

Tharptown Elementary School is set to host its third annual 'Color Me Fun' Run/Walk next Friday, May 11 at the THS football field. See story Page 8.

Student representatives from each school in the Franklin County system took part in a panel discussion hosted by the Child Nutrition Program. See story Page 10.



PRSR - STD US POSTAGE  
PAID Franklin Free Press  
113 Washington Ave. NW  
Russellville, AL 35663

# Absentee voting begins as June 5 primary draws near

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Absentee voting for the Alabama primary elections began Tuesday and will run through June 1.

Franklin County circuit clerk Anita Scott, who was unopposed this year in her bid for another term, is serving as the county's absentee election manager. Applications for absentee voting are available at Scott's office in the Franklin County Courthouse or by logging onto [www.alabamavotes.gov](http://www.alabamavotes.gov).

As with voting on the June 5 primary day, absentee voters must designate whether they want a Democratic or Republican ballot. Voters casting an independent ballot will vote only on the Franklin County referendum to renew the one-cent school tax for another two-year period.

In Franklin County, the Democratic primary features only one local race, and that's available just on the west

end of the county.

Mike Shewbart faces Ralph Winchester for the Democratic nomination for Franklin County Board of Education District 5.

**As with voting in the June 5 primary, absentee voters must designate whether they want a Democratic or Republican ballot. Voters casting an independent ballot will vote only on the Franklin County referendum to renew the one-cent school tax for a two-year period.**

There are no other local races on the Democratic ballot, although Franklin County resident Rick Neighbors is again running for the nomination for United States Representative, 4th Congressional District. Neighbors faces Lee Auman.

The other Democratic state-level primaries are for governor, where the ballot includes six names: Sue Bell Cobb, Christopher Countryman, James C. Fields, Jr.,

See 'VOTING,' Page 7

# Coaching hires highlight city school board meeting

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Personnel moves comprised the lion's share of the April 26 meeting of the Russellville City Board of Education, including the hiring of a new varsity volleyball coach.

The board approved the hiring of Whitney Glover as head volleyball coach at Russellville High School. Glover, a teacher at Russellville Middle School, helped coach the program this year.

The board also accepted the resignation in position of Kevin Barnwell as an at-risk teacher at Russellville Elementary School and Leah Lockett, as a counselor at Russellville Middle School.

Chris Balentine was hired as an at-risk teacher at RES, effective May 1, 2018.

Balentine is expected to serve as defensive coordinator for the Russellville varsity football team as part of new coach John Ritter's staff. He leaves the same position and a teaching position at West Morgan to come to Russellville.

In 2016, Balentine received a one-year coaching suspension from the Alabama High School Athletic Association after an investigation into the recruiting of a student-athlete from Wilson High School. Balentine was alleged to have improperly contacted the student about transferring to Muscle Shoals High School, where

See 'HIRES,' Page 5

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**Dawson "Bud" Burfield**, Spruce Pine, age 80  
Died Saturday, April 28, 2018. Funeral will be held at 2 p.m. on Wednesday, May 2, 2018 at Pinkard Funeral Home in Russellville. Interment in Liberty Hill Cemetery in Phil Campbell.

**Martha Faye Eddy**, Russellville (Littleville community), age 78  
Died Saturday, April 28, 2018. Funeral held at Pinkard Funeral Home. Interment in Gravel Hill Cemetery.

**Delores Fay "Cricket" Galloway**, Hackleburg, age 78  
Died Thursday, April 26, 2018. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Liberty Hill Cemetery.

**Mary Elizabeth Jackson**, Russellville, age 75  
Died Friday, April 27, 2018. Funeral held at Spry Memorial Chapel. Interment in Franklin Memory Gardens.

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# Work underway on new Tharptown cafeteria

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Work is underway on the new Tharptown High School cafeteria, and if all goes according to schedule the new building should be ready for the 2018-19 school year.

Franklin County superintendent of education Greg Hamilton gave the Franklin County Board of Education an update on the project at the board's April 24 meeting.

"The foundation blocks are in place, and they are working two shifts," Hamilton said. "They're on track to have it open by the new school year."

Hamilton also gave an update on the Vina science lab/band hall building. The mobile unit will be picked up April 27, and the surveyor is on location to prepare the new site for the building. The new building will either be in the same location or just west of the current location, Hamilton said.

"We are in the final stages of putting together the contract for demolition of the old building," Hamilton said.

The Alabama Legislature's 2018-19 education budget included a \$750,000 appropriation for the Vina science lab/band hall.

In other action, the board:

- Awarded a bid to Dixie Store Fixtures and Sales Company, Inc., as the lowest responsible bidder for the new serving line at East Franklin Junior

High School at a bid price of \$58,000. The system received an \$83,000 grant from the State Department for the project.

- Approved summer school 2018 to be held at Tharptown and Belgreen Schools. Dates will be June 4, 2018-June 29, 2018. Fees for in-system students will be \$200 for a half credit and \$400 for a whole credit, and \$250 for out-of-system students for a half credit and \$450 for a whole credit.

**"The foundation blocks are in place, and they are working two shifts," Hamilton said. "They're on track to have it open by the new school year."**

- Approved the Tharptown High School rocketry team to travel to Manassas and Great Plains, VA and Washington, D.C. from May 9-14, 2018, and Tharptown High School and Phil Campbell High School 11th-graders to participate in the Educational Talent Search College Road Trip May 30-June 1 at several university locations in Alabama.

- Approved partial funding of a school resource officer for Franklin County Schools to begin work on April 25, 2018, through the end of September, 2018, with \$8,000 to be paid by Franklin County Schools and the remainder by the Franklin County Commission. Brent Wells will be the school resource officer.

- Approved a \$15,000 expense to repair the Phil Campbell High School fieldhouse as a result of

water damages during the recent storms. The amount will be reimbursed to the system from Risk Management Services of Alabama.

- Approved a contract with Riverbend Center for Mental Health for the use of Belgreen School for the 2018 Summer Therapeutic Program.

- Approved the superintendent's recommendation to suspend Riley Winstead, bus driver, for five days without pay for reasons that were not publicly disclosed at the meeting.

- Approved personnel moves including: Retirement of Cressolene Cantrell, bus driver at Vina and Neva Armstrong, bus driver at Red Bay and Tina Swinney, fourth-grade teacher at Phil Campbell, all effective June 1, 2018; Resignation of Ross Sonny Glasgow, Jr., teacher at RBHS, effective May 31, 2018; Employment in Supplement of Cayla Moses Hardin, junior high cheerleader coach at Red Bay; Substitute termination of Brittney Renea Davis; New teacher substitute Ronda Frank; Child Nutrition Program Seamless Job Positions for Sena Mixon and Mary Gonzalez at Belgreen; Lavelle Mays, Sonia Roberson and Sherry Johnson at East Franklin; Amy Strickland, Chrissy Lewey, Donna Garrett and Myra Coats at Red Bay.

The next scheduled meeting of the Franklin County Board of Education will be Tuesday, May 15, 2018, with work session at 5 p.m. and meeting to follow.

# Water & Sewer Board hires Rogers to new position

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

The Russellville Water and Sewer Board approved the hiring of Stephanie Rogers to fill a new position of accountant/bookkeeper at its April 17 meeting.

Rogers was selected from a pool of 24 candidates described as "outstanding" by Water and Sewer Board general manager Doug Clement.

"We interviewed seven candidates and carried the top three applications to the board, and the board picked the final applicant and hired her," Clement said.

Rogers, who holds a Masters Degree in accounting, will begin her employment in early May, Clement said, after working out a two-week notice at her present employer.

At a special meeting last Tuesday, the board met in executive session for nearly 90 minutes before emerging to hire Rogers. Rogers is the daughter of board chairman Dan Terry.

Terry recused himself from both the executive

session and the board vote from among the final three candidates. Clement said Terry would recuse himself from any future matters regarding Rogers' duties, salary or any issues related to her employment.

The other four board members, Dick Tutich, Joe Graham, Wanda Myrick and Harold Mitchell, unanimously voted to hire Rogers.

**"This new position is a very important one for the Water and Sewer Board," Clement said. "The board was very deliberate and very purposeful in trying to get the right thing done with this hire."**

"If there are ever any issues that have to do with her, Dan will recuse himself every time, and the other four board members will handle any situation like that," Clement said. "As general manager, I would carry any issue to the board, and I'll deal with her as I deal with any other employee. We don't expect any issues, but if there is one, he will recuse himself and the remaining board members will handle it."

Pat Seal, joint office manager for Russellville

Utilities, presently handles bookkeeping duties for the Water and Sewer Board in addition to handling the monthly billing for the Russellville Electric Board, Russellville Gas Board and Russellville Water and Sewer Board. Seal will retire later this year.

Joint office manager applicants will be interviewed by a board consisting of representatives from all three boards, and the final hiring decision will be made by all board members.

When Seal's replacement is hired, he or she will no longer handle bookkeeping for the Water and Sewer Board, Clement explained.

"This new position is a very important one for the Water and Sewer Board," Clement said. "All I want is to see is the lifeblood of the Russellville Water and Sewer Board continue in a manner it has since 1942. We want the finances handled in a professional way and wanted someone to answer to the manager."

"The board was very deliberate and very purposeful in trying to get the right thing done with this hire."

# More local eateries earn satisfactory health ratings

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

The 13 Franklin County establishments that received health ratings during the week of April 16-20 each had scores that fall into the "satisfactory compliance" range.

Health ratings are required to be prominently posted in all food/lodging establishments. Scores are graded by the Alabama Department of Public Health inspectors on a 100-point scale.

Establishments with scores of 85 to 100 are considered to be in "satisfactory compliance" and are

routinely inspected. Establishments scoring between 70 and 84 will be inspected again in 60 days, and those scoring between 60 and 69 will have another follow-up within 48 hours. Any establishment scoring below 60 will be immediately closed.

