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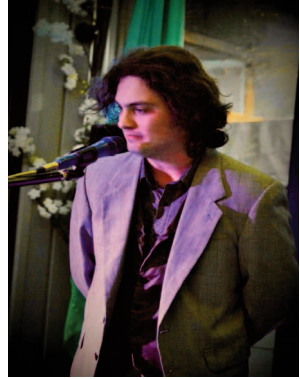
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RHS graduate Guinn heading to American Idol celebrity judge auditions

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

If not for the encouragement from two Russellville High School teachers during Avery Guinn's freshman year, he might never have received have been honored with a Stanley Award this month for Best Performance By An Actor in a Supporting Role in Community Theatre/College Musical. Guinn might never have taken the stage with the Velcro Pygmies in front of a massive crowd at last week's Franklin County Watermelon

Festival.



And he might never have found himself preparing for the celebrity judge audition round of American Idol this October. When the 2021 RHS graduate started doing theatre his

freshman year, Guinn worried he
 See 'GUINN,' Page 5

City preparing for start of commercial solid waste pickup


John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

The City of Russellville will begin dumpster leasing and pickup on October 1st, and the Russellville City Council approved the purchase of 45 new dumpsters at its August 21st meeting. The dumpsters were purchased from Box Gang Manufacturing in the amount of \$48,024. That price includes 18 8-yard, 18 6-yard and nine 4-yard dumpsters. In February, the council approved the purchase of 185 used in-place dumpsters from the Franklin County Solid Waste Department at a cost of \$500 per dumpster. That was the first step toward the

City of Russellville's effort to take over exclusive commercial solid waste operation inside city limits. Mayor David Grissom said preparation continues toward the October 1st date, including the city receiving contracts from local businesses. "We sent out contracts to all business owners in the city. We started with the Franklin County list, then others, and we've got 60 back already," Grissom said. "We still needed additional dumpsters on top of what we purchased from Franklin County. "October 1st will be here before we know it. The only thing we're lacking is a spare truck. We have one new truck in and we're searching for a spare," he added.

See 'CITY,' Page 4

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-Carol Conaway, Google Review

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Micky D. Montgomery, 48, of Russellville, passed away Friday, August 25, 2023. Visitation will be 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 29, 2023, at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment will be at 2:00 p.m. Wednesday, August 30, 2023, at Spry Memorial Chapel.

Lorene Lavern Parker, 85, of Russellville, passed away Friday, August 25, 2023. Visitation will be 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon, Tuesday, August 29, 2023, at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment will be held at 12:30 p.m. Tuesday, August 29, 2023, at Franklin Memory Gardens.

Joseph King, 80, passed away August 22, 2023. Akins Funeral Home assisted the family.

PUBLIC NOTICE

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Downtown Russellville Collective, McKinney honored at Main Street Alabama conference

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

During last week's Main Street Alabama Conference in Huntsville, the Downtown Russellville Collective and its President Julie McKinney, were honored by the organization.

In May, Downtown Russellville and Centreville were designated as Main Street Alabama cities by the organization.

Main Street Alabama is a non-profit organization that focus on bringing jobs, dollars and people back to Alabama's historic downtowns. The organization works with its Main Street designees to promote economic development centered around restoration and promotion of historic downtown communities.

Ann Epperson McDermitt, Executive Director of the Downtown Russellville Collective, said the city's Main Street Alabama designation was the result of determination and hard work by community leaders.

"I am absolutely thrilled to witness Russellville's remarkable journey as we proudly accept the esteemed designation of a Main Street Alabama city in 2023," McDermitt said. "This milestone stands as a testament to our community's unwavering dedication to preserving our rich heritage while embracing a vibrant future."

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Each of Alabama's local Main Street programs selected a Main Street Hero to be honored. The criteria were any organization, business or person who made an outstanding contribution to their program.

McKinney was selected as Russellville's Main Street Hero. She was honored along with others at a 'Toast to Heroes' reception held prior to the banquet. McKinney was a catalyst in collaborating with the City of Russellville to gather the expansive information needed to complete the city's Main Street Alabama application.

Russellville was enrolled as a Main Street Alabama Network Community in 2016. In 2022, Russellville was chosen as the pilot program for a new designation, Main Street Alabama's Aspiring Community.

McKinney serves as the Board President of the Downtown Russellville Collective.

"Thank you to all my peers. I'm honored to receive this recognition. My personal devotion to our town has been a delight and a challenge. Truly, I can't wait to discover the next hero as we continue progress and inspire each other," McKinney said.



'CITY,' From Page 1

In other agenda items the council:

--approved a resolution to adopt the FY 2024 Rebuild Alabama Transportation Plan with tentative plans to mill, restripe and resurface a portion of Coffee Avenue between Franklin and Lawrence Streets, using funds the city receives from Alabama's gas tax. Those plans to redo Coffee could change though, as Councilman David Palmer said he was going to prepare a list of roads across the city that could be improved and/or repaved by Street Department workers, which would allow the approximately \$1.5 million in funds to be used to pave twice as much roadway distance than a paid contractor would do with the same money.

--authorized Councilman Gary Cummings to sign acceptance of an award letter for an Alabama Tourism grant in the amount of \$2,600 to be used for expenses for the annual July 4th Jam on Sloss Lake.

--approved a matching retirement payment for Russellville Police Officer Captain Jake Tompkins in the amount of \$1,317.20 to Retirement Systems of Alabama.

--accepted a resignation letter from Firefighter Johnathan Pace in the Russellville Fire Department and authorized advertisement of the same.

--declared a vacancy for Heavy Equipment Operator II with paving experience and a Heavy Equipment Driver/Operator and authorized advertisement of the same.

--accepted a letter of resignation from Chris Burrell in the Russellville Street Department.

--heard a report from Grissom about the job done by the city's Street, Police and Fire Departments at the 42nd annual Franklin County Watermelon Festival, including clean up late Saturday night.

--heard an update from Grissom about a call he received from Sen. Tommy Tuberville's office informing him that \$500,000 has been earmarked in an appropriations bill that would allow the Russellville Police Department to purchase vehicles and equipment, and that \$3.892 million is included in an appropriations bill that would be used to construct a new library/media center. Both bills must clear the House and Senate and then be signed by the President.

The next regular meeting of the Russellville City Council will be September 5, 2023, with work session at 6 p.m., and meeting to follow.



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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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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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'GUINN,' From Page 1

might be 'too strange or weird' to be a good performer.

After sharing his concerns to RHS teachers Patrice Smith and Emily Rush, the two veteran educators told their future star that being strange was typically how actors become successful.

"They told me don't worry how others might view you when you're onstage because you are trying to get them to see the character, not you," Guinn said. "So I gave it a shot. I remember walking on stage for the first time, and feeling all emotions of doubt, sadness and uncertainty that I frequently felt during that period of my life wash away. It gave me a character I could use to take an audience out of reality even if just for a little while."

That newfound confidence helped Guinn, the son of Tim and Sandy Guinn, begin what now looks like a promising career in the performing arts.

A gifted vocalist as well as award-winning stage performer, Guinn recently advanced through the first three rounds of Idol auditions on Zoom, catching the eye of the show's producers with each performance. It was Guinn's first time to audition, and it couldn't have gone any better.

There are some parts of the Idol audition process contestants are prohibited from discussing, including where they will go for the celebrity judge auditions and what song they plan to perform.

Guinn made a Facebook post Friday announcing he was called by producers Wednesday and told he made it onto the show. American Idol is slated to begin its seventh season on ABC in early 2024.

