

The Tharptown cafeteria project has been pushed back. See Page 3 to find out when officials now expect construction to be complete.

Local Cub Scouts enjoyed an educational trip to the Russellville Airport, where they saw a presentation on the Tuskegee Airmen.



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Russellville, AL 35663

Mullins film lawsuit moving forward

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Roy Lee "Chucky" Mullins' life served as an inspiration to his Russellville community.

Two documentaries about his life are at the center of a federal lawsuit that appears headed to trial after a judge ruled there are material issues of fact that can be presented to a jury.

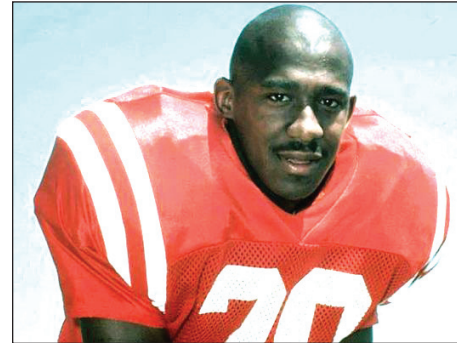
The lawsuit was filed by 38 Films, LLC, and Dr. Charles E. Smith, Jr., an associate professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Mississippi. There are multiple defendants, including ESPN, Inc., Mt. Philo Films, LLC and Wendy Yamano, who produced the ESPN documentary *It's Time: The Story of Brad Gaines and Chucky Mullins*, which originally aired in 2014.

The case was filed on August 31, 2016, and is pending in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi.

In his lawsuit, Smith, the creator of 38 Films, LLC, alleges that he made a 2004 documentary about Mullins' life called *Undeclared: The Chucky Mullins Story*.

The complaint alleges that in 2014 Yamano contacted Micah Ginn, who had been hired by 38 Films to assist with the project, seeking 38 Films' consent for her to use portions of *Undeclared* in her film. An oral agreement was reached with terms whereby Yamano would pay 38 Films \$3,000 for each minute of footage she used from Smith's film.

Smith alleges he sent 38 Films' entire digital archive to Yamano relying on the agreement. Three months later, Smith maintains Yamano called him and said 38 Films had no rights



Chucky Mullins

to any of the film that had been sent to her.

Yamano allegedly tried to change the terms of the agreement and proposed paying 38 Films a lump sum of \$3,000. Smith maintains he did not agree to change the terms. On September 4, 2014, Smith alleges Yamano sent him an email requesting he invoice her for \$3,000, and

See 'MULLINS,' Page 9

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Parker's Merchandise a true treasure trove



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

Stacie and Jamie Parker opened the doors of their retail business in Littleville on November 1.

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

It was a phone call from her father-in-law, Phillip Parker, that set the wheels in motion for Stacie and Jamie Parker's new Littleville business, Parker's Merchandise.

"Before he got sick, he called us one day and suggested we do a retail store. That's where we got the idea," Stacie said. "I hear people talk about when the Parkers were in Newburg and going to their business. So we decided to buy the building early this summer and follow up on his idea."

Though Jamie's father passed away last December, he no doubt would be proud of his son and daughter-in-law's new business venture. The Parkers purchased the former Community Marketplace building on Highway 43 in Littleville in May from Valley State Bank.

They opened the doors on their retail business November 1, with shelves stocked with similar merchandise previously available only at Parker Distributing Company, Inc., located

See 'TREASURE,' Page 11

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Peggy Joann Brown, Russellville, age 80
Died Tuesday, November 7, 2017. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens.

Connie Williams Hester, Phil Campbell, age 65
Died Tuesday, November 7, 2017. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home in Russellville. Interment in East Franklin Cemetery.

Myrl Elizabeth Cheek Martin, Russellville, age 95
Died Monday, November 6, 2017. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Liberty Hill Cemetery in Phil Campbell.

Cindy Taylor Sanford, Vinemont, AL (formerly of Russellville), age 60
Died Monday, November 6, 2017. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel in Russellville. Interment in Rock Creek Cemetery in Franklin County.

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Rock Bridge Trail still open, but foreclosure sale looms

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

With a foreclosure sale looming later this month, Hodges' Rock Bridge Canyon Equestrian Trail remains open for business, at least for now.

State Bank and Trust of Winfield took the required legal steps to publish the town's default on a \$750,000 note secured by the park's campground property, arena, camp store and the surrounding property. The foreclosure sale is set for Monday, November 27, 2017.

When contacted by the *Free Press* Monday, an employee with Rock Bridge Canyon said the park remains open and is still accepting reservations for camping. The employee said she had not been notified to stop taking reservations.

Repeated calls to Hodges mayor Terry Petree and Hodges City Hall were unanswered.

Dana Peoples, branch manager at State Bank and Trust, declined to answer questions when

contacted Monday. She referred any inquiry to the bank's attorney, Diane Henderson. Henderson did not return a message left with her office Monday morning.

Although nobody wants to talk about it on the record, the foreclosure appears imminent. The note is one of two on the property, along with a \$500,000 note to First National Bank in Hamilton. According to a source familiar with the park, the State Bank and Trust note is secured and has first priority.

The apparent default is the latest in a series of negative publicity incurred by the park.

When former park director Mike Franklin resigned last November, Franklin, seen by many as the face of the facility, said he was forced out by Petree. Petree said he was only trying to save expenses when he made a motion at a council meeting last year to change Franklin's salary to an hourly wage.

After Franklin's departure, Deborah and Danny

Avery, owners of Rock Bridge Canyon and Franklin's sister and brother-in-law, rescinded the park's use of the canyon, saying that Franklin's involvement with the park was a condition precedent to their allowing park users access to the canyon.

There remains pending litigation between the Avery's and the town relating to fees for use of the canyon that the Avery's say were not paid to them.

Petree posted a notice on social media last December reiterating that the park was open for business and was accepting reservations for 2017.

With the prospect of the facility being sold on the steps of the Franklin County Courthouse, the future of what was once one of the county's best tourism attractions is in jeopardy. Described as a 'treasure' on its web page, RBC Equestrian Park has events scheduled through the end of the year, including a benefit ride November 25, two days before the scheduled foreclosure sale.

Time frame for Tharptown cafeteria project pushed back

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When the Franklin County Board of Education approved a cafeteria renovation project at Tharptown School earlier this year, superintendent Greg Hamilton never envisioned the series of problems and delays that would subsequently result.

The latest setback came when the contractor of the cafeteria project was held in default after repeated notices of cure, which are legal demands for the contractor to correct conditions causing it to be in default. Hamilton said the company was seriously behind on its time schedule to start the project, and, as a result, the system had to take legal action.

"The Franklin County Board of Education exercised its right under the contract to make demand on the bonding company to take over the job at Tharptown High School," Hamilton said.

Earlier this year, the project appeared dead after the Alabama Building Commission stated that in order to renovate the school's existing cafeteria into four new classrooms, the cafeteria would have to be converted into a safety shelter. The cost of that would have grounded the project.

Hamilton said the time frame for completion of the project was April of 2018, but now that has been pushed back to the start of the 2018 fall school year.

That was resolved when, through a \$1.4 million leverage bond, another six-classroom facility was to be constructed that will meet the parameters for a safety shelter, giving Tharptown 10 new classrooms and a new cafeteria, as well as a tornado room that will fit the entire elementary school enrollment.

The process now, Hamilton explained, is for the system, in conjunction with the bonding company,

to contact the next-in-line bidder to get the cafeteria project started.

Hamilton said the time frame for completion of the project was April of 2018, but now that has been pushed back to the start of the 2018 fall school year.

As for the damaged band hall and science lab at Vina High School, Hamilton said he hopes to secure funding to have it demolished and rebuilt. For the moment, though, the building remains locked and unoccupied because school officials believe it to have suffered structural damage from a tornado and to be beyond repair.

Vina band students are using a makeshift band hall, and science classes have been moved into another classroom, but no lab is available.

"It's a disservice to students," Hamilton said. "We have a temporary band hall in a portable large building, but it's frustrating. We just disagree with [State of Alabama] Risk Management officials about the integrity of the building."

Council votes to suspend police officer, pending investigation

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

After a 60-minute executive session, the Russellville City Council unanimously voted to suspend a police officer for 14 days pending an internal investigation.

