AUGUST 21, 2017

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AUGUST 11, 2017 – AUGUST 21, 2017

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BIRMINGHAM ATTORNEY TAKES ROLE ON UNIVERSITY BOARD

A Birmingham lawyer has been appointed to the University of Alabama's board.

The University of Alabama System board of trustees named Sid J. Trant general counsel and secretary of the board. The Tuscaloosa News said he'll start Sept. 1.

Trant is filling positions that were vacated in 2016 after the retirement of former general counsel Cooper Shattuck and board secretary Michael Bowmer.

John Daniel, chief counsel at University of Alabama at Birmingham, was interim counsel, and deputy board secretary Matt Calderone was interim secretary.
Good news on the employment front

It was about time some good news came our way. With all the negativity pervading the news these days, reasons abound for a pessimistic outlook. But this past Friday afternoon, some good news flowed in like a cool glass of lemonade on a hot summer day.

Alabama’s unemployment rate dropped again; down now to 4.5 percent in July, one-tenth of a percent lower than it had been in June.

That’s a remarkable drop from the same time last year when it was a 5.8 percent.

According to Gov. Kay Ivey, there are fewer unemployed people in Alabama than there have been in a decade. And many who call Tuscaloosa home are very familiar with one of the people who should be celebrated for the strong performance.

Fitzgerald Washington left a secure position at Buffalo Rock a few years back to join the administration of fellow Tuscaloosa native Robert Bentley as secretary of the Alabama Department of Labor.

When Bentley resigned the office of governor, many in his cabinet were replaced when Ivey took over.

Washington has remained, and this is why. He’s delivered the kind of results that have far-reaching implications.

“In addition to this being the lowest unemployment rate Alabama has seen since January 2008, we also continue to see yearly growth in many of Alabama’s industries, including manufacturing and construction,” Washington said Friday.

“Upticks in manufacturing and construction jobs are indicative of positive economic growth.”

That kind of thing doesn’t happen by chance and it doesn’t happen overnight.

In Tuscaloosa, we still have a lot of work to do, but things are improving. The county’s jobless rate was 5 percent, down from 5.2 percent a month ago and down from 6.2 percent a year ago. The city’s unemployment rate was 6.1 percent, down from 6.4 percent in June and down from 7.3 percent a year ago.

Statewide, Alabama still has not recovered from the economic recession that began at the end of 2007, but we’re making up lost ground in huge chunks. The last time Alabama’s economy included two million jobs was just before “The Great Recession” hit. We’re not back to that mark yet, but we’re closing in and if trends continue, we have a chance to hit that mark by the end of this year or early in the first quarter of 2018.

Alabama unemployment also still remains a bit worse than the national rate, which has fallen to a 16-year low of 4.3 percent, so there’s no time to rest. And our rate still represents 96,251 people who are unemployed. That’s almost enough to fill Bryant-Denny on a football Saturday and far too many people who still need a job. But each month that number continues to fall, is a good month.

Gainful employment is always a good thing. Any job where a person can get an honest day’s pay for an honest day’s work is honorable.
Alabama Confederate monuments controversy in the spotlight

By: Paul Gattis

Emerging from the violent rally that left one person dead last weekend in Charlottesville is a national controversy on the fate of confederate statues that has a sharp focus on Alabama.

As protestors tore down a statue in North Carolina, as the mayor of Baltimore removed statues, as the mayor of Lexington plans to remove the statues in that Kentucky city, Birmingham's mayor erected a plywood wall around a confederate statue at a downtown park.

Birmingham's actions resulted in a lawsuit filed by the state of Alabama against its largest city, demanding fines of $25,000 each day until the barriers are removed.

And Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey said the state must preserve its history.

Of Alabama's 67 counties, at least 56 have statues commemorating - in some form or fashion - the Confederacy that ended more than 150 years ago. Montgomery also served as the first capital of the Confederacy before moving to Richmond.

Alabama was also the epicenter of the 1960s Civil Rights movement a century after the Civil War. Birmingham was founded about two decades after the Civil War.

"It's important to remember that Alabama has a very proud distinction, has a dual distinction of being the birthplace, the cradle of the confederacy and the birthplace of civil rights," Gov. Kay Ivey said. "So we need to preserve our history - the good, the bad and the ugly -- so we can understand better our past and learn from our past."

Even before the protests in Charlottesville, the issue of commemorating the Confederacy has been a passionate one. A grassroots organization is lobbying the Madison County Commission to remove the confederate statue outside the courthouse in downtown Huntsville.

When Commissioner Bob Harrison, the commission's lone African American member, that he would take no stance for or against the statue, he said a proponent of removing the statue angrily protested.

"I had one lady tell me I could go straight to hell," Harrison said.

A protest of the Confederate monument outside the Madison County Courthouse was set for Saturday in downtown Huntsville. The protest was being organized by the Democratic Socialists of America: North Alabama and the Tennessee Valley Progressive Alliance, according to an announcement Thursday on the Facebook pages of those groups.

Similarly strong emotions are evident in Birmingham, too.

Monuments law

See next page
A week before the mayoral election, Mayor William Bell ordered a barrier be built to obstruct the base of the Confederate Soldiers & Sailors Monument in Linn Park. Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall found the obstruction to be in violation of a new state law passed earlier this year that protects statues on public grounds that have been in place for at least 40 years.

As a result, the state filed a lawsuit against Birmingham seeking a fine of $25,000 a day for violation of the law.

Gubernatorial candidate Stacy George has also filed an ethics complaint against Bell over the move to cover the monument.

Bell invoked Hitler in defending his position on the statue.

"We are trying to find a way to bring people together and not divide people, and my personal belief is would we have a statue to Hitler in this community, would we have a statue that would glorify having people in human bondage?" Bell said. "I don't think so."

Meanwhile, Bell's opponents in the mayoral race have accused him of attempting to score political points days before voters go to the polls.

"Sure took a long time to discover the statue's implication," said one mayor candidate, Patricia Bell, in a statement to AL.com. "After 40 years of service as a career politician, the incumbent Birmingham Mayor William Bell, decides a week before election day, that it is time to cover the statue that descendants of slaves continue to pay for with their hard-earned tax dollars."

One lawmaker is attempting to wipe out the new monuments law. State Rep. Juandalynn Givan, D-Birmingham, plans to sponsor three bills in the 2018 legislative session - one of which would repeal the monuments law.

"This is a city of Birmingham park, not a state of Alabama park," said Givan, who abstained in the final House vote on the monuments bill. "And I think that is overreaching for us to tell any governmental entity outside of the Legislature what they can and cannot do with regards to issues such as these."

Sen. Gerald Allen, R-Tuscaloosa, criticized Bell for attempting to cover the statue. Allen sponsored the monuments bills.

"It is unfortunate that Mayor William Bell has decided to elevate his own personal preferences above the law in covering the monument at Linn Park," Allen said in a statement. "If Mayor Bell believes his city is best served by the monument's alteration or removal, he should follow the law and apply for a waiver as outlined in the Memorial Preservation Act."

State Rep. Chris England, D-Tuscaloosa, has raised the issue that the monuments law does not specifically require a waiver to remove a monument that is more than 40 years old. England, an
attorney, also said that the law doesn't specifically spell out a punishment for removing a monument that is more than 40 years old.

"To put it bluntly, the law prohibits entities from doing anything to monuments that are 40 years old or older, but doesn't have any sort of punishment in the law if the entity violates it," England said in his Facebook post.

England also wrote that "the spirit" of the monuments law "is horrible. However, on a basic fundamental level, it was poorly drafted."

New statue

Meanwhile, as the controversy plays out in Birmingham, a new Confederate statue will be unveiled about 50 miles south of Montgomery in rural Crenshaw County.

The memorial pays homage to "unknown Confederate soldiers" and the public is invited to attend the Aug. 27 unveiling. The monument will stand in a Confederate memorial park that was dedicated in 2015.

The public park is actually located on private property owned by Luverne residence David Coggins - a Sons of the Confederate Veterans member who also operates a nearby RV park.

"He's putting it up [to memorialize] soldiers who came out of Crenshaw County or surrounding counties who never came home," said Jimmy Hill, commander of the Alabama division of the Sons of the Confederate Veterans.

Meanwhile in Huntsville, the Tennessee Valley Progressive Alliance is seeking to raise $25,000 to pay the fine imposed for removing a statue from a public place without prior approval from a council established by the new state monuments law. The group said it would turn the money over to the Madison County Commission if the statue is removed.

So far, the group had raised $1,330 on its Go Fund Me page as of late last week.

A similar effort by another group wanting the Birmingham monument removed had raised nearly $1,700 to help that city to pay any fines.

The Huntsville group has not yet formally approached the commission about its proposal.

In declining to take a position for or against the statue, Harrison, the Madison County commissioner, said he didn't believe the statue held enough historical significance to be an issue. He also cited the fact that the statue is not of a particular person.

The statue's engraving said it is "in memory of the heroes who fell in defence (sic) of the principles which gave birth to the Confederate cause."

It was erected in 1905.
"If you go back historically and look at things, you have to ask yourself the question, who is this statue?" Harrison said. "It doesn't have a name on it. It could be somebody's son who went to serve in the Confederate army because he lived in the Confederate south. It could have been a perfectly good person, I don't know. And I don't think I ought to make a judgement about that.

"Just to have served in the Confederate army, to me, would not be something bad. There were a number of black slaves who served in the confederate army. There were a bunch of slaves who felt like they had to go to war for their south and their owner. That's kind of an enigma but that happened."

In Mobile, there are two Confederate statues but according to the Port City's first black mayor, their presence is not a pressing issue. Sam Jones served two terms as Mobile's mayor from 2005-2013 and is challenging incumbent Sandy Stimpson in Tuesday's election.

Jones indicated it wasn't unthinkable that Mobile's statues might be challenged, but said it wasn't on anyone's front burner.

"I wouldn't say there's nothing (that needs to come down)," Jones said. "I would say that there's a process in which you address issues like that. And I don't see that we've had a big issue with that in Mobile. But when the Confederate flag came up, I was very, very satisfied with how the total community dealt with that and how the local government dealt with it."

In 2015, the city of Mobile dropped the "Six Flags" concept on the city's seal - which included a Confederate flag - and now the seal displays only the U.S. flag. The move followed the racially motivated killing of nine people in a church in Charleston, S.C.

Jones, who has criticized President Trump as lacking the character required for the office, also blamed him for current unrest.

"I do think that the climate we're seeing nationally, as it trickles down to communities like Mobile, it could pose some issues," he said. "It could be a point of division. And I really hope that we'll see a change in that climate because that climate hurts everybody ... I do think what we're seeing from the president of this country is creating the atmosphere in communities like Mobile that could spark some things that normally would not happen if you saw a different kind of leadership."

One of the city's upscale hotels quietly removed the name from honoring a Confederate naval hero. After renovations in 2015, the hotel known as the Radisson Admiral Semmes was recast as simply "The Admiral." Hilton Hotels, which owns the building, did not comment on the name change and it occurred with virtually no attention in Mobile.

A statue of Semmes still stands prominently at the western entrance to the Bankhead Tunnel.

A planned protest of the Semmes statue - including a call by the hacking group Anonymous to have it and others around the nation torn down - never materialized Friday night.

See next page
Unlike in Virginia and North Carolina, there have been no acts of violence in Alabama associated with the Confederate statues. And that's a point of pride for Gov. Ivey.

"In Alabama, I'm proud that, above all, we're a civil people and we have a process in place that when controversies arise, you have a process passed by law that makes the process civil," Ivey said. "And that's what's important. Freedom of speech, we all treasure and value.

"In Alabama, we just don't have room for people who have violence and disruption like that."
ALABAMA SENATE ELECTION

With Jones, Democrats dreaming big again

‘Mount Rushmore of political upsets’

John Sharp  jmsharp@al.com

The irony of Doug Jones winning the Democratic primary in Alabama’s special Senate election on the same day that President Donald Trump was overwhelmingly criticized for making sympathetic statements toward white supremacists isn’t lost on state Democrats.

To them, Jones’ unique biography as the prosecutor of the two men responsible for the 1963 16th Street Baptist Church bombing which killed four girls and sparked nationwide outrage during the height of the civil rights movement, is “an antidote” to what occurred in Charlottesville, Virginia, last weekend.

“I think it’s beyond irony,” said Zac McCrory, a Democratic pollster for Antalone Liszit Research in Montgomery. “So many people are disgusted by what they’ve seen play out in Charlottesville and most recently, out of Trump’s White House press conference. It might be the right moment for someone like that. It’s the best time to tell that story.”

But will that story lead to the unlikeliest of victories? State GOP strategists and longtime observers of Alabama politics have deep doubts about that. At least one Republican analyst says it’s not worth the “oxygen” in discussing a Jones upset during the Dec. 12 general election.

For now, in the immediate aftermath of the primary, Jones’ win is giving Democrats a rare bit of statewide hope. A former U.S. attorney under President Bill Clinton, Jones won Tuesday’s primary with 66 percent of the 154,481 votes cast by Democrats.