Areas of inspection by ADPH include management and personnel; food storage, preparation and service; equipment; utensils; linen cleanliness; plumbing and waste; poisonous or toxic material storage; and an inspection of the physical facility or property.

The 13 Franklin County businesses listed in the

most recent food and lodging establishment ratings scored 89 or above, within the satisfactory compliance range.

The highest score was 99, received by West Elementary School, 1340 Clay Avenue, Russellville, Dollar General #785, 15043 Hwy. 43, Russellville and Vina Senior Citizens Center, 7053 Hwy. 19, Vina.

Inspections of Franklin County businesses, with critical item violations noted, resulted in the following scores:

- Blue's Diner, 3145 Hwy. 237, Phil Campbell, 89.

See 'RATINGS,' Page 5

# Honey Do: Feel the pressure

There is one great power tool that I'm finding many folks adding to their home arsenal: Pressure washers. These machines, used properly, can make quick work of cleaning siding, brick, driveways and even vehicles. Pressure washers are ideal for thoroughly and powerfully cleaning almost any surface that is covered with caked on dirt, grime and grease.

Using a pressure washer is much different than using a garden hose. You have to know how and when to use one so that you get the job done safely and cleanly. Whether it's your deck, siding or driveway that requires extreme cleaning, pressure washing your home is a great way to keep things looking new. And a power washer is the machine you need.

There are two basic kinds of pressure washers: Gas-powered and electric. Gas-powered models are more powerful and mobile because they don't require an electrical plug and extension cord. Electric models are typically less expensive and lighter to carry and have trigger-activated engine on/off function.

You want a machine with a pressure level between approximately 1,300 and 1,600 pounds per square

inch (PSI) for general cleaning of your home's exterior surfaces, such as siding, sidewalks, patios and patio furniture. A machine with pressure level between 1,800 and 3,000 PSI is for more serious work like stripping paint or stain off of siding and decks. Some jobs could require more power though, so do your research to figure out how much power you think you need.

Some pressure washers have adjustments that let you adjust the spray and pressure. Most quality machines have interchangeable tips that change the impact of the spray by spreading out or compressing the spray pattern. For extreme jobs, there is a turbo tip that actually spins to really eat through stubborn stains.

Check the washer's cleaning power by looking at its cleaning power units (CPU). This rating assesses cleaning power by multiplying PSI by the gallons per minute (GPM) it uses. You want a pressure washer with the highest CPU, in addition to your other considerations



Doug Green

## Our House

by Ree Shannon



See 'PRESSURE,' Page 5

six months of expenses. Hope that helps, Bob!

Dave

Low vs. No

Dear Dave,

My husband and I are trying to buy a house, but we both have low credit scores, so we're having trouble securing a loan. We've heard you talk about getting a mortgage loan with no credit score. Is this the same as a low credit score?

Laura

Dear Laura,

No, it is not. No credit score means you don't have any credit or your credit score is "indeterminable." A low credit score indicates you've had—or still have—debt in your life, and you haven't done a good job of paying creditors on time.

Two things will help solve the problem of having a low credit score. One is time. If you've had instances of late payments from years ago, time will help heal that to a degree. The older late issues become, the less they count against you.

But my guess is you two probably have some bad debt. By bad debt, I mean things that were never paid or accounts that are in collections. If that's the case, you need to contact those people and settle those debts in full—and in writing—as quickly as possible. Officially close the accounts, too, before you try to buy a home.

When it comes to buying a home, Laura, I always advise folks to first be debt-free and have an emergency fund of three to six months of expenses set aside.

Dave

\*Follow Dave on the web at [daveramsey.com](http://daveramsey.com) and on Twitter at @DaveRamsey.

## FRANKLIN FREE PRESS

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### Publisher

John Pilati

### Executive Editor

Mike Self

E-mail: [franklinfreepress@yahoo.com](mailto:franklinfreepress@yahoo.com)

### Sales Representatives

Linda Bumpers, John Pilati

### Content Contributors

Mike Self, John Pilati, Brady Petree, Ree Shannon, Doug Green, Rebecca Thomason, Sheryl Hamilton, Ashley Cummins, Gail Motes

### Graphic Design

Jason Hill

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by Dave Ramsey

### Why not short-term disability?

Dear Dave,

Why don't you recommend having short-term disability insurance while doing the first three Baby Steps of your plan? It seems like a good time for it, when you're in the beginning stages of getting your finances in order.

Bob

Dear Bob,

You could certainly do that if you want, possibly even through your place of employment. I'm a big fan of folks having *long-term* disability insurance when they're in their prime wage-earning years. But short-term disability is something I've always considered to be gimmick insurance, and that's something I don't recommend or buy.

I get the argument, too, that short-term disability coverage usually isn't very expensive. But during the first two Baby Steps—getting a \$1,000 beginner emergency fund set aside, and paying off everything but the house—you're trying to *limit* expenses as much as possible. Chances are you wouldn't need it in Baby Step 3, because that covers your full emergency fund of three to

## 'HIRES,' from page 1

Balentine was employed at the time. Balentine was arrested in November of 2015 and charged with domestic violence assault after an incident where he broke his wife's nose in an incident on Halloween night. He pled guilty to the misdemeanor charge and completed a batterer's intervention program that led to the case being dismissed.

RCS superintendent Heath Grimes said he and RHS principal Jason Goodwin were aware of both incidents, and Balentine and Ritter were vetted about both.

"Coach Balentine had a personal interview with both me and Mr. Goodwin," Grimes said. "I talked with his employer now at West Morgan and was told that he would probably have been selected as their new head football coach if he had stayed there. I also spoke with friends in Muscle Shoals who talk about how much the kids think of him. It might be different if we were hiring him from an unemployed situation, but he's being hired from another district where he was highly respected in the same position."

Grimes said he discussed Balentine extensively with Ritter before and after Ritter was hired. Grimes also said there were multiple head coaching candidates who expressed interest in bringing Balentine to Russellville in addition to Ritter.

"Coach Ritter was very forthcoming about the difference he saw in Coach

Balentine's life since that incident," Grimes said. "He's in a different relationship now, a new school system and he's seen a turnaround in his personal life.

"Coach Balentine was also open and forthcoming about the situation. He understands nothing like that will be tolerated here, and he satisfied us that's not representative of his character and he's truly in a different place in his life now. I believe when people make a turnaround in their lives, they deserve a second chance."

Other action by the board included:  
•Approval of several trip requests, including the RMS Scholars Bowl team to travel to Kissimmee, Fla., June 13-18 for the Junior National Academic Association National Academic Championship; the JROTC to the Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville during May 28-31 for summer camp; the RHS Rocketry Team to travel to Washington, D.C., May 10-14 for the TARC National Finals and RCS students to travel to Hawaii from June 8-15.

•Approval of a facility use request of the RHS Auditorium by the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce for the annual Franklin County Watermelon Festival Pageant July 20-21.

•Approval of a contract with Kellie Singleton for public relations services in the amount of \$20 per hour up to a total of \$20,000.

## 'PRESSURE,' from page 4

such as cost.

Among the list of features to look for is cleaning power, hose length, ability to add chemicals, portability and, as mentioned, cost. Consider buying a water hose long enough to reach the job, hearing protectors, gloves and safety glasses.

This is not an easy machine to operate, and you need to have a good basic understanding of how to safely operate it. Next week, we'll look at setting up a new machine or maintaining an old one.

Remember, help is just around the corner at your local hardware store.

## 'RATINGS,' from page 3

(Can opener blade dirty).

•Chelle's Kitchen, 7321 Hwy. 19, Vina, 92. (Hose connected with no backflow preventer).

•Rhoda P's Catering Services, 2080 College Road, Phil Campbell, 93. (Chemicals stored with and above cups and lids).

•2 Moons Quick Stop, 606 4th Ave. SE, Red Bay, 93. (Cleaner stored above cups and lids).

•Sonic Drive In of Russellville, 15376 Hwy. 43 N, Russellville, 94.

•Russellville Elementary School, 133 Chucky Mullins Dr., Russellville, 98.

•Russellville High School, 1865 Waterloo Road, Russellville, 98.

•Russellville Middle School, 765 Summit St., Russellville, 98.

•Waffle House #2186, 14005 Hwy. 43, Russellville, 98.

•Backwoods Bargains, 30012 Hwy. 24, Russellville, 98.

Of the six inspections done in Colbert County from April 16, 2018 through April 20, 2018, one business scored below the satisfactory range.

Kaavyakrupa LLC DBA Quick Stop, 1021 Hwy. 72 E., Tuscumbia, scored a failing grade of 67. (Toxic items stored on top of ice machine, no drying device at kitchen handwashing sink, no soap at restroom sink, prep cooler holding numerous TCS foods at improper temperature, various foods being held out of temp, mold on BBQ chicken, cooking and selling raw animal food product with an improper permit).

The high score for the week in Colbert County was 98, received by Momma Goldberg's, 1500 Woodward Ave., Muscle Shoals.

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# What's Happening


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


 In preparation for mowing season, the Mt. Pleasant Cemetery Committee requests that all old flowers be removed from the cemetery on Hwy. 724 in Newburg. Donations for cemetery maintenance are needed and may be mailed to Mt. Pleasant Cemetery, 941 Hwy. 87, Russellville, AL 35654.


 Dempsey Cemetery Decoration is the third weekend in May. To prepare for decoration, all old flowers must be removed by May 5. For more information, please call Hal Bray at 256-710-1120.


 Russellville Masonic Lodge 371 is selling Boston butts for Memorial Day weekend. Butts are \$30. Pre-order at 256-810-1970. Pick-up will be Saturday, May 26 from 8-10 a.m. at the Masonic Lodge on Coffee Street.


