April 12, 2013

ARTICLES OF INTEREST

For specific news stories, see the following page numbers:

NEWS ABOUT

TRUSTEE/SYSTEM INFORMATION 2
STATE ISSUES 3
UA CAMPUS ISSUES 9
UAB CAMPUS ISSUES 22
UAH CAMPUS ISSUES 26
OTHER STATE UNIVERSITIES 28
SPORTS 36
NATIONAL NEWS 50
HUNTSVILLE Tuition hike approved for medical students

The University of Alabama System Board of Trustees finance committee approved tuition increases on Thursday for first professional students in medicine, dentistry and optometry at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and the College of Community Health at the flagship campus in Tuscaloosa.

The full board, meeting at the University of Alabaman in Huntsville, will vote on the tuition increases at today's meeting.

Medical students at UAB and UA community health students will pay 6.5 percent more for tuition in the 2013-14 academic year while dental and optometry students will see a 5.5 percent increase. During her presentation to the trustees, UAB Provost Linda Lucas said that despite the increase, the tuition remains below the average of peer institutions and ranked in the bottom half in comparison with about 20 peer institutions.
Bentley won't enforce federal rules

Says federal, not state, regulators should be responsible for health law patient protections

The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY | Gov. Robert Bentley has rejected another provision of the federal health care overhaul pushed by President Barack Obama, saying Alabama insurance regulators won't enforce parts of the law aimed at protecting consumers.

Bentley wrote a letter to federal officials last month saying Washington, rather than state regulators in Montgomery, should be responsible for ensuring that insurance policies sold in Alabama comply with the federal law's requirements such as covering people with pre-existing health conditions, the Montgomery Advertiser reported Saturday.

Bentley spokeswoman Jennifer Ardis said the governor doesn't believe state insurance officials have the authority to enforce the federal provisions. She said the cost of enforcement is also unclear.

"Also, it's extremely difficult for Alabama to commit to enforcing something for which the federal government keeps changing the rules and regulations," Ardis said. "Alabama will continue to regulate health insurance under the powers granted under state law."

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said Alabama is one of six states that have said they won't help enforce provisions of the Affordable Care Act. The others are Arizona, Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas and Wyoming.

Bentley, a physician, has rejected other parts of the health law, such as setting up a state-run health insurance exchange or expanding Alabama's Medicaid program to cover more low-income residents.

The consumer protections in the 2010 federal law prohibit insurance companies from imposing annual limits on benefits, crack down on unreasonable rate increases and allow young adults to keep receiving coverage under their parents' insurance up to age 26.

See Rules | 11B
RULES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

Bentley's decision means the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services in Washington will be responsible for making sure insurers in Alabama follow those rules.

"It is our strong preference that states continue to be the primary enforcers of the important consumer protections that are now federal law," said Alicia Hartinger, a spokeswoman for the federal agency, though she added that "CMS will step in to enforce these protections when necessary."

The Obama administration says it has made arrangements with many states to collaborate on enforcement. But Bentley's March 14 letter to Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius says nothing about Alabama collaborating with federal regulators.

"The state of Alabama will continue to enforce our ... insurance code, and other state laws as they affect the business of insurance in this state," Bentley wrote.

State Sen. Roger Bedford, D-Russellville, said the governor is wrong to leave consumer protection enforcement to Washington.

"Gov. Bentley seems more interested in standing in the schoolhouse door over federal health care than he is in helping the people of Alabama," Bedford said, "which is sad, considering he's a physician."
Bentley says he’ll run for re-election

Says he is proud of progress made in his first term

Kim Chandler
kchandler@al.com

It’s official and unsurprising, Gov. Robert Bentley is running for re-election in 2014. “Our state has been through a great deal of hardship over the last two years, but we have also enjoyed a great deal of success,” he said in a statement Tuesday from his campaign. “I am proud of the progress we have made, especially when it comes to economic prosperity.”

Bentley’s decision, which was not widely noticed, was first shared at the state convention of college Republicans during the weekend. It was an understated announcement from a governor who has had an understated style for his first two years in office.

The announcement was not a surprise because Bentley has been strongly suggesting for some time that he will seek a second term.

The Republican primary will be held June 4, 2014.

A SECOND TERM FOR BENTLEY?

HE DESERVES IT

“I think he has done an excellent job,” Speaker of the House Mike Hubbard, R-Auburn, said. “I think he has been effective. I think he deserves to be re-elected and I intend to support him.”

HE DOESN’T DESERVE IT

House Minority Leader Craig Ford, D-Gadsden, criticized Bentley’s leadership by saying the state’s unemployment is still around 7.2 percent. Ford also criticized Bentley’s decision not to expand Medicaid and to sign a bill that will give tax credits to families at “failing” public schools to help pay tuition at a private school or to attend another public school. “I don’t know how he can justify those decisions and hope to win re-election,” Ford said.
Federal prosecutor John England III selected as new U.S. magistrate judge for northern Alabama

By: Kent Faulk

John England III, who is second in command at the U.S. Attorney's Office and the son of a former Alabama Supreme Court justice, has been named to replace retiring U.S. Magistrate Judge Robert Armstrong.

He will be the only African American among the five federal magistrates on the bench in the northern district of Alabama.

"I am excited and honored to have been selected. Because of my father's example, I have always aspired to be a public servant and to use the law to help others," England said. "I look forward to the challenges ahead as I take the bench."

The district judges of the Northern District of Alabama selected England, who is First Assistant United States Attorney in the Northern District of Alabama, from a list of five candidates presented by a panel of local lawyers and community leaders, Chief U.S. District Court Judge Sharon Blackburn said this morning. A number of others had originally applied.

"We had a number of highly qualified applicants to fill the upcoming vacancy on the magistrate judge bench," Blackburn said. "The court selected John England due to the wide breadth of his legal experience, his reputation as an outstanding lawyer, and his excellent temperament. These qualities are all strong predictors that he will be an exceptional magistrate judge."

"It is hoped that Mr. England will be able to assume the position of magistrate judge in the next few months," Blackburn said.

Armstrong retires June 17.

Kevin Butler, federal public defender for the northern district of Alabama, said that England is an "outstanding" choice for the position.

"The knowledge and experience he brings to the position will be a tremendous benefit to the court and the citizens of the northern district of Alabama," Butler said.

In his application for the magistrate job, England explained why he wanted the job and wrote about his father, John England Jr., a Tuscaloosa County Circuit Court Judge who once served on Alabama's Supreme Court.

"I view the position as United States Magistrate Judge as another opportunity for public service," England stated in his application. "I am not applying for the position because of prestige or money but because it would provide me with an opportunity to engage in another meaningful role as a public servant in the state where I have lived all of my life and am now raising my daughter."
England stated that when he was growing up in Tuscaloosa he learned the importance of making a positive impact on his community, and beyond, from his father, England stated. "My father was one of the first African-American graduates of the University of Alabama's Law School."

"Because there were few firms hiring African-American attorneys and there were little or no other employment opportunities for African-American attorneys at that time, my father boldly decided to hang out a shingle," the younger England stated. "I observed the cases he handled and the way he handled them, and I learned what it means to handle cases that are about much more than money."

England stated that his father often took cases "for little or no money, and he gladly represented those who, in the past, had little or no access to legal representation."

"I observed my father progress in his career from his election to Tuscaloosa's first city council to Tuscaloosa circuit judge to Alabama Supreme Court Justice," England III wrote. "Given such a role model, it is not surprising that my two siblings and I chose to follow in our father's footsteps in the legal profession and in public service."

England has been the first assistant U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Alabama since 2010, overseeing the criminal, civil, appellate and administrative divisions. He serves as acting U.S. Attorney in the absence of the U.S. Attorney.

From 1999 to 2010 England served in various other roles in the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Before he joined the U.S. Attorneys Office England worked for the law firm of Watson McKinney LLP in Huntsville as an associate attorney.

From 1996 through 1997, England worked as a law clerk to Associate Alabama Supreme Court Justice Terry L. Butts.


England graduated from the University of Alabama's law school in 1996, He also got his bachelor of arts degree from the university in 1993.
Airbus breaks ground on south Alabama plant

The Associated Press

MOBILE | Airbus broke ground on its first U.S. airplane assembly plant Monday with a ceremony marking the start of a project that could help transform Alabama's coast into an aerospace center.

Top company executives and state leaders were in the port city for the event, held at the Airbus site at Brookley Aeroplex. A jetliner parked behind the stage provided a backdrop for the occasion.

Mayor Sam Jones recounted how it took seven years to bring aircraft manufacturing to the Alabama coast after a series of starts and stops.

"Our future and Airbus' future are tied together, and we're extremely proud of that," said Jones.

Gov. Robert Bentley said the start of work marked a "great day for Alabama."

The $600 million factory is expected to employ 1,000 people once production of the Airbus A320 jet begins around 2015.

Keith Deravi, an economist with Auburn University Montgomery, compared Airbus' decision to locate in Alabama to the decision by Mercedes-Benz in 1993 to construct its first U.S. assembly plant in Tuscaloosa County. The Mercedes decision "made Alabama a global powerhouse in the automobile industry," and Airbus could do the same for aerospace, he said.

The ceremony came as the state's first major Airbus supplier, Safran Engineering Services, opened its new office in Mobile. The company plans to employ about 50 people at an engineering support facility.

The Mobile facility will join Airbus assembly plants in France, Germany and China. Airbus parent European Aeronautic Defense and Space Co. had planned to build a new Air Force refueling tanker in Alabama, but Boeing won the contract in 2011. Airbus announced last year it would construct a jetliner assembly line near downtown Mobile.

Local leaders hope the Airbus plant, being built at the 1,650-acre Brookley industrial park, will make Alabama the heart of aerospace work along the northern Gulf Coast.

"Brookley is situated right in the center of the Gulf Coast aerospace corridor, and the Airbus facility sets us up to be the nucleus of that corridor," said Bill Sisson, executive director of the Mobile Airport Authority.