Officer Brett Evans' suspension was effective immediately after the motion was made by councilman Arthur Elliott, seconded by Gary Cummings and approved by the mayor and council. The motion called for Evans to be suspended 14 working days "pending an investigation," according to minutes of the November 6 meeting.

Chief Chris Hargett, who was out of town on police business last Monday evening, said he learned of the suspension later that night.

"With a pending investigation, it would not be appropriate for me to make any statement or discuss any allegations," Hargett said.

While Elliott's motion did not outline the specifics of the incident that led to the suspension, he did say it was initiated by local residents.

"I can't say anything at the moment, since it's an ongoing thing," Elliott said. "It came from the public. That's where all this started from—from citi-

zens coming to me."

The matter was discussed in a lengthy executive session, which is closed to the public.

"It will be up to the police department to investigate," Elliott said. "We felt it was serious enough for all of us after hearing some information, and it was a unanimous vote."

Russellville mayor David Grissom said the investigation would be handled within the police department and declined to offer specific allegations.

"It's not appropriate to comment. We need to let the investigation run its course," Grissom said. "We don't yet know if the allegations are warranted, and out of an abundance of caution it will be investigated."

Grissom said Evans' suspension would be with pay.

According to the RPD's website, Evans is a patrol officer who earned the department's physical fitness awards in 2015 and 2016, and the Good Conduct Award in 2015.

In other action at its November 6 meeting, the council:

•Approved a proposal for engineering services with Civil Group for a 48' x 10' community storm shelter at the John Blackwell Sports Complex at a

cost of \$5,200 for engineering services.

•Approved and authorized the submission of the Foster Grandparent Program grant application for 2018 and approved the city's local match in the amount of \$3,975.68 based on the current number of foster grandparent volunteers.

•Voted to ask Brad Williams with North Alabama Council of Local Governments to look into the city's downtown grant to see if there are any restrictions from making a traffic safety improvement at the intersection of Jackson Avenue and Limestone Street. Councilman David Palmer said he had received a citizen complaint about limited visibility for traffic attempting to cross Jackson on Limestone.

•Approved waiver of the rental fee for use of the A.W. Todd Centre by the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce on December 2 and by the Russellville High School volleyball team on November 16.

•Asked the city attorney to research whether three additional spots could be added to the Russellville Industrial Development Board, with each being filled by a board member on the Russellville Electric Board, Russellville Gas Board and Russellville Water and Sewer Board.

Honey Do List: Breathe easier

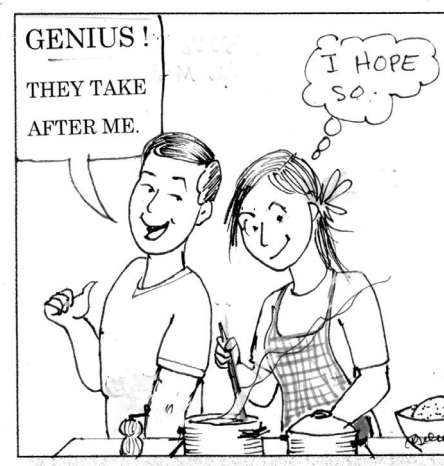
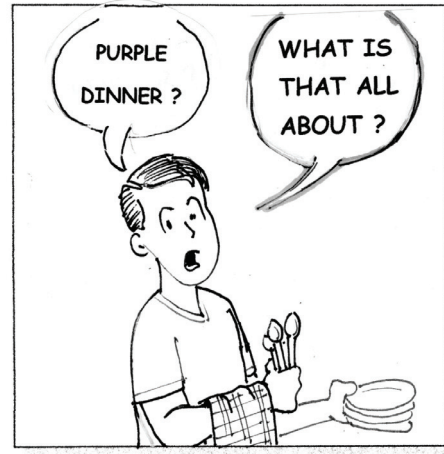
Every day we live, work and play in many different environments, come into contact with many people and handle many different types of materials. We, generally, have little control over the cleanliness of these different experiences, but most people go home to the same house and sleep in the same bed every night. This is one area where we have control and can fight allergens that cause many different health issues. While you sleep, you inhale microscopic, allergenic particulates from bedding, carpet, draperies and upholstered furnishings. If you suffer from allergies, the removal or regular cleaning of these areas will help. Bedding should be washed weekly in water that is at least 130 degrees. Mattresses and springs should be vacuumed regularly. There are allergen-proof zippered covers that may be used to cover mattresses to keep them from collecting dust, and it will provide a washable surface. Use synthetic pads and pillows. Feather and cotton pillows are huge habitats for allergens. Severe allergy-sufferers should remove carpet and heavy drapes. If removal isn't possible, vacuum regularly. Tile, linoleum or even-short napped carpet is better, and light,

airy window treatments are much less prone to holding dust. Avoid storing items under the bed. This creates areas for dust to collect and allergens to thrive. If you must use this space, use clear storage boxes and clean the area regularly. Clear boxes make it easier to see the contents and allow light into storage areas to discourage spiders and critters from taking up residence. Humidity levels are important to control dust mites, who need high humidity to survive. Dehumidifiers, bathroom vents and air cleaners can help control humidity, but if the humidity is too low the air will be dry and uncomfortable to breathe. Maintain any air filters in these machines. It's recommended that once or twice a year you "move out" of the bedroom and thoroughly clean all areas, bedding and window coverings. The cooler days of fall that are approaching are a good time to do this. You'll be sure to breathe a little easier. Remember, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.



Doug Green

OUR ^{PURPLE} HOUSE By: Ree SHANNON



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DAVE SAYS
 Financial Straight-Talk
 www.davesays.org
 by Dave Ramsey

Married or single, budgeting is the key

Dear Dave,
Do you have any tips for how single people can stay on track with their finances?

Deb

Dear Deb,
The first thing I'd suggest is the same advice I give to married couples, and that is to spend less than you make and live on a written, monthly budget. Sit down at the end of each month and write down—on paper—all your expenses and income for the upcoming month. Give every dollar a job, then spend everything on paper before the month begins.

When you think about it, budgeting isn't that difficult. All it takes is a little time and a few basic math skills. Some expenses, like your mortgage payment or rent, will be the same. If you have a car pay-

ment, it should remain constant as well. Things like utilities and groceries may fluctuate a little based on the time of year, but you can formulate pretty accurate estimates by looking at past months.

Another thing I would recommend is finding a mature, trustworthy friend or family member to act as an accountability partner. This person should also be good with money, and your relationship should be strong enough that they're not afraid to call you out if you start behaving irresponsibly with your cash.

Sit down, just the two of you, once a month and talk about your finances. You can even go over your income and budget line by line if it helps.

The point in this scenario is to get support from someone who cares about you, and is willing to be there—and help hold you accountable—for the financial decisions you're making.

Dave
Used car warranties?

Dear Dave,
What is your opinion of used car warranties?

Anonymous
Dear Anonymous,

I'm not a fan of extended warranties in general, and I especially dislike used car warranties. In my mind, they're bad because they're expensive and—on average—of little benefit to the buyer.

Did you know, in many cases, only about 12 percent of what you pay for used car warranties goes to cover the cost of repairs? That means around 88 percent goes toward profit, overhead and commissions.

In fact, some used car dealers make more money from the sale of extended warranties than they do on the sale of actual cars.

The best way to cover yourself is to buy smart and self-insure. Save up an emergency fund of three to six months of expenses, and stay away from stuff like used car warranties!

Dave

**Dave Ramsey is CEO of Ramsey Solutions. He has authored seven best-selling books, including The Total Money Makeover. The Dave Ramsey Show is heard by more than 13 million listeners each week on 585 radio stations and multiple digital platforms. Follow Dave on the web at www.daveramsey.com, and follow him on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.*

Flight Night



PHOTO BY JOHN PILATI

Tom McKnight (right) presents a poster detailing the history of the Tuskegee Airmen to Harry Mattox of the Russellville Airport.

Scouts visit local airport

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Members of Cub Scout Pack 39 enjoyed an evening at the Russellville Municipal Airport last Tuesday as part of the airport's annual Aviation Night.

