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### Mission Accomplished: THS Rocketry team finishes second in national finals

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Marsha Inmon wanted her Tharptown Rocketry Team students to experience 'a trip of a lifetime' as they headed to The Plains, Va., last week for the American Rocketry Challenge National Finals. Mission accomplished. Tharptown's seven-student team finished second among the 100 qualifying teams for nationals, earning the students \$15,000 and an additional \$1,000 for their school. Team members include: Angie

Chavez, Kylee Beard, Shyla Martinez, Adrianna Ashley, Isabella Hall, Addison Mardis and Angel Garcia. Tharptown finished in 10th place nationally in 2022 and ninth place in 2021. The team's faculty sponsors are Inmon and Areanna Orozco. Ironically, Inmon's 'trip of a lifetime' plans for her students didn't hinge on how they finished in the competition. The venue is a short distance from Washington, D.C., and Inmon still recalls her first trip to the area. "I saw things I'd only seen on TV and was seeing them in person,"

See 'THS,' Page 7

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### Kiel's HB 208 would provide tax credit for contributions to crisis pregnancy centers

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

A bill that would provide a state income tax credit to those who contribute to eligible pregnancy resource centers has cleared the Alabama House of Representatives and now awaits action in the Senate. House Bill 208, sponsored by Rep. Jamie Kiel (R-Russellville), is called the Pregnancy Resource Act. The bill passed the House on a 76-26 vote, mostly along partisan lines. If approved, HB 208 would allow up to \$10 million in annual tax credits toward state income tax for individuals or businesses that donate to "eligible charitable organizations that operate as a pregnancy center or

residential maternity facility." Specifically, Kiel explained, tax credits would be available for contributions to "groups that advocate saving babies," he told the FFP May 21st. In 2019, the Alabama Legislature passed what's been described as the nation's strictest abortion law that outlawed the procedure except where necessary to save the life of or to prevent serious health risk to the mother. Kiel said his bill logically follows the state's position on abortion. "There's a difference of opinion among groups, but I don't see giving tax credits to people who advocate killing babies as something we should do. The groups receiving tax

See 'KIEL,' Page 7

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**Bobbie Nell Copeland , 83 of Russellville, passed away May 18, 2023. Pinkard Funeral Home of Russellville assisted the family.**

**Grady "Gathel" Wynn, 81, of Phil Campbell, passed away May 17, 2023. Pinkard Funeral Home of Russellville assisted the family.**

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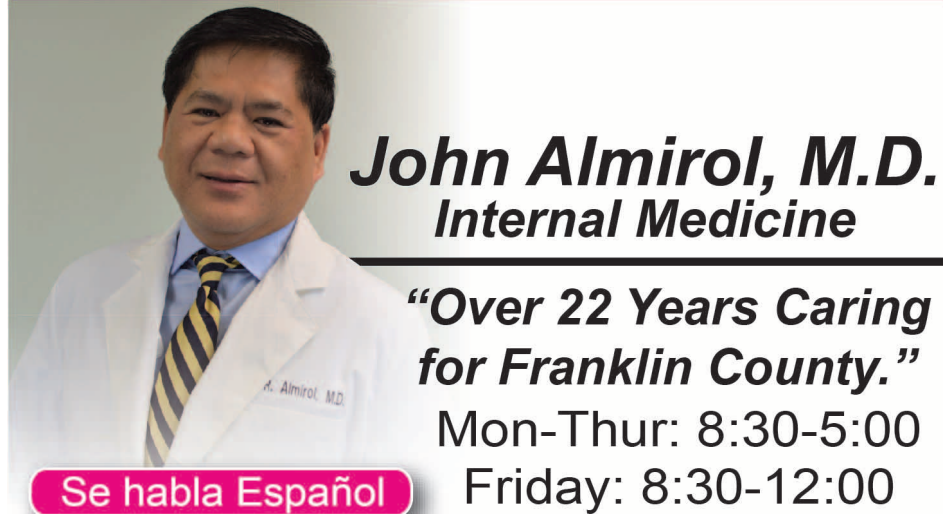
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# Belgreen FCCLA 'Hoopin 4 Hunger' raises funds for fellow students

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Belgreen High School's Family, Career and Community Leaders of

America hosted a three-man basketball tournament recently to raise money to purchase grocery gift cards for some Belgreen students whose families could use some extra help this summer.