One of the show's frequent story lines is to focus on a contestant's 'day job,' particularly when it's something unusual. If that's the criteria, Guinn has a great one.

He works at Arx Mortis, a popular haunted house in Killen. Guinn builds sets, helps set up new attractions and when Halloween season rolls around, he can be found walking the halls of the haunted house playing scary music on his accordion.

Remember, 'strange and weird' is what builds performing arts careers.

Guinn was presented with the Best Performance By An Actor in a Supporting Role in Community Theatre/College Musical August 5th at the Stanley Awards.

The Stanley Awards are presented to those who help promote excellence in the theater arts in the Shoals area. Guinn's performance as the Villain (the Man in the Yellow Suit) in Shoals Theatre's Tuck Everlasting earned him his Stanley.

Guinn has taken the stage to sing some 80's Rock mainstays with the Velcro Pygmies, a high energy rock band who headlined the August 18th

entertainment at this year's Watermelon Festival. Guinn also performed the Bon Jovi classic Wanted: Dead or Alive with the band August 17th in a show in Florence.

Guinn sings a very different style of music each Sunday at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Florence, where he's one of two musicians who perform hymns for the congregation. Guinn plays piano as well during Sunday services.

Guinn was the central character in the Roxy's Christmas Spectacular for two years. And he's done numerous shows at the Ritz in Sheffield and Shoals Theatre.

He's currently working as assistant director of a show, but he can't say what show it is yet, calling that future tidbit a 'little bit of a surprise.'

And if his American Idol audition goes well, Guinn's entire schedule, from haunting accordion music to hair band rock, could change entirely.

"I've spoken with some people who've done this and if my auditions on American Idol go well, it can keep you pretty busy for a while," Guinn said.

Whether it's music or acting, Avery Guinn performs in a way that showcases his unique style.

"In acting you have a written character you have to bring to life and the way I like to do that is to bring the character to life a little different than how others have done it in the past, using my own spin on the role or song," Guinn said.

Guinn's musical tastes are for songs well beyond his years. He loves the crooning side of music, with songs from the Rat Pack, Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis, Jr., to name a few.

"I like to perform music of musicians who have inspired me. From what I've seen, a lot of those people don't mind getting an outside perspective or a different type of cover of their song because that inspires different people in different ways. I like to interpret music in the way it means the most to me," Guinn said.

Two years out of high school, Guinn says he's pleased with how his young career is going.

"I'm very thankful for those who have supported me in times where I was doubting myself quite a bit," Guinn said. "They really helped me and my goal is that I want to perform the rest of my life because that's where I feel like the genuine me lies."

And thanks to the encouragement of two RHS teachers six years ago, Guinn is completely comfortable with the genuine version of himself, even if it's a little strange or weird.

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The Senior Center of Phil Campbell is under new management. Everyone age 60 and over are invited to come join us and be part of the group. This is for men and women. We meet at the Phil Campbell Community Center Monday thru Friday from 8-noon. A delicious lunch is served at 11 a.m. Meals are \$1 donation. Some come and play Rook. We also do Bingo when we have enough people. There are several games to play or just sit and socialize with other seniors.

Pastor Bro. Eric McKinney and the congregation of Crestview Missionary Baptist Church, 24131 Hwy. 24, Russellville, invite you to worship with them. Sunday morning Bible Study is from 10-Noon and Sunday morning worship from 11-Noon. All are welcome to our services! Call 256-324-0179 for more information.

The Long Term Care Ombudsman's job is to protect the rights of Residents of long term care facilities, including Nursing Homes, Assisted Living Facilities, and Specialty Care Assisted Living Facilities. The Ombudsman works to ensure that the Residents receive fair treatment and quality care. Anyone can contact the Ombudsman to report long term care problems or to request information about long term care facilities in Franklin, Colbert, Lauderdale, Marion and Winston Counties. For more information please contact Tina Pitt, local Ombudsman, at 256-389-0533.

The Clarion Hotel, in collaboration with Knox Media Group and Pilgrim's Pride, is thrilled to present an exhilarating and electrifying event - Free Mix Mingle Money and Music Job Fair. Mark your calendars for Friday, September 1, 2023, from 4-7pm as this evening promises to be an absolute blast. With over 20 exceptional businesses participating, this job fair is not to be missed. The atmosphere will be filled with the infectious beats of good music, creating an energetic ambiance that will surely uplift your spirits. So, come on out, grab something to eat, and get ready to network, groove to the music, and explore new job opportunities in this area. Don't let this exciting event pass you by!

The state beef checkoff is important because it's the major source of funding for programs to promote beef, educate influencers and consumers, respond to negative media, protect the reputation of cattle farmers, fund producer education, promote beef exports, support youth programs, and provide research for producers on cattle production. All cattle owners in Alabama are eligible to vote with no age restriction and must vote in person. You do not have to vote in the county your cattle are located. The ballot includes one question: "Do you vote 'yes' or 'no' for the continuation of the state beef check-off program with a deduction of \$1 per head from the sale of all cattle and calves? Voting will be held at the Franklin County Extension Office (located in the Franklin County Courthouse basement) on August 28, 2023, from 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. For more information, call 256-332-8880.

Gateway Church will have Evangelist Perry Stone in service September 10, 2023 at 10:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Due to the fire at our church the services will be held at the Russellville High School Auditorium. For more information please call 256-627-7935.

AlmostBama, a Tribute to the Band Alabama, will be at Russellville's Roxy Theatre on Saturday, Sept. 23 at 7 p.m. For ticket information, call 615-479-0954 or visit www.aprilpotterentertainment.com for more information.

Shiloh Baptist Church in Hamilton will host its first annual Labor Day Singing and Dinner on the Ground with Bob Sellers. Sunday, Sept. 3, 2023. Singing 10-11 a.m. Message 11-11:30 a.m. Dinner 11:30-12:45 p.m. Singing 1-2 p.m. Church is located at 1920 Hwy. 41, Hamilton. For more information, call 256-436-3422.

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Community Yard Sale. Saturday, Sept. 2. 9-2. 575 Payne Creek Estates. Multiple Families Participating.

Yard Sale. Friday/Saturday, Sept. 1/2. 8 a.m.-until. 291 Rustic Loop, Russellville. Clothing, Housewares, lots of misc. items.

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SPORTS

8.30.23

Water contamination issues push back Red Bay/Hamilton season opener

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Friday was supposed to be the first game for Red Bay varsity football coach Heath Childers' team, but it turned out to be another first—the cancellation of a game due to no water.

Red Bay was scheduled to play at Hamilton High School Friday evening, but Childers and Red Bay Principal Michael Nanney were contacted by Hamilton school officials shortly after 8 a.m., Friday morning, and told school had been canceled for a day due to a contamination of the city's water supply and a subsequent state of emergency in the city.

The City of Hamilton Water Department cautioned residents to conserve water due to problems with contaminated water at the treatment plant. The cause of the contamination was the collapse of a small dam on an area farm. Once the dam collapsed, a large amount of silt and dirt flowed into Buttahatchee River and was carried into the water supply at the treatment plant.

Officials from the Alabama Department of Environmental Management were in Hamilton Friday working with the Hamilton Water Department to remedy the problem. Residents were advised to boil all water until further notice.

With concerns about water shortages, the disruption faced by Hamilton residents and the cancellation of school Friday, the decision was made to postpone Friday night's game.

