



Christmas Celebration

The NW-SCC Music Department will perform a free Christmas concert Sunday at FBC Russellville.

Broadband Internet

Johnny Mack Morrow says electric co-ops are key to providing service to rural Franklin County.

PRSR STD US POSTAGE
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Russellville, AL 35663

FranklinFreePress.net

12.06.17

PCES students decorate Capitol tree

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Christmas at the Alabama State Capitol has a distinct Franklin County flare as students from Phil Campbell Elementary School's fourth-grade class traveled to Montgomery last Thursday to decorate a tree in the capitol rotunda.

The trip was at the invitation of Alabama secretary of state John Merrill. Each holiday season, Merrill invites an elementary class to travel to Montgomery to decorate the secretary of state's Christmas tree.

In 2015, Merrill invited the fourth-grade class from Westwood Elementary School in Coker, where his wife Cindy teaches. Last year, the invitation went to Merrill's former elementary school in Cleburne County.

This year, the secretary reached out to Phil Campbell Elementary, his wife's alma mater.

"This year, the logical school to invite was Phil Campbell Elementary, where my wife Cindy attended," Merrill said. "I called [principal] Jackie

See 'TREE,' Page 3



COURTESY PHOTO

Secretary of state John Merrill invited the fourth-grade class at Phil Campbell Elementary School to Montgomery last week to decorate a Christmas tree in the State Capitol rotunda. Merrill's wife Cindy is an alumnus of PCES.

NW-SCC appoints interim president

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

When the chancellor of the Alabama Community College System appointed Dr. Glenda Colagross as acting president of Northwest-Shoals Community College in October, it wasn't the first time he'd called.

Colagross was appointed interim president at Southern Union State Community College in 2013, a position she held for more than four years. While she enjoyed her tenure with Southern Union (a college with campuses in Valley, Wadley and Opelika), Colagross was ready to come home to northwest Alabama and the college she's called home since 1992.

A 1979 graduate of Cherokee High School, Colagross was class valedictorian. She attended the University of North Alabama, where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics and English in 1983.

Colagross received her Master of Arts in Education degree from UNA in 1990 and her Doctoral degree in

Higher Education Administration from the University of Alabama in 1996.

She has been part of the NW-SCC faculty since 1992, when she was hired as a developmental studies instructor in math and English. Colagross became Dean of Instruction in 2001; Vice President of Instruction, Institutional Effectiveness and Development in 2008; and was named NW-SCC Vice President in 2012, a position she's kept even while serving as interim president at Southern Union.

Colagross sat down with the *Free Press* recently to discuss her return home, the state of NW-SCC, the future of



Dr. Glenda Colagross

See 'PRESIDENT,' Page 9

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Story idea?



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Velmar Welch Parrish, Haleyville, age 86
Died Monday, November 27, 2017. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel in Russellville. Interment in Spruce Pine Cemetery.

Larry Houston Sherrill, Russellville, age 72
Died Friday, December 1, 2017. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home. Interment in Ramsey Cemetery in Russellville.

Bobbie Ann Voyles, Russellville, age 79
Died Thursday, November 30, 2017. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home. Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens.



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Morrow: Electric Co-ops key to solving broadband issue

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Officials from six area municipalities and several electric cooperatives met with Rep. Johnny Mack Morrow (D-Red Bay) and representatives from Tombigbee Rural Electric Cooperative last Wednesday morning to learn what the company is doing in Marion County with fiberoptic high-speed internet.

The goal, Morrow explained, is to craft a plan among all the entities to present to Tombigbee's internet arm, freedomFIBER, that could bring affordable broadband internet to Franklin County and Tishomingo County, MS.

Tombigbee officials attended a public forum in Phil Campbell in October to answer questions and provide information to Franklin County residents interested in seeing a reliable broadband provider service the rural parts of the county.

FreedomFIBER is building a network of broadband internet in the cities of Hamilton and Winfield as part of a conditional \$40,000,000 investment. FreedomFIBER plans to expand into the remainder of Marion County and Lamar County and the cities of Haleyville and Fayette next year.

Last Wednesday's meeting, held in Hamilton, allowed representatives from the various cities the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about what is happening with Tombigbee Communications, LLC, which operates under the freedomFIBER name.

"If we wait around and do nothing, AT&T and Charter and Comcast will never run high-speed internet into our rural areas," Morrow said. "This is the only way we have a shot--if the electric cooperatives, the same ones who brought these people electricity in the '30s and '40s, make this happen."

In order to bring broadband internet to less populated rural areas of Franklin and Tishomingo Counties, Morrow said they will have to follow the script of what was done with rural electric providers decades ago.

"Following the construction of the dams on the Tennessee River and the creation of TVA, the problem was how to get the electricity to remote rural families and businesses," Morrow said. "The Rural Electric Cooperatives were created, and everyone received the electric service, even those customers at the very end of the road. It worked with electricity in the early 1900s, and it will work with affordable high-speed internet today."

Buddy Wiltshire, mayor of Belmont, MS attended the meeting and liked what he heard, although he's realistic about the timeframe in which any plan would develop.

"We're going to have to have cooperation from a lot of different entities. Our local Tishomingo County Electric Power Association will have to be on board with this. I think they would be," Wiltshire said. "It would have to be a team effort. I don't think anything will happen as fast as anyone would like, but, yes, I think it is a definite possibility."

What would be required, Morrow believes, is a package proposal whereby freedomFIBER would come into Russellville, Red Bay, Phil Campbell, Vina, Hodges, Belmont and Golden in order to create a subscriber base large enough to justify the infrastructure expense of expanding into the less populated rural areas.

"I taught economics, and there's such a thing as economies of scale," Morrow said. "If a larger number of people are there as potential customers, that adds to the attractiveness of the proposal. When you put in Belmont and Golden, Mississippi, with Red Bay, that's a lot of potential customers."

"If you're stringing broadband wire all the way to Red Bay, why not look at Belmont and Golden and all the businesses and people down there?"

While Belmont is served by MaxSouth and AT&T U-verse, there is no provider for the more remote outlying areas.

"There are a lot of customers they can't reach. That's the same way with AT&T U-verse," Wiltshire said. "There are certain areas not available at the present time that need to have the same opportunities to have affordable high-speed internet."

Past efforts to appeal to larger providers to service rural areas of Franklin County have been unsuccessful, Morrow explained.

"If we wait around and do nothing, AT&T and Charter and Comcast will never run high-speed internet into our rural areas," Morrow said. "This is the only way we have a shot--if the electric cooperatives, the same ones who brought these people electricity in the '30s and '40s, make this happen."

