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Franklin EMA Director describes last week as most severe weather emergency in her five years on the job

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

It didn't take Mary Hallman-Glass long to answer where the January 2024 arctic weather blast ranked among the severe weather events she's been through as Franklin County Emergency Management Agency Director. "It's the most severe I've dealt with in my five years (as EMA Director),"

Hallman-Glass said. And as of Monday night, Franklin County residents were still dealing with icy road conditions sufficient to cause Franklin County Schools to remain closed through Tuesday. "It's the combination of all the sleet then temperatures never getting high enough to give it a chance to melt," Hallman-Glass said. "And all it did was just sit there and get hard." While most Franklin County resi-

See 'EMA,' Page 4

RHS great Tiggs to be honored at Jan. 30th home basketball game

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

When the Russellville Golden Tigers host West Point Tuesday, January 30th for girls' and boys' varsity basketball games, the evening will be about much more than just trying to beat an Area 15 opponent. The night will belong to 1983 Russellville High School graduate Luther Tiggs, who will be honored at halftime of the boys' varsity game. It will be a 'back to the 80s' theme for the RHS student section, a fitting motif for a night that honors Tiggs and the 1982 Golden Tigers, who won a state championship that season. Tiggs was named the state's

Most Valuable Player as well. A two-time All American at RHS, Tiggs went to the University of Cincinnati to play basketball for the Bearcats. But Tiggs transferred to the University of North Alabama and the decision was a good one, as he would become UNA's all-time assist leader in a game, season and career. Assists are a fitting record for Tiggs to hold, as he's assisted those around him to become better players, students and people his entire career. Tiggs retired last year from his coaching job at Bob Jones High School, ending a 33-year career as an administrator, teacher and

See 'BASKETBALL,' Page 3


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**Janet "Jan" Marie Smith passed away
January 17, 2024. Pinkard Funeral Home
assisted the family.**

**Betty JoAnn "Jody" Suddith, 67, of Phil
Campbell, passed away on Wednesday,
January 17, 2024. Spry Memorial Chapel
assisted the family.**

**Willie Ray "Bill" McQuary, 90, of
Hackleburg, Alabama, passed away
January 19, 2024. Pinkard Funeral Home
assisted the family.**

**Mildred "Millie" Green Sanderson, 86, of
Russellville, passed away on Thursday,
January 18, 2024. Spry Memorial Chapel
assisted the family.**

**Nellie Jean Strickland, 89, of Red Bay,
passed away January 21, 2024. Visitation
will be Sunday, January 28, 2024 from
1:00 – 3:00 at Akins Funeral Home.
Burial will be on Monday, January 29,
2024 at 11:00 am at Cedar Creek White
Oak Cemetery.**

'BASKETBALL,' From Page 1

coach, including 22 years as a head coach at Bob Jones, James Clemens, Sparkman and Buckhorn High Schools. He finished with 427 career wins as a head coach, with only 248 losses. Tiggs was inducted last year into the UNA Sports Hall of Fame.

"Luther has been honored in all of his roles for his success and impact, and now it's time for his hometown to do the same," said RHS Principal Jeremy Madden.

"We hope to see a big crowd show up to celebrate the legacy of our own Luther Tiggs and the positive way he has represented Russellville over the years," Madden added.

Tiggs shined in the AHSAA state playoffs as a Golden Tiger, but teams he coached were no strangers to the post season themselves.

His 2005 Sparkman team made the AHSAA Final Four, and the next season Sparkman posted a 32-4 record, Tiggs' best win-loss record in one season.

Tiggs and his wife Sylvia have been married 32 years and have two sons.

Although retired from education, Tiggs still serves on the committee for the annual Alabama All-Star Basketball Game and he remains tournament director of the annual N2Hoops Tournament he helped start while at Bob Jones.

Tuesday night is expected to include a few unknowns for Tiggs. Although Tiggs knows he will be attending Luther Tiggs Night, Madden has a few tricks up his sleeve in not sharing all the details of the evening with its honoree.

Those may include appearances from some special guests along with some other surprises.