The scouts heard a presentation from Tom McKnight about his cousin Lt. Carroll Napier Langston, a Tuskegee Airman who was killed in action when his P47 aircraft lost air pressure and crashed on June 7, 1944, off the coast of Italy. They also had the opportunity to inspect a Diamond Star aircraft owned by Robbie Tidwell, and airport manager Harry Mattox told the scouts about their local airport.

McKnight, who served in the U.S. Air Force from 1964-68, is a member of American Legion Post 31's honor guard. McKnight told the scouts about the honor guard and how a military funeral is conducted.

McKnight shared the story of Langston, his cousin, and the long journey involved in transporting his body back to its final resting place at Greenwood Cemetery in Nashville.

Through McKnight's efforts, Langston was honored with a military ceremony including flag fold, rifle volley and the playing of Taps some 73 years after his death when Post 31 Color Guard and Russellville pastor B.J. Bonner traveled to Nashville on June 10 of this year. He told the scouts how men like Langston fought for their freedom and urged them not to take their education for granted.

"His story can share how veterans put their lives on the line for your

See 'AIRPORT,' Page 11

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"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat..."
Matthew 25:35


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 Russellville Masonic Lodge 371 will be selling hams for Thanksgiving. Hams are \$30 and may be pre-ordered by calling 256-810-1970. Pick-up will be Wednesday, November 22 from 8-10 a.m. at the Lodge on Coffee Street.


 Samaritan's Purse (Operation Christmas Child) shoeboxes are being collected November 13-20. Go online to samaritanpurse.org/occ to find drop-off locations, hours of operation and suggestions for packing a shoebox. Deadline is Monday, November 20 at noon. Interested in volunteering? Stop by any of the drop-off locations during hours of operation; all help is welcomed!


 The Spruce Pine Historical Society will be having Craft Night on the third Thursday of each month at the Spruce Pine Community Center at 6:30 p.m. For more information, please call Kim at 256-436-3992.


 Gentiva Hospice offers a grief support group, "Grieving Well Together," that meets the third Thursday of each month at 10 a.m. in the Lenox room at Calvary Baptist Church in Russellville. Next meeting will be this Thursday, November 16. You are invited to attend.


 Chicken stew (Riley Taylor recipe!) will be for sale at the Frankfort Community Center this Saturday, November 18. Serving begins at 11 a.m. Stew will be \$20/gallon, or eat in for \$5 (includes drink and dessert).


 Mountain Top Homemakers will hold their annual Bazaar this Saturday, November 18 from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. at New Hope Methodist Church, located on Hwy. 81 in the Oak Grove community. All money goes to charity, such as local fire departments, police departments, St. Jude's, the Shriners, and hospice needs and nursing home needs for local residents. Decorative towels, pictures, wreaths, lots of assortments of Christmas gifts. Come see us!


 The Reedtown Back to Basics Life Skills Center will sponsor a free fellowship Thanksgiving dinner on Sunday, November 19 from 2-4 p.m. at the Chucky Mullins Center on Hamilton Street in Russellville. All are welcome!

 The quarterly meeting of the Colbert County Historical Landmarks Foundation will be held this Sunday, November 19 at 2 p.m. at Helen Keller Public Library. The program will be presented by Sheffield architect David Milstead, who will update our organization on the progress being made with restoration of the former Grace Episcopal Church, Sheffield. Vickie and Gary Dean, who acquired the building and have undertaken its restoration, will be our guests for the meeting. We commend them and look forward to hearing all about their continuing work and plans for the future of this historic landmark. Refreshments will be served following the meeting. For more information, call 256-383-4401 or 256-710-9081.

 The Roxy's *Legend of Toyland*, a much-loved musical written and directed by Lanny McAlister, will premiere at the historic Roxy Theatre on November 29 and run through December 3, with 12 performances. Tickets will be sold the second Saturday of each month prior to the Kerry Gilbert Band and Guests Show at the Roxy. For updates on events and ticket sales, visit the Facebook page, The Legend of Toyland.

 Mountain Valley Hee Haw features live music every Friday and Saturday night. Show time is 6 p.m. Karaoke at 7 p.m. on Thursday nights. Free admission. No alcohol or drugs allowed. From Russellville, take 243 to Hwy. 79, turn right, go 1/4 mile, 3rd building on left. For more info, call 256-332-5479 or 256-810-4840.

 TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly) weight loss support group meets each Monday evening at 6 p.m. at the Russellville Recreation Center. Weigh-ins being at 5:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome to drop in for a free meeting visit. Call 256-446-5962 or 256-412-2855 for more information.

 The Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert at the Roxy Theatre in downtown Russellville on Saturday, December 9 at 7 p.m. General admission seating. Doors open at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for children ages 6-12, and free for children under 6. Group discounts available! Call 256-335-4356.

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Students visit Cypress Cove

Michael Rice
For the FFP

Last Tuesday, students from northwest Alabama joined with students from Tishomingo, MS to learn about veterans at Rep. Johnny Mack Morrow's Cypress Cove Farms.

Fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-graders had a busy schedule, with several activities to take part in and learn about veterans. Frankie Smith, Red Bay's Commander of American Legion Post 120, oversaw most of the activities at the event.

"Johnny Mack and I saw a problem in our school systems where students aren't learning what veterans are," Smith said. "We made this program to educate kids and show them why they should appreciate them."

Students participated in all types of activities, including learning how to fold flags. They also had the privilege of hearing not one but two World War II veterans speak. Cecil Batchelor of Russellville, and Aubrey Smith of Muscle Shoals were the honored veterans who spoke about their time in the service.

Batchelor, Chairman Emeritus of CB&S Bank's Board of Directors, told stories to the young students and offered the advice of education, not war, being the answer.

"We should focus on ourselves and the well being of others rather than fighting," Batchelor said.



Rep. Johnny Mack Morrow (left) with World War II veterans Cecil Batchelor and Aubrey Smith at a school program last week.

'MULLINS,' from page 1

later that evening ESPN ran Yamano's documentary.

Smith alleges he and his staff digitized and altered their footage and that Yamano's use of it was in violation of their agreement.

The lawsuit alleges breach of contract, fraudulent misrepresentation, negligent misrepresentation, conversion, copyright infringement, negligent hiring and seeks a preliminary and permanent injunction against the defendants.

When contacted by the *Free Press*, Smith declined to comment on the pending litigation.

Mullins, a Russellville High School graduate, went to Ole Miss on a football scholarship. Mullins was injured on October 28, 1989, when he made a head-first tackle on Vanderbilt fullback Brad Gaines. Mullins shattered four vertebrae in his cervical spine and was paralyzed as a result.

Mullins' story caught the attention of the college football community, as well as his hometown. Mullins returned to school at Ole Miss in June of 1990 to finish his education. He died on May 6, 1991.

According to the complaint, Yamano's documentary was supposed to focus on Gaines and how the incident affected his life. The plaintiff maintains it was really a documentary about Mullins and that defendants stole their ideas in the making of the film.

Smith seeks an injunction preventing the defendants from promoting, airing or profiting from their documentary in any way while the lawsuit is pending.

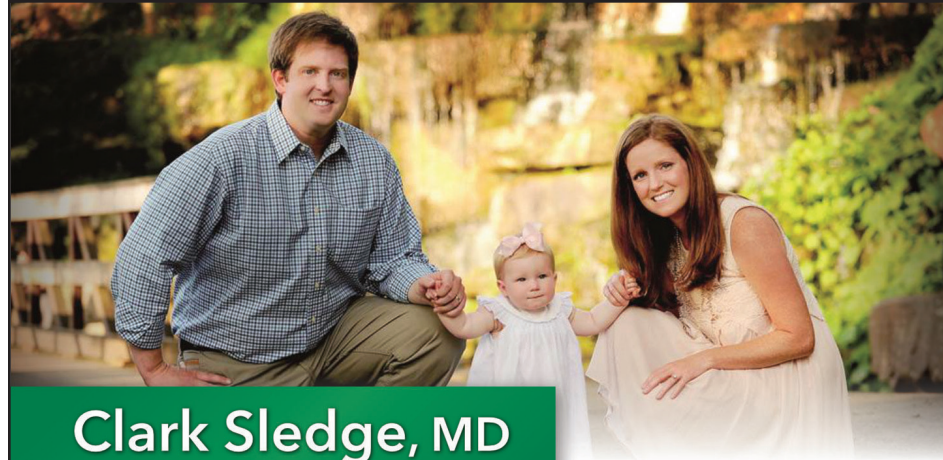
The defendants maintain that use of any footage from 38 Films doesn't rise to the level of copyright infringement.

