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Coming Home: Guinn hired as RCS Superintendent of Education

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

Minutes after he was hired to be Russellville City Schools' new Superintendent of Education, Tim Guinn was asked whether he still had a closet full of black and gold Golden Tiger clothing.

"I did keep some for nostalgia, but not all of it," Guinn said. "I will definitely need to collect some newer

pieces."
 After leaving Russellville City Schools in 2022 to take the Superintendent of Education position for Satsuma City Schools, returning home to Franklin County wasn't on Guinn's radar. That is, until he was approached by the Russellville City Schools Board of Education to gauge his interest in the same position Guinn was a finalist for in 2015. Nine years ago, the RCS Board of

See 'GUINN,' Page 3

Grand Jury indicts Hester on four misdemeanors resulting from 2023 two-fatality motor vehicle accident

John Pilati
 Franklin Free Press

A Franklin County woman involved in a two-fatality motor vehicle accident last year was charged Thursday with four misdemeanors as a result of the September 2023 incident.

Pam Hester, 66, turned herself in to the Franklin County Jail to be booked and bonded out Thursday in an arrangement scheduled by her attorney and the Franklin County Sheriff's Office.

Hester faces two counts of Criminally Negligent Homicide and

two counts of Assault Third Degree. The first two are based on the accident causing the death of 34-year-old Jennifer Fretwell and her 11-year-old son Jase.

Two other teenagers, Fretwell's nephew and a cousin, were injured and transported by ambulance from the scene. The two assault charges are based on those injuries.

Each charge is a Class A misdemeanor, with a maximum of 12 months in the county jail upon conviction.


The accident occurred around 10:15 p.m., the night of September 27th. According to police reports,

See 'GRAND JURY,' Page 4

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James Horace Smith passed peacefully from this life at the age of 85 on March 21, 2024. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.

Joan Sims McCollum of Decatur, Alabama passed away on Thursday, March 21, 2024. Akins Funeral Home assisted the family.

David Douglas Hallman, age 75, of Phil Campbell, passed away on Sunday, March 24, 2024. Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family.

Mary Edna Jennings Wilson, age 91 of Russellville, Alabama passed away on Sunday, March 24, 2024. Visitation will be Thursday, March 28, 2024 from 12:00 – 2:00 pm at the First Baptist Church, Hackleburg, Alabama. Funeral will follow at 2:00 pm at the Church.



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'GUINN,' From Page 1

Education selected Heath Grimes over Guinn to succeed retiring Superintendent Rex Mayfield. Grimes submitted his intent to retire effective June 21, 2024, and after a hushed process of reviewing applications and candidates, the board formally hired Guinn on Friday, March 22nd.

The vote was unanimous, 4-0, as board member Radford Hester was absent from the special called meeting.

Guinn's tenure at Russellville City Schools began in 2002, when he was hired as RHS Assistant Principal, a position he held until 2009 when he became RHS Principal.

In 2016, after Grimes was hired, Guinn was offered the position of Administrative Assistant in the RCS Central Office.. He remained in that position until accepting Satsuma's offer three years ago.

When Guinn says he wasn't looking to leave Satsuma City Schools, he means it. With his military service background, Guinn isn't one to play games with his words. He was happy at Satsuma and there were very few systems he'd leave for if they came calling.

Russellville, though, was one where he answered the call.

"The decision to leave Satsuma City Schools was very difficult. This is a wonderful community, a hidden gem in north Mobile County with an outstanding faculty, staff and student body," Guinn said.

"Before I came to Satsuma, I did my homework. I studied their academics, athletics, community and city government. I've never been one to apply for every opening and I'm still not. Russellville City Schools is certainly a system worthy of consideration by any administrator in the state, a system with a proud tradition going back to the 1920s, also rich in academic and athletic achievements, a supportive mayor and city council and an involved and supportive community. I wouldn't leave Satsuma for just any system, but Russellville is one of them," he added.

With 33 years of experience in education, Guinn has spent 22 of those in Russellville City Schools. He knows the system well, including its strengths and challenges, one of those being a near 60% Hispanic enrollment, many of whom start their educational process without being proficient in English.

