and results don't define you, the process that you take to get there does," Heaps said. "So I told them that there are seven innings in this baseball game and we've been down before. But if we play all seven innings to the best of our ability and we have the right mindset, the results will take care of themselves."

But the Golden Tigers had been preparing all season for a scenario such as this. After putting together a schedule that ranked as one of the toughest, not only in 5A, but in the entire state, Heaps and his staff felt as though they had been battle-tested enough to withstand any storm that came their way.

"We created a monster schedule in the first half. And I told our guys that if we could just go .500, we will play for a state championship. We played against teams like Auburn, Saraland, Colliersville (GA), DeSoto Central (MS) and all those teams either made it to the state championship or semifinals in their states. And we ended our season at 35-13. We are just so pleased with the work our guys put in and their attitude throughout the season," Heaps said. "All I asked for from our guys, is that they show up everyday and understand that you get to. Anytime that you can replace "have to" with "get to", it changes perspective and energy. We are very blessed to have the opportunity to

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create the opportunity for ourselves to be in this position."

After the speech in the fourth inning, a switch suddenly flipped.

The offense that had been struggling to put together successful at-bats against the Bulldog starter Drey Barrett suddenly sparked to life.

Reed Hill singled to lead off the inning and was then retired as Nathan Brockway grounded into a fielder's choice, putting Brockway on first with one out. Brayden Spurgeon then followed that up with a single of his own.

That left things up to last year's hero in the 5A state title game, Andrew Hatton, to come through with another clutch hit for the Golden Tigers and break this scoreless offensive showing.

Hatton delivered a single into center field to score Brockway and put Russellville on the board for the first time in game three.

Casen Heaps singled home Spurgeon to tie things up at 2-2 and the Golden Tigers had caught their second wind and were back in the game.

After last week's performance against Madison Academy where he drove in two runs in the sixth inning to effectively seal the deal in game three, Casen Heaps followed up that performance by dealing another bruising swing, this time against Holtville.

And the end-result wasn't just a game-tying run, but the junior centerfielder also gained a very fitting nickname in the process.

"Dagger. That's the nickname that Coach (Jay) Stanley gave me last week after the Madison Academy series. So Emmitt Green had these and he gave it to me so I guess it stuck after all," Casen Heaps said. "I just try to keep things simple when I am up to the plate. My approach is really just stay through the middle and do you. It's surreal. Not enough words to feel what I feel right now but for now I'll keep it simple: it feels really nice."

On a 0-1 pitch, after Hatton and Heaps pulled off a double steal, Grayson Thorpe smoked a ground ball to shortstop and forced an error to be made, scoring Hatton and Russellville was finally able to take their first lead.

Another error, this time by the Bulldog third baseman, off the bat of Eli Gipson scored Heaps and just like that, after a speech and a glance at the scoreboard, the Golden Tigers had a two-run lead. What followed for the rest of the game could best be described as an "offensive clinic", to say the least.

Both squads went down scoreless in the fifth inning with the Bulldogs looking to play catch up and the Golden Tigers looking to stave off a comeback. Then the sixth inning happened.

Sam Pace, who got the start on the mound for Russellville for the second straight game three, sat down the Bulldogs in order in the top of the sixth, giving way to the Golden Tiger offense once again.

Going into the inning, Chris Heaps knew that they needed some more insurance runs to feel more comfortable with where the game stood. And the key, in his mind, was to put pressure on Barrett.

"I felt like that if we could just get on the scoreboard and put a little pressure on him, I felt like we could get to him and things started going our way once the energy started going in our direction," Heaps said.

Safe to say that the pressure worked.

Carrying that 4-2 lead into the home half of the sixth inning, a walk to Hatton and a hit by pitch to Heaps was followed up with a sacrifice bunt by Thorpe to move Hatton and Heaps to third and second. Eli Gipson was then intentionally walked to load the bases for Canyon Pace.

In one of the more "you get what you ask for" moments of the postseason, Pace made Holtville pay for a decision in the sixth inning.

After the Bulldogs elected to intentionally walk Eli Gipson to load the bases in front of Pace - who led the state in home runs on the year at one point late in the season - he knew what he had to do.

A smile back to the dugout and two pitches later, Pace made them pay.

"I was standing on-deck and I was swinging, just getting ready for my at-bat. Then they walked Eli and I just looked back at Ethan (Oliver) and I said, 'they made a mistake,'" Pace said.

On the seventh pitch of his at-bat, Pace then lined a single into center field, scoring Hatton and Heaps to extend the Golden Tiger lead by four runs to 6-2.

And that was just the beginning of the offensive onslaught for the Golden Tigers.

Reed Hill singled home two more runs, scoring Gipson and Michael Scofield (who courtesy ran for Pace), to extend the Russellville lead to 8-2.

Hill had a massive day at the plate for Russellville, going 3-4 with two RBI and a run scored on the day.

"It's just a sense of overwhelming joy. Not everyone has the opportunity to win one championship, and we got to win two. So it's been just a great experience and I'm so glad I got to do it with these guys," Hill said.

Nathan Brockway grounded out to bring home another run to make it 9-2 Russellville with Reed Hill advancing to second base on the play.