U.S. district judge Michael Mills' October 30 order finds the presence of "material facts present in the copyright claim such that a jury could reasonably find for the Plaintiffs," (10/31/17 Order, Page 8). As a result the court denied the defendants' motion for summary judgment, opening the door for the case to be tried before a jury.

Carver and Karen Phillips, the Russellville couple who raised Mullins after the death of his mother, were not aware of the lawsuit when contacted by the *Free Press*. The Phillips said they are disappointed and tired of people exploiting Mullins' story in an effort for personal gain.

"They are all out for themselves," Carver said. "When [Smith] went through with his documentary, he told us a bunch of lies. He made his money and told us he didn't have to give us a dime. It's a disappointment and disgrace to us to see money made off of Chucky's name. We haven't received a dime.

"We didn't take in Chucky for money, but if there's money made off Chucky's name it rightfully should go to us."



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OB/GYN



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An Alabama native, Dr. Sledge completed his OB/GYN residency at Parkland Hospital in Dallas, TX (top 10 national medical residency programs). He is able to communicate with both his English and Spanish-speaking patients.



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Yard sale this Thursday & Friday, November 16-17 from 8 am-until at 214 Hillendale Drive, 1 mile past McDonald's. Lots of household items, toys, flower arrangements, jewelry, clothes and lots more!

Rummage sale this Thursday-Friday-Saturday, November 16-18, at 1001 Washington. Furniture & appliances.

Call 256-627-1916 or 256-332-5081.

Multi-family yard sale this Friday, November 17 from 8 am-until at 901 Hwy. 144. 24 East to 724, second house on the right. Christmas dish sets, sheets, plus-size ladies' clothing, men's and women's clothing (reg. size), misc. items.

Garage/Estate sale this Friday & Saturday, November 17-18, at 489 Seminole Street. Bedroom furniture, dining room furniture, living room furniture. Lots of other stuff. No sales before 9 a.m.

Yard sale this Saturday, November 18 from 7 am-until at 100 Spring Street, Russellville. Household items,

clothes, some furniture.

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House for rent to own in Russellville. 149 Wedgewood Drive. \$2,000 down. \$550 a month. Call 256-412-8333. (4)

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Furniture for sale. Couch and chair, \$75. Two café booths, \$100 for both. Call 256-412-4012. (1)

Burgundy recliner, \$75. Computer desk, \$45. Big Boy chair, \$75. Call 256-332-0068. (3)

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Refrigerator for camper or dorm, \$25. Call 910-578-5821.

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Pre-lit 7-foot flocked Christmas tree with decorations, \$125. Tree and

decorations from Hobby Lobby. Call 256-810-4530.

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Firewood for Sale. \$65/load. Call 256-460-8467. (2)

Firewood for sale. Call 256-324-9779. (2)

Baby swing for sale. Runs on 3 speeds. Plays music. \$25. Please call 256-324-2917. (3)

Two Fenton baskets, \$37 each. MK purse, \$40. Green Carnival glass pitcher and six glasses for \$60. Call 256-332-0068. (3)

For sale: 70 concrete blocks. Also, small bush-hogger and small box blade. Call 256-810-7359. (3)

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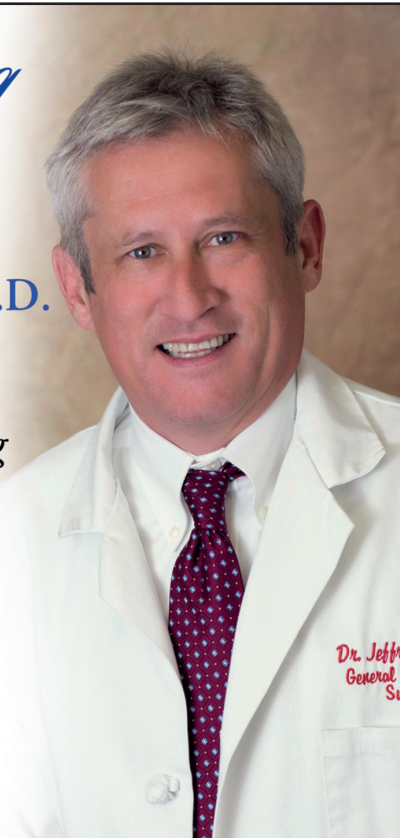
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'AIRPORT,' from page 5

future," McKnight said. "Be appreciative of the educational opportunity you have."

McKnight presented Mattox with a commemorative poster about Langston and the Tuskegee Airmen as a way of thanking him for his work in promoting the history of the group.

"You have been a tireless advocate promoting the history of the Tuskegee Airmen, and we appreciate your efforts," McKnight said.

Mattox said Russellville Airport, also known as Bill Pugh Field, handles approximately 3,000 operations each year. With more than 5,000 feet of runway, the airport is designated a Class 2 facility, and that allows corporate aircraft to come into Russellville.

Mattox said the annual Aviation Night introduces young people to their local airport.

"This is a chance to give back to the community

and let these guys learn what's happening at our airport in Russellville," Mattox said.

The scouts asked McKnight a variety of questions ranging from his age (72) to how many people he killed (none) to what type of aircraft he flew (none).

During his tenure in the Air Force, McKnight was part of a team that serviced B52 bombers, but he was never commissioned as a pilot.

'TREASURE,' from page 1

on Highway 24 West.

"It's a completely separate business and incorporated independently from the other one," Stacie said. "But we'll carry much of the same merchandise and some things we don't carry at the warehouse."

Parker's Merchandise offers a treasure trove of new items, most of which are closeout items purchased in bulk.

"For example, Walmart discontinued a very nice line of glass bowls, and we have those for sale at a great discount," Stacie said. "We also have our line of tarps and brown jersey gloves."

Stacie, who will run the day-to-day operations of Parker's Merchandise, and Jamie have four employees: Charlotte Bragwell, Barbara Higgins, John Bunt and Drew Daniels.

Parker's Merchandise is open Monday through Saturday from 8 a.m.-7 p.m., and beginning on Friday, November 24, there will be special holiday hours of Monday-Saturday from 8 a.m.-9 p.m. and

Sunday from 1-6 p.m.

Most of the store's inventory is purchased from Parker Distributing. Stacie explained that her husband has a great resource of contacts and suppliers of merchandise from the many years of experience Phillip had in the business.

Even though the new location has been open for business since the first of the month, the Parkers have stayed busy stocking the shelves and adding more inventory daily.

"We've got a handle on it, but we still have tons of stuff to put out," Stacie said. "There's pallet after pallet at the warehouse waiting to come here."

Parker said it was a pleasure working with Valley State Bank officials, and she also expressed appreciation for the warm welcome received by Littleville city officials.

"We have built a great relationship with the Town of Littleville," she said. "Before we even opened our doors, they were like a kid at Christmas, excited about a new business coming to town. They

have been super supportive."

Included in the wide variety of items for sale at Parker's are two aisles of tools; lots of Alabama and Auburn merchandise; purses, including concealed purses with a spot for a pistol in the back; rustic home décor; military-themed décor; and large buckets of laundry detergent.

Other popular items for sale include animal traps, rods and reels and fishing tackle, car seat covers and floor mats, light bulbs, socks, bamboo sheets and even some Tennessee and Mississippi State merchandise.

The Parkers' new venture adds to a lengthy list of family members in the business. Jamie operates Parker Distributing, Inc. His brother Jason has two retail locations in Mississippi, and his brother Chris operates Parker Surplus Sales in Loretto, TN.

Parker's Merchandise is located at 1884 George Wallace Highway in Littleville. You can reach them by phone at 256-398-8939.

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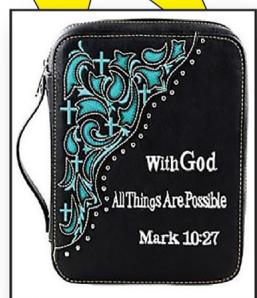
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Basketball is back in Belgreen!