JONES FROM A1

In addition, Democrats feel that the upcoming Republican runoff — pitting incumbent Luther Strange against former Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore — could be filled with highly negative advertising that hurts both candidates.

Several things have to break the right way for Doug Jones to be genuinely competitive in this race,” said McCrory. “At the moment, you are seeing things that are breaking in his favor.”

Said McCrory about the potential for a Jones win: “I think it would be on the Mount Rushmore of political upheats.”

“NO-LOSE SITUATION”

Democrats acknowledge the realities of Alabama: It’s a deep-red state that overwhelmingly backed Trump last November. Alabama hasn’t elected a Democrat to statewide office since Lucy Broadley defeated Republican Twinkle Cavanaugh in 2008 to become president of the Alabama Public Service Commission, and no Democrat has won a U.S. Senate race in Alabama since Richard Shelby, who is now a Republican, won as a Democrat in 1992.

Republican political strategists do not see a path for a Jones victory. They claim, correctly so, that Alabama Republicans turned out in far greater numbers than Democrats on Tuesday — 417,966 GOP voters cast ballots.

Moore, the top vote-getter for Republicans, received 62,570 total votes, more than the entire Democratic field.

But that doesn’t mean that Tuesday wasn’t a victory, onto itself, for the state Democrats.

“For Democrats, nationally and locally, this is really a no-lose situation,” said state Rep. Craig Ford, D-Gadsden, and the former minority leader in the Alabama House.

“If Doug wins, then Democrats will have pulled off something few people expect and it will give Democrats at every level a lot of momentum going into the 2018 elections. If Luther wins it all, national Republicans will have spent millions of dollars defending an incumbent in Alabama, and it will be that much less money to spend next year.”

He added, “If Moore wins, the national Republicans will have spent all that money but now won’t have anything to show for it. Roy Moore will be a Republican they can’t control, and his brand of extremism will get national attention and turn off a lot of moderate Republicans and independent voters.”

William Stewart, professor emeritus of political science at the University of Alabama, said Democrats also win in having, for once, a “good candidate” in a high-profile statewide race.

“In the past, just about anyone who paid the qualifying fee could be the candidate of the Impotent Democratic Party,” said

See next page
“Doug Jones is a fine man and he has a good record of convicting Klansmen. I’m glad to see Doug Jones do so well. We know Alabama is a very red state, but Democrats deserve good candidates to vote for.”

William Stewart, professor emeritus of political science at the University of Alabama

Stewart. “Doug Jones is a fine man and he has a good record of convicting Klansmen. I’m glad to see Doug Jones do so well. We know Alabama is a very red state, but Democrats deserve good candidates to vote for.”

The Jones victory, and the potential to face Moore in the general election, has some Democrats looking back at 2012, for inspiration. That year, Moore narrowly defeated Democrat Bob Vance to win a seat on the Alabama State Supreme Court.

The victory came after Vance made a late entry into the race.

Vance, a circuit court judge in Birmingham, said the “same dynamics” exist in Alabama as they did in 2012, in that “a lot of Republicans cannot stand Roy Moore.”

“That was my whole strategy when I ran against him to see if I could peel off a significant number of Republican voters,” Vance said. “I didn’t have enough time to do that. I suspect, though, Doug will do the same thing. Moore is a very polarizing figure even within the Republican Party.”

Moore’s polarization stems from his two removals from the bench. In 2004, he was ousted for refusing to take down a Ten Commandments monument in the Alabama Judicial Building. He was then suspended last year for encouraging state officials to ignore federal court rulings that would overturn bans on same-sex marriage.

‘REACH 50-PLUS’

Gary Nordlinger, a professor at the graduate school of political management at George Washington University, said there is no reason for Jones to turn the general election campaign into a referendum against Trump, given the president’s “high approval ratings in Alabama.”

“Mr. Jones already has the anti-Trump crowd,” said Nordlinger. “Now he needs to attract others to reach 50-plus in December.”

Jones, in the days leading up the primary, received two key endorsements from national Democratic figures — Georgia Congressman and civil rights icon John Lewis and former Vice President Joe Biden.

But will the national Democratic fundraising machines also step up for Jones? Again, skepticism abounds.

“I doubt the ‘national Democrats’ will invest a million dollars or more into this campaign,” said Nordlinger. “It could actually hurt Mr. Jones by tying him to ‘national Democrats’ like Senator Chuck Schumer and Representative Nancy Pelosi, much the way Senator Strange’s opponents tied him to Senator Mitch McConnell. However, if polls show Mr. Jones is within striking distance, then all stops will come out.”

The Democrats have failed, so far this year, in turning over a GOP seat during special elections elsewhere. In Georgia, Democrat Jon Ossoff lost to Republican Karen Handel in a hotly contested House race in June. The seat had, for years, been a Republican stronghold and was once occupied by Newt Gingrich.

Jonathan Gray, a Mobile-based political strategist, said Alabama has little in common with next-door Georgia. “One thing people in Alabama will tell you is Georgia is ‘Southern light.’ Alabama is the ‘Heart of Dixie’ and Alabama isn’t going to stand for a bunch of Hollywood liberals coming in to tell you how much Roy Moore is a bad guy,” he said.

Moore, in one TV campaign spot, appears ready for the fight. “They are afraid to take our Alabama values to Washington,” he says of his political rivals, before turning to face the camera. “And I can’t wait.”

Richard Fording, a political science professor at the University of Alabama, said that a strong battle between Jones and Moore — or Jones and Strange — “might be good for the Republicans.”

Fording said, “If they are little bit scared, it might bring their voters to the polls.” And in a low-turnout election, like the past Tuesday, “it doesn’t take many votes to win.”
TALE OF TWO
GRAD RATES

Alabama releases 2016 high school graduation rates — one federal, one state

Trisha Powell Crain
tcrain@al.com

The high school graduation rates for the class of 2016 have finally been released, confirming state education officials July 11 announcement that the official federal graduation rate is 87.1 percent.

Of the 56,433 students who enrolled as ninth-graders in the fall of 2012, 49,164 of them graduated in 2016.

The 87.1 percent rate is higher than the 85 percent rate announced in April, but lower than the 89.3 percent rate from 2015, which was found to be artificially inflated.

A second graduation rate, using Alabama’s definition, was 89.2 percent.

The calculation for Alabama’s state graduation rate includes 1,202 students who took courses designated as “Essentials” — courses that federal officials said could not be included in the federal rate because the coursework is not fully aligned with Alabama’s college and career ready standards.

This is the first time officials have calculated an Alabama-specific rate.

The rates had been delayed to ensure they were accurate before being posted online Monday afternoon. The rates were placed online in late April but taken down three days later after local school officials questioned their accuracy.

An internal investigation led by former Jefferson County superintendent Phillip Hammonds found a “perfect storm” in the breakdown of communication between state department officials led to the rates not being fully vetted with local officials before being posted online in April.

Alabama’s graduation rates, beginning in 2011, are not reliable, federal officials said in the report they issued in June, and must be noted as such in federal reports.

Alabama graduation rates by group

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<td>All students</td>
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Source: Alabama Department of Education
Strange, Moore in GOP runoff

Doug Jones wins Democratic nomination for the Alabama Senate race

By Kim Chandler
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY — Sen. Luther Strange and former Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore are headed to a Republican primary runoff to fill the U.S. Senate seat previously held by Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

The two men, who represent different factions within the Alabama Republican Party, will face off in a Sept. 26 runoff after neither captured more than 50 percent of the vote.

Strange was forced into a runoff with the firebrand jurist despite an endorsement from President Donald Trump and heavy investment by a super political action committee.

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Election Summary

U.S. Senate Dem - Primary

- Doug Jones 57,124
- Roy Moore 55,193
- Robert Kennedy 9,305
- Michael Hamen 8,183
- Will Boyd 7,220
- Jason Guy 3,124
- Brian McCann 2,841
- Charles Norwood 2,143
- Vane Caldwell 2,046

46 percent 50 percent 9 percent 7 percent 5 percent 2 percent 1 percent 1 percent

U.S. Senate GOP - Primary

- Luther Strange 150,113
- Roy Moore 110,953
- Doug Jones 13,403
- Randy Moore 1,352
- Adam Strange 2,314
- Mary Maxwell 1,148
- Bryan Jones 1,507
- James Davenport 509
- Dan Carter 254
- Joseph Brown 108
- Advances to runoff

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tied to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. The winner will face Democratic nominee Doug Jones in a December election.

Moore, who was twice removed from his duties as chief justice for his stances supporting the public display of the Ten Commandments and against gay marriage. Moore expressed optimism Tuesday after a horseback ride to his polling place, an election day tradition of his.

"We look forward to registering our vote to make this country great again, to make it good again. And we're looking forward to voting and hope we have a good turnout today, because I know there's a lot of motivation out there to change Washington," Moore said.

Strange had emphasized his Trump endorsement but had acknowledged all along that a runoff was likely because of the crowded GOP field.

"The final pitch is: Listen to President Trump. The key is someone who will support him in Washington. He's endorsed me," Strange said Monday as he encouraged Alabamians to get out and vote.

Trump's approval rating has hit a new low of 34 percent, according to Gallup, but strong currents of support still flow through the Republican electorate in Alabama, where the GOP candidates went all-out to attract Trump voters and throw shade on the Washington, D.C. "swamp."

Trump recorded a Monday night robocall urging voters to choose Strange. Strange's campaign quickly pushed the message out in robocalls to try to get voters to the polls in the late summer special election. The primary had low turnout which would favor candidates like Moore, who has a heavy following among the state's evangelical voters but has alienated others with his hard-line religious right stances.

Voting was steady at St. James Methodist Church on the outskirts of Montgomery, where retired teacher Tommy Goggans said he turned out specifically "to keep Roy Moore from getting it." Why? "He's been kicked out of everything he's done."

In the rural community of Gallant in northeast Alabama, Jimmy Wright, 41, showed up early Tuesday to vote for Moore.

Aside from being a neighbor, Wright said, he likes the way the ousted judge conducted his campaign.

"He's the only one who hasn't been talking crap about the others," Wright said. Trump's support for Strange didn't matter to him, he said.

GOP challenger U.S. Rep. Mo Brooks, who finished third, had hammered at Strange's support from McConnell, asking voters to send a message that "our Alabama Senate seat cannot be bought by special interests in Washington D.C."

"Alabama has a chance to send a message, a huge message — not only to Washington D.C. — but the United States of America. We can send a message that we are tired of this do-nothing Senate," Brooks said.
Three visits made this exec a believer in Birmingham

“Birmingham is not on my list of Top 100 Cities to Live.”
That was my wife’s response when I told her about a job in Birmingham, Alabama, which would require relocation from the Philadelphia area. I had lived all over the country and, in theory, had no problem moving ... but to Birmingham, Alabama? Clearly, both of us had impressions of Birmingham, which I now know were off base.

After I accepted the job offer, we immediately made plans to visit and learn more about the “Magic City.”

Thank God for an open mind! The fact is, I would have gone anywhere to work for my CEO, given his amazing foresight and vision, tremendous heart for people and incredible business acumen.

The bonus would be if I liked where I lived. The super bonus would be if my wife did!

After our first trip, we were mildly surprised. After our second trip, we were excitedly optimistic.

By our third trip, we had fallen in love! Who knew Birmingham was so wonderful?

Who knew Birmingham was such a foodie town? Who knew Birmingham was so incredibly beautiful, with its rolling hills and mountains?

Who knew Birmingham had cutting-edge health care, because of the enormously positive influence of UAB?

Who knew Birmingham had an amazing housing market, with an affordable, beautiful and plentiful inventory?

Who knew we could see Chris Rock, Sinbad and Lauryn Hill in Birmingham? Who knew pristine white beaches were a short drive away?

Who knew the shopping was so “cosmopolitan” and the cultural offerings so varied? Who knew the people were so friendly, welcoming and hospitable?

Who knew? Not us.

I guarantee you a lot of people outside of Alabama have no idea what they are missing. Local companies could easily recruit talent from all over the country if Birmingham was not such a well-kept secret.

“Who knew? Not us! I guarantee a lot of people outside of Alabama have no idea what they are missing. Local companies could easily recruit talent from all over the country if Birmingham was not such a well-kept secret.”

The people are amazing. The food is amazing. The breadth of activities is amazing.

I could go on and on as Birmingham has so much to offer.

My wife and I were recently visiting friends at a church in another state. When asked to introduce ourselves, my wife proudly proclaimed,

“As of last month, we are officially Alabamians from Birmingham!”

So much for not being on her list of Top 100 Cities. The bottom line is, we love Birmingham and Birmingham loves us. If only others knew!

Ken Gordon is vice president of sales and marketing for BioGX.
Alabama Power cuts the juice to BCA summer conference

Kyle Whitmire
kwhitmire@al.com

This weekend, elected officials and business interests gather at the Grand Hotel in Point Clear for the Business Council of Alabama’s Government Affairs Conference — an annual expenses-paid weekend soiree where lawmakers enjoy free meals and drinks on lobbyists’ dime.