"There are not a lot of alternatives out there to have dependable high-speed internet. We're at the discussion stage exploring this alternative. That's the best way to describe today's meeting."

Darren Woodruff, chairman of the Russellville Electric Board, announced that the board would be hosting a broadband meeting on Thursday, December 21 at 6 p.m. at the Russellville Electric Warehouse.

PUBLIC NOTICE

On December 1, 2017, Pilati Investments, Inc. filed an Application with the Federal Communications Commission seeking authorization for the construction of a FM Translator to serve the community of Russellville, AL. The proposed FM Translator will operate on Channel 228 at 0.25 kilowatts. The proposed FM Translator will rebroadcast AM station WKAX, Russellville, AL which operates on frequency 1500. A copy of the Application is available for public inspection and comment on-line at www.fcc.gov.



'TREE,' from page 1

Ergle last week and asked if she was interested in bringing her fourth grade, and she said yes.

"Cindy is an alumnus of Phil Campbell Elementary, and that area is very important to me. I want the people of Phil Campbell to know how much we appreciate them."

Franklin County superintendent of education Greg Hamilton was thrilled to hear about students at one of his schools traveling to Montgomery as guests of the secretary of state.

"We are honored he would ask one of our classes to come do that," Hamilton said. "Secretary Merrill is a true advocate for Franklin County, and I'm really honored he called and invited the students at Phil Campbell to decorate the tree."

The students enjoyed a tour of the state capitol before decorating the Christmas tree in the rotunda.

"We were super-excited to get the invitation, both teachers and stu-

dents," Ergle told Larry Lee, author of the *Education Matters* blog. "You know, something like this doesn't happen every day for our little school."

The students wore holiday-themed shirts they made at school. They toured the capitol, met with Merrill and placed their handmade decorations and ornaments on the tree.

Merrill, who took office in 2015, said he plans to continue the annual tradition of inviting a fourth-grade class to Montgomery each December to decorate the tree.

"When I became secretary of state in 2015," Merrill said, "I was approached in November by the governor's office and told we would have a Christmas tree in the capitol rotunda, and I could invite anyone I wanted to decorate it."

"I'm honored to have students from my wife's hometown to have done the decorating this year."

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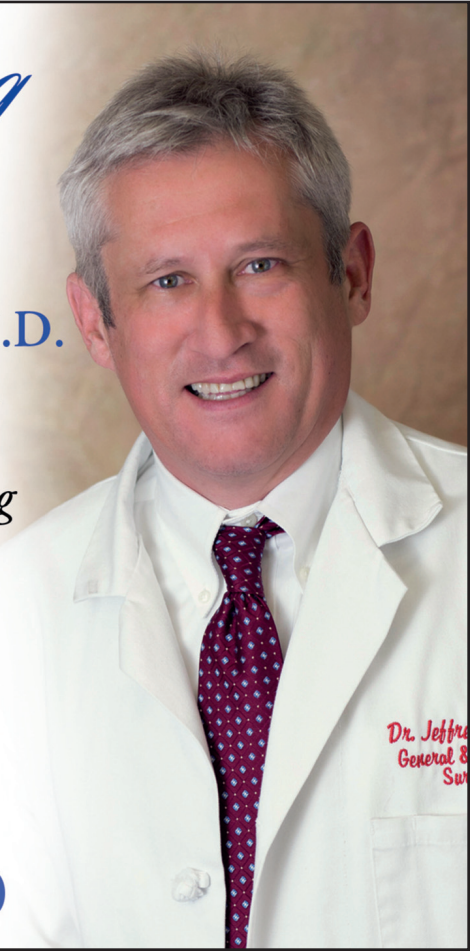
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Honey Do List: Rat baits

Last week I wrote about rat and mouse traps, so in keeping with that topic let's take a look at poisonous baits.

The standard used to be pellets and granular baits that came in boxes that made handy dispensers that mice and rats could easily feed from. This has changed drastically, likely from a safety point of view for children and pets.

Poisonous baits now come in small cubes that should be placed in bait stations. These bait stations are large enough for the rodents but small enough that a child or pet would have a hard time coming into contact with the bait. These stations should be placed where you see signs, such as droppings, of rodents. Keep an eye on the area, and remove the baits when signs cease to exist.

Poisonous baits now come in small cubes that should be placed in bait stations. These bait stations are large enough for the rodents but small enough that a child or pet would have a hard time coming into contact with the bait. These stations should be placed where you see signs, such as droppings, of rodents.

Bait can also be used outdoors, and the station will help keep it dry. If you like, you can secure the bait with a nail through the hole in the center. This will keep larger rats from carrying them off. Again, use common sense when placing baits, and consider animals you might not want to kill, such as squirrels, chipmunks and pets.

There are many other options for rodent control. Sonic repellents have gotten much cheaper and smaller. These devices plug into an electrical outlet and emit ultrasound waves that drive rodents away. You can't use these if you have pets that are related to mice, such as hamsters, guinea pigs or gerbils.

There are also non-poisonous repellents that can be used. These are great for outside areas where mice and squirrels like to nest and chew up things such as idle vehicles, lawnmowers or campers.

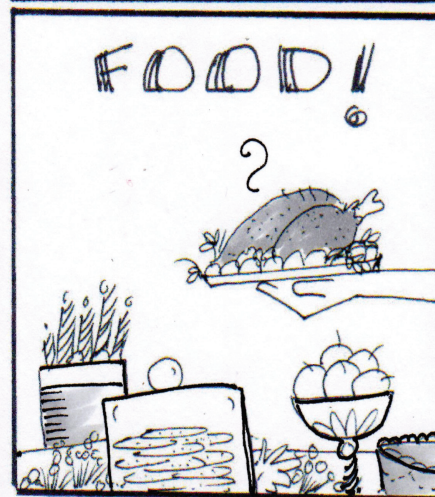
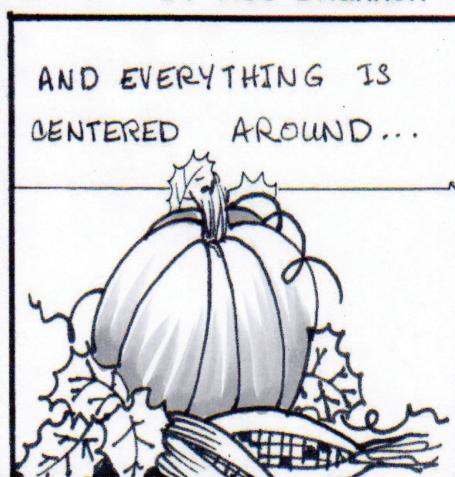
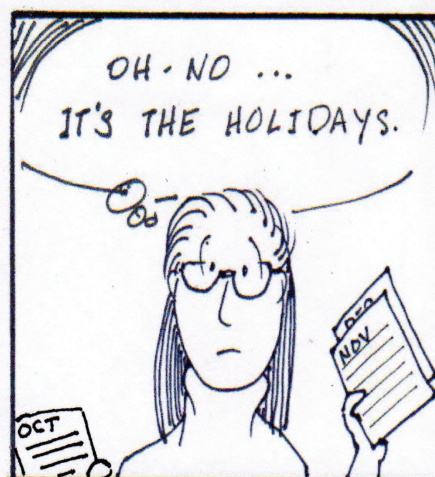
Which product you use is a matter of personal preference and what works best for your rodent situation. Remember, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.