Childers said he completely understood and

See, 'WATER,' page 9

Golden Tigers, Phinizee, run past Grissom in season opener

Hayden Moss
Franklin Free Press

Friday was a great night to open up the 2023 Russellville Golden Tigers' football season, with the team playing at home and beating the Grissom Tigers 35-12, led by sophomore running back Cam Phinizee.

Though it was extremely hot and humid (temperature at kickoff was 91 degrees), the Russellville fans came out in large numbers for Senior Night.

Russellville opened up the season with a 40-yard drive which ended with the Golden Tigers going for it on fourth down and turning the ball over.

Grissom had a shaky start to the game, losing yards on a three and out possession, and punted back to the Golden Tigers.

Russellville's second possession, a 46-yard drive, ended in a ten-yard touchdown run from Phinizee, making the score 7-0.

At the start of the second quarter, the Golden Tigers scored on a one-yard run again by Phinizee, making it 14-0 with 11:14 left in the first half.

Just before the half came to a close, Russellville was able to punch in another touchdown from Phinizee, making the score 21-0 at the half.

As poorly as Grissom played in the first half, the Tigers rebounded in the second half and ran the opening kick back for a touchdown.

On Russellville's next possession, Grissom intercepted a Harrison Burch pass and took it back to the end zone making the game 21-12, shocking the Golden Tigers crowd.

After Russellville shook off the nerves of giving up 12 consecutive points, the team bounced back with a big kick return across mid-field and drove the ball all the way to the end zone which extended their lead to 28-12.

With a mostly quiet remainder of the second half, the Golden Tigers managed to tack on one last touchdown extending their lead to 35-12. That score came on a Zaye Eggleston run inside the final two minutes.

Phinizee led all players with four touchdowns and over 250 yards rushing on a night when the Golden Tigers relied primarily on the ground game. Kicker Manny Martinez was a perfect 5-5 on extra points against Grissom.

"It was some very old school football tonight, more like the style we played my first three years (at RHS)," RHS Coach John Ritter said. "To Harrison's credit, he took what the defense gave him. With those run-pass-options (RPOs) it's easy to get frustrated but he did a great job managing the game and not making the situation bigger than it was."

While it's unusual to hold Senior Night during your home opener, Ritter said he didn't want to have Homecoming and Senior Night in consecutive weeks late in the season, because each event is special for students and their families.

"We didn't want to do Homecoming and Senior Night back-to-back weeks. It's a lot of work preparing for those events and we didn't want to have them in consecutive games," Ritter said. "It actually turned out to be a heck of a way to kick off the season."

Ritter has been impressed with his 26-player senior class since off-season workouts began last November.

"They're a great group and are very close and unselfish when it comes to stats and positions played," Ritter said. "They want to be successful and want each other to succeed. They had a great off-season and fall camp and we came out of the gate hot and that's a testament to our seniors."

Russellville hosts Deshler this Friday, with kickoff set for 7 p.m.



COURTESY PHOTO

Cam Phinizee found the end zone four times in Russellville's 35-12 defeat of Grissom.

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Knowledge of safety and property firefighting equipment.

Knowledge of containment and cleanup of hazardous material, evacuation procedures, evacuation procedures, safe extraction procedures, and basic rescue techniques.

Knowledge of up-to-date EMS protocols, hydraulics as applied to pump operations and water pressure, safety rules, skills to comprehend operator manuals, directives, procedures, and instructions.

Ability to communicate with supervisor and co-workers, writing skills for forms and records, math skills to basic calculations, skills to operate power equipment and hand tools

Ability to do the essential functions of the job as directed in this description.

Willingness to: work overtime, irregular hours, weekends and holidays; travel and attend seminars and workshops.

QUALIFICATIONS and SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:

Possession of a high school diploma or GED

Minimum of 18 years of age

Ability to obtain and maintain a valid Alabama Firefighter 1 Firefighter II certification within

The first year of employment

Ability to obtain and maintain on Emergency Medical Technician (Basic) certification within

The first year of employment

Ability to obtain and maintain current CPR certification

Possess a current and valid driver's license

Ability to successfully complete the Certified Physical Ability Test (CPAT) prior to

Attending Fire Academy.

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Applications and copies of the Job Descriptions may be obtained at the Russellville City Hall, Office of the Mayor, 304 North Jackson Avenue. Applications submitted to the Russellville Civil Service Board less than one year ago remain active. Those individuals need not reapply in order to receive consideration for this appointment. Applications must be returned no later than September 11, 2023 BY U.S. MAIL TO:

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P. O. BOX 308
RUSSELLVILLE, AL 35653

The appointees will be required to successfully complete a physical examination including drug and alcohol screening prior to employment.

'WATER,' From Page 8

supported the decision to postpone the game, which will now be played Thursday, August 31 at a time to be determined in Hamilton.

"They had a lot going on down there, with a lot of issues due to people being out of water and there are more things at stake than just a football game, so we were willing to work with them and help any way we could," Childers said.

The option to play the game in Red Bay was discussed, but the school's new scoreboard with a video screen is still under construction. Additionally, Childers said there would have been logistical issues to change venues and Hamilton school administrators had more important things to deal with.

In a stroke of good fortune, both teams were scheduled to have byes on Friday, September 1st, so it was convenient to play the game without scheduling issues.

Childers told his team Friday morning the game would be pushed to Thursday. Red Bay had a 45-minute practice Friday afternoon and Childers liked what he saw.

"They were disappointed when they first heard we weren't playing, but kids are a lot more resilient than we as adults give them credit for," Childers said. "They bounce back from thins a lot faster than we do. There won't be any issues getting these guys ready to practice Monday and Tuesday. They're looking forward to it."

Red Bay will travel to Lexington on Friday, Sept. 8, for a 7 p.m., kickoff in their Class 2A Region 8 opener.



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JOB OPPORTUNITIES

The Franklin County Commission is accepting applications for the following position(s):

Corrections Officer/Dispatcher, Franklin County Jail Deputy, Franklin County Sheriff's Office

Heavy Equipment Operator, Franklin County Solid Waste Applications will be accepted in the Franklin County Commission office until 5:00 PM on Friday, September 1, 2023.

An application and job description may be picked up, faxed or emailed upon request from the Franklin County Commission Office, located at 405 N Jackson Avenue, Monday – Friday, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, by calling (256) 332-8850 or applications are available at www.franklincountyal.org under the Careers tab.

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FC Commission approves purchase of two new dump trucks

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Franklin County Commission approved the purchase of two new dump trucks for the Highway Department at its August 21st meeting.

Commissioners authorized buying two dump trucks at a total cost of \$427,000. Two used dump trucks were declared surplus property and will be listed for sale with J.M. Wood.

The purchase will restore the Highway Department back to a full inventory of four dump trucks.

In other agenda items, the commission:

--approved the removal of Rhonda Frank as secretary for the Franklin County Coroner and approved Debra Baker as the new secretary.

--approved the resignation of Caden Watts as a temporary employee with the Highway Department.

--approved the employment of Corey Jones and Donnie Ivey as permanent Corrections Officers/Dispatchers in the Franklin County Sheriff's Office, the resignation of Sarah Kimbrough and Chance Hurt as Corrections Officers/Dispatchers, the resignation of deputy Richard Michael, the hiring of Dakota Riley as a temporary deputy.

--authorized Sheriff Shannon Oliver to accept the lowest responsible bids for new tankless water heaters at the Franklin County Jail, as 10 of the 13 heaters are not working.