The event, 'Hoopin' 4 Hunger,' was a great success according to FCCLA sponsor Mimi Wood, the home economics teacher and fishing sponsor at Belgreen.

"The students and faculty who took part had a great time and FCCLA was able to raise money to purchase \$800 in gift cards," Wood said.



COURTESY PHOTO

The winning team included Dakota Green, Coach Luke Tucker and Alex Guidry, pictured with FCCLA Sponsor MiMi Wood.

"Also, IGA Priceless Foods donated an additional \$200 in gift cards to bring the total to \$1,000."

Wood said the idea for 'Hoopin 4 Hunger' started in the fall of 2022 when her son Jaxon suggested a three-man tournament as part of the school's fall festival activities. Although not possible to host the tournament at that time, Wood said FCCLA would plan the event for the spring.

Once the tournament was planned, the FCCLA student officers met to discuss what philanthropic project would benefit from funds raised by the event.

"We tossed around a few ideas, and decided the most beneficial thing we could do was help out students in our own school," Wood said.

"Groceries have gotten so expensive, and families have to provide a lot more meals for school aged children when they are not at school," she added.

FBCLA officers for the 2022-23 school year included: Noelle Willingham, President. Katie Cooper, Vice President. Brilee Whitten, Treasurer. Secretary, Emiliano Jimenez. These students planned the details of how to schedule and host a three-man basketball tournament.

Teams consisted of any combination of students from 7th-12th grade and faculty. Each team came up with their own name. 16 teams entered the double-elimination tournament that was held on May 12th.

The winning team was Lefties Minus One, consisting of Dakota Green, Coach Luke Tucker and Alex Guidry. Second place finisher was Mud Creek, with Noelle Willingham, Coach Nathan Vincent and Emiliano Jimenez.

The top two teams were awarded gift cards donated by Hibbett Sports and hats from Community Spirit Bank.

"The tournament was a great success. Our students and faculty had a great time, and FCCLA was able to raise money to purchase \$800 of gift cards," Wood said.

"As the FCCLA sponsor, I am very appreciative of all the students and faculty who helped make the event a success, and I am proud we were able to help out some students and families from our school," she added.