But one of Alabama’s biggest business interests won’t be there. In an abrupt move, Alabama Power told BCA last week that it will not be taking part in this year’s event.

Alabama Political Reporter first reported the split Wednesday.

Alabama Power did not explain its decision, despite multiple attempts by AL.com to seek comment, but the message it’s sending was received clearly in the state’s political circles. The company is not happy with BCA CEO Billy Canary’s leadership and wants someone else to lead the organization, or it’s cutting off the juice.

Sources familiar with the spat say that tension between the power company and Canary has been building for years. Meanwhile, Canary has failed to execute the business alliance’s agenda in the Alabama Legislature.

This year, BCA had at least three items it failed to deliver: expanding the Alabama Accountability Act, raising gas taxes for road construction and killing a bill that required insurers provide autism therapies for children.

On the autism bill, Canary got crosswise with a handful of Alabama lawmakers who subsequently did not receive invitations to the summer conference. BCA denied that the lawmakers weren’t invited because they supported the bill, but those lawmakers said that’s how they interpreted the slight.

While Alabama Power is one of BCA’s most influential members, the organization’s board is large, packed with smaller business owners and corporate leaders who are close with Canary. Last month, 14 former board chairs and vice chairs signed a letter of support for Canary, in which they, too, denied the lawmakers had been blackballed from the conference because of the autism bill.
Following in father’s footsteps

Greensboro farmer Mary Quitman Holmes is Alabama’s Catfish Farmer of the Year

By Ken Roberts
City Editor

For Mary Quitman Holmes of Greensboro, being a catfish farmer is a part of a family tradition.

“It’s an honor to carry on a legacy that my father started,” said Holmes, who oversees Lawson Catfish Farms. The Perry County farm was originated by Holmes’ father, Reid Lawson.

Holmes was recently named Catfish Farmer of the Year by a nonprofit group that promotes the industry. Holmes is the first woman to earn the title.

Each year, the Jackson, Mississippi-based Catfish Institute names its farmers of the year in Alabama, Mississippi and Arkansas, where the majority of the nation’s catfish farms are located.

“This honor is a great opportunity to give leading producers national recognition for their contributions to our industry, and we are proud to feature these outstanding American farmers in our annual lineup of industry promotions,” said Roger Barlow, president of the Catfish Institute and executive director of Catfish Farmers of America.

The farmers of the year participate in the institute’s advertising campaigns throughout the year, including print advertisements and radio ads during National Catfish Month, which has been held in August each year since 1984. The farmers also participate in events, such as Boston’s Seafood Expo North America, which was held in March. They also have their own brochure to highlight each farmer’s favorite catfish recipe.

In addition to Holmes, Chris and Missy McGlawn of Swiftown, Mississippi, and Glen Fleming of Dumas, Arkansas, earned the Catfish Farmer of the Year honor.

Holmes was born and raised in Hale County and graduated from the University of Alabama with a degree in finance.

Holmes’ father was a banker who decided in the early 1980s to start a small catfish farm in Sawyerville. Lawson later purchased land in Perry County, between Newbern and Uniontown, where he built fish ponds and moved his catfish farming operation there.

After college, Holmes lived in Birmingham, New York and Tuscaloosa, but returned to Greensboro in 2008 to work for Peoples Bank, where she is now vice chairwoman. Along with her banking work, Holmes also began helping her father with the farm’s bookkeeping. Her role with the farm grew and now she is in charge of overseeing the farm’s daily operations.

Today, Lawson Catfish Farms has 350 acres of water and produces about 3 million pounds of catfish annually, with plans to expand the operation with 50 more acres to stock with more catfish in the fall.

“I love working with my family, taking care of my family’s land and providing a quality product for people around the country,” said Holmes, who lives in Greensboro with her husband, William Holmes, and their three children. Holmes’ sister, Amy Cooper also works on the farm, along with manager Menno Clemmer and co-manager Rock Hoskins.

West Alabama has become a hub for catfish farming, with the state’s top catfish producing farms in Hale, Greene, Dallas and Perry counties, according to the Alabama Catfish Producers, a division of the Alabama Farmers Federation.

In 2016, Alabama farmers produced 33 percent of all the catfish in the U.S. with 120 million pounds on 85 farms. Around 1,500 Alabamians work in catfish production or processing.
About 5,000 UA students move in this weekend

Staff report

Students began moving into dorms at the University of Alabama on Friday and will continue unloading Saturday and Sunday.

The phased move-in will be from 8 a.m. – noon and 1–5 p.m. today. On Sunday, students will move in from 1–5 p.m.

About 5,000 students will arrive this weekend ahead of the start of classes on Aug. 23. Last week, around 3,000 students moved in during the early arrival period for pre-approved activities such as sorority recruitment and band practice.

Students are moving into Blount, Bryant, Bryce Lawn, Burke East and West, Friedman, Harris, Highland, Lakeside, Parham, Paty, Presidential I and II, Ridgecrest, Riverside and Tutwiler residential buildings.

Saturday also sees the beginning of the annual Week of Welcome, the series of events meant to help introduce first-year and transfer students to campus.

Saturday at 7 p.m. there will be a showing of the film “La La Land” on the Quad. The event will also include free food, drinks, popcorn, T-shirts, and other giveaways. Sunday, will be “The Amazing Race: UP Edition” from 7–11 p.m. on campus. The event will give students a better understanding of the university using landmarks on campus.
UA begins Week of Welcome

Events are designed to promote unity, friendship

Staff report

The University of Alabama marks the start of the academic semester with a series of events for incoming and returning students, the Week of Welcome.

The activities are designed to promote unity and strength through friendship, according to a UA news release.

Here are some of this year's activities.

- **Saturday, Aug. 19:** Movie on the Quad: The annual event under the stars will take place after move-in to welcome students to their first night at the Capstone. The film will be "LaLa Land." Free food, drinks, popcorn, T-shirts, and other giveaways will be provided.

- **Sunday, Aug. 20:** Amazing Race: UP Edition. This event will give students a better understanding of the university by participating in the "Amazing Race" spinoff activity of monumental landmarks on campus. This event will take place at various locations around campus with its main area being housed in the Ferguson Student Center from 7 to 10 p.m.

- **Monday, Aug. 21:** Yea, Alabama! Kickoff: This event will give students the opportunity to enjoy a variety of food, popsicles and summer activities. The Welcome Back BBQ will take place on the Quad from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

- **Tuesday, Aug. 22:** Immersion Pizza Party: The Immersion Program will host a pizza party for 2,000 students on the Quad from 4 to 6 p.m. This event will feature a DJ, activities and free pizza and drinks.

- **Tuesday, Aug. 22:** Convocation Script A: This event is the annual convocation welcoming the incoming freshmen and transfer students. It will include the Class of 2021's script "A" photo, exclusive T-shirts and other giveaways. Students will go to Bryant-Denny Stadium and take a class photo in the shape of Alabama's trademark script "A." Convocation Script A will be from 6 to 8 p.m. in Bryant-Denny Stadium.

- **Wednesday, Aug. 23 and Thursday, Aug. 24:** Welcome Back Breakfast: On the first day of classes, students will be offered a free breakfast. Crimson Compass volunteers will greet students and answer questions about finding their classes. The Welcome Back Breakfast will take place from 7 to 9 a.m. on both days.

- **Thursday, Aug. 24:** Music Glow Run: University Programs will partner with campus organizations to host a glow in the dark 5K that features music lining the track. Students will have the opportunity to participate in this interactive race in order to learn the importance of physical wellness, as well as facts and statistics about on campus organizations. The Music Glow Run will take place from 7 to 9 p.m. starting at Cyber Hall on the Bryce Campus.

- **Friday, Aug. 25:** ONYX: The annual organization fair from 5 to 9 p.m. on the Ferguson Plaza features representatives from more than 550 student organizations as well as campus and community departments:
Supreme Court justice to speak at UA

Sept. 12 event is open to the public

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor will give the Fall 2017 Albritton Lecture at the University of Alabama School of Law on Sept. 12. The event, which is open to the public, will feature a conversation between Sotomayor, Dean Mark E. Brandon and the lecture's namesake, U.S. District Court Judge W. Harold Albritton III, a 1960 law school graduate and the senior judge for the Middle District of Alabama.

"We are pleased and honored to be able to welcome Justice Sotomayor to the School of Law. Her professional record is stellar and her life's story inspiring," Brandon said in a news release.

The lecture will be in the McMillian Lecture Hall, room 237, at 2 p.m. Registration is unnecessary but seating is limited. Purses, bags, laptops, umbrellas and large jackets will not be allowed in the lecture hall during the talk.

Sotomayor was appointed to the court in 2009 by President Barack Obama. Previously, she was a U.S. district court judge in the Southern District of New York and served on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

Sotomayor will be the 12th supreme court justice to give the lecture since its founding in 1996. Most recently, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan gave the lecture in 2013.

"This unique lecture series has been limited to Supreme Court justices and chief justices, as well as chief justices of foreign nations, to give our students and faculty direct exposure to discussions of the judicial process by those involved at the highest levels," Albritton said.
Panel has yet to meet

Group will consider requests to remove Confederate monuments

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The members of a newly appointed committee tasked with considering waivers to a state law that bans tampering or the removal of Confederate monuments and other historic structures are still considering dates for their first meeting.

The Committee on Alabama Monument Protection is required by the law passed this spring to hold its first meeting before Oct. 1. The 11-member committee was appointed by Gov. Kay Ivey, Senate President Pro Tempore Del Marsh and House Speaker Mac McCutcheon.

Ivey appointed Morgan County Commissioner Randy Vest, Montgomery Mayor Todd Strange, Opelika Mayor Gary Fuller, Judson Edwards and Katherine Lynn. Marsh appointed state Sen. Gerald

A memorial to Confederate soldiers from the University of Alabama sits Thursday in front of the Amelia Gayle Gergas Library on the Tuscaloosa campus. The new Memorial Protection Act bans tampering or the removal of Confederate monuments and other historic structures. [STAFF PHOTO/GARY COSBY JR.]

See PANEL, A5
PANEL

Continued from A1


The committee members are being polled about possible dates for their first meeting, Allen said Thursday. The first meeting will likely include choosing officers, said Allen, who was the law's sponsor in the Legislature.

"Certainly, we hope to be setting that very shortly," Allen said.

Criticism of Confederate monuments has been intensifying since Saturday, when a rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, turned violent after white nationalists opposed to the city's plan to remove a statue of Gen. Robert E. Lee clashed with counter-protesters.

Alabama's new law prohibits the relocation, removal, alteration, renaming or disturbance of architecturally significant buildings, memorial buildings and streets or monuments on public property that have been in place for 40 or more years. It allows for changes to monuments, buildings or streets that have been in place for at least 20 years but fewer than 40 years through a waiver process overseen by the committee.

Public entities that make changes to buildings, streets or monuments in violation of the law can be fined $25,000 for each violation.

Proponents of the law argued it is meant to protect the state's history while critics counter its intent was to preserve Confederate monuments in the face of ongoing pressure to remove symbols of the Confederacy from public spaces across the Southeast.

As the committee continues preparations for its first meeting, a legal battle over monuments has already begun under the new law.

Alabama's Attorney General Steve Marshall is suing the city of Birmingham and its mayor for surrounding a Confederate monument in a downtown park with a barrier of plywood panels. Marshall's office argued that the covering violates the law by altering or disturbing the monument while the city countered the shroud does not touch the monument and is legal.

Allen praised the attorney general's action Wednesday, adding, if the city wants to alter the monument, it should apply for a waiver.

Ambiguity in the definitions and waiver process has also been a point of criticism about the law.

Allen said previously the committee would be able to help address questions about the application and interpretation of the law. The committee has the authority to adopt rules to help implement the act including but not limited to further defining architecturally significant buildings.

Reach Ed Enoch at ed.enoch@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0209.
City to propose rules for restaurants, bars

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

Developers and business owners and advocates say regulatory changes proposed for new downtown bars and restaurants could impede investment in the heart of the city.

But without them, downtown residents say, their neighborhoods are being overrun with scofflaws and miscreants.

“No one wants to open a bar next to residences that cause a lot of problems,” said Phil Weaver, a longtime investor in downtown Tuscaloosa and its surrounding edges. “We’re trying to find some middle ground that makes everyone happy.”

At issue are the ongoing efforts of Tuscaloosa city officials to craft a list of definitions to legally define bars, restaurants and combinations thereof. Of particular concern is gastropubs, the name given to restaurants that, at some point during the night, convert to a more bar-like atmosphere.

From this has sprung a push to create barriers, or buffer zones, around neighborhoods to prevent these bars, restaurants and gastropubs with lively nightlife from encroaching upon family-friendly atmospheres.

But this could have a chilling effect on investment, according to pro-business advocates and the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama. They claim these rules could potentially create an unfair playing field as new bars and taverns would have to abide by rules their pre-existing competitors do not.

Any rule adopted by the City Council, which is again expected to revisit these regulations on Tuesday, would apply citywide but not to any business now in operation, city officials have said.