Throwback signage from the 80s along with students dressed in 80s attire will also make the evening a special one for all in attendance.



Franklin Free Press

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Franklin County Commission District One
in the
March 5, 2024 Republican Primary

'EMA,' From Page 1

dents heeded the recommendations to stay at home, some didn't have that choice due to emergency situations. Others just decided to ignore safety warnings.

The net result? A lot of vehicles in ditches and a lot of sliding that caused damage to those vehicles.

"There still are a lot of cars in ditches. I get it, if you're running out of food or have some emergency. But you need to understand we ask them to stay at home because it's a matter of life safety," Hallman-Glass said. "We had an elderly couple who couldn't get out to get their medicine, so they called 911 and I was able to get their medication to them.

"Sometimes people don't want to call because they know we're so busy. So they think 'I've got a front-wheel drive car so I can drive on this, then they soon learn differently,'" she added.

From wrecker services to ambulance crews to police and fire department personnel, Franklin County's first responders answered the call last week, again and again.

"It takes all of us. We've all got to be on the same team, because one ambulance service can't do it alone. One fire department can't do it. It takes a team effort together to get something done. And I feel like that happened last week with everyone helping each other," Hallman-Glass said.

The hard sheets of ice made driving nearly impossible in some areas, even for four-wheel drive vehicles, Hallman-Glass said.

Emergency personnel, including Franklin County EMA, transported dialysis patients for treatment, and assisted ambulances that could not make it up driveways or roads to get to patients.

"We had one ambulance run off the road after it slid and wrecked. There was a law enforcement vehicle that ended up in a ditch and I damaged my vehicle after a slide," Hallman-Glass said.

Dangerous ice remained on some county roads Monday night after Monday's temperatures weren't high enough to melt it all.

"It will take this rain (forecast for Tuesday night and Wednesday) coming in to melt it, so we're hoping the rain will start Tuesday night into Wednesday and that will take care of most of this," Hallman-Glass said.

"The road temperatures are so cold, the ice just hasn't been melting."

Hazardous road conditions and ice around the Franklin County Courthouse and Courthouse Annex forced their closing on Monday, January 22nd. And backstreets in shaded areas in the City of Russellville remain iced over, Hallman-Glass said, so motorists are encouraged to use extreme caution traveling on non-major collector roads.

RHS honored nationally for gender diversity in AP Computer Science Principles class

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

As high school students begin to consider their desired career path once their education is complete, computer science is one of the most rapidly growing career choices.

And an award received by Russellville High School indicates the school is doing all it can to expose students to this vital field.

RHS was honored last week with the AP (Advanced Placement) Computer Science Female Diversity Award for the outstanding job RHS' AP Computer Science Principles (CSP) instructors and students have done in expanding girls' access to this important program.

According to College Board research, female students who take AP Computer Science Principles in high school are 500% more likely to major in computer science or a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) as compared to female students of similar background and academic preparation who don't take CSP.

Female students remain underrepresented in high school computer science classes across the country, though, accounting for just over one-third of AP Computer Science Principles participants.

Almost 58% of the nation's high schools teach foundational computer science, and only 1,127 of those received this year's AP Computer Science Female Diversity Award. With more than 23,500 public high schools in the United States, less than five percent qualify for the award.

Russellville High School met the requirement of having 50% or more female students in its AP Computer Science Principles classes.

"Computer science is the source code of our economy and much of the career landscape," said Trevor Parker, Head of the AP Program nationally. "In the six years since we began the AP Computer Science Female Diversity Award, it's been heartening to see schools like Russellville High School welcome so many more young women into this vital field."

Brea Colagross is in her sixth year as AP Computer Science Principles teacher at Russellville. Colagross, whose teaching experience prior to CSP was in math and business education, said once she was asked to teach computer science eight years ago, she put in hundreds of hours of training and workshops to become certified, which totally changed her outlook on job opportunities for her students.

"It exposes students to such a different way of thinking about the world," Colagross said. "Now, rather than just being users of technology, it changes their thoughts to become those who have the ideas of change to innovate our world.