"I think it's important to note that RCS has always done a great job in educating children of all socio-demographic backgrounds, including those with

language barriers," Guinn said. "I remember when RHS was first honored as one of the top 50,000 high schools in the nation by U.S. News and World Report many years ago when Rex Mayfield was principal, and we received several during his administration, as well as those administrations that followed him.

"The high school was honored by the state as a CLAS Banner School in 2014 for an innovative Career & Technical Education program in Global Information Systems (GIS) under LTC Norman Lier, and there are many others that can be named throughout the system at each school over past years," Guinn added.

As far as the challenges presented at Russellville City Schools, Guinn said they are similar to those facing most Alabama public school systems.

"They include the lack of teachers entering the field, the political extremism that is constantly pushing at the gates of our school doors and the ever-present hyperfocus on high stakes testing demands from our state and federal governments," Guinn said.

RCS Board President Greg Trapp said one of Guinn's many selling points was the familiarity he already has with the system.

"We are looking forward to Dr. Guinn coming back and know he will do an excellent job upholding our traditions and the excellence we're known for," Trapp said. "Having someone who is already familiar with our system and how things work is going to be a plus for us and hopefully make this transition a smooth one. We look forward to working with him."

There was one other agenda item at Friday's special called meeting, as board members unanimously voted to transfer superintendent duties to RCS Administrative Assistant Jason Goodwin, effective immediately. Goodwin will handle those duties until Guinn begins his new position.

No board action was taken to terminate Grimes, and he remains under contract until June 21st, but without any day-to-day duties.

The FFP made multiple efforts to contact Grimes for comment but he did not return messages as of Monday afternoon.

Last week's RCS Board work session included a discussion between Grimes and Trapp as to whether Grimes would recommend Brett Voss to become the permanent Athletic Director at the board's March 19th meeting.

Voss has served as RCS Interim AD since John Ritter resigned in January. Trapp and other board members said their focus first needs to be on ways to maintain a number of teachers, including many ESL positions, hired two years ago with COVID-19 Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) monies that expire after this school year.

Trapp said it would not be appropriate to take on additional expenses to hire an athletic director until the teacher funding issues are first resolved.

After Friday's meeting, both Trapp and Guinn shared their appreciation of Grimes and the job he's done as RCS Superintendent.

"I would like to thank Dr. Grimes for his contribution to the tradition of excellence established at Russellville City Schools. I wish him well in the future," Trapp said.

"Dr. Grimes has done an excellent job, and I appreciate all of his hard work and dedication he gave to this system during his time here. I am looking forward to picking up the torch and moving our system forward," Guinn said.

Guinn said he hopes to begin his new job by June 1st, but he's committed to 'ensuring a smooth transition in Satsuma,' as he described it, so there's no specific date for his first day.



GUINN

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'GRAND JURY,' From Page 1

Hester was traveling north on Highway 43 after turning out of Hester Heights subdivision. Moments later, her vehicle hit the median and she began traveling north in the southbound lane of 43. The impact with Fretwell's vehicle occurred in front of the former Catfish Haven restaurant. Fretwell's family members say Hester did not have her headlights on at the time.

When Fretwell's family learned that a Franklin County Grand Jury indicted Hester on misdemeanor-only charges, it didn't sit well with them. "We obviously thought it should be manslaughter," said Nikki Murray, Jennifer's sister. "But at least there are charges that will hold her responsible for what happened. We found out Thursday she'd been arrested and a family member contacted the district attorney's office to find out what happened."

According to the police investigation, Hester is believed to have early onset dementia. A source told the FFP Hester is now residing in a residential facility in the Shoals area.

As the case moves through the Franklin County Circuit Court system, it is anticipated that Hester's attorney will file a pre-trial motion asserting Hester is not guilty by reason of severe mental disease or defect.

This will be a two-pronged determination to be made by the court per Code of Alabama Sec. 13A-3-1.

First, at the time of the commission of the acts constituting the offense, was Hester, by reason of severe mental disease or defect, unable to appreciate the nature and quality of her acts, or unable to appreciate the wrongfulness of her acts.(Emphasis added).