The Lady Bulldogs are set to tip off their season at home against county rival Red Bay on Friday.

It's Holiday hoops time!

Vina's girls will host a Thanksgiving tourney starting this Thursday.



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SPORTS

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Week 12 in the SEC

The most impressive aspect of Auburn's 40-17 whipping of Georgia last week was the way the Tigers controlled the line of scrimmage. Prior to Saturday, the Bulldogs had rushed for at least 200 yards in eight of their first nine games and 185 in the other; against Auburn's outstanding defensive front, they managed 46 yards on 32 attempts.



Mike Self
Sports Editor

The story was much the same on the other side of the ball. Georgia had held six of its first nine opponents to less than 65 yards on the ground; the Tigers rolled up 237.

Auburn's performance, combined with Alabama's struggles in Starkville, certainly raised the level of intrigue heading into next week's Iron Bowl. This much we know: The winner will face Georgia for the SEC title, and—provided the Bulldogs make it to Atlanta without dropping another game—the winner of *that* game will punch its playoff ticket.

Let's not jump the gun, though. There are five conference games on the Week 12 SEC docket. Tennessee fired Butch Jones on Sunday, so we'll pass on picking the Vols' home game with LSU. [It won't be pretty.] Let's dive in on the other four.

**Last week's record: 3-1 (33-11 this year)
Saturday, November 18**

Kentucky (7-3, 4-3) at Georgia (9-1, 6-1)

Auburn showed that it is possible to run the ball against Georgia. That's good news for Kentucky tailback Benny Snell, Jr., who has rushed for 100-plus yards and three touchdowns in three straight games. On the other hand, a mediocre Wildcat defense could be subject to a bounce-back effort from a Georgia offense looking to get back on track.

The Pick: Georgia 34 Kentucky 14

Missouri (5-5, 2-4) at Vanderbilt (4-6, 0-6)

Lost among the wreckage of awful seasons by the likes of Florida, Tennessee, Arkansas, et al, is the fact that Vanderbilt is winless in SEC play following a 3-0 start to the year. That's not likely to change against a white-hot Missouri team that has scored at least 45 points in four straight games (all wins).

The Pick: Missouri 38 Vanderbilt 28

MS State (7-3, 3-3) at Arkansas (4-6, 1-5)

Should Dan Mullen regret not going for it on fourth-and-three in plus territory late in the fourth quarter of Saturday's loss to Alabama? He shouldn't face any such agonizing decisions this week against the hapless Hogs, who have allowed 40-plus points four times in conference play for the second year in a row.

The Pick: MS State 35 Arkansas 20

TX A&M (6-4, 3-3) at Ole Miss (5-5, 2-4)

True freshman Jordan Ta'amu has thrown for 368, 382 and 418 yards in his first three career starts, with seven touchdowns. Apparently, quarterbacks grow on trees in The Grove. Expect a shootout in Oxford.

The Pick: Ole Miss 41 TX A&M 38

Gifted guards take center stage for RHS

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Patrick Odom is the first to admit it—he coaches Devin Buckhalter a little differently than he does most other players.

And with good reason. Devin Buckhalter is not most other players.

"As far as just general athleticism, he's got it all," Odom said of the 6'0, 194-pound Buckhalter, a physically gifted junior guard at Russellville who squats 400 pounds and possesses a 36-inch vertical to go along with a sweet shooting stroke. "He's got great hands, he's got good feet and he's so strong. That was the big thing that changed

See 'GUARDS,' Page 16



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

BUCK SHOT - Buckhalter broke out last season as a sophomore, averaging 13.0 points per game. He is Russellville's lone returning starter and leading returning scorer.

Wildcats make history again with first-ever playoff shutout

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

COLBERT HEIGHTS - The defining play of Colbert Heights' first playoff win in a decade began innocently enough.

With roughly a minute gone by in the third quarter and the Wildcats clinging to a 7-0 lead over Locust Fork last Thursday night, senior quarterback Kevin Shaw took the snap from the Hornet 39-yard line and darted up the field on a keeper. Almost immediately, Shaw was grabbed by linebacker Hunter Neely, who tried his best to reach in and pry the football loose.

The 6'3, 185-pound Shaw kept fighting his way forward, pulling Neely along with him, until both players were enveloped by a swarm of bodies, seemingly huddling together for warmth on a cold November night at Amos Mitchell Stadium. The play appeared dead in the water after about a five-yard gain, but Shaw refused to go down, so the rugby scrum continued.

Little by little, the mass of humanity—at least ten to twelve bodies strong by this juncture—kept moving...and moving...and *moving*, gathering momentum like a snowball rolling downhill. Finally, Shaw burst from the pile and lunged forward to the 22-yard line, squeezing every last inch out of one of the more hard-earned 17-yard gains you'll ever see.

"That wasn't me," Shaw would later say. "That was everybody. It was great effort by everybody."



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Riley Fuller's second-half sack of Eli Musso was one of 13 tackles made at or behind the line of scrimmage by Colbert Heights.

The play epitomized what second-year head coach Taylor Leathers had hoped to see from his offense after a frustrating first half.

"Give Locust Fork credit," Leathers said. "They played well defensively and did some things that took away some of what we wanted to do. But we adjusted. I really challenged our offensive line at the half to take over and dominate the game at the line of scrimmage.

"That play showed our guys that if we could get a hat on a hat and go knee-to-knee and toe-to-toe with them, we could take control of the game up

See 'SHUTOUT,' Page 14



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'SHUTOUT' from page 13

front."

On the very next snap, senior fullback Dylan Chandler ripped right through a demoralized Hornet defense for a 22-yard touchdown run, his second of the night and 19th of the season. Blane Howard tacked on the extra point to make it 14-0 with 10:17 left in the third, and the Wildcats never looked back. They drove 80 yards for another touchdown on their next drive and then added a late pick-six by Shaw, punching their ticket to the second round for just the fourth time in program history with a 28-0 win.

Amidst a record-setting season, Colbert Heights (10-1) made history yet again on Thursday, recording the first playoff shutout in the program's 52 years and matching the school record for wins previously set by the 2007 team that went 10-2.

"First round of the playoffs, and we get a shutout," senior linebacker Korey Saint said after the game, marveling at the scoreboard while his teammates took part in the singing of the alma mater behind him. "Amazing. To be on the varsity for five or six years and now finally get to play in a playoff game in my senior year, it's amazing. It's something me and these seventeen other guys won't forget."

Shaw, another member of the Wildcats' 18-man senior class, echoed those sentiments.

"Crazy," he said. "It was a big atmosphere. It'll be a great memory."

Wildcat fans in attendance for their team's first playoff win since November 9, 2007, will remember another terrific defensive performance in a season full of them. Watching film of Locust Fork's Wing-T based offense last week, Leathers pinpointed the jet sweep and the trap as the Hornets' two bread-and-butter plays. Outside contain, he said, would be critical to stopping the jet sweep.

On the fourth snap of Locust Fork's opening drive of the night, quarterback Eli Musso handed the ball to Neely on the jet. Saint, starting at outside linebacker in place of injured senior Brendan Borden, stormed off the edge and swallowed up Neely for a three-yard loss.

"Brendan broke his collarbone [in the team's Week 10 game against East Lawrence], so I moved up from safety to outside linebacker," said Saint, who ranked second on the team during the regular season with 69 tackles. "My job was to set the edge, and I was able to get in the backfield and make a play."

He wasn't the only one. After the Wildcats took advantage of a short field to grab a quick 7-0 lead on Chandler's two-yard touchdown run with 7:21 left in the first quarter, the Hornets (4-7) began their second drive at their own 29-yard line. Musso tried to throw a quick screen on first down, but senior end Bud Pratt crashed through the line and rocked Musso just as he released the football, forcing an incompleteness.

Two plays later, senior linebacker Bevin Foust tackled Musso a yard shy of the marker on third-and-three, and then massive senior tackle Isaiah Miller teamed with Pratt to stuff Musso's sneak attempt for no gain on fourth-and-one.

