AUGUST 4, 2017

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How big was Avery Johnson’s raise?

By: Tommy Deas

Alabama men’s basketball coach Avery Johnson and six other UA coaches got raises Friday when the board of trustees’ compensation committee met, and new baseball coach Brad Bohannon’s contract was approved with a total compensation package of $425,000 per year.

Johnson’s compensation was raised to $2.9 million per year from the $2.8 million he signed for when he was hired in 2015. His contract was extended through 2023.

Johnson has gone 18-15 and 19-15 in his two seasons as head coach, finishing 10th in the SEC in his first season and tied for fifth last season. UA made it to the NIT in both seasons.
Auto industry projected to keep growing in 2017

Projects in Tuscaloosa, Bibb counties helped drive production last year

By Ken Roberts
City Editor

Projects in Tuscaloosa and Bibb counties spearheaded growth in the state’s automotive industry during 2016, according to an analysis by the Alabama Department of Commerce.

“Our deep roots in the auto industry keep growing deeper,” said Greg Canfield, secretary of the commerce department, in a July 24 news release. “Last year alone, there were new or expanding auto companies in 26 Alabama counties, showing the vast reach of auto production in Alabama.”

The news release also notes that the state's automotive industry is poised for continued growth in 2017, pushing past a total of $1 billion in new capital investments as Alabama enters its second decade of vehicle production.

The 2016 projects cited in the news release included:
• The 535-job expansion of Tuscaloosa County’s Lear Operation Corp., which supplies seating systems to the Mercedes-Benz U.S. International factory in Vance.
• MollerTech USA’s new $46.3 million, 222-job facility in Bibb County, which manufactures parts for car interiors.
• Hyundai’s $52 million

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investment in upgrades to its
Montgomery plant to bring
the Santa Fe SUV back to its
assembly lines.
• A $14.5 million, 200-
job expansion for Eissmann
Automotive North America
Inc. in St. Clair County.

Elsewhere, Spain's Truck & Wheel Group is building its
first U.S. parts plant in Tuscaloosa County, investing
$30 million in an operation
that will employ 70 people.

In Lee County, the Berghoff Group announced a $30
million, 100-job precision
machining facility.

The news release said that
Mercedes officials recently
underlined the importance of
SUV production in Alabama
during discussions with vari-
ous suppliers, including Lear,
SMP and Kamtek.

"The increasing require-
ments due to a continual rise
in production numbers for the
SUV segment was a massive
challenge for all suppliers,
which was mastered very
well," said Klaus Zehender,
member of the divisional
board of Mercedes-Benz
Cars, Procurement and Sup-
plier Quality.

Jason Hoff, president and
CEO of the Alabama opera-
tions at MBSUI, emphasized
the partnership that has
grown over the years since
the first Mercedes M-Class
rolled down the automaker's
Alabama assembly line on

"Mercedes-Benz became
the first auto manufacturing
plant to build vehicles in Al-
abama more than 20 years ago

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GROWTH

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and, since that time, other
automakers and suppliers
have joined us," Hoff said.

"Our suppliers have found
- just as we have - that
Alabama is a great place
to do business."

The foundation of the
state's automotive indus-
try consists of assembly
plants operated by Mer-
cedes-Benz, Honda and
Hyundai, as well as Toy-
ota's major engine plant.

For 2017, the com-
merce department cites
these projects as evidence
of continued growth in
Alabama's automotive
sector:

• Auto supplier Hanwha
Advanced Matери-
als America LLC plans
to invest $20 million to
upgrade its manufactur-
ing facility in Opelika,
adding 100 new jobs over
the next three years.

• Honda announced
plans to invest $85 mil-
ion at its Lincoln plant in
the first phase of a multi-
faceted project to improve
manufacturing flexibility,
strengthen logistic effi-
ciency for future models
and prepare for future
technologies.

• Spain-based auto
supplier Grupo Antolin
announced plans to invest
nearly $10.4 million to
establish a manufactur-
ing facility in Jefferson
County that will employ
150 people by 2020.
State abandons Medicaid reform plan

RCO plan driven by Obamacare, officials say

Amy Yurkanin
ayurkanin@al.com

State officials have abandoned a plan to transform Medicaid in Alabama from a fee-for-service model into a managed care system led by local health care organizations due to uncertainty about funding and high start-up costs.

The change, which was authorized by a 2013 law, would have reorganized Medicaid around Regional Care Organizations, or RCOs. Unlike traditional managed care, which pays insurance companies a set rate for each patient, the fees would have gone directly to medical providers as an incentive to provide more efficient care and improve patient health. The state won a waiver from federal regulators and up to $700 million in grants to help implement the program, which was set to launch in about a third of Alabama's counties in October.

Implementation of the program has proven to be expensive, and state lawmakers recently earmarked more than $105 million from the BP oil settlement to Medicaid. Some of that money would have gone toward RCOs. The funding boost would have only lasted until 2018, creating uncertainty for 2019 and beyond.

Medicaid Commissioner Stephanie Azar said in a statement that the decision to drop RCOs was partially driven by potential changes to Medicaid funding that have been discussed in Congress.

"It is highly likely that federal health care changes are on the horizon," Commissioner Azar said. "While the financial implications could be challenging for our state, the new flexibilities and waiver options that the Trump Administration is willing to consider gives our state Medicaid program new options to accomplish similar goals without incurring the same level of increased upfront costs associated with the RCO program."

State Senate Majority Leader Greg Reed, R-Jasper, one of the sponsors of the 2013 legislation, said in a statement that the decision to discard the plan is the right one. He said the creation of RCOs was driven by the passage of the Affordable Care Act, and that changes in Medicaid regulations could make the transformation unnecessary.

"The Regional Care Organizations were a smart mechanism for the delivery of Medicaid care under the Affordable Care Act during the era of the Obama administration," Reed wrote. "The goal of the RCOs was to bend the cost curve down for Alabama taxpayers and improve health care outcomes for Medicaid recipients."

No changes to the Affordable Care Act have yet been made by Congress, but some proposals championed by Republican lawmakers would include major changes to the Medicaid program. Proposals could cut funding, but also provide more flexibility for states.

"I believe with the new presidential administration we can accomplish the goals of the RCO initiative via a different path and without the upfront costs it would take to fund a transition to the RCOs," Reed wrote. "Pursuing new options with the Trump administration for Medicaid is the right call for Alabama."

The goal of the RCO plan was to reduce increases in Medicaid costs. The cost of the program has increased every year, but proponents of Regional Care Organizations argued the increases would be slower under the new system.

But the transformation to regional care organizations has been stymied by the departure of major hospital systems. The CEO of UAB Health System, Will Ferniany, said earlier this year the system favored out-of-state managed care companies over Alabama hospitals. He also cited funding uncertainties as a reason to withdraw UAB from the program.

At the time of its creation, many officials hoped the RCO system could become a model for managed care. Almost all states use some form of managed care for Medicaid, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, and Alabama is one of just a few that mostly pays on a fee-for-service basis.

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama, in partnership with Eliza Coffee and Shoals Hospitals, had created an RCO set to launch on Oct. 1. The insurance company released a statement on the state's decision.

"(Blue Cross) and our affiliated non-profit, My Alabama, are disappointed that the Regional Care Organizations, created by the Legislature to bring innovation, cost containment and improved care to Medicaid recipients, will not be going forward," the statement read.

"Blue Cross and My Care Alabama made a total commitment to the RCO initiative and partnership with the Medicaid Agency to achieve the goals and objectives of the project. My Care Alabama continued to be engaged and committed to the RCO initiative at the request of the State and the Medicaid Agency. We regret that there will not be an opportunity to move the state toward these goals."

In her statement, Gov. Kay Ivey said the decision was driven by federal policy discussions around Medicaid.

"The RCO model didn't fail," said Gov. Kay Ivey in a statement, "instead the alternative is a recognition that the circumstances surrounding Medicaid have changed, thus our approach must change. Our end goal is clear — to increase the quality of services provided and protect the investment of Alabama taxpayers."
Vouchers and Medicare for all

Will Ferniany for AL.com

The Affordable Care Act, commonly referred to as “Obamacare,” is flawed. It was based on a broken health care system and rushed into law. While there have been some positive outcomes, there have also been significant unintended consequences. Unfortunately, efforts to “Repeal and Replace” to date have been a modification of the broken ACA and similarly rushed, resulting in unpassable legislation that can only be described as “Repeal and Make Worse.”

Working to improve the inherent flaws of the Affordable Care Act is much like doing extensive home renovations when the underlying structure of the house is bad. Many times, it is best to tear down the house and start with a new structure that can satisfy the needs of the homeowner, rather than spend time and money only to be unhappy. We cannot get to the system Americans need and deserve by modifying the flawed Affordable Care Act.

If lawmakers do not start fresh and build a system for America’s future, everyone’s best efforts and intentions will fail flat. We must improve the efficacy of the system to benefit patients, as well as make health care financially sustainable.

Following is a practical and (what I believe to be a) politically feasible approach to U.S. health care reform.

The keys to this solution are vouchers (for choice) and allowing everyone an option to purchase a Medicare solution.

The proposal provides freedom of choice for people purchasing insurance; addresses concerns regarding pre-existing conditions; provides competition, thereby reducing the cost and increasing benefits; stabilizes the small and individual markets; ensures fairness by having large risk pools; and eliminates the Medicaid stigma barrier.

We already have a proven example of how a voucher system could operate with Medicare Advantage, where beneficiaries can stay with traditional Medicare or elect private insurance. The private insurance companies compete to offer the best benefits for the “voucher.”

This proposal does not provide for universal insurance, but it does offer a foundation for such in the event that the federal and/or state government(s) wished to extend benefits to all, through tax credits or subsidies.

Medicare: Medicare would remain and would offer coverage options to all those who choose it, and compete with private insurance. All people eligible for Medicare would be given a choice — to enroll in traditional Medicare, to enroll in a Medicare Advantage plan, or to use a voucher priced to the cost of traditional Medicare to purchase private insurance on their own.

Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Plan: Medicaid and CHIP as we know them would go away. States would decide the eligibility, voucher amount and minimum benefits for their residents. A federal match could remain similar to what it is today, where the federal government agrees to match at varying rates per state the money appropriated by the state for covering its Medicaid population.

That said, the federal government could choose to move to a per capita funding model for states (where they agree to provide to states a set amount annually on a per enrollee basis), or to a pure block grant funding model (where they agree to provide to states a set amount annually without regard to the number of Medicaid enrollees in a particular state).

With this approach, the stigma associated with having a “public” Medicaid card would be alleviated or eliminated. This coverage could be used with a private company or a Medicare product, and private insurers selling to Medicaid enrollees would be certified by each state’s insurance commissioner. There would be a minimum eligibility and benefit required for any state receiving a federal match for sponsoring Medicaid/CHIP-eligible people.

Large and Small Employers: Employers would stop purchasing policies directly for their employees, but rather provide vouchers, and employees would be able to use the voucher for a private policy or a Medicare offering. Employees would have freedom of choice on their policy, and if the chosen policy is less than the voucher, the remaining balance would be placed in a health savings account for that employer’s benefit.

Instead of being rated by the employer, a plan’s ratings would be determined by all people purchasing the insurer’s products. Employers could work with insurers and Medicare to provide offerings based on the voucher amount and make those choices available to employees. They would have to offer plans from at least three insurers and Medicare.

Individuals: Those obtaining insurance as individuals would continue to purchase insurance or buy a Medicare product. They would be rated with all other customers buying from that insurer.

Individually eligible for a subsidy or tax credit would be determined on the exchange by applying to the state Public Health Department based on criteria determined by the federal government, which would fund the subsidy or tax credit. This system would eliminate the need for an insurance mandate or penalty, as well as concerns about religious issues.

Insurance companies: To attract customers, insurers would compete with each other and Medicare to try to reduce cost with providers as much as possible, and increase quality to offer the best benefits to the voucher customers (similar to Medicare Advantage today). Insurers would be certified to offer coverage by the state insurance commissioner. Ratings would be based on all those covered by the insurance company, not by individual groups or segments. Insurance companies have some marketing restrictions on the individual market similar to but less than Medicare Advantage to prevent the company from “cherry picking” those who select their company.

The plan could include a “risk adjustment” provision as in the Affordable Care Act.

Veterans, Department of Defense, Indian Health Service: Each would remain, and those currently eligible could continue to receive services in these facilities. All people eligible for these services would be given a choice — use the government-sponsored system or use a voucher priced to the cost of traditional services to beneficiaries to purchase insurance on their own.

Drug prices: The federal government would negotiate drug prices and formulary for all persons purchasing insurance in America through a government-sponsored or subsidized voucher. Private companies would have the option of utilizing these prices and formulary or negotiating their own.

It is possible to balance compassion with good business sense and fiscal responsibility in health care reform. A foundation like the one outlined here — with the right amount of good-faith debate and insight from other experts — could lead to that very outcome.

Ferniany, who holds a Ph.D., is CEO of the UAB Health System, a $3 billion per year system that serves patients across Alabama and beyond, and includes the Viva Health Insurance Plan and the 9th-largest hospital in the nation.
What’s next for Jeff Sessions?

Senate, governor runs suggested

Paul Gattis pga@bham.com

Alabama is on the brink of an election process to select a new senator to replace the old senator who remains popular and, possibly, could soon be unemployed.

That’s pretty much a snapshot of the political landscape in Jeff Sessions’ home state.

And despite the unfolding drama, it may all end up meaning … absolutely nothing.

“I won’t say it’s crazy,” said Jess Brown, a retired political science professor from Athens State University, “but I think it’s low probability.”

The question — whether people are quietly wondering to themselves or, as in the case of one Senate candidate, firing off a press release about it — is this: Could Sessions, if he is no longer U.S. attorney general, seek to regain his seat in the U.S. Senate?

As Brown said, it’s unlikely. And at the moment, Sessions still holds one of the most esteemed political positions in the country. That would seemingly make a career change a beyond-the-horizon distant thought for Sessions, who served as Alabama’s junior senator from 1996 until resigning earlier this year upon being appointed AG.

Still, there are these circumstances:

> Sessions has been vilified by President Trump over the past week both on Twitter and in interviews. The White House has declined to declare all is well between Trump and the earliest supporter of his campaign from the Senate.

> Alabama’s special election cycle to fill Sessions’ seat begins Aug. 15 with the primary primaries. The general election will be Dec. 12.

> One of the 18 candidates who will appear on the primary ballots, U.S. Rep. Mo Brooks, issued a press release last week offering to withdraw from the Senate race if the remaining eight candidates would do the same. Brooks’ rationale is the Alabama Republican Party, with no candidates remaining, would appoint Sessions as the GOP’s nominee.

> “The reason I think he won’t (seek the Senate seat) is I’m not so sure if he’s no longer attorney general, he’s going to go do something else,” Brown said of the 70-year-old Sessions. “He’s no spring chicken.”

And there’s that little detail of Sessions still being the attorney general and resolving not to resign — no matter the vitriol Trump may fire his way — unless the president asks.

But Sessions’ old job is still available and, if he wanted, it might be his new job.

THREE PATHS TO SENATE

There are three paths Sessions could be re-elected to the Senate in December. All are unconventional.

> The first is that he runs as an independent candidate. According to the Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill, the state’s top election official, that would require collecting about 36,000 names on a petition by the primary date of Aug. 15.

> If he collected the signatures, though, his name would be placed on the December ballot.

> Another method would be a write-in campaign. While the Democratic and Republican candidates would campaign for the office, Sessions would urge Alabamians to write his name on the ballot.