 The Sons of Confederate Veterans, Lt. Col. John W. Harris Jr., Camp #1833 will meet this Thursday, May 3 at 6 p.m. at the Russellville Rec Center on Ash Avenue in Russellville. Camp #1833 meets the first Thursday of each month EXCEPT January and July. For more information, call 256-324-2317. Everyone welcome!


 The Shoals Area Chapter of the Order of St. Luke will meet in the Sheffield Room at Park Place, 501 N. Montgomery Avenue in Sheffield, this Thursday, May 3 at 6:30 p.m. Rev. Doc Shell will share his miraculous healing testimony and a teaching on healing. We believe God heals spiritually, physically and emotionally. All are welcome.


 The Russellville High School Class of 1988 presents the ninth annual Chucky Mullins Memorial Golf Tournament this Friday, May 4, 2018 at Twin Pines Country Club. Tee-off times at 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. Lunch at 11:30 a.m. Three-man teams. Entry fee is \$225 per team. There will be cash prizes and door prizes. Proceeds go to the Chucky Mullins Memorial Scholarship Fund. For additional information, you may contact Deedra Seale Moore at (256) 412-5659 or Rosell Christian Hamilton at (256) 335-3663. Mail Donations to 399 High Pine Drive, Russellville, AL 35654.


 Mountain Valley Hee Haw will host a special event this Saturday, May 5 with a birthday celebration for Joann Welch Miller, featuring Elvis impersonator Kevin Adams from 7-10 p.m. Admission is free. From Russellville, follow 243 to Hwy. 79, turn right, go 1/4 mile, 3rd building from left. For more information, contact William Welch at 256-332-5479 or 256-810-4840.


 Osborn Hill Cemetery will hold Decoration Day this Saturday, May 5. The first Saturday of May has been observed as Decoration Day for well over 100 years. All old flowers will need to be removed off the graves. Please make plans for that special day to come to the cemetery. Also, it's time again for annual donations. If you would like to donate to the Osborn Hill Cemetery Fund, please send your donations to: Osborn Hill Cemetery Fund, c/o Mrs. Lana Duncan, 2330 Colburn Mtn. Road, Tuscumbia, AL 35674.

 The Helen Keller Hospital Foundation is bringing a familiar face from Facebook and YouTube to the Marriott Shoals Conference Center this Saturday, May 5. Heather Land, known for her “I Ain’t Doin’ It” series of videos, is bringing her comedy and music show to Florence as a fundraiser for the Foundation. The show will begin at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are on sale by calling 256-386-4747. Ticket levels include: Bronze Level \$30; Silver Priority Seating \$40; Gold VIP Level \$100. The Gold VIP Level includes cocktail tickets, hors d’oeuvres, meet and greet with Heather Land, and a group photo. The proceeds from this event will benefit the Pediatric Unit at Helen Keller Hospital. For more information, call 256-386-4747.

 The annual Scott Family Cemetery Decoration & Covered Dish Lunch will be this Sunday, May 6. Scott Cemetery is located at 1350 Scott Landing Road in Hodges, AL. The covered dish lunch will be at the Hodges Community Center at noon. All family and friends and any descendants of Joel Mannen Scott are invited.

 American Legion Post 64 meets the second Thursday of each month at the Chamber of Commerce office on Jackson Avenue. Meal served around 6 p.m., meeting at 7 p.m. Next meeting will be May 10.

 Please support “Cindy’s Journey” Benefit Ride. Everyone is welcome to join the cause! Cindy’s journey started three years ago with Stage 3 ovarian cancer. Over the last three years, she was in remission for a short period, then discovered the cancer was traveling throughout her body and has now reached her brain. Her family refuses to give up, and so does Cindy! They have discovered a doctor in Texas who may help. Let’s pull together as a community for Cindy’s next journey to be a road of recovery and happiness! The ride is set for Saturday, May 12 with registration at 10 a.m. and KSU at 11 a.m. There will be a free live concert by Luke Shepherd and the Cold Water Band. There will be food, raffles and a 50/50 drawing. Bouncy house by the Next Level. It all takes place at Natchez Trace Harley-Davidson, 595 U.S. 72 W, Tuscumbia.

 SAVE THE DATE: Saturday, May 12, for Pioneer Day, part of Franklin County’s Bicentennial Celebration, from 9-5 in Russellville on the east side of Sloss Lake on Hwy 24. Living history demonstrations to show how people lived, worked and played 200 years ago. Actors will portray historical figures. Native Americans. War of 1812 soldiers. Civil war camp. Food and artisan products for sale. Free admission. Free parking in the field across Hwy. 24 from the entrance. Free shuttle bus service. Join in the fun and wear pioneer clothing, if you wish. For more information, email archive@hiwaay.net or call 256-332-8827 or 256-332-4085.

# What's Happening

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

**T**he Kerry Gilbert Band will perform a benefit concert at the Roxy Theatre in downtown Russellville on Saturday, May 12 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. Call 256-335-4356.

**K**indred 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. You are invited to attend.

**T**he Franklin County Extension Office will host a free Herd Health Management Program on Tuesday, May 22 at the Northwest Alabama Livestock Auction, 1330 Hwy. 243 South in Russellville. Meal and registration will be from 5-5:45 p.m. Guest speaker Dr. Chris Bishop will speak from 6-7:30 p.m. He is a veterinarian with the Alabama State Veterinarians Office and will be discussing proper herd vaccination and deworming protocol. Meal sponsored by the Franklin County Cattlemen's Association, Franklin County Extension Office and Alabama Cattlemen's Association. RSVP by Wednesday, May 16 to 256-332-8880.

**E**veryone is invited to attend a Candidate Supper at Jonesboro Community Center on Saturday, June 2. Bean plates will be \$10 for adults and \$7 for children. Supper starts at 4 p.m. Candidates will speak at 5:30 p.m. For more information, call Dianne at 256-332-0525 or Helen at 256-332-8078.

**O**range Baptist Church will hold Vacation Bible School on Saturday, June 16 from 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m. The church is located at 8153 Highway 34 in Russellville. VBS will be one day only. For more info, call 256-332-2296.

**T**he Bay Tree Council for the Performing Arts in Red Bay will sponsor two scholarships to two area high school seniors. The scholarships will be \$500.00 each, and applications can be obtained from Micah Jackson at Red Bay High School, or they can be emailed to you by contacting BTCPA through their Facebook page or contacting Scotty Kennedy at 256-356-8758 or scottydk@att.net.

**M**ountain 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. From Russellville, take 243 to Hwy. 79, turn right, go 1/4 mile, third building on left. For more information, call 256-332-5479 or 256-810-4840.

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## 'VOTING' from page 1

Walt Maddox, Doug "New Blue" Smith and Anthony White.

The Democratic primary for attorney general is between Chris Christie and Joseph Siegelman, and the secretary of state primary features Lula Albert and Heather Milam.

Both the Democratic and Republican ballots include the local referendum on the one-cent tax renewal for two years. That referendum will again appear on the November general election ballot when voters will consider whether to renew the one-cent tax for 30 years.

"If we waited to put it on the November ballot and not in June, there would be a lag period where the periods would not overlap," explained Franklin County election manager Mary Scofield. "It's not two different taxes. Voters are considering the same tax, first for a two-year renewal then for a 30-year renewal in November."

Several local candidates who are unopposed will not appear on the primary ballots. They include Scott, circuit judge Terry Dempsey, district judge Paula McDowell, sheriff Shannon Oliver, Franklin County Board of Education District 1 member Ralton Baker, Franklin County coroner Elzie Malone (Democratic nominee), Charles Adcox (Republican coroner nominee), Johnny Mack Morrow (Senate District Six Democratic nominee), Eddie Britton (House District 18 Democratic nominee), Poncey Robertson (House District 7 Republican nominee) and Ken Brackens (House District 7 Democratic nominee).

"They won't be on the ballots if they have no opponent in their party primary," Scofield said last week.

Scofield said voters should remember that they may only vote in primary runoff elections for the

party whose ballot they select on June 5. There is no crossover voting.

The Republican ballot in Franklin County features one county race for probate judge. Incumbent Barry Moore faces Joe Mansell. There is no Democratic candidate, so this will be the de facto election.

Another race of local interest, House District 18, features two candidates seeking the Republican nomination, Jamie Kiel and Tony Riley.

Sen. Larry Stutts faces primary opposition from Steve Lolley and Eric Aycock.

Congressman Robert Aderholt faces Republican opposition from Anthony Blackmon in the June 5

primary.

At the state level, there are 17 contested Republican primaries, including governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, associate justice places 1 and 4 for the Supreme Court, Court of Civil Appeals places 1 and 2, Court of Criminal Appeals place 2 and 3, secretary of state, state treasurer, state auditor, commissioner of agriculture and industries, and Alabama Public Service Commission places 1 and 2.

Sample ballots are available at the Franklin County Probate Judge's office in the Franklin County Courthouse.

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# Tharptown Elementary hosting third annual 'Color Me Fun' run

John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Tharptown Elementary School will host its third annual "Color Me Fun" Run/Walk on Friday, May 11 at 1 p.m. at the Tharptown High School football field.

"This is an idea I had a couple years ago. I was able to convince the administration, and soon everyone was on board and very excited," said Susie Tverberg, the run coordinator. "In 2016, we had around 20 sponsors and 400 participants. This year, we hope to have 50 sponsors and at least 600 participants."

"Thanks to our valued sponsors, we are able to keep the cost of the event low so that all of our students may participate if they want to."

Tharptown students were invited to submit T-shirt designs for the "Color Me Fun" event. Sixth-grader Angel Myers submitted the design that was chosen to be on all the T-shirts. Myers' drawing features a running wildcat.