North Alabama already has a strong aerospace industry with NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville and a Delta rocket factory operated by United Launch Alliance nearby at Decatur.
The interview schedule is:

- 9:30 a.m., Robert Gunter of Marion, Ark., deputy director for career and technical education at the Arkansas Department of Career Education.
- 10:35 a.m., Thomas Huebner of Tuscaloosa, Shelton State's dean of students.
- 12:20 p.m., Linda North of Opelika, academic dean for Southern Union State Community College.
- 1:25 p.m., Valerie Richardson of Anniston, vice president of the Office of Institutional Advancement and Student Services at Gadsden State Community College.
- 2:30 p.m., Stephen Vacik of Colby, Kan., president of Colby Community College.

Steve Fair is now serving as Shelton State's interim president. Fair, who is not a candidate for the president's job, was named interim president in October after Mark Heinrich resigned to accept the job of chancellor of the Alabama Community College System.

UA began interviews for provost on Tuesday. Dave Francko, associate provost and dean of UA's graduate school, was the first candidate to

See Posts | 7B

See next page
be interviewed.

Upcoming interviews, which are open to faculty, staff and students, will be held from 11 a.m. until noon:

- Pam Whitten, dean and professor in the College of Communication Arts and Sciences at Michigan State University, on April 19 in Room 309 at the Ferguson Center.
- Gordon Emslie, provost and vice president for academic affairs at Western Kentucky University, on April 23 in the Heritage Room at the Ferguson Center
- Kimberly Espy, vice president for research and innovation and dean of the graduate school at the University of Oregon, on April 30 in the Heritage Room at the Ferguson Center.

The candidates' curriculum vitae is available online at www.provost.ua.edu/.

Judy Bonner, UA's previous provost, became the school's president on Nov. 1, replacing Guy Bailey.

Joe Benson, UA's vice president for research, is serving as interim provost.
NEWS | ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

UA sees decline in student academic misconduct cases

Offenses for decade peaked in spring 2005

By John Burleson
Staff Reporter

The number of academic misconduct cases at The University of Alabama have declined in recent years, despite an increase in population and prevalence of modern technology in the classroom.

According to a list of academic misconduct offenses over 10 years provided by a UA spokesperson, cases of misconduct reached a relative high during the period of 2004-2009 but have seen a relative decline in recent years.

This fall, 71 cases were reported, as opposed to 79 in fall 2011. Offenses for the decade peaked in spring 2005, when 158 cases were reported.

According to the list, academic misconduct is most prevalent in the College of Arts & Sciences and the College of Engineering, on average.

Mark Nelson, the vice provost and vice president for student affairs, said the University has implemented various ways to prevent academic misconduct, but the best way to prevent students from cheating was to be clear and concise.

"It is certainly possible that a growing student body could increase the number of cases of misconduct, and it certainly appears plausible that technology could make it easier to commit misconduct due to access to ease of 'cut and paste' technology. This does not seem to be the case at UA though," Nelson said. "Some of the best deterrents to misconduct that I have discovered in the literature seem to be clear instructions for assignments and discussions about misconduct by the professor."

— Mark Nelson

Some of the best deterrents to misconduct that I have discovered in the literature seem to be clear instructions for assignments and discussions about misconduct by the professor — education and clear expectations.

Nelson also said there were various programs and techniques the University has implemented to reduce the possibility of students cheating.

SEE MISCONDUCT PAGE 5
Number of cheating cases fell in 2012

We offer turnitin.com as a preventative tool and as an educational tool. Also, the formation of Academic Honor Councils in each college has played a major role in increasing awareness and curtailing misconduct," he said. "Maintaining academic integrity is a priority at all levels of the university."

In the Code of Academic Conduct, the Capstone's definitions of multiple offenses are detailed, a description of what constitutes academic misconduct in general and a description of penalties which students may face if misconduct is found.

In the code, academic misconduct is defined: "academic misconduct includes all acts of dishonesty in any academic or related matter and any knowing or intentional help, attempt to help, or conspiracy to help, another student commit an act of academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following acts, when performed in any type of academic or academically related matter, exercise, or activity: cheating, plagiarism, fabrication and misrepresentation."

Ramey Edwards, a UA alumna who majored in journalism, said a few classes in the College of Communication and Information Sciences were strict regarding academic misconduct. Edwards said the worst class in terms of strictness about misconduct regarding tests was under professor William Gonzenbach.

"Dr. Gonzenbach was extremely strict about tests. I had a friend who had been yelled at because he had his hat was not turned around, and they were worried about people writing answers to the test on the bill of their hat," Edwards said. "They were just really strict. He would yell at people for coming into the tests with their phones on or flipping the test too early. I was always a little afraid that I was going to get yelled at over something."

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TOTAL ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT OFFENSES PER SEMESTER</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Fall 2012: 71</td>
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Farewell to a Tide legend
Community pays its final respects to Mal Moore

"We all lost a very special man, Alabama lost a Southern gentleman, the university lost a great leader and I lost a great friend."

University of Alabama head football coach Nick Saban, who's who of University of Alabama luminaries paid tribute Thursday to a man who came to embody Crimson Tide athletics as a player, coach and administrator.

More than 200 people attended the celebration of life ceremony held at Coleman Coliseum for Mal Moore, UA's former director of athletics, who died March 30 at the age of 73.

But while Moore's legacy of achievement in athletics is what most people think of first, radio host Paul Finebaum said he will remember the Dozier native for something else.

"To me, it wasn't what he did on the football field," Finebaum said after the ceremony was over. "I know what he went through with his wife (Charlotte, who died after a two-decade battle with Alzheimer's disease in 2010).

"It was pure agony seeing someone go through what his wife went through, but I think it's also truly remarkable that this big, tough guy who was a quarterback and a coach was so kind and gentle in taking care of the most important person in his life.

"That's what I'll take away from the legacy of Mal Moore."

Moore's compassion for his wife and his passion for the Crimson Tide were the main themes of speeches at Thursday's ceremony, which included...
MOORE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

UA System Chancellor Robert E. Witt, UA President Judy Bonner, former Alabama and NFL quarterback Richard Todd, UA golf coach Jay Seawell and head football coach Nick Saban.

"Today, we're here to celebrate Mal Moore's life," Saban said. "We all lost a very special man, Alabama lost a Southern gentleman, the university lost a great leader and I lost a great friend."

Saban credited Moore as the main reason he chose Alabama for his return to the collegiate sideline after coaching the Miami Dolphins in the NFL.

He also told of the smiles on Moore's face after each win — especially the wins that cemented the school's three BCS national titles — and how Moore would read poetry to Saban's wife, Terry, on road trips.

But Saban said that one of his proudest moments was when Moore was named the recipient of the 2012 John L. Toner Award, which is presented by the National Football Foundation to that year's best athletic director.

"He said something to me afterwards," Saban said. "And he had a tear running down his cheek — which was really tough — and he said 'You changed my life when you came here.'"

Mal Moore's daughter, Heather Cook, and her family are seen during a memorial service for University of Alabama Athletic Director Mal Moore at Coleman Coliseum in Tuscaloosa on Thursday.

"I looked him right in the eye and said: 'No, Mal, you changed mine. I'm a better coach, I'm a better person, I'm a better teacher from the lessons I've learned in being in partnership with you.' "

The ceremony opened with a video chronicling Moore's life and career, from his days as a youth in the small Crenshaw County town of Dozier to his playing days under legendary football coach Paul W. "Bear" Bryant. The video featured segments on his work during the recovery after the April 27, 2011, tornado and his commitment to Caring Days, the local program for adults with Alzheimer's and other memory disorders.

The Rev. Keith Pugh, senior pastor of Open Door Baptist Church and a former UA football player, was the first to the podium at Thursday's ceremony and he likened Moore's legacy to the story of the biblical prophet Elisha. After Elisha's death, the Bible's second book of Kings said that his bones were powerful enough to resurrect the dead.

"Elisha was gone, but he's still making an impact on the lives of people," Pugh said. "And Coach Moore is gone, but he's going to impact the lives of students and a lot of people in our state and our community."

Witt, UA's chancellor since March 2012, worked closely with Moore while he served as UA's president for nine years.

Witt recalled Moore's penchant for telling stories and how, during a football game, a trainer told the then-president that Moore's stories often carried a message that the gentleman athletic director wanted known.

"So, I started listening much more carefully," Witt said. "And I can't tell you the number of times, as I listened to a story from Mal, that I was getting advice. Wise advice. And good advice.

"Mal Moore brought out the best in everyone he knew, and I believe that will be one of his most enduring qualities."

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
Al Trace’s “You Call Everybody Darlin’” was the first song played on the Coleman Coliseum speakers as University of Alabama fans of all ages streamed inside for Mal Moore’s “Celebration of Life” on Thursday. Moore, the longtime Alabama institution who passed away Saturday at the age of 73, will be buried Sunday in his hometown of Dozier. A private funeral service took place Thursday morning at Calvary Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa.

Thursday’s public memorial closed with the playing of Alabama’s alma mater. Here is some of what was said.

Nick Saban

The Alabama football coach shared the story of Moore’s persistence in trying to hire him. He recalled telling his wife, Terry, that he didn’t want to interview for the job. Moore, though, was already at Saban’s house.

“He’s coming for dinner tonight,” Terry said.

Saban continued his praise of Moore.

“This was a genuine person. He never disrespected a single soul I know. I never heard anyone use the word ‘unfair’ when they talked about Mal.”

Saban recounted an emotional conversation with Moore last year after he received the John L. Toner Award as the nation’s top athletics director.

“Mal said, ‘You changed my life when you came here,’” Saban recalled. “I said, ‘No, Mal, you changed my life’.”

Jay Seawell

The Alabama men’s golf coach remembered a road trip on which he learned of Moore’s passion for music. With an expert piano player in their hotel lobby, Moore sang “Yellow Bird” for Seawell and his wife.

“Coach gave the Crimson Tide a soul,” Seawell said. “He was our heartbeat.”

RichardTodd

Todd, an Alabama quarterback when Moore was a coach, remembered the spit that would collect in the corners of Moore’s mouth when he yelled. Once, Moore used Todd’s jersey to wipe it off.

“I know Mal is up there with the angels and he’s talking to them and telling them he’s just a kid from Dozier.”