They could affect Weaver, however. He owns the now-vacant Alagasco building, located less than a block from Queen City Avenue on University Boulevard and is looking to fill it with what amounts to a gastropub.

Should the council adopt rules regulating how a prospective tenant can operate there, Weaver said it’s going to hamper his ability to lure in a new business and he questions the harm in a restaurant that closes its kitchen at 10 p.m. to allow a solo singer to play until midnight or so.

“It will hurt some of these new restaurants,” Weaver said, “and it hurts our ability to recruit a good restaurant if they can’t utilize their facility to the fullest.

“Hopefully, we find some kind of compromise.”

Historic district residents, however, want to ensure any proposed rules protect them from the onslaught of drunken college students who trample through their streets while attempting to stumble home.

See DIVIDE, A5

See next page
Numerous residents have told of having property broken or destroyed or waking to the sounds of an inebriated stranger banging on doors in an effort to get "home," with the knocker being confused about where they are.

Used condoms have been found in front yards. Bushes, trees and the sides of homes have been used as makeshift urinals.

And, on more than one occasion, historic district homeowners have awakened to find unwanted visitors sleeping in their homes or on their porches.

Kelly Fitts is president of the Original City Association, a volunteer group organized to represent and advocate for historic district residents in and near downtown.

She acknowledges that these stories can cut both ways. In a sense, they can serve as a black mark on their neighborhoods.

"But if we don't say anything," she said, "no one pays attention."

Fitts, an Audobon Place resident since 1994, is advocating for a 250-foot buffer zone between single-family homes and bars, taverns and gastropubs. That, she said, would help keep neighborhoods like hers from being further overrun.

She said the problems with these students began after the University of Alabama began acquiring property on the Strip, effectively sending bars into the downtown area, and the 2009 relocation of Innisfree Irish Pub from Greensboro Avenue to its current location at University Boulevard and 20th Avenue.

This put the restaurant, which is more like a popular bar for the university's steady increase of college students — most of whom are from out-of-state — near the historic neighborhoods. In turn, this allowed its patrons to begin the chaos these residents now experience.

"The closer they are to us, the worse it seems to be," Fitts said.

Efforts to reach an Innisfree representative for comment were unsuccessful.

While Fitts said she would prefer to see bars like Innisfree shut down, the main goal for her and historic district residents is to keep new ones from popping up within proximity to their homes.

"The late-night activity creates noise and traffic and doors slamming and people yelling and those kinds of things," she said. "That's just not what you want next to a neighborhood."

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
Tide trainer’s invention makes debut in hometown

By Carlton D. White
Marietta Daily Journal

KENNESAW, Ga. — North Cobb’s football team will debut a collapsible medical tent along the sidelines this season, and it has one of its own graduates to thank for it.

Dubbed the SidelinER, the 71.5-square foot tent is the brainchild of Jeff Allen, who is the head athletic trainer at Alabama and a 1989 graduate of North Cobb.

The tent, which was unveiled for the first time during Alabama’s game against Middle Tennessee State on Sept. 12, 2015, allows athletic training staff and medical personnel to examine injured athletes privately on the sidelines during games. It can be put up in 5 seconds around an examination table, and taken down just as quickly when the training staff is done testing the athlete.

Since its inception, more than 70 colleges and high school teams have purchased the device, and this season, the National Football League officially endorsed the product and will require every team to have one on its sideline during games.

Allen, who played offensive line for the Warriors under coach Robert Lassiter, has been amazed by SidelinER’s success.

“I never thought it would do as well as it’s done,” Allen said. “It’s pretty remarkable. Everybody sees value in it providing privacy for the doctor or trainer and the athlete. I always describe it like this to people — ‘imagine if you go to the doctor, and he or she gives you an examination right in the waiting room in front of a bunch of other people?’ How would that make you feel?

‘Now, take that image, and suppose it’s you in front of tens of thousands of people in a stadium.’ That’s what these
athletes go through. But, you put them in a private setting, and it's different. Athletes are calmer and more forthcoming with information because they don't have as many eyes on them. It's really changed the quality of the evaluation."

Allen, 46, got involved in athletic training while recovering from an ACL injury he sustained before his senior season in football at North Cobb. He worked as a student athletic trainer as an undergraduate at Georgia Southern before obtaining his master's degree from Valdosta State. Allen is entering his 11th season at Alabama.

"I saw a need and got with the dean of the College of Engineering at Alabama, Chuck Karr, and he put some students on it as a senior project to develop a prototype," Allen said.

Alabama class of 2015 engineering students Jared Cassity and Patrick Powell, whom Allen would later go into business with to market the SidelinER, are co-developers of the project.

"I'll never forget when I first saw it. I said this was going to work. It had so much potential," Allen said. "Carr said they'd patent it, and when people saw it on TV, teams just started calling for it."

Allen said there have been four to five subtle changes to the SidelinER since the initial prototype, but "the idea is no different from the very first time we used it." Smaller versions are in the works, and Allen and his team are trying to find ways to make it even more portable. It fits in a long bag and weighs roughly 70 pounds.

"I think it's pretty cool," North Cobb coach Shane Queen said. "You can put the kids inside and there's less distraction. Anything we can do to provide a safer environment for our players is a benefit."
Former Alabama player, partner open new restaurant

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

Tuscaloosa's latest sushi restaurant carries the name of a two-time national champion.

Dubbed "Ajian," the spelling is an intentional nod to AJ McCarron, an investor and partner in the new restaurant built around the fast-casual model of building your own sushi roll.

In fact, its logo is even McCarron's first name, only turned on its side to resemble a character in the Japanese alphabet.

Ajian opened at 1914 University Blvd., across the street from Innisfree Irish Pub and Hooligan's, on Tuesday.

"The trend is, more and more consumers are interested in fast-casual because time is our greatest asset," said Ajian co-owner Pete Zimmer. "The fast-casual sushi has popped up in a couple of places and we saw an opportunity to expand it into a couple of different markets."

Zimmer explains the concept simply -- if someone likes a certain meat or vegetable outside of a sushi roll, then they'll like it inside.

See SUSHI, B3

Ajian

What: A build-your-own sushi roll restaurant affiliated with former Alabama quarterback AJ McCarron

Where: 1914 University Blvd.

Hours: 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday-Wednesday; and 11 a.m. until about 1 or 2 a.m. Thursday-Saturday

Prices: $7-$8 per roll, depending on the protein choice. A second protein can be added for $2 more.

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At the time, Zimmer was the owner of Smoq, a Cincinnati-based barbecue restaurant. Zimmer took over Smoq after it was offered to him by a food supplier that took control of it when the prior owners couldn’t pay their bills.

Zimmer said he wasn’t familiar with barbecue, so he took a tour through Memphis, Tennessee, and Mississippi that led him to begin adding Southern-style offerings to Smoq’s menu.

With his involvement in Smoq, the restaurant became a favorite of the Cincinnati Bengals, with several players regularly stopping by, Zimmer said.

And when Bengals management decided to hold a Friday lunch to build camaraderie among the players, Smoq was one of the first restaurants it turned to.

“We were happy to be a big part of that concept and that growth with the Bengals,” Zimmer said.

It was through Smoq that Zimmer came to know McCarron, who quarter-backed the University of Alabama’s back-to-back BCS national championship teams and was drafted by the Bengal in the fifth round of the 2014 NFL Draft.

Zimmer also knew Michael Johnson, a Selma native who played college football at Georgia Tech and is now a defensive end for the Bengals. Zimmer said he approached Johnson about his idea of opening a restaurant in Tuscaloosa and Johnson suggested McCarron’s involvement could make it instantly popular.

Within days, Zimmer, McCarron and Johnson had agreed to partner up.

“We were working on the concept for two years,” Zimmer said.

And now, Ajian is a reality.

As for the logo, Zimmer said he’d settled on one with AJ’s first name featured prominently and a sushi roll that resembled a football.

But a friend encouraged him to look beyond Tuscaloosa and paid for some different approaches to the logo. It was from these that Zimmer found the current logo that he anticipates could be used in markets outside Alabama.

Zimmer said he’s planning an official grand opening during the Bengals’ bye week in October, the week the Crimson Tide square off against the Arkansas Razorbacks in Bryant-Denny Stadium.

If all goes according to plan, McCarron and Johnson will be in town to sign autographs and take photos with fans and restaurant-goers.

“Once the season is over, he’ll be down here when he’s around,” Zimmer said of McCarron. “He’s obviously a big fan of the city and likes to spend time here.

“But the ultimate goal of this place is to open many of these stores.”

Reach Jason Morton at jason.morton@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0200.
Stallings suffers minor stroke

Former Alabama coach was on his way to speaking engagement

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

Former Alabama football coach Gene Stallings suffered a stroke Monday morning at the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport.

Stallings was headed to Huntsville to speak with former Auburn coach Pat Dye at an event organized by The Legendary Coaches. Both coaches were scheduled to participate in an event organized by the company. The Legendary Coaches confirmed the news on its Facebook page and said Stallings’ speaking events in Alabama would be rescheduled.

Stallings is 82. He suffered a minor stroke earlier this summer before a speaking engagement in Montgomery.

Stallings was head coach at Alabama from 1990-96. He led Alabama to the 1992 national championship and went 70-16-1 in seven seasons. He now lives in Paris, Texas.

Stallings is a member of the “Junction Boys,” the first team at Texas A&M coached by Paul W. “Bear” Bryant at Texas A&M in 1954. His coaching career began as an assistant at Alabama under Bryant in 1958, until he was named head coach.

See STALLINGS, B2

Former Alabama Crimson Tide coach Gene Stallings signs autographs at the newly opened Dick's Sporting Goods in Tuscaloosa on Sept. 13, 2015. Stallings suffered a minor stroke Monday after also having one in May. [STAFF FILE PHOTO]

STALLINGS

Continued from B1

of the Aggies in 1965. He worked in the NFL as an assistant and head coach from 1972-89 before arriving at Alabama.

Stallings became an active member in the Tuscaloosa community during his coaching tenure, working as a prominent supporter of the Rise School at UA. Stallings’ son, Johnny, was born with Down syndrome. Rise serves young children with disabilities. Its facility on campus is named The Stallings Center.
UAB Hospital is best in Alabama, magazine’s rankings say

10 of its specialties are rated among top 50 in the U.S.

Erin Edgemon
edgemon@al.com

UAB Hospital is the best hospital in Alabama, and 10 of its medical specialties rank in the top 50 in the nation, according to the 2017-2018 Best Hospitals ranking from U.S. News & World Report.

“We are pleased that UAB Hospital continues to be recognized for providing world-class health care to the residents of our state, region and nation,” said Health System CEO Will Fernaniy. “The consistent excellence of our faculty and staff is a reassuring constant during times of change and uncertainty in our country’s health care system. We are proud of our national rankings, and proud to be acknowledged as Alabama’s best hospital.”

Huntsville Hospital was named second-best in the state. None of the hospital’s medical specialties ranked nationally, but eight adult procedures were listed as “high performing.”

U.S. News & World Report ranked the following UAB Hospital specialties in the top 50: rheumatology (10), nephrology (14), pulmonology (17), urology (20), diabetes and endocrinology (21), gynecology (26), cardiology and heart surgery (30), neurology and neurosurgery (34), geriatrics (47), and ear, nose and throat (50).

Four other specialties listed as “high-performing” at UAB: orthopedics, cancer, rehabilitation and gastroenterology/GI surgery.

Eight UAB programs moved up in the rankings. Geriatrics earned a top 50 for the first time, while urology, pulmonology, cardiology, and diabetes and endocrinology had the largest jumps. Gastroenterology/GI surgery moved into the high-performing category.


According to the magazine’s published methodology, the ranking for 12 of the categories is based on reputation, mortality, patient safety, and a mix of care-related factors such as nursing and patient services. The top hospitals in each of these specialties with the highest scores are listed. Rankings for ophthalmology, psychiatry, rehabilitation and rheumatology are based strictly on reputational scores.
UAH professor discusses modern political science and international relationships

By: Christine Mitchell

Politics is often a word that conjures either passionate opinions or indifference.

In this week’s leadership perspectives interview, WHNT News 19’s Steve Johnson and political science professor Dr. Kathy Hawk from the University of Alabama in Huntsville discuss some of the interesting things going on in the world’s current political climate.

We asked her if it’s hard these days to explain what political science actually means.

The world is a complicated place. On one hand, we're in the middle of an ongoing argument with Russia, but at the same time, we work with Russia in our space program. Dr. Hawk talks about how international relations are complicated.
Town sworn in as US attorney for Alabama’s northern district

By: Associated Press

Alabama has a new U.S. Attorney working in the Northern District.

Jay E. Town began his new role last week after taking his oath of office Friday from Chief U.S. District Judge Karon O. Bowdre.

Town, a former judge advocate in the U.S. Marine Corps, previously served as a senior prosecutor in the Madison County District Attorney’s Office in Huntsville. He’s also taught as an adjunct professor at the University of Alabama-Huntsville in the Department of Political Science with the curriculum focused on executive war powers and the Geneva Conventions.