"Whether it's design, programming or cyber-security, the opportunities are so vast. I have two former students working for NASA now. Whether or not my students decide to major in computer science and it becomes their job and career, it's a whole other way to take their math and science skills and use them to think in a completely different way," she added.

Providing female students with access to computer science courses is a vital step toward the goal of gender parity in STEM careers. These are generally high-paying jobs that help drive American innovation and creativity.

Students who complete AP Computer Sciences Principles and pass an exam earn college credit for taking the course in high school.

Colagross also teaches a freshmen Foundational Computer Science Principles course as well as IT Fundamentals and Python Programming. While the AP Computer Sciences Principles class has

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'RHS,' From Page 4

a large number of girls, Colagross said her other classes continue to see male student numbers exceed female student participation. "It's interesting to see the number of boys outweigh the number of girls who sign up for these classes," Colagross said. "I encouraged my daughter to take the class, then she encouraged some of her friends to take it and that's a good way for more girls participate. When they see the class as fun, opportunities come from that and then they use their experience to recruit others."

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Doug Aaron

Franklin County Commissioner

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 **T**he 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.


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 **M**Y FATHER'S HOUSE MINISTRIES, RUSSELLVILLE, AL, 104 E. Lawrence St., Pastor Pearl Shelton, would like to invite you to our weekly Prayer Meeting every Monday evening at 5:30 p.m. Come join us as we pray together in unity and power! Anyone needing prayer please be sure to join us! Everyone is welcome!

 **C**ommunity Action Partnership of North Alabama is now taking applications for Head Start and Early Head Start. Give your child a head start on kindergarten readiness. No-cost services for eligible families in a classroom setting, programs for children ages birth through four years old, priority points for children in specific need categories and prenatal services for pregnant women teens. Call 256-331-0162 for an appointment today.

 **Y**ou are invited to Revival at Gateway Church of God, 15988 Hwy 43, Russellville, AL. Evangelist: Garrett Marchant. January 28th - January 31st. Sunday Morning @ 10:30, Sunday Evening @ 5:00, Monday - Wednesday @ 7:00. If you have any questions, please call 256-627-7935.

 **Y**ou are invited to Revival at Mars Hill Church of God with Evangelist Jeremy Lane. January 24-27 starting at 6:30 p.m., nightly. With special music from the Believers, Paul Mishue and More. Pastor Rick Newell and congregation invite everyone to attend. Church is located at 77 Mars Hill Road, Phil Campbell.

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Voters to decide amendment related to local legislation

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When Alabama voters go to the polls for the March 5, 2024, primary elections, they will also vote on one constitutional amendment.

Amendment One will appear on all ballots, regardless of whether the voter casts a ballot in the Republican or Democratic Primary.

The language of Amendment One reads as follows:

Proposing an amendment to the Constitution of Alabama 2022, to amend Section 71.01 authorizing the Legislature to sign and transmit local laws or constitutional amendments before the transmission of basic appropriations.

Section 71.01 of the Alabama Constitution prohibits any bill or law from being considered by the House of Representatives or Senate before budgets are approved by the Legislature and sent to the Governor, unless an additional vote is approved by the House and Senate of at least a three-fifths (3/5ths) vote.



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Essentially, the Constitution requires the Legislature to pass a budget and send it the governor for signature before it can consider any other legislation.

If voters approve Amendment One, the Legislature may vote on and approve local laws or local Constitutional amendments even before the budget is approved.

Local laws are those which are not classified as general, special or private laws. While general laws apply to the entire state, a local law only impacts the residents of a particular county or counties.

The same is true for a local Constitutional Amendment.

An example of a local Constitutional Amendment for Franklin County came in 2018 when voters were asked to consider extending the county's one-cent sales tax (with 75% going to the two school systems in Franklin County and 25% to the Franklin County Commission for road and bridge improvements) for a 30-year period.

Previously the one-cent tax was considered by Franklin County voters every two years.

Under the 2024 amendment, the Legislature could approve local legislation and clear the way for local amendments to be placed on the November general election ballot.