Judy Bonner

The Alabama president’s praise went beyond what Moore accomplished as a player, coach and athletics director.

“The real legacy Mal leaves behind is he was a good and decent man.”

Robert Witt

Witt, the former UA president who is now UA system chancellor, remembered Moore’s commitment to the university’s successes all over campus, not just in athletics.

Witt recalled when both were asked to speak at an alumni association chapter meeting. Moore rattled off a slew of stats, figures and accomplishments that went beyond athletics. Afterward, he asked Witt how he did.

“I said ‘Mal, you were perfect.’ You covered everything. We have a problem. They’re about to introduce me and you just gave my speech.”

Keith Pugh

“Coach Moore is gone but he’s going to impact the lives of a lot of students, the people in this state and community, said the pastor who spoke at Moore’s private funeral service.

“Coach Moore liked to say there’s lots of tigers and bears, but there’s only one Crimson Tide.”
Fast track to success
B-team coach got slow lineman off and running

Don Kauser Jr.
dkauser@bhamnews.com

Before Bill Battle ran, he virtually walked. Before he walked, he practically crawled.

Before he earned a football scholarship to Alabama and formed a lasting relationship with coach Paul Bryant that would open doors into coaching and windows into the business world, the Crimson Tide’s new athletics director had to give up baseball.

Before Bryant entered the picture, a coach at West End High School in Birmingham put Battle on track for success.

"When I first got there, I was short and fat and really slow," Battle said. "One other guy on the team and I would fight it out every day in wind sprints not to be last."

The B-team football coach was also the head track coach.

"I told him I was really a good baseball player," Battle said. "He told me, ‘You can forget about baseball. You need to learn how to run.’ I thought it was the cruelest thing you could do to a kid: He put me on track."

BATTLE LINES
A three-part series on new Alabama AD Bill Battle

I. TODAY: The player — He was a slow lineman at Birmingham’s West End High School who blossomed and then played end for Paul Bryant at Alabama. That opened doors and windows for the future.

II. FRIDAY: The coach — He coached at Tennessee, against Bryant, but first he worked for Bud Wilkinson, Paul Dietzel and Doug Dickey. He was a pioneer of computer analysis in college football.

III. SUNDAY: The businessman — He retired as a multimillionaire and now has come out of retirement to succeed former teammate Mal Moore as Alabama’s athletics director.

See BATTLE, Page 11B
BATTLE
From Page 38

in the 440-yard dash. Between my sophomore and junior year, I grew about six inches and became a taller, skinnier guy, and the running really did help me.

He reached the state track meet and ran in the 440 and the mile relay.

"I didn't place," Battle said, "but I ran my fastest time. I'd come a long way."

Now look how far he has come. He came out of the blocks and played end on offense and defense on Alabama's 1961 national championship team. On the backstretch of his career, he became college football's youngest head coach at Tennessee at age 23. In the last curve, he started a college licensing company and sold it for millions of dollars a year later. Now in his home stretch, he has come out of retirement to succeed Mal Moore as Alabama's athletics director.

Who is Bill Battle?

Battle was Moore's teammate at Alabama, and like Moore, Battle went into coaching. Unlike Moore, Battle hit his stride in big business.

The son of educators — his father was a professor and athletics director at Birmingham-Southern and his mother taught junior high English in Pleasant Grove — was slow to develop as a football player for Coach Bear at West End, which won two games in his first three years and then doubled that total when he was a senior.

"When I was slow, I played every position on the line," Battle said. "Lot of center.

The team had a strong-armed quarterback but lacked good receivers.

"I said, 'I can catch the ball.' I said, 'I can catch the ball.'" Battle, who was moved to wide receiver midway through his junior year. He went to earn all-state recognition as a senior and signed with Alabama as part of Bryant's first full recruiting class in 1959.

"When I signed, I weighed 170 pounds," the 6-foot-2-Battle recalled. "Coach Bryant said, 'Don't gain any weight.' I was skinny. We were all skinny, because they didn't feed you much. You went through the cafeteria line. Auburn ate family and they got a lot more beef on their team, but Coach Bryant brought the quickness and all the lead-and-mean and great defense and field position. Everybody bought into it, because he was a pretty good salesman. I might have gotten to 210 my senior year. There weren't many on our team that were more than 200 pounds."

Looking back, Battle is struck by how well Bryant and his assistants prepared their players, for games and more.

"We were well prepared for everything, because Coach Bryant believed in having a plan for everything," Battle said. "He equated many of the lessons that we learned on the field into life lessons, and that was very meaningful to me...."

"It was tough, but we all knew we were part of something special, a pretty good football team."

"Ok, I could catch OK. I could catch OK. I could catch OK. I could catch OK."

"What's the deal? I come in, and like he did a lot of things when he was thinking, lie was thinking, I was thinking, and he wasn't talking.

The players were ready for a tantrum.

"He said, 'They're not as good as I thought they were.' Battle recalled. "We've got 'em right where we want 'em. We're going to embarrass them right in front of their crowd. All we need to do is change two or three little things, and we're going to be good.'"

"Well, that was not exactly what we were expecting. So sure enough, we went out and started playing better, and we scored, and we got within where a field goal wins, and we got down and Richard O'Dell kicks a field goal as time expires, and we win 16-15. If he had come in and fussed at us, we'd have probably gotten booted 40-0."

It was Bryant at his best.

"He was smart enough to know how to lift you up," Battle said. "He was good at putting you down. He got people grounded. He was good at that, but he could pick you up, too."
Students plan all-night fundraiser to fight cancer

By McKenzie Pope
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

TUSCALOOSA | More than 4 million people around the world participate in Relay For Life events each year, according to the American Cancer Society. On Friday, University of Alabama students will host a 12-hour, all-night Relay For Life event to raise money for cancer research and treatment.

Kristin Payne, UA's Relay For Life director of development, knows how important cancer research and treatment can be. A senior at UA, she is one of the cancer survivors who will participate in Friday’s Relay For Life. She was diagnosed with stage 4 neuroblastoma when she was 7 months old.

“I had a tumor on my spinal cord and cancerous cells in my bone marrow,” Payne said.

After multiple surgeries and a few rounds of chemotherapy, doctors still gave her a very low chance of survival, Payne said.

“By the grace of God, I can now call myself a cancer survivor,” Payne said.

She said she got involved with Relay For Life for that reason.

“Cancer doesn’t sleep, and neither will we,” Payne said.

The 2013 Relay for Life will take place at the Sam Bailey Track and Field facility at the University of Alabama. The event starts at 6 p.m. Friday and continues until 6 a.m. Saturday. While there will be themed relays around the track, there also will be games, including capture the flag, dodgeball, whipped cream twister and a DJ for entertainment. As of Tuesday, more than 500 participants and 50 teams had signed up for the event.

Another all-night Relay for Life for Tuscaloosa County will be at 6 p.m. April 19 at Snow Hinton Park.

Anna Lisa Sexton, Tuscaloosa’s community representative for the American Cancer Society, said that nearly everyone has a reason to participate in Relay For Life. The society gives cancer patients hope, something that would not be possible without the money Relay For Life raises, she said.

“Relay For Life is the signature event for the American Cancer Society,” Sexton said.

See Cancer | 7B
CANCER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

Sexton said. "Since 1985, the American Cancer Society has raised nearly $4 billion in the fight against cancer."

Sexton said the research the American Cancer Society does gives cancer patients like her uncle much-needed time. She said he lived 10 months longer than doctors initially said he would because of treatments he received because of research done by the American Cancer Society.

"Everyone has a story or a tie to cancer," Sexton said. "Relay For Life is a way to come together to remember those who have lost the battle to cancer, while celebrating those who have won."

Payne said that the greater the number of participants for Relay for Life, the more fun the event is for everyone and the more awareness and funds that will be raised.

"I love being able to work with other people that are so passionate about the fight against cancer," Payne said.
"It's nice to know that I am not the only one who wants to fight back, and it's fun to work with others to do something great."
City considering incentives adjustment with developer

Officials: Hotel construction costs exceed initial estimates

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

TUSCALOOSA | Citing an unforeseen rise in costs associated with the development of an upscale hotel downtown, the company behind the project is asking City Hall for additional financial help.

The company Kemmons Wilson of Memphis, Tenn., has requested the city modify an economic incentive package the City Council approved in September to assist the $27 million development planned for the corner of University Boulevard and Greensboro Avenue.

The economic incentives consisted of a series of rebates that will amount to a maximum of $4 million — or 10 years' worth of the rebates, whichever comes first — in property and lodging taxes to Wilson Hotel Management Group, a division of Kemmons Wilson Inc. that oversees hotel development and operations.

The council's Projects Committee agreed last week to authorize the mayor and city staff to negotiate with the developer regarding increased site preparation and material costs.

The negotiations will include possible adjustments to the original incentives package, such as augmenting the incentive payments or adjusting the timing of payments for the purchase price of the property.

A vote could come as early as Tuesday.

"The city's interests in the development are more far-reaching than those of a mere property owner or even hotel..."
HOTEL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

owner,” said City Attorney Tim Nunnally, who presented the request to the committee. “The hotel owner’s primary goal is to construct and operate a profitable business, whereas the city’s goal is that it not only be profitable — so it stays in business — but that it has a synergistic effect on the continued revitalization of downtown.”

Nunnally said the federally required environmental and archaeological assessments ran higher than expected and that material costs have increased in the eight months since the city and Kemmons Wilson came to an agreement on the project.

“As with any development agreement such as the one the city has with the Kemmons Wilson group, there are certain risks that must be shared by the parties,” Nunnally said. “Otherwise, the project cannot be built.”

In August 2012, Kemmons Wilson and the city reached an agreement in which Wilson Hotel Management Group would purchase the city-owned, 2.02-acre tract for $1.855 million. Half of that amount will be paid at closing, with the other half spread over subsequent years.

In exchange, the development company would erect an upscale Embassy Suites hotel featuring convention space, a rooftop bar and a restaurant operated by Chris Hastings of the Birmingham-based Hot and Hot Fish Club.

McLean T. Wilson, vice president of Kemmons Wilson, said the request to City Hall does not mean the project is in jeopardy.