> He could stage a write-in and would not have to get a majority of the vote to be sworn in,” Brown said. “He could win that with a plurality. He simply has to get more votes than anybody else. And you know, I think Jeff Sessions could do that.”

> It’s happened before, Merrill said. In 1983, after the federal courts essentially threw out the legislature election results from the previous year because of district lines, Lowell Barron of DeKalb County staged a write-in campaign and won his state Senate seat over the Democratic candidate David Stout.

> Baseball elections were avoided for the 1983 elections, Merrill said, because the major parties simply selected a single candidate to run for each office. And Barron was not the Democrats’ choice.

> Barron got elected in ’82 and (the state Democratic Party) assigned someone else, David Stout, to run in that seat in ’85," Merrill said. "And Lowell Barron took it to the people up there in Jackson and DeKalb counties and said, ‘Look, I was elected as your senator, they didn’t allow me to run, this is your senate seat. It doesn’t belong to the power brokers in Montgomery.’

> "He ran a write-in campaign and beat David Stout.”

> The final option would appear to be the longest of long shots. That would be Brooks’ proposal for everyone to drop out of the race. Luther Strange, who holds Sessions’ seat in the Senate pending the outcome of the election, dismissed Brooks’ proposal as a "desperate" strategy of a candidate who is falling in the polls.

> Strange, a leading candidate to win the GOP primary along with former Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore and Brooks, would appear to have the most to lose in Brooks’ plan. Brooks, meanwhile, could run for his seat in the U.S. House of Representatives next year if he dropped out or isn’t elected to the Senate.

> "The person who would have to make the biggest sacrifice in that set of circumstances is the current interim senator," Brown said.

SESSIONS FOR GOVERNOR?

State Auditor Jim Zeigler offered still another piece of career advice for Sessions — run for governor next year.

What Sessions has done so far

Actions and statements made by Jeff Sessions as attorney general include:

Feb. 22: The Justice and Education departments roll back Obama administration rules allowing transgender students to use public bathrooms and locker rooms matching their gender identities, saying those rules are best left to states.

Feb. 23: Sessions reverses an Obama-era policy phasing out the use of private prisons for some federal prisoners.

April 11: Sessions, at the U.S.-Mexico border, announced: "This is the Trump era." He instructed prosecutors to charge immigrants re-entering the country with a felony rather than a misdemeanor and told them to crack down on the "harboring" of undocumented immigrants.

April 14: Sessions said that consent decrees between the federal government and local police departments on reforming police activities can lower police morale. He had ordered the Justice Department to review all existing consent decrees.

May 12: Sessions personally wrote to congressional leaders urging them to ditch a provision in spending legislation that bars the Justice Department from cracking down on state-medical marijuana.

July 25: The Justice Department announces that it will impose new grant conditions in a bid to make sure that federal money does not flow to so-called sanctuary cities.

"Sessions for governor could possibly scare out Gov. Kay Ivey, Mayor Tommy Battle, 'Tinkle Cavanaugh,' John McMillan and me," Zeigler, who is considering a gubernatorial run himself, said in a statement. "There would likely only be nominal candidates to oppose Sessions." For any of those scenarios to even reach the level of possibility, Sessions has to be looking for a job. And he's still the attorney general.
UA to test gunshot detection technology

System will reduce first-responders' response time

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The University of Alabama Police Department plans to test the efficacy of gunshot detection technology on and around campus with a live fire test on Monday.

The ShotSpotter system will allow law enforcement to receive information about gunshots quicker, an advantage UA Police Chief John Hooks hopes will reduce response times.

"Seconds count in this profession," Hooks said.

The controlled test will take place at 5 p.m. Monday at two locations on campus, according to the university. To test the detection system, police plan to fire around 36 rounds at close range into a bullet catcher, a device designed to safely trap projectiles fired into it. The test site will be cordoned off and will not be disclosed, according to the university.

The ShotSpotter technology uses acoustic sensors and algorithms to identify gunfire from other sounds and triangulate its location. The system will use 69 sensors on and around campus, Hooks said.

The approximate area monitored by the system is the region around campus between Jack Warner Parkway, 15th Street, Queen City Avenue and just east of McFarland Boulevard. The Tuscaloosa Police Department will have access to information from the system, Hooks said.

Hooks compared the system to a fire alarm.

"Its sole job is to relay to the first-responders this is a fire, this is where we need to go," he said. "The ShotSpotter system is very similar in that way. It detects the sound of a gunshot and relays it to law enforcement, and we can respond very rapidly. And of course, that is a very positive thing."

The sensors can distinguish between similar sounds, such as fireworks or engine backfire, and provide information about the time and approximate location of a gunshot.

The data is reviewed by ShotSpotter staff at a 24/7 Incident Review Center -- a process that takes around 45 seconds, according to the company. Digital alerts on gunfire are then transmitted to police dispatchers.

Hooks described the adoption of the technology as a preventative measure that offers a greater sense of security. The department began researching the technology last fall, Hooks said. The technology costs $180,000.

"The way I see this, it keeps the wolf from the door," Hooks said.

While the purchase was not driven by existing concerns about gunfire near campus, Hooks did allude to shootings elsewhere in the nation.

"You can't ignore that fact that there are issues going on around the country," Hooks said.

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GUNSHOT
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University of Alabama creates premium parking spots for Purple Heart recipients

By: Leada Gore

The University of Alabama is honoring those who sacrificed for their country by making their lives a little easier.

On Aug. 9, the university will unveil a parking space at Ferguson Center lot designated for veterans who have received the Purple Heart. The Purple Heart, the nation's oldest military medal, is given to military members who have been wounded or killed while serving their country.

The parking space, located in the Ferguson Center lot, will be marked with a Purple Heart logo and a special sign, according to the university.

"Honoring veterans in this way shows the commitment and dedication UA has for taking care of these students," said David Blair, director of Veteran and Military Affairs at UA. "This is just one more reason UA continues to be recognized as a Top Military and Veteran friendly university. Currently we serve just over 4,000 veterans, service members, and dependents. The financial impact these students have at UA and in the local community annually is well over $40 million."

UA currently has two registered Purple Heart recipients in its student body and is a Purple Heart University, a designation signifying its recognition and honor of veterans who were wounded in combat.

In addition to the designated Ferguson center spot, UA's Purple Heart recipients will be able to register with Veteran and Military Affairs to receive a Purple Heart hang-tag that will allow them park in any spot or zone on campus, except for handicapped spaces.

The new Purple Heart marker will be officially unveiled at an Aug. 9 ceremony in the parking lot along Campus Drive west of the Ferguson Center. Retired Air Force Col. and Purple Heart recipient Duane Lamb, assistant vice president for facilities and grounds and commander of the Purple Heart chapter in Tuscaloosa, will speak at the 11 a.m. event.
In search of excellence and diversity at the University of Alabama

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s excellence under attack at the University of Alabama? Is the "politically correct intellectual community" working to corrupt the young? Larry Clayton thinks so. In his column, "Excellence Should Take Precedence in Academia (The Tuscaloosa News, July 2)," he warns that the university is succumbing to a politically correct agenda that replaces excellence with the crippling mantra of "diversity.

He introduces the example of two of his own children, one a surgeon, the other an airline pilot. They succeeded, he argued, because of their skill, tenacity and intelligence — in other words because of their excellence. He then hints darkly at the consequences in the real world if we replace excellence with diversity.

The problem with his argument is that it is both unfounded and misleading. There is no inherent opposition between excellence and diversity: They are concerned with different things and can easily coexist — in a university, in the workplace, and in society in general — if we let them.

Clayton appealed to the example of his own successful children; at the risk of sounding like a braggart I am going to use myself as a counter-example. I am a professor of mathematics and chairman of the Department of Mathematics at UA. During a 25-year career I have written four books and published more than 70 research articles, and I have a solid reputation in my field. Are there better mathematicians? Certainly. But I hope that in some small way I embody the excellence that Clayton values and demands for the University of Alabama.

But if you look at how I got to where I am today, you will see Clayton's worst fears realized. I was born in a mill town in Wisconsin, my father a Mexican immigrant. After high school I attended the University of Chicago. Though I have no proof, I am fairly certain, given the circumstances, that being a working class Mexican-American played a role in my admission. In other words, the school accepted me because they were concerned about diversity.

I went to graduate school at the University of California, Berkeley. During my time there I was supported by a fellowship from the National Science Foundation. This fellowship was specifically targeted at minority students. So my graduate education was made possible not just by a concern for diversity, but by an actual affirmative action program.

Some years afterward, as a junior faculty member at Trinity College, a small liberal arts school, I received a Ford Foundation fellowship, again from a program that specifically targeted minority faculty. I used this money to write my first book and to launch a major research program.

So I am where I am today because of a commitment to diversity by universities, private foundations, and the government. Is this, as Clayton put it, "the very antithesis of what made this country what it is"? Or to turn his abstract concerns into something concrete and personal: Is my position at UA and my professional stature tainted because we can have excellence, or we can have diversity, but not both?

We can avoid this uncomfortable dilemma if we reject the idea that diversity and excellence are in opposition: They can co-exist and reinforce each other. Excellence can exist without diversity, but then the quest for excellence is hurt because it

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to ask: What can be done to create a student body that reflects the state, while not detracting from excellence? Their response was to create a vice president for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, whose mission is to help UA "foster a welcoming and supportive environment" for all people.

Thirty-five years ago, I started college, and thanks in part to multiple efforts to promote diversity I now teach at UA. And I have been a professor of mathematics and chairman of the Department of Mathematics at the University of Alabama since 2015. He is a member of the Secular Franciscan Order, a Catholic religious community.

David Cruz-Uribe, OFS, has been a professor of mathematics and chairman of the Department of Mathematics at the University of Alabama since 2015. He is a member of the Secular Franciscan Order, a Catholic religious community.
Tuscaloosa extends services for incoming college students

Staff report

The city of Tuscaloosa’s annual back-to-school accommodations have begun with extended service hours and additional garbage bins for incoming students.

To handle the amount of excess waste associated with moving, the city’s Environmental Services Division has placed nine additional garbage bins across the city. They will remain until Aug. 6.

The locations are:
- Fifth Avenue at 16th Street
- Seventh Avenue at 11th Street
- Eighth Avenue at 11th Street
- 11th Avenue at 12th Street
- 12th Street (behind Tutwiler)
- Seventh Avenue at 13th Street
- Ninth Avenue between 12th and 13th streets
- 12th Street at 14th Avenue
- Thomas Street

City officials said these additional bins are for residential use only and should not be used for contractor or business-related wastes. Students and their families also are encouraged to recycle as much of the garbage as possible.

Starting Monday, the Water and Sewer Department’s customer service phone banks will extend hours until 6 p.m. Monday-Friday, though phone hours on Aug. 5 will be from 9 a.m. until noon. These hours will continue through Aug. 14 or until the demand subsides.

Customers can reach the water department during these extended hours by phone at 205-248-5500 or by email at ubcontact@tuscaloosa.com.

Customers can open a new account, transfer existing service or cancel water service online at tuscaloosa.com/online-services and students can access a student tab for student-specific needs, including links to pay water bills and recycling information.

For more information, contact Tuscaloosa 311 at 205-248-5311.
Sarah Patterson to lead United Way fundraising effort

Staff report

Former University of Alabama gymnastics coach Sarah Patterson will serve as chairwoman of the 2017 United Way of West Alabama fundraising campaign.

Patterson, whose teams won six NCAA women's gymnastics championships, said that she aims to raise a "championship" amount to improve health, education and financial stability across West Alabama.

Patterson has a long history of raising money for causes that are significant to her and her husband, David Patterson. David Patterson was diagnosed with cancer 21 years ago and the Pattersons were touched by support they received from the university and the community.

"I remember everyone coming up to me and saying that we were in their thoughts and prayers and thinking "This is home," said Sarah Patterson, a four-time NCAA Women's Gymnastics Coach of the Year. "I started to think of everyone and everything we've been given in our career and how important it is to give back."

That experience inspired Sarah Patterson to begin the now national Power of Pink initiative, which draws awareness and raises money through a series of seven events that include an all-pink gymnastics meet featuring breast cancer survivors. The Power of Pink series in Tuscaloosa has raised almost $10 million for the DCH Foundation Breast Cancer Fund. David Patterson has also co-founded of Camp Smile-A-Mile's Ride of Love. The 152-mile bike ride raises money for children with cancer.

"We live in such a generous community," Sarah Patterson said. "We are able to do all that we do because we have the support of people in this community. Nobody has ever told us no."

She said that in addition to reaching the campaign fundraising goal, she also wants to raise awareness about the services United Way and its partner agencies offer. She wants to make sure everyone knows how they can benefit from United Way services by contacting UW's 211-1 Helpline and Referral Program.

She encourages the public to come to this year's United Way of West Alabama campaign kickoff luncheon, which begins at 11:30 a.m. Aug. 15 at the Bryant Conference Center, 240 Paul W. Bryant Drive.

"When I retired, I finally had the time to attend the United Way kickoff," Sarah Patterson said. "I was so moved by the speakers and agencies that were represented that I immediately knew I wanted to be involved. I wanted to help."

The campaign's 2017 fundraising goal will be announced at the luncheon. For more information about United Way, its partner agencies and how to donate to the 2017 campaign, visit uwwa.org or call 205-345-6640.
Saban's favorite day

Coach's foundation donates more than $500,000 to charities

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

If the timing feels routine, it's because it is. The day that Nick Saban describes as his favorite day of the year — the day of the annual Nick's Kids luncheon — always falls the day before the opening of the University of Alabama football team's fall camp.

So it was again Wednesday afternoon in the North Zone inside Bryant-Denny Stadium, Saban's altruistic day, when the Sabans distributed funds from the charity to more than 150 local children's organizations. This year more than $500,000 was given to organizations, bringing the total to more than $7 million since UA head coach Nick and wife Terry Saban came to Tuscaloosa in 2007.

"It means a lot to me," Saban said. "We've always tried to look for ways to give back. It's an example that we want to set for the community as well as our players in terms of someone that is in a position where people have a chance to look up to and maybe respect some of the things you do. It's like my dad always said, 'No man stands as tall as when he stoops to help a child.' I think what we've been able to do here, I hope, has had some significance in helping some young people, whether it improves their quality of life or improves their opportunity in life.'

A few of Saban's players

See SABAN, A5
attended, signing autographs for attendees, many of whom were children happily bouncing around after collecting signatures. Bradley Bozeman, Rashaan Evans, Minkah Fitzpatrick, Shaun Dion Hamilton, JC Hassener, Hale Hentges, Jalen Hurts, Jamar King, Ross Pierschbacher and Levi Wallace sat at a table and made a few hundred children's day.

Earlier in the day, former legendary Notre Dame coach Ara Parseghian passed away. Saban commented on the occasion. “I met him several times,” Saban said. “I had a lot of respect for him. Of course when you coach at Michigan State for 10 years, the Notre Dame-Michigan State rivalry was huge. The (1966) game, which everybody remembers as maybe the game of the century, Ara was involved in that. There was a unique sort of relationship between Notre Dame and Michigan State. It wasn’t a rivalry that was built out of hatred or anything like that. It was sort of out of mutual respect. So I think that everybody at Michigan State that had the opportunity to meet Ara through the years really had a tremendous amount of respect for him, not only in the terms of what he accomplished as a coach, but also the kind of person he was.”

Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.