The very next batter, on a 3-1 pitch, Brayden Spurgeon shot a sinking liner into left field that got past the left fielder for Holtville and rolled all the way to

'SEASON,' from page 11

son and will look to take the next step in his career as a senior in 2022. As for the hardwood, Franklin County fared very well as per usual. In class 1A both Belgreen boys and girls teams won their respective area titles before falling in the sub-regional round. Will and Collin Bonner finished their varsity basketball careers with Will eclipsing the 2,000 point mark for his career and Collin finishing with over 1,000 points. In class 2A, the Red Bay Tigers won their area title and rode the momentum all the way to a regional berth in Hanceville. Carson Corum was outstanding for Red Bay from beyond the arc, hitting 267 points just off of three-pointers on the season. Phil Campbell's girls won the 3A area 15 tournament before eventual elite eight team Elkmont would bring their season to a close. Kenner Scott averaged 12 points per game as she led the Lady Bobcats to yet another area title. On the boys side in 5A, the Russellville Golden Tigers won the area 15 title before falling to top-five ranked Mae Jemison in the sub-region. Once spring came and the diamonds were opened up and thawed out, Franklin County teams showed out. The Red Bay Lady Tigers won their area title over Colbert County, punching their ticket to the regional tournament as both Russellville and Belgreen finished as the runner-up in their respective areas. In baseball, three out of six possible teams in Franklin County made the postseason. Belgreen finished as the 1A area 13 runner-up and secured a postseason berth as the program has been revitalized over the past two seasons. As for 3A, the Phil Campbell Bobcats attempted to repeat as 3A fell just short in the 3A semifinals as they fell to Piedmont. However, the Bobcats

still surpassed the 30-win total for the second straight season. Mason Swinney will be the lone senior departing as he will head to Alabama to continue his baseball career so the Bobcats should reload and be ready to vye for another state title tournament appearance behind the likes of Bryant Anthony, Cam Habada, Sage Raper and others. And last, but certainly not least, the Russellville Golden Tigers were able to bring home another blue map as they captured the 5A state baseball title over Holtville across three games. It is the second straight state title for Russellville and their fifth championship in eight years. The Golden Tigers will see a plethora of seniors depart from the program with two rings to show for it, but if there is one program that is good at replenishing talent year over year, it's the Golden Tigers so expect them to be right back in the playoff conversation once again in 2023.

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'HOME,' from page 13

the fence. By the time the Bulldogs got the ball back in, Spurgeon was sliding head first across home plate with an inside the park home run to make it 11-2 Russellville.

Langston, getting his lone at-bat in the series, then singled home Andrew Hatton to cap off an eight-run sixth inning and walk off the Bulldogs and claim back-to-back titles.

While Sam Pace wouldn't have a chance to go back out on the mound for the seventh inning, giving him six innings while allowing just two runs and striking out three in the title-clinching game.

To hear Pace put it, the work and dedication that the Golden Tigers put in over the course of the season was second to none and thus led to the success on the field.

And to be the one that the Golden Tigers turned to in such a pivotal moment in their season stands above and beyond for Pace.

"Everyday we go out to practice, we know that we're doing things in practice that other clubs aren't and that sets us apart. We work harder than just about anyone in the state and that showed here today. It's just a great feeling and I'm extremely happy right now," Sam Pace said. "I knew if we went to a game three that my number was going to be called on. After last week's performance, I got back to work the next day and I knew that I was going to be prepared to go out there and do what I do best."

Watching from the dugout after his incredible performance on the mound in game one, Langston knew, as did most of his teammates, that once the runs started to come around for Russellville, it would be awfully hard for Holtville to make them stop.

"We had the same process this year as we did last year. But our goal every year is to go far and do big things," Langston said. "After we scored those first couple of runs, they just weren't stopping. With all that momentum, we knew that we were going to keep on pushing and pushing and once we got our sticks rolling, they didn't stop."

Dating back to last week, momentum played a massive role in Russellville's win over Madison Academy. Fast-forward to this week, and momentum found its way back into the fold for another Golden Tiger win.

"Last week in our Madison Academy series, we lost the first one and then the second one that night, we were down and it was just a bad situation. But once our fans and the crowd, that we love so much, got up and got us going again and carried us to a win and I think that that really carried over into this week. Momentum is a big deal in baseball," Hill said.

Hatton, who scored the final run of the title-clinching games in both 2021 and 2022, will end his career at Russellville as one of the more clutch Golden Tigers of all-time.

"It's just unbelievable. To go out on top with my best friends, it's just emotional and just incredible," Hatton said. "I had to make something in that at-bat, I knew that. I didn't want to let my teammates down and I was lucky enough to get something to work with and I made something happen. Coach Heaps told us to not worry about the scoreboard and just do what we do and things will happen. So we just put everything together and we made it happen."

Emitt Green, who was a vital part of the rotation for the Golden Tigers last season in the championships series and will continue his baseball career at Northwest-Shoals Community College once he graduates from Russellville, was one of a stable of arms that the Golden Tiger coaching staff felt could lock down a game at any time during the season.

Being able to be a part of a staff that has brought home two state titles together is something that he will take with him long after his Golden Tiger days.

"Going on this ride with my brothers is what it's all about. It's incredible what we did and it's all because we came together and played as a team, that's for sure," Green said. "We've got seven dudes that we can trust at any given moment. And for Sam to come out in a game like this, it's huge."

As for the group of seniors that will be departing from the Golden Tiger program with two rings to show for their stellar careers with the Golden Tigers, there is no doubt that they will go down as one of the most storied groups to come through the program.

To hear their head coach put it, the impact that the group has left on their teammates, coaches and the program will be one that will be felt for a while.

"This is one of the closest groups I have ever been around. I literally feel like I have a bunch of my own kids here on this team. These seniors bring it every day. They are the hardest workers in the weight room and they don't skip a rep, and they make sure others don't skip a rep either," Heaps said.

"We have a saying that goes, 'If you're going to be successful, success has never been owned, it's rented and the rent is due everyday.' And these guys have paid for it. You never know what's going to happen as a coach. You hope and pray but all you can do is hold them to a standard and the results will usually take care of themselves if you have the right process with those standards, and these guys took care of it."



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