Rather, it’s an extension of the relationship that Kemmons Wilson has had with City Hall since this process began.

“With any partnership, as you get more details and a deeper understanding of the work required, a good partnership requires good communication and good transparency,” Wilson said. “We have a great partnership and relationship with the city and, because of that, I do not feel that the project is at any risk.”

Wilson said he anticipates construction to begin in earnest by the end of this month now that the archaeological and environmental inspections are nearing an end.

“We’re extremely excited about being to the point of seeing the finish line, of being able to put stakes in the ground and building a wonderful hotel for downtown Tuscaloosa,” Wilson said.

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
Cancer-fighting machine keeps UAB at forefront

By: Mike Oliver

Racing against incoming severe weather, crews worked feverishly and carefully Thursday morning to unload and install a 61,000-pound cyclotron into the basement of the renovated UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center.

A cyclotron.

That’s not an exercise bike.

It’s a $20 million particle accelerator.

What it does is speed up protons and accelerate UAB’s reputation as a leading medical research university.

Part of 19th Street had to be shut down to get this into the cancer center, which has been newly renovated with this very thing in mind.

So there was a spot waiting for it. There better be after its 2,100-mile, six-day trip on a special flat-bed truck from Vancouver, Canada, where it was manufactured.

Dozens of interested parties — doctors, researchers, cancer center personnel, including director Ed Partridge — watched as the crane lifted the giant blue box, weighing as much as 10 SUVs, from the truck through an open wall onto a platform. From there it will be lowered into a hole in the floor to the basement.

Partridge said the importance of the cyclotron “is to determine presence of very small cancers, to determine if drugs, therapeutic antibodies, and/or small molecule therapies are hitting their target, and to determine effectiveness of therapeutic intervention in real time.”

The cyclotron creates radiopharmaceuticals, which are injected into a patient.

“Other imaging modalities like a CT scan or an MRI, they can’t tell us the things these agents will tell us,” said Dr. Janis O’Malley, the director of the UAB Division of Molecular Imaging and Therapeutics. “These agents look at how cells are functioning at a molecular, cellular level. If you do a CT scan you are looking at whole organs or masses. How big is the tumor. Is the tumor getting better because it shrinks in size? Well maybe. … These agents can tell us what’s really alive in the tumor and the impact that the medicines have.”

The agents the cyclotron produces have a very short shelf life, some last just a few minutes. So time — from producing the agent to injection into the patient and getting an image — is of the essence, said Dr. Kurt Zinn, director of the UAB Division of Advanced Medical Imaging Research.

See next page
“The reason it’s so important to have it located physically on campus next to where the imaging instruments are is because what we produce in the cyclotron primarily is very short lived. It doesn’t last very long,” Zinn said. “So you can’t transport it around. It’s not commercially available. You can’t just pick up the phone and order it.

“So we need it very close,” he said. “And we need to be able to do chemistry on the agents we produce and inject them into patients. Obviously there’s a lot of safety reviews and different compliance related parts that the FDA has to approve.”

Once up and running, after federal approvals are all in, the cyclotron will be ready for work sometime in August and it could be used in a number of scientific disciplines.

“It covers the spectrum, and it’s not just cancer, but for cardiac research; for neurosciences-related items, for example interrogating patients for Alzheimer’s,” Zinn said. “But primarily we are going to focus on cancer initially. Cancer was the driving force in getting the cyclotron funded.”

The hefty $20 million cost was funded through state bonds and ultimately will be paid back by the state.

“Bonds are issued by the state and paid back by the state with interest,” Partridge said. “The funds from the bonds are provided to the state institutions with some restrictions, but the institution does not have to pay back the state.”

Today’s arrival was the culmination of two years of planning, said Kevin Bell, the capital projects coordinator for the cyclotron.

“I’ve installed a lot of complicated imaging equipment—PET, CT, MRI—but this is by far the most complicated one I’ve ever worked on,” Bell said.

UAB is billing this cyclotron as the most powerful one in an academic medical setting.

“This cyclotron allows us to continue to be a leader in the development of new and innovative advanced imaging techniques,” Partridge said. “We have already seen an increase in interest in the scientific community regarding opportunities for recruitment to UAB. It is also quite likely that other institutions will contract with us for production of isotopes for use by investigators in their institutions. Every grant and contract that we receive as a result of the cyclotron adds jobs and economic benefit to the region.”
UAB brain cancer finding may aid in figuring life span

By: Mike Oliver

The deadliest type of brain cancer eventually kills nearly all of its victims, but UAB researchers may have discovered why some patients live longer than others.

Researchers examined tumors of patients with glioblastoma multiforme (GBM) and found that patients with a higher level of an enzyme live less than half as long as patients with lower levels, according to a study published Wednesday in the journal PLOS ONE.

"We reported for the first time that an enzyme, cytochrome c oxidase, is involved in predicting the survival time of patients that had brain cancer," said the study’s lead author Corinne Griguer, associate professor in the Division of Neurosurgery in the School of Medicine at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

The significance of this finding is that now doctors and patients will have more information about prognosis in order to form a treatment plan based on life expectancy, she said. While GBM patients have been lumped into one category for treatments, the enzyme finding will help categorize the patients to better target those treatments, she said.

"We can divide the group of patients based on the enzyme," she said.

"Sometimes there are drugs that are not effective, and we wonder why, but maybe we are targeting the wrong group (of patients)," she said.

Perhaps there’s a drug that works for one group but has been discounted too early, she said.

The study of 84 patients with GBM found that patients with the overactive production of the enzyme lived on average six months. Those patients with lower enzyme activity lived for 14 months. About 25 percent to 30 percent of the patients had the more active enzyme.

Glioblastoma is particularly difficult to treat because it is difficult to remove all of the cancer as the tumor spreads its tentacles into the brain.

It is typically treated by surgery followed by radiation and chemotherapy.
UAB cancer center director rallies against sequestration cuts

Mike Oliver
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The director of the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center joined thousands of others in Washington, D.C., Monday calling on Congress to boost funding for medical research. Dr. Edward Partridge blogged about it, saying that sequestration is slashing the National Institutes of Health budget by 5.1 percent, or about $1.5 billion.

"This makes it extremely difficult to keep pace with the rate of biomedical inflation," Partridge wrote in a blog post. "NIH funding supports research by 325,000 scientists at more than 3,000 universities and other entities across the United States, including the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center," he wrote.

The Hill, a newspaper and website that covers Congress, reported that 200 organizations and some lawmakers participated in the event.

"When we see a grassroots movement rising up, from doctors, from scientists, from advocates and patients, you are impossible to ignore," U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., told the crowd, the Hill reported. "DeLauro is a cancer survivor."

Partridge ended his blog post: "If you would like to see an end to cancer, heart disease, diabetes, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, I encourage you to contact your congressional representative and tell them to make funding for medical research a national priority. All of our lives depend on it."

The total impact of sequestration to UAB is estimated to be $34 million, Ray Watts, the newly appointed president of UAB, said in March.
Structure Improves Meeting Productivity

By: Chad Brooks

Adding more structure to meetings is a way to make them more productive, new research shows.

Employees improve their performance when they business meetings are conducted in a structured environment where everyone reflects on his or her role and how it relates to the overall performance of the team, the study indicates.

The researchers believe communication is essential in this reflexivity phase so that each team member develops greater situational awareness, which is the perception of their environment and what it may mean now and in the future, and better transactive memory, which is the ability to recall which team members have expertise in various roles.

As part of the study at The University of Alabama in Huntsville, 40 virtual teams of four members each played a simulated fire rescue video game designed for experimental and training purposes called Network Operations Fire. The teams were divided in two, with one half conducting more reflexive meetings during the game and the other half not.
UAH hockey player arrested on rape charge

Paul Gattis
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The 23-year-old man charged with first-degree rape after being arrested by University of Alabama in Huntsville police is a member of the school's hockey team, The Times and al.com have confirmed.

Lasse Uusivirta is listed on the UAH athletic website with a hometown of Espoo, Finland. He is a junior at UAH.

"Information about an incident on campus came to the attention of university officials, and the facts of the incident were immediately submitted to the university's disciplinary process," the school said in a statement.

"As a result of those procedures, punishment was administered to the student in accordance with established university policies and precedence," the statement continued.

Uusivirta continues to be listed on the UAH hockey team roster on the university athletics website. According to a campus crime report, the case was first reported on Jan. 13.

The victim chose to pursue criminal charges on Monday and the suspect was arrested.

The victim originally declined to press criminal charges and told UAH police that she wanted the matter referred to the student conduct board, according to The Times' news partner WHNT.

The incident is alleged to have taken place at South East Campus Housing on the 700 block of John Wright Drive.

Uusivirta was being held on $10,000 bond, according to WHNT.
USA trustees begin search for president

Dallas-based firm used by many universities

Ellen Mitchell emitchell@al.com

The University of South Alabama has begun the search for a leader to replace President Gordon Moulton, who will retire July 1 after more than 46 years with the school.

The USA Board of Trustees held a special meeting in the Administration Building to commence the nationwide search for a new president by selecting a consulting firm to identify qualified candidates. That firm, R. William Funk & Associates, based in Dallas, has been involved in presidential searches at Louisiana State University, the University of Georgia, and the University of Virginia, among others.

James Yance, chairman of the USA Board of Trustees, said that R. William Funk & Associates was the best choice due to its extensive work with recruiting presidents at major institutions with health care facilities.

“There are over 70 sitting presidents in this country that he’s recruited,” Yance said of Bill Funk, the head of the agency.

National search firms typically seek a fee that is one-third of the first year’s compensation to the position they’re filling. The USA trustees said that they hope to negotiate a lower fee.

“Every company we talked to said they would be willing to negotiate off that standard one-third fee,” said Bob Shearer, facilitator for the presidential search committee.

“I feel comfortable that we can negotiate a very competitive rate significantly less than the standard.”

Funds for the search firm will be taken from the university’s contingency account, with a preliminary budget set at $175,000.

Moulton, who is recovering from cancer, announced March 8 he would step down as president. Moulton had a malignant brain tumor removed in October and returned to work within a week.

But the trustees granted him a 90-day leave of absence during an emergency meeting in February to allow Moulton more time to recover.