The Legislature has frequently used the three-fifths rule to usher through bills before approval of a budget, a procedural step called the Budget Isolation Reduction.

Why a Constitutional amendment is needed is something advocates of Amendment One must explain to voters. Count the Association of County Commissions of Alabama Executive Director Sonny Brasfield as one who supports the amendment.

"Local legislation is designed to deal with a problem in a particular county that's different from problems in neighboring counties. We think legislators ought to be able to bring those bills at any time and not be restricted by this budget isolation vote," Brasfield told a Birmingham television station last week.

Whether Alabama voters agree remains to be seen.



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RCS board meeting includes personnel moves, rare executive session

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The January 22nd meeting of the Russellville City Schools Board of Education saw the board go into a rare executive session.

Board attorney Danny McDowell said the purpose of the executive session was, as reflected in the minutes, for the board to 'discuss with its attorney legal opinions and possible ramifications of potential board action.'

After the executive session, the board returned to the meeting and it was announced no action or votes were taken during the session.

According to a source familiar with the board, board members are considering how to proceed in the posting, hiring and contracting of a new superintendent to replace Dr. Heath Grimes, who will retire from his position in June.

The source could not confirm whether this was the subject of the executive session.

January is School Board Appreciation Month and board members watched a video tribute to them and Russellville High School Principal Jeremy Madden expressed appreciation to the board on behalf of the district's students, faculty, administrators and staff.

"We appreciate your vision to create an environment where we can excel. You always have our students in mind when you make policies and decisions. What you do sets the tone for the entire system, so on behalf of our students, faculty and staff, thank you for what you do," Madden said.

In other agenda items, the board:

--approved the Textbook Committee for the 2023-2024 school year, with area of consideration this year being Career Tech Education, to be: West Elementary School Suzanne Glass, Talitha Fleming, Kerri Traglia and Lauren Ritter. Russellville Elementary School Channing Wright, Leanne James, Jamie Lane and Ana Torres. Russellville Middle School Monica Moon, Kayla Odom, Melanie Malone and Priscilla Davis. Russellville High School Shelley Montgomery, Alana Swinney, Jordan Shelton, Erin Willis and Jeremy Campbell.

--approved trip requests for the 2023-2024 athletic season for track and for RHS HOSA students to attend HOSA State Leadership Conference in Montgomery February 29-March 1, 2024.

--approved personnel moves including: Temporary Employment in Position: Marlena Young-Jones, Challice Langston, Holly Wigington, Jennifer Willis, Jamie Boyles, LeJoy Winston, Courtney Sandlin, Lindsey Johnson, Charley Butler, Jessica Gipson, Dalia Gerardo, Madison Thompson, Brittany Flanagan, teachers for Afterschool Tutoring and Enrichment Program. Kasey O'Malley for substitute teacher for Pre-K Before and After Care, Jesslyn McNutt, Jennifer Willis and Monica Balding, teachers for 21st CCLC, Addison Farris, Maddox Parker, Peyton Garrison and Christian Cade Parker, Park & Recreation Department part-time workers, and Selena Pounders, aide for 21st CCLC.

2023-2024 Athletic Volunteers: John Seal (RHS Golf Team), Nachin Cortez (RHS Girls Soccer) and Jai Smith (RHS Track).

--Resignation in Supplement, Kevin McCravy, Track.

--Resignation in Position, Amber Motes, CNP Worker at RHS and Jackie Burch, Retired Part-Time Park & Recreation Department employee.

--Termination of Non-Tenure Employee: Chelsea Tompkins, RHS teacher.

--Employment in Position: Jade Bragwell, revised start date from 1/3/2024 to 1/22/2024 and Shelly Lewis, CNP Worker at RCS.

--Employment in Supplement, Darbi Crumpton, RHS Track Varsity Coach.