Nick's Kids impact on the community

Here are a few of the projects the Nick's Kids Foundation has helped fund:
• 16 homes built in conjunction with Habitat for Humanity
• The playground at the Tuscaloosa Riverwalk
• The annual Teacher's Excellence Awards luncheon, which honors Tuscaloosa-area school teachers
• The playground at Alberta Performing Arts School
• Nick's Kids also contributed to the new YMCA of Tuscaloosa and was instrumental in the renovating of the Short-term Treatment and Evaluation Program Building at Brewer Porch Children's Center

The Tuscaloosa News
Thursday, August 3, 2017
New owner cooks up deal

Rama Jama's founder Gary Lewis will stay to ease transition

By Mark Hughes Cobb  
Staff Writer

The new owner of Rama Jama's shares qualities with founder Gary Lewis: Michael Hebron loves Alabama football, with that affection expanded to encompass the crimson-and-white diner just off the southwest corner of Bryant-Denny Stadium.

About a month back, after a three-day meeting, the old owner and new came to terms, among them being that tradition would hold.

"What I'm buying is a breakfast-luncheonette kind of place, with a lot of really cool memorabilia," Hebron said. "And it's across the street from my happy place."

The new boss divested himself of other interests, packed, and moved to Tuscaloosa from New York City.

"I said 'New York City'?' Lewis said, laughing. "New York City and Tuscaloosa just became a little bit closer in my world."

The new boss is no outsider. He became an avid fan four years ago, when daughter Lisa began studying at the University of Alabama.

"I went to my first home game in 2015," he said.

See RAMA JAMA'S, B3
RAMAJAMA'S

Continued from B1

game my daughter's freshman year, and I've never missed one since,” said Hebron, who'd been a golf pro for 20 years, following in his PGA Hall of Fame dad's cleat-steps. As Lisa took a job, post-graduation, teaching at UA's Brewer-Porch Children's Center, staying close appealed to him.

Aside from food services at courses, the 51-year-old didn't have much restaurant experience.

But that's not unlike Lewis, who sold his part of the Houndstooth bar back in 1993, then tried unsuccessful food concerns with Birmingham partners. “I learned a very valuable lesson: Just because you may be the CEO of a Fortune 500 company doesn't mean you can run a restaurant,” he said.

A lightbulb went off when Lewis spotted the then-dilapidated 1000 Paul W. Bryant Drive spot. When he opened it on Sept. 14, 1996, he made over the former gas station and convenience store into a fast-food haven decked out in pure Roll Tide, sinking it so firmly in Barna fan's hearts, it seemed to have grown there decades before.

Hebron left behind a 12th-floor office at Rockefeller Center, overlooking the ice-skating rink, to plunge hands-first into flipping burgers, waking up pre-dawn, turning keys, guiding staff, and maintaining Rama Jama's ambassadorial image. On any given day, 65 percent of patrons come from out of town, Lewis said, with that number soaring in fall.

For game days, Rama Jama's will add outdoor stands, for those who can't fit in the doors, and they'll start opening Sundays 9 a.m.-2 p.m., open until 8 other nights. Staying the same are the menu, red vinyl seats, checkerboard floors and walls of decor: Helmets, jerseys, calendars, pom-poms, stadium seats, autographed photos, framed newspaper stories, Heinz 57 ketchup bottles labeled with UA's national championships, personalized Alabama license plates — TGRHNT, ROOLL, 2B 1ST, YEATIDE — in a cornucopia of crimson, white and black, an organically grown shrine to Crimson Tide players, coaches and fans, generations of glory and grid-iron greatness.

Panic briefly ensued when Lewis announced, two years ago, that Rama Jama's was going on the market. Patrons flooded in, pleading, offering donations, sometimes thousands of dollars, to help. “Oh, man, please don't leave us!,” Lewis recounted, laughing. But business wasn't slow. It's just that after almost 20 years of 14-hour days, six days a week, no vacations or days off, the owner-creator-operator thought change might be OK.

“I'm probably not the smartest restaurateur in town, but I've sure outworked 'em,” he said.

Offers came in, none acceptable.

“I've had an opportunity to talk to a lot of smart businessmen over the years,” Lewis said. “By that I mean they wanted to steal the place.”

Hebron stepped up with the right combo of fair price and similar vision.

“I'm here to perpetuate what he started,” Hebron said, “and do the right thing. I wouldn't have it any other way.” His new title, he said, should be "steward."

Lewis concurred: Why break a solid foundation?

"After 21 years, I said, 'Here's the keys. Don't screw it up,' " he said.

Post-sale, he still wakes early to ease transition, which as far as Lewis is concerned includes fall, as thousands stream by, and through, Rama Jama's doors.

"I'm not ready to retire. Long as I can go, I want to go,” said Lewis, at 66 boundlessly energetic, as when playing basketball for Alabama Christian College more than four decades ago. He'll continue hunting trains, staple of Sundays with his 14-year-old son, but is also talking possible other ventures with Hebron.

"This is not the end for me. This is the beginning of the next chapter of my life," Lewis said.

He's still pondering going to a game, rather than watching the Tide roll from nearby.

"I've been right across the street from 174 of 'em. ... And you know what? I'm still not going to be able to. Those seven days a year are so important to the bottom line, of his business now, somebody's gotta be here," he said.

"Maybe in a year or two, they can squeeze me in."

The Tuscaloosa News
Tuesday, August 1, 2017
UA prepares for eclipse

10 things to know about the solar eclipse

1. The total solar eclipse will take place around 10:16 a.m. PDT in Oregon, 11:46 a.m. CDT in Missouri and 12:01 p.m. EDT in South Carolina.

2. Along the "path of totality" — where the eclipse will be seen the best — the total solar eclipse will last for about 2 ½ minutes or less.

3. The path of totality will darken the skies from Oregon to South Carolina.

4. The total solar eclipse will cast a 70-mile wide shadow.

5. Those outside the path of totality will witness a partial solar eclipse — rest assured, it will still be cool.

6. The last total solar eclipse viewed from the contiguous U.S. was Feb. 26, 1979.

7. The total solar eclipse of June 8, 1918, crossed a similar path, traveling from Washington to Florida.

8. Total solar eclipses occur approximately once every 18 months, but it depends where on Earth you are if you have a chance to see them.

9. The next annular solar eclipse that can be seen in the U.S. will be Oct. 14, 2023, and will be visible from Northern California to Florida.

10. The next total solar eclipse will be visible from Texas to Maine on April 8, 2024.

Tools for safely viewing event will be on the Quad

By Stephen Dethrage
Staff Writer

Tuscaloosa will experience a partial solar eclipse when the moon passes between the sun and the Earth in August, and astronomers at the University of Alabama are preparing to help people view the astral phenomenon safely.

Dean Townsley, an associate professor in UA’s Department of Physics and Astronomy, said the eclipse is expected to be visible in all 48 of the continental United States on Aug. 21.

Most astronomers on campus plan to head to points north on that day, settling somewhere inside the 70-mile swath where the sun will be obscured.

See ECLIPSE, A7

See next page
Entirely and viewers on the ground can experience a total solar eclipse. Townsley, though, will be on the Quad in front of Gallalee Hall equipped with a number of tools for safely observing the event.

"I run simulations and work with stellar physics, so I'm more about calculations than observations," Townsley said. "That may make me a little less sky-oriented than others in the department, so I'll still be here."

Townsley plans to set up a table with a telescope, a projection screen and 100 filtered viewing devices so anyone can walk up and experience the partial eclipse without damaging their eyesight.

"I think people are so interested in eclipses because they don't happen very often, it's only every decade or so that there's an eclipse people can see," Townsley said. "It's really interesting to us to observe something in the sky change, to become different while we're standing there and it's also dramatic -- if you're in totality, the sun just goes out."

William Keel, another UA astronomer, said 90 percent of the sun will be obscured during the height of the eclipse in Tuscaloosa. He said an eclipse that "deep" was last visible here in 1991 and the next won't occur until 2024.

The real show, though, is predicted in August 2045, when astronomers expect Tuscaloosa, Montgomery, Dothan and all points in between will experience a total solar eclipse.

"It's an astonishing thing that we can tell where the moon is going to be to the fraction of a second, but we're far enough from the sun and from black holes that even Newton's understanding of gravity made the study of the motion of planets a really exact science," Keel said. "Planets and moons move through space to with extraordinary high accuracy, and when you're calculating that motion, nothing but gravity matters."

The partial eclipse next month should begin a few minutes after noon and reach the moment of greatest obscurity around 1:30. Keel said observers in Tuscaloosa and elsewhere across the country will be "completely at the mercy of the weather," but said he was rooting for a clear day.

"For anybody's who has ever experienced a total solar eclipse, it's an emotional experience on top of what you see visually," Keel said. "It's something else."

The best way to view the partial solar eclipse over Alabama that day are pinhole projections, solar filters and projections from telescopes or binoculars, he said.

- Pinhole projection: In this method, sunlight passing through a small hole makes an image of the sun on whatever surface is used as a screen. The image of the sun gets larger the further the screen is from the hole, and only small holes will work, Keel said. A puncture in cardboard or aluminum foil works well, but any material works, and even gaps in tree leaves can project the eclipse onto the ground, he said.

- Solar filters: Solar filters are thin films in a cardboard or plastic mount. Only special-purpose solar filters, such as eclipse glasses or handheld solar viewers, are sufficient to look at the sun. Several vendors can provide safe solar filters, Keel said.

- Projections through lenses: Most telescopes and binoculars can focus enough to project a sharp image of the sun onto a sheet behind the eyepiece. Telescopes with eyepieces at a 90-degree angle from the tube offer easy ways to shade the image for clearer views, Keel said. Those choosing this method need to be careful to keep anyone from looking directly through the eyepiece to avoid severe damage to the eye.

—Reach Stephen Dethrage at stephen.dethrage@tuscaloosanews.com or 722-0227.
Solution sought for flooding

Officials meet about ditch along railroad corridor that borders UA campus

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The University of Alabama is collaborating with other local partners to address storm drainage and flooding issues associated with the drainage ditch along the railroad corridor that borders the south side of campus.

University officials met Thursday with representatives from the Alabama Department of Transportation, the city of Tuscaloosa, DCH Regional Medical Center and the Kansas City Southern and Norfolk Southern railroads about the drainage ditch, which runs along the tracks until they cross McFarland Boulevard just south of the hospital property. During heavy rains, there has been flooding along McFarland Boulevard, a state-maintained roadway, in low spots between 13th Street and the University Boulevard interchange.

The discussions this week were preliminary but the partners are considering the possibility of combining their separate drainage problems into one program and seeking federal funding to pay for the storm sewer improvements, according to Tim Leopard, associate vice president of construction at UA. The partners are discussing the best way to approach the problem and plan ahead, he said. The working title for the effort is the Tuscaloosa Railroad Corridor and Storm Drainage Resiliency Project.

“We are talking potentially a project from Hackberry (Lane) to McFarland,” Leopard said. “The city has issues east of McFarland along the rail bed.”

The partners are considering pursuing a Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant to pay for the improvements if the federal funds are available, said ALDOT spokesman John D. McWilliams.

While there is uncertainty about how much would be available under the competitive grant process, Leopard noted there was a caveat for projects addressing problems that could impair critical rail facilities. Accordingly, the group is focusing on the rail corridor, he said.

“Will a flooding issue causes problem with tracks, obviously that is impacting critical rail facilities,” Leopard said. “That’s how we would approach it.”

McWilliams said the partners anticipate available funds will be announced in August, giving the local group 120 days to file an application for the grant, which would cover 20 percent of the cost of the project.

FLOODING

Continued from B1

along McFarland Boulevard, a state-maintained roadway, in low spots between 13th Street and the University Boulevard interchange.

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UA student found dead outside apartments

Police do not suspect foul play

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

A young University of Alabama student died after falling from her apartment balcony late Thursday or early Friday.

Police do not suspect foul play in the death of Gina Lupo, 21. A passerby called 911 before 7 a.m. to report seeing her body on the sidewalk alongside The Lofts at City Center on 13th Street East, said Capt. Gary Hood, Tuscaloosa County Metro Homicide Unit commander.

"Investigators reviewed video from the apartment complex and recovered evidence from the victim's apartment that led investigators to believe no foul play is involved in her death," he said.

The University of Alabama issued a statement identifying her as a senior biology major who was not enrolled in summer classes. She was last enrolled during the spring semester, Associate Vice President for Communications

See DEATH, A3
DEATH

Continued from A1

Monica Watts said in the statement.

“Our university community is mourning the untimely loss of a member of the UA family this morning near an off-campus apartment building,” she said.

Evidence technicians and investigators with the Tuscaloosa County Homicide Unit spent Friday morning at the complex, using a ladder to make their way to a second-floor balcony.

Lupo was found on a sidewalk that runs along the length of apartment patios and balconies, behind a fence in a landscaped area of the apartment property.

She was from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and was on UA women’s rowing team for three years.

Watts said that counseling services are being made available to UA students at 205-348-3863 and https://counseling.sa.ua.edu/.

Employee resources are available through the Employee Assistance Program http://hr.ua.edu/benefits/other-benefits/employee-assistance-program.

—Reach Stephanie Taylor at stephanie.taylor@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0210.
UAB players understand debt they owe fans, community

Kevin Scarbinsky

The 23-year-old Jones, a fellow linebacker and "redshirt senior" who started at UAB in 2012, called Crews "a super senior."

Crews redshirted out of Bibb County High School in 2011. He played in 2012 and 2013 under Garrick McGee and in 2014 under Bill Clark. Just when things were looking up after Clark's inaugural 6-6 season — Crews finished that season with 33 tackles and two sacks — the bottom dropped out. The program was killed.

It came back in name in June 2015, but #TheReturn hit a different gear Monday. This was the first day of fall camp with an actual game to play against Alabama A&M 33 days away.

No wonder Crews counts his blessings daily.

"It's a blessing," he said. "Coach Clark's a blessing. This community stepping up doing everything it has for us is a blessing."

Hard to imagine a college football player as motivated this season as Crews — unless it's his UAB teammates like Jones. The grind of preseason practice has begun, but the "wow" factor of the Football Operations Center and Legacy Pavilion hasn't worn off for them.

"I still get lost in this building," Jones said. "It's like a maze, but it's a wonderful maze. I'm glad to be in it."

Jones also acknowledged the responsibility he feels to repay the fan base and the local community for everything they did to give the team this opportunity.

"Without a doubt," he said. "We want to show our respect to them and do the best we can. They put a lot of their effort and their hard-earned money into this project. We're going to put our effort, our sweat, blood and tears to give them the best we can."

It's easy for outsiders to forget UAB won its last football game. The Blazers beat Southern Miss 45-24 on Nov. 29, 2014. When they kick off Sept. 2 at Legion Field against Alabama A&M, they'll end an unforgettable streak of 1,007 days without a UAB football game.

In that time, a bond formed between this team and its fans that'll be hard to match. The fans did their part, and they're not done. Expect the players to do everything in their power not to let them down.

"You don't take anything for granted now," Crews said. "Like, yeah, we do have a nice facility now, but you can't forget where you came from."
GUEST NOTEBOOK

One CEO’s plan for health care reform

Both the Democrats and Republicans tried valiantly to pass laws which would improve America’s Health System. While there have been some positive outcomes, there have also been unintended consequences.

Working to improve the Affordable Care Act is much like doing extensive home renovations when the underlying structure of the house is bad. Many times, it is best to tear down the house and start with a new structure that can satisfy the needs of the homeowner, rather than spend time and money only to be unhappy. We cannot get to the system Americans need and deserve by modifying the flawed Affordable Care Act.