“We’ve only had two presidents in the 50-year history of this university,” Yance said.

“That’s really unheard of. And with our 50th anniversary coming up this summer, it’s interesting that we’re about to embark on selecting a new president.”

Moulton started teaching business classes at USA in 1966, only three years after the west Mobile university was founded, and has been president since 1998, succeeding Frederick P. Whidond.

With wife Geri, Moulton has contributed $7 million in gifts towards projects such as the USA Mitchell Cancer Institute, as well as to scholarships and academics. In his time as president, USA’s enrollment has grown significantly, climbing past 15,000.”
AD: School actions on fake pot were right

Sources: Ex-player wrong about his grades; he had been excused from classes

Auburn University's athletics administration and coaching staff could not have legally informed parents about failed tests for synthetic marijuana before the drug was banned, according to documents obtained by al.com through an open records request.

Auburn informed the student-athletes of each positive test for synthetic marijuana (sometimes called spice), offered counseling to each, and told athletes that the substance would likely be on the school's banned substance list.

In the future, said Cassie Arner, Auburn's assistant director for public relations.

A six-month investigation by ESPN The Magazine and E:60 released Thursday contended that "the highest-ranking members of the athletic department made a specific choice not to talk about spice."

Auburn athletics director Jay Jacobs responded by telling ESPN that school...
AUBURN

From Page 1A

officials could not reveal failed drug tests to players' parents because it was not on the school's banned substances list at that time, an assertion supported by the documents.

In a different media report the day before, former Auburn football player Mike McNeil accused the school of changing a failing grade to a C to keep him eligible. McNeil said he was going to receive an F for attendance in a computer science class before the 2010 season because he "missed too many classes," according to a report by Rooststigo.com.

But sources told al.com that McNeil was excused from attending class due to personal and medical reasons. Those sources said it was unclear if McNeil turned in that paperwork to the professor.

"I went to the instructor and said, 'I really need this grade,'" McNeil said in the Rooststigo.com report. "He said that he was sorry but he couldn't change it. I went to the person over him. She was in a position of power and backed up the instructor. I then told my counselor with the athletic department."

Days later, McNeil said, the grade was changed from an F to a C and he did not miss a game, according to the report. Sources contended to al.com that McNeil's absences would not have led to a failing grade, because he was excused.

According to the Rooststigo.com report, as many as nine players would not be able to play in the 2010 championship game because they were academically ineligible. Freshman running back Mike Dyer was identified in the story as one of those players. Dyer's uncle, Andre Dyer, told al.com on Thursday his nephew was "never close to being declared ineligible."

Dyer, according to a source with knowledge of the situation, passed 15 hours at Auburn in the fall of 2010. A student-athlete must pass 24 hours of coursework within a given year to remain eligible, and 18 of those hours have to be between the start of the fall semester and spring commencement, according to the NCAA. Dyer passed 36 hours in his first academic year (fall through summer semesters), according to the source.

Spice

Auburn student-athletes "consent to be tested for the presence of banned substances" when they sign a drug testing waiver, which also provides for the release of failed tests to parents upon the receipt of a specific request.

But when Auburn began testing for synthetic marijuana on Jan. 27, 2011, the drug was not banned by the NCAA or the state of Alabama.

Because the drug was not banned by Auburn, synthetic marijuana was not covered under Auburn's drug testing waiver policy.

The ESPN article points out that possession of the drug had been outlawed in July 2010, but the drug was still readily available.

Synthetic marijuana could still be bought at stores until Gov. Robert Bentley issued an executive order on Oct. 14, 2011, banning stores from selling the product.

After the drug was outlawed, Auburn asked its testing company, Aegis Sciences Corporation, if there was a test available. Aegis did not have one yet, according to Jacobs' statement on Thursday and corroborated by the ESPN article.

Before Auburn implemented penalties for the drug, the school tried to educate athletes, according to Jacobs.

Al.com obtained a copy of a letter circulated to athletes by Joe Joe Petrone dated July 17, 2010, informing athletes of the state law that banned possession, outlining the state's penalties and warning athletes that synthetic marijuana is "often sold over the Internet and in herbal stores."

ESPN's story also outlines meetings led by former Auburn coach Gene Chizik to educate coaches and players about the drug.

After testing was implemented, athletes were offered counseling, but because the substance was not banned, counseling sessions could not be mandatory. Several athletes skipped those sessions, according to sources with knowledge of the situation.

Since Auburn banned the substance and penalties were implemented, Jacobs said on Thursday, three athletes have tested positive for synthetic marijuana out of 2,500 tests. None of those athletes still competes for Auburn.
AUBURN BASHES REPORTS

WEBSITE ▼ CASH, GRADE CHANGES FOR PLAYERS

CHIZIK ▼ 'ABSURD AND OUTRAGEOUS'

DYER ▼ FAMILY SAYS HE WAS ELIGIBLE

Brandon Marcello  bmarcello@al.com

After two scathing reports in as many days with allegations of wrongdoing at Auburn University, Athletics Director Jay Jacobs and former head football coach Gene Chizik on Thursday vehemently disputed the allegations, which included claims of NCAA violations and failed drug tests by its players.

The first story was posted online Wednesday on Roopstigo.com and alleged Auburn committed academic fraud, recruiting violations and made cash payments to players. A story posted late Thursday on ESPN.com alleged 12 Auburn football players failed drug tests for synthetic marijuana and that the school covered it up.

Thursday's whirlwind of reaction to the initial report started with a 340-word statement from Chizik, who took aim at the reporting done by Selena Roberts, founder and CEO of Roopstigo.com and a former reporter for Sports Illustrated and the New York Times. "Unfortunately, Ms. Roberts' story is long on accusation and inference, but short on facts and logic," he said. He called Roberts' report "absurd" and "outrageous."

He also noted that during the same time frame, the NCAA conducted an investigation into the recruitment of former Auburn quarterback Cam Newton and expanded it to other allegations involving illegal benefits and recruiting practices, but found no major violations.

Roberts quoted several former Auburn players in her story, which was framed...
AUBURN

From Page TA

around Mike McNeil, a former player who is scheduled to go on trial next week on charges of armed robbery.

Many of the people quoted in Roberts' report denied her account, even what was portrayed as their own words in the form of quoted material.

McNeil, who appeared in court Thursday seeking new counsel, would not confirm or deny his strong allegations against the program as he entered the building.

In the report, McNeil said former defensive coordinator Will Muschamp, now Florida's head coach, paid him $400 in 2007 and that Auburn changed his grades to keep him and others eligible to play in games.

At least three other players in the report said they were either misquoted or their statements were used out of context in Roberts' report.

Former Auburn running back Mike Dyer, whose grades were changed to remain eligible for the 2010 BCS title game according to Roberts' report, disputed the ineligibility claims through his uncle, Andre Dyer, in an interview with al.com.

Jacobs also disputed that and the other claims.

"We have no reason to believe these allegations are either accurate or credible," he said. "However, as a matter of procedure, we are reviewing them carefully."

Second report

ESPN's report said Auburn hid results of failed drug tests from parents before synthetic marijuana was banned by Auburn, the NCAA and the state of Alabama.

ALLEGATIONS INVOLVING AUBURN FOOTBALL

- Former player Mike McNeil said he had a letter grade changed from an F to a C.
- According to McNeil and former player Mike Blanc, the team was told as many as nine players, including star running back Mike Dyer, would not be able to play in the 2010 national championship game due to academic ineligibility, but all played.
- McNeil said players were provided more money than permitted under NCAA rules to spend on visiting recruits.
- McNeil said coaches gave him $500 to entertain former Alabama corner Drek Kirkpatrick when he was a recruit.
- McNeil said he received $400 from then Auburn defensive coordinator Will Muschamp, now the head coach at Florida. Muschamp denied the allegations through Florida officials Wednesday.
- Former player Darvin Adams "confirmed he was offered financial incentives" to stay for his senior season rather than leaving for the NFL.

Source: Report by Selena Roberts of Roostertown.com

PLAYERS RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT REPORT

Some post-publication reaction from players who were used as sources in the Roostertown.com report:

Mike Blanc tweet: "Man this article is outrageous and isn't true. The media will do anything for a juicy story."

Neil Thorpe tweet: "While I spoke to Selena Roberts about Mike I have just read her article & not only am I misquoted but my words are very out of context. We didn't talk about NCAA violations or recruiting. I'm proud 2 have played at Auburn & the opportunities it gave me."

Antoine Carter tweet: "Please dont remix my words.

Twelve players, according to the report, failed tests for the synthetic drug in the early days of Auburn's testing for the "spice" drug. The university started testing for the substance, which wasn't banned by Auburn until August 2011, nearly a month after the Tigers defeated Oregon in the BCS national championship game.

Auburn officials said 3 percent of the school's student-athletes tested positive for synthetic marijuana in the early days of testing.

"One player interviewed by ESPN, for example, alleges that up to half of the 2010 football team was using synthetic marijuana," Jacobs wrote in an open letter to Auburn fans. "It's hard to be more wrong than that.

The facts and our drug-testing results simply do not support such a claim.

Jacobs called many of the allegations made by those quoted in the story as "baseless and inaccurate."

Auburn also said more than 50 phone calls were made to the parents of Dakota McSory and Shaun Kitchens, the two athletes ESPN interviewed for its piece on synthetic marijuana.

Auburn contends it provided the information concerning its drug-test results to ESPN in March, but the network did not include some of the information in the report Thursday.

Jacobs questioned the journalistic decisions of Roberts as well, saying the reporter "did not fully represent to us what the story was about when requesting an interview."

Roberts told al.com: "Obviously they never called me (back) to ask me anything about what else we could talk about or what else I was doing. Like I said, there was not one discussion about anything. They just bluntly denied the emails. In fact, I sent an email and I had to wait three days to get a response. Again, not one phone call."

Roberts, who is an Auburn alumnus, said she contacted Auburn early last week, "Auburn just went radio silent on me," she said.

For more coverage, go online to al.com/auburnfootball
Despite state funding cutbacks, AUM could reduce out-of-state tuition

By: Evan Belanger

Trustees at Auburn University will consider next week increasing tuition to cope with rising expenses and historically low levels of state support for higher education.