Town earned a bachelor’s degree in Government & International Relations from the University of Notre Dame in 1995 and received his Juris Doctor from Seton Hall University School of Law in 1998.
Information manager honored by materiel enterprise

By: Kari Hawkins

Managing computer software systems and applications for the Aviation and Missile Command is normally a behind-the-scenes job for information technology specialists.

But thanks to an Army Materiel Command award received by AMCOM IT portfolio manager and team lead Lisa Hall, the command’s Chief Information Office is getting some spotlight attention.

Hall has been named as one of the recipients of the 2016 Louis Dellamonica Award for AMC Outstanding Personnel of the Year. The annual award recognizes AMC employees whose work accomplishments have significantly contributed to AMC’s mission and overarching goals and objectives. Hall was among 11 employees in the AMC worldwide enterprise chosen for the award. She is the first AMCOM employee to win it since 2013.

“It feels good to know people appreciate what you do. I am really honored that what I do doesn’t go unnoticed,” Hall said of the award. “But without the team I work with, this award would not have happened.”

She was nominated for the Dellamonica Award by her supervisor, Joan McDonald, chief of the Enterprise Architecture Services Division.

“When you have an employee who is exemplary, this is a great way to let them know just how much you appreciate them,” McDonald said.

“Ms. Hall has a highly complex and stressful job, however, when working with her you would never know it. She handles every situation with professionalism and tactfulness, and makes a positive impression on everyone she comes in contact with. Her job requires a meticulous mind with a knack for seeing issues, resolving them and implementing improvements on a daily basis. She is able to take complex guidance and articulate it in such a manner that the everyday employee understands it and can implement the guidance with ease.”

Hall and her team of three IT specialists oversee requirements for a far-reaching network of computer systems and applications that support the AMCOM mission, including IT business systems that identify and mitigate maintenance related materials and products. They also oversee computer systems that provide information on technical data packages, ammunition tracking, missile and aviation management tracking, aircraft maintenance and electronic repair manuals.

“We have 91 IT investments in the portfolio at AMCOM, to include Corpus Christi Army Depot, Letterkenny Army Depot and the Aviation Center Logistics Command at Fort Rucker,” Hall said.

“We have to make sure those systems and applications meet government regulations and requirements. Without some of these systems, people couldn’t do their job.”
The systems managed by Hall and her team represent an annual budget of $113 million and involve system owners from 20 AMCOM organizations.

Besides ensuring these systems meet requirements, Hall’s team processes approvals for IT investment waivers to obtain funding approvals. Last year they processed 350 waivers representing about $47 million.

Hall and her team recently had an IT portfolio review with system owners and the AMCOM Chief of Staff Col. Shawn Prickett to understand the significance of each system/application to AMCOM’s mission.

“The Army is pushing portfolio reductions. We’ve reduced the IT portfolio quite a bit during the past five years, while still providing support to the mission,” Hall said. “These IT systems are important, especially with manpower reductions and the need to do more with less. Shutting down some of these systems could have a huge impact. You can’t complete the mission without IT.”

Hall, who has a bachelor’s in management information systems from the University of Alabama in Huntsville, began her IT career at AMCOM seven years ago when she was provided the opportunity of managing multiple IT projects along with career progression. Before that she worked for 18 years as an IT contractor supporting NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center.

Even though her focus is technical, Hall gets the most satisfaction from working with her team and interacting with AMCOM employees to provide needed support.

“Every day is interesting,” she said. “And it can be really challenging. We have to achieve a balance between reducing the portfolio and providing justifications to keep systems or applications to support AMCOM’s mission.”

A positive attitude, attention to detail and ability to work with others are all essential to being successful, Hall said. Branching out and taking on additional responsibilities are always worthwhile, she said, adding that her experience in 2016 as a student in AMCOM’s Leader Investment for Tomorrow program has prepared her to step into higher level leadership positions within AMCOM.

“I want to be able to make a difference and be a motivator, and create a work environment where people love their job,” Hall said. “My supervisor, Joan McDonald, is like that. She is very motivating and a great person to work for. I would like to emulate that in my own career.”

At home, Hall enjoys spending time with her husband and two sons. Her 17-year-old son has the family involved in the Hall Family Light Show, which is a popular Hampton Cove destination every holiday season. He has also gotten his mom involved in the Huntsville High School’s Theater Booster Club, where she serves as its vice president.
Optics Lab engineer sets sights on accuracy

By: Christy Barnett

Growing up in a small town in Northwest Alabama, Daniel Thompson dreamed of becoming an astronaut. In high school, he realized engineering may be the way to go since he excelled in math and physics, and there seemed to be plenty of engineering jobs in Huntsville and on Redstone Arsenal.

Majoring in electrical engineering at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, Thompson enrolled in the co-op program at the Redstone Test Center in 2011. During that time he focused on working with optics, spending one semester working at the center and the other focusing on completing his degree. Upon graduation in 2014, Thompson was hired full time at the center. After a few positions in different test divisions, he took over the Optics Lab in 2015.

“This lab has the capability to take mirrors, lenses and any other optical components and run a series of tests on them to determine a wide range of optical properties that might be useful to know, if something’s up to spec or not,” Thompson explained, “This lab is also useful for in-house testing. If we buy a lens or filter from a company we can test it for ourselves, to determine how accurate they were in what they sold us.”

The Optics Lab at Redstone Test Center offers services so customers don’t have to ship test items elsewhere to ensure lenses and mirrors match the correct specifications. The tools in the lab can accurately measure optical components in lasers and designators, and components in sensors and cameras. The Optics Lab can provide one stop shopping for a test project. For instance, a laser designator is used to pinpoint the accuracy of a missile, such as Hellfire. The Optics Lab can measure components of the designator in house and then the missile can be tested elsewhere at the center.

A typical day for Thompson can include meticulous testing for a single lens, using a variety of measurements, or simple testing that can be completed in a matter of hours.

“What we can do in the Optics Lab includes mapping the surface of an optic, checking for defects or irregularities, checking for the amount of transmission through something, or the amount of reflectance you’re getting back from something, or determining the focal length, the back focal length, or the radius of curvature,” he said.

Running his own lab is quite an accomplishment for Thompson, who recently turned 27. While he has a long career ahead, he said this might just be described as his dream job. “I get to work with lasers every day in my own lab, so yeah, I guess you could say this is pretty much a dream job for me.”
Survey Shows Senior Homes Aren’t Taking Telehealth Seriously

By: Eric Wicklund

A recent survey of vendor preferences among senior living providers finds that they aren’t using telehealth all that much – but they are taking a liking to mHealth.

The survey by Ziegler indicates less than 10 percent of the 143 chief financial officers of single and multi-site senior living facilities are using a telehealth platform to connect staff and patients to outside healthcare services for video visits or consults. About a quarter of those are partnering with local health systems, while the rest are using a commercial vendor like Honeywell Life Care Solutions, Teladoc or MDLive.

Nearly a quarter of the respondents, however, are using remote monitoring technologies like wearables and sensors to track patients and patient movement.

The potential is there for growth. The Ziegler survey finds that almost 94 percent contract with outside physicians, while 83 percent outsource for rehabilitation or therapy services.

While telehealth and mHealth solutions are often associated with helping seniors remain in their homes longer and out of hospitals and senior living facilities, a growing number of those facilities are using that technology to improve their operation and the clinical outcomes of their residents.

This might include a telehealth link to a local health system for primary care and off-hours services, mHealth solutions that track patient movements (especially those with cognitive issues like Alzheimer’s) or tablets, kiosks and even robots that give residents and staff easy access to healthcare information.

At the University of Alabama Huntsville, researchers are collaborating with Huntsville’s Center for Aging and the UAH’s College of Nursing to test remote monitoring solutions that can help facility nurses keep tabs on their most fragile patients.

"In the case of strokes, you have changes in both speed and stability," said Dr. Emil Jovanov, director of UAH's Real-Time Physiological Monitoring Lab, which is testing mHealth apps that can help caregivers track minute changes in patients that may be indicative of a stroke. "Very often, a sequence of small strokes signals that a big stroke is coming. If you detect early the effects of the smaller strokes, then the physician may be able to prevent the big stroke."

At the University of Missouri, meanwhile, researchers are testing new technology in Tiger Place, the university’s own independent living community. The goal is not only to find solutions that allow seniors to stay in their own homes, but to improve remote monitoring programs in assisted and independent living facilities.

“In-home sensors have the ability to capture early signs of health changes before older adults recognize problems themselves,” Marjorie Skubic, a professor of electrical and computer

See next page
engineering in the MU College of Engineering and director of MU’s Center for Eldercare and Rehabilitation Technology, said in a 2016 press release announcing MU’s participation in two National Science Foundation-funded mHealth projects involving radar-embedded sensors. “The radar enhances our ability to monitor walking speed and determine if a senior has a fall risk; the bed sensors provide data on heart rate, respiration rate, and overall cardiac activity when a senior is sleeping. Both sensors are non-invasive and don’t require seniors to wear monitoring devices.”

California-based OhmniLabs, meanwhile, is putting its zero-touch robots into senior living facilities and even private homes through partnerships with Home Care Assistance of North America (HCA), a national health and homecare provider, and California senior care facilities like The Heritage Pointe in Walnut Creek and Avenidas in Palo Alto.

“We started with the idea of creating an affordable robot for the home environment,” company co-founder and CEO Thuc Vu said. “What we saw in (elder care) was that there were no other products like ours.”

One obstacle facing senior living facilities is that payers generally don’t reimburse for remote monitoring, leaving facility managers to come up with their own ROI on the technology – either through a business arrangement with the telehealth or mHealth vendor or after studying how the technology cuts healthcare costs.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services is also getting in on the act. Recognizing that post-acute care services in skilled nursing facilities account for more than $1 billion in healthcare expenses each year, CMS recently announced a project in Florida to test how a telehealth platform could reduce those costs in three such SNFs.

“Studies show that approximately 60 [percent to] 70 percent of all nursing home transfers to the hospital are unnecessary,” said John Whitman, executive director at Pennsylvania-based TRECS Institute, which is coordinating the study. “Sending a vulnerable senior to the hospital only increases their exposure to a wide range of other proven, adverse effects.”
Alabama readying for solar eclipse

By: Staff

Alabamians from the Tennessee Valley to the coast are getting ready to view the solar eclipse on Monday.

The area of totality is north and east of Alabama along a line extending from Nashville, Tennessee to Columbia, South Carolina. But midday skies will still darken across much of the state.

Stores in northern Alabama are selling thousands of protective glasses to view the sun, and the University of Alabama in Huntsville has an eclipse-watching party. The McWane Science Center in Birmingham is having a viewing party atop its parking deck.

Near Mobile, about 900 students at Saraland Elementary School will watch the eclipse on television after officials canceled plans to let them watch outdoors. At least two state school systems are dismissing early since they couldn't provide glasses to students.
2017 solar eclipse: What is NASA's plan to share it?

By: Lee Roop

What is NASA doing for the eclipse across America? Everything it can think of, apparently. The space agency is deploying gear, scientists and experts across the country to study the eclipse and share it with the public.

The serious science focuses on observations of the sun, moon and Earth from balloons and ground-observing stations. A full breakdown can be seen here.

The agency will also host a multi-hour broadcast on its website Monday, August 21, beginning in Charleston, S.C. Additional video will come from Salem, Ore.; Idaho Falls, ID; Beatrice, Neb.; Jefferson City, Mo.; Carbondale, Ill.; Hopkinsville, Ky; and Clarksville, Tenn.

Experts from Alabama's Marshall Space Flight Center will be at the Kentucky and Tennessee sites. Hopkinsville is being called "Eclipseville," because it is the point of greatest eclipse. Planetary scientist Dr. Renee Weber and other experts will be broadcasting from Orchardale Farms, a working farm with open acreage and elevated viewing.

In Clarksville, Marshall solar astronomer Dr. Mitzi Adams and other experts will be working with Austin Peay University to educate students from the U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville, the University of Alabama in Huntsville and other schools.

NASA experts will also be at:

The Adventure Science Center in Nashville
St. Louis Science Center in Missouri
Total Eclipse Music Festival in Adams, Tenn.
Clingmans Dome in the Smoky Mountain National Park
Volunteer State Community College in Gallatin, Tenn.
The University of Tennessee Space Institute in Tullahoma, Tenn.

"It's going to be a spectacular event," said Marshall Chief Scientist James Spann. "We'll be sharing our research and work with people and letting them know how to safely view the eclipse, not only at the events in the path of totality, but also worldwide online and on NASA Television. Excited doesn't begin to describe how our team feels right now. It truly will be breath-taking, and we can't wait."
Logan Scott’s versatility as both a blocker and pass-catcher makes him a valuable asset

Drew Champlin  dchamplin@al.com

The health of tight end Logan Scott’s left knee has been closely monitored this month, but all signs point to him being ready for the Sept. 2 season opener. The Blazers lost two tight ends for the season on the third day of practice, but the 6-foot-2, 240-pound Scott came out of spring as the starter. Scott came to UAB from Jones County Junior College for spring practice and won the starting job despite an injured knee. Scott had meniscus surgery after spring ball and has participated in some, but not all, preseason practices.