"I was amazed at the 65 entries that were turned in," Tverberg said. "It was a very tough decision for the committee. They narrowed it down to two students, and Angel

was chosen as the winner. Pamela Miranda received honorable mention for her work.

"In appreciation of Angel's work, her name and year will appear underneath the design on the T-shirt. We are thankful for the hard work and time Angel put in creating the design."

Myers said she was excited to hear her design had been chosen as the winner.

"I was surprised. I found the design online, and I knew I wanted to do a running wildcat, so I went with that," Myers said. "I've always enjoyed art, and it was exciting to hear my design was the winner."

Myers, the daughter of Angela Parker and Scotty Borden, said she looks forward to the "Color Me Run" each year.

"It's really fun and good for our school because it makes everybody happy," she said.

The registration fee to enter the "Color Me Fun" Run/Walk is \$5 for TES and THS students and faculty members, and \$10 for non-students. This fee includes a "Color Me Fun" T-shirt, small pack of colored powder and an arm band.

For more information on participating in next Friday's event, email [susietverberg@franklin.k12.al.us](mailto:susietverberg@franklin.k12.al.us).



COURTESY PHOTO

Tharptown principal Kelby Daniel is pictured above with T-shirt design contest winner Angel Myers, right, and Pamela Miranda, honorable mention winner.

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# Golden Tigers cruise into quarters with rout of Lee

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

HUNTSVILLE - Standing along the railing of the first-base dugout at the Lee High School baseball field in Huntsville on Monday night, Caden Parker was asked how it felt to have his first career playoff start behind him.

The junior righthander, who had just struck out a season-high eight batters in six innings of one-run ball to pitch the Golden Tigers past Lee 13-1 and into the Class 5A quarterfinals, merely shrugged. "Just another game," he said.

Perhaps somewhat skeptical of Parker's super-chill reply, another sports writer asked the logical follow-up question. *Is it really that simple?*

For Parker, it just might be.

"He's got a little swag about him," head coach Chris Heaps said. "He's been telling me since yesterday, 'I got this, Coach. Don't worry. I got this.'"

Because the start of the second-round series was pushed back from Friday to Saturday due to wet field conditions, the two teams got a rare day off between Game 2 [which Russellville won 10-2 to stave off elimination following a 3-2 loss in the opener] and Game 3. Heaps took advantage of the Sunday respite to further prepare the Golden Tigers for their first do-or-die, win-or-go-home playoff game in an opponent's home stadium since their current run of three consecutive state titles began in 2015.

"We practiced for three hours," senior Noah Gist said. "We scrimmaged. A lot."

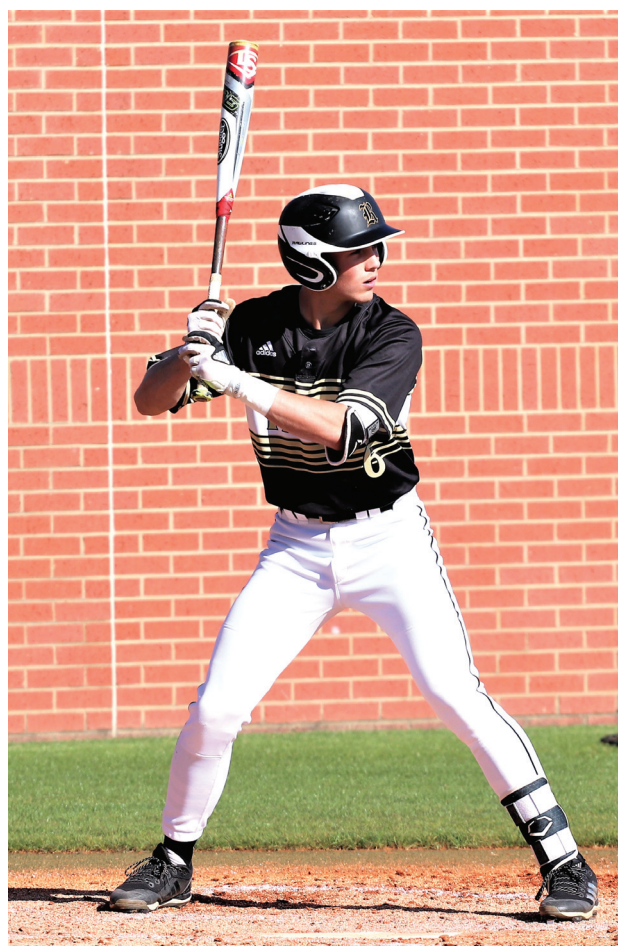
The day off also gave Parker, who went 5-2 during the regular season with a 2.02 ERA but hadn't pitched in an actual game since April 12, a little extra time to contemplate the burden of being a Game 3 starter in the postseason. A loss would be nothing less than a season-ender for Russellville, not to mention a career-ender for the team's 11 seniors and a dynasty-ender for a program seeking to become the first in AHSAA history to win four straight Class 5A championships.

If the weight of all that responsibility—or the prospect of going pitch for pitch with Lee ace Ludany Rodriguez—caused Parker any stress, he certainly didn't show it.

**"I just wanted to come out and pitch like I always pitch," said Parker, who struck out a season-high eight batters and took a shutout into the sixth inning. "Throw strikes, keep the ball down, get some groundballs. My defense did a great job today. I have a lot of faith in those guys. It doesn't matter if they make zero errors or six errors—I trust them."**

"I just wanted to come out and pitch like I always pitch," he said. "Throw strikes, keep the ball down, get some groundballs. My defense did a great job today. I have a lot of faith in those guys. It doesn't matter if they make zero errors or six errors—I trust them."

Unlike Rodriguez, who had struck out a staggering 73 batters in just 43 innings through Sunday, Parker succeeds with a pitch-to-contact approach that relies heavily on the guys behind him making plays. In his two best outings of the season (3-0 wins over Hartselle and Arab a week apart in late March), Parker struck out exactly one batter in 13 innings of work. He also walked just one and held the Tigers and the Knights to a total of five hits while throwing 81 of his 122 pitches for strikes (a stellar rate of 66 percent) and getting groundball outs by the bushel.



FILE PHOTO

**NOAH'S SPARK** - Gist reached base three times and scored two runs out of the leadoff spot on Monday night, helping Russellville roll to a 13-1 win. He finished 2-for-3 and was one of seven Golden Tigers with two hits apiece.

Lee, issuing only one free pass and throwing 69 of his 108 pitches for strikes. He also induced something close to his usual allotment of groundballs, including two that resulted in key double plays—one in the bottom of the first after Lee's first two batters of the game had singled, and another in the bottom of the fourth after he plunked Jackson West with a two-strike pitch to start the inning.

But Monday's start was different for Parker in one respect—those eight strikeouts, one more than he had in his first start of the season way back on February 22 at Haleyville. He fanned three hitters in the bottom of the second, including leadoff man Noah Watkins with two down and the bases loaded in a 2-0 game, and then struck out the side in his final inning, the bottom of the sixth.

So where did all those K's come from?

"My curveball was working tonight," said Parker, who now has 38 strikeouts on the season in 50.2 innings. "Coach [Eli] Fuller did a good job of getting us ahead with the fastball, and Briles [Hunter, the team's junior catcher] always does a good job framing pitches and getting me some strikes on pitches that might not be strikes."

While Parker (6-2) was missing bats left and right (pun intended), Rodriguez was laboring. The senior lefty dominated Gunterville in Game 3 of the Generals' first-round series, striking out 12 and giving up only three hits in a 2-1 win, but the Golden Tigers (26-14) had his number from the get-go on Monday. They scored single runs off him in the first and second innings and then chased him with four straight two-out hits in the third, opening up a 6-0 lead.

The plan of attack was to...well...not attack.

"We wanted to be patient and put the ball in

play," said Gist, who scored the Golden Tigers' first run of the night, knocked in their second and finished 2-for-3 with a walk in the leadoff spot. "Our goal was to make him work, make him throw strikes. Coach Heaps kept telling us after we lost Game 1, 'Calm down, it's baseball.' We didn't want to try and take the game to them. When you do that, you get over-anxious and you start getting yourself out.

"We wanted to let the game come to us."

With that in mind, Gist led off the top of the first on Monday by drawing a walk, his team-leading 25th of the season. Rudy Fernandez got into a two-strike count but lined a breaking ball from Rodriguez into left field for a single. Two outs later, with runners at second and third, Rodriguez stumbled and nearly fell during his stride toward the plate on a pitch that never came to Houston Kitterman, committing a balk that allowed Gist to score the game's first run.

Parker allowed back-to-back singles to start the bottom of the first, but senior second baseman Brock Malone turned a sharp groundball by Rodriguez into a 4-6-3 double-play that helped tidy up what could have become a messy inning. The Golden Tigers continued to grind away in the top of the second, loading the bases on walks to Kitterman and T.B. Scott sandwiched around a single by Devin Buckhalter.

Gist came to the plate with two outs and worked the count to 3-and-1 before taking a called strike on a borderline pitch that may or may not have grabbed the outside corner.

"I thought it was ball four," Gist said, "but you have to move on to the next pitch. That [strike two] pitch wasn't in my future any more. I put it out of my mind. I just looked at my bat and said, 'Confidence,' and got back in there."

Rodriguez grooved a 3-2 fastball right over the heart of the plate, and Gist didn't miss it. He hit a hard liner right back through box and into center-field, chasing home Kitterman and Buckhalter on what appeared to be a two-run single. The Generals appealed, however, and Buckhalter was ruled out for apparently failing to touch home plate. His run didn't count, but Russellville still led 2-0.