If lawmakers do not start fresh and build a system for America’s future, everyone’s best efforts and intentions will fall flat. We must improve the efficacy of the system to benefit patients, as well as make health care financially sustainable.

Following is a practical and what I believe to be politically feasible approach to U.S. health care reform.

The keys to this solution are vouchers (for choice) and allowing everyone an option to purchase a Medicare solution. The proposal provides freedom of choice for people purchasing insurance; addresses concerns regarding pre-existing conditions; provides competition, thereby reducing the cost and increasing benefits; stabilizes the small and individual markets; ensures fairness by having large risk pools; and eliminates the Medicaid stigma barrier. We already have a proven example of how a voucher system could operate with Medicare Advantage, where beneficiaries can stay with traditional Medicare or elect private insurance. The private insurance companies compete to offer the best benefits for the “voucher.”

This proposal does not provide for universal insurance, but it does offer a foundation for such in the event that the federal and/or state governments wished to extend benefits to all, through tax credits or subsidies. Here’s a look at some of the key components.

Medicare: Medicare would remain and would offer coverage options to all those who select it, and compete with private insurance. All people eligible for Medicare would be given a choice – to enroll in traditional Medicare, to enroll in a Medicare Advantage plan, or to use a voucher priced to the cost of traditional Medicare to purchase private insurance on their own.

Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Plan: Medicaid and CHIP as we know them would go away. States would decide the eligibility, voucher amount and minimum benefits for their residents. A federal match could remain similar to what it is today, where the federal government agrees to match at varying rates per state the money appropriated by the state for covering its Medicaid population. That said, the federal government could choose to move to a per capita funding model for states (where they agree to provide to states a set amount annually on a per enrollee basis) or to a pure block grant funding model (where they agree to provide to states a set amount annually without regard to the number of Medicaid enrollees in a particular state). With this approach, the stigma associated with having a “public” Medicaid card would be alleviated or eliminated.

This coverage could be used with a private company or a Medicare product, and private insurers selling to Medicaid enrollees would be certified by each state’s insurance commissioner. There would be a minimum eligibility and benefit required for any state receiving a federal match for sponsoring Medicaid/CHIP-eligible people.

Large and small employers: Employers would stop purchasing policies directly for their employees, but rather provide vouchers, and employees would be able to use the voucher for a private policy or a Medicare offering. Employees would have freedom of choice on their policy, and if the chosen policy is less than the voucher, the remaining balance would be placed in a health savings account for that employee’s benefit. Instead of being rated by the employer, a plan’s ratings would be determined by all people purchasing the insurer’s products. Employers could work with insurers and Medicare to provide offerings based on their voucher amount and make these choices available to employees. They would have to offer plans from at least three insurers and Medicare.

Individuals: Those obtaining insurance as individuals would continue to purchase insurance or buy a Medicare product. They would be rated with all other customers buying from that insurer. Individuals eligible for a subsidy or tax credit would be determined off the exchange by applying to the state Public Health Department based on criteria determined by the federal government, which would fund the subsidy or tax credit. This system would eliminate the need for an insurance mandate or penalty, as well as concerns about religious issues.

Will Ferniany is CEO of University of Alabama at Birmingham Health System.
Local female scientists form community for public outreach

By: Sydney Cromwell

A small group of Birmingham women are creating an organization for women in scientific careers to network, mentor each other and learn how to share what they know with the broader community.

UAB infectious diseases professor Karen Fowler recently learned about 500 Women Scientists, a national group dedicated to more diversity in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) careers. When she contacted the group to find a Birmingham “pod,” as local chapters are called, Fowler was instead asked to create one herself.

“Women in science have come a long way, but they have a long way to go,” Fowler said. “There are times when colleagues cut women out ... but there are times when we don’t speak up either.”

She and a group of about eight other women are the de facto leaders of Birmingham’s pod. They started reaching out to people at the Birmingham March for Science earlier this year, where about 100 people expressed interest in 500 Women Scientists.

Though they’re just getting started, Fowler wants the group to be a place for networking and mentorship, particularly for young women and women of color in science.

500 Women Scientists can also be an educational source, and Fowler said she would like to see future members leading STEM training in schools or rural education programs. In the midst of divisive national discourse on topics such as climate change and vaccinations, Fowler said she’s worried young girls will be turned off from pursuing STEM careers.

“We’re going to lose a generation of young women who probably have brilliant ideas,” Fowler said. “You need to see those role models who’ve made it.”

Fowler would like to position the Birmingham pod as a source of expert opinions when scientific issues come up in politics or the media. Part of that goal, she said, will be training members to speak and write in a way that is accessible to those outside their field.

“I would like to see scientists, but especially women scientists, speak up in the public discourse,” Fowler said.

She is planning an August social event for interested women, though details had not been finalized as of Iron City Ink’s press time. Find the Birmingham pod on Facebook or email 500womenscibhm@gmail.com for more information.
Shifting Sights

By: Sydney Cromwell

More grads opting to plant roots in Magic City thanks in part to new opportunities

UAB is the source of more than 61,000 jobs and $4.6 billion in total economic impact each year in Alabama, most of that spent in Birmingham. The growth of the university and the city are so intertwined that one could not exist without the other.

“If it wasn’t for the university, I’m not sure Birmingham would be having the success that it’s having as a city,” said Larry Norris, the president of downtown-based Lewis Communications.

And as a new generation of UAB graduates finds something to love in Birmingham rather than relocating to Nashville, Atlanta or Charlotte, that economic impact is reaching further into established companies and young startups.

In fact, 2017 graduate Emory Moe has found a trend among her own group of UAB friends that would have surprised the average Birmingham resident even 10 years ago.

“All of my friends who have moved away have really regretted it and have tried to find a way to get back,” Moe said.

The recent growth of cultural and recreational opportunities in Birmingham is partly attributable to the interests of students and young professionals, and it also helps UAB recruit new students on its way to a goal of 20,000 students by 2018.

In this final segment of Iron City Ink’s series on the growth of UAB, we look at the economic impact the university has on the city, and how Birmingham is positioning itself to fight the “brain drain” of losing its young professionals to other cities.

Blazer boomtown

Based on an economic impact study in the 2008-09 fiscal year, UAB’s annual impact on the state is more than $4.6 billion. That number includes university jobs, events, tourism and out-of-town visitors, university research and the money students spend each year to decorate dorm rooms or grab lunch.

Overall student enrollment that year was just over 16,000, and it has since grown to a fall 2016 enrollment of 19,535. With growth trending upward, the university has commissioned Tripp Umbach, a consulting firm from Pittsburgh, to complete a new community and economic impact report, which was scheduled to be complete this month.

The purchasing power of UAB’s students, faculty and visitors influences the behavior of businesses such as restaurants and apartment complexes, where the right spot near campus can boost their success. Lewis Communications relocated downtown in December, Norris said, in part because they hoped to appeal to potential hires from the university.
“We know that the millennials and the college graduates these days, they tend to want to live in an urban area. And that’s an important part of our workforce now,” Norris said.

Mazi Rasulnia, the president of health care support company Pack Health, said when he and co-founder Will Wright decided they were ready to take their startup from Innovation Depot to its own location, they intentionally stayed near UAB for research and employment opportunities. Their office on Sixth Avenue South is now host to a number of interns and employees from UAB.

“Birmingham and UAB, specifically, provide a really great foundation and attract a lot of talented people,” Rasulnia said. “Oftentimes we do export them, so we’re trying to keep them here.”

The food culture is one of the things that drew Nadia Harden, a theater and health care management major set to graduate in 2019, to choose UAB. She has enjoyed the new additions to downtown, such as Publix and the Pizitz Food Hall.

“I was looking for city life,” Harden said. “I like the fact that UAB is part of the city, and the city is a part of UAB. I went to the big SEC schools. I kind of felt claustrophobic in those towns where if the university was not there, there was nothing there. I like that the university thrives on the city, and the city thrives on the campus.”

Birmingham may not have the population size of its neighbors Atlanta and Nashville, but mechanical engineering student Andrew Whitfield agreed that the city has plenty for UAB students to do.

“The city has everything. You’ve got your metro area. You’ve got your downtown, your little-bit-calmer Southside. If you want to go somewhere nice, you can go up to Mountain Brook and Highlands and all that,” Whitfield said. “It captures a lot of different types of people, the city itself. You can see anywhere from really formal people to your average guy sitting at Rojo up on Highlands.”

In the 2008-09 impact study, UAB estimated that with mid-range growth, the university’s total economic impact on the state would be $6.6 billion by the 2019-20 fiscal year.

Fresh perspective

Current UAB students and new graduates are more likely to see the positive sides of living in Birmingham, particularly if they have only experienced the city during its cultural and lifestyle revitalization of the past few years.

“Birmingham, at least recently, has become more of that hipster young culture, but I think there is a huge revitalization of culture in Birmingham, which is really exciting for my generation, especially if I have the opportunity to go to graduate school here,” said Joanne Jacobs, a biology student from Flowery Branch, Georgia.
“I think it’s just lacking in growth, but it’s coming,” said Moe, who has lived in Southside for five years. While she said the city could use more parking and affordable housing, she doesn’t see an absence of culture and things to do.

“There’s a good vibe in Birmingham right now. It’s easier to recruit people from out of town to Birmingham than maybe it was 10 years ago,” Norris said.

UAB National Alumni Society Executive Director Jennifer Breland said the university has always had a high concentration of graduates stay in the area, but now it’s a top choice rather than a backup option.

“I think we’re seeing it become more of a first choice to do so,” Breland said.

Rasulnia said Pack Health has hosted young professionals from California and New York, and many of their preconceived notions of the city were proven false. He said it’s a different atmosphere even from when he moved to the area 15 years ago.

“I remember a lot of the classmates I had, and even friends, were like, ‘Oh, why are you in Birmingham?’ I think that perception is changing very quickly,” Rasulnia said.

UAB Career & Development Director Melissa Whatley said she doesn’t see many students eager to get out of town as they plan their post-graduate life.

“I don’t hear students saying that they want to get out of Birmingham,” Whatley said. “I don’t sense that even in the least.”

In regional alumni gatherings, Breland said, she hears echoes of the sentiments Moe hears from peers: “I think there’s an increasing interest to come back to Birmingham.”

The current generation of graduates and young professionals — often referred to collectively as millennials — tends to place a higher emphasis on quality of life when choosing where to live compared to previous generations. Landing a job is still top of the list, but a social scene, activities and a place where they can get invested are close behind.

“The interactions are still really important, the cultural scene is really important, the open green space that we have, the food scene,” Rasulnia said. “They’re looking for challenge, and Birmingham has a good mix of that, both in health care, IT, in finance ... So there’s a lot of opportunities to really showcase your skills in different industries.”

Whatley and Breland said based on many of the students they work with, as well as research at other institutions across the nation, new graduates value flexibility and mentorship opportunities within their workplace, but they’re moving away from the idea of working long hours to get ahead in favor of a more complete social scene and work-life balance.

Jeris Gaston, the president of Birmingham Rotaract, said the young professionals who join her service organization are looking for a place to fit within the community where their presence has a tangible impact.
"People are a whole lot more invested in the city," Gaston said. "I think they want a sense of community, and I think Birmingham is slowly becoming a true community again ... People want to be part of something that matters to them."

*Birmingham ‘brain drain’*

Though Birmingham may be feeling more love from UAB students and young professionals, it hasn’t translated into a large-scale change in behavior of the city’s young population.

U.S. Census counts of the population declined from around 242,000 in 2000 to 212,000 people in 2010, and it has since stayed almost flat. The 20-24 age group increased its share of the population only slightly, from 8 percent in 2000 to 8.9 percent in the 2011-15 estimate, and 25 to 34-year-olds bumped up from 14.9 percent to 16.3 percent.

Birmingham is still fighting the draw of larger neighboring cities, as well as the desire of graduates like Moe or public health student Hassan Sanruddin to travel and experience new places before possibly returning to Birmingham "at some point," Moe said.

"I would like to travel, and I would like to live in a bigger city, but I think Birmingham is a great retirement city," Sanruddin said.

The city also still has room to grow in its economic offerings. In November 2016, the Birmingham Business Journal published an analysis from American City Business Journals that ranked Birmingham 102 out of 106 cities for private sector job growth. From September 2006 to September 2016, Birmingham lost an average of 2.79 jobs in the private sector per day. And all the green spaces and new restaurants in the world can’t outweigh the importance of a steady, paying job for someone at the beginning of their career.

"Today’s grads, clearly they want a return on their investment," Whatley said. "Most of them are going to go where the money is."

State House District 47 Rep. Jack Williams recently announced his candidacy for the Jefferson County Commission, and one of his platform points is fighting “brain drain,” or the loss of talented individuals to other cities. He said the fact that Birmingham’s overall population has remained stagnant while UAB’s enrollment is growing shows that adults are still leaving the city for jobs, family or other reasons.

Williams said, if elected to the commission, he wants to work with city and community leaders to create “a climate of opportunity where college students who are here choose to look for opportunities in this area” and those who may have left the area see “coming back to Jefferson County to live and work is not only a viable option, but their preference.”

Birmingham doesn’t have the positive name association of Nashville or Atlanta, and marketing the city is one of many possibilities to attract younger residents and keep families. “You don’t hear folks raving about how great things are here. We let the most negative voices in our community define us,” Williams said. “I think this is an incredible community, and we have a lot going for us.”
Williams' other ideas include boosting tourism, particularly ecological tourism, and attracting international businesses to the area. With the millions of dollars in research going on at UAB and entrepreneurial efforts such as Innovation Depot, creating a "corridor" of research and technology firms in the metro area could create more internship and job opportunities for students.

"We have opportunities here that we’ve not yet fully realized to partner with UAB and get our foot in the door in the research and technology field," Williams said.

Projects at this scale require cooperation across Birmingham’s municipalities and community groups to succeed. Williams thinks Birmingham should look to the choices made in Atlanta, Memphis or Charlotte to get ideas of what works and what doesn’t. Groups like the Birmingham Rotaract and Young Professionals of Birmingham already promote civic engagement, so their own perspective could make them natural allies in marketing the city.

"We want to develop leaders to push Birmingham forward," Gaston said.

But the success of Birmingham in attracting millennials doesn’t rest solely in citywide efforts. Rasulnia said paying attention to what young professionals want in a workplace can help individual businesses hire the best talent coming out of UAB, Samford or even colleges in other cities.

"I think it’s more about, you know, friendships and community. I hear that a lot from a lot of the millennials who are in our workplace," Rasulnia said. "The culture is also really important of that company, so you feel like you’re walking into a family as opposed to a corporation."

Building up the strong points that Birmingham has and working on its weaknesses could help the city reach the day when graduates don’t think of the city as a place they might come back to "at some point," as Moe put it, but as a place they just don’t want to leave.

"I think that there’s something really awesome about watching your city grow," Moe said.
UAB replacing intramural fields

UAB is building new intramural fields to make room for the university's new track and field facility.

The Board of Trustees has approved a $3 million budget for the project. Construction will start this fall and is scheduled to be done by March. There's a grow-in period for the sod, so it should be open for play in fall 2018.

"It'll be higher-quality fields than our current fields," said James Fowler, UAB's director of planning, design and construction. "There will be a higher-quality base underneath the field, so it drains better. It'll have a higher-quality turf irrigation system."