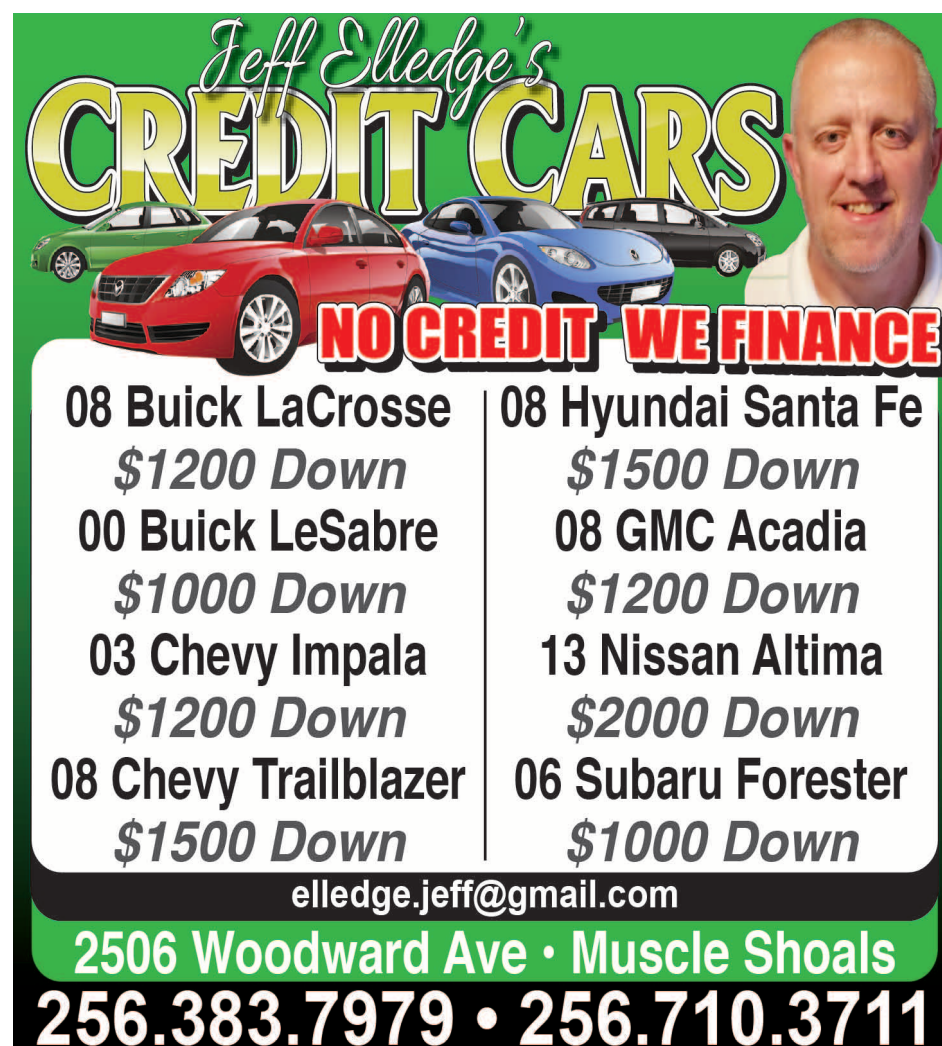
--approved a contract with Southern Health Partners to provide medical care for Franklin County inmates for FY2024 in the amount of \$234,000.

--approved the retirement of David Murray as a Heavy Equipment Operator in the Highway Department and the employment of David Murray as a part-time Heavy Equipment Operator.

--approved a 12-month rollover of the county's fuel contract with Tatum Oil Company, with gasoline \$.107 per gallon over rack price and diesel \$.117 over rack price.

--appointed Mary Hallman-Glass, Leah Mansell, Gene Ward, Felicia Weeks, Caleb Sherrill and Bill Cheatham to the Franklin County Safety Committee. The committee meets quarterly.

--approved the resignation of Ricky Pierce as a Dumpster Driver and authorized advertising for the same.



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Inspired by grandfather, Sparks announces run for County Commission District One

Submitted

My name is Kirk Sparks, and I am asking for your vote on March 5, 2024, to be your Republican Candidate for Franklin County Commission District One.

I am 34 years old. I graduated from Mt. Hope High School in Lawrence County in 2007.

I attended Northwest Shoals Community College, where I received an Associates Degree in Occupational Technology, majoring in Machine Shop.

In 2015, I married Haley Sparks, a 2013 Russellville High School graduate.

We have three boys, Ryder, Stetson, and Tilton.

We have cattle and operate four broiler houses. I am also a realtor with Exit Realty Shoals and I work at G&G Steel in Russellville. We are members of Tharptown Baptist Church.

In my spare time, I enjoy spending time with my family. I am an avid deer and turkey hunter.

My grandfather, Billy Sparks, lived in Franklin County his entire life. He was a Franklin County Commissioner in District One. He has inspired me to run for this position.



As your District One County Commissioner, I want to make a positive impact on our great county for its next generation. I will do everything I can to help our county continue to grow and improve. I will listen and make myself available to hear everyone who contacts me. We need elected officials who are accessible and willing to listen to the people they represent.

Please remember to vote for me, Kirk Sparks, as your Republican Candidate for Franklin County Commission District One. Thank you and God Bless.

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FOOTBALL

FRANKLIN FREE PRESS



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Franklin County Board of Education Class of 2024



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Terry Welborn
Chairperson



Carol Murphree
Board Member



**Kacey Hester
Johnston**
Board Member



Ralton Baker
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Pat Cochran
Board Member

2023-24 Important Dates

Sept. 4: Labor Day
Oct. 13, 16-17: Fall Break
Nov. 11: Veterans Day
Nov. 20-24: Thanksgiving
Dec. 20: Half Day for Students
Dec. 21-Jan. 10: Christmas Break

Jan. 8-10: Teacher Workdays
Jan. 11: Students Return
Jan. 15: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Feb. 19: President's Day
April 8-12: Spring Break
May 24: Graduation

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Congratulations, Belgreen on your first year of football!

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Bulldog football program embarks on initial season

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press

For the first time in decades, Belgreen High School will trot out a football squad. After years of rumors of the Bulldogs returning to the gridiron, those rumors will become a reality this season.

At the helm of the program is Jonathan Raper, who left Phil Campbell High School after a historic run as the school's baseball coach, leading the Bobcats to their first baseball state title in history.

Raper now takes on the task of leading the Bulldog athletic program into a new era, as it becomes the sixth and final high school within Franklin County with a football program.

Due to AHSAA regulations for new programs, the Bulldogs will be limited to playing a junior varsity and junior high schedule for two years before they can officially compete for postseason play.

While they may not be competing for a playoff berth this year, Raper said this season will serve as a valuable learning experience as players get comfortable with playing the game, while also giving coaches an opportunity to see what positions players excel in.

Quarterback:

Under center for the Bulldogs will be a bit of a mixed bag. Raper said the current plan is to run a dual-quarterback system for the time being, to get a look at different skillsets.

Landon Cox and Rush Berryman are scheduled to take a majority of the snaps at signal-caller for Belgreen with others potentially in the mix.

Running Back:

In the backfield, Raper said there are "a bunch" of players who could see time at running back.

Will King figures to be the lead back with Skyler Vickry also getting a lion's share of the touches. Brayden Messer and Brayden Nelson will also slot in behind the quarterback from time to time as well. Raper also mentioned Issac Hammond as a viable option for the running game.

Raper said there will also be a healthy mix of seventh-graders who coaches will get a look at at the running back position.