**"We wanted to be patient and put the ball in play," said Gist, who scored the Golden Tigers' first run of the night, knocked in their second and finished 2-for-3 with a walk in the leadoff spot. "Coach Heaps kept telling us after we lost Game 1, 'Calm down, it's baseball.' We didn't want to try and take the game to them. We wanted to let the game come to us."**

Parker got the pivotal strikeout of Watkins to escape a bases-loaded jam in the bottom of the second, and the Golden Tigers took the wind out of Lee's sails with a two-out rally against Rodriguez in the third. Landon Ezzell was on first when Kitterman singled, and Malone followed with a double down the right-field line to bring home pinch-runner Will Rogers and make it 3-0. Buckhalter drove in Kitterman with an infield hit, and Malone scored on a wild pitch. Briles then chased Rodriguez with an RBI single that brought home Buckhalter to make it 6-0.

Parker struck out two more batters in the bottom of the third, stranding a pair of runners, and then got another 4-6-3 double-play courtesy of middle infielders Malone and Fernandez in a scoreless fourth. Parker pitched around a leadoff single by Watkins in the bottom of the fifth, and Russellville



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## Child Nutrition Program gets feedback from students



John Pilati  
Franklin Free Press

Franklin County students eat breakfast and lunch at their schools 180 days a year.

So knowing what students like, and don't like, on the menu is helpful for Franklin County Schools Child Nutrition Program director Robynn Bragwell. That's why Bragwell held a child nutrition panel discussion with student representatives from all Franklin County schools.

The meeting was held last Wednesday morning at Belgreen.

Forty-two students were asked to rate menu offerings, cafeteria logistics/environment, marketing/appealing appearance of school food, their favorite and least favorite foods and propose changes in the menu for the 2018-19 school year.

Bragwell said she received some great feedback from the students.

"The one thing they specifically asked for was more variety of fresh fruit to be offered at breakfast," Bragwell said.

Students rated crispitos as their favorite meal, while spaghetti brought up the rear as the least favorite entree.

"The meeting was very positive," Bragwell said. "Students were open and honest about what they like, dislike and would like to see changed. They also expressed their appreciation to the Child Nutrition Program staff. And I agree with them. Franklin County Schools has the best CNP managers and staff.

"I look forward to planning for the 2018-19 school year."

The panel discussion also focused on nutrition and wellness and how it relates to learning.

For more information on the Franklin County Schools Child Nutrition Program, call 256-331-2136.

**COURTESY PHOTO**

Student representatives from all Franklin County schools attended last week's meeting and were asked to rate menu offerings, cafeteria logistics/environment, marketing/appealing appearance of school food, their favorite and least favorite foods and propose changes in the menu for the 2018-19 school year. Students rated crispitos as their favorite meal, while spaghetti brought up the rear as the least favorite entree. The panel discussion, organized by Franklin County Schools CNP director Robynn Bragwell, also focused on nutrition and wellness and how it relates to learning.

## 'CRUISE,' from page 9

put the game away with another four-run rally in the top of the sixth. Gist and Fernandez both singled and scored in the inning, Parker hit a sacrifice fly, Malone had an RBI single, and Ezzell came home when Buckhalter reached on an error to make it 10-0.

On the verge of being run-ruled, Lee (18-13) put together three singles in the bottom of the sixth to get a run on the board and extend the game, though Parker did strike out the side. Russellville got the final three of its 16 hits on the night in the top of the seventh, including a mammoth pinch-hit home run to right-center by Jeff Lloyd and an RBI double by Ezzell down the third-base line. Ezzell scored the final run of the night when Nick Smith

reached on an infield single, making it 13-1.

Parker gave way in the bottom of the seventh to freshman Gordon White, who retired Lee's two-three-four hitters in order to finish off the Golden Tigers' 34th win in 38 playoff games since 2015. Next up is a home series this weekend with Area 11 runner-up Springville (24-11).

Aside from Gist, six other players had two hits for Russellville on Monday. Fernandez was 2-for-5 with a run, and Ezzell went 2-for-5 with two RBIs and two runs scored. Kitterman went 2-for-3 with two runs and two walks, and Malone was 2-for-5 with a double and two RBIs. Buckhalter was 2-for-4 with a run and a stolen base, and Briles went 2-for-4 with an RBI.

After dropping Saturday's series opener 3-2 in eight innings, the Golden Tigers out-scored Lee 23-3 over the course of two elimination games to keep their four-peat hopes alive.

"There might have been a little bit of panic," Gist confessed, "but we just kept going back to what Coach Heaps told us. 'Calm down, it's baseball.' Really, I think losing that first game just made us mad."

Both quarterfinal series in the North half of the 5A bracket feature matchups between teams from Area 16 and Area 11. In addition to Area 16 champ Russellville hosting Area 11 runner-up Springville, Area 16 runner-up Brooks will play at Area 11 champion Mortimer Jordan.



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Monday night's Game 3 between Russellville and Lee-Huntsville in the second round of the Class 5A baseball playoffs ended after our sports section had gone to press. For details on the game, please see the front section of today's paper and also visit our website at [www.franklinfreepress.net](http://www.franklinfreepress.net).



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# Chicks dig the *LONG BALL*



## Relying on a heavy-hitting lineup flush with power, Russellville is ready to swing for an area title and a third straight regional berth

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

Every team, no matter the sport, has an identity. And there's little doubt as to the defining characteristic of Russellville softball in 2018.

The Lady Golden Tigers can swing it. "Well, we're aggressive, to say the least—not only aggressive, but we don't back down," said senior leadoff hitter Sydney Burcham, whose .468 batting average and .596 on-base percentage were both tops on the team through Sunday. "We're not just aggressive like swinging out of your cleats every time; we're aggressive hitting line drives.

"We love our pitchers, but we've struggled quite a bit in the field error-wise, so we've relied mostly on our bats, and the bats have come through for us. We hit all the time—in the preseason and even now, and it's really paid off this year."

Russellville's girls slugged their way to a share of the Class 5A, Area 16 regular-season title, aver-

aging 10.8 runs in six area games. [They went 4-2, tying Lawrence County and East Limestone for the top spot.] As they prepare for Thursday's area tournament opener against Lawrence County at 5 p.m. at East Limestone High School, the Lady Golden Tigers (17-15-2 overall through Sunday) are hoping to ride those bats all the way to Montgomery.

"We haven't really talked about team goals a lot," sophomore centerfielder A.J. Taylor said, "but I'm sure as individuals we all have the goal of going to regionals and making it to state this year. There definitely is a drive for us to win the area tournament."

Three teams are capable of doing exactly that in Athens this week, but only two will earn a regional berth and a trip to Huntsville. Taylor, for one, believes the power of intangibles will carry the day for Russellville.

"We have a lot of potential, honestly," she said. "Our team is full of heart, and we have a ton of

See 'DIG,' Page 16



PHOTOS BY  
SONNY  
GLASGOW

**HOT TO TROT** - Clemmons (13, top of page) led Russellville through Sunday with six home runs. Burcham (5) had gone deep four times but is careful not to get too homer-happy.

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# Lady Bulldogs defend county softball crown with comeback win

Staff reports

Camie Terrell homered, doubled and drove in three runs for Belgreen on Saturday night, helping the Lady Bulldogs come back to beat Phil Campbell 5-4 and win their second straight Franklin County Tournament championship.

The Lady Bobcats (21-10) led 4-1 after a two-run homer by Cypress Quinn in the bottom of the second, but Belgreen rallied for four runs in the top of the third. Sydney Borden and Katie Dempsey got things going with back-to-back singles, but Phil Campbell pitcher Emily Swinney retired the next two batters. Terrell, who had already hit a solo home run to get the Lady Bulldogs on the board in the top of the second, came through again with a two-run double to left, cutting the lead to 4-3.

Emma Dempsey tied the game with an RBI single, and Bailey Wood followed with another base hit. Freshman Kelsey Wilson delivered a go-ahead RBI single to put the Lady Bulldogs on top 5-4.

The Lady Bobcats threatened in the bottom of the third, getting singles from Abby Davis and Chloe Roberson, but Emma Dempsey pitched her way out of trouble to keep Belgreen in front. The Lady Bulldogs had chances to extend the lead but left the bases loaded in the top of the fourth and again in the fifth.

Dempsey retired Phil Campbell slugger Leeah Jackson on a pop-up to start the bottom of the fifth, but Davis and Roberson followed with back-to-back singles to put the winning run on base. Dempsey got Darby Elliott on strikes for the second out, but a wild pitch put runners at second and third. Dempsey retired Olivia Knight to finish off the win.

Terrell was 2-for-3, and Borden went 2-for-2 with two walks and a run scored. Emmie Scott and Cortny Williams each had one hit.

The Lady Bobcats jumped in front early with two runs in the bottom of the first. Katie Thomas walked and scored on Jackson's two-out double, and Davis delivered an RBI single to make it 2-0.

Terrell homered leading off the second to cut the lead to 2-1, but Phil Campbell answered with two more runs in the bottom half. Thomas singled with one out, and Quinn cracked her second home run of the season to make it 4-1.

Davis and Roberson each went 3-for-3 for the Lady Bobcats. Thomas was 1-for-2 with two runs scored, and Elliott was 1-for-3 with a stolen base. Swinney also had a hit.

Emma Dempsey pitched all five innings to earn the win, allowing four earned runs on 11 hits. She struck out four and walked one. Swinney took the loss, allowing five earned runs on nine hits in 4.1 innings.

In previous action at the county tournament:

**Phil Campbell 5 Tharptown 4**

The Lady Bobcats built an early 5-0 lead on Saturday and then held off Tharptown in the loser's bracket final, earning a spot in the championship game.

Emma Ergle, returning to the circle after an extended absence due to injury, gave up only two hits through the first four innings and took a five-run lead into the top of the fifth. The Lady Wildcats mounted a two-out rally, getting a two-run double from Brooke Daily and an RBI single from Cara Ergle to cut the lead to 5-3.