"Our defense played outstanding tonight," said Leathers, whose team held Locust Fork to just 201 total yards and nine first downs while making 13 tackles at or behind the line of scrimmage. "They really carried us through the first half while we were struggling a little bit on offense, and they continued to play well all night long. Any time you can get a shutout in the playoffs, that's huge."

The Wildcats failed to capitalize on the short field following the early fourth-down stop, and then Locust Fork put together its first positive drive of the night. Musso connected with Neely for gains of 16 and 24 yards, and then Neely broke off a 13-yard run down to the Colbert Heights 27. On the first play of the second quarter, however, senior defensive lineman Brannon Bradford tackled 6'0, 220-pound fullback Drew Rogers for a one-yard loss to put the Hornets in third-and-long. Musso threw incomplete twice, and Locust Fork turned the ball over on downs.

The Wildcats picked up three first downs on their ensuing possession (converting a fourth-and-one from their own 45 on a two-yard run by Chandler), but the drive stalled just across midfield and they punted. Rogers got Locust Fork moving with a 16-yard run, but a false start penalty and a tackle for no gain by Pratt and Chandler put the Hornets behind the sticks. On third-and-15 late in the first half, Musso—under pressure from linebacker Riley Fuller—threw a short pass to Neely, who was promptly drilled by Foust for a six-yard loss.

Shaw found tight end Evan Norton for 13 yards to get the Wildcats' next drive going, but an intentional grounding penalty and an incompleteness forced Colbert Heights to punt. The Wildcats, who held Locust Fork to just 85 yards in the first half but gained only 101 themselves, settled for taking a 7-0 lead into the locker room.

"First round of the playoffs, and we get a shutout," Saint said. "Amazing. To be on the varsity for five or six years and now finally get to play in a playoff game my senior year, it's amazing. It's something me and these seventeen other guys won't forget."

"We started a little slow on offense," Leathers said. "I thought overall our guys handled their first playoff game really well, but maybe our struggles on offense in the first half had a little bit to do with nervousness and just not knowing exactly how to play in a game like this. We're a senior-laden team, so I reminded our guys at halftime that we didn't want this to be the last game we played."

Last Thursday night was hardly the first time the Wildcats have labored into the locker room only to play lights-out football in the second half.

"We do that a lot," Saint said after the game. "Sometimes we just have to come in there and get our tails chewed, and then we start to play better."

Added Shaw, "The effort [on offense] just wasn't where it needed to be in the first half. It was a lot better in the second half."

From the very first snap of the third quarter (a 15-yard run by Chandler Willis on the jet sweep), the Wildcat offense demonstrated a greater sense

of urgency. Two plays later came the signature 17-yard pile-driver by Shaw, and then Chandler dashed to the end zone to make it 14-0.

Junior defensive end Tyler Tubbs tackled Musso for a one-yard loss on third-and-10 to end Locust Fork's next possession, and then Colbert Heights put together its most impressive drive of the night.

Chandler got things rolling with an 11-yard run, and then freshman Carson Shaw scampered for 25 more down to the Hornet 24. A false start cost the Wildcats five yards, but Kevin Shaw connected with Willis for a 23-yard gain down inside the five. On third-and-goal from the one, the 6'2, 188-pound Chandler plowed into the end zone for his third touchdown of the night—and 20th of the year—to make it 21-0 with 4:23 left in the third.

The Hornets moved into Colbert Heights territory on their next drive, but Fuller sacked Musso for a six-yard loss on third-and-13 to force a punt. The Wildcats fumbled the kick, setting up Locust Fork with its best field position of the night, but the Colbert Heights defense rose to the occasion yet again. Saint stopped Rogers for no gain on first down from the 20-yard line, and then Braden McCaig tackled Rogers well short of the marker on fourth-and-seven to force a turnover on downs.

Colbert Heights punted, but Shaw sealed the deal when he stepped in front of a Musso pass to record his team-leading fifth interception of the season and then delivered a highlight-reel return, running it back 55 yards to the end zone to make it 28-0 with 7:08 remaining.

Chandler put the game on ice with four carries for 34 yards on the Wildcats' final drive; he finished the night with 116 yards and three scores on 19 attempts and now has 1,074 yards and 20 touchdowns on 168 attempts this season.

Kevin Shaw rushed 15 times for 76 yards on Thursday, giving him 885 yards on 161 carries this year. Shaw threw for 37 yards on 3-for-6 passing.

As a team, Colbert Heights rushed for 257 yards on 41 attempts, an average of 6.3 yards per carry.

Prior to last week, only three teams in Colbert Heights history had ever advanced beyond the first round; all three lost in round two—to Phil Campbell in 1999, Susan Moore in 2006 and, most recently, Clay County in 2007. For these Wildcats, a trip to Weaver is on tap for Friday.

At the end of a season that has already seen a lifetime's worth of streak-breaking and history-making, why shouldn't the 'Cats crash the quarterfinals for the first time and, in the process, become the first team in program history to win 11 games?

"I can tell you this about the playoffs," Leathers said last Thursday, still wet from his post-victory Gatorade shower. "The biggest jump in competition is from round one to round two. There's gonna be eight teams in the north half of the state, and all those are gonna be really good football teams."

"But I'm proud of these kids for what they've been able to accomplish this year. I'm grateful to God that He's let me be a small part of it."

Kevin Shaw, for one, couldn't wait to take that next step. Just the thought of it made him smile.

"Second round," he said. "Here we come."

Green: Boards will be big for Belgreen girls

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

The Belgreen Lady Bulldogs have guards who can shoot, post players who can score, and more than enough experience and depth to improve upon last year's 15-15 record—despite the fact that they'll be facing a tougher schedule this season.

But head coach Chad Green firmly believes that the key to his team's chances of returning to Hanceville after a one-year absence is—above all else—rebounding.

"I hope we push the ball up the floor and shoot the ball well," Green said. "We've got good post players down low. But as the year goes on, I hope more than anything that we're one of the best rebounding teams around."

That was not the case last season, and Green takes full responsibility.

"We didn't focus as much on rebounding the basketball," Green said, "and that's my fault. I'm bound and determined for that not to be the case this year. Our top priority is rebounding the basketball. I feel like that's one thing that's a must for us to advance deep in the playoffs."

Green, a Russellville graduate who coached at Tharptown for nine years before taking over the Belgreen program in 2015, has long been a staunch admirer of Red Bay legend Donnie Roberts, who believed strongly that rebounding was more often than not the critical factor that decided the biggest of games. Now that Roberts is retired, Green sounds ready to take up the mantle when it comes to the importance of boxing out.

"I definitely think rebounding is one of the top priorities when it comes to winning those close games," Green said. "You get a couple of offensive rebounds, and it breaks the other team's back. Or you rebound on the defensive end and hold the other team to one shot. Whichever team gets more shot opportunities has a better chance of winning."

The more shots the Lady Bulldogs get, the better, because making them shouldn't be a problem. Veteran guard Jasmine Martin, the team's lone senior, knocked down a team-best 45 threes last season and averaged 7.3 points per game. She's joined in the backcourt by junior guard Gabbie Moore, who has made 66 threes over the past two seasons while scoring in double-figures 21 times; sophomore guard Autumn Bragwell, who burst onto the scene with five threes and 17 points in a late-season rout of Covenant Christian last January; and junior guard Emma Willingham, another capable perimeter shooter.

"We didn't focus as much on rebounding the basketball last year," Green said, "and that's my fault. I'm bound and determined for that not to be the case this year. Our top priority is rebounding the basketball."

Both Moore (who is moving to point guard on a full-time basis after averaging 6.5 points per game off the ball last season) and Martin (who will play some at the one when she's not firing away from the wing) will be asked to handle the ball a lot more this season following the graduation of veteran guards Brianna Wood and Shellie Barber.

"Gabbie will start at the point for us," Green said. "During the summer, she did a good job there. You could tell she had really improved. She was playing with more confidence than she had the past couple of years when it came to handling the basketball and even shooting the basketball."

"Jasmine is just a solid player. She's a solid shooter. She's gonna be our backup point guard, and she'll start on the wing. She's a solid defender and a good passer. She's been playing varsity since the seventh grade, so you're not gonna find too many players who have played more varsity basketball than her. She's exactly what you want in a senior."