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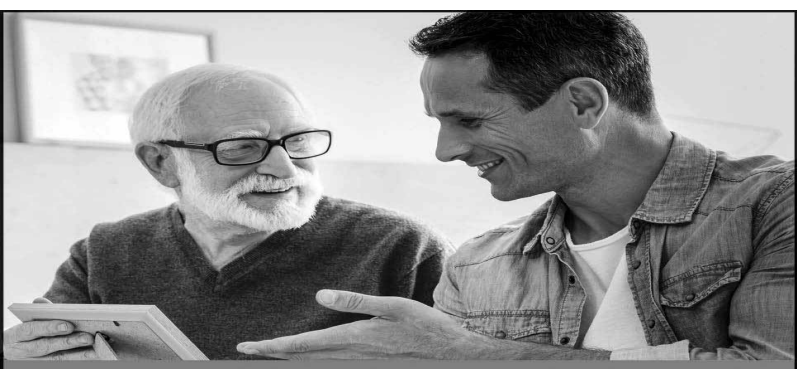
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SPORTS

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Winter weather delays start of RHS baseball spring practice

*John Pilati
Franklin Free Press*

Last week's weather wasn't exactly conducive to spring baseball, but that's exactly where Russellville High School varsity baseball coach Jess Smith's mind was.

Last Tuesday was the Alabama High School Athletic Association's official start of baseball practices, but a week-long blast of arctic weather put a literal chill on any such thinking.

And with school canceled Monday, that meant another day of lost practice time, which didn't exactly ease the second year head coach's mind.

"Last week was supposed to be the first week of official practice and we shut down entirely," Smith said. "That brings a level of concern to me and our coaching staff.

"You already feel crammed in getting ample time to prepare for opening day but you do your best with the cards you're dealt. I hope it sends a message to our team that you never know when you'll be shut down and for how long, so every day you have an opportunity it's imperative to win that day," he added.

Russellville went 22-15 in Smith's first year, reaching the third round of the 5A state playoffs.

After a slow start last year (0-5), Russellville

See, 'BASEBALL,' Page 15

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Vina girls eye postseason without leading scorer Harper

*Michael Rice
Franklin Free Press*

The Vina Lady Red Devils basketball team is headed into a busy week with regionals just around the corner.

The Red Devils are 9-13 overall with a 2-3 area record.

The Red Devils have been led by leading scorer Sara Harper, who tore her anterior cruciate ligament in Vina's last game against Phil Campbell.

The Red Devils will need to find a leader to step up and account for the 9.6 points per game Harper averaged.

Harper scored 906 points this season and had a chance to make it to her 1000th point by season's end.

"Luckily for Harper, she's a junior and she'll have the opportunity next year to make that milestone," head coach Richie Hester said.

The Red Devils face Belgreen Tuesday night, January 23rd and will use that game to regroup after the loss of Harper.

"Belgreen is a great team. We'll get a good chance to assess our team," Hester said.

Layla Hester will move to point guard going forward this season. Hester has been averaging

See, 'VINA,' page 12



Layla Hester

Golden Tiger girls' soccer team counting on new leadership this season

*Michael Rice
Franklin Free Press*

The Russellville Lady Golden Tigers soccer team has been busy preparing for its 2024 season which begins next month.

Last year, the Golden Tigers finished runner up in their area with only two area losses and 10-7-2 overall.

"We did lose some seniors last season and that does leave us either some big shoes to fill. However, with the dynamic of our program, I have already seen the girls stepping up into those shoes," said girls



Jesenia Mateo

varsity soccer coach Dalany Roberts.

"A lot of these girls have been playing together since they were in 7th and 8th grade so this is a transition for them going from being the younger players their whole career and now stepping into the leadership roles," Roberts added.

Nadia Mendez is a returning striker for the Golden Tigers who is a key contributor to the team on and off the field.

"Mendez is one of our most fluid players on the field. She's been a huge part of the dynamic of our defense and also an exceptional offensive player. She's going to fill that role on offense perfectly since we lost a key striker," Roberts said.

Mendez has stepped up as one of the team leaders making sure team members understand their roles and if they are going to be

See, 'SOCCER,' Page 13



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'VINA,' From Page 11

9.4 points per game. Hester is only a freshman and has been contributing all season on the varsity level.