The current intramural fields at 800 11th St. S. will stay open until the new fields are ready. The new fields — just a couple of blocks away at 1101 Fifth Ave. S. — will be built on an existing surface UAB parking lot. There will be an on-site restroom/storage facility. The fields will be used for a variety of intramural sports, including soccer, flag football and, essentially, any sport that requires a field. — Kelly Poe
New Cyber Camp will teach campers to use computer powers for good

By: Lee Roop

The U.S. government has fought a cold cyber war for years to protect its satellites, modern weapons and the American power and communications grids. The public began tuning in when hackers started targeting banks, credit card companies and even a major political party's email.

As our lives move more online - Google Home, anyone? - cyber security is becoming "a foundational element to engineering," says Trevor Daniels of the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville.

"Cyber touches everything," agrees Norven Goddard of the Systems Management and Production Center (SMAP) at the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH).

Engineers built many current smart systems, like "refrigerators that tell you when you're out of eggs," without "securing the cyber security from the ground up," Daniels said, "and a lot of those things can be hijacked by malware to launch Distributed Denial Of Service (DDoS) attacks against companies."

That's part of why the space center is adding a Cyber Camp to its longstanding trio of Space Camp, Aviation Challenge and Space Camp Robotics. The first session was held this week for 32 Alabama high school students from around Alabama chosen by their teachers. Goddard was an instructor.

"I've loved it," student Zach Davis of Tuscaloosa said. "It's been everything I thought it would be."

Cyber Camp, like cyber security in general, appeals to smart kids like Davis in part because, sometimes, in his words, "You're having all the fun and excitement of doing something you're not supposed to, but you're still helping people. You're still working for the good guys."

Davis was talking about "penetration testing," the cyber specialty where companies hire cyber experts to try to hack into their systems. "If you do it successfully, you tell them, 'Hey, I was able to get into your system and this is how I would fix it,'" he said.

This kind of scenario fits perfectly with the space center's longstanding way of doing its camps - what it calls "the secret sauce." Space center camps put teams in realistic scenarios - repairing a satellite in space, for example - and make them work together to complete the mission.

In Cyber Camp, Daniels said teams might defend a satellite or spaceship in orbit or a nuclear power facility on the ground. There are many ideas under development.

Harris was interviewed in a room where students were experimenting with virtual reality headsets and seeing what modern 3-D printers can build. In another room, they were flying drones and learning how they can be forced down by interrupted radio downlinks.
"We want to start them as young as we can," Daniels said of the camp, "but the demands of the workforce led us to target the high-school aged student."

Nearby schools like Calhoun Community College and UAH offer training now that can certify cyber security specialists in as few as two years. There is a list of companies and government agencies in the area that need the expertise.

"You have the Army Materiel Command where the Army does its cyber," Daniels said ticking off a few local players, "the Software Engineering Directorate that does a lot of cyber, the Boeings and Lockheeds and Adtrans, Hexagon and Intergraph. There are a lot of assets."

"It's uniquely Huntsville," Daniels said.
Samford's nursing school recognized

Samford University’s Ida Moffett School of Nursing was named a Center of Excellence by the National League for Nursing for promoting the pedagogical expertise of faculty.

“The success of our school has been possible through the continuation of the legacy of its namesake, Ida Vines Moffett, and her belief in academic excellence, caring, compassion and service, which are the foundational pillars of our school. The key to continuing Mrs. Moffett’s legacy is our faculty,” said Nena F. Sanders, vice provost of Samford’s College of Health Sciences and nursing school dean.

“This designation validates the quality of their work and their dedication to our students. Today, more than 6,000 nurses who have graduated from our programs are impacting the lives of others throughout the United States and the world,” she said.

According to Samford, a committee of six nursing faculty representing the school’s undergraduate and graduate programs worked to complete the more than 100-page document that outlined the school’s unique initiatives and resulting outcomes.

The school’s accomplishments include outstanding first-time licensure and certification pass rates, leadership and participation in interprofessional education, and multiple opportunities for service learning, including international missions, according to the university.

Testimonies from College of Health Sciences faculty, nursing students, alumni and community representatives were included as supporting evidence of the faculty’s expertise and commitment to excellence.

The school, currently celebrating its 95th year, will receive the award in September at the National League for Nursing’s honors convocation and president’s gala in conjunction with its annual education summit in San Diego. — Erin Edgemon
Former walk-on James Noble III is Blazers' most consistent running back

Drew Champlin  dchamplin@al.com

James Noble III can eat a little more and spend a little more, but his mindset on the football field hasn’t changed since being awarded a scholarship in the spring.

Noble, who started his career at Fresno State, came to UAB as a walk-on in 2016 from Chaffey (Calif.) College. Slowly but surely, the 5-foot-7, 180-pounder emerged as the Blazers’ most consistent running back.

Noble was awarded a scholarship late in spring practice earlier this year and could be UAB’s starter at running back when UAB opens the season on Sept. 2 against Alabama A&M.

He said he was “very happy, extremely happy,” to receive the news. Now, he has access to meals and extra spending money. But his attitude on the field hasn’t changed.

“I approach practice the exact same way,” Noble said. “It hasn’t changed anything, but I get more meals. It’s the same thing. I’ve got to attack practice every day. It’s not like I’m a different person or anything.”

UAB has depth at the position with returnees Donnie Lee, Kalin Heath and Lucious Stanley along with freshman Spencer Brown, so Noble knows he can’t slip up.

“Nobody has their set spot,” Noble said. “Coming in every day trying to compete, trying to win every rep, everything I do, trying to compete and do better than the next guy.”

Noble said he’s now up to 180 pounds and should be able to keep that weight on his stocky 5-foot-7 frame.

“Same kid, just solid as can be,” UAB head coach Bill Clark said. “He’s stronger. He’s thicker. He hasn’t gotten any taller. This guy does everything right. He’ll make people look good in the passing game that nobody knows about, picking up a block that somebody else might have missed.

“He’s Mr. Dependable, Mr. Solid. James Noble comes to work every day and doesn’t say two words. He just does his job.”

Noble had seven carries for 62 yards and a touchdown in UAB’s spring game. His brother, also named James, trained him when he arrived in Birmingham in the summer of 2016. His brother was a record-setting running back at Cal Poly.

“That’s a position where you don’t have to be the tallest,” Clark said. “He is powerful, all-muscle and has good bloodlines as a run-
TWO TIGHT ENDS COULD MISS SEASON

Just four days into fall practice, two key players in UAB's offense have been sidelined with knee injuries and could miss the season.

Clark said that junior tight end Thair Blakes is out for the season after suffering a right knee injury early in Wednesday's practice on a non-contact play.

He also said that fellow tight end Skylor Clinton, a sophomore, is possibly out for the season with a right knee injury. His injury came very late in Wednesday's practice.

It's a massive blow for an offense that uses the tight end frequently. Kennard Backman and Gerald Everett starred at the position for the Blazers in 2014, and Tristan Henderson also saw meaningful time.

Blakes had recovered from a left knee injury and scored on a 38-yard touchdown reception in UAB's spring game. UAB signed Clinton over the summer to add another weapon to the attack.

Junior Logan Scott, who also had a good spring game, is UAB's likely starter at the position. Redshirt freshman Hayden Pittman has made a good impression and the Blazers signed Hazel Green's Logan Arnold in February. Steve Pickren returned to UAB for his senior season and senior Tony Ransom is also on the roster at the position.
UAB linebackers Shaq Jones, Tevin Crews are 'go-to leaders'
By: Drew Champlin

The confidence and leadership abilities that UAB linebackers Shaq Jones and Tevin Crews exude has rolled off on the rest of the team.

That's a good thing, because the Blazers need them as much as they needed this return.

Jones and Crews are among the oldest players on the team. Both stayed with the program during the return, choosing not to go anywhere else for their senior seasons.

If the 6-foot-3, 250-pound Jones couldn't finish his playing career at UAB, he wasn't going to play anywhere.

Crews, now bulked up to 6-foot-2 and 230 pounds, was parking cars as a valet at the Westin downtown when Clark reached out to him about the return. Crews is on his third coach, redshirting in 2011 when Neil Callaway led the Blazers. He had 30 tackles, three for loss with two sacks and a forced fumble in UAB’s 2014 season, the best of his career. Jones, who played as a freshman and sophomore for Garrick McGee, was one of UAB's top defensive players in 2014, recording 50 tackles, 12.5 for loss.

"They're our go-to leaders," UAB quarterback A.J. Erdely said Tuesday after UAB's second preseason practice. "Everyone looks up to them and they do a great job leading by example. They're awesome guys."

They are a big reason why UAB players aren't letting the thrills and perks of a brand new $22.5 million football facility get to their head. They were in the team meeting room in 2014 when president Ray Watts announced the shutdown of the program. They have practiced on poor fields and suffered through a combined five wins in 2012 and 2013 before UAB earned bowl eligibility with a 6-6 season in 2014.

"It's been taken away from us," Crews said. "I just go out there like it can be taken away again. That's the approach I take."

Jones is quick to point out that it's been almost three full years since UAB played in a game. He's also mature enough to understand that just because a new facility is here for the players, that the work is nowhere close to being finished.

"We know where we came from and we know the grind," Jones said. "Do you know who our coach is? That sums it up. It doesn't matter what we had. Coach Clark is still our coach."
The depth chart is still sorting itself out, but Jones is UAB's probable starter at the JACK linebacker spot where he can line up on the edge and drop back into coverage. Crews is another likely starter at one linebacker position.

Both players have added around 20 pounds of good weight since they last suited up. Due to the NCAA freezing the eligibility clock of players who stayed at UAB, Crews is essentially a seventh-year senior and Jones a sixth-year senior.

"They know this is what it's all about, this is what it takes, this is what our league looks like, this is what Coach is like on game week, etc," Clark said.

"Granted, this is it for them, so they should really be leading."

Crews and Jones have bonded over the years and represent a voice for the former players who were around in 2014.

"Me and Shaq spend a lot of time together," Crews said. "We hang out a lot. We've got to have great communication. We've got to lead the rest of the team. We really embrace the challenge. We really like it. All the pressure that's put on us, we really enjoy it. We have a lot of old players calling us, saying, 'We're depending on you T.' We don't want to let any of them down, so we embrace it.

** Some more notes from UAB's second day of practice **

** Receiver Justin Walker has still not been cleared to practice as UAB is waiting on a final grade. That could come soon. **

** A.J. Brooks is listed as a running back, but is more of a swing player and will line up more as a slot receiver, Clark said. He's playing the same role as Jonathan Haden and Demetrius Davis. **

** Offensive lineman Jordan Jamison and defensive end Mykelle McDaniel are on the roster, but not part of the 105 as they rehab injuries. **

** D'Von Isaac is now listed as an offensive lineman after starting out on the other side of the line. **

** UAB moves into shoulder pads and helmets on Wednesday and full gear on Friday. **
The Blazers start practice Monday as return to competition approaches

Drew Champlin  dchamplin@al.com

UAB opens practice Monday with nearly the full allotment of 85 scholarship players, a brand new football facility and a light at the end of the tunnel.

Since the program was shut down after the 2014 season and restored six months later, the Blazers have only been able to practice, but they finally have a game to look forward to. UAB opens the season Sept. 2 at Legion Field against Alabama A&M.

Bill Clark has recruited a team full of upperclassmen built to compete. How will it fare against the opposition? It's too soon to tell, but Clark likes his team's direction.

"It's wait and see," Clark said. "How do we respond to these situations? Physically, top to bottom, I think we're very solid. I know we all want to gauge (against other teams). I can say I've seen a huge difference in them even since May. They get the seriousness of this.

"I was concerned going into June if we would take the next step and I think they have."

Here are some things to look for in the next few weeks.

THE NEW PRACTICE SETUP
UAB's $22.5 million facility is essentially complete, minus a few amenities and decorations. Players and coaches have moved in.

The plan, Clark said, is to practice on the outdoor turf field for most of the morning session and go under Legacy Pavilion for the last hour.

"My thoughts would be toward the end of practice, by 10:30 (a.m.) or 11, it's scalding out there," Clark said. "That'll be a chance to come under the pavilion. But, we need the heat too. We'll always start outside and then you might see the (defensive backs) under here. The last half of practice, we'll come under here."

Clark said UAB will have two true scrimmages in August. A grass field will be ready after the season, not long after UAB's old football building is bulldozed.

QUARTERBACK PLAY
Junior A.J. Erdely goes into camp as the starter with redshirt freshman Tyler Johnston the No. 2. The two are still competing after both "worked their butts off" in the summer.

"The second guy is going to play," Clark said. "Obviously we're not saying it'll be equal. With the amount of snaps that happen in a game now and in 12 games, I'd be shocked if anyone didn't play two quarterbacks, but we plan to."

NEW PLAYERS
There are some new scholarship players who are not on the current roster (as of Friday afternoon).

February receiver signee Justin Walker from Fullerton (Calif.) Community College is expected to arrive, as is another outside receiver in Kalian Carter, a junior college transfer. Those two, along with Tennessee Tech grad transfer Brock McCoin, returning receiver Xavier Ubosi and new healthy receivers Ronnie Turner and Andre Wilson, will bolster the outside receiver group.

"That group could end up being pretty special," Clark said. "It could go from a weakness to a strength."

UAB added three more defensive players in Blake McClain, a defensive end from Northeast Mississippi Community College, and linebackers Tre Crawford from Tyler Junior College in Texas and Adrienne Talan, a linebacker from Navarro (Texas) College. Talan is a former three-star recruit who originally signed with Nebraska.

Tennessee transfer Mykelle McDaniel has signed with UAB, but he won't be part of the 105-man roster for fall camp as he rehabs a knee injury. He has to sit out this season anyway as a transfer.

COULD TRUE FRESHMEN CONTRIBUTE?
Running back Spencer Brown has been a weight room rock star, squatting 585 pounds. At 6-foot, 238 pounds, he's built like a college running back. He dominated at Mortimer Jordan last year.

Donnie Lee and James Noble III have emerged as top options at running back with Lucious Stanley and Kalin Heath.

"I think running back is a spot that you can (play early)," Clark said. "I think our running back corp is solid, but I think this guy is talented. He's big, strong and fast."

Ex-Spanish Fort linebacker Thomas Johnston, at 6-foot-2 and 230 pounds, is also built like a college linebacker after choosing UAB over Power 5 schools.

"He's been good for a long time," Clark said. "He gets in here and sees that, 'Wow, they're good already.' The mindset of where he's coming from and how he's trained, I think he's ready to contribute."

ANY STARTERS SET IN STONE?
Clark feels much better about the team's depth, and there will be plenty of battles over the next month. Clark said that the spring game was a good indication for who is going into fall as a starter. Based on the last year, it would be hard to imagine the season-opener without the following players as starters: Collin Lisa as one receiver, James Davis at left tackle, Chris Schleuger somewhere on the line and Shaq Jones at JACK linebacker.

There are several more guesses, including A.J. Erdely at quarterback, Darious Williams at one corner and Fitz Mofor and Tevin Crews at linebacker spots. There is plenty of competition for playing time and starting spots across the board.

"There's no guarantees," Clark said. "That's over the course of the season. We'll try to get as many guys ready to play as we can."

"We just want to keep breeding that competition."
UA men’s tennis sets 2017-18 schedule

The University of Alabama men’s tennis schedule for 2017-18 will include eight events in the fall and 27 dual matches in the spring. The Crimson Tide also will host the 2018 Southeastern Conference Championships on April 25-29.