“He’s working his way back into full speed, but he’s just solid, comes to work every day, smart, doesn’t say two words,” UAB head coach Bill Clark said. “I’ll be glad to get him back full speed. He’s doing well.”

Scott came to a UAB camp last summer and caught the eye of Blazer coaches. The Hattiesburg, Mississippi, native wasn’t feeling the love from his home school and signed with UAB. That’s why Scott is looking forward to the Oct. 28 game at Southern Miss.

“They recruited me on and off,” Scott said. “There were certain circumstances that took place, and this was the best place for me.”

Scott said USM was deep at the tight end position.

“I’m looking forward to that game,” he said. “I’ll have a lot of family there, and I have to have a big game that day.”

But currently, UAB just wants him fully healthy.

“It really flared up on him at the end of spring,” Clark said. “He fought through it in the spring game and we cleaned it up. We’re easing him back in to get that knee stronger and healthier.”

With Thair Blakes and Skylor Clinton injured, UAB turned to redshirt freshman Hayden Pittman to handle many first team reps. But Scott’s versatility will be key for an offense that likes to use the tight end.

“He’s the in-between guy that you want,” Clark said. “He’s not a speedster, but he’s got good speed, really good hands and he’s a good blocker.”

Scott’s 4-yard touchdown reception on a fake field goal as a senior at Oak Grove High School gave his team a 14-7 state championship. He capped his high school career off playing for NFL Hall of Fame quarterback Brett Favre, who was the school’s offensive coordinator.

“It was pretty cool,” Scott said. “He knew every defense out there. He’d tell you exactly what to do and how to do it to get open. He did a really good job, just able to pick apart the defense. Our offense was pretty stout.”

Scott was able to get past the fact he was playing for a legend.

“The thing with Brett, it wasn’t really ever like that,” Scott said. “There were a few who were star-struck, but he was really down to earth and he just wanted to get you better.”

“He’s working his way back into full speed, but he’s just solid, comes to work every day, smart, doesn’t say two words. I’ll be glad to get him back full speed. He’s doing well.”

UAB head coach Bill Clark
PLAYMAKER OR PRETENDER?

OC Les Koenning has expectations of his players

Drew Champlin
dchamplin@al.com

UAB offensive coordinator Les Koenning has one simple message for his players.

"You're either a playmaker or a pretender," Koenning said. "Which one are you? If you're a playmaker, you'll get the ball. If you're a pretender, you're probably not going to get on the field."

This comes off UAB's first scrimmage on Saturday with not much time to recover before its second. UAB will have another scrimmage on Thursday.

"One of the things you can't do is beat yourself," Koenning said. "That's the first way you win. You can't turn the ball over, jump offsides, have bad snaps. That's where it starts."

But Koenning feels like UAB has plenty of playmakers at the receiver spot. Collin Lisa returned from Buffalo after playing with UAB in 2014. UAB got Ronnie Turner and Andre Wilson healthy and added Brock McCoin and Justin Walker this fall. Xavier Ubosi, Jonathan Haden, Sederian Copeland, Demetrius Davis and others are working at the receiver spots.

"I'm very pleased with what we have," Koenning said. "I won't know until we get on the field (Sept. 2 against Alabama A&M). When we scrimmaged, some guys stepped up and did some good things, but that's one scrimmage. You've got to do it every day.

"It's a tough job. You can't just show up for 30 minutes. You better be there for the whole game."

Koenning said he's been pleased with quarterbacks A.J. Erdely and Tyler Johnston. Erdely said the tempo was good in Saturday's scrimmage.

Erdely said he's also noticed his receivers improve.

"They're more comfortable with the offense," Erdely said. "A lot of them were new in the spring, not really knowing the plays. Once you get the mental part of it, knowing what the plays are and more confident, your true playmaking abilities come out."

The offensive line has been a constant for UAB this preseason with consistency. The line, from left to right, looks to be James Davis, Chris Schleuger, Lee Dufoeur, Malique Johnson and Justice Powers, while Richard Cook also is pushing for a starting spot.

"That's probably been our most improved position," Koenning said. "Offensive line coach Troy (Clark)'s done a great job. He's molded a bunch of young men and put them together. We're pretty decent up there. They've kept the quarterback clean in passing situations and they've come off the ball in run situations."

"I'm very pleased with what we have. I won't know until we get on the field (Sept. 2 against Alabama A&M)."

Les Koenning, UAB offensive coordinator

RODDY WHITE AMONG 2017 UAB HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

Roddy White is the best player to ever wear a UAB football uniform, and he will be a part of the 2017 UAB Athletics Hall of Fame Class.

White, who played at UAB from 2001 to 2004 before a decade-long NFL career with the Atlanta Falcons, is one of five inductees. White was a four-time NFL Pro Bowler. White ranks among the best in school history in several categories, including the No. 2 mark in career touchdowns (26), total receiving yardage in a single game (253 at Tulane, 2004), and career yards per reception (19.09). White finished third overall in career receptions with 163.

Other inductees are Daniel Gaitan of men's soccer (1979-80), Deanna Jackson of women's soccer (1998-2002), Jerome Mincy of men's basketball (1982-86) and Mirela Vladulescu Booker of women's tennis (1997-2001). The class will officially be inducted into the Hall of Fame on Friday, Oct. 13. UAB hosts Middle Tennessee the next day at Legion Field.

— Drew Champlin
All-he-can-eat

DE Stacy Keely struggles to pack the pounds onto 6-foot-7 frame

Drew Champlin  dchamplin@aol.com

UAB offensive lineman Malique Johnson can only laugh and roll his eyes when he hears teammate Stacy Keely complaining about having to eat too much.

Johnson, UAB’s projected starting right guard, could eat all day if he wanted. But at 6-foot-3 and 320 pounds, UAB coaches don’t want him getting heavier.

It’s the exact opposite for Keely, who has a chance to start at defensive end. Keely and Johnson were teammates at Iowa Western Community College before coming to UAB in the summer of 2016.

Keely has upped his weight to 240 pounds. It’s not the 280 that head coach Bill Clark would like to see on his 6-foot-7 frame, but it’s still a big jump.

“You should have seen him at Iowa Western,” Johnson said. “He’d be walking around and at Iowa Western and he was almost 190 (pounds). You’d see him walking around with a bag full of food and he’d have to eat, eat, eat.

“He would get tired of eating, but you have to get on him because he has to gain the weight.”

Keely, who was once a receiver and tight end, understands the challenges. He’s asked to eat six meals a day, take 9,000 to 10,000 calories and still keep in good shape where he can make it through practice and one of strength and conditioning coach Lyle Henley’s offseason workouts.

“It’s been tough,” Keely said. “There’s been times where I didn’t want to eat but I know I have to put food in my body. There’s been times I’ve been eating to the point where I’m throwing up because I know that every day I put weight on, it’s money in the long run.”

Keely practiced at around 200 pounds last fall, he said. He said coaches give him leeway for the most part on what he chooses to eat.

“It’s more of me being not hungry and having to eat that stuff,” Keely said. “That’s when it starts getting tough because when I’m not hungry, everything just looks nasty and not appealing and you’ve got to just find a way.”

Dessert isn’t the best meal, either. He normally avoids it.

“Adding all that sweet stuff on the top, I wouldn’t say is icing on the cake,” Keely said.

Keely makes no excuses about the offseason work, either. He’s noticed his own strength gains and that of his teammates.

He’s also making more of an impact on the field, showing the explosiveness that UAB coaches thought he would have for this season when they signed and developed him.

“He does have multiple moves now,” said UAB right tackle Justice Powers, who battles Keely daily in practice. “(Johnson) said (last year that) he only had one move. When I got here, he was already spin-moving, long-arming and stuff like that. He’s a good guy and a great player, too.”

And that’s why Keely doesn’t miss being a lighter receiver.

His wing span and frame make him a professional prospect if the performance and some more weight comes.

“It would be a lot more fun to know that I don’t have to eat as much and be as heavy, but I like what defensive end has going on for me and I like the physicality of the position, so I’m probably going to stick with that,” he said.
Long wait for UAB football, Shaq Jones is almost over

The Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM — Shaq Jones held out even when UAB dropped its football program.

Plenty of colleges came courting the linebacker after his breakthrough 2014 season, but he was reluctant to leave behind either his school or his son, Jamari, football or no football.

"I just wanted time to pretty much grieve about the process that happened," Jones said.

Six months after UAB dropped three sports because they were too much of a financial drain, the university decided in June 2015 to bring back football for the 2017 season.

Jones had tentative plans to transfer to Western Kentucky by then, but pivoted back and knew he would stay put in Birmingham. He and the other Blazer holdovers will finally get to play in a game on Sept. 2 against Alabama A&M — after waiting 1,007 days.

"He got the news saying it was back and he called me crying about it," said JaKola Jones, his mother. Jones' long-delayed senior season comes after two years of practices and workouts without games — and earning a sociology degree.

The 6-foot-1, 250-pounder hauled furniture for two moving companies and worked for Abercrombie & Fitch at a suburban mall during the hiatus. Those retail paychecks went directly into an account in his hometown of Lanett, Alabama, to help his 7-year-old son who lives with Jones' mother.

He's also helped his father, Cameron Robinson, with a nonprofit Robinson is starting to work with former foster kids to help them acclimate into life outside the foster care system.

"It was worth it, without a doubt," said Jones, who is pursuing a second degree in medical sociology. "It's history. It's history about to be made. It's rewarding in itself to know that I'll be a part of history with UAB football."

Plus, leaving behind Jamari, UAB and his family to pursue his football career just felt wrong. It felt selfish.

Never mind that he would have gotten a ring after Western Kentucky won the league title in 2015.

"Staying behind enabled him to spend weekends, and sometimes more, with Jamari, who's only a couple of hours away."

Jones, who has packed on 60 pounds since high school, was coming off his best season and probably his best game out of the university dropped football, bowling and rifle.

He had 50 tackles as a junior, including 12½ behind the line of scrimmage.

Jones had six tackles and two sacks in the season-ending win over Southern Miss that made UAB bowl eligible for the first time in a decade.

Three days later, UAB shut down football.

Dozens of players quickly moved on to play for other schools like Georgia, Georgia State and South Alabama. Tailback Jordan Howard left for Indiana and is now coming off a big rookie season for the Chicago Bears.

"Other players left and eventually came back."

The program is reaping the benefits of Jones sticking around."

"It's hard to put into words when a guy just really believed in you and he believed in the program and everything, and he's a guy that can play," UAB coach Bill Clark said. "I mean, he's going to have a chance to keep playing (professionally)."

"Those are the guys that you don't even know how many people they've affected, how many fans, how many recruits. They say: 'Well, that guy stayed. He believes in the coach, he believes in the program.' That's how we recruited."

Plus, Jones fits Clark's desire to help each player become "a whole man."

What motivates Jones? Fear of failure, as a man or a father.

"I know what I want in my life and the things I kind of foresee. Those are just the kind of things I have to do to achieve my goal," said Jones, who wants to work with kids in some capacity.

"It's easy to stay motivated. I want my son to have a life that I didn't have," he said.

And now his son gets to watch him play football again. He gets to hang out the night before home games and proudly sport that No. 42 shirt with his father's picture.

"He's always asking, 'When's he going to play football again?'" JaKola Jones said.
Expectations higher for Tide soccer

Opens season tonight against Jacksonville State

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

West Hart and the University of Alabama soccer team don’t want to make too big of a deal about making last year’s SEC Tournament. Because, really, they don’t think it was a big deal. They want more.

"To be honest, with 10 out of 14 teams (in the league) making the tournament, it should be a given," said Hart, Alabama’s third-year coach. "But for us, it was a stepping stone from the previous year. "From here on out that’s kind of a given; that’s not necessarily a goal for us to try and make the SEC Tournament."

Alabama went 9-8-2 last season, 4-5-2 in league play, to finish ninth in the league. The Crimson Tide opens its season Friday night at home against Jacksonville State in a 7 p.m. game.

The expectations, and the goals, are a bit higher this season.

"For us this year, we want to be competitive in each and every game, and I think we are going to be that," Hart said. "We’d like to be fighting for the opportunity to at least be competing for an SEC championship."

"History will probably tell you if you’re finishing in the top half – top six or seven in the SEC – you probably have a pretty good chance of making the NCAA Tournament. I feel that we’re good enough that if we stay healthy and perform like we should, there should be a good chance of that."

Senior Kat Stratton returns in goal to lead UA’s defense. She made 91 saves last season, allowing 1.14 goals per game.

"I think we’re getting it together," Stratton said. "I think we’ll be fine. If they get us one (goal), I think our defense can hold them down."

See TIDE, C5

TIDE
Continued from C1

Alabama has installed a three-back system after playing with four players back the last two years, giving Hart versatility. He expects the scheme to allow UA to press further up the field to create more scoring opportunities.

"I think we’ll be a team that can press teams and turn the ball over," Hart said. "The difficult part will be who’s going to score the goals."