Also, freshman Lana Bell has been averaging 9.5 points per game.

Senior Kaley Attaway has been successful on defense and the boards this season, averaging 11 rebounds a game.

Also, junior Khylee Brooks has been averaging 10 rebounds per game.

After facing Belgreen Tuesday night, the Red Devils will travel to face 4A Haleyville on Wednesday.

Vina will then travel to Cullman Christian Thursday night and round out the week against Waterloo on Saturday for senior night.

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'SOCCER,' From Page 11

great, there can't be any exceptions. "I had a meeting with my seniors the other night and they said they had been talking among themselves about how excited they are for the season and what their expectations are for the team. I'm pleased to see that these girls had a very smooth transition to the leadership role," Roberts said.



Justin and Dalany Roberts with their son, Shep Roberts.

For the first time, high school soccer teams were able to have fall practices unlike other years. The Golden Tigers have been conditioning year round preparing for their season. Most Golden Tiger soccer players are part of the cross country team.

"It's good these girls stay close throughout the year and not just during the season. It definitely helps build a closer bond," Roberts said.

The Golden Tigers have a huge sophomore class this season. Not all of them are contributing on the varsity level, but there are some players who will. One of those sophomores is Kimberly Mojica who is a midfielder.

"We also a freshman this year that contributed as an 8th grader last season, Ashley Siquina. We saw a lot of potential in her and I feel like she will be a dynamic player on defense. She's one of those players that puts the work in," Roberts said.

Jessenia Mateo is also a returning leader from last season. "Mateo has been a leader consistently and she's one of our absolute leader of our defensive line. She's always communicating expectations to other players. She's a voice of positivity," Roberts said.

"The community is going to be proud of these girls this season. The team is full of determination. You could feel the dynamic shift during practice to get ready for the season and get ready to dominate," Roberts added.

The Lady Golden Tigers kick their season off on the road February 6th at 6:15pm against the Tharptown Wildcats.

The team's first home game is February 8th at 7 p.m.



Vote Tracie CLARK

Franklin County Commissioner District 4

GENERAL NOTICE ANNOUNCEMENT CITY OF RUSSELLVILLE

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REQUIRED KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES:

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Ability to: operate a motor vehicle; read; safely fire a weapon; communicate on telephone and radio; generate written documents such as reports and tickets; bend, crouch; stretch; stretch; walk; run; respond to emergency situations on short notice when off-duty; and 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:

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'BASEBALL,' From Page 11

went on to post a 5-1 area record and a Class 5A Area 14 championship.

Just like 2023, 2024's schedule is loaded with teams who regularly compete for state titles, including 7A Sparkman, a perennial competitor for the North each season, Piedmont, which has reached the 3A state championship and Arab, ranked No. 3 in 5A last season.

The Golden Tigers will face those teams in a two-day round robin event at Arab on March 29-30.

Other pre-area opponents include 7A Florence, James Clemens and Austin, 6A Baldwin County and Saraland and talented squads from Mars Hill Bible School, Guntersville, Brooks and Cullman.

"It's important to be able to compete against a high level club," Smith said. "You should do that, so we try to give our guys that opportunity on weekends throughout the season and especially prior to area play. Even on weekends after area play, we try to go play the best across the state," Smith added.

Russellville's Area 14 again includes Lawrence County, West Point and Jasper. Each of those teams gave the Golden Tigers a good test last year.

"We won a tight game one with Lawrence County, we went into extra innings against West Point and we lost game one to Jasper last year, so I believe we have some quality opponents year round, both in and out of area," Smith said.

The Golden Tigers begin their 2024 season, weather permitting, February 15th with a home game against Florence at 4:30 p.m.

And it's going to take some TLC to get the field rehabilitated after a week of being blanketed by a sheet of ice.

"Now that the ice is melting off, our plan is to apply fertilizer this week and with warmer temperatures and rainy weather, we hope to salvage the perennial rye we put out last fall," Smith said.

"It really hurts us when it comes to not being able to practice on the field. The first week was canceled and this week will be primarily indoors wherever we can go to get work in," he added.

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