Alabama opens its season at home with the Crimson Tide Four-In-The-Fall tournament Sept. 22-24. The field will include Oklahoma, Florida State, Illinois, Notre Dame, Tulane, Memphis and Rice.

“We’ve got another strong, challenging schedule this season,” UA head coach George Husack said. “The Crimson Tide Four-In-The-Fall will once again kick off our year. We have an outstanding field competing in a format that will guarantee each player four singles and three doubles matches. It allows our guys to not only get their feet wet in the new season, but to face some tough competition early.”

The fall season will close with the third-annual Country Club of Birmingham Collegiate Invitational on Nov. 10-12, featuring 11 visiting teams, including SEC foes Kentucky and Tennessee.

In the spring, Alabama will open with three straight doubleheaders at home, starting with Alabama State and Jackson State on Jan. 13. Other early dual matches include Virginia Tech (Jan. 20), Penn State (Jan. 28), Pepperdine (Feb. 9) and a doubleheader with San Diego State and Lipscomb on Feb. 11. UA will compete in the Blue-Gray Classic (Feb. 23-24), an eight-team invitational in Montgomery.

Alabama will open SEC play with Vanderbilt and Kentucky on March 2 and 4, respectively. Of Alabama’s 17 home dual matches in the spring, six will come against SEC opponents, including in-state rival Auburn on March 18 and defending SEC champion Georgia on April 6.

April sees Alabama serve as host of the SEC championships for the first times since 2006 and the seventh time overall.
Recruiting is a team effort for Alabama baseball

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

There were no extraneous titles issued when Alabama baseball coach Brad Bohannon named his coaching staff. Neither Jerry Zulli nor Jason Jackson was named "associate head coach." There isn't even a recruiting coordinator.

"I think there's three of them," Jackson said.

There's truth to that. Zulli was recruiting coordinator and hitting coach at Louisiana Tech last season. Jackson was Florida Atlantic's pitching coach and recruiting coordinator. Bohannon was recruiting coordinator at Auburn.

See BASEBALL, C7
Recruiting is hardwired into all three coaches. It’s part of how they built their reputation, and where all three of them met. Bohannon, Jackson and Zulli had never coached with one another before they landed at Alabama this summer. They met on the recruiting trail when their territories and targets overlapped. 

And their territories are vast. Bohannon has signed recruits from 25 different states as well as Canada. Zulli is a Louisiana native who has recruited Mississippi, the Florida panhandle and junior colleges heavily. He spent four seasons at South Alabama and knows the state. Jackson also coached at South Alabama earlier in his career and spent the last nine seasons at FAU, recruiting up and down the state. 

"Basically you’re taking three people and putting three networks together,” Zulli said. “It’s going to hard for there to be a player anywhere in the country where we’re not going to be able to pick the phone up and call somebody that we know has seen or knows him. That’s the biggest advantage.”

Not every school has that advantage. At college baseball programs around the country, it’s not unusual for only one or two members of the coaching staff to handle off-campus recruiting. That’s not the case at Alabama. Even for the head coach.

“It’s hard to keep Bo off the road,” Jackson said. “He chomps at the bit.”

The coaching staff covers the bases well with or without official titles. Bohannon has years of experience working with infielders. Zulli is primarily known for his work with offenses and outfielders. Jackson will handle the pitching staff. Volunteer assistant Brock Bennett will work with catchers.

The coaching staff hasn’t had a chance to work with the current roster yet, but Zulli isn’t totally unfamiliar with many of its players. While he was at South Alabama from 2011-15, he recruited many of them. Chandler Avant, Hunter Alexander, Jake Walters, Sam Finnerty, they all told me no,” he said. “I couldn’t tell you the smiles on their face when they saw me.”

The in-state experience all three coaches have should help, too. None of the coaches will have to build relationships from the ground up.

They also have a similar idea of the kind of players they’re looking for. Bohannon likes athletic, rangy players on offense who can fill in at multiple defensive spots. There’s a place for big-bodied sluggers on the roster, but only a handful. “If you sign a right fielder, he’s playing right field,” Jackson said. “If you sign a shortstop, he can go play right field if you need him to. So if you sign some athletic defenders who are versatile and have a chance to produce offensively, and you’re always going to be able to defend. If you can pitch and defend, you’re going to be in ball games.”

There’s also an outline for the kind of personality the staff wants. That’s about more than just personality; it’s a look at where the coaches want to take the program.

“I try to envision whether or not I can see that guy jumping on a dogpile,” Zulli said. “I really do. Can I see him on a dogpile? Can I see his passion? Can I see the way he plays? Can I see him holding up a trophy? Can I see him handling an interview? Those are all things that come with dogpiles and championships.”

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Alabama baseball’s volunteer assistant named Brock Bennett was Georgia State volunteer assistant, catcher at UA

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

The University of Alabama baseball’s coaching staff is complete. Brock Bennett was named UA’s volunteer assistant Monday by head coach Brad Bohannon in a news release.

“I’m so excited to bring a former Alabama baseball player back to our program in Brock Bennett,” Bohannon said in the release. "Brock has a tremendous reputation here and across college baseball and other coaches who had worked with Bennett recommended him for a position on Bohannon’s staff.

Bennett spent three years at Georgia Perimeter before joining the staff at Georgia State. Bennett was a catcher at Alabama from 2007-11. He played for Mitch Gaspard and Jim Wells during his time in Tuscaloosa. Bennett was a reserve his first two years, then redshirted in 2009 before becoming a key player for the Crimson Tide in 2010 and 2011.

Bennett arrives after spending two years as the volunteer assistant at Georgia State. Bennett was a catcher at Alabama from 2007-11. He played for Mitch Gaspard and Jim Wells during his time in Tuscaloosa. Bennett was a reserve his first two years, then redshirted in 2009 before becoming a key player for the Crimson Tide in 2010 and 2011.

"I couldn’t be more excited for this opportunity," Bennett said in a phone interview on Monday. "It’s in the back of my mind when I’m coaching, but it’s like a dream come true. While I’ve been coaching for five or six years, it’s pretty quick to get back to the alma mater and a place you want to be. I’m just thankful for the opportunity to work with the guys."

He played in 113 games at UA and started 103 during his junior and senior years of 2010 and 2011. Alabama made an NCAA Super Regional in 2010 and the NCAA Tournament in 2011.

"It’s always been in the back of my mind, but when you get into coaching you kind of realize how difficult it is to move up in the ranks and how much hard work you have to put in," Bennett said. "It’s always in the back of my mind, or anyone’s mind to go to your alma mater."

Reach Ben Jones at ben@tidesports.com or 205-722-0196.

See BENNETT, C3

BENNETT

Continued from C3

in 2011. He batted .338 with 22 RBIs and led the team with nine stolen bases in 2011. He was a 33rd-round draft pick by the San Francisco Giants that summer.

When Bohannon was named head coach earlier this summer, Bennett reached out to congratulate him. They had crossed paths briefly when Bohannon had recruited a pitcher on Bennett’s team at Georgia Perimeter College, a two-year school where he was coaching at the time. Gaspard and other coaches who had worked with Bennett recommended him for a position on Bohannon’s staff.

Bennett spent three years at Georgia Perimeter before joining the staff at Georgia State. GPC finished first in the Georgia Collegiate Athletic Association in the regular season in 2013 and 2014 and won the conference tournament in 2014.

All of Bennett’s teammates from his time at Alabama have since moved on, but he still has some tangential ties to the program. He coached the brother of Alabama pitcher Davis Vainer earlier in his career.

Jerry Zulli, an assistant with a hitting background, joined the staff on June 9 from Louisiana Tech. FAU pitching coach Jason Jackson was named to the staff on June 13. Jack Hoehl was named director of baseball operations on July 17. Bennett is the first hire with direct ties to the program.

"It’s always been in the back of my mind, but when you get into coaching you kind of realize how difficult it is to move up in the ranks and how much hard work you have to put in," Bennett said. "It’s always in the back of my mind, or anyone’s mind to go to your alma mater."

Reach Ben Jones at ben@tidesports.com or 205-722-0196.
Tide roster taking shape

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

There's still a long way to go before the first season for new Alabama baseball coach Brad Bohannon. But he's sorted through much of his to-do list in his first eight weeks on campus.

That includes hiring his two full-time assistant coaches and a director of operations and sorting through the Crimson Tide's roster situation before the start of the fall semester.

"It's been exceptionally productive," Bohannon told The Tuscaloosa News last week. "Every day you leave here and you're like, 'Oh my gosh, I need to do this, this and this. I haven't done this, this and this.' Then, like right now, you look back for just a second and you're like 'I cannot believe what we've gotten done.'"

The roster is firming up as summer ends. Bohannon still hasn't seen the team play, but has an idea of what's in store for fall practice.

Alabama will return its entire starting infield from the 2017 season. Second baseman Cobie Vance, shortstop Chandler Avant, third baseman Connor Short and first baseman Cody Henry all started at least 47 games for Alabama last year.

Sophomore John Trousdale, batting over .300 in the New England Collegiate Baseball League this summer, also returns. Coaches have gotten good reviews on junior college transfer Jett Manning, an athletic player who arrives at UA as a junior.

"There's a lot of SEC at bats returning, which is valuable," Bohannon said. "I think no matter what level of athletics you coach, there's no substitute for experience. We have a lot of guys who have been around the block and been through the league, and that's exciting."

The outfield includes junior Chandler Taylor, who turned down the Minnesota Twins after being drafted in the 27th round. Junior college transfer Joe Breaux and junior Gene Wood are both options.

See BASEBALL, C3
in center field. Returners Sam Finnerty and Keith Holcombe both have experience in the outfield as well.

There are more questions about the pitching and catching. Junior college transfer Matt Malkin should have a chance to contribute behind the plate. Junior Kyle Kaufman, who started 39 games at catcher and designated hitter, is back after batting .301 last season. Freshman Sam Praytor was one of the state's top recruits last year.

Senior pitcher Jake Walters was Alabama's No. 1 starter last year and should start on the weekends again this season. Finnerty, a two-way player, and ACA product Deacon Medders are also returning pitchers who will have an opportunity to play a bigger role. Walters State transfer Sam Gardner should also contribute.

The bullpen is a work in progress. Sophomores Davis Valiner and Sonny Potter are both back, but depth there remains a question.

Three UA pitchers who finished the season injured have begun their way back. Righty Brock Love and lefty Garret Rukes each had midseason Tommy John surgery, but began throwing this week. Lefty Dylan Duarte, who missed his final start with an elbow injury, also threw for the first time this week.

"Everything we've gotten has been positive," Bohannon said. "We'll handle that with what's best for them individually, not necessarily what's best for the team. We're not going to rush them. If they need to redshirt, they'll redshirt. If they're ready to help us win in the spring and they want to pitch, then we'll do that. Those decisions will be made individually and we'll do what's best for them."

There's still plenty of time before the season, and plenty for Bohannon and his staff to decide. Practice this fall will be his first opportunity to evaluate the roster in person.

"We'll have to get out there and see what they can do," Bohannon said. "I'm going to try really, really hard to stay open minded."

Reach Ben Jones at ben@tidesports.com or 205-722-0196.
Alabama basketball draws a crowd out of season

Team prepares for exhibition games in Canada

By Cecil Hurt
Sports Editor

University of Alabama basketball practice in August might be out of season, but it certainly wasn't out of order for anxious Crimson Tide fans.

In front of more than 2,000 fans at Coleman Coliseum, the Crimson Tide held a fundamental practice - working on what coach Avery Johnson called "the basketball version of special teams" - in preparation for its three-game stretch of exhibition games against Canadian teams next week.

"I was just expecting a few people to show up on a Wednesday night in Tuscaloosa," Johnson said following the practice. "Instead, we had a great crowd. My staff told me that there were more than 2,000 people here. They weren't just sitting there, either. They were involved and energetic. I hope they saw a brand of basketball they liked and will be back during the season."

The crowd was involved throughout but grew particularly raucous during a fast-paced exchange that saw freshmen John Petty and Collin Sexton duel each other, each hitting a pair of 3-point baskets in a span of less than two minutes.

Fans also had loud cheers for sophomore Braxton Key, who chose to return for the upcoming season after entering his name in the NBA Draft, and transfer center Daniel Giddens, who will be eligible after sitting out a season.

The only somewhat-negative news of the practice was that...
sophomore guard Dazon Ingram did not participate in the practice and is "questionable" to play in Canada due to rehabilitation of a foot injury. Johnson said that Ingram would travel with the team and that the decision to hold him out was "strictly precautionary."

Johnson said he "had an idea" about Alabama's starting lineup form the first game in Canada but did not announce the starters.

"We have a plan but it's flexible," Johnson said. "We have a plan for the first game and if we like what we see, maybe that will be the lineup for the second and third game."

Johnson added that Alabama intended "to look at a lot of players on various roles."

Alabama will depart Tuscaloosa on Friday, Aug. 4 where it will spend a total of eight days and play three games against Canadian Universities throughout its time in Montreal and Ottawa. The first game will be played in Montreal on Aug. 7 against McGill University at 6 p.m. CT. The Tide will then play a pair of games in Ottawa, beginning with a contest on Aug. 9 at Carleton University followed by facing the University of Ottawa on Aug. 10.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
Ranking the top 25 most influential people in Alabama sports

By: Kevin Scarbinsky

What is influence? Winning games? Changing the game? Hiring and firing coaches? Making money, building buildings, leaving a legacy? Influence means different things to different people. Here are the 25 individuals AL.com columnist Kevin Scarbinsky sees as the most influential in Alabama sports in 2017. Let us know who you think is overrated, underrated or just plain missing.

No. 25 Sarah Patterson
Now retired after winning six national titles as the Alabama gymnastics coach, Patterson has long been one of the leading advocates in the state for women's sports. Alabama's Champions Plaza is named in her honor.

No. 24 Steve Savarese
The former head football coach at four different Alabama high schools, Savarese is the most influential person in the state at the prep level as the executive director of the Alabama High School Athletic Association.

No. 23 Pat Dye
A quarter century after his last season as the Auburn football coach, with his name on the field in Jordan-Hare Stadium, Dye's distinctive voice still resonates in public and private and his strong opinions continue to make headlines.
No. 22 Phil Savage
The former general manager of the NFL's Cleveland Browns and current Alabama football radio analyst for the Crimson Tide Sports Network shares his weekly opponent scouting reports with Nick Saban and serves as executive director of the Senior Bowl. He also has a national voice on SiriusXM radio.

No. 21 Deontay Wilder
The Tuscaloosa native has risen from Olympic boxing bronze medalist to undefeated heavyweight champion of the world, joining the legendary Joe Louis and Evander Holyfield as the only Alabamians to earn that prestigious title. The Bronze Bomber is 38-0 as a professional with 37 knockouts.

No. 20 Bruce Pearl
He brought renewed attention to Auburn basketball and the sport in general in a football state when he was hired as head coach, which helped motivate Alabama to make a change the next year and bring in Avery Johnson. Pearl has raised the recruiting bar, signing Auburn's first 5-star recruits.

See next page
No. 19 Avery Johnson
The Alabama basketball coach has Tide fans and national analysts alike more excited about the program than they’ve been in ages after signing one of the best recruiting classes in school history. The former NBA coach of the year has Alabama ranked in early polls and power rankings for the 2017-18 season.

No. 18 Bill Clark
He's been UAB's head football coach for only one season but 3 1/2 years, a unique distinction. Insiders believe had Clark not stayed committed to the program after it was shut down in 2014, it wouldn't have come back. His presence sparked #TheReturn and the construction of the Football Operations Center and Legacy Pavilion.