But it will also consider another resolution that could benefit nonresident students at Auburn University Montgomery.

If approved, AUM would cut its out-of-state tuition rate from three times the in-state rate to 2.25 times the in-state.

Board documents show the proposal was initiated by AUM Chancellor John Veras' senior staff. They attribute the program to the "declining number of graduating seniors in Alabama" heightening the need recruit nonresident students.

State law requires public universities and colleges to charge twice the in-state tuition for nonresident students. Auburn trustees currently require both Auburn and AUM to charge three the in-state rate though.

If approved during the board's April 12 meeting, the resolution would not impact out-of-state tuition at Auburn's main campus.

Auburn currently charges $328 per credit hour for in-state undergraduate students and $984 per credit hour for out-of-state undergraduate students.

That translates to an estimated $9,446 for tuition and fees annually for in-state students and $25,190 annually for out-of-state students, according to university projections.

If the board approves the overall tuition hike, Auburn would be the first public university in Alabama to raise tuition this year. It likely won't be the last.

See next page
After the state slashed higher education by $556 million during the recession to rank fourth in the nation for higher education cuts, the Legislature's proposed budget restores just $15.6 million of that in fiscal 2014, an increase of just 1.2 percent statewide.
ASU loses another trustee, Birmingham doctor Lawrence Lemak resigns

By: Evan Belanger

A spokeswoman for Gov. Robert Bentley has confirmed Alabama State University has lost its second trustee this year.

Lawrence Lemak has provided the governor a letter of resignation, said Jennifer Ardis, the governor’s press secretary.

Lemak is the founder of Lemak Sports Medicine & Orthopedics in Birmingham.

In a letter to Bentley, Lemak said he is resigning because he will soon be too old to continue serving under the board's bylaws and wanted to step down soon enough for the senate to confirm a replacement.

"In June of this year, I will be seventy years of age. Accordingly, I will 'age out' from being able to serve this great institution," he wrote. "Unfortunately, the way the calendar falls this year that will be just a few weeks too late for the Legislature to confirm a new trustee."

In a letter to ASU President William Harris, he also cited health problems related to cancer treatment.

"As you may know, since October of last year, I have been undergoing cancer treatment for a lesion that was found on the base of my tongue. I have not been able to participate on the board very much as of late, and as my energy comes back in the coming months, I would like to visit the campus again and have lunch when your schedule allows."

Harris said Lemak's service has been a "great honor" for the university.

"We appreciate the fact that since he would be having to take mandatory retirement off the board in the coming weeks due to the rule that requires all members to retire at the age of 70, that Dr. Lemak took this step to allow Gov. Bentley to nominate replacement to the Senate during the current, ongoing regular session of the Alabama Legislature," he said in a statement.

Lemak is the second trustee to leave the board since Kathy Elmore Sawyer resigned in January, following a dust-up over the school's former president, Joseph Silver.

Asked if Bentley would nominate candidates for both empty slots during the current legislative session, which can go no later than May 21, Ardis said, "We hope to have the appointments ready soon."
Battle has big choices to make with upgrades

The year was 1981 and the Alabama Crimson Tide had a very good baseball team, even though it wasn't reflected in the postseason results.

The place was Baton Rouge, La. The LSU Tigers, coached by Jack Lambie, a sort of Cajun-spiced Buttermaker from "The Bad News Bears," weren't very good.

As the Saturday night game of a weekend Southeastern Conference series approached, UA assistant coach Roger Smith hobnobbed with the media covering UA (one reporter) and confided "you are going to see a no-hitter tonight." Alabama had hard-throwing right-hander Bryan Kelly (who went on to make the major leagues with Detroit) on the mound.

When Kelly and his 95 mph fastball were right, he was tough to hit under good circumstances. And in those days, Alex Box Stadium was far from the best of circumstances. The outfield lights looked to be leftovers from a parish high school's football field. They were so dim that the legions of bugs they lured from the local marshes often lost interest and dive-bombed the grandstand lights as well.

Smith's prediction didn't miss by much. Kelly struck out 14 Tigers in a shutout win, but two LSU ground balls found their way through the infield and it was a two-hitter, not a no-hitter. The hits likely came as the occasional freight train chugging by in left field provided some extra illumination.

But times have changed. Lambe left and LSU made a big-time commitment to baseball. Only a smattering of fans would even recognize the site of old Alex Box Stadium as the same place where a glittering baseball palace now stands.

Skip Bertman revitalized the LSU baseball program and as it grew, its stadium grew, too. Building a new baseball facility didn't make LSU baseball great, just as it didn't automatically transform South Carolina or Arkansas simply through brick-and-mortar osmosis.

But Alabama has had good baseball teams since then — some of them very good. To be fair, its home stadium has been upgraded since then, too — upgraded, but not keeping up with the best facilities in the SEC, not as a total facility.

There are a lot of questions to be asked about Sewell-Thomas Stadium or, in the dream world of some UA baseball supporters, a yet-to-be-named new facility. Nothing is easier than spending someone else's millions and, although Alabama does have healthy athletic department revenues, college sports is expensive.

See Hurt | 3C
HURT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C

and Bill Battle, Dr. Judy Bonner and their bosses on the UA Board of Trustees have to have good fiscal sense.

Perhaps Battle could take in an SEC road trip or sneak in a visit to South Carolina’s $35 million gem of a stadium (although UA does not play there this year) and get an idea of the atmosphere Alabama faces on the road — and the hurdles its recruiters face when players come on official visits, fresh from visiting Columbia or Fayetteville or Starkville.

Hopefully, he will sit behind home plate at one of those places and see that the best seat in the house should actually have a view of the entire playing field. A ball hit into the right-field corner at Sewell-Thomas might as well be in Cambodia as far as the spectators can tell.

Battle will have facilities decisions to make in his tenure — stand still in the SEC and you fall behind — and they won’t all involve baseball.

The track and swimming programs, also perched on that valuable real estate bounded by Hackberry Lane and Bryant Drive, also need upgrades, perhaps in the newly developing parts of campus. But Battle needs to look at competing facilities with a keen eye, and begin to build his own legacy by building.
TIDE TURNS UP
THE HEAT

No. 4 Tide dominates
Mizzou pitching ace

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

TUSCALOOSA | When Chelsea Thomas started to run out of gas, the fourth-ranked University of Alabama softball team put its foot on the accelerator and ran over her.

The Crimson Tide rolled over one of the nation’s top pitchers, winning the weekend series over the sixth-ranked Tigers with a 14-6 victory in front of a crowd of 2,973 at Rhoads Stadium.

Alabama improved to 35-6 overall, 10-5 in Southeastern Conference play. Missouri fell to 23-4, 8-3 in the conference.

Thomas, Missouri’s ace pitcher, came into the weekend having allowed just seven earned runs. Alabama plated 11 earned runs on 11 hits in six innings in the finale in a bounce-back effort. UA won Friday’s series opener 4-1 and fell 9-4 on Saturday.

“That’s better,” UA coach Patrick Murphy said. “I thought our hitters really took it to them. To score 14 against probably one of the top three pitchers in the country is just something else.

“I thought everybody battled hard. We took the walks when they gave them to us and then we hit good pitches when they gave those to us.”

Missouri took a brief 1-0 lead in the top of the first on Nicole Hudson’s RBI single before Alabama plated four runs in the bottom of the frame, keyed by catcher Molly Fichtner’s three-run home run. It was just the fourth homer given up by Thomas all season.

“I’m seeing it real well right now,” said Fichtner, who played with her left thumb taped up from an injury two weekends ago and finished the series 7-for-8. “For a while after my injury happened, I went back to basics. I’m thinking now that really paid off.”

Missouri got a run in the top of the second and Alabama responded with another four-run outburst, with second baseman Kaila Hunt singling in two runs.

It looked like the Crimson Tide might completely run away with it after UA went up 10-2 in the third when outfielder Haylie McCleney singled in a pair of runs, but Missouri responded with its own big inning, scoring four runs in the top of the fourth on three hits and three walks.

See next page
HEAT
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C

Alabama ace Jackie Traina (17-3) didn’t allow another run after that. She gave up five earned runs on eight hits with five strikeouts and five walks.

“She needs to be sharper on Sunday,” Murphy said.

Thomas (14-3) was roughed up for double-digit hits and eight walks with only three strikeouts. The top two hitters in UA’s batting order, Kayla Braud and McCleney, went a combined 4-for-6 with four runs scored and three RBIs.

Keima Davis, at the bottom of the order, had a triple in the second inning to ignite Alabama.

The Crimson Tide wore white batting helmets with the No. 15 on them for the series to honor late UA athletic director Mal Moore, although some fans thought it somehow tied into Alabama’s 15 national championships in football.

“Mal wore No. 15, and that was in honor of him,” Murphy said. “I think a couple of the older fans realized it, but a lot of them thought it was the championships. I was glad we could do it.”

Alabama will host Mississippi Valley State at 6 p.m. Tuesday.

Reach Tommy Deas at tommy@tidesports.com or 205-722-0224.
Hoover touted as location for softball World Series

By Tammy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

The University of Alabama softball team won the Women's College World Series last year. Now, the Alabama Sports Foundation is exploring a bid to move the event from Oklahoma City to Hoover.

The foundation, with a mission to promote amateur athletics in the state, would like to bring college softball's NCAA Division I championship event to Hoover Metropolitan Stadium. The facility was home to the Birmingham Barons minor league baseball franchise, but the Barons moved to a new stadium in Birmingham starting with this season.

Hoover has hosted the NCAA Division I College Cup men's soccer national championship the last two seasons. The Alabama Sports Foundation also successfully bid to bring the NCAA Women's Gymnastics Championships to Birmingham in 2014.

"It's something that kind of sparked our interest and we're going to start to pursue," said Billy Rodgers, vice president of the foundation. "Nothing formal has been done. We don't know what the deal is with OKC. It has been just kind of initial discussions amongst ourselves.

"We do have a stadium that's available and it has some of the amenities that the NCAA looks for. They have the College Cup, so they know what it's all about."