Abbie Boswell is the Crimson Tide’s top returning scoring threat after netting seven goals with seven assists last season. Chatham DeProspo, who had three goals and two assists last season, has moved up the field for more scoring opportunities. Freshman Casey Wertz is also expected to add some offensive punch.

Reach Tommy Deas at
tommy@tidesports.com
or at 205-722-0224.

Alabama soccer
Who: Jacksonville State
Where: Alabama
When: 7 p.m., Friday
Records:
Season opener for both teams
Alabama’s Jereem Richards takes gold at track championships

LONDON – Alabama’s Jereem Richards ran the second leg on Trinidad & Tobago’s gold medal-winning 4x400-meter relay to close out the final day of action at the 2017 IAAF World Championships on Sunday at London’s Olympic Stadium.

Richards took the baton with Trinidad & Tobago well off the lead after the opening leg and turned in a split of 43.60 to move Trinidad & Tobago into second place behind the United States at the second exchange, where they remained heading into the final lap. Richards’ split was the fastest of the four Trinidad & Tobago relay legs in the final.

On the anchor leg, Richards’ teammate Lalonde Gordon caught and passed the United States’ Fred Kerley down the home-stretch to give Trinidad & Tobago the victory in a 2017 world-best 2:58.12.


“This is something I’ve always dreamed about, something I’ve been working for my whole life,” Richards said following the race. “To actually achieve it, words can’t explain how grateful I am right now. Everything is just feeling like a dream.”

With the victory, Richards joins Calvin Smith and Kirani James as the only Tide athletes to win gold at the IAAF World Championships. Smith won a pair of gold medals (200 meters, 4x100-meter relay) at the first IAAF Championships in Helsinki in 1983 and added a third career gold in the 200 meters in Rome in 1987. James won the 400 meters in 2011 in Daegu, South Korea.

Richards and Smith are also the only Alabama athletes to win multiple medals at one IAAF World Championship. Smith won silver in the 100 meters to go with his two gold medals in 1983. The two medals are the most for Alabama at an IAAF World Championships since 1987 when Smith, Jamaica’s Clive Wright (bronze/men’s 4x100-meter relay) and the United States’ Lillie Leatherwood (bronze/women’s 4x400-meter relay) combined to win three. Richards’ gold on Sunday was the 22nd medal won by an athlete with Southeastern Conference ties at this year’s world championships, a total which would rank second behind the 30 won by the United States in the country medal standings.
It was just a matter of time before Thomas' breakthrough

The rest though, as they say, is history as he produced a closing round full of highlight reel shots that will long live in the memory as he captured the famous Wanamaker Trophy and became the second Crimson Tide golfer to win a major, along with Jerry Pate winning the 1976 U.S. Open.

I think it is worth retelling the story of how Thomas came to play for the University of Alabama.

"I have an office (phone) line at the (Jerry) Pate Center, but I hardly ever use it or check messages. I use my cell phone for everything. I'm rarely in my office to be honest. Turns out Justin and his father had left me a voicemail (in fall 2008) saying they would like to visit as they were playing in the (AJGA's) Polo (event) in South Florida and wanted to come by Ol' Colony on their way home to Kentucky," long-time UA head golf coach Jay Seawell told me earlier this year.

"Well, when I got that message it must have been, and I'm a little embarrassed to say this, around 40 days old. The Polo had come and gone."

It was over Thanksgiving week that they played and traveled back.

"Despite not hearing from me, they came by Ol' Colony, but it was closed for Thanksgiving and the gate was locked. They literally jumped the fence and took a look at the outside of the Pate Center."

"Justin must have been 14 or 15 then and I was actually at the Polo and watched him play, but (NCAA) rules mean you can't talk to a player at an event. Somebody, after his 'visit', got him my cell number and we connected."

Seawell was immediately interested in Thomas and Thomas became more and more interested in attending UA. Cory Whitsett and Bobby Wyatt were freshmen when he came on an official visit and he joined them the next year.

"Did I know Justin would be a great player? I knew he had all the skills and was already a very good player."

See MR. GOLF, C4
MR. GOLF

Continued from C1

He certainly hit the ground running at the Capstone, winning his first ever college event. He didn't look back and was named National Player of the Year his freshman year. He would play in UA's team that lost in the final match of the NCAA Championship to Texas, which included his close friend Jordan Spieth. Spieth turned pro after his freshman year, with Thomas returning for the Tide. Thomas and the Tide would go on to win the NCAA Championship on the line,” Seawell noted when talking about Thomas' prowess and ability to produce the goods when the pressure is highest. He's a rare talent indeed playing the game in rarefied air. And I don't see him slowing down any time soon.

Ian Thompson has been writing about golf in Alabama for over 24 years. His weekly "Mr. Golf" column concentrates on golfers, golf events and people associated with the sport of interest to the Tuscaloosa and Birmingham areas. Reach him with story ideas at thomponteesoff@gmail.com.
Thomas’ win brings notice to Alabama golf

By: Cecil Hurt

Jay Seawell started to realize that his plans for a quiet Monday were going to go out the window as Justin Thomas started the back nine at the PGA Championship on Sunday.

“Believe it or not, I was caddying for one of his (Alabama) teammates,” said Seawell, the University of Alabama golf coach, describing his Sunday as he watched Thomas win his first major championship, and the first by a UA golf alumnus in 41 years. “I was in Springfield, Missouri, caddying for Bobby Wyatt at a Web.com Tour event. So it was fun to share that moment with a former teammate and good friend of Justin’s. And we were acting just like you’d expect, cheering and high-fiving on every shot.”

For most of the golf fans watching, Thomas’ victory at Quail Hollow Golf Club will be defined by a birdie putt at the 10th hole, the ball seeming to defy gravity for several seconds as it sat on the lip of the cup before finally dropping in. Seawell had seen signs of an impending win before that.

“As iconic as I think that putt will be over the years to come, I think he was already in the zone,” Seawell said. “He was playing with confidence. Even his demeanor on that putt was good. When it didn’t go in at first, he wasn’t distraught. There wasn’t a change in his demeanor. Then on his chip shot on the 13th, when he broke the five-way tie, you could tell. Even Bobby saw it. He turned to me and said, ‘Look how calm he is.’ He was playing quickly, but he wasn’t in a hurry. That meant he wasn’t over-thinking things. He was engaged. He had that look that I’ve seen before when he was really playing well.”

Thomas essentially clinched the title on the 17th hole, scoring a birdie on the par-3 to put him two shots clear of the field.

“I don’t think more than 4 or 5 players on tour can hit a 7-iron on that tee shot and get it within 15 feet,” Seawell said. “For most pros, that’s a 5-iron hoping to get safety on the green. Not for Justin. I thought it was the shot of the tournament, maybe the shot of his life. But I’ve seen that shot before.

“It’s amazing how the elite athlete does that under such high pressure,” Seawell said. “A lot of good players melt under it. He didn’t.”

The reaction to Thomas’ win, both in the golf world and in his collegiate home of Tuscaloosa, has been “remarkable,” Seawell said.

“I sort of expected it from the golfers because he is such a popular, likable guy with a great story (both Thomas’ father and grandfather were also golf pros),” Seawell said. “But the reaction I’ve gotten from Alabama people has been amazing. I had more texts on Sunday night than I got when we won the (NCAA golf) national championships. I’ve been talking to the media all day long. That is great for us.”
Seawell said the golf program, which already has Jerry Pate’s U.S. Open championship trophy on display in its clubhouse at Ol’ Colony Golf Complex, has received “so much positive publicity” and plans to use that in recruiting, whether it is bringing Thomas back for a football game appearance (probably for the Alabama-LSU weekend), or simply adding the Wanamaker Trophy, emblematic of the PGA title, to its clubhouse hardware.

“I’ve already been looking at where to put it,” Seawell said, laughing. “We’ll find room for it, and we’ll tell recruits that we are halfway to the Grand Slam and they can be the one to win The Masters or the British Open and get their own wing for their trophy, too.”
Thomas wins PGA Championship

Former UA golfer Justin Thomas closed with a 3-under 68
The Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Former University of Alabama golfer Justin Thomas emerged from the shadow of a long-time friend and won the PGA Championship to take his place among the young elite in golf.

With two big breaks to start the back nine, a chip-in for birdie to seize control and a timely 7-iron that soared over the water to a peninsula green, Thomas closed with a 3-under 68 for a two-shot victory.

The PGA Championship was the most fitting major for the 24-year-old son of a PGA professional.

Mike Thomas, a former PGA board member and longtime pro at Harmony Landing outside Louisville, Kentucky, walked along the edge of the 18th green and into the arms of his son, a major champion.

The week began with Jordan Spieth's quest for a career Grand Slam. Spieth was at the 18th green late Sunday afternoon at Quail Hollow, but only so he could celebrate the moment with Thomas, close friends since they were 14.

"So awesome, dude," Spieth told him.

Thomas was every bit of that.

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PGA

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With five players still in the mix on the back nine, Thomas surged ahead by chipping in from 40 feet on the par-5 13th hole, and holding his nerve down the stretch as his challengers eventually faded, one after another.

Hideki Matsuyama, bidding to become the first player from Japan to win a major, recovered from back-to-back bogeys with birdies on the 14th and 15th holes to get within one shot. But the championship turned on the 16th hole.

Thomas faced a 6-foot par putt to stay at 8 under. Matsuyama caught a good lie over the green and chipped to 5 feet. Thomas wasted no time over the putt and drilled it in the center of cup. Matsuyama missed and was two shots behind.

"The last major of the year, and I was in contention," said Matsuyama, a runner-up at the U.S. Open. "All I can do is try harder next time."

Thomas sealed it with a 7-iron from 221 yards, so pure that he let the club twirl through his hands as he watched it clear the water and roll to 15 feet. The birdie putt curled in and his lead was up to three going to the 18th. A final bogey only affected the score.

Thomas finished at 8-under 276 for his fourth victory of the year.

The PGA has been part of the Thomas family for three generations. Paul Thomas, his grandfather, was the longtime pro at Zanesville Country Club in Ohio who played in the 1962 U.S. Open. His father played at Morehead State and had aspirations of playing the tour that didn’t last long. Instead, Mike Thomas became a club pro who watched his son fall in love with the game and grow into a force on the PGA Tour.

“I can’t put it into words,” Thomas said about his PGA of America’s legacy. “I wish my grandpa could be here for it. It’s so special to get it done. I’m glad we have a trophy now.”

Kevin Kisner was the last one who had a chance to catch him. But he three-putted from 100 feet on the 16th for bogey, couldn’t birdie the 17th from long range and hit his second shot into the water and finished with a double bogey.

Matsuyama also hit into the water on No. 13 and made bogey for a 72 to finish three back.

Louis Oosthuizen (70), Patrick Reed (67) and Francesco Molinari (67) tied for second, though none had a chance to win playing the 18th. Oosthuizen holed a 50-foot birdie putt on the 18th to get a runner-up finish in the majors for the fourth time.

For Reed, it was his first top 10 in a major.

Just two months ago, fresh off a record-tying 63 in the U.S. Open to get in the final group at Erin Hills, Thomas struggled from the start and shot 75. He started this final round two shots behind, skulled a bunker shot on the first hole and had to make a 15-foot putt to avoid double bogey. He missed a short par putt on No. 3, and that was the last mistake he made until it no longer mattered.

Thomas began his move with a 35-foot birdie putt on No. 9, and then caught two breaks on the par-5 10th. His tee shot sailed left into a tree and bounced out into the fairway. Then, his 8-foot birdie putt hung on the left edge of the cup. Thomas smiled and nearly turned away, and a few seconds later as he looked back toward the hole, gravity took over and the ball dropped into the cup.

Justin Thomas celebrates after a birdie on the 11th hole during the final round of the PGA Championship golf tournament at Quail Hollow Club Sunday in Charlotte, N.C. (AP Photo/John Bazemore)
Crimson Tide fans can expect a next-level game day experience for season opener at Mercedes-Benz Stadium

By Molly Catherine Walsh
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

ATLANTA – It looks like Atlanta, it feels like Atlanta and it certainly smells like Atlanta, but the enormous and shiny, new Mercedes-Benz Stadium now looms over the city like a main character in a “Transformers” movie.

Is it from the future? Will it move by itself? Can you touch it?

No, yes and yes.

Billed as “The Finest Sports and Entertainment Facility in the World,” it is pretty much going to rock every football fan’s world. Not just football either; soccer fans and concert-goers, too.

The stadium will host the Alabama Crimson Tide’s football season opener, when UA plays Florida State on Saturday, Sept. 2.

The first thing attendees will encounter, if they use the stadium’s front entrance, will be a large, stylish, steel statue of a falcon perched atop a football, a symbol signifying it as home of the Atlanta Falcons of the

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National Football League.

The front entrance leads to a balcony overlooking the field. The 71,000 black and red stadium seats surround the turf. Behind each goalpost is a transparent wall called the ‘window to the city,’ looking over downtown Atlanta’s skyline.