Second, is Hester, as a result of severe mental disease or defect, unable to understand the nature of the charges she's facing and unable to assist in her own defense.

The burden falls on the defendant to prove, by clear and convincing evidence, she has a severe mental disease or defect.

But Murray said her family has seen videos where Hester is talking about the accident with other people. Fretwell's family questions how she could be unable to understand her actions at the time of the accident if she discussed it with others after the fact.

"That's the one thing that has hurt us more than anything, that she remembers the wreck," Murray said. "And she's talked about it with other people. There are videos out there. I think she should have to show more than just an act. We lost two people and it's hurtful when (Hester) makes it out like it's nothing."

Franklin County Sheriff Shannon Oliver told another media outlet that he spoke with Hester's family while she was being booked and those family members said Hester did not understand why she was at the jail or what was happening.

Ultimately, the Court will make the legal determination as to Hester's mental fitness to stand trial.

Fretwell's family is now working to have a law passed in Alabama that requires the revocation of a person's drivers license once he or she is diagnosed with dementia. Additionally, the family wants to see mandatory reporting by family members and/or doctors to the Alabama Department of Public Safety in such cases.

They created a petition and are gathering signatures to submit to legislators. The petition can be found by visiting www.change.org, and searching 'mandatory reporting Alabama dementia law.'

The petition, started by Jessica Seay, currently has 1,105 signatures. "We cannot afford further loss due to lackadaisical regulations around such critical issues. We must prioritize safety over convenience or discomfort about confronting difficult health issues like dementia," Seay said in her post.

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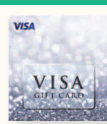
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An application and job description may be picked up, faxed or emailed upon request from the Franklin County Commission Office, located at 405 N Jackson Avenue, Monday – Friday, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, by calling (256) 332-8850 or applications are available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


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 **S**pring Revival will be held at Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church, April 7-10, 2024. Sunday at 5 p.m., and Monday-Wednesday at 7 p.m. Pastor Bro. Jeff Fleming and congregation invite everyone to attend. Evangelist will be Bro. Jonathan Prince. Church is located at 305 Bethlehem Road in Russellville. Spring Revival will be held at Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church, April 7-10, 2024. Sunday at 5 p.m., and Monday-Wednesday at 7 p.m. Pastor Bro. Jeff Fleming and congregation invite everyone to attend. Evangelist will be Bro. Jonathan Prince. Church is located at 305 Bethlehem Road in Russellville.

 **R**ussellville Masonic Lodge 371 is selling Hams for Easter. Hams are \$35 each and may be pre-ordered by calling 256-810-1970. Pickup is Saturday, March 30 between 8-10 a.m., at the Lodge on Coffee Avenue.

 **T**he Why Knot Show 'Em Off Easter Car Show will be Saturday, March 30, from 2-6 p.m., in downtown Russellville. Cash prizes, 50/50 drawing, Easter Eggs for kids, door prizes. In front of the Franklin County Courthouse. Easter Bunny from 4-5 p.m. Food truck vendors on site. \$15 entry fee.

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Contract with engineering firm next step in massive \$3.817 million City of Russellville paving project

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

If City of Russellville officials were to announce their plans for a \$3.817 million paving project through text message, they might post it in all capital letters, as it's far and away the largest such plan in the city's history.

The Russellville City Council took the next step toward that plan becoming a reality when it approved a contract with the Civil Group of Florence to handle preliminary engineering, including plan development, specifications and letting to contract at the council's March 18th meeting.

Once the project is started, the same firm will handle engineering and inspection as road improvements are being made across the city.

The \$3.817 million will come from several sources, including Rebuild Alabama Act funds (the state's 10-cent per gallon gas tax), the general fund and other city funding.

When the council approved purchasing its own paving equipment last year, it was 'all part of the process leading up to' what will be the largest-scale road improvement Russellville residents have seen,

according to District One City Councilman David Palmer.

Palmer said if the Russellville Street Department, using the new equipment, is able to do the bulk of final paving where the job doesn't have to be bid out, the funds will stretch even more.