Doug Green

OUR HOUSE

BY Ree Shannon



REE SHANNON © 2015

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The *Franklin Free Press* strives for excellence and accuracy, and we will be pleased to correct any error in our newspaper. To request a correction or clarification, call or e-mail our office.

Letters to the editor

The *Franklin Free Press* is published by hometown people, for hometown people. We urge contributions of all kinds, including guest columns, picture submissions, cartoons or letters to the editor. Send any letters to our office via U.S. Postal Service or e-mail, and we will gladly publish them. Letters must be signed and contain the hometown and phone number of the author. The *Franklin Free Press* reserves the right to edit letters for style, length and content.

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Budgeting for holiday happiness

Dear Dave,

My wife and I are trying to improve our finances by living on a budget and following your plan. We're in the middle of Baby Step 2, so we're working to pay off everything but our house using the debt snowball.

We only bring home about \$40,000 a year combined right now, so how should we handle Christmas budgeting in the middle of working our debt snowball?

Scot

Dear Scot,

Working to get out of debt can cause stress within a relationship. That stress is sometimes magnified if you're serious about getting out of debt during the holidays. I'm glad you two are on the same page where your finances are concerned. The fact that you're committed to becoming

debt-free as a couple will go a long way toward ensuring a merrier Christmas.

Just sit down together, have a look at your budget, and ask what she thinks is a reasonable amount to spend on gifts and things while you're trying to get out of debt. If you think her suggestion is a manageable figure, just give her a hug, tell her you agree, and move on. If you've been trying to get out of debt for a while, you might even propose using last year's Christmas budget.

The important thing is to make sure you listen to each other, and approach this *together*. On the off chance one of you wants to spend what the other considers to be too much, talk about how and why you arrived at that figure. Then, using your budget as a guide, gently and lovingly talk things out.

Honestly, I don't think you're going to have problems if you've already been working together to get your finances in order. And remember, you don't have to spend a lot of money to make people happy. Delicious homemade treats and thoughtful, handcrafted gifts can put a smile on anyone's face.

Merry Christmas!

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 daveramsey.com and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.*

For updates on news and sports, visit us online at www.franklinfreepress.net!

'Spend \$22' resolution passed

John Pilati
Franklin Free Press

Russellville mayor David Grissom plans to do some last-minute shopping on December 22, and he'll do it right here in his hometown as part of the city of Russellville's "Spend \$22 in Russellville" Day.

The annual promotion was designed to encourage local residents to spend at least \$22 with a Russellville business on December 22 as part of a concentrated effort to promote shopping here at home.

The promotion came after Grissom consulted with Franklin County Chamber of Commerce executive director Cassie Medley and Russellville City Schools superintendent Heath Grimes, both of whom

promoted the event to local businesses and families.

The Russellville City Council approved a resolution at its November 20 meeting declaring December 22, 2017 as "Spend \$22 in Russellville" Day.

Studies have shown that if each person were to spend only \$22 at a city of Russellville business on that day, revenue could increase by as much as 60 percent that day.

"It's just a fresh take on an idea done many years ago with the Chamber of Commerce as part of a county-wide effort," Grissom said. "When you spend dollars at home, they turn over several times in the local economy. That benefits our entire city, all our city departments and our local school system as well."

Letter to the Editor

Reporting the truth

To the editor,
I am writing to express my disappointment in the news media for not reporting the truth. I am not referring to the *Franklin Free Press*. I know your emphasis is on local, positive news. I am referring to newspapers and T.V. networks who ordinarily report on politics, crime, etc.

Recently, the news broke that three more witnesses have come forward on Judge Roy Moore's

behalf. These were more than "I feel" or "I think" stories. One of them said she reported her story to a well known news source, but never saw it published. I listened to several T.V. network newscasts and didn't hear a word about it.

Folks, please wake up and find a good news source that will tell you the truth, not just what they want you to hear.

Evelyn Ann Hill
Russellville

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What's Happening

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EVENTS OF INTEREST • FAMILY REUNIONS • PLAYS • CHURCH GATHERINGS • EDUCATIONAL • CLUB MEETINGS

Russellville Masonic Lodge 371 will be selling hams for Christmas. Hams are \$30 and may be pre-ordered by calling 256-810-1970. Pick-up will be Saturday, December 23 from 8-10 a.m. at the Lodge on Coffee Street.

To continue the holiday spirit downtown and to show appreciation for the community-wide support of The Roxy's Legend of Toyland, the Franklin County Arts and Humanities Council and the Alabama Central Credit Union are showing on the big screen the movie *Elf* free to the public. The movie will immediately follow the annual Russellville Christmas Parade this Thursday, December 7 at 6 p.m. You and your family are invited to drop by and enjoy this fun classic. There will also be a Santa's mailbox for children to drop their Christmas letter wishes to Santa. The children's letters will be mailed to Santa the next day!!! Also, there will be a box available in the Roxy's lobby for anyone who wants to donate canned and nonperishable items for food pantries in local churches.

The Foster Grandparent Program will host its 43rd annual Recognition Banquet this Thursday, December 7 at 9:30 a.m. at the A.W. Todd Centre. Lunch and entertainment will be provided. Please join us in honoring these special volunteers. RSVP by this Friday, December 1 at 256-332-6800.

The Sons of Confederate Veterans, Lt. Col. John W. Harris, Jr., Camp #1833, will meet Thursday, December 7 at 6 p.m. at the Russellville Rec Center on Ash Avenue. Camp #1833 meets the first Thursday of each month EXCEPT January and July. For more info, call 256-324-2317. Everyone is welcome!