Wide Receivers/Tight End:

As the Bulldogs work out the kinks to see if they'll be pass-reliant or run-heavy offensively, they'll have a solid stable of weapons on the exterior to go to if they opt to go with the former.

Collin McCalpin has stood out as the top wideout thus far, with Kaleb Taylor also emerging as a top receiver for the Bulldogs. Emi Jiminez and Colton Ashton will also line up at wideout with Aaden Marsh also getting some consideration.

At tight end, Carter Raney has been working at the position with Gabrian Adcox-Wilson also getting some reps.

Offensive Line:

While there may be a bit of shuffling around at the skill positions, the offensive line for Belgreen is a little more set in stone, at least to begin the year.

Thomas McKinney, Dalton Gardner, Noah Scott, Landon Cantrell and Ty Hamilton will see a bulk of the starts on the O-line. Backing up will be Giancarlo Alban, Uriah Whitfield and Wayne Shelnett will suit up as well.

Defensive Line:

Raper said most of the offensive line will also line up on the defensive line this year. Whitfield and Scott will lead the way in the rushing game with Cantrell and Alban also lining up on the D-line. Wayne Shelnett will be the starting defensive tackle for the Bulldogs.

Linebackers:

Hamilton will suit up at outside linebacker as James Scott will also anchor a spot at the position. The defense will mix things up, Raper said, as Whitfield will also see snaps at linebacker when not on the defensive line with Bryant Britton working as an outside linebacker. King and Berryman will man the inside linebacker positions for Belgreen.

Secondary:

Kaleb Taylor will man one of the cornerback slots with Emi Jiminez manning the other spot. Aaden Marsh will also see time at corner. At safety, Colton Ashton will be the free safety with Brayden Nelson serving as the backup. Raynie Fuller will most-likely pull double-duty, playing both corner and safety for Raper and his staff.

Special Teams:

Since Belgreen is playing a junior high/junior varsity schedule, there are no kickoffs or extra points, therefore special teams is not required.

2023 Bulldog Schedule	
8/29	@ Cherokee
9/5	@ Iuka
9/18	@ Vina
9/25	@ Tharptown
10/6	@ Tishomingo

Bobcats open with first win hosting Hackleburg

Michael Rice
Franklin Free Press

After trailing late in the fourth quarter, the Phil Campbell Bobcats air raid landed safely with a 22-20 win.

Hayden Wingo had a night to remember, as he scored all three touchdowns for the Bobcats in all phases of the game.

"Wingo scored on a scoop and score on defense, special teams and on offense," head coach Jacob Hamilton said.

Wingo also caught an important pass moving the chains on a 4th down.

The Bobcats struggled to move the ball a majority of the game, but when it counted on the final drive Gage Baker stepped up.

"Baker got us a 8 yard run when it mattered and helped us drive down the



COURTESY PHOTO

field to get in scoring position." Hamilton said.

"This game was important for us. It showed our guys still have some fight in them. That's something you can't coach. I'm proud of my guys and for them pushing through for the win," Hamilton said.

The Bobcats face Lamar County this Friday with kickoff at 7pm.

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Good Luck to All Franklin County Teams!



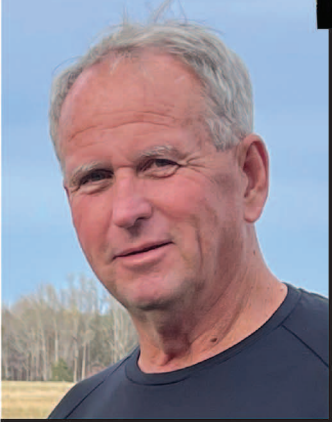
From left: Commissioners Chris Wallace, Jason Miller, Joseph Baldwin and David Hester. Seated: Probate Judge Barry Moore.

Franklin County Commssion

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Hamilton begins PC tenure with experienced offensive line, linebacker corps

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press

It's the dawn of a new era for the Phil Campbell Bobcats' football program as they usher in a new, yet familiar face as their leader.

Alumnus Jacob Hamilton was hired when five-year head coach Kevin Barnwell resigned after leading Phil Campbell to a 26-27 record and three playoff appearances.

Hamilton comes over from in-county rival Tharptown where he spent one season with the Wildcats, going 2-8 on the year. As he enters his first season as the coach of the Bobcats, Hamilton and his staff will rely on an experienced backfield and gritty play from upperclassmen in the trenches to lead them back to the postseason.

Quarterback:

As the Bobcats enter a new regime, they'll do so with a young quarterback at the helm. Freshman Hayston Scott has been tabbed as the starter for Phil Campbell to open up the season. While he may be on the younger side of varsity starting quarterbacks in the area, Hamilton said his signal-caller will have plenty of time to grow and adapt in the program.

"He's a really good athlete," Hamilton said. "He's young so he's got some time to grow. But he's matured every single day and he's dedicated to being a team player and working on his craft."

Running Backs:

The backfield will be an area of strength for the Bobcat offense this season, with Hamilton saying there are multiple running backs capable of shouldering the load.

"We've got four or five guys that we trust to carry the ball for us," Hamilton said. "Having that depth is huge for us."

Junior Braxton Mayfield will suit up at the fullback slot, with Hamilton labeling him as a "hard runner" whose skill set will be prioritized in short yardage situations.

6'2, 190-pound senior Gage Raper returns as the starting running back with junior Noah Raper also getting significant time at the position. Senior Isac "Rickey" Hill will also get some snaps at tailback with junior Hayden Wingo also potentially running the football some for the Bobcats.

Wide Receivers/Tight End:

Offensively Phil Campbell will run the wishbone a majority of the time. However, Hamilton said the Bobcats have the ability to spread things out if needed.

In the event they opt to go with a spread offense, Gage Baker will remain in the backfield with Hayden Wingo, and Braxton Mayfield and Noah Raper will all line up at receiver.

Others figuring to see time at receiver include Hagen Raper, Austin Elliott and Chandler Benford, who led the Bobcats in receiving during their jamboree.

"We've got three or four young guys that can catch the football and really open up the field for us," Hamilton said. "We just try to do what's best to get all our athletes the ball in the right situation."

When he's not getting carries in the backfield, Wingo will be the go-to guy at tight end most of the time.

Offensive Line:

Hamilton will have multiple returning starters along the offensive line, including three-year starting center Jackson Clark, and newcomers to work with in the trenches.

"He knows everything that's going on and he really has a high football IQ," Hamilton said of Clark. "He's one of our leaders and he's all the way bought-in."

At right guard will be junior Johan Vazquez with 6'5, 230-pound fellow junior Logan Wright lining up next to him at right tackle.

On the left side of the line, Kamron Thomas will slot in at guard with sophomore Russellville transfer Weston Greenhill filling in at left tackle for the Bobcats.

Defensive Line:

Logan Cooper and Kaden Trapp will line up at defensive tackle. This will be Trapp's first year playing football with Cooper a returning sophomore. In the event Trapp is playing tackle, Cooper will simply slide over and fill one of the defensive end positions.

Playing both sides of the ball, Vazquez will slot in at one of the defensive ends positions with Gage Baker also taking one of the spots.

Sophomore Brayden Reeves could also see time at defensive end, Hamilton said.

"We've got some guys that play both sides of the ball and so if any of them get worn out, we've got guys that we're comfortable rotating in and out there," Hamilton said.

Linebackers:

Perhaps the most experienced group of players at any given position for the Bobcats will be the linebacking corps.