"We would be able to do those jobs much cheaper obviously than if we have to let those same streets to contract," Palmer said. "This will be a two-phased project. Some will be done this summer into the fall. And the final phase will take place next spring and hopefully be completed by summer 2025."

Palmer said all City of Russellville streets were recently inspected, something that hasn't been done in four years. From those inspections, data is used to assess streets and that information will be distributed to council members so they can review the most pressing needs in their districts.

"That information includes traffic data, the number of residences, the number of businesses, etc.," Palmer said. "Those things are used as metrics to determine priority lists as well, in addition to the index produced from the inspections."

District Two Councilman Darren Woodruff is reviewing the inspection reports for his district. Woodruff has been in contact with Palmer about his preferences for projects based on need and cost.

"I am very excited to be part of the largest paving project in the history of the City of Russellville," Woodruff said. "I look forward to seeing how much paving we can get done in District Two and the entire city."

The \$3.817 million will allow an average of \$763,400 of paving and/or striping work in each of Russellville's five districts.

From the inspections, a map was prepared marking all city streets in varying colors that represent road condition and the other factors.

Palmer cautioned residents that even though there is a large amount of funding for these projects, just because a master list of streets is prepared, it doesn't mean all of those will get full resurfacing or repaving.

"We'll try to prioritize in each district from the top down to the bottom of what we want to do in this project. Some marginal streets may not make it ultimately," Palmer said.

In other agenda items at its March 18th meeting, the council:
--approved a resolution to declare two Gravely Proturn 148 KAW lawnmowers surplus property and to trade them in for new lawnmowers at Kiel Equipment of Russellville.

--approved the purchase of two Gravely Proturn 148 lawnmowers from Kiel Equipment for a cost of \$12,434 with trade-in.

--approved the resignation of Belen Paniagua from the position of Accounts Payable Clerk for the City of Russellville and authorized advertisement to fill the vacancy.

--approved a claim in the amount of \$300.59 from Luis Diaz, 248 James Road, for damages to his mailbox by a Russellville Fire Department truck.

The next regular meeting of the Russellville City Council will be April 1, 2024, with work session at 6 p.m., and meeting to follow.

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RCS board approves personnel moves at March 19th meeting

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville City Board of Education approved a number of moves at its March 19th meeting, but hiring a new superintendent was not among them.

The board held a work session Monday, March 18th, but did not discuss any applications, interviews or recommendations related to the vacant superintendent position.

RCS Superintendent Heath Grimes' retirement takes effect June 21, 2024. The superintendent position was posted through March 1, 2024, but it is unknown how many applied for the job.

Board members met late last week at the law office of RCS Board attorney Danny McDowell, where they met with multiple candidates for the position. But Board President Greg Trapp said there were no interviews conducted at that time or any other time so far.

Trapp said the board is working through the process to find the best candidate for the superintendent position, but he did not give a fixed time as to when the board would hire a candidate.

"I don't want to speculate as to a timeline. We're moving as fast as we can while we do a thorough job through this process," Trapp said.

Personnel moves approved by the board included:

--Leave of Absence Request: Reyna Kirchner, bookkeeper at Russellville High School, from May 28, 2024 through June 30, 2024, Leticia Vargas, EL teacher at Russellville Elementary School, from February 26, 2024 through May 24, 2024, and Charley Butler, West Elementary School teacher, from April 29, 2024 through September 3, 2024.

--Voluntary Transfer: Elizabeth Alonzo, transfer from EL aide at WES to EL aide at RES.

--Employment in Supplement: Kathy Sanchez, JV/Asst. Varsity Girls Soccer Coach, Ella Burcham and Bralynn Vincent, Park and Recreation Department Pool Manager Supplement.

--Temporary Employment in Position: Amir Williams and Tyler Liverett, student workers (part-time) at Park and Recreation Department.

--Substitute Bus Driver: Annette Nolen.

In other agenda items, the board:

--recognized Russellville Middle School seventh grader Aleya Lane for being named to the Alabama All-State Chorus, and the RMS Scholars' Bowl team for winning the District Tournament and advancing to the State Tournament last month.