No. 17 Bo Jackson
Auburn's second Heisman Trophy winner served on the search committee that landed Gus Malzahn as head football coach and is a regular on the Tigers' sideline. His annual Bo Bikes Bama charity event raises money for the Governor's Emergency Relief Fund.
No. 16 Steve Shaw
The coordinator of football officials for the SEC and the Sun Belt Conference, Shaw added even more national responsibility to his plate when he was named NCAA secretary-rules editor for football.

No. 15 Greg Byrne
Alabama's new athletics director is one of the biggest national names in his profession, and his hire signaled a new direction for the school away from its traditional AD with Crimson Tide ties. He made an early splash by hiring Auburn assistant Brad Bohannon as Alabama's new head baseball coach.

No. 14 Gus Malzahn
He won one national title as Auburn's offensive coordinator and played for another in his first year as head coach. Malzahn has helped change college football into a Hurry Up, No Huddle game. He's one of only two current SEC head coaches to win the conference championship.
No. 13 Jay Jacobs
Since he became Auburn's athletics director in 2004, the Tigers have won 12 national titles and upgraded facilities to include the new Auburn Arena for basketball and a 100-yard indoor football practice building. He's second in longevity among SEC ADs and was honored in June as an Under Armour AD of the Year winner.

No. 12 Paul Bryant Jr.
The son of the legendary Alabama coach and retired president of the UA Board of Trustees isn't the go-to decision-maker he once was, but he still has allies on the board, and the chairman of Bryant Bank remains one of the university's largest donors.

No. 11 Bobby Lowder
The long-time former Auburn trustee may not wield the same power he once did, but he's on the board of the Tigers Unlimited Foundation, the athletic department's official fund-raising arm, which has considerable influence on the budget.
No. 10 Mike Slive
The retired commissioner of the Southeastern Conference, Slive oversaw the SEC’s emergence as the most powerful intercollegiate athletics conference in the nation. He now serves as a consultant to the conference, and his words still carry weight.

No. 9 Gene Hallman
The president and CEO of the Bruno Event Team has been a leader in landing and managing a variety of national and international events for the state, including the Regions Tradition, the SEC Baseball Tournament and the Honda Indy Grand Prix of Alabama.

No. 8 Charles Barkley
The heart and soul of the best sports studio show on TV, the NBA on TNT, the former Auburn basketball star is a go-to voice in the basketball world. The Leeds native also does considerable charity work in his home state.
No. 7 The UAB Gang of Seven
Birmingham business leaders Tommy Brigham, Justin Craft, Mike Goodrich Jr., Miller Gorrie, Craft O'Neal, Hatton Smith and Robert Simon led the fundraising efforts to bring UAB football back from the dead in 2015 and to build the program's Football Operations Center and Legacy Pavilion.

No. 6 Jimmy Rane
The richest man in the state as founder, chairman and CEO of Great Southern Wood, Rane is a long-time Auburn booster and has been a member of the school's board of trustees since 1999. He's a friend to coaches beyond Auburn.

No. 5 Dr. James Andrews
An internationally known orthopedic surgeon, Andrews has operated on some of the world's best athletes, co-founded the American Sports Medicine Institute and been a leader in injury education and research. He also works with a number of college and pro football teams, including Alabama, Auburn and UAB.
No. 4 Raymond Harbert
The founder, chairman and CEO of Harbert Management Corp. - pictured above on the right with Bo Jackson - Harbert was appointed to the Auburn board of trustees in 2009 and has taken an increasing interest in the school's football program. He's said to have Gus Malzahn's ear and is one of the rare visitors to practice.

No. 3 Finis St. John
A member of the University of Alabama System Board of Trustees, St. John has influence on both Alabama and UAB as chairman of the board's Athletics Committee. He played a key role in the hires of Alabama AD Greg Byrne and basketball coach Avery Johnson.

No. 2 Greg Sankey
Being commissioner of the Southeastern Conference, the most powerful of the Power 5 conferences, would be enough to land Sankey high on this list, but he also carries additional national clout as chairman of the NCAA Infractions Committee.
No. 1 Nick Saban
The most prominent college football coach and voice in the country, the Alabama coach has won five national titles, four with the Crimson Tide, and sparked a debate comparing his legacy to Bear Bryant's. After 10 years in Tuscaloosa, Saban shows no signs of slowing down. When he speaks, everyone in college football listens.
Alabama No. 1 in preseason poll

By: Michael Casagrande

There was talk of a No. 1 vs. No. 2 showdown in Atlanta in Week 1. For the first major poll, at least, that's not the case.

Alabama checked in at No. 1 in the preseason coaches poll released Thursday morning while Florida State is No. 3. Ohio State is No. 2 followed by the Seminoles, USC and defending champ Clemson at No. 5.

Alabama opens practice Thursday afternoon in Tuscaloosa. The Tide has four ranked opponents in the poll in the Seminoles, LSU (12), Auburn (13) and Tennessee (24).

**Coaches poll**

1. Alabama (49) 1,603 14. Stanford 732
2. Ohio State (5) 1,512 15. Georgia 701
3. Florida State (4) 1,434 16. Florida 681
4. USC 1,415 17. Louisville 676
5. Clemson (7) 1,367 18. Miami 472
7. Washington 1,245 20. West Virginia 319
10. Wisconsin 936 23. Texas 193
11. Oklahoma State 912 24. Tennessee 155
12. LSU 834 25. Utah 109
13. Auburn 819
The University of Alabama's season opener against Florida State, pitting two national championship contenders in the new Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, will be the site of ESPN's College GameDay program, the network announced Wednesday. The show, which runs from 8-11 a.m. CT, will broadcast live from International Plaza outside of the stadium. UA and FSU will be playing in the Sept. 2 Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game, which will kick off at 7 p.m. CT and be broadcast by ABC.

"College GameDay is synonymous with the biggest games of the year," Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl CEO and President Gary Stokan said in a statement. "With this game shaping up to be the Greatest Opener of All Time, we welcome GameDay back to Atlanta. It's going to be an epic celebration of college football."

The game will pit the sport's two winningest programs since 2010 and may feature a matchup between the two highest-ranked teams ever to play on opening weekend. The Crimson Tide will be making its fifth appearance in the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game. Alabama is 4-0 in previous appearances, which took place at the Georgia Dome. UA has won its last 15 season openers, while FSU has won its last six.
Hand could play in season opener

He will avoid suspension for DUI arrest if he completes internal discipline, Saban says

By Aaron Suttles
and Ben Jones
Sports Writer

Da'Shawn Hand will have the opportunity to play in Alabama’s opener against Florida State despite his DUI arrest last weekend, head coach Nick Saban said on Thursday.

Hand won’t be suspended if he completes his prescribed internal discipline. He was found sleeping in his car with the keys in the ignition early Saturday morning and charged with driving under the influence.

"It’s not OK that he’s drinking, with me, and that’s a behavioral issue that needs to be addressed and we will address it," Saban said. "But

INSIDE
For full rankings in the preseason top 25 coaches poll, see Page C2.

the fact that he didn’t drive the car and wasn’t driving the car and did not put other people at risk, which to me is the most significant thing when you drive under the influence.”

Hand participated in the open period of practice on Thursday as the Crimson Tide opened fall camp. The senior projects as a starter this season at defensive end.

Saban said Hand was placed in 48-hour inpatient treatment for alcohol after his arrest so professionals could assess what help he needed.

He’ll be required to complete community service and participate in a police ride-along among “some different things” as part of his discipline from the program, Saban said.

"If he does everything he needs to do, he will not be suspended, because I think what we’re doing is helping the player," Saban said. "If he had driven the car, it would have been a totally different circumstance. Even if he didn’t get arrested, and he put himself in that situation at 4:30 in
NOTEBOOK

Continued from C1

the morning being in that condition, we would have sent him to do the same thing, for his future sake of his decision-making.”

Saban addressed Hand’s situation with the rest of the team as well so others could learn from it.

“Every opportunity that we have, whether it’s somebody on our team, or somebody somewhere else, we use every one of these as opportunities to teach and opportunities for the other people to learn, all the time,” Saban said. “We do it with former players doing good things. We do it with (current) players doing good things. We do it with other people doing not-so-good things and making poor choices and decisions.”

Top ranking rankles

The USA Today Coaches Top 25 preseason poll was released Thursday, and to no one’s surprise Alabama held the top spot. Remarkably, the preseason ranking marks the 10th consecutive season the Crimson Tide has ascended to the No. 1 spot during some point of the season.

Ohio State ranked No. 2, Florida State (Alabama’s opening opponent on Sept. 2) was third, Southern Cal was fourth and Clemson fifth.

Saban said the poll, which is conducted by college coaches, means “little to nothing about anything.”

“It’s all about how you play when the game comes against the competition that you have to play against,” Saban said. “We’re not going to be in the mood to be making comparisons or making comments on rankings. It’s flattering that people think highly of our team, but our team needs to understand that they need to prove who they are to by what they do, and this means very, very little.”

Hurts finds solidarity

When sophomore quarterback Jalen Hurts participated in the Manning Passing Academy earlier this summer, he probably didn’t expect to make a good friend, especially not one playing for another team in the conference.

Yet that’s exactly what happened when he made quick friends with South Carolina sophomore quarterback Jake Bentley.

“That’s my dude,” Hurts said. “We built a really good relationship with each other, I’ll say that.”

The pair bonded over the pressures of being young quarterbacks in a league that can eat passers alive. They even went so far as to swear off social media once fall camp began.

The Manning experience was positive for Hurts.

“Just being around a great group of guys, obviously highly-touted guys, and being able to impact kids. Learn from Peyton, Eli and Archie, just it was a great experience,” he said. “(I learned about) preparation. Preparing. Peyton Manning and Eli’s probably one of the best at preparing for football. You see Peyton and look at him and how he prepares and how he performs, it’s impressive. That’s a goal, to kind of imitate guys like that and be ready to play on Saturdays.”

Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.
DUI arrest details released

Da'Shawn Hand was sleeping in car, not driving at time of arrest

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

Da'Shawn Hand was asleep in his parked car and not driving at the time of arrest, The Tuscaloosa News has learned.

The University of Alabama defensive lineman was arrested early Saturday morning for driving under the influence and held on a $1,000 bond.

According to Alabama state law, Hand was deemed to be in "constructive possession" of the vehicle, and although he wasn't driving and the vehicle was parked, the keys being in the car was the determinant that triggered the arrest.

Hand was parked in a near-campus parking lot, sitting in the driver's seat with the headlights on and the vehicle cranked, but was asleep with the car in park. The arresting officer found Hand at 4:30 a.m. at the 1100 block of University Boulevard. Bars in Tuscaloosa close at 2 a.m.

A pretrial hearing is set for Sept. 18 in Tuscaloosa Municipal Court.

The arrest is the first time Hand has run afoul of Alabama program rules. He serves on the Student-Athlete advisory committee and was twice named to the SEC Academic Honor Roll. Nonetheless, UA head coach Nick Saban expressed disappointment in his senior.

"This type of behavior is not acceptable and we are disappointed in Da'Shawn's actions," Saban said via statement. "We are still gathering information and will evaluate what we need to do in terms of appropriate discipline as we move forward, so better choices and decisions can be made in the future."

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It's football time again
UA opens camp; Fan Day set for Saturday

Online
By Ken Roberts
City Editor

The University of Alabama on Thursday held its first practice of the 2017 football season, and fans will get their first chance to see the team this weekend.

UA's Fan Day will be held Saturday afternoon at Bryant-Denny Stadium, featuring an open practice followed by an autograph session. Here's what you need to know about Fan Day:

Free parking: Two parking decks as well as surface lots will be available at the west ten Hoor area of campus. Parking for people with disabilities will be available on a first come, first-served basis in the communications building lot and the Wallace Wade lots.

Free posters: About 3,000 Alabama football autograph posters will be distributed.

Food: Concessions vendors will be

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FOOTBALL

Continued from A1

walking through the stadium with food and drinks for sale, and the concession stands on the west side at the field and mezzanine levels will be open. Fans can also buy Alabama merchandise on sale inside the stadium.

Open practice: Fans can enter the stadium beginning at 1:30 p.m. Saturday through gates 9 and 19. Fans can sit in sections A through N in the lower bowl of the stadium's west side. The practice will begin at 2:30 p.m., and it's expected to last about two hours.

Autographs: At 1 p.m., the first 150 fans in line at Gate 25 will receive numbered color-coded wristbands for early entrance to the post-practice autograph session. Fans receiving wristbands will need to report to Gate 25, which is the south field entrance, at 4 p.m. to begin lining up for the autograph session. Alabama coaches and players will be available for autographs for about 45 minutes beginning at around 4:45 p.m. Fans will be limited to one item per person for autographs, and no posed photographs will be permitted.

What if it rains?: The autograph session will be moved to the Hank Crisp Indoor Facility near Coleman Coliseum. Practice will go on as scheduled at the stadium.
COMMENTARY

Positive news is a welcome change

Cecil Hurt

There's a steady stream of news these days, as much as you want, and not all of it is pleasant. Fortunately, this week has at least a glimmer of light coming on Wednesday.

Football season starts as it has for the past few years, not with a practice but with a celebration of sharing as The Nick's Kids Foundation, the charitable project of Alabama head coach Nick Saban and his wife, Terry, donate thousands of dollars to area charities that impact young people. Nick Saban will meet the media, although he usually tries to keep the spotlight on the recipients, not the football season. That isn't always easy.

There's always some off-season issue that draws attention (especially as SEC Media Days is pushed earlier and earlier in the calendar, to the point that there is nearly a month of time in between.) Still, it's fair that the work of Nick's Kids get has a day of recognition. There's still plenty of time for the football frenzy that will start on Thursday when the full Alabama team takes the practice field.

Uniquely, football isn't the only sport in the spotlight on Wednesday. The men's basketball team is about to embark on a short but much-anticipated journey to Canada but before they head north, Coach Avery Johnson has arranged for the team to have an open practice at Coleman Coliseum. It's not a Midnight Madness-style event — Alabama will almost certainly stage one of those in October. But it's a chance for a sneak preview, like a trailer for the next “Star Wars” with a glimpse

See HURT, C7
of Luke Skywalker in it.

A Collin Sexton/Skywalker comparison isn’t fair, no matter how many All-Star slam dunk competitions (including the iconic McDonald’s All-Star Classic) he won over the summer. That would be just one more brick on Sexton’s hype pile, which already is massive enough to build a new coliseum. There is no question, though, that he’ll be the stellar attraction at what may well be the best-attended basketball practice in UA history. (The overall record — 92,000-plus at the 2007 A-Day — remains safe.)

The savvy observer won’t go expecting a dunking exhibition, although there are bound to be a few rims rattled. What will really be worth watching will be the rare early peek at team dynamics. How much progress will sophomores Dazon Ingram and Braxton Key have made since last year? What sort of inside enforcer will Ohio State transfer Daniel Giddens be, and can he play alongside Donta Hall in a big lineup? What will be the roles of last year’s energizers, Riley Norris and Avery Johnson Jr.? Will they be challenged by the Crimson Tide’s touted and versatile freshmen, John Petty and Herb Jones? How will they stop Darth Vader . . . wait, that’s the “Star Wars” trailer again. But the 6 p.m. practice, free to the public, should offer hints to those other questions.