Hamilton said all four players who he plans to use at linebacker are defense-only players, giving them the ability to only focus on the one position.

At middle linebacker is junior Mason Weeks with fellow junior Koltin Hester also sliding in at an inside linebacker position. Sophomores Ethan Hallman and Boone Lawrimore will man both of the outside linebacking positions to round out the group.

"Having those four guys as only defensive guys is huge for us," Hamilton said. "They're able to get a breather on the sideline while the offense is on the field and get things corrected. They're vocal leaders and they understand what's going on."

Secondary:

While Hayden Wingo and Isac Hill will get a lot of reps offensively, they'll also get their fair share of defensive snaps with both slotting in as the starting cornerbacks for the Bobcats.

Hagen Raper and Zy Traywick will also fill in at the corners.

"We've got guys back there that we can trust," Hamilton said. "We've got enough depth to where if one of those guys breaks off a long run on offense and we really need them to take a rest, we've got others we can put in behind them to where we're not missing a beat."

At safety, Aiden Cleveland – another defense-only player – with Noah Raper manning the other safety spot. Sophomores Braeden Chaney and Madden Welch will be the backups at safety.

Special Teams

Gage Baker will serve as the team's kicker and punter with Noah Raper and Isac Hill returning both kickoffs and punts.

2023 Bobcats Schedule	
8/25	Hackleburg 22-20 W
9/1	@ Lamar County
9/8	@ Elkmont
9/15	vs. Colbert County
9/29	@ Carbon Hill
10/6	@Lauderdale County
10/13	vs. Mars Hill
10/20	@ Colbert Heights
10/27	vs. Clements
11/3	vs. Red Bay

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Franklin County Revenue Commissioner

Familiar face in Renfrow leads Red Devils into fall campaign

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press

Keeping with a countywide trend of new head coaches, Cody Renfrow returns to his roots as he takes on the task of leading the Vina Red Devils moving forward.

Renfrow, who also serves as Vina's head baseball coach, takes over the football program after Luke Childers resigned after the Red Devils went 10-30 during his tenure.

Renfrow is no stranger to the program, having played football at Vina before graduating in 2014. Now, he'll look to take the program back to the postseason for the first time since since 2019.

Quarterback:

Junior Christian Purser was tabbed the starting quarterback for Vina this season despite being his first year under center. While Renfrow noted his quarterback might not have the most experience, he was encouraged by what he saw in the Red Devils' spring game.

"He stepped up in the spring game and made some good throws for us so that was a good sign," Renfrow said.

Running Backs:

One of the deeper groups the first-year head coach will have to work with will be the running back corps.

"We've got a couple of guys that we're able to kind of rotate in and out," Renfrow said.

Junior Trevor Baker will lead the rushing charge for Vina as one of the lone holdovers who is still playing the same position from a year ago. Cai Lawler, another junior, will also receive reps at running back and senior Bailee Scott will also line up in the backfield.

Wide Receiver/Tight End:

When he's not playing running back, Bailee Scott will line up as the number one wide receiver for Renfrow and his staff.

At tight end, freshman Benjamin Guin will see most of the snaps at the position.

Offensive Line:

The offensive line will have the most experience for Renfrow.

Sophomore Zach Sparks will start at left tackle for the Red Devils with Lane Easternly manning the left guard position. At center, Andrew Shotts will be the player starting, with Renfrow saying he possesses the most experience amongst the linemen on his squad.

At right guard, another senior in Alex Hargett will lead the charge with senior Trey Ashley playing right tackle.

Defensive Line:

On defense, Hargett will play defensive end for Vina with Zach Sparks and Ben Guin lining up as the defensive tackles. Rounding out the last defensive end in the Red Devils' 4-3 scheme will be Andrew Shotts.

Linebackers:

Sophomore Bryson Finch will be tabbed as the middle linebacker in the group and will primarily play defense over the course of the season. At outside linebacker, Trevor Baker and Bailee Scott will round out the position.

Secondary:

Matthew Patterson and Manny Alatraste will man the cornerback position with Tristan Pharr and Cai Lawler patrolling the secondary at safeties.

Special Teams:

Returning kickoffs and punts for the Red Devils will be Trevor Baker and Bailee Scott. Scott will also be doing a share of the kicking and punting with Alex Hargett also stepping into the role.

2023 Red Devils Schedule	
9/1	vs. Addison
9/15	@ Shoals Christian
9/22	vs. Woodville
9/29	@ Curry
10/6	vs. Phillips
10/13	vs. Cherokee
10/20	@ Meek
10/27	@ Hackleburg
11/3	@ Waterloo

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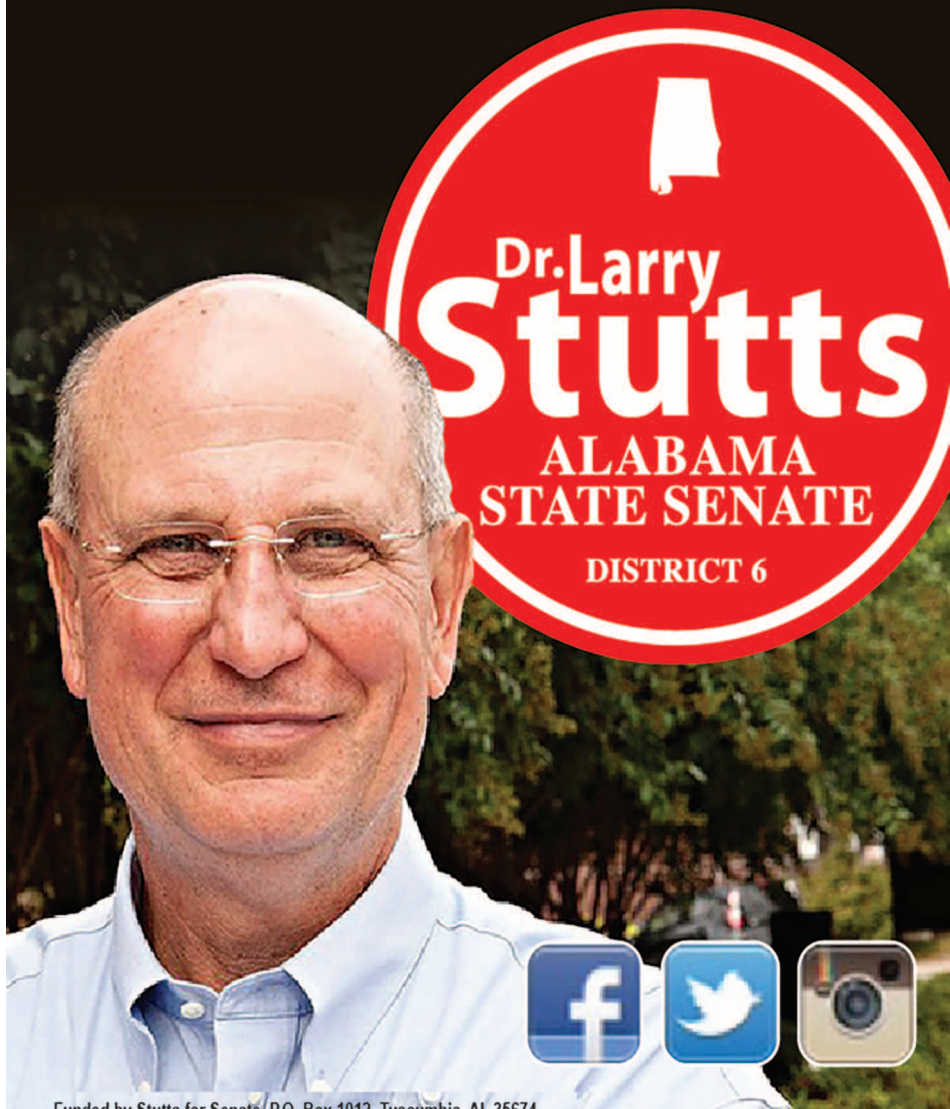


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Johnson looks to build winning culture at Tharptown

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press

Beginning the season with their third head coach in as many years, the Tharptown Wildcats will look to build towards putting together a winning program as John Johnson takes the coaching reins.