--tabled an agenda item regarding revised salary schedules for coaching supplements. At their March 18th work session, board members cited concerns about future teacher funding due to the end of ESSER funds which were received as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The board's consensus was to address the teacher funding issue prior to considering any additional supplements.

Grimes made the recommendation at the March 19th meeting, so the board voted to table the entire agenda item relating to coaching supplement schedules.

--approved facility use request for the RHS Marching Hundred to use the RHS campus for the annual Northwest Alabama Marching Classic on September 21, 2024.

--accepted a bid for a cafeteria serving line at West Elementary School from Mobile Fixtures for \$81,300, the same being the lowest bid.

--accepted a bid for a walk-in cooler at RMS from Hotel and Restaurant Supply for \$37,000, the same being the lowest bid.

--accepted a bid for a pot and pan washer at RHS and a dishwasher at RES from Hotel and Restaurant Supply for \$114,875, the same being the lowest bid.

--approved Teacher Excellence and Accountability for Mathematics and Science (TEAMS) contracts for Kim Ertle, Brianne Roberts, Emily Nelson, Marisa Rich and Casey Guynn.

Alabama Secretary of State warns residents about 'misleading' election mailer

Submitted

Secretary of State Wes Allen is warning Alabama citizens of a misleading, unsolicited mass mailing of pre-filled voter registration forms targeting Alabama mailboxes. The mailer is not affiliated with the State of Alabama and has, in fact, been officially discouraged by the Office of the Secretary of State.

The Voter Participation Center and Center for Voter Information, the two groups operating the mass mailing, appear to be run by the same organization. They have communicated their intent to send at least two mass mailings of pre-filled voter registration forms to Alabama citizens, beginning as early as this month. The Secretary of State has submitted written objections to their efforts, due to the confusion they will create.

"On two occasions, this office was contacted on behalf of Voter Participation Center and Center for Voter Information regarding a mailer they planned to send to Alabama citizens. In response, I strongly discouraged the group's plan to mass mail our citizens," Secretary Allen explained. "This type of targeted, partisan interference by out-of-state, third-party organizations is unnecessary, confusing, and counterproductive."

In past election cycles, the Office of the Secretary of State has fielded complaints from concerned Alabama residents who received incorrect pre-filled voter registration forms similar to the ones being mailed by the Voter Participation Center and Center for Voter Information.

"Alabama citizens can rest assured that the Alabama Secretary of State's office and local election officials are well-equipped to handle voter registration in Alabama. Trusted voter registration and election information can be found on the Secretary of State's official website," said Secretary Allen.

Eligible Alabama citizens may register to vote online at www.AlabamaVotes.gov or mail a voter registration form to their local Board of Registrars.

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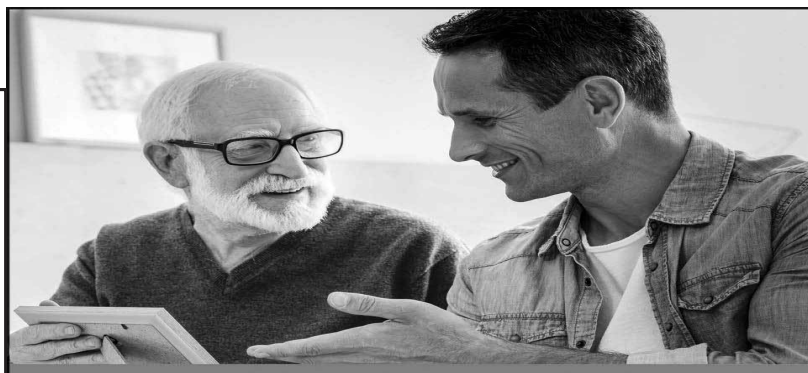
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RHS diplomas to show special designation to recognize fluent bilingual students

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Grimes also recognized Martinez' efforts in working with students to assist and encourage them to work towards the dual language certification.

The Russellville City Board of Education approved a plan to recognize and honor graduating seniors who demonstrate proficiency in English and another language.

On April 1, 2022, a new Alabama law went into effect that provides for a designation on a student's high school diploma if the student "demonstrates an intermediate level of proficiency in English and at least one other world language, including American Sign Language."