The NCAA's current deal to host the event in Oklahoma City runs through the 2014 World Series, and officials there are seeking a long-term deal similar to the 25-year contract the NCAA executed to keep the baseball College World Series in Omaha, Neb.

"It is our intention to enter into a long-term agreement with the NCAA," Oklahoma City All Sports Association executive director Tim Brassfield told The Oklahoman newspaper. "We feel this event should stay here. We're doing everything in our power to keep it here for the next 20 to 25 years."

Officials told The Oklahoman that the city is in the process of raising $20 million ($12 million from the city and $8 million through private donors) to make significant improvements to the host stadium as

See next page
part of the commitment to earn a long-term deal with the NCAA.

Oklahoma City's All Sports Association Hall of Fame Stadium has hosted college softball's World Series every year since 1990 with the exception of 1996, when it was held in Columbus, Ga. The WCWS was held in Sunnyvale, Calif., in 1988 and 1989 and in Omaha, Neb., from 1982-87.

The Bruno Events Team, which is hired to run major sporting events for the Alabama Sports Foundation, is running the 2014 U.S. Senior Open golf tournament in Oklahoma City. That, coupled with the Alabama Crimson Tide's success in softball, sparked interest in making a bid for the World Series.

Right now, the Alabama Sports Foundation is in the early fact-finding stage.

"We haven't talked to Alabama," Rodgers said. "I would assume the next steps are to visit the softball World Series this summer and start discussions with the NCAA."

Alabama softball coach Patrick Murphy said he believes a bid to bring the event to Hoover would be a good thing for college softball's championship event, whether successful or not.

"I think it's very exciting," he said. "When there's another option, that's going to be great for everybody. If there is only one option, it's like they have no reason (in Oklahoma City) to improve their facility. They have done some great things the last couple of years with the new locker room and adding seats and the permanent fence in the outfield. The whole atmosphere is awesome there, but it could always improve."

Alabama, in addition to making it to the World Series eight times since 2000, has also led the nation in either average or home attendance — or both — in every season since 2008, except for 2011, when UA was second to Arizona. Last year, UA set a single-season home attendance record at 86,108, more than 13,000 better than the previous record, set by Arizona the year before.

"That is always part of it with any sport," Rodgers said of local fan interest.

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Alabama has some of the best sports facilities in the nation, but when it comes to baseball, UA has fallen woefully behind

By: Aaron Suttles

At Alex Box Stadium in Baton Rouge, there is chicken and sausage jambalaya to savor. At Carolina Stadium in Columbia, S.C., you can walk around the entire park while watching the game. At Baum Stadium in Fayetteville there are 34 luxury suites, with plans to add more to fulfill the demand of a swelling wait list.

At Sewell-Thomas Stadium in Tuscaloosa the concession stand was out of food last Thursday night, fans can't see down the right-field line and you have your pick of almost any seat in the park.

At Plainsman Park in Auburn the green monster in left field looms large. At Swayze Field in Oxford, Miss., a raucous, packed-out outfield student section knows the names of opponents' parents and girlfriends.

No such character exists at Sewell-Thomas Stadium, unless you count parking problems and a disjointed, mostly empty, grandstand and bleachers that massacre sight lines.

In the grand scheme of things, Sewell-Thomas Stadium is an adequate baseball stadium, but for a university that prides itself on having first-class facilities and amenities, the University of Alabama has fallen woefully behind its conference brethren in baseball.

There are no luxury suites at The Joe, as the stadium is known, nor any vendors selling soft drinks, water or peanuts in the stands. Fans must exit the stadium, missing the game action, to get to the concession areas. Until recently, there was nothing in the stadium to honor former championship teams. There is nothing recognizing former standout players.

If baseball plays at the same time as a basketball game or a gymnastics meet or a graduation commencement, which happens quite often, good luck finding a parking spot.

Alabama's glaring baseball stadium problem is simple: it is not fan-friendly. Which might explain why so few fans show up to support a team near the top of the Southeastern Conference standings.

The Tuscaloosa News asked former SEC baseball players to rank the league stadiums, excluding newcomers Missouri and Texas A&M: Alabama ranked 11th, ahead of only Kentucky.

New Alabama Athletics Director Bill Battle has been on the job only a few weeks, and has already delivered on his vow to conduct a "listening tour." He was spotted making his way around the stadium and talking with fans during Alabama's 9-1 win over Southeastern Louisiana last Tuesday night. He acknowledged there are problems to be addressed.

See next page
"Having a baseball facility that is competitive with our peers is a priority for us," Battle told The Tuscaloosa News.

What direction the facility may go, where it may be located and a time frame for completion are all under review, Battle said.

"We will consider all options, but I don't want to speculate on a specific direction at this time," he said. "I can assure you that the options we are considering will allow us to have a facility that is on par with our peers.

"I don't want to speculate on a timetable. However, we know that the longer the process takes, the more competitive the marketplace becomes."

So how did the program with the most wins in SEC history come to have a stadium voted next to last? It came about from an accumulation of bad renovations, missteps and inattention.

Thomas Stadium, named for former UA coach Frank Thomas, opened three years after World War II on March 26, 1948. It was renamed Sewell-Thomas Stadium in 1978 to honor former player and coach Joe Sewell, a former New York Yankees and Cleveland Indians standout. It has since undergone overhauls, the major ones in 1996 and 2001.

It was then that the stadium went awry. When the grandstand was extended and cemented in 2001, it jetted toward the field at such an angle that a portion of right field became obstructed to the home plate umpire - not to mention disrupting the view of paying fans. Only patrons sitting in left field can see a ball hit down the right-field line.

A new locker room and players lounge were the major improvements in 2010, but it was akin to slapping a Band-Aid on a knife wound as far as keeping up with the SEC facility arms race.

Take for instance Carolina Stadium, a $35 million gem that opened in 2009, complete with suite and club-level premium seating, 6,400 chair-back seats and a wide concourse that runs completely around the stadium. Or look at Arkansas or LSU, Alabama's SEC Western Division foes, and their sparkling ballparks.

"The Joe is extremely outdated," said former UA player Taylor Dugas, Alabama's career hits leader. "When you look at the top stadiums in the conference, in the nation, LSU, South Carolina, Arkansas: those stadiums are very fan-friendly.

"The problem is everything is outdated. There is no indoor facility. Those other stadiums are just more fan-friendly. It's easier to attract fans to come to the games. The stadium makes it more of an event. Alabama can be that way. The main thing is creating an atmosphere that people want to come to. You have to get students and fans to the games. There is nothing at Sewell-Thomas Stadium that is inviting."

State-of-the-art stadiums and facilities matter to prospective student-athletes, and in other sports Alabama has been at the forefront of the facilities era. That's why UA recently scrapped what

See next page
was already one of the best weight rooms in the country, constructed less than 10 years ago, in favor of a $9 million, 37,000-square foot facility that opened in March.

In its most recent recruiting class, the Alabama baseball coaching staff had all but sewn up two front-line power pitchers before they were lured away after seeing facilities at other SEC schools. Jonah Patten, a 6-foot-3, 200-pound right-hander with a 90 mph fastball, opted for Arkansas, and Will Crowe, a 6-foot-3, 225-pound right-hander with a 92 mph fastball, chose South Carolina.

"I don't think there is any question that when it comes down to recruiting, one of the first things they want to see is the venue they're going to play in and what goes with it," Alabama coach Mitch Gaspard said. "I think also just from a competitive standpoint, who you're going up against when it comes to getting players, the facilities that you're up against certainly impacts recruiting. We could certainly get in the mix and have some opportunities with some out-of-state kids. We feel like we do a really good job of building relationships with players out there. I think any advantage you have with the facilities or relationships always are going to work in your favor." And it doesn't just affect baseball.

The top-rated quarterback in the country for the 2012 class lived 45 minutes away in Hueytown. Jameis Winston, a football and baseball standout, seriously considered Alabama. On multiple visits to Tuscaloosa, he voiced displeasure with the existing baseball facilities and inquired about new ones, concerned the program wasn't given the attention he desired. The five-star athlete signed with Florida State to play both sports.

Renovations have been promised several times over the years, but always in the future, always in another four or five years.

"I've been told they were coming probably for at least the past 10 years," said Rick Pendley, the vice president of the Alabama Grand Slammers booster club. "We've heard it all before. We've heard the term, 'Five-year Plan.' I think it's just a lack of support and interest from the athletic department. That's my opinion.

"I've been all around the conference, and I don't know if I would rank anyone lower than Alabama."

Plans that have been made for upgrades have gone as far as commissioning a rendering of an upgraded Sewell-Thomas Stadium a few years ago, but the proposal was never presented to UA's board of trustees. But even those renderings, now outdated, may be scrapped for other plans. One project, however, is already underway in right field. The $3.26 million Sarah Patterson Champions Plaza, which will honor UA championships in sports other than football, will also provide multi-level tiered grass seating.

During his tenure as director of athletics, the late Mal Moore said options were available, including building a new stadium - with the most logical location being adjacent to the Rhoads Stadium softball complex on Campus Drive. He also said he preferred to keep the stadium in its current location.

See next page
Officials have attempted to address the problem, allocating nearly $1.7 million over the past six years on different projects, including dugouts, the indoor hitting cage, artificial turf apron, player lounge, locker room and scoreboard.

A major renovation would not be as simple as backing up tractors and pouring concrete. The money must come from somewhere. The athletic department can't hand every program a blank check. That is where the baseball program might learn a thing or two from its softball counterpart. UA softball coach Patrick Murphy began by building a diehard fan base. Then he raised his own funds. And even with one of the best facilities in the country, including an indoor facility, upgraded locker room, etc., the softball program continues to raise its own funds for future improvements.

In 2012, softball received private contributions of $146,929. Baseball's donations totaled a dismal $15,658.

Gaspard said fundraising plans have been discussed and will go forward once a project has been approved. He said he appreciates the administration's support, as well as its candor.

"I think it's been gaining momentum the last couple of years," Gaspard said. "The administration has been supportive of us. I've felt all along that when the timing is right administratively for it to happen, it will. Obviously we're hoping it happens soon, but we're supportive and appreciative for all the administrations efforts and all they do for our program."
CHARGING UP THE POLLS

For the first time in a decade, UAH baseball finds itself ranked in Top 5.