Amelia Dawson doubled to right, and then Catie Dawson came

See 'CROWN,' Page 15

**Camie Terrell**  
Junior infielder, Belgreen

Terrell helped the Lady Bulldogs rally past Phil Campbell on Saturday night to win their second straight county championship. With the Lady Bobcats up 2-0 in the top of the second, Terrell smacked a solo homer to get Belgreen on the board. One inning later, she drove in two more runs with a double to spark a two-out rally that saw the Lady Bulldogs score four times on their way to claiming a 5-4 win and another county crown.

Terrell finished the game 2-for-3 with three RBIs and two runs scored.



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# Bobcats get Game 2, but Mars Hill moves on

Mike Self  
Franklin Free Press

PHIL CAMPBELL - No one can accuse Brandon Thomas of being overly ambitious when it comes to his approach at the plate.

"Single or an error," Thomas said, summing up his mindset once he digs into the batter's box. "I'm just hoping to get on base on an error. I'm not up there trying to do too much."

*Single or an error* doesn't exactly scream 'game-winning hit,' but it might be the perfect mentality for the game of baseball, where some degree of failure is every player's constant companion, and humility—not hubris—is most often rewarded.

So it was that Thomas, a senior reserve for Phil Campbell whose primary contributions this season have come as a base runner, grabbed a bat and headed toward home plate in the top of the sixth inning of last Friday's Game 2 against second-round playoff opponent Mars Hill. Fellow senior Joe Hardy had just tied the game with a clutch two-out, two-strike RBI single, and the go-ahead run was standing on second in the person of courtesy runner Brett Saint.

Head coach Jonathan Raper had informed Thomas the previous inning that he would be hitting for third baseman Chase Hutchens in the six-hole if that spot came up in the top of the sixth. At that point, Thomas—who hadn't had an at bat since the finals of the county tournament on April 16 and hadn't had a hit since the final game of area play at Sulligent on April 12—sprung into action.

"I just started moving around," he said, "trying to get my legs loose, trying to shake off the jitters."

Raper later said he had no qualms about giving Thomas his first at bat in 11 days—and his only at bat of Friday's doubleheader—at the most critical juncture of a do-or-die playoff game. [The Bobcats were facing elimination after dropping Game 1 to Mars Hill 3-2 in eight innings.]

"I have confidence in Brandon," Raper said. "He didn't get a chance to swing it in the [first-round] series against Fyffe, but he did at the county tournament and he did in our last area series. I felt good about him in that spot. It was next man up.

"As far as pressure goes....I'm not sure our kids even think about it. They're a pretty loose, free-spirited group."

Thomas stepped to the plate with one thing on his mind.

"Choke and poke," he said. "I was looking for something outside that I could hit the other way. That's kind of what I do best as a hitter."

*Choke and poke.* Not exactly Babe Ruth calling his shot.

Mars Hill pitcher Cade Parrish, who had done an admirable job of keeping



PHOTO BY KYLE GLASGOW

**SPECIAL DELIVERY** - Raper was terrific in the series opener, allowing just five hits and striking out seven in seven innings, but the Panthers scored a run in the top of the eighth to win 3-2. Phil Campbell evened things up with a 6-3 win in Game 2, but Mars Hill held off two Bobcat rallies to take the series on Saturday with a 10-7 win in Game 3.

the Bobcats at bay since taking over in relief just two batters into the game, obliged Thomas with a pitch on the outer part of the plate. Thomas, a lefty, reached out and poked a fly ball to shallow left that dropped in near the line for an RBI double [what happened to single or an error?], chasing home

See 'BOBCATS,' page 18

## 'CROWN', from page 14

through with an RBI single to make it a 5-4 game. Emily Swinney came on in relief and got Olivia Ergle on a groundball to third for the final out.

Emma Ergle (7-3) got the win, allowing four runs (none earned) on seven hits in 4.2 innings. She struck out two and walked one. Swinney earned the save.

Phil Campbell grabbed an early lead in the bottom of the first. Katie Thomas singled and scored on an RBI double by Leeah Jackson. Kenner Scott came home on a groundout by Abby Davis to make it 2-0.

Ergle pitched around a hit batter in the top of the second and then worked a one-two-three top of the third. The Lady Bobcats added three runs in the bottom of the inning, getting an RBI double from Chloe Roberson, a squeeze bunt from Darby Elliott and an RBI single from Olivia Knight to open up a 5-0 lead.

Taylor Cameron broke up Ergle's no-hitter with a leadoff single for Tharptown in the top of the fourth. Cara Ergle singled one out later, and Catie Dawson drew a two-out walk to load the bases. Emma Ergle retired Olivia Ergle on a pop-up to escape the jam.

Cameron started in the circle for Tharptown and took the loss, allowing two earned runs on five hits in three innings. Olivia Ergle worked a scoreless inning in relief, striking out two and walking two.



PHOTOS BY KYLE AND SONNY GLASGOW

**SPLIT DECISION** - Head coach Chris Scott celebrated a second straight Franklin County Tournament championship with his Belgreen Lady Bulldogs on Saturday night. Kneeling behind Scott are seniors Morgan Welch and Cortny Williams. Standing, from left, are Kaycee Wilson, Camie Terrell, Kelsey Wilson, Katie Dempsey, Emmie Scott, Sydney Borden, Gracie Dempsey, Bailey Wood, Emma Dempsey, Bailey Oliver, Noelle Willingham and Katie Cooper. Not pictured are Megan Smith and Kaley Chandler.

## 'DIG', from page 13

chemistry. We've really bonded this year compared to others. We like playing with each other."

Positive energy is a key piece to the puzzle, certainly, but what separates the Lady Golden Tigers more than anything is the length and depth of their lineup. The first six batters in the order (Burcham, sophomore outfielders Krista Sikes and Alivia Clemmons, sophomore third baseman Autumn Logan, Taylor and junior shortstop Karlie Moore) had all hit at least three home runs apiece through Sunday, combining for a total of 26 dingers. Five of them were batting .400 or better, with Logan checking in at .364.

Factor in the solid contributions of players like Lauren Rogers and Makala O'Neal toward the bottom of the order, and the Lady Golden Tigers—who were hitting .361 as a team and averaging 7.1 runs per game through Sunday—can do damage one through nine.

"Hitting right in the middle, I always have people behind me to back me up in case I mess up," said Taylor, who brings a .424 average with four homers, 31 runs scored and a team-leading 20 stolen bases to the fifth spot in the lineup. "And if the people in front of me struggle some, I'll always be there to back them up as well."

Hitting the ball over the fence is by no means the only way to score runs, but second-year head coach Kathryn Montgomery has the luxury of penciling in half a dozen legitimate power threats on her lineup card every day. Clemmons led the team through Sunday with six home runs, batting .457 in the three-hole with team-highs in hits (43) and RBIs (40) while impressing even her most experienced teammates.

"Alivia Clemmons has really shown out this year," said Burcham, a five-year varsity veteran. "She's come out of her shell. She's been absolutely killing the ball."



**PHOTOS BY KYLE AND SONNY GLASGOW**  
**HIT SQUAD** - Sikes (above), Taylor (below, left) and Moore (below, right) had combined for 12 of the team's 28 home runs through Sunday, and all three were batting .400 or better on the year.

Clemmons may hit the most home runs, but she doesn't necessarily hit them the farthest. That honor, according to Taylor, goes to Logan and Burcham—each of whom had four long balls on the season through Sunday. Asked to single out the player with the fastest home run trot, Taylor paused to think.

"Sydney is pointing at me," she said with a laugh, "so I guess I'll say it's me."

Best home run celebration? It's a no-doubter.

"I think it's Krista," Taylor said of Sikes, who smacked her third homer of the season two Saturdays ago in a game against Deshler. "She'd never hit a lot of home runs before this year, so every time she hits one she gets pretty excited about it."

Sikes, batting .412 through Sunday with 28 RBIs and 25 runs scored, recently settled into the No. 2 spot in the lineup, right behind Burcham and right in front of Clemmons. Logan, tied for the team lead in doubles with eight and second in RBIs with 35, bats cleanup, followed by Taylor and then Moore, another varsity veteran who was batting .400 through Sunday with five home runs, 26 RBIs and 27 runs scored.

Senior Jasmine Galloway and seventh-grader Chalea Clemmons have each gone deep once this year, putting Russellville's team total through Sunday at 28 home runs, but earlier this season Burcham experienced first-hand the danger of getting a little *too* homer-happy at the plate.

"I hit a couple of home runs, and the whole team was just on fire," she said. "I was up there trying to crank it every time I batted, just trying to kill it every time. I had a conversation with my dad [Jason], and we talked about how I was becoming more of a one-dimensional player. He told me to step back and think about what I was doing."

"He said, 'You've got so much more in your tool box, and you're only using one thing.' And he was right."

Burcham tweaked her approach and began trying to use her sweet left-handed stroke to do more than just hit balls over the fence.

"Ever since then, my batting average has gone way up," said Burcham, whose 37 hits (in 79 at bats) through Sunday included five triples and six doubles. "Leading off, you get so many opportunities, and if they're playing back on me I'll lay down a slap bunt and try to run it out. If they're playing me up, I'll try and bop one as far as I can."

Either way, Burcham—who was leading the team with 19 walks and 37 runs scored entering Monday's regular season finale at Austin—has proven exceedingly difficult to strike out, fanning only five times all season in 104 plate appearances. She's not alone in that regard. Clemmons (six homers, seven strikeouts), Logan (four homers, five strikeouts) and Moore (five homers, eight strikeouts) have also excelled at hitting for power without sacrificing contact. As a team, the Lady Golden Tigers go down on strikes an average of only 3.2 times per game.