The annual "Every Light A Prayer for Peace" will be sponsored by the Cultura Garden Club this Thursday, December 7 at 4:30 p.m. on the steps of the Franklin County Court House. Prior to the ceremony a reception will be held in the Franklin County Courthouse to honor veterans and first responders between 3:30 and 4:15 p.m. Both these events will be prior to the Christmas parade, which begins at 6 p.m. Groups involved in participating in this special event include the performance of the RHS Ensemble and the Russellville Middle School Choir. The RHS JROTC will post the colors, and Kim Stanley Clonts will sing the Star Spangled Banner, followed by Sam and Reed Hamilton leading the Pledge of Allegiance. Priest Vincent Bresowar, Good Shepard Catholic Church, will provide the message and prayer. RHS Drama students Laken Brown, Elisabeth Lerch, Alli Franklin, and Allison Woods will present the reading of the poem "Light A Candle." The combined choruses will sing "Let There Be Peace On Earth." The program will conclude with the playing of The Taps by Jeremy Willis, RHS band director. Everyone is invited to attend this very worthwhile and inspirational program.

The Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert with special guest Harmony River at the Roxy Theatre in downtown Russellville this 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.

Oakwood Baptist Church in Spruce Pine on Highway 13 will host its Christmas program this Sunday, December 10 at 6 p.m. Everyone is invited! There will be a fellowship meal following the program.

The Bay Tree Council for the Performing Arts in Red Bay announces auditions for its second production of the 2017-2018 season, "One Toe in the Grave," by Jack Sharkey. Auditions will be held at Community Spirit Bank's Weatherford Centre this Sunday, December 10 at 2 p.m. and Monday, December 11 at 7 p.m. The play, directed by Emily Edmonson, has three adult male and three adult female parts, with older teens being able to play young adults. The play will be performed February 15-18, 2018, with practices beginning the first week in January. This will be the dinner theatre for the season, and groups that are interested in coming can contact Beth Hammock at 256-356-9286. For more info, call 256-356-8758.

First Presbyterian Church of Russellville (201 N. Green Avenue) will host its annual Christmas Eve candlelight service on December 24 at 5 p.m. Join us for this special time of worship at this special time of year.

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‘PRESIDENT,’ from page 1

the college’s Phil Campbell campus and several other topics.

Franklin Free Press: Now that you’ve been appointed interim president of Northwest-Shoals, will you seek the position permanently?

Glenda Colagross: “Right now, I’m acting president. Once Dr. [Humphrey] Lee retires, I’ll become interim president on January 1, 2018. As far as becoming president permanently, I don’t know about the timeline on the search. There are several colleges in the system with interim presidents, so we’ll wait and see what happens.”

FFP: Although the recent Reduction in Force (RIF) was announced before your return to NW-SCC, what does the loss of 16 employees and the elimination of the physical education department mean about the status of the college?

GC: “I think enrollment was taken into account in that decision. Even before I left, the last time I looked at enrollment numbers by program, physical education numbers were low. With changes in financial aid, it forces our students to do more pathway programs to keep on the pathway from community college all the way to four-year universities.”

FFP: With the elimination of physical education, some students have expressed concern about whether intramural sports, a big part of the campus here at Phil Campbell, will continue. What will happen with intramurals?

GC: “Most student activities are handled through Student Services/Student Life. We’ll find someone else to pick those up because they’re so big on this campus.”

FFP: What are some of the changes or improvements recently completed or in the works for Northwest-Shoals’ Phil Campbell campus?

GC: “Of course, those are tied to the budget. But you’ve always got to start new things, especially in the career technology area. We’re constantly looking at program enrollment and doing program reviews, and sometimes you have to make hard decisions.

“We started a machine tool program here and a welding program. We built a new building for the machine tool program, and we interviewed companies like Tiffin Motor Homes and G&G Steel when we started our tech program. We’ve seen a new roof on the Occupational Building. There is an ongoing roofing project on the Administrative Building and a new roof on the Bevill Center. The floor has been installed in the gym, but there are no bleachers yet.

“I think the improvement with the biggest impact here is with the Student Success Center renovations. The students rave about the impact it’s made in their lives from managing time to studying.”

FFP: The Phil Campbell campus has a special relationship with Franklin County and a historic place in Alabama’s community college system. There is concern that NW-SCC administrators are phasing out Phil Campbell and that it’s not part of the college’s long-term plans. Is this true?

GC: “If that were the case, we would have some evidence of it and we wouldn’t be making improvements. If we planned to close [the Phil Campbell] campus, we wouldn’t be spending money to improve it. We wouldn’t be improving the Student Success Center and writing a Title 3 grant for tech if we were closing the campus. I’ve worked here a long time, and the Phil Campbell campus will remain an important part of this college.”

FFP: There are some who question why, if reduced enrollment has required a reduction in force, would NW-SCC administrators pursue a new building located in Lauderdale County if finances are so tight. How do you respond to those concerns?

GC: “I think what happened is we looked at non-credit for career tech areas and always wanted to expand those. If we could have a place offsite, where if you work full-time but want a 40-hour class from eight to five for two weeks, we’ll have a place to offer it.

“That idea started while talking with legislators about the need for a place to do some of that training. There’s still a lot of discussion left about this. Career tech is not meant to take away from either campus or what we do there. If we expand career tech and non-credit courses, that can be used as a way to attract new industry into the area.”

FFP: Enrollment has decreased in the last five years at both campuses of NW-SCC. Are you concerned about this trend, and how do you plan to stop this trend?

GC: “I’d like to start some initiatives on increasing our enrollment, and our recruiters need to plan different ways to recruit. I’ll invite them to come to the president’s cabinet to talk about new ideas. We can increase visits to high schools, and we need to develop ways to get non-traditional people on campus.

“Everyone is a recruiter. At Southern Union, we gave awards to ones who spent personal time recruiting. All the president’s cabinet had to work on a way to increase enrollment. After seeing a decrease of three to five percent each fall for several years, we saw enrollment [at Southern Union] up ten to twelve percent this fall as a result of our efforts. You have to recruit because there’s so much competition out there today.”

FFP: What type of relationship should the president of Northwest-Shoals Community College have with the Franklin County community?

GC: “What I’ll try to do here is be out in the community as much as I can be. That includes Chamber of Commerce events. I want to be active in the local chamber. Any time there’s a ribbon cutting for a local business or industry, you want to attend as many of those as you can.”

FFP: Dating back to the merger of Northwest Junior College with Shoals Community College, some critics have been concerned that the merger was not in the best interests of the Phil Campbell campus. How do you respond to that?

“To be honest, I wanted to come home. I consider this my college. I wanted to be back here at home in some role. It’s exciting to share the things that were successful at Southern Union. That is the ultimate networking.”

GC: “I believe the thought behind consolidation was a good thing. Consolidation has helped save rural colleges. Those efforts have saved some of the smaller campuses. Our chancellor’s vision is to start sharing services system-wide to save money so we can keep campuses in smaller communities open. For example, we do more shared purchasing now as a system to help toward that end.