This designation applies to students at high schools whose boards of education approve the plan, which the RCS Board did Tuesday.

RHS EL/ML teacher Edmund Martinez told the board there would be 32 RHS seniors who will receive the special designation on their diplomas in May. While many of those are students proficient in English and Spanish, Martinez said there were several students whose proficiency in Native Indian dialects also are included in the state's plan.

"We will be the first in the state to do so," Martinez said at Tuesday's meeting.

The special designation on the graduate's diploma shows potential employers and universities which students are bilingual and those who prioritize the study of other languages and cultures.

The Alabama Seal of Biliteracy states: The Alabama Seal of Biliteracy emphasizes the importance of both bilingualism, which facilitates improved communication and boosts the local economy and cultural understanding that promotes social acceptance.

In a school system that has almost 60 percent Hispanic enrollment, the improved communication and cultural understanding can have a significant impact in the City of Russellville, RCS Superintendent Heath Grimes said.

The bar is set high when it comes to the criteria to receive the Alabama Seal of Biliteracy. It requires a student to earn a composite score of Level 4.8 or higher on the ACCESS test, and an Advanced Placement Language Examination score of 3 or higher.

"It's quite an honor that we have 32 students to be certified with the Alabama Seal of Bureaucracy. These students demonstrated achievement both in English and another language at a very high level," Grimes said.

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RHS girls' tennis team a favorite once again to capture Section tourney

Kadin Pounders
 Franklin Free Press

The Russellville High School varsity girls' tennis team is nearing the end of its regular season campaign and looking forward to the section tournament in mid-April. Up to this point it's been another solid season for a Golden Tigers squad who is sitting on just one section defeat going into their final few matches of the year.

"The season has been going good for us," Russellville head coach Charlotte Dollar said. "Our only loss in section, as far as a team, has been to Brooks and we split with them. We beat them one time and they beat us one time, and both times it was 5-4."

The Golden Tigers, the reigning Section 8 champions, are expecting a tough fight to keep a hold of the section crown.

"We'd really like to win the section tournament—we've won it several years in a row—but it's going to be a lot closer this year than it has been in the past," Dollar said. "Us and Brooks are going to be a real close match and Deshler, too. We've beat Deshler both times this season but the matches have both been pretty close. So I think it's going to be a real tight race between us and Brooks and Deshler."

"That's not counting anyone out," she added. "The teams that haven't done as well up to

See, 'TENNIS,' Page 14

RHS junior first Golden Tiger in 41 years named to ASWA all-state basketball first team

Kadin Pounders
 Franklin Free Press

Ronald Reagan was president, the Space Shuttle Challenger made its maiden voyage, and the hit television show M*A*S*H* was in its final season the last time a Russellville High School basketball player was named to the Alabama Sports Writers Association's all-state first team.

Back in 1983 then-senior Luther Tiggs was named to the ASWA all-state first team in Class 3A. Though there have been many Golden Tigers picked for the second team and received honorable mentions since then, none have been chosen as among the best of the best in the state—until now.

On March 16, junior guard EJ King was selected among the best five players in Class 5A when the ASWA released its all-state teams.

"It feels great," King said. "I gave it my all all season. I'm still kind of sad that we didn't make it too far (in the playoffs), but I am glad that I got all-state."

The players were picked by the ASWA prep committee with assistance from coach nominations. Russellville head coach Patrick Odom certainly believed King was worthy.



COURTESY PHOTO

See, 'ALL-STATE,' page 13

12-2 East Franklin baseball team eyeing Franklin County Tournament title

Kadin Pounders
 Franklin Free Press

The East Franklin Junior High School baseball team is nearing the conclusion of a season that has the Rebels boasting a record of 12-2 heading into their final two games.

The Rebels started the season 5-0 before dropping a 3-1 decision at Hackleburg on March 11. Following that loss East Franklin went on a six-game winning streak and shut out every opponent in those victories. The Rebels' only other loss was a tight 1-0 defeat at Phil Campbell on March 21.

"We've had some really good pitching and we've been swinging the bat well. We've just got to continue to do it," East Franklin head coach David Ward said.