Bragwell, Willingham and sophomore Gracie Dempsey will also see significant minutes on the perimeter.

"Emma's a good hustler," Green said. "She does the dirty work and gets on the floor after the ball. Gracie, she's a great defender. She'll be one of our top defenders this year. And Autumn is turning into a good scorer, not only from outside but as a jump-shooter as well."

The guard rotation is solid, but Belgreen's strength may lie in the paint. Emma Dempsey, a 6'0 freshman, is back after averaging a team-best 10.2 points per game as an eighth-grader last season. She shot a solid 61 percent (100-for-164) from the foul line and put up three games of 20-plus points, including a career-high 26 in a win at Vina on January 10.

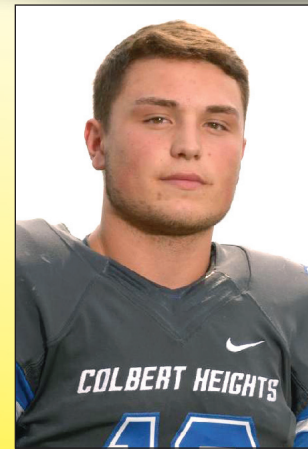
"Emma has been working on her post moves," Green said. "She's long and athletic, and she's getting stronger. We're in the weight room a lot, and she knows she's gotta get stronger down low. The ceiling is very high for her."



Korey Saint Senior LB, Colbert Heights

A position change didn't slow down Saint in the least last Thursday against first-round playoff opponent Locust Fork. Moving up from his normal safety spot to replace injured outside linebacker Brendan Borden, the 6'2, 200-pound Saint made a big tackle for loss on the Hornets' opening drive and finished the night with a team-high nine total stops in the Wildcats' 28-0 win.

For the season, Saint ranks second on the team with 78 tackles, including 3.5 for loss. He also has a pair of interceptions.



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Dempsey is joined in the post by 5'8 sophomore Katie Dempsey (her older sister and Gracie's twin), along with juniors Megan Smith and Camie Terrell and sophomore Ansley Tate.

Katie Dempsey (pictured at right) led Belgreen in rebounding a year ago and averaged 7.3 points per game as a freshman, shooting 63 percent (93-for-148) from the foul line. Terrell averaged 4.0 points per game in a reserve role, demonstrating the ability to step out and knock down mid-range jumpers with consistency.

"Camie Terrell is one of the best mid-range shooters on the whole team," Green said. "From the free throw line, from the short corner—she's a knock-down shooter, and she's working more on her outside shot, too. I think we'll see that improve."

"Katie, she's just a bruiser. She's just a beat-and-bang girl, a good defender and a good rebounder down low. Ansley Tate has really improved down low with her post moves and her conditioning as well."

With the renewed emphasis on rebounding, Smith is likely to see significant minutes in the paint.

"Megan is probably the best box-out girl on the whole team," Green said. "She likes contact, and she does a great job boxing out. She's really solid fundamentally."

Belgreen will open the season this Friday at home against Red Bay, and the Lady Bulldogs will once again battle Phillips for the top spot in Class 1A, Area 13. Belgreen and Phillips split two regular season meetings last year, and Phillips won the area tournament title on its home floor in February.

"They're one of the preseason favorites to win a state championship," Green said. "They've got pretty much their whole starting five back, except for one. Coach [Scott] Veal does a great job with them. They have good athletes, some good, quick guards, and some good post players. We'll have to play well to beat a team like that."

"Coach [Hope] Hudson at Hackleburg lost a lot of good veteran players on her team. They had four or five seniors last year. Coach [Tanna] Benford at Tharptown has some good young talent coming up with [Brooke] Dailey and [Aly] Vandiver. I think Richie [Hester] has a good team down at Vina, too. His daughter [Abby Hester] is a good point guard, and they have some really good shooters. You'll really have to defend that three-point line against them."



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between his ninth- and tenth-grade years, just the strength level he was able to play at."

As a freshman reserve two years ago, Buckhalter averaged better than five points a game for the Golden Tigers and showed flashes of being able to do much, much more. But, as players who are both really young and really talented are prone to do, he also drifted on occasion—not loafing, by any stretch, but perhaps throttling down the engines a bit and coasting.

Those occasions did not escape the notice of his head coach.

"I coach him very hard," said Odom, who is about to begin his 19th year on the sidelines and his third season at RHS. "Because sometimes, as much ability as he has, Devin could get casual from time to time. So I told him, 'I'm gonna coach you hard, because God's given you more, and you've gotta give it every day.'

"He's the complete package. It's hard to say what his ceiling might be. He's so talented, and then you add the work ethic and the fact that he's a great kid, too. When you put it all together, it's a formula for success."

Those "casual" stretches were far less frequent for Buckhalter last season, when he blossomed into a big-time player capable of burning defenses from virtually anywhere on the floor. He finished second on the team in scoring (13.0 points per game), threes made (34) and free throw shooting (74 percent), topping the 20-point mark on five occasions.

Buckhalter got better as the season progressed, averaging 14.4 points in 14 games after January 1 and 17.3 points in three postseason games, offer-



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

STROKE PLAY - McNutt led the Golden Tigers last season with 39 threes made and also shot a team-best 75 percent from the foul line.

ing hints that his best may be yet to come. That's good news for the Golden Tigers, who must replace four senior starters off the team that went 18-8 a year ago and won a second straight area tournament title.

"There were a lot of seniors surrounding him last year," Odom said of Buckhalter, who also averaged 4.6 rebounds and 2.1 assists while reaching double-figures in scoring in 20 of the team's 26

games. "But the fun part was, as many seniors as we had and as many great players as were on that team, there were two or three nights where Devin was the difference. That was the growth you saw, the maturity.

"Now, with where he is and as many games as he's played, we expect him to be the difference every night. That's what you look for when you have good players with the God-given ability that he has."

Buckhalter is capable of incredibly hot stretches [he torched East Limestone for 25 points in the first three quarters of a key road win last January], but it's not as though he'll have to go it alone this year. Fellow junior guard Lucas McNutt also returns after a breakout sophomore season in which he buried a team-best 39 threes and shot 75 percent (45-for-60) from the foul line.

Like his classmate and backcourt partner, McNutt also flourished down the stretch, averaging 10.4 points in 14 games after January 1 and finishing the season at 8.2 points per game.

It's not a stretch to say that Russellville probably wouldn't have won the area tournament without McNutt, who came off the bench to nail six threes and score 20 points in a first-round win over Lawrence County and then made two technical free throws with less than five seconds remaining to give the Golden Tigers an 83-81 victory over East Limestone in the final.

"There were a couple of games last year where Lucas was the difference for us," Odom said, "with his ability to make shots and to make big shots in big moments. Confidence is something every

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coach talks about. As a player, you need it, but in order to get it you have to earn it in those types of moments.

"People ask me why I picked Lucas to shoot those free throws, and I tell them, 'Because I knew he would make them.' That's the confidence I have in him, and in Devin, too. They know my expectations. Like I've told both of those guys, when you walk out on the floor feeling good about yourself and believing in what you can do, it rubs off on everybody else."

Odom said last week that Buckhalter is fully recovered from the broken foot he suffered in late August, an injury that necessitated surgery and ultimately cost him the entire football season.

"He has been cleared, and he's been practicing full-speed," Odom said last Friday. "He's looking good. He looks like Devin Buckhalter should look, and that's helped me sleep a whole lot better."

Full seasons of health and consistent production from Buckhalter and McNutt are crucial to Russellville's hopes of winning a third consecutive area championship. The only other player with significant varsity experience is junior forward Caden Parker, who averaged 2.3 points per game in limited minutes off the bench last season. The Golden Tigers have five seniors (guards Brock Malone and Houston Kitterman, athletic forward Logan Jones, and post players Calen Bragwell and Danny Hernandez) on the roster, but all of them are essentially rookies when it comes to the varsity level.

"People ask me why I picked Lucas to shoot those free throws, and I tell them, 'Because I knew he would make them.' That's the confidence I have in him, and in Devin, too. They know my expectations. Like I've told both of those guys, when you walk out on the floor feeling good about yourself and believing in what you can do, it rubs off on everybody else."