“I don’t see consolidation as a threat. I think it helps us keep a lot of smaller college campuses open.”

FFP: The outgoing president pledged to return athletics to NW-SCC by 2016. Obviously, that didn’t happen. What are your opinions about the return of athletics to Northwest-Shoals?

GC: “There are still colleges in the system getting rid of athletic teams. That makes it more expensive with travel. We would have to have a real good recruiting effort to change the budget to include athletics.”

FFP: Obviously, you enjoyed your four years at Southern Union. While you didn’t actively seek the appointment at Northwest-Shoals, how does it feel to be back home?

GC: “To be honest, I wanted to come home. I consider this my college. I wanted to be back here at home in some role. It’s exciting to share the things that were successful at Southern Union. That is the ultimate networking.

“But, yes, I’m glad to be back home.”

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Northwest-Shoals to hold free 'Christmas Celebration' concert

Submitted to the FFP

Northwest-Shoals Community College's Music Department will hold a FREE Christmas concert, "A Christmas Celebration!" this Sunday, December 10, at 3 p.m. at First Baptist Church in Russellville.

The concert will feature two of the college's musical groups: The Northwest-Shoals Chorale directed by Jeff McAlister and the Northwest-Shoals Jazz Band directed by George Crummie. Admission is FREE.

For more information, please call Jeff McAlister at 256.331.6299.

Members of the Northwest-Shoals Chorale are Laura Allen of Haleyville, Layne Boyd of Russellville, Bekkah Church of Russellville, Allie Harris of Haleyville, Nate Harris of Double Springs, Devan Hulsey of Natural Bridge, Zeke

Lowery of Russellville, Olivia Martinez of Houston, AL, Carson McInnish of Bear Creek, Jacob Patterson of Double Springs, Regan Roberts of Mt. Hope, Lucas Shepherd of Russellville, Lindsey Shotts of Hamilton, Hannah Swinney of Russellville, and Cody Wakefield of Lynn.

Members of the Northwest-Shoals Jazz Band are Joshua Aderholt of Haleyville, Zach Aderholt of Haleyville, Kalley Baker of Tuscumbia, Carter Berry of Haleyville, Salvador Blanco-Perello of Russellville, Patrick Crummie of Russellville, Cheyenne Dutton of Haleyville, Haley Emmerson of Haleyville, Nate Harris of Double Springs, Allison Harvey of Phil Campbell, Devan Hulsey of Natural Bridge, Dillon Jackson of Phil Campbell, Zeke Lowery of Russellville, Olivia Martinez of Houston, AL, Madison Price of Hamilton, Tommy Quinn of Hackleburg and Matt Wilson of Phil Campbell.

RHA Board names executive director

*John Pilati
Franklin Free Press*

The Russellville Housing Authority Board of Directors turned to a familiar face in naming the new executive director, as the board promoted long-time employee Deborah Freeman to the position.

The board met recently and voted unanimously to hire Freeman, who has worked for the Russellville Housing Authority for three decades. Freeman had served as acting executive director since Bernitta Johnson was fired from the position on October 10, 2017.

Although no specific grounds for termination

were cited in the board's motion to terminate Johnson, board members said Johnson "had a different direction and vision" for the Housing Authority than that of the board.

At the October 10 meeting, board members asked Housing Authority attorney Sharon Hester to research whether or not the executive director position had to be posted if the board wanted to promote an existing Housing Authority employee to the position permanently.

With that question now resolved, that paved the way for the board to promote Freeman to the position of executive director, something that several board members indicated was their preference even back in October.

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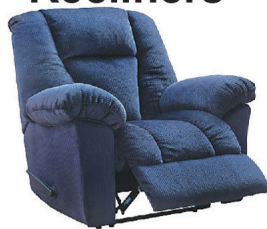
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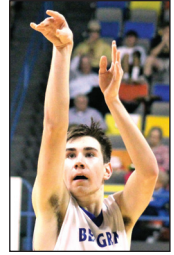


Rivalry renewed

Russellville's girls will travel to face Lawrence County on Friday in Moulton, where they won a thriller in overtime last season. Listen live on WGOL-FM 100.7!

County Clash

Belgreen big man Mason Bragwell, our Athlete of the Week (Page 16), will lead unbeaten Belgreen against Vina on Friday.



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SPORTS

12.06.17

Free throws falling at impressive rate for local standouts

The one shot that translates from high school (or, for that matter, middle school) all the way to the highest levels of the game of basketball is the free throw. It's an unguarded 15-footer on a regulation 10-foot rim, whether you're playing at the Vina High School gym or Madison Square Garden.



Mike Self
Sports Editor

Shooting free throws is like putting; proper technique is important, sure, but it's more a mental exercise than anything else. Confidence is crucial, and the best foul shooters—and putters—are the ones who have refined their craft to the point where they can rely on muscle memory to triumph over nerves in even the most stressful circumstances.

Foul shooting in high school basketball is largely hit or miss (pun intended). Most coaches would be thrilled to have their teams shoot somewhere in the 70-percent range, but it seems that fewer and fewer are actually hitting that mark. Nothing stings quite like going 12-for-24 from the line in a three-point

See 'FREE,' Page 16



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Kitterman had gone 7-for-7 at the line through Sunday, helping Russellville shoot a sizzling 79 percent as a team in its first four games.

Strange surroundings

Realignment has landed Russellville in a hardly recognizable new region

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Buckle up, Golden Tiger fans. The Russellville football program is poised to go places it's never been.

Literally.

Corner. Dora. Hayden. Head coach Mark Heaton and company may need a road map to navigate their way through the newly aligned Class 5A, Region 7, which will be their home for at least the next two seasons. Nametags might not be a bad idea either.

These are certainly unfamiliar surroundings.

"The newness of it is pretty neat," said Heaton, who has guided the Golden Tigers to a 30-16

See 'STRANGE,' Page 14



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

Heaton (with headset) and the Golden Tigers will face eight new opponents in 2018.

Road gets rough for Tigers, Wildcats

Mike Self
Franklin Free Press

Tharptown's move from Class 1A to Class 2A—announced last week as part of the Alabama High School Athletic Association's most recent round of reclassification and realignment—came as no surprise to head football coach Kevin Lacey.

Nor did the fact that the Wildcats' region schedule for 2018 and 2019 got considerably more difficult. A bump in competition was expected.

But this?

"We pretty much knew we were going up, with everything we'd been hearing about the numbers," said Lacey, who just finished his second season as Tharptown's head coach. "And we knew it was gonna be tough. We didn't know it would be *that* tough."