Football has its own questions and will at least allow a free look of its own on Saturday. They’ve been asked endlessly all summer, and there’s a risk that Saban has had one quarterback question too many even before practice starts. Most of the football freshmen have already made a public debut, thanks to the early-entry movement, although Henry Ruggs III, among others, may open some eyes.

The best news of all, though, is there’s a bit of positive news on the horizon. These days, we can all use it.

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THE DREAM TEAM

The Crimson Tide lost Cam Robinson but still has a steady offensive line

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

This is the fourth installment in a seven-part series looking ahead to the start of Alabama’s fall camp football practice. We continue with a breakdown of the offensive line.

The offensive line lost Cam Robinson, a three-year starter at left tackle. What it returns is a true freshman, who earned rave reviews for his play, a two-year starter at left guard and a redshirt senior center, who established himself as one of the league’s best a season ago.

The experienced

This time last year Ross Pierschbacher was trying to fill the shoes of Ryan Kelly at center. That never happened because Pierschbacher stayed at left guard and Bradley Bozeman broke into the starting lineup at center after competing for the right guard position the season before. Jonah Williams proved to be one of the most technically sound freshman offensive linemen of the Nick Saban era, as he started all 15 games at right tackle. Williams will likely move to left tackle this season and team with Pierschbacher to create a formidable left side of the offensive line. Bozeman is one of the strongest members of the team and his power will be counted upon.

The others

What’s unknown about this year’s offensive line is how the right side will be constituted. Saban said exiting spring that the team felt good about four offensive linemen. While not spelled out specifically, it is widely assumed that he meant Williams at left tackle, Pierschbacher at left guard, Bozeman at center and Lester Cotton on the right side. Whether Cotton lines up at right guard or right tackle isn’t known, but he’s considered one of the best four. That Cotton play both positions is a plus and helps create depth on the offensive line. He will most likely get an opportunity at right guard first, but he has the ability to play outside too. Matt Womack took the majority of the first team repetitions at right tackle during spring practice. Deonte Brown is a fascinating player, and one that could be a difference maker at

See FOOTBALL, C4
FOOTBALL

Continued from C1

right guard. He’s listed at 6-foot-4, 350 pounds. If he’s lost any weight during the summer, Brown could really make a move to a contributing role this fall. Alex Leatherwood and Jedrick Wills are talented freshmen who could make some noise as well. Scott Lashley, Dallas Warmack, and Chris Owens among others will provide healthy competition.

Overall

The right guard position was an unsettled position for the majority of the season in 2016 with a variety of different players earning starts in the 15 games. Offensive line coach Brent Key would like someone to win the job early this season, but last season proved the coaching staff isn’t afraid to shake things up week to week. With a stable of talented and versatile running backs, this offensive line could be counted on to open holes all season long. This could be a running back’s dream line.

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COMMENTARY

Everyone has an opinion on disciplinary actions

Cecil Hurt

No one believes me, but I like Danny Kanell. The former Florida State quarterback has always been generous with his time. He worked hard for ESPN on radio and in television and while I don't know the economic details of his departure from that network's college football coverage, I sense that he may have gotten a raw deal.

Did he take extreme positions sometimes, particularly regarding Southeastern Conference football? Sure. Opinions like that can be good, and disagreement isn't personal, if they cause you to look at a situation from a different angle.

Saturday afternoon was spent pondering the news that Alabama defensive lineman Da'Shawn Hand — one of the players who'll be counted on in 2017 — had been arrested for a DUI in Tuscaloosa. Inevitably, many people in college football media had an opinion. Here was Kanell's, via his Twitter account:

"Bama will probably come down hard on him. Like a series. Or the first snap. Week 1 or 2? Depends on the info gathered. #SEC"

That may be the case, although I'm not sure whether the #SEC hashtag means that incidents like this don't happen everywhere or that the ensuing discipline is uniform in every other league. But it also made me think — what would Kanell's college coach, Bobby Bowden, have to say, generally, about discipline. Bowden was historically successful at FSU, beloved by those who know him (including me) and while he had the image of a kindly old grandfather, he didn't win all those football games without giving serious thought to an important aspect of any college football program.

So I went online and looked up what Bowden has to say.

This is from an Associated Press article in 2000, when FSU had a series of offseason problems.

"I think one of the most misused concepts in college football now is the suspension thing," Bowden said. Everybody is on the suspension kick. 'Suspend them!' Suspending doesn't hurt him at all. He sits around twiddling his fingers. It hurts your team.

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Go buy your own meals. Say a kid abuses his housing. He's out of there. He can go find his own housing. A kid gets in trouble with the law. Well, he's going to run those stadium steps. (Defensive coordinator Mickey Andrews) has been running Derrick Gibson for a week now, up and down those stadium steps. They're pretty high, and it's not one trip, and it's every morning at 6 o'clock."

That's folklier than the answer Nick Saban will give when asked about Hand later this week. It is not substantively different, from the most successful coaches of their generation. That doesn't mean they are automatically right. Plenty of people took exception to Bowden's methods - let the one among us who never made a "Free Shoes University" crack cast the first stone. Plenty will take exception to Saban's.

One point that must be made: DUIs are serious matters. People can die because of drunk driving and not just the person who makes the decision to get behind the wheel. That should be a factor in a coach's decision. Some people, like USA Today columnist Dan Wolken, think a DUI should result in a mandatory suspension. That's a fair discussion point, too. Ultimately, Saban will consider the information - all the information, including Hand's off-the-field work in three years - and make the call, as he has done in all such incidents. That's part of being a head coach -- but it didn't start being a part of it in 2017, or 2000, or 1958. There's never been a blanket solution, and the only guarantee is that some fans will like it and some fans won't.

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Rick Dearborn is a 'good ol' boy from Oklahoma' in the White House

By: Justin Wingerter

One morning in the early months of President Donald Trump's presidency, chief of staff Reince Priebus stood before a meeting at the West Wing. Gripping two news articles in his hand, he motioned toward chief White House strategist Steve Bannon.

"Hey, Steve, it says here I want to stab you in the back," Priebus said.

Bannon, holding two news articles of his own, responded in kind.

"Hey, Reince, it says here I want to club you like a baby seal," he said.

Seated between them and laughing heartily was a self-described "good ol' boy from Oklahoma," a fast-talking politico whose stream-of-consciousness spiels still harbor a slight Sooner State twang.

Three decades in Washington have not cost deputy White House chief of staff Rick Dearborn his folksiness. "Heck" and "doggoned" pepper his sentences. His mother is still "Momma." The White House budget director is "ol' Mick Mulvaney."

In an executive branch full of outsized personalities, the 52-year-old Dearborn is publicly unknown. He's never been a guest on cable news or the credited architect of divisive legislation. He's uninterested in press reports of palace intrigue and denies interview requests. He agreed to be interviewed by The Oklahoman only because his mother reads it.

"If she has some sense that I'm actually working, doing a good job, then I think that's a good thing."

'Sure you are, honey'
The Air Force service of Dearborn's father took him to World War II, Korea and Vietnam. It brought young Rick and his two sisters to Oklahoma — first Del City, then Edmond.

He was an unusually gregarious child, always talking and smiling, says his mother, Joyce, who still lives in Edmond. He had a paper route, tossing the Edmond Sun into yards and onto porches.

In the eighth grade, he traveled to Washington, D.C. on a class trip. Instantly, he was hooked.

"When he came home, he said, 'I'm going to live in Washington, D.C.,'" Joyce Dearborn recalls. "I said, 'Sure you are, honey.'"

Two days before Rick Dearborn's 15th birthday, the Republican Party formally chose as its presidential nominee Ronald Reagan. Among his campaign slogans was "Let's Make America Great Again."

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"I started tracking the Reagan presidential race and it just really appealed to me, what he was saying about limited government and the shining city on the hill," Dearborn said. "It appealed to me and I got very involved in it."

Dearborn was president of his senior class at Edmond Memorial High School, a detail he never mentioned in a 30-minute interview but one his mother was eager to discuss, as mothers do. Then it was on to the University of Oklahoma for a degree in public administration and economics.

That took him to Washington, where he worked for six senators, most notably as chief of staff to Jeff Sessions, the conservative Republican from Alabama. Co-workers along the way included a young Paul Ryan, now the House speaker, and Stephen Miller, a conservative firebrand credited with crafting the president's controversial travel ban.

Subway sandwiches with Donald

In 2005, the United Nations announced plans to renovate and expand its historic headquarters along Manhattan's East River. It requested $1 billion for the job, plus an additional $500 million in interest payments.

Sessions and then-U. S. Sen. Tom Coburn, an Oklahoma Republican, thought that was an outrageous amount of money and sought an expert to tell Congress as much. As Dearborn and his boss mulled their options, the senator turned to his assistant.

"Hey, see if you can get Donald Trump on the line," Sessions said.

With characteristic bravado, Trump told Sessions he could build a better building for half the price. He agreed to testify at a subcommittee hearing Coburn chaired, telling senators what he had told Sessions. Afterward, he and his newly pregnant wife, Melania, sat in Sessions' office with Dearborn as the senator returned to the chamber for votes.

"I remember we ordered Subway sandwiches and I kept thinking to myself, I'm sitting in Senator Sessions' office eating a Subway sandwich with Donald Trump and his wife, talking about how much money you could save building a building on the government's dime," Dearborn recalled.

A year before, NBC's "The Apprentice" had made Trump a household name outside New York. Twenty-eight million people watched the season finale and several were among Sessions' staff. After 10 minutes of eating sandwiches, Dearborn asked the brash billionaire if he would mind meeting his fans.

"I'll be doggoned if he didn't take a picture with every single person in that office. He was just one of the most delightful guests that we ever had," Dearborn said. "So, that's how we first met. Then, of course, he runs for president and Sessions endorses him and the rest is history after that."

Dearborn worked for Sessions for 20 years, a dozen of those as chief of staff. When Dearborn was nominated for a Department of Energy post that required Senate confirmation, Sessions called Dearborn "one of the finest people I've gotten to know in Washington." The head of
governmental affairs at the University of Alabama once referred to Dearborn as "the hand of the king."

Former U.S. Rep. Jo Bonner, R-Ala., has known Dearborn for decades as a "hard worker and an honest broker." In a capital city known for callousness, Dearborn's kindness set him apart, Bonner says.

"If he tells you it's going to rain outside, you don't need to look, just grab an umbrella. He's a straight shooter," Bonner said.

On April 20, 2010, an explosion off the coast of Louisiana set off the largest oil spill in American history. Dearborn went to work contacting his Capitol Hill sources and corralling leaders of Gulf Coast states to lobby for a change in federal law. The result was the RESTORE Act, signed by President Barack Obama, that set aside funds from the oil company BP for cleanup efforts.

Last February, during the presidential primary, Sessions took a risk by being the only senator to endorse Trump, a political novice who worried some Republicans and insulted others. Dearborn joined the campaign in Washington, selling skeptical politicos, aides and lobbyists on the agenda of Trump, who knew little about the capital and its inner workings. It's a role he hasn't relinquished.

The Instagram account of Gina Dearborn, Rick's wife, shows a couple winding along Trump's strange road to the presidency. There are photos of them at the Republican National Convention and the inauguration and outside the White House. There are photos of her with first daughter Ivanka Trump, presidential candidate Ben Carson, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, Fox News host Jesse Watters, and former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort.

With Trump's unexpected victory in November, Dearborn was propelled to a level of influence he couldn't have dreamed of as an eighth-grader touring the capital. He was named executive director of the Trump transition team and, after that, deputy White House chief of staff in charge of policy. Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich called Dearborn's hire a "great pick" by Trump.

The Instagram photos began coming from inside the White House — photos of the Dearboms in the Oval Office, in the press briefing room, in the White House movie theater and hosting Attorney General Jeff Sessions at their home. They had arrived at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

**Palace intrigue**

On a sweltering Thursday afternoon in mid-July, Dearborn is seated in a corner office on the northwest side of the West Wing. On massive whiteboards he has planned the president's schedule through Labor Day, what he calls "a herculean task." His own schedule contains meetings at 7 a.m., 8 a.m., 9:15 a.m., 11 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m., 3 p.m., 4 p.m., 4:30 p.m., 5 p.m., 5:30 p.m., 6 p.m., 7 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. that day. He typically works seven days a week.
"By the time you get back to your desk after all the meetings you have with folks and the phone calls you made and the trips into the Oval Office and down to the chief of staff's office — talking with Cabinet secretaries and you name it — it's about 8, 9, 10 o'clock at night," he said.

If an elected official is in contact with the White House, Dearborn knows about it. He oversees the legislative affairs department, 20 staffers who coordinate with Congress. Cabinet members go through Dearborn before they talk with Trump. So, too, do state officials, county commissioners and the nation's 3,600 mayors.

Trump, in a statement to The Oklahoman, called Dearborn "a great asset to the administration." "Our mission to Make America Great Again depends on talented people like Rick, who work hard every single day on behalf of the people of our country," the president said. "I appreciate his dedication and support. His home state of Oklahoma should be very proud of the work he is doing."

Trump's relationship with congressional Republicans has, at times, appeared rocky. He's complained about their inefficiencies; they've complained about his erratic tweets. He's criticized House Speaker Paul Ryan, the most powerful congressional Republican, and U.S. Sen. John McCain, a revered figure in Congress. Meanwhile, the party's top legislative priorities — Affordable Care Act repeal and tax reform — loom.

Dearborn is defensive of Trump's legislative accomplishments, noting the high quantity of executive orders and bills he has signed, but acknowledges "one thing that the media will wind up grading every president for is the types of legislation that they sign." He knows the president's top legislative priorities remain unaccomplished.

The press-averse Dearborn refers to news articles of dysfunction in the White House as "noise in the box." He was interviewed a day after Trump said he regrets appointing Sessions as attorney general and a day before press secretary Sean Spicer resigned amid a communications team shake-up.

"I've talked to friends of mine who worked for Reagan, who worked for Daddy Bush, who worked for Dubya, even for Clinton," Dearborn said. "What they'll tell you is that it does always seem more intense when you're in here, when it's your presidency that you're dealing with. But to be honest with you, the media has always tried to push a lot of these palace intrigue stories. Sometimes they're right, sometimes they're wrong."

Trump's public admonishments of Sessions — Dearborn's longtime boss and the link between him and the president — could place the deputy chief of staff in an unenviable position of choosing between the two if the relationship further sours. Dearborn said he believes Trump has confidence in Sessions and brushed aside one source of their disagreement: multiple investigations into the Trump campaign's ties to Russia.

"Hell, Reagan had a special prosecutor, Clinton had a special prosecutor, Dubya had a special prosecutor. This isn't that different from others in the past who have had to go through it," Dearborn said. "You compartmentalize it. You have to realize that lawyers and a lot of others..."
have to deal with that stuff and you just do your job and try to focus on doing right by the president and by the country."

It was an Oklahoma City attorney, Lawrence Walsh, who investigated the Iran-Contra affair during Reagan's presidency, resulting in multiple indictments and two convictions. An investigation into President Bill Clinton led to his impeachment. A 2003 investigation during the presidency of George W. Bush resulted in the conviction of Scooter Libby, an adviser to the vice president.

Regardless of what happens next in Trump's White House, Dearborn will likely remain the same — low-key, reserved, behind the scenes. As Bonner, the former congressman, puts it, "He's not one to rush to the microphones, he's one to sit back and listen." It's a formula that has taken him from the halls of Edmond Memorial to the halls of power.

"My daddy used to always say, 'If you can be a workhorse versus a show horse, then be the workhorse.' So, I just try to keep my head down and do my job."