Johnson begins his stint as Wildcat head coach after Jacob Hamilton left to take the same position with Phil Campbell after posting a 2-8 record with Tharptown. His first overall season as a head coach, Johnson will have a lot of work to do in order to get the Wildcats up to par in what is arguably one of the most difficult regions in northwest Alabama.

However, given his long coaching resume – including a stint as defensive coordinator alongside current Russellville head coach John Ritter at West Morgan – Johnson may be just what Tharptown needs to finally right the proverbial ship.

Quarterback:

For the 2023 season, inexperience will be the biggest issue to overcome for the Wildcats and the quarterback position is no different.

Junior Logan Bevis has been named the starter under center for Tharptown and not only will it be his first season at the position, it'll be his first season playing football at all, according to Johnson.

"He's been a starting pitcher for the varsity baseball team so he's used to having eyes on him so that should translate well," Johnson said.

Running Back:

In the backfield, Johnson said the Wildcats will roll with a different combination of players.

At the H-back, Jackson Clement will be the starter. Johnson said the tailback position features a 1-2 punch with seniors Dawson Higgins and Jeremy Vasquez shouldering the running game.

"Dawson is more of a hard nosed, stick it in the hole and get what you can get kind of back," Johnson said. "Jeremy is more of a guy who can really stretch a defense from side-to-side."

Wide Receiver/Tight End:

Perhaps the most skilled position on offense for the Wildcats is the receiving corps.

6'1, 170-pound senior Malachi Minor will be the number one receiver for Bevis this season with Joel Wilcoxson serving as more of a possession receiver, according to Johnson.

Noting that they don't opt for a tight end in most offensive packages, in the event the Wildcats use one, Jackson Clement will oftentimes be the player called

on.

Offensive Line:

While the weapons at the skill positions for Tharptown stand out, the play from the offensive line will be a question mark due to the aforementioned inexperience.

Seniors Dylan Dolley, right tackle, and Noah Capelton, center, will lead the offensive line group for Tharptown. At the guard position, Zach Little and Luis Dircio will start for the Wildcats. Junior Maddox Cochran will get the start at left tackle.

Defensive Line:

The Wildcats will change up their defensive play style this season, going from a four-man front a year ago to a three-man front along the defensive line.

Leading the charge for the new-look defense will be senior Jason Pointer who will suit up along the D-line. Nikolai Clark will serve as the defensive tackle with Angel Morales serving as a defensive tackle as well.

Linebackers/Secondary:

Johnson said he's breaking in an entirely new set of linebackers this season.

Jackson Clement, who was an inside linebacker last year, gets the start at outside linebacker this season and he'll lead the way.

"He's a football player," Johnson said. "He's just a tough, hard-nosed football player and knows his way around the field." Skylar and Landon Hall will also serve as linebackers, working on the interior.

Sophomore D'Marvis Lewis will serve as a cornerback for the Wildcats with Euseibo Molina serving as the free safety. Tharptown will shuffle a few players around at the other safety and corner spots until two players emerge as the front-runners at the positions.

Special Teams:

Dawson Higgins will be doing most of the kicking for Tharptown with Dylan Dolley and Maddox Cochran cycling out as the punters.

2023 Wildcats Schedule

- 8/25 @ Shoals Christian 56-7 L
- 9/1 vs. Phillips
- 9/8 @ Tanner
- 9/15 vs. Hatton
- 9/22 vs. Lexington
- 9/29 vs. Cherokee
- 10/6 @ Red Bay
- 10/20 vs. Sheffield
- 10/27 vs. Falkville
- 11/3 @ Whitesburg



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Three-year QB starter Edgmon leads Red Bay offense

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press

The lone holdover in terms of head football coaches within the Franklin County School System, Heath Childers and the Red Bay Tigers will look to make back-to-back playoff appearances.

After going 6-4 a year ago, the Tigers made the postseason where they took on the eventual 2A state champion Fyffe High School.

Quarterback:

Leading the Red Bay offense will be a familiar face. Gage Edgmon returns for his third year under center and his head coach has high expectations for the senior.

"We're expecting big things from him," Childers said. "He's really worked hard this year and has shown a lot of improvement."

Sophomore Jeremiah Thorne will be slotted as the backup to Edgmon.

Edgmon will look to build on last year's success in which he led the Tiger offense to a scoring average of 29.8 points per game.

Running Back:

Despite having to replace first-team all-state running back Brady Hardin who graduated last year, there is a plethora of experience to go around in the Red Bay running backs room.

In the backfield behind Edgmon will also be a steady group of experienced running backs, with senior Keaton Lanphear leading the way as the first-string fullback. Jaxon Vinson will also serve as a fullback as well.

In terms of running backs, seniors Cody Carnes and Ayden Pruitt will receive most of the carries for the Tigers, according to Childers.

Wide Receivers/Tight End:

While he's primarily made his mark in the Red Bay secondary – with 14 interceptions the last two seasons earning all-area honors in 2022 – senior Holden Inmon will be the top wideout target for Edgmon this season, his third year as a starter.

Sophomore Brayden Tabbs will also see his playing time increase in his second year. Seniors Brady Bolton and Noah Hester will line up at the wing position.

At tight end, Kyler Watson will get the first-string nod.

Offensive Line:

Up front, Red Bay returns multiple three-year starters, boasting one of the most experienced and skilled group of linemen in Franklin County.

Twins Will and Jack West will take up two slots on the O-line at center and

right guard with Kaiden Blansett will line up at left guard with Reed Hamilton suiting up at left tackle.

The lone newcomer to the offensive line is sophomore Rhett Lockhart at right tackle.

Defensive Line:

A season ago, the Tigers defense allowed 27.5 points per game, just 2.2 points fewer than the offense scored on average. This year, the hope is that experience will make a difference as Red Bay looks to trim down the defensive miscues.

Much like their offensive counterparts, the defensive line also features a healthy core of veteran players. Senior Wes Maldin will lead the d-line for the Tigers, playing defensive tackle.

Seniors Andrew Massey and Jaden Smith will man the two defensive end positions.

Linebackers:

Three-year starters Kyler Watson and Will West will take charge of the inside linebacking position with Eli Farris and Jack West, both second-year starters will lead the way for the outside linebackers.

Secondary:

In keeping with the theme of veteran starters, Holden Inmon and Cody Carnes – both three-year staples in the Tiger defense – will look to shut down the opposing passing game as cornerbacks.

At safety, Brady Bolton will get the nod as a starter with Keaton Lanphear lining up opposite him at the other safety slot.

Special Teams:

Reed Hamilton will be handling the punting duties for Red Bay with Holden Inmon serving as the kicker on extra points and kickoffs for the Tigers. Inmon will pull double-duty on special teams, returning punts and kickoffs as well for Red Bay.