Tharptown, which will have the fifth-smallest enrollment in Class 2A when the new alignment kicks in next fall, will compete in a loaded Region 7 that also includes county rival Red Bay, always-talented Sheffield, perennial powers Colbert County and Tanner, and an Addison team that finished 10-3 this season after losing in the 1A quarterfinals.

"It's one of the toughest regions around. Top to bottom, it's really tough," said Lacey, whose Wildcats went 1-9 overall this season and 1-5 in Class 1A, Region 8. "We imagined we would be in there with Red Bay and Hatton and those teams. Then Addison, which is a powerhouse, came up with us and ended up in our region. And Colbert County bumped down, which I had no idea was gonna happen until a day or two before it came out. That was a surprise."

"It feels like we got sandwiched in there with



some of the best teams from 1A, 2A and 3A."

Colbert County, which made 25 playoff appearances and won three Class 3A state titles (with three runner-up finishes) in a 26-year stretch from 1992-2017, will now be the 17th-largest school in Class 2A starting next fall. The Indians' status as one of the premier programs in north Alabama is matched by that of Tanner, which won at least 10 games every year from 2008-15 and claimed back-to-back Class 2A state crowns in 2012 and 2013.

Factor in Addison, which brought home a Blue Map as recently as 2005 and has won five playoff games the past two years under current head coach David Smothers, and the new-look Region 7 will be a virtual Who's Who of small-school prep football.

"It's a very tradition-rich region," said Red Bay coach Michael Jackson (above), who has led the Tigers to a 33-11 record and two region titles in four seasons. "I think it was a good shakeup. It

See 'ROUGH,' Page 19

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'STRANGE' from page 13

record since taking over the program in 2014. "The last four years, the region has pretty much had the same look. Being able to travel to some different areas and see some different kinds of football will be exciting. I'll enjoy preparing for those games and the different systems we'll see. I'm excited about a lot of those teams coming over."

The only two familiar faces Russellville will see in region play next fall are Lawrence County and West Point. The Golden Tigers and the Red Devils have developed an intense rivalry as region opponents over the past eight seasons. West Point was a member of that same region from 2012-15, so Russellville knows the Warriors pretty well, too.

Beyond that...well, that's what nametags are for. According to AHSFHS.org, the Golden Tigers have never faced Corner or Hayden, both of whom will accompany West Point in making the move from Class 5A, Region 6 into the new-look Region 7. Then there's Dora, a team Russellville most recently defeated 40-8...in 1987. That's the only meeting on record between the Golden Tigers and the Bulldogs, who went 9-3 this past season at the 4A level and will now compete as the smallest 5A school in the entire state.

Hamilton, also making the jump from Class 4A into Class 5A, Region 7, should be a familiar opponent to Russellville fans old enough to run for President. The Golden Tigers and the Aggies met every season but two between 1971 and 1995, but they haven't played since.

Finally, there's Jasper, a familiar school with an unfamiliar name. Formerly known as Walker High School, the Vikings have squared off with Russellville eight times since 2000, including four straight years from 2010-13. Jasper is moving down from Class 6A and will be the largest school in Region 7 and the fourth-largest 5A school in the entire state.

"Jasper coming down from 6A, they had a tough year last year, but in Week Ten they were playing with their third-string quarterback," Heaton said of the Vikings, who finished this season with a 3-7 record—the same as the Golden Tigers. "That's a game that Russellville used to always play when they were Walker, so it's neat getting them back. Dora coming up from 4A, they had a great year last year, so we're excited to be a part of that. There are so many different ones we're looking forward to playing, ones that I've never played before and have only seen a couple of times."

"I'm excited. It's really different. The only team from the previous region we've had the last four years is Lawrence County. We're excited to keep them inside the region. That's been a really good game the last few years. And we're excited about the new additions we have coming in, too."

Gone from Russellville's old region are Jemison and Lee-Huntsville, both of whom will move up to 6A; Brooks and St. John Paul II, both of whom are dropping down to 4A; and East Limestone and Ardmore, both of whom will remain as the only two holdovers in a practically brand-new 5A, Region 8.

Of the eight teams in Russellville's new region, five (Corner, Dora, Hayden, Lawrence County and West Point) made the playoffs this season. Only two (Dora and West Point) finished with a winning record.

"I think it's a very competitive region for us," said Heaton, whose team bounced back from an 0-5 start to go 3-2 down the stretch and narrowly miss out on a playoff berth. "It'll give us a chance to build on what we did during the second half of the season this year. We're also excited about the non-region games we picked up."

Indeed, Russellville's non-region schedule has undergone significant changes as well. Deshler, of course, remains a fixture in the season opener, but Hartselle and Colbert County are gone, replaced by a pair of Class 4A

See 'STRANGE,' Page 15

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'STRANGE' from page 14

opponents—Haleyville in Week Five and Central-Florence in Week 10.

"When you take those games into account and also the addition of the new region games, it's a very competitive schedule," Heaton said on Sunday. "A lot of those games are a lot closer, which should cut down on travel. Plus, I like playing teams that are a little closer by because it gives you a chance to create more of a rivalry."

Haleyville (where Heaton served as head coach in 2012 and 2013 before arriving at RHS) has not appeared on Russellville's schedule since 1999. The Golden Tigers haven't faced Central since 1983.

"I wanted to keep Colbert County [in Week 10], but they dropped down to 2A," Heaton said. "With them being three classifications away from us, it would not help us in a tiebreaker situation. We wanted to find someone close by within two classes to be able to utilize that, because that's the exact situation we were in this year. At least it gave you an opportunity to win that game and get in the playoffs. If Colbert County had been 2A this year, it would have done us no good."

"I've played against Central in the past when I was at Haleyville. They do a tremendous job, and they're very well coached. Heath Wood does a great job up there. He's a friend of mine. They're a classy program, and we have a lot of respect for them. That's definitely somebody we're excited about having."

Haleyville, which Heaton led to a 10-2 record in 2013, replaces Class 6A Hartselle as the Golden Tigers' mid-season non-region opponent.

"Week five, I always like to play a good, solid football team," Heaton said, "preferably one as close by as you can within your area. It gives you a good indication as to where you are in terms of playoff potential at mid-season. With Haleyville, we've been trying to work that out the last four years. It's been tough, because they've been in a seven-team region and we've been in an eight, but it worked out this year."

"We're right down the road from each other, so it should be a great game and a very competitive game. It's a community right down the street from us, and the kids on both sides really get after it."

After playing an unbalanced schedule in each of the past two seasons (six games at home and four away in 2016, followed by the reverse of that in 2017), Russellville will go back to a standard five-and-five slate in 2018. The Golden Tigers will host Deshler (Week 1), Hayden (Week 3), Lawrence County (Week 6), Hamilton (Week 7) and Dora (Week 9). They will travel to Corner (Week 2), West Point (Week 4), Haleyville (Week 5), Jasper (Week 8) and Central (Week 10).