"In practice, we do a lot of drills—timing drills and different drills to help us keep our eye on the ball," explained Taylor, who had struck out only 10 times in 103 plate appearances through Sunday. "So we're always ready to hit no matter what comes at us."

Russellville's girls know exactly what's coming at them Thursday afternoon—a first-round date with old nemesis Lawrence County. Burcham has been playing varsity softball since 2014, and she had never been part of a win over the Lady Red Devils until this season, when the Lady Golden Tigers beat Lawrence County 12-5 on April 2 at home and 20-12 on April 12 in Moulton.

"This is our first year to beat them—and not just beat them, but beat them by a lot," said Burcham who went 3-for-5 with two triples, a double and seven runs scored in the two wins over LCHS. "It gives us more confidence as a team and shows

See 'DIG,' page 17





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## 'DIG', from page 16

what we're capable of, but it also puts more pressure on us because we know that no matter how far we've come, we still have more to do."

Taylor and her teammates know that beating the Lady Red Devils a third time in three tries will be challenging, to say the least.

"They have really good bats," she said. "They always hit home runs, every single game we play them, and they have a little bit of slow pitching, which can always be a struggle for us as well."

Then there's top seed and tournament host East Limestone, which will face Brooks in a first-round game on Thursday. The Lady Indians held Russellville in check twice this season, sweeping two area games 4-1 and 5-4, and pitcher Olivia Crouch has historically given the Lady Golden Tigers problems.

"They have a very good team, very consistent as well," Taylor said. "Their pitcher has done a lot for them. When we played them, we just made too many defensive mistakes and didn't get our bats going hot enough."

The area tournament will be double-elimination, with the champion and runner-up both punching their regional ticket. For seniors Burcham, Galloway and pitcher Emma Whitfield (7-3, 3.62 ERA through Sunday), this week represents their final chance to get back to Montgomery and play for a state title. [Russellville made the regional tournament in each of the past two seasons, advancing all the way to state in 2016.]

"One of the main factors for us is, we're hungry," Burcham said. "We're hungry to win. We've been beaten a couple of times by East Limestone, games we probably should have won. And Lawrence County is one of our big rivals. We always love playing them. We're ready to win, go on to regionals and hopefully win the whole thing."

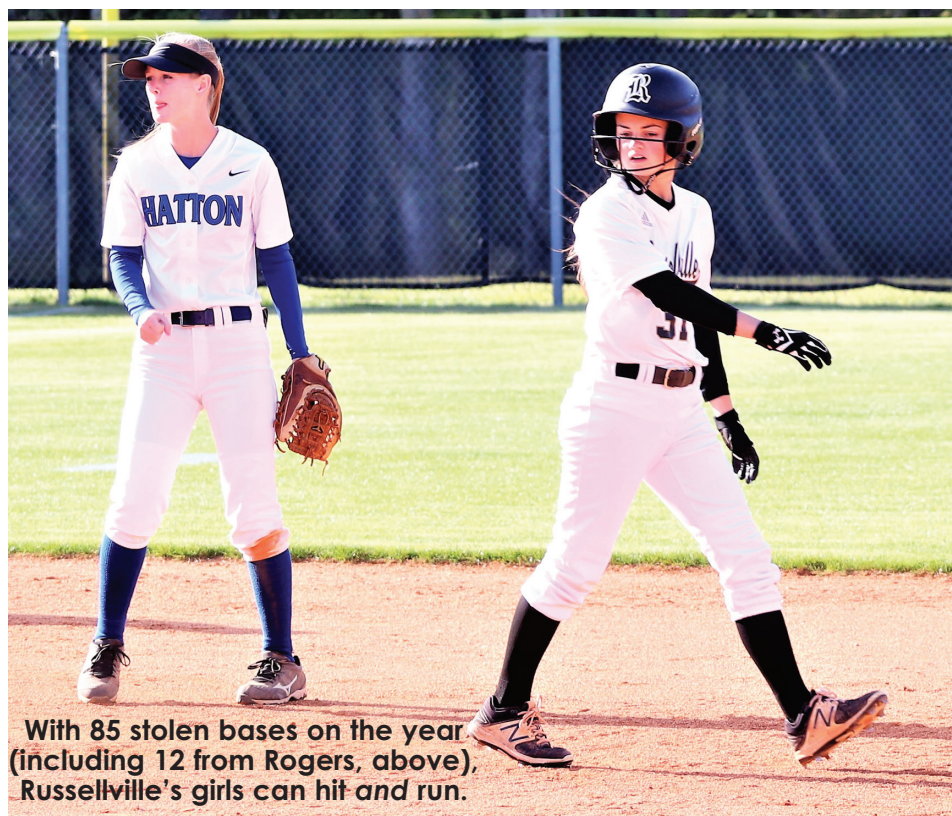
**"One of the main factors for us is, we're hungry," Burcham said. "We're hungry to win. We've been beaten a couple of times by East Limestone, games we probably should have won. And Lawrence County is one of our big rivals. We always love playing them. We're ready to win, go on to regionals and hopefully win the whole thing."**

"I want to see us win it all, honestly. Our focus the next couple of weeks is to not accept defeat, to go out there on every groundball, on every pitch ready to show everything we have. I'd like for every single player on the team, even if they're not playing, to give everything they have this upcoming week."

And if it takes ten runs a game to survive and advance, so be it.

"We don't really have a set number in mind," Burcham said. "We just want to get as many as we can as fast as we can, and then get more every single inning. We focus on winning every pitch. If you win every pitch, you win every inning. And if you win every inning, you win every game"

"Of course, there will be some nerves, but we know how to face nerves. We know how to overcome nerves, because of all the stuff we're sure of and all the things we've worked for. More than being nervous, we'll be ready."



With 85 stolen bases on the year (including 12 from Rogers, above), Russellville's girls can hit and run.



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# 'BOBCATS', from page 15

Saint to give Phil Campbell a 4-3 lead. "He threw me a pitch outside," Thomas said, "and I just poked it the other way. Thankfully it made it over third and dropped in."

Senior Brody Nix followed with a third straight two-out hit, singling through the hole between third and short to bring home Hardy and Thomas and stretch the lead to 6-3.

"Those were three big hits right there," said Raper, whose team would hold on to beat the top-ranked Panthers 6-3 before falling short in a 10-7 loss the following day in the series finale. "It's been somebody different for us all year long. That's kind of how we do things. It's usually not just one person."

The Bobcats' late rally in Game 2 made a winner out of senior ace Peyton Thomas (7-3), who worked his way out of major jams in the bottom of the fifth and the bottom of the sixth before hitting his pitch limit in the seventh and leaving with 11 strikeouts and just two earned runs allowed in 6.1 innings. The scary part is, that late rally almost never happened.

Freshman Ridge Raper doubled to right with one out in the top of the sixth, and Mars Hill made the no-brainer decision to intentionally walk Peyton Thomas, who had blasted his 10th home run of the season and the 32nd of his career earlier on Friday in the fourth inning of Game 1. The next batter was cleanup man Nate Owens, who floated a soft, sinking liner toward shallow right-center. As speedy centerfielder Sam Ragan raced in to make a diving attempt, Hardy watched from the on-deck circle and hoped.

"When I saw him getting ready to dive," Hardy said, "I thought, 'There's no way.' But that kid can fly."

Ragan dove for the ball, appeared to fumble around with it on the ground for a second or two, and then raised his glove to show the ball to the second-base umpire, who ruled the play a catch. Raper, the runner at second, was standing a few feet away from the bag and bolted for third, clearly thinking the ball had hit the ground. Ragan scrambled to his feet and threw to second, seem-

ingly completing a double-play that would have ended the inning.

Jonathan Raper, meanwhile, rushed out from the third-base coach's box to plead his case that Ragan had not, in fact, caught the ball in the air. Raper had seen the second-base umpire signal a catch, but he had also seen the first-base umpire [playoff games have a three-man crew] simultaneously throw out the safe sign, signaling no catch.

If ever there was an argument Raper needed to win....

"That was the one," he said. "I just went out and told him, 'The ball was on the ground. The ball was rolling around on the ground.' He said, 'Coach, I don't think it was.' I thought we had a chance, because I had seen the first-base umpire call it no catch. So I asked them to get together and talk about it."

Both field umpires conferred with the home plate umpire, and the call was ultimately over-turned. They ruled that Ragan did not make the catch, but Peyton Thomas—the runner at first base when Owens hit the ball—was correctly ruled out at second on a force play. Ridge Raper was allowed to advance to third, leaving runners at the corners with two outs.

Parrish nearly escaped the jam anyway, getting two quick strikes on Hardy, but the senior short-stop smoked a high breaking ball back through the middle to score Raper and tie the game 3-3. It was a moment of sweet redemption for Hardy, who had taken the loss in Friday's opener after coming in to pitch in a tie game and giving up the go-ahead run in the top of the eighth.

"I just wasn't feeling it," said Hardy, who was Phil Campbell's relief ace during the regular season with a 4-0 record, two saves and only two earned runs allowed in 24.2 innings. "I wasn't hitting my spots. I walked the first guy, they got a hit, and they took the lead. My guys made a couple of plays behind me to help me out. I was lucky to just give up one."

"When I came up [in the sixth inning] in Game 2, I got behind in the count real quick. I just tried to battle and stay in it, and thankfully he hung me a

curveball and I was able to put a good swing on it. Then Brandon came up and got a real big hit for us."

After Hardy, Thomas and Nix turned a one-run deficit into a three-run lead with three clutch swings, it was up to Peyton Thomas to finish things on the mound. Raper had elected to hold his ace back for the second straight week, giving the Game 1 assignment instead to Ridge Raper. The freshman righthander pitched brilliantly in Friday's opener, holding a potent Mars Hill lineup to two earned runs on five hits in seven innings while striking out seven and walking just one.