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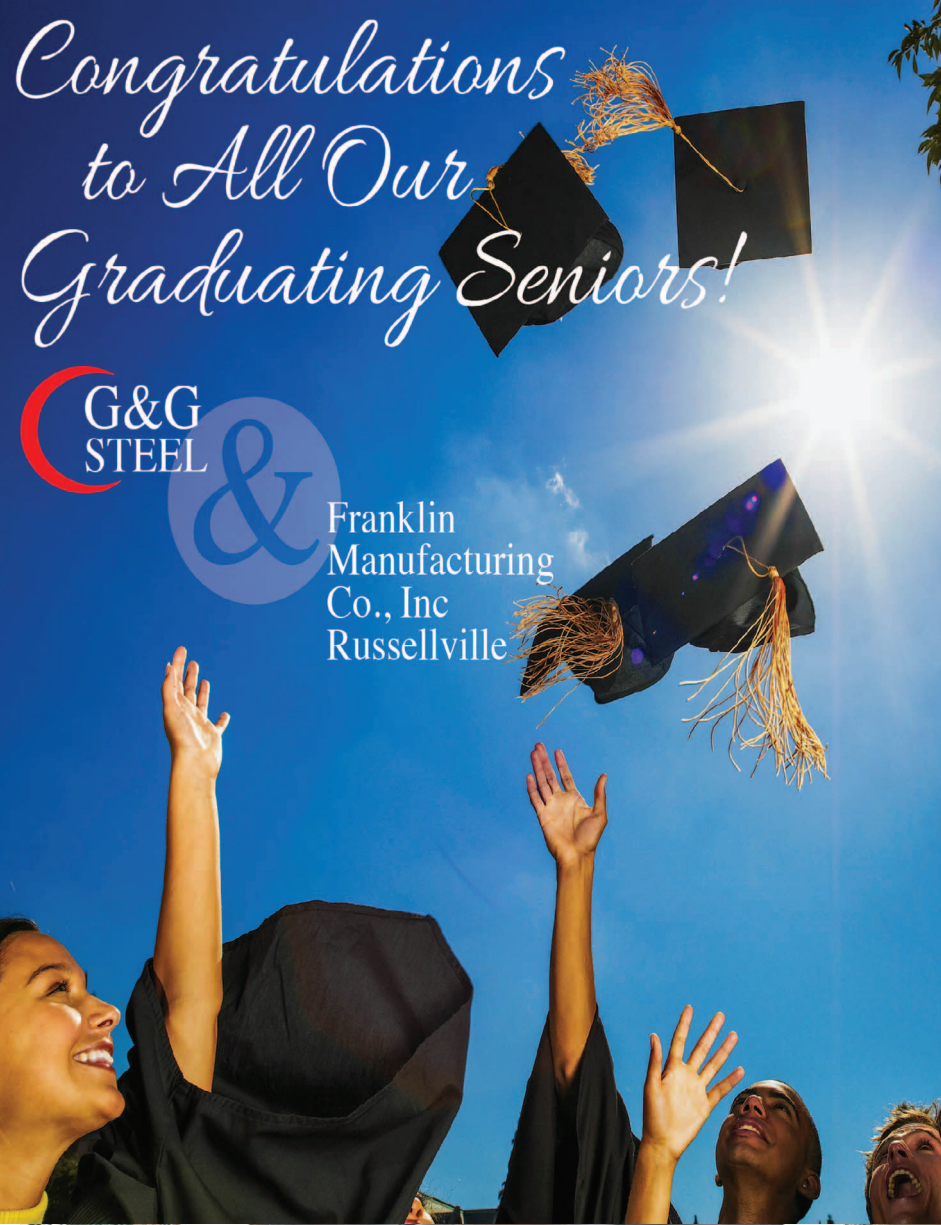
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 **R**ussellville Masonic Lodge #371 is selling Boston Butts on Memorial Day weekend. Butts are \$35 each and may be ordered 256-810-1970. Pickup is Saturday, May 27th, between 8-10 a.m., at the Lodge on Coffee Avenue.

 **T**he annual Woodruff Family Reunion is set for Saturday, June 17th, from 10-2 at Cedar Buff Farm, 3449 County Road 78.

 **L**iberty Chapel Freewill Baptist Church will hold its Revival June 4-7, 2023. June 4 at 5 p.m. June 5,6,7 at 7 p.m. Evangelist Bro. Bradley Long. Pastor Bro. Brian Galloway and congregation welcome everyone! The church is located at 10780 Highway 81, in the East Franklin community.

 **F**ranks County Schools will provide a Seamless Summer meal program at the following Franklin County Schools: Belgreen, East Franklin, Phil Campbell, Red Bay, Tharptown and Vina Monday through Thursday, Breakfast - 7:30 – 9:30 a.m, Lunch - 10:00 - 12:00 p.m. June 5-8, 12-15, 20-22, 26-29; July 10-13, 17-20 All meals are FREE and served to children ages 0-18. Students do not have to attend a Franklin County school to participate. If you have questions, please contact Robynn Bragwell at 256-331-2136 or by email at [robynnbragwell@franklin.k12.al.us](mailto:robynnbragwell@franklin.k12.al.us)

 **T**he Cowboy Church of Franklin County will host "Outlaws For God, Children After God's Own Heart," the church's 2023 Vacation Bible School theme, from July 10-14, 2023. 6-9 p.m., nightly. Dress to get dirty! Refreshments will be served. The church is located at 25100 Highway 24 in Russellville.

 **N**orth Russellville Baptist Church will host "Big & Bold Vacation Bible School" June 4-7, from 6-8 p.m., each evening. Ages pre-school thru sixth grade. Bible lessons, crafts, games, food, music. Live Your Faith Courageously!!