"We're really excited about the way it fell, too," said Heaton, who was still nailing down the final details on a fall preseason jamboree set for August 24 at Fayette County. "We'll have five home games and five away games this year. The opportunity for the fan base to grow is gonna be there. Most of these schools travel really well, and that's exciting, too. Kids love playing in front of big crowds. We had a tough time in the last region getting big fan bases from other teams. We'll see more people in the seats, which is good."

Better buy those nametags in bulk.

Below are profiles of each of the eight teams that will compete in Class 5A, Region 7 starting next fall.

Russellville Golden Tigers

Enrollment (grades 10-12): 529.95 (21st in Class 5A)

Head coach: Mark Heaton (30-16 record in four seasons)

2017 record: 3-7 (3-4 in Class 5A, Region 8)

Playoffs: DNQ

Points scored per game: 15.9

Points allowed per game: 32.9

Record over the last five years: 34-22 (25-10 in region play)

Playoff trips over the last five years: Three (3-3 record, one quarterfinal appearance)

All-time record versus other Region 7 teams: 64-40 (with 7 ties)

Jasper (formerly Walker High School) Vikings

Enrollment: 592.5 (4th in Class 5A)

Head coach: Heath Brunner (30-22 record in four-plus seasons)

2017 record: 3-7 (1-5 in Class 6A, Region 6)

Playoffs: DNQ

Points scored per game: 14.7

Points allowed per game: 31.1

Record over the last five years: 30-23 (20-13 in region play)

Playoff trips over the last five years: Two (1-2 record)

All-time record versus Russellville: 18-12 (with 3 ties)

Last meeting with Russellville: Lost 20-14 in 2013

Hayden Wildcats

Enrollment: 521.8 (23rd in Class 5A)

Head coach: Keith Register (23-31 record in five seasons)

2017 record: 5-6 (4-2 in Class 5A, Region 6)

Playoffs: Lost 31-21 to Lee-Huntsville in round one

Points scored per game: 25.1

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Points allowed per game: 30.1

Record over the last five years: 23-31 (14-19 in region play)

Playoff trips over the last five years: Three (1-3 record)

All-time record versus Russellville: Never met

Lawrence County Red Devils

Enrollment: 451.1 (38th in Class 5A)

Head coach: Rich Dutton (27-36 in six seasons)

2017 record: 5-6 (3-4 in Class 5A, Region 8)

Playoffs: Lost 28-12 to Mortimer Jordan in round one

Points scored per game: 25.4

Points allowed per game: 21.9

Record over the last five years: 24-29 (15-20 in region play)

Playoff trips over the last five years: Three (0-3 record)

All-time record versus Russellville: 5-21

Last meeting with Russellville: Won 25-6 in 2017

West Point Warriors

Enrollment: 439.85 (41st in Class 5A)

Head coach: Don Farley (29-25 record in five seasons)

2017 record: 6-5 (4-2 in Class 5A, Region 6)

Playoffs: Lost 41-30 to Brooks in round one

Points scored per game: 28.3

Points allowed per game: 25.7

Record over the last five years: 29-25 (18-15 in region play)

Playoff trips over the last five years: Four (0-4 record)

All-time record versus Russellville: 0-6

Last meeting with Russellville: Lost 27-7 in 2015

Corner Yellow Jackets

Enrollment: 407.15 (50th in Class 5A)

Head coach: Zac Willis (28-35 record in six seasons)

2017 record: 5-6 (3-3 in Class 5A, Region 6)

Playoffs: Lost 44-0 to Mae Jemison in round one

Points scored per game: 20.3

Points allowed per game: 21.8

Record over the last five years: 21-31 (10-23 in region play)

Playoff trips over the last five years: Two (0-2 record)

All-time record versus Russellville: Never met

Hamilton Aggies

Enrollment: 393.2 (56th in Class 5A)

Head coach: Rod Stidham (101-50 record in 13 seasons)

2017 record: 3-7 (2-4 in Class 4A, Region 6)

Playoffs: DNQ

Points scored per game: 22.6

Points allowed per game: 26.9

Record over the last five years: 30-26 (17-14 in region play)

Playoff trips over the last five years: Three (3-3 record, one quarterfinal appearance)

All-time record versus Russellville: 16-25 (with 4 ties)

Last meeting with Russellville: Lost 35-14 in 1995

Dora Bulldogs

Enrollment: 377.95 (61st—smallest—in Class 5A)

Head coach: Bart Lockhart (9-3 record in one season)

2017 record: 9-3 (4-2 in Class 4A, Region 6)

Playoffs: Defeated Deshler 29-20 in round one, lost 31-24 to Saks in round two

Points scored per game: 32.0

Points allowed per game: 15.9

Record over the last five years: 23-31 (14-19 in region play)

Playoff trips over the last five years: Three (1-3 record)

All-time record versus Russellville: 0-1

Last meeting with Russellville: Lost 40-8 in 1987

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Bragwell helped the Bulldogs stay unbeaten last week with a pair of impressive wins over larger-class competition. Last Monday, the 6'5 junior scored a season-high 23 points to lead a 70-53 win over Colbert County. He followed that up with another 23-point outing in last Friday's 73-56 victory over Sheffield.

Since the start of last season, Bragwell has topped the 20-point mark on ten occasions while reaching double-figures in 32 straight games. Through Sunday, he was averaging 20.0 points per game for the 3-0 Bulldogs.



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'FREE' from page 13

loss.

Two local players in particular are performing exceptionally at the foul line so far this season. On the girls' side, Vina senior point guard Abby Hester had made 85 percent of her free throws through Sunday for the 8-2 Lady Red Devils. Hester's proficiency from the line is especially valuable because of how often she gets there; she had already attempted 105 free throws (making 89 of them) in Vina's first 10 games, putting her on a pace to easily surpass her career-high of 247 attempts last season [she shot 75 percent].

Almost all big-time scorers get to the foul line a ton, and the 5'2 Hester certainly fits the bill; she was averaging 19.4 points per game through Sunday (up just a tick from 18.0 last year), and she's topped the 20-point mark in a game 19 times since the start of last season.

Hester had an off game—for her—at the line on Saturday in Bear Creek, misfiring on four of her 12 attempts. That's three more free throws than Russellville's Lucas McNutt had missed all season through Sunday. McNutt, a 6'1 junior guard, hit his first two free throws of the game in the season opener at Colbert County two weeks ago before coming up empty on the front end of a two-shot situation in the third quarter. As of Sunday, he hadn't missed since.