"The interesting part of our roster, and something that I've never really had before, is that our five seniors are not the most experienced players on our team," said Odom, who spent 14 seasons at Shoals Christian and two at Belgreen prior to arriving at Russellville in 2015. "They've been in our program, so they have an understanding of the system and the terminology and all that. They've been with me since I've been here, but there's not a lot of varsity experience there. We've gotta have a lot of those guys step in and play well for us."

Malone and Kitterman, each of whom moved up from the B-team late last season, will be counted on to provide ball-handling and perimeter shooting.

"The more those guys can handle the ball," Odom said, "the more that will allow us to play Devin and Lucas off the ball and give them more opportunities to score. We're gonna look a little perimeter-oriented at times, but we don't really have a choice."

Odom's first team at Russellville, with 6'6 Adonis Bailey and 6'5 Austin Stidham down low, was by far the biggest he's ever coached. Stidham returned last year and averaged 11.7 points and 8.4 rebounds per game as a true back-to-the-basket post player, but now he's gone, too, and the Golden Tigers are depending on the athleticism and energy of Jones, the physicality of the 6'2 Bragwell and the work ethic of Hernandez to fill the void in the paint.

Odom's free-flowing, up-tempo style is built on getting defensive stops and rebounding the basketball, which begs the question: Who's going to rebound the basketball?

"Everybody," Odom said. "I say that because that's been a very common focus point for us every day. This team has to team-rebound. Last year, we had a guy in Stid who was good enough to control the boards by himself. That allowed other guys to leak out in transition. This team can't do that. We have to team-rebound. Everybody is responsible for it."

"I do think Calen Bragwell will be a very important guy for us when it comes to that, though. He's not 6'6 like Stid, but he's strong, and he's a good athlete. He's gotta provide that physical presence for us in the paint."

"We want to get out and play in transition, but you've gotta rebound to run, and that's gonna take a great effort from everybody."

Rugged freshman Brooks Scott, who started all season at inside linebacker for the Golden Tiger football team, should provide immediate help in the paint, and fellow ninth-grader Chandler Dyas brings more perimeter shooting and scoring to the table.

The Golden Tigers are scheduled to tip off their season on Monday, November 20 at Colbert County. They will once again battle Brooks, East Limestone and Lawrence County in the Class 5A, Area 16 race.

"As far as area goes, we feel like it should be ours, because it has been ours," Odom said. "But there's a lot of work to go achieve that. Everybody else returns more starters than we do. It's gonna be a big challenge."

"If we play with competitive character and bring that element the way it has to be brought every day, then we feel like we can compete for an area championship. That's within our grasp."

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Congratulations to Week 11 winner **PAM SMITH**, who correctly picked nine out of ten games and also picked Auburn to beat Georgia 21-17!

Franklin Free Press Football Picks Contest

Week 12: November 18	Brady's Pick	Your Pick
Kentucky at Georgia	Georgia	_____
Missouri at Vanderbilt	Missouri	_____
LSU at Tennessee	LSU	_____
Mississippi St. at Arkansas	Mississippi St.	_____
Texas A&M at Ole Miss	Ole Miss	_____
Michigan at Wisconsin	Wisconsin	_____
Kansas St. at Oklahoma St.	Oklahoma St.	_____
TCU at Texas Tech	TCU	_____
Utah at Washington	Washington	_____
UCLA at USC	USC	_____
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Lady Red Devils bring back plenty of firepower

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

With the top three scorers—including All-State guard Abby Hester—back from last year's 22-win team, expectations are as high as they've been in quite some time for Vina's girls. But head coach Richie Hester knows that those high expectations won't mean much on Thursday afternoon, when the Lady Red Devils tip off the season with a game against Whitesburg Christian Academy in the Vina Holiday Tournament.

"We're excited," Hester said on Sunday. "But when you're excited, you've still gotta prove yourselves, and that's what we're hoping to do."

"We're hoping to prove ourselves."

For the Lady Devils, proving themselves at least in part means avoiding the kind of second-half lull that took some of the shine off last year's blistering 17-2 start. Vina stumbled out of the gate in January and went just 5-7 the rest of the way, ultimately falling all the way to the No. 4 seed in the Class 1A, Area 13 tournament and losing to host Phillips in the semifinals.

"We did have a great year last year," Hester said, "but we were kind of upset with the way we came back from Christmas. After the Christmas break, it took us two or three weeks to start back playing good again. During that span, we had four or five area games, and that really hurt us. We didn't play good in those games that were key to the season. At the end of the season, we were back playing like we were at the beginning of the year, but we got a bad draw in the tournament. This year, we're hoping to maybe maintain consistency throughout the season. Our expectations are higher."

Those expectations largely center around the high-scoring trio of Hester (a senior point guard), sophomore guard Kaitlyn King and junior forward Emma Humphres, who among them accounted for 197 of Vina's school-record 215 three-pointers made last season.

"Those are three prolific shooters, for sure," Richie Hester said.

The 5'2 Hester came up big in virtually every way, leading the Lady Red Devils in scoring (18.0 points per game), assists (8.3 per game), steals (5.7 per game), threes made (75) and free throw shooting (185-for-247, a rate of 75 percent) on her way to earning second-team All-State honors from the ASWA. She topped the 20-point mark 14 times, including a career-high 43-point barrage in an overtime loss to Tharptown on January 13.

Hester has already scored 1,067 career points at the varsity level, and she has plenty of help, too. King knocked down 68 threes last season and shot a solid 49 percent from inside the arc, averaging 10.9 points and 5.9 rebounds per game. Humphres hit 54 threes last year and averaged 9.9 points while also pulling down a team-high 9.0 rebounds per game.

All told, Hester, King and Humphres combined to score 1,175 points last season, an average of 37.9 points per game.

Vina Holiday Tournament (Nov. 16-18 at Vina High School)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16

2:00 - Vina vs. Whitesburg Christian (Varsity Girls)

3:30 - Winston County vs. Sheffield (VG)

5:00 - Whitesburg Christian vs. Addison (VG)

6:15 - Vina vs. Winston County (Varsity Boys)

7:30 - Vina vs. Addison (VG)

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17

3:15 - Vina vs. Sheffield (VG)

4:30 - Waterloo vs. Winston County (VG)

5:45 - Waterloo vs. Winston County (VB)

7:00 - Sheffield vs. Waterloo (VG)

8:15 - Vina vs. Winston County (VG)

***Tournament play continues with 8 games on Saturday**

Lefty guard Rayleigh Guin and post player Sarah Scott, both eighth-graders, filled the other two starting spots for Vina during a strong summer, and senior guard Kaleigh Vandiver (a Belgreen transfer) and sophomore forward Sarah Johnson will also see major minutes.

"I think we're a little deeper than we were last year," Hester said. "Sarah Johnson has a lot of athletic ability. She brings a lot to the table. She was our best defensive player last year. When we had to stop somebody on the other team, she was the one we called on. She's very important to our team."

"Kaleigh gives us more depth and another guard who can shoot it. Rayleigh Guin has a lot of athletic ability, and she can shoot and run the floor and do whatever we need her to do. Sarah Scott gives us a threat under the goal

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that we didn't have much last year. She's a good rebounder and can shoot under the goal. All of those things add to what we didn't have last year."

As seventh-graders last season, Guin and Scott helped lead Vina's junior girls to a runner-up finish in the county tournament.

"They were both a major part of that," Hester said. "They're young, but they're gonna be thrown into key positions for us and see a lot of time. They'll have to mature quickly."

Sophomore Hannah Johnson and freshman Amy Colvin will play reserve roles, and Hester expects eighth-graders Hailey Cantrell and Abbie Petree to move up from the junior high level and make an impact later in the season.

By that time, Hester hopes the Lady Red Devils will be well on their way to battling the likes of Phillips and county rival Belgreen for an Area 13 championship—and more.

"We've played at Wallace before," he said. "We went to Hanceville the summer before last, and we want to go to Wallace [for the regional tournament]. We may have three of the top teams in 1A in the state of Alabama in our area, with us, Phillips and Belgreen, and you can't count out Tharptown. They have a lot of young players, and I know they didn't have a great season last year, but they'll be a lot better this year."

"Our expectation is to be in Birmingham this season."

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