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# 'THS,' from Page 1

Inmon said. "I was hoping for our kids to get that same awe. And the giggles and grins said it all. We had kids try different foods for the first time.

"There were so many experiences outside of the competition. The trip to Washington, D.C., was about them seeing our nation's capital and having experiences they will remember for a lifetime," she added.

Back to the competition...All 100 teams take part in a first-round rocket launch, with the top 50 scores advancing to the second round.

The students' rocket carries one large hen egg to a specified height and must remain airborne between 42-45 seconds and return to the ground safely.

A perfect score is 0. Scores are based on how close the rocket gets to the predetermined altitude and whether the fly off is completed within the allotted time range. The farther a launch is from those target numbers, the higher the score.

The team's first round score of 13.8 was good enough to advance to the final round. In previous years, Tharptown has struggled with its second launch, posting impressive first-round scores followed by higher scores in the finals.

Not so in 2023. Tharptown's score of one point was the best score in either round of the entire national finals.

Knoxville's Hardin Valley Academy won first place with an overall 13.4. Tharptown's total was a 14.8.

The team is comprised of five sophomores, one freshman and one eighth-grader.

By finishing in the Top 25, Tharptown also earned a place in the NASA Student Launch Initiative, a college level competition.

THS Principal Bart Moss said the students' success will open up doors for them at the collegiate and professional level.

"I'm really proud of these kids. There are a lot of younger kids on the team and they'll all be back. They worked extremely hard to try and perfect their craft," Moss said. "They are learning skills to carry with them later in life and their success will look good on their resumes.

"I thank Marsha Inmon and Areanna Orozco, our sponsors. If not for their organization and initiative, the students would not have this opportunity," he added.



L to R: Angel Garcia, Addison Mardis, Shyla Martinez, Kylee Beard, Angie Chavez, Isabella Hall and

# 'KIEL,' from Page 1

credits under this legislation are not those who would give the advice that you should kill a child," Kiel said.

The legislation applies only to organizations with federal income taxation exemption under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The facilities must regularly answer a dedicated phone number, maintain an open office for at least 20 hours a week, utilize licensed medical professionals to perform any medical procedures and offer services as no cost to clients.

It also limits one eligible organization from receiving more than 50 percent of the total tax credits allowed each year.

HB 208 has received harsh criticism from abortion rights organizations, including Planned Parenthood.

"The Alabama House is currently debating HB 208, a bill that would provide tax credits for people who donate money to crisis pregnancy centers, entities that are famous for giving out false and medically inaccurate information," said Planned Parenthood Alabama Director Stephen Stetson in a recent social media post.

With most of the 2023 Legislative session behind it, the Alabama Senate may not have time to vote on Kiel's bill, which is sponsored in the Senate by Sen. Gerald Allen (R-Tuscaloosa).

Kiel said there are a number of bills pending related to taxes and it's unlikely all will make it this year to the Senate floor. If HB 208 isn't one of those that do make it to a vote, Kiel said he'll start the process over again next year by re-introducing the legislation.

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# Putting Franklin County First: County halts acceptance of Colbert County construction and demolition waste

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

When construction and demolition (C&D) debris from Colbert County and the cities of Muscle Shoals, Tuscumbia and Sheffield started arriving at the Franklin County Landfill earlier this year, it was supposed to be a short-term solution to the long-term problem arising from the closing of the Cherokee Industrial Landfill.

After that landfill was closed by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management due to issues with leachate (a liquid created by decomposing household waste), Colbert officials reached out to Franklin County Solid Waste Officer Gene Ward for assistance.

Ward agreed to accept C&D waste from Colbert County for a short period of time. Although the exact parameters of that 'short period of time' weren't specifically defined, Ward said he was told by Colbert County officials they expected about a 30-day shutdown before their landfill would reopen.

More than three months later, Colbert County C&D waste continued to roll into the Franklin County Landfill, creating almost three times the volume of waste the landfill regularly receives.

And when an ADEM inspector visited the Franklin landfill in April, the collection of all that C&D waste had created issues for Ward.