2023 Tigers Schedule	
8/31	@ Hamilton
9/8	@ Lexington
9/15	vs. Sheffield
9/22	vs. Belmont
9/29	@ Hackleburg
10/6	vs. Tharptown
10/13	vs. Falkville
10/20	@ Tanner
10/27	vs. Hatton
11/3	@ Phil Campbell



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Front row, from left: Radford Hester, Kim Clonts, Greg Trapp.
Back row, from left: Howard Hillman Jr. , Heath Grimes, Ike Rogers.

Russellville City Schools 2023-24 Calendar

Labor Day Sept. 4

Homecoming—Half Day Oct 20

Fall Break Oct. 12-13

Veterans' Day Nov. 11

Thanksgiving Nov. 22-26

Christmas Break Dec. 18 - Jan. 3

MLK Holiday Jan. 15

President's Day Feb. 19

Spring Break March 25-29

Half Day/Last Day May 24

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Russellville brings experienced defense, quarterback into 2023 season

Brady Petree
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville Golden Tigers look to improve on last year's 7-5 record that saw the team advance to the second round of the Class 5A playoffs after winning the Region 8 championship. Coach John Ritter's team once again faces a tough non-Region schedule with 7A Grissom, Deshler, Mars Hill (which routed Cullman 55-21 in its opener) and Athens High Schools.

Here's a position-by-position breakdown of the 2023 Golden Tigers including their coach's thoughts as the season begins:

Quarterback:

The Golden Tigers will have a familiar face under center this season, with Harrison Burch scheduled to take most of the reps at quarterback. The 6-foot, 170-pound senior will look to lead Russellville to its sixth consecutive winning season.

In his junior campaign, Burch threw for just over 2,700 yards with 27 touchdowns and four interceptions, leading the Golden Tigers to the 5A region 8 championship.

The past few seasons has seen the Golden Tiger offense be more reliant on the passing game. Having a quarterback like Burch, who started all 12 games for Russellville last year, returning provides a huge boost for head coach John Ritter and his squad.

"He had a great junior year," Ritter said. "Anytime you can bring your quarterback back, that opens up your offense because the install is easier than it is for other positions."

In the event Burch needs a breather or under other circumstances, freshman Tripp Cleveland has been tabbed as the backup quarterback.

"He [Tripp] is going to be a really good player," Ritter said. "He showed a lot of signs of maturity in the fall scrimmage and can throw it. He's a good runner and he's what you look for in a quarterback."

While Ritter and his staff would prefer to run Burch out there for as long as the season allows them to play this year, having two quarterbacks capable of running the offense could provide a huge boost down the stretch.

"While we don't necessarily want to play a freshman early, we've got two really good quarterbacks," Ritter said.

Running backs:

Lining up directly behind Burch and Cleveland this year will be a young, but experienced, group of running backs for Russellville.

Sophomore Cam Phinizee figures to get most of the carries out of the backfield. The 5'11, 185-pound back got valuable minutes during last year's postseason, starting the Golden Tigers second round playoff game against Boaz.

"He got a lot of carries throughout the year as the 2-punch since we really try to do things with a 1-2 punch at tailback," Ritter said. "He's got a lot of game experience even though he's just a sophomore and he's got a lot of ability. He's had a great fall camp and has shown signs he can be a complete player."

Senior Malachi Duncan and junior Zaye Eggleston will also receive a heavy workload as the second and third-string running backs this season. While Duncan has mostly made his mark as a linebacker — being named all-area at the position the last two years — Russellville is counting on him on the offensive side of the ball a bit more this year.

"Malachi is a guy who, for any other team, would probably be the starting running back and be really good for three or four years," Ritter said. "Unfortunately for him, he's kind of been behind Conner [Warhurst] and some of those guys moving up. But he's a very viable candidate for us when we need to run the football."

Cash Crumpton is another name to keep an eye on, with Ritter saying the

junior's speed on the outside could pay dividends.

Wide Receivers/Tight End:

In terms of weapons on the outside, Russellville returns a solid core of veteran wide receivers and tight ends to help spread out the offense.

Senior Bralynn Vincent figures to be the go-to target in the receiving corps. Nick Pounders, who played mostly outside linebacker last year, will also see significant snaps at receiver. Shiloh Willis will start most games at tight end, rounding out an experienced group of players who will get most of the touches when the Golden Tigers turn to the passing game.

Crumpton is another weapon for Russellville at the receiver position. Ritter said the junior possesses plus speed, giving the offense a weapon along the outside.

Another defense-to-offense transition was Michael Scofield, who will line up some at wide-out as well.

"Both of those guys can stretch the defense vertically," Ritter said. "With those two guys, it's just a lack of experience right now. But I think they have a really high ceiling and can be really good in the passing game for us."

Offensive Line:

One of the keys to Russellville having a successful running and passing game will rely heavily on the play of the Golden Tiger offensive line. Out of all the positions, the O-line may prove to be one of the more experienced groups for Ritter, despite starting two new players.

Logan Lindsey returns as the starting center with Neyland Baker also returning and moving from guard to left tackle. Tait Barnes, provides versatility along the line, playing every position ranging from center, to guard to tackle last year as a sophomore.

"He [Barnes] may not have started in the same position every game, but he played a lot," Ritter said.

Eric Hernandez, who's returning from a torn ACL, will take over one of the guard spots along the line. Ritter said before Hernandez' injury, he was counting on him to be a big piece of the offensive line puzzle and is hopeful Rounding out the offensive trench is 6'4, 250-pound junior Eddie Velasquez who will slot in at right tackle.

Defensive Line:

On the opposite side of the trenches, Ritter has high hopes for a group that returns all three starters from a year ago.

Junior Baltazar, Matthew James and Javonte Hill all started on last year's region-title winning team and led a formidable defense that allowed just 15.5 points per game a season ago.

"At some point throughout the season, there may have been a few games where Junior or Javonte might not have started, but they all played and played a lot," Ritter said. "Those three guys anchoring the defensive line will be a huge strength for our team."

Linebackers:

While noting it "feels like they've been playing forever," Ritter will also have a deep linebacking corps full of experienced players.

Martin Tomas, Malachi Duncan and Devin Green both return as two and three year starters at outside linebacker with Reece Carson taking the fourth linebacking spot. Carson showed out in the playoffs last season, totaling 16 tackles for the Golden Tigers.

"I think the defense as a whole is a strength for us because of the guys and experience we got back," Ritter said.

Secondary:

Jah Williams and Richard Scott will alternate between corner and safety as they lead the pack of returning defensive backs for the Golden Tigers.

Junior Gunner Sappington also figures to take over one of the safety positions with Braxten Goodson, Zaye Hubbard and Ben Pounders taking over the cornerback positions.

Special Teams:

Jah Williams, Cash Crumpton and Zaye Hubbard will handle most of the kick returning responsibilities with Williams also handling punt returning duties.

Doing the kicking and punting for the Golden Tigers will be Manny Martinez with Shiloh Willis taking over as the long snapper.

"I feel very confident all of those guys can do an excellent job and give us a leg up when it comes to special teams," Ritter said.



2023 Golden Tigers Schedule	
8/25	vs. Grissom 35-12 W
9/1	vs. Deshler
9/8	@ Lawrence County
9/15	vs. West Point
9/22	@ East Limestone
9/29	@ Mars Hill
10/6	@ Brewer
10/20	vs. Ardmore
10/27	vs. Fairville
11/3	@ @ Athens

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From left: David Palmer, Darren Woodruff, Gary Cummings, Dexter Hamilton, Jamie Harris, and Mayor David Grissom.



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