Mars Hill righthander Colt Smith was even more dominant, striking out 13 and limiting the Bobcats to two hits in 7.1 innings. The first of those hits came in the bottom of the fourth, when Peyton Thomas smashed a low curveball over the fence in left-center for a two-run homer to tie the game 2-2.

Smith allowed a sixth-inning single to Austen Baker and nothing else, turning a 3-2 lead over to reliever Josh Bowerman with one out in the bottom of the eighth. Bowerman got the final two outs to nail down the save and give the Panthers a 1-0 series lead.

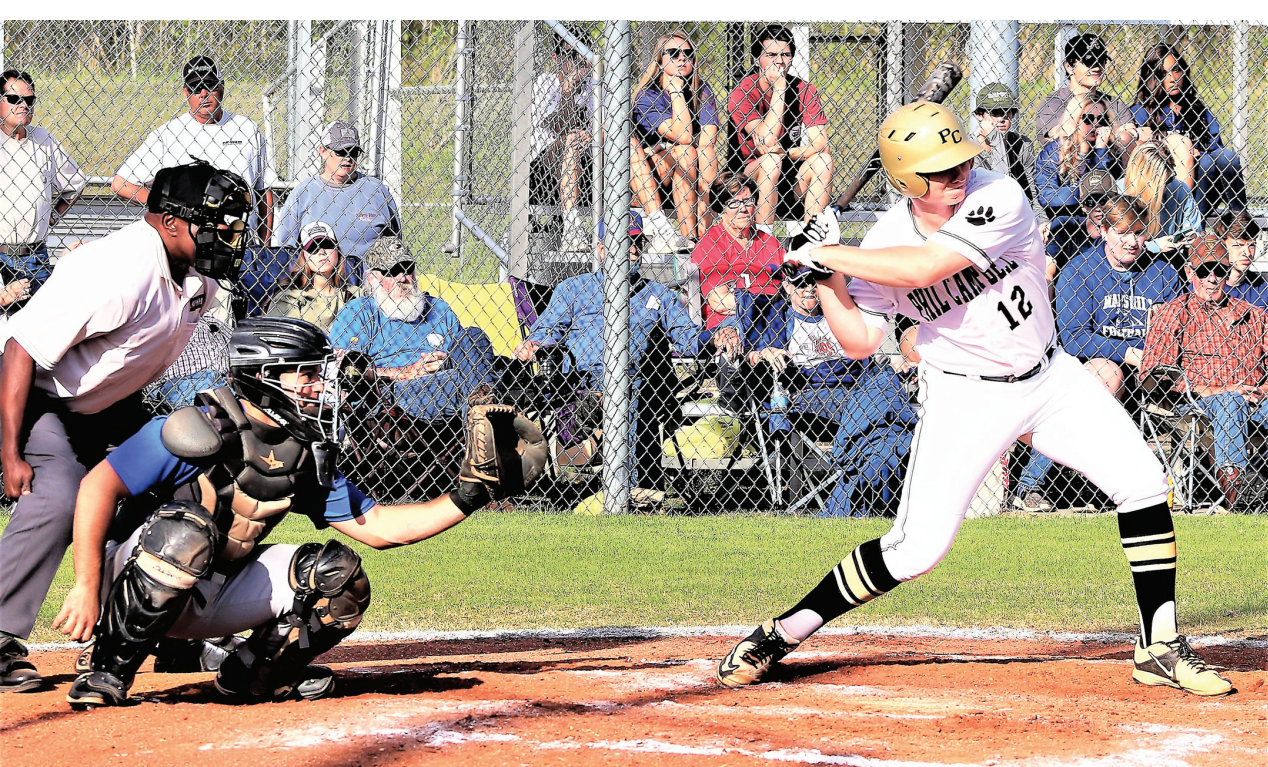
In addition to his stellar work on the mound, Smith also went 2-for-3 with a double and drove in all three Panther runs.

"Their guy pitched a good game, just like we expected," Jonathan Raper said. "The Smith kid is a good pitcher, and he did a great job. I thought Ridge pitched a good game, too. There were pretty much only two hard-hit balls the whole game—the double by the Smith kid in the first inning and then the home run by Peyton. Aside from that, I don't remember too many balls being barreled up."

Raper might have gone with Owens for Game 2 (like he did in the previous week's first-round sweep of Fyffe) had Phil Campbell beaten Mars Hill in Game 1, but Thomas got the call with the season on the line.

"Our guys have a lot of confidence with Peyton

See 'BOBCATS', Page 19



PHOTOS BY KYLE GLASGOW

**PEYTON'S PLACE** - Thomas (12) smashed the 32nd and final home run of his high school career in last Friday's opener. Mars Hill walked the UNA-bound slugger six times in a tight series that saw the Panthers out-score Phil Campbell 16-15 in three games.

# Stockton Memorial fishing tournament set for May 19

Staff reports

The fifth annual Casey Stockton Memorial Scholarship Bass Tournament is set for Saturday, May 19 at Cedar Creek Lake at Slick Rock boat ramp. Tournament time will be 6 a.m.-2 p.m.

There is a five-fish-per-boat limit, and the entry fee is \$60 per boat. There is an optional big fish pot with a \$20 per boat fee (100 percent payout). But you don't have to participate in the big fish pot to fish in the tournament.

Prize money will be awarded with \$750 to first place, \$450 to second place, \$250 to third place and \$150 for fourth place. There will also be door prizes for tournament participants.

The tournament will be held regardless of weather conditions. No refunds will be made. Two contestants per boat only, please. Large mouth, small mouth and spotted bass only are counted. All fish must be weighed by pound and ounce system and must measure 12" with mouth closed and roll tail.

Contestants must be 16 years of age or older unless accompanied by an adult. All fish, except trophy fish, will be the property of tournament officials to be released after the tournament. Entry forms will be taken by mail or at the ramp on the 19th. Take-off will be by the way entry forms are received.

For more information, call Ronnie Wray at 256-627-8898 or Tim Stockton at 256-520-9959. Entry forms may be mailed to Ronnie Wray, 501 Hwy. 44, Russellville, AL, 35654.



**Letters to the Editor**

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## 'BOBCATS,' from page 18

on the mound," Raper said. "We believe that if we can score four or five runs with him pitching, we've got a great chance to win. We feel that way about all our pitchers. Peyton is our number one, our senior, our most experienced guy, but we feel like we've got some other guys who are pretty good, too."

Thomas, who had struck out 82 batters while walking only 10 and posting a miniscule 0.69 ERA in 51 regular-season innings, wasn't in top form on Friday, giving up a run on three hits in the bottom of the second and then issuing a walk and throwing two wild pitches in the bottom of the fourth as Mars Hill scored twice to grab a 3-2 lead. But he bore down late in the game and got three critical strikeouts, fanning Ragan on a curveball with the bases loaded to end the fifth and then recording back-to-back K's to escape a two-out, one-out jam in the sixth.

Thomas blew a 3-2 fastball by three-hole hitter Collin Huntley to start the bottom of the seventh, reaching his pitch-count limit and then turning things over to Owens. The junior lefthander got Smith to ground to second before running into a spot of two-out trouble. Mars Hill loaded the bases on a walk and two singles, but Owens got Kyler Murks to hit into a 4-6 force play for the final out, nailing down his second save of the year and ensuring that Phil Campbell's season would live to see Saturday.

Phil Campbell twice rallied from sizable deficits in Game 3, but the Bobcats were ultimately unable to out-hit their mistakes in a season-ending 10-7 loss that felt all too familiar. They committed eight errors in the game to just one by the Panthers (26-9), who eliminated the Bobcats (25-11) from the playoffs for the fourth consecutive year.

The game was scoreless until the top of the third, when Mars Hill mounted a two-out rally against Owens. Cade Parrish reached on an error and came around to score the game's first run when Phil Campbell committed another error on Sam Ragan's base hit to right. Colt Smith walked, and Brooks Thompson delivered an RBI single to make it 2-0.

The Panthers added to the lead in the fourth, putting together three walks, two singles, an error and a sac fly to score twice and make it 4-0.

The Bobcats got up off the deck and tied the game with four runs off Mars Hill starter Josh Bowerman in the bottom of the inning. Peyton Thomas and Hardy both walked, and Chase Hutchens got Phil Campbell on the board with an RBI single. An infield hit by Nix loaded the bases, and Hardy scored when Mike Wrona reached on an error. Saint was thrown out trying to score on the play, but Brandon Thomas delivered a clutch pinch-hit for the second day in a row, tying the game 4-4 with a two-run single to right.

The Panthers went right back in front in the top of the fifth, taking advantage of two errors, three singles and a fielder's choice to score three times and grab a 7-4 lead. They tacked on two more runs in the top of the sixth and led 9-4 before Phil Campbell rallied again in the bottom of the inning.

Hardy led off with a double to center and then scored on a two-out double by Wrona. Brandon Thomas was hit by a pitch, and Baker followed with a single to left. Raper's clutch two-run single cut the lead to 9-7. Peyton Thomas walked to load the bases, but Mars Hill reliever Campbell Gooch struck out Owens to end the inning.

The Panthers capitalized on two more Bobcat errors to score a run and stretch the lead to 10-7 in the top of the seventh. Walks to Hardy and Hutchens to start the bottom of the seventh brought the tying run to the plate for Phil Campbell, but Peyton Higgins retired the next three batters to seal the win and punch Mars Hill's ticket to the quarterfinals.

Nine different players had one hit for the Bobcats. Wrona was 1-for-4 with a double, two RBIs and two runs. Hardy went 1-for-2 with two walks and two runs scored. Peyton Thomas was 1-for-1 with three walks and a run.



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