ADEM regulations require all waste to be completely covered by the end of the last working day of the week for each landfill. With so much debris coming in from Colbert County, combined with increased rainfall in March and April, the Franklin landfill was not in compliance.

"It started out they weren't sending that many loads, but we kept getting more and more and by taking all that we couldn't handle the volume," Ward said. "We had so much coming in along with lots of rain and we weren't keeping everything covered. Then on Monday we weren't covered when the inspector came. One used dozer is all we've got and there was so much coming in we just couldn't handle it. There were too many loads and if we kept taking it, it would fill our landfill, so I pretty much made the decision we needed to quit taking it before we get problems with ADEM or our dozer goes down," Ward added.

That led Ward to contact Colbert officials and inform them their C&D waste would no longer be accepted at the Franklin County Landfill after May 4, 2023. Ward gave that notice on April 25th.

Colbert County and the three municipalities were paying Franklin County \$25/ton for the C&D debris. \$1 of that fee is paid to ADEM, per state regulations.

Ward contacted Colbert Solid Waste Officer Jake Flanagan, Colbert County Administrator Roger Creekmore and mayors of the three cities to inform them of the May 4th deadline.

"I tried to explain to everybody the reason why. They were appreciative for what we've done. They thanked us and were disappointed, but said they understood. It was definitely a short term arrangement," Ward said.

The arrangement never involved the acceptance of household waste from Colbert County. It only applied to C&D waste. No entity outside Franklin County deposits any inert material to the Franklin County Landfill, Ward said. Counties, cities and businesses who bring household waste to Franklin County drop it off at the transfer station, where it is taken to Morris Farms Landfill later the same day.

Ward said the ADEM inspector never said the county had to stop collecting C&D debris. But he told Ward the county would be held responsible if all waste wasn't properly covered in future inspections.

"I just decided we needed to quit now. This could end up being a drawn-out situation in Colbert County and we couldn't handle it," Ward said.

"This is the Franklin County Landfill. We've got to put our citizens first. It's not easy making those calls, but sometimes you have to do difficult things," he added.

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## Former Tharptown hoops standout takes over girls' program

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

It was 2014 when then-Tharptown High School senior Kamri Sears signed her letter of intent to play basketball at Wallace State Community College.

Nine years later, now Kamri Fleming, she is taking the reins of the very program she excelled in as a student.

The Franklin County Board of Education approved Fleming's hiring as Tharptown girls varsity basketball coach at its May 16, 2023, meeting.

Fleming, a self-contained special education teacher, has coached volleyball and softball since she was hired in 2020. She'll continue her volleyball coaching duties, but she resigned as softball coach due to taking over the basketball program.

Fleming inherits a young team with only three returning players from this year's squad, only one of whom was a starter. Among the senior basketball players graduating from Tharptown this week is Sarah Mansell. Mansell became the second girls' player at Tharptown to earn a basketball scholarship when she committed to Blue Mountain College recently.

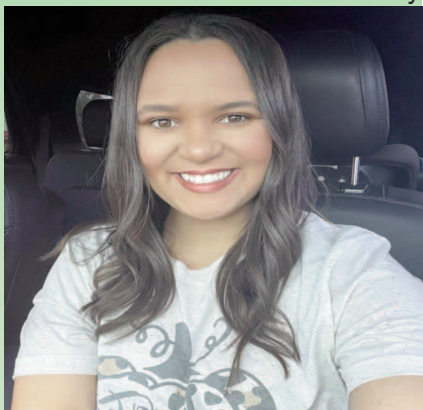
Fleming, a 2014 Class 1A Honorable Mention All-State honoree, played on the Tharptown varsity for five seasons. Her father Wayne was an outstanding high school basketball player at Russellville High School. He continued his playing career at Northeast Mississippi Community College.

For Fleming, the basketball court was a foundation of her childhood, so it was a natural evolution that she developed into a standout player who scored more than 1,700 points in her varsity career.

"With my dad and cousins, we always had that connection to basketball," Fleming said. "When I was little, we would always play basketball when we'd go to my grandmother's. It's always been very relevant in my life and has continued into my adult life.