McNutt made his final nine attempts in Leighton that night and then went 8-for-8 at Hamilton a week later and 7-for-7 in a loss at Haleyville last Thursday. He did not attempt a free throw at Winfield the following night, leaving him at 26-for-27 (96 percent) on the year with 24 consecutive makes [impressive, to be sure, but a far cry from the AHSAA record of 58 in a row by Victor Newman of Houston Academy over a seven-game stretch in the 1987-88 season].

Like Hester, McNutt was a very good foul shooter last season as well, when he shot 75 percent from the line and was called upon by head coach Patrick Odom to shoot a pair of technical-foul free throws in the final seconds of a tie game in the area finals against East Limestone. [He made both, giving the Golden Tigers an 83-81 win.] Through Sunday, McNutt had nearly doubled his scoring average from 8.2 points per game last season to 15.8 per game this season.

The Golden Tigers dropped three of their first four games, but foul shooting was not to blame; they were 77-for-98 (79 percent) heading into Tuesday's area opener at Brooks. McNutt is not their only marksman, with senior guard Houston Kitterman shooting 7-for-7 through Sunday and freshman guard Chandler Dyas going 7-for-8.

Vina's girls probably wouldn't have been 8-2 through Sunday without Hester's foul-line heroics; she went 16-for-17 in a game against Winston County on November 17, scoring 26 points and helping the Lady Red Devils rally from a fourth-quarter deficit to win 60-50. The next day she shot 15-for-18 from the line and scored a season-high 29 points in a 68-46 rout of Fayette County.

There are, of course, other excellent foul shooters in Franklin County, starting with Belgreen's inside-outside combo of 6'5 junior post player Mason Bragwell and 5'9 junior guard Brant Bragwell. After some uncharacteristic misses in the Bulldogs' first two games of the year, the duo combined to go 14-for-16 from the line last Friday against visiting Sheffield. Belgreen shot 24-for-31 as a team in the 73-56 win, running its record to 3-0. [Mason Bragwell was averaging 20.0 points per game through Sunday, with Brant on his heels at 18.3 per game.]

Belgreen's girls, meanwhile, scuffled from the line in their first two games before going 16-for-19 last Friday in a 64-28 rout of Sheffield. Guards Jasmine Martin and Gabbie Moore led the way, combining to shoot 7-for-7.

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'ROUGH' from page 13

was the most change we've had in quite a while. We picked up four new teams, so it changed our region pretty good. It's a very talented region, as far as speed goes, and you've also got Addison coming off a big year in 1A.

"I think it's one of the best 2A regions in the state, with a lot of traditional teams in there that have won a lot of football games. It should make things very interesting and very competitive the whole year."

Red Bay is at least familiar with Tanner, having faced the Rattlers 13 times (and beaten them four times) in 14 years from 2000-13. The Tigers haven't played a regular-season game against Colbert County since 1961, but they have played junior varsity games against the Indians in each of the past two years.

"They've both been really good in the past, and I expect those guys to have good teams next year," Jackson said of Tanner and Colbert County. "It's an extremely tough region. With Addison coming into the region, that just adds another tough team. They're coming off a good year right now, and they've got some kids coming back."

"We're excited about it. It changes up the schedule some. It helps that we'll have Colbert County and Sheffield at home at Red Bay."

In addition to facing the Indians and the Bulldogs at home, Red Bay will also host Tharptown in region play. Class 3A Colbert Heights (Week Zero) and Class 4A Wilson (Week 10) will also visit Fred Bostick Memorial Stadium in 2018.

The Tigers will travel for road games against Region 7 opponents Addison, Hatton and Tanner, while also visiting Class 3A Phil Campbell (Week Two) and border rival Belmont (Week Four) in non-region play.

Wilson, which last visited The Fred in 2006, replaces Cherokee as Red Bay's Week 10 non-region opponent. The Warriors went 10-2 this season, losing 28-24 to Cherokee County in the second round of the Class 4A playoffs.

"We were looking for a game ten, and Wilson had a game ten open," said Jackson, whose Tigers are coming off a 5-5 season. "Wilson does a really good job. We've played them in seven-on-seven. I know Coach [Scott] Brown really well. I've watched them play the last couple of years. I think it will be a

good game for us to play instead of having to travel a lot further.

"We had to go up in class. I had no luck at all finding any 1A or 2A schools to play. We didn't get one call. So we had to go up to a bigger school."

Tharptown will soon know all about facing bigger schools. With an enrollment of 166 students in grades 10-12, the Wildcats will be the second-smallest school in the newly aligned Region 7 [only Addison, with an enrollment of 163 students, will be smaller]. Tanner (eighth), Sheffield (12th), Hatton (13th) and Colbert County (17th) will all rank in the top third of Class 2A starting next fall.

Tharptown is scheduled to play 1A opponents Shoals Christian (Week Zero), Brilliant (Week Five) and Vina (Week 10) in non-region play, but the Wildcats' schedule will largely have an unfamiliar—and challenging—feel to it. They've never faced Colbert County, Sheffield or Tanner in football before.

"They're all brand new," said Lacey, who said on Sunday that he is still searching for a fourth non-region opponent for 2018. "They're all very good teams. You hear a lot about them. With what we've had in the past, swapping films with other coaches, we haven't really come across a lot of these teams. It's pretty much all brand new to us."

Tharptown will not be the only Franklin County school to jump up a classification. After spending the last 14 years in Class 2A, Phil Campbell will compete as the eighth-smallest school in Class 3A (with an enrollment of 239 students in grades 10-12) starting in the fall of 2018. The Bobcats will be one of two new teams in Class 3A, Region 8, joining Westminster Christian [which will drop down from 4A] and holdovers Clements, Colbert Heights, East Lawrence, Lauderdale County and Lexington.

The Bobcats' most successful three-year run in the last two decades came as a 3A school, when they went 29-8 from 1999-2001. Phil Campbell made just three trips to the Class 2A playoffs over the past 14 seasons, with two of those coming in 2014 and 2015 under current head coach Ryan Swinney.




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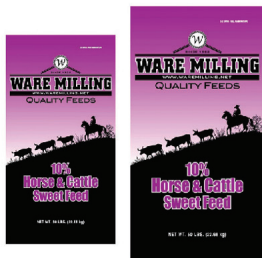


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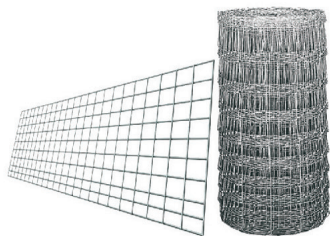
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