In East Franklin's six-game run against the

likes of Deshler, Colbert County, and Winston County, the Rebels outscored their opponents 41-0.

"The pitching has been great," Ward said. "I think swinging the bat we've gotten a lot better and defensively we've gotten a lot better."

The first two games of the six-game winning stretch saw back-to-back Duboise no-hitters in a doubleheader against Deshler on March 14. The first was a combined no-hitter that saw Isaac Duboise toss four and two-thirds innings, striking out 12 batters. Miles Duboise came on in relief and struck out the final batter in the 4-0 win. Miles Duboise continued on the mound in the next game, a 6-0 victory, and fanned six over three shutout innings.

The Rebels no-hit the Tigers again two days later, routing Deshler 11-0 in four innings. It was Isaac Duboise again on the mound, but

See, 'TOURNAMENT,' Page 12

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'TOURNAMENT,' From Page 11

this time he went the full distance, striking out nine batters in the process. Miles Duboise led the Rebels with two RBI and Kye Baker came around to score three times in the game.

Colbert County was next to run into the buzzsaw. A fourth-straight no-hitter in four innings of work from Miles Duboise led East Franklin to a 7-0 victory in the game. Duboise finished with eight strikeouts while Baker led at the plate with two hits, two runs, and an RBI.

The no-hitters ended in the March 19 doubleheader against Winston County but not the winning. Issac Duboise led the team on both the mound and in the batter's box in the series' first game, a 4-0 triumph. He recorded the win on the bump, allowing one hit and striking out 11 in five innings pitched. At the plate he had a two-run double while Miles Duboise and Titus Nix both came around to score twice.

The winning streak was capped with a 9-0 win in the next game. Melvin Gutierrez got the start and tossed three shutout innings, striking out four before Miles Duboise came in in relief. The Duboises along with Eli Baker and Luke Morgan all knocked in a run.

It was Phil Campbell that finally silenced the bats and dispatched the Rebels on March 21 as East Franklin and the Bobcats split the doubleheader. Phil Campbell snuck by with a 1-0 victory thanks to an RBI from Kruz Cochran. Miles Duboise pitched well in the game, going four innings with 11 strikeouts, but he was bested on the day by Jack Owens, who gave up just two hits to the Rebels.

East Franklin got its revenge in game two. The Duboises were on the mound with Miles getting the start and Isaac coming in in relief. Miles struck out four batters in four innings, surrendering two runs, and Isaac hurled a scoreless fifth inning. Jonah Stancil was 2-of-3 at the plate and had a team-high two RBI while the Duboises came in to score two runs each. Jeremiah Smith also had an RBI.

This season, Miles Duboise leads the team with a .545 batting average while Isaac Duboise has a team-high 12 RBI. Isaac Duboise, with a season record of 4-1, has a team best 39 strikeouts on the mound.

The Rebels will end the season with a doubleheader at Tharptown before the county tournament begins on Saturday, March 30.

Naturally, the goal is to take the county title but Ward said, whatever the outcome, he's been happy with how his team has progressed throughout the season.

"I like to win. I hope we can win it," he said. "I've been impressed with a lot of my younger kids, who have really gotten a lot better. I've been watching them mature and learning the game. That's what it's all about. We've developed into a pretty good team."

"I just want to say that these are some really great kids out here," Ward added.

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'ALL-STATE,' From Page 11

"It's a great honor and a well-deserved honor if you look at the season (King) had. There's no way you can question it's deserved," Odom said. "When you look at the players picked around him, they're some of the best players in the state. It just solidifies what type of player he is. We know it, we get to see it every day, so it's great to see him get the recognition he deserves."

With his sneaky good performances, King helped lead the Golden Tigers to a 17-9 overall record and a fourth consecutive area title this past season.

"A lot of guys have a lot of shots, a lot of volume, but EJ is such an efficient player that he has big games in a very quiet way," Odom said. "We'll think he has 17 or 20 points and then look at the book and he's got 28 or 30 because of how he does it. It's just a steady approach."