"When I came home from school, I helped Blair Woods at Muscle Shoals. I coached junior high there, then I coached at Hatton High School. Basketball is something I've always done. I didn't

See, 'FLEMING,' page 11



## Baker to join track & field team at University of Montevallo

Michael Rice  
Franklin Free Press

Russellville High School senior, Tilman Baker was emotional at his signing day last Thursday.

"It's definitely bittersweet. I'm gonna miss my guys. I have a lot of friends who are juniors. I'm really gonna miss football. But I'm looking forward to having a training coach and getting to work for the future," Baker said.

Baker received a scholarship to the University of Montevallo in Montevallo, Alabama, where he will throw the javelin for the college's track and field team.

Baker started track and field just three years prior to earning his scholarship. He was a multi-sport athlete at Russellville. He was a varsity football and basketball player as well as a track and field athlete.

Along with Baker, new Russellville Middle School football coach Brett Voss began coaching track and field three years ago. Voss and Baker began learning together the ins and outs of track and field.

"Baker's work ethic is like no other. He constantly puts pressure on himself. Just like this year at sectionals, it came down to his last throw to qualify for state and he qualified," Voss said.

Baker finished in 5th place in state at this year's finals.

"Baker sees hard work pays off and that's a valuable lesson to learn," Voss said.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL RICE

Tilman Baker signing letter of intent with head track and field coach Brett Voss.

## RHS' Johnson continuing FB career at Central Ga. Technical College

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Russellville High School standout wide receiver Randell Johnson will take the next step in his football career after committing to play at Central Georgia Technical College last week.

Johnson, a 5A All-State Football first team selection, amassed 1,158 receiving yards in 12 games during his senior year as a Golden Tiger. His 45 receptions resulted in 14 touchdowns and he was part of a record-setting performance in the first round of the 5A playoffs against Boaz, as Johnson and Russellville quarterback Harrison Burch teamed up for 377 yards and six touchdowns.

In his two years at Russellville, Johnson's commitment and ability to adapt to the program

impressed his coach, John Ritter.

"He transferred into our program raw and not understanding what it took to be successful. There's a lot more attention to detail here than where he came from and it's impressive to see how far he's come in two seasons," Ritter said.

"Randall was an all-around great player but I was also proud of what he did on the practice field. He was a really good blocker. There were a lot of games we didn't throw to him and relied on our run game and he stepped up each time," Ritter added.

Central Georgia is located in Warner Robins, Ga., and competes in the National Club Football Association. Johnson will join Coach Terry Kendrick's team for the fall 2023 season.



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## 'FLEMING,' from Page 10

coach the last two years, but I was a high school basketball official, so I stayed connected with the game," she added.

Tharptown High School Principal Bart Moss said he's excited to have teachers and coaches who graduated from Tharptown. In addition to Fleming, Kaitlyn Vandiver, a Tharptown teacher and coach, is also a THS grad.

"With Kamri, it's a testament to the growth of our school to finally get some Tharptown graduates coming back here to continue in the classroom, in the field and on the court," Moss said.

"She brings a lot to the basketball program, including excitement and energy. She was a part of this program and they were very successful, so I'm excited to see her now leading our girls' basketball program," Moss added.

During Fleming's career as a Wildcat, the girls' varsity had a three-year run of area championships that included a 30-0 record against area opponents in the regular season and post-season. But it took time for the program to reach that level of success.

"When I first started playing varsity basketball, we were kind of like where we are now," Fleming said. "It's a building process and it takes time. I started in the eighth grade and we really didn't see that success until my 10th grade season. It is possible to get there. You've got to put in the work, the effort and the time."

As Fleming goes from officiating high school games to walking the sidelines as coach, she won't forget the difficult job the men and women in the striped shirts have.

"I'll definitely have more patience with them since I've been in their shoes," Fleming said. "As officials, you don't see everything happening. You're not officiating the whole game. You're watching zones and the part of the floor you're assigned to watch.

"It's interesting to go into next year as coach. I've been on all three sides on the floor—as a player, an official and now a head coach," Fleming added.

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