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UAH baseball is, as coach Hunter Royer put it, "back on the national map," but he and the Chargers are trying to maintain a sober perspective as the season heads into its final month.

The Chargers were ranked No. 4 in the Collegiate Baseball News NCAA Division II ratings this past week and were ninth in D2 Baseball News rankings and 11th in the National Collegiate Baseball Writers Association poll.

The Chargers (27-1) entered the weekend in first-place in the Gulf South Conference with Delta State.

"The top five ranking and tie for the lead in conference is all great," said Royer, "but there is still a lot of baseball to be played and the most important poll — the one that matters — hasn't even been released yet. We have a lot of guys playing at a very high level and we need to keep that up as we start to hit the stretch run this season."

The Chargers continued their torrid pace with a doubleheader sweep of Union on Saturday. The two teams meet again at 1 p.m. today at Charger Park. Andrew Bushy improved to 8-1, allowing only six hits in seven innings, in a 3-1 victory in the opener. Dana Wright, with 10 strikeouts in seven innings, pitched UAH to a 5-2 win the second game.

Chandler Brock had a pair of hits and an RBI in the opener, then Blake Massey drove in a pair of runs in the second.

Brock leads the team with a .425 average and 36 RBIs, Jud Sherrill is at .387, Vincent Korbawi is at .374, with a team-best four homers, Chase Handley is batting .358 and Cody Burton .350. Luke Mould, with a 1.08 ERA out of the bullpen, has four wins, as does Alex Aultman.

Crediting assistant coach Evan Bush with a recruiting effort that has rebuilt the Chargers' program, Royer said, "The players are buying in to what we have put in place and the record and statistics are a strong indication of that."

Royer and Bush haven't had to spend much gas money on recruiting. Some 14 of the Chargers are from the immediate Huntsville area.

The aforementioned unrelease poll is the one from the coaches that will place UAH somewhere in the NCAA Division II South Regional rankings. That tournament will begin May 16, after the Gulf South Conference tourney May 2-5 in Chattanooga.

"Only six teams will make a regional this year, and as a lot of people know, the South region is loaded with good teams and great talent," Royer said. "While I'm pleased with our play up to this point, I'm definitely not satisfied; we have to take our play to another level and get back to the postseason and take another step further. This team has the pulse and talent to do so. I'm excited!"
New lineup in Barons office

Staffing increased, menu revamped for new ball park

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The Birmingham Barons have hired dozens more stadium workers than in years past and have created several new management positions in anticipation of a significant rise in attendance at their new $64 million ballpark.

The club has hired a customer service manager to coordinate fan activities, a retail manager to run its new store and a chef to raise the bar for the quality of food in the luxury suites, said team co-owner Jeff Logan and General Manager Jonathan Nelson.

About 200 Barons employees will

See BARONS, Page 2C

The Barons' team store is opposite Railroad Park and much larger than the space where the club sold its merchandise in Hoover. (Joe Songer/jsonger@al.com)
BARONS
From Page 1C

be working the opening-day game in a bid to make the park's debut go as smoothly as possible, and they likely will be busy. The game today is the first home opener the club has sold out in more than two decades.

"We're definitely going to overstaff and put people everywhere," Nelson said. Permanent staffing will be determined at a later date, he said.

The club has retained most of the companies that provided food, beverages and other services to fans last year, including Parkview Catering, Red Diamond, Birmingham Beverage Co. and Supreme Beverage Co. But there will be a different flavor, literally, to some of what's available.

Fans will be able to quaff beer from Good People Brewing Co., Avondale Brewing Co. and Back Forty Beer Co. while noshing on a Magic City Dog, which is a Dreamland sausage on a hoagie with sauce, mustard and slaw.

Corporate customers, who have leased all of the 20 available luxury suites, will be offered standard ballpark fare but also can get shrimp cocktail, sliders, salads with Dreamland pork or chicken and other higher-end treats.

Birmingham chef James Maudlin was hired to oversee food. The club will gauge demand before deciding how to expand the menu, but it's likely other new items will be added during the season, Nelson said.

Among the biggest changes fans will see is the new retail shop. The space in Hoover that Logan termed a "book" has been replaced by a 2,000-square-foot store that will be open even on non-game days. Birmingham retail veteran Joseph Cooper was hired to manage retail merchandising.

Parking, available in several nearby lots, will be managed by Intelligent Parking Systems. There will be more dedicated spaces available in those lots, at $5 each, than were on hand at the stadium in Hoover, and many fans will find street parking at no cost, Nelson and Logan said.

Regulars at games in years past will recognize George Chavous. Formerly the head usher, Chavous is the new director of customer service.

"Most of the people we've worked with here have remained the same," Logan said. "What's changing is the scope of the operation, he said."

The club is trying to add value to the ticket price by giving fans more to see and more to do, he said.

"When you buy a general admission ticket for $7, it is an incredible value in the number of ways you can experience a game," Logan said.

"It's light years beyond what we had."
Huntsville native headed to NCAA's Frozen Four

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It's not typical athletic superstition that'll be on display for a national audience this weekend, long hair flowing from underneath Nick Dowd's hockey helmet, and helmets of some of his St. Cloud State teammates.

Dowd, whose hair was recently measured at 11 inches long, and other players have let their hair grow since last season so they can eventually donate it to the charity Locks of Love, which uses the hair to create wigs for cancer patients.

Before he makes it to a barber shop, Dowd, a Huntsville native, is headed to the NCAA Frozen Four in Pittsburgh. St. Cloud (25-15-1) will play Quinnipiac on Thursday, April 11 in the NCAA semifinals. UMass-Lowell and Yale are in the other semifinal.

Dowd, a junior forward who was drafted by the Los Angeles Kings in 2008, had 14 goals and 25 assists for St. Cloud.

The Huskies are in the Western Collegiate Hockey Association, which UAH joins next season. UAH lost a pair of games at St. Cloud this past season, with Dowd scoring two goals and registering one assist.

Dowd played prep hockey at Culver Academy, then junior hockey before signing with St. Cloud. He is the son of Alan and Liz Dowd.

He was named to the WCHA All-Academic team and as a WCHA Scholar-Athlete.

When chosen by the Kings, he made history as the first Alabama-born player drafted by the NHL. As he told al.com earlier this season, "I'll never forget that...I was at Walmart and got a text message. Still, to this day, I relive that moment."

A second player with Huntsville connections just missed reaching the Frozen Four. Clarke Saunders, a goalie who transferred to North Dakota after Malcolm Porteous attempt to turn UAH Huntsville hockey into a club-level program, came up a game shy of the Frozen Four. North Dakota fell to Yale in the NCAA West Regional final. He had a .922 save percentage and 13-9-2 record this year.
Faculty wants athletics director, president fired

From wire reports

TRENTON, N.J. — Mike Rice may have been fired as the Rutgers men’s basketball coach after a video surfaced showing him shoving players and berating them with gay slurs, but critics said New Jersey’s flagship public university still has more explaining — and maybe some more firing — to do.

The call from faculty members to oust top Rutgers University administrators grew louder Thursday.

More than 50 faculty members signed a letter calling for the dismissal of Athletics Director Tim Pernetti and an explanation from President Robert Barchi for why he didn’t fire Rice last year when he learned of a video showing Rice’s behavior during practices.

Meanwhile, the number calling for Barchi to step down more than doubled to 28.

The letter calling for Barchi’s resignation was first sent to the university’s governing boards on Wednesday. In it, the faculty cite Barchi’s “inexcusable handling of coach Mike Rice’s homophobic and misogynist abuse” of players, his “continued pattern of insensitivity and arrogance toward issues of diversity” and the “secrecy and lack of transparency that he has exhibited in his relations” with faculty, staff and students.

It’s unclear what effect the calls might have on the president or the athletic director. Neither was willing to be interviewed by the Associated Press on Wednesday or Thursday. Members of the university’s two governing boards have been mum.

Barchi, a neuroscience researcher before he became a university administrator, was hired a year ago and took office Sept. 1 to lead the university.

He was brought to Rutgers as the university takes over two medical schools that now are part of the separate University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

The ongoing reconfiguration of the state’s higher education system is intended to expand Rutgers’ life-science research prowess, and Barchi was chosen largely to oversee that.
Rutgers AD resigns amid Rice furor

From wire reports

PISCATAWAY, N.J. — Tim Pernetti announced his resignation as Rutgers' athletic director on Friday and in a letter to the university said that he wished he had overridden school officials and fired basketball coach Mike Rice.

Pernetti’s resignation comes three days after video came to light showing Rice shoving, grabbing and throwing balls at players and using gay slurs during practice.

“My continued tenure as athletic director is no longer sustainable for the University which I attended and where a piece of me will always remain,” Pernetti said in his resignation letter.

“In connection with the incidents involving former basketball Coach Mike Rice, as was the case with all other matters which I handled on behalf of the University, I always tried my best to do what is right.”

In the letter, Pernetti went on to say that his position was to fire Rice — although earlier this week he said he was intent on rehabilitating the coach’s behavior, in part, through counseling — but that he apparently didn’t have the support of his superiors. Pernetti, with the approval of Rutgers president Robert L. Barchi, initially suspended Rice three games in December and fined him $50,000 when Rice's mistreatment of players was brought to the AD’s attention.

“I have spent a great deal of time reflecting on the events which led to today,” Pernetti said. “As you know, my first instincts when I saw the videotape of Coach Rice’s behavior was to fire him immediately. However, Rutgers decided to follow a process involving university lawyers, human resources professionals, and outside counsel.

“Following review of the independent investigative report, the consensus was that university policy would not justify dismissal.”

But a Jan. 21 report by an outside counsel hired by Rutgers — John Lacey of Connell Lacey LLP states that Rice could have been fired then: “...due to the intensity with which Coach Rice engaged in some of the misconduct, we believe AD Pernetti could reasonably determine that Coach Rice’s action tended to embarrass and bring shame or disgrace to Rutgers in violation of Coach Rice’s employment contract with Rutgers.”