It was another banner year, but Russellville was knocked out of the playoffs following a 74-43 loss to Ramsay in the northwest regional. This led King to think he may have been overlooked by the committee.

"I wasn't thinking that I would get it just because we lost in the first round at Wallace. I was thinking I was out of it," King said.

Sometimes players are hurt in the contest for individual awards when a team result doesn't go their way, but Odom said King's been seen and his talent speaks for itself.

"I think playing in the regional has given him some statewide exposure and if you look at the northwest region...and the state rankings, two-thirds of the teams in this region are ranked, so we're competing against some really good teams," Odom said. "If you look at our schedule this year, it wasn't like he was playing against a lack of competition. He was playing against some of the best, so putting up the kind of performances he did this year and play at the level he played against those teams, I think it has earned him a lot of respect."

King was the first Golden Tiger first team all-state player since 1983, but you have to go back even longer, back to Tommy Bonds in 1973, to find a non-senior player earning all-state honors. Luckily for Russellville, King has one more season left in the black and gold and

Odom is happy to have him around.

"(King) is a quiet guy but he's a leader in how hard he works. No one outworks him," Odom said. "He's just a steady presence for our team and that rubs off on everyone else."

"We're proud of his basketball, but he's an even better kid than he is a basketball player, and that tells you what type of young man he is," Odom added.

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Micheal Murray Commissioner District 1

I'm Micheal Murray, candidate for Franklin County Commission District One in the April 16, 2024 Republican Primary.

I'm a 1992 Russellville High School graduate. My wife, the former Kathryn Melton, is a 1989 graduate of Phil Campbell High School.

We have two children. Madison is a senior at Alabama A&M University and Grayson is a freshman at the University of North Alabama. They both graduated from RHS.

I have worked for the Franklin County Board of Education for 16 years, where I am a shop foreman. I also own M&G Automotive, a small business I've operated for 17 years. I work hard and I'm not afraid to get my hands dirty. I'll bring that same work ethic to the County Commission. As a business owner and school employee, I know how to work within a budget. It's not always easy to do so, but we've always figured a way to make the best of it.

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'TENNIS,' From Page 11

now, any of them could come on strong at the end." Russellville is hoping for the return of the team's number one, Peyton Parrish, soon. Parrish, who signed to play collegiate tennis at North Alabama in December, suffered an injury early in the season and has been out since.

"We're hoping she's coming back after spring break, but we don't know that for sure. We're hopeful she'll be back," Dollar said. "It's tough when you're missing your number one out there."

Her return would be a big boost to the Golden Tigers heading into the tournament, but in the meantime, Russellville has had players step up in her absence.

"(Parrish's) replacement, which has been Lakin Derrick, has played phenomenal to be coming up and subbing in there. She's played exceptionally well," Dollar said.

Derrick, alongside Dollar's number two, Sofia Tiffin, are undefeated in section action, as well as the doubles team of Lily Cate Pace and Kinsley Palmer. Others, if they have a section loss, have just one, Dollar said. That's in section play, but the Golden Tigers have seen some defeats this year against larger schools. Dollar said that experience against top non-section competition will be valuable for the team at tournament time.

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"We went to some big tournaments where we played big 7A schools. We played Hoover and Hewitt-Trussville and big schools like that, and we lost in some of those matches," Dollar said. "You try to play tough matches so that they learn to play from behind, learn to play in tight situations so when they get to section tournament or...if they make it to state then you're used to playing some teams that are tougher and have experience in those types of situations."

Of course, the goal is always to win the section and advance to the state tournament, but there are more than a half-dozen players with a real incentive to continue the success the girls' tennis team has seen in recent years and conclude the year in a satisfying way.

"We have seven seniors this year, so we're losing a big chunk of our experience and talent this year," Dollar said. "With all of these seniors we'd really like for them to have a great senior season and end everything on a positive note. We're hoping that they're able to do that, pull it all together, and have a great ending to the season at the section tournament."

The Golden Tigers will travel to Muscle Shoals on April 1 for their next match and play their final section match against Wilson on April 2. Russellville will then cap the regular season with matches against Decatur and Florence before hosting the section tournament at the RHS tennis complex April 15-16.

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