“The window to the city literally sheds a light on the stadium that you never had in the Georgia Dome,” said Steve Cannon, CEO of AMB Group, which runs the stadium. “The natural light that covers the field and flows into the concourses as well to allow fans and teams to feel like they are connected to the heart of downtown.”

Directly over the center of the field is the 360-degree, 63,000-square-foot HD video halo board that will show highlights, replays and live action. Above the halo board is the retractable roof constructed of 27,000 tons of steel and modeled after the Roman Pantheon.

The roof will remain closed for the Alabama-FSU game and other events early this fall. Calibration on getting the retractable roof to open and close automatically is still being worked out.

The building is eco-friendly, with 47 percent less water use than a typical building its size, and 4,000 solar panels to generate enough energy to power 10 Falcons games.

With 2,000 high-definition television screens throughout the building, it will be nearly impossible to miss a moment of play.

The Atlanta United soccer team and the Atlanta Falcons were extremely hands-on in the design and building of their locker rooms. Everything from the lockers to the chairs were hand-picked by the players to suit the needs and preferences of the team.

“We really wanted to listen to our players and give them a comfortable space,” Atlanta Falcons president and CEO Rich McKay said. “It’s also important to create a locker room that will help any team that plays here to feel at home and to not feel like guests whether it be Alabama or anyone else.”

Alabama and FSU will not get to use the host teams’ locker facilities, McKay said. Each team will use a separate locker room built to specifications for visiting NFL teams.

Staying with the theme of being true to downtown Atlanta, well-known local chefs partnered with the stadium to bring fans affordable and local food. Restaurants like Molly B’s Kitchen and Fries Up have opened locations in the $1.5 billion stadium. With 24 bars and restaurants and 673 points of food sales, fans will find it hard to go hungry during a game.

The new stadium has instituted fan-friendly concessions pricing, as well as free refills of soft drinks.

“There are over 1,000 taps to refill your drink yourself for free and dozens of places to try something new like beer-infused meat,” said senior vice president of fan experience Mike Gomes.

“We want fans to experience new and great food while also maintaining an efficient atmosphere.”

The “mega-column” video screen inside the front entranceway is also a neat touch that might scare small children. The column is a 6,700-square foot and 101-foot high display screen that can depict Atlanta Falcons players or other images as larger than life on the screen while they pound on their chests and nod their heads in an intimidating manner, as if they are ready to jump off the screen.

Keeping up with social media to live tweet the game won’t be an issue either with 4,000 miles of fiber optic cable that run along the ceiling of the concourses, assuring smartphone connectivity.
Tight ends will see more use as Daboll leads the offense

Michael Casagrande  
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Different or the same?  
Everyone is asking about the look of Alabama's offense after Brian Daboll replaced Lane Kiffin/Steve Sarkisian as Alabama's coordinator in charge of that aspect.  
Answers have been particularly cagey dating back to the spring, thought it wouldn't figure to look outrageously different from the past.  
Daboll's background with the tight end position has been of particular interest. He's been in charge of that position for the New England Patriots for the past few Super Bowl runs, so it's a natural inference.  
"I think systematically, we'll probably use the tight end a little better," Nick Saban said Wednesday. "Systematically. I'm not making comparisons. Good coaches coach good players to play well."

It's fitting since one of the better tight ends to play at Alabama graduated last season. O.J. Howard is now a rookie with Tampa Bay after his first-round selection in the spring.  
Tight ends caught 17.2 percent of the passes completed by Alabama passers last year — up from 14.6 percent in 2015. Howard had 45 of the 54 such receptions in his senior season.  
"We have a couple of players there that have some experience," Saban said. "Really three, Hale (Hentges), Miller (Forristall) and Irv (Smith) all played some last year. I think all of them have improved. I think they've all gotten bigger, they've all gotten stronger. I think they've all done really well."

They also added freshmen Major Tennison and Redrick James, while converting running back Ronnie Clark to the position.  
Hentges has been part of the rotation for the past two seasons while Forristall was a factor as a freshman last season.  
Forristall, who had five catches for 73 yards last season, was well aware of his new offensive coordinator's background when asked about it in the spring.  
"Obviously when he was with the Patriots, they had a lot of opportunities there," he said with a smile, "and I'm hoping we can get some opportunities here. Hopefully we can get a little carry over."
LOOMING QUESTIONS

With no drama at quarterback, what's left unanswered two weeks away from kickoff?

Raekwon Davis is expected to fill one hole on Alabama's defensive line, though questions remain behind him.
Vasha Hunt, vhunt@al.com

Michael Casagrande mcasagrande@al.com

For three years, the quarterback intrigue made August an interesting month in Tuscaloosa. There was genuine mystery surrounding the most important position on Alabama's football team. Now what? The lack of a battle at quarterback has made this preseason a little less spicy. The other high-profile skill positions like running back and receiver are stocked with talent, so there aren't major concerns there. That's not to say everything is settled in the Crimson Tide football complex. There are still some important decisions needing resolution before heading to Atlanta on Sept. 2 to face No. 3 Florida State. Here are a few:

What's the deal at kicker?
This one can't be asked enough since it seems to have the most mystery surrounding it. At least with quarterbacks you can get a feel for how things look in media viewing periods at practice. Very little has been said about the state of this special team — one that's been inconsistent for years at Alabama. There were two misses inside 40 yards in the A-Day game without much actual game experience returning. Could JK Scott handle this duty along with punting? It's possible. With a high-end opponent waiting on Week 1, small details like a field goal could make a difference, so this question is easily the most critical.

How will the defensive line rebound?
Replacing depth has been a concern after boasting one of the deepest defensive lines in the game recently. There's comfort in having Da'Ron Payne and DaShawn Hand back, but what about the others? Sophomore Raekwon Davis has received strong reviews for his offseason work, entering camp in top physical condition as a strong candidate to start on a line that lost draft picks Jonathan Allen and Da'Vine Tomlinson. The rest will be something to follow. Isaiah Buggs was recruited from junior college with the idea of making an immediate impact. Before moving on to the NFL, Allen said redshirt freshman Quinnen Williams could step into his role at defensive end. Joshua Frazier is a senior who's been around the line who could add experience to the situation. And there are highly recruited freshmen like La'Bryan Ray and Phidarian Mathis who could add depth to the chart.

Which freshman could contribute?
Obviously, there is running back Najee Harris and receiver Jerry Jeudy. Both confirmed potential on A-Day. Saban on Wednesday also mentioned the progress of Tuscaloosa's Brian Robinson as he worked on pass catching from

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the backfield to earn a role this season. On the offensive line, Saban said tackles Alex Leatherwood and Jedrick Wills Jr. have shown they can handle the transition and will be in the mix moving forward. Over on defense, it’s hard to imagine Dylan Moses won’t be part of the rotation with what he’s shown in spring and August. Switching his number from 7 to 8 removes the conflict with starting cornerback Trevon Diggs No. 7 just in case they were to share the field at some point.

How will secondary shake out?
There hasn’t been much movement in the first group as it replaces Marlon Humphrey and Eddie Jackson at safety. If confidence continues to build with Diggs at corner, Minkah Fitzpatrick would stay at the safety position he inherited on the fly after Jackson’s injury last October. It’s also clear Alabama coaches feel comfortable with Fitzpatrick playing practically any spot in the backfield — a luxury that gives flexibility to the game plan if any issues pop up.

Anything with QB?
Saban mentioned a role for Tua Tagovailoa during SEC Media Days, but it’s not yet clear what that will be. At the very least, it would be reasonable to say there’s more confidence in the playmaking ability in the backup than in years past.

Tua Tagovailoa won’t start, but is expected to play a role for Alabama this season.
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Saban heaps praise on DB Minkah Fitzpatrick

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Minkah Fitzpatrick is an All-American. Last month, he was tabbed as a preseason all-SEC selection. He is considered the most versatile player on Alabama's top-ranked football team. And he's one of Nick Saban's all-time favorite players.

"Minkah does it as well as anybody I ever coached in terms of how he works every day, how he finishes plays, his conditioning level," Saban said. "Just phenomenal. Just phenomenal ... It's important to him. He makes sure he knows what to do."

Fitzpatrick's value to the Tide is unparalleled. The junior has played every position in the secondary, according to Saban. In 2016, he started at three spots and led the team with six interceptions.

"I am just out there wherever Coach needs me to play at," Fitzpatrick said earlier this month. "Coach thinks I am versatile and I think I am pretty versatile, too."

Fitzpatrick is more than that. He is a role model for his teammates, as Saban pointed out Wednesday.

"A lot of players who are good players, I have heard them say, 'I am saving it for the game,'" Saban explained. "Every single one of those players and all those teams I have been on when players say that, ain't none of them been worth a s---. ... He doesn't do that.

"He works every day to get better and I hope we have more and more players that work like him because when you have players who do that you usually have a pretty good team. He sets a great example and we are excited to be able to utilize him in a lot of different ways."

Saban's praise of Fitzpatrick came after he opened his news conference with a statement that really was a message to his players. In the soliloquy, he told them the recipe for winning.

"You can have success on one play and one game," Saban said. "But if you're successful, you have consistency in performance over a long period of time and you develop an identity and that takes a lot of competitive character.

"You can't be complacent. It's a lot of hard work and perseverance. ... If you can't give effort, you can't play with toughness, you can't focus and be responsible to do your job, how can you ever develop and get the trust of your teammates?"
After three years of work, Miller finally where he needs to be physically

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

Thirty pounds is a lot of weight to put on for anyone. For some, it comes easier than others.

For Christian Miller, it was a three-year process. But now, at 240 pounds, the redshirt junior outside linebacker is ready for his turn.

That was the plan all along, though. Miller and his father, Corey Miller, knew that it would take a few years to get him where he needed to be from a physical standpoint. That's why the draw of Alabama was too great to pass up, being able to work with strength and conditioning coach Scott Cochran.

"Honestly most of it was just extra workouts after practice, a lot of help from Coach Cochran, Miss Amy (Bragg) with nutrition," Miller said. "But really I just used to workout after practice, a bunch of our guys do, it's not just me. I would just go workout after practice to get extra in, eat as many calories as I can.

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"It's not easy, it's not easy. Everybody is all like, 'Oh, it's probably nice to be able to eat whatever you want.' You get sick of it, but you've got to do what you've got to do. And I'm just happy where I'm at now."

Where he is now is competing for a starting job at outside linebacker. It's a unit that lost two elite pass rushers in Tim Williams and Ryan Anderson, and with Anderson the defense lost an outside backer who could set a hard edge.

Anfernee Jennings is capable of setting the edge, and Miller is capable of rushing the passer. It's a skill he feels he was born to do. Even if that rush doesn't end in putting the quarterback on the ground via sack, Miller is confident in his ability to affect the passer.

Coming off the first scrimmage of the year, Miller had "a lot of production points," according to UA coach Nick Saban.

"I didn't really come here just to put up numbers," Miller said. "If I wanted to go put up a ton of sacks, I would have gone to a small school. Honestly, no. I just enjoy getting praise for doing my job, even if I don't get a sack. Even if I just affect the quarterback, I know I'm getting into his head, and that's my job, I just want to get in their head."

There's no shortage of players who can rush the passer. One of those players is Terrell Lewis, a 6-foot-5, 254-pounder, who looks like he was created in a laboratory for the express purpose of creating havoc on defense.

"I don't think you can get better measurables," Miller said. "...that guy is a great player, smart kid. I mean he's going to be something. He's definitely going to help this team out a lot."

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UA in talks to play Miami

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

For the first time in nearly three decades, it appears the University of Alabama will once again square off against the Miami Hurricanes.

Alabama is in negotiations with Miami to play in the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game in 2021 in the Mercedes Benz Stadium in Atlanta, The Tuscaloosa News has learned.

The two teams last met in the 1993 Sugar Bowl to conclude the 1992 season when No. 2 Alabama handed No. 1 Miami a 34-13 defeat to win the national championship. The win halted a 29-game Miami winning streak and gave the Crimson Tide its 12th national championship and first since 1979.

Future games

It was reported Tuesday that Ole Miss will play Louisville in a second Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game in 2021. The Crimson Tide opens the 2017 season in the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game on Sept. 2 against Florida State. UA is also scheduled to open the season in Atlanta in 2019 against Duke.

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Saban staying on point during preseason

Occasionally, Saban works in a more abstract mode, as he did on Wednesday.

He didn’t come out and say that it was a grueling hot day and the Crimson Tide practice might not have been all that he expected. That seems to have been the case and, if so, it’s not surprising.

These are the most difficult days for any team. The mid-August heat (from which the Crimson Tide was spared for a couple of unseasonably mild weeks) has arrived. The practice routine offers no respite, only the promise of more practice. When game week arrives, then motivating yourself for practice takes on a new monument for a player.

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Until then, the players is largely on his own — with the occasional nudge from the player. Saban didn’t come in talking about a specific temperature — but if you looked closely at what he said, you could get the message that the heat had an effect, and the fatigue did as well.

“If you can’t give effort, if you can’t get focused...how can you ever get the trust and respect of your teammates?,” Saban asked rhetorically. “We can’t get any of this done in the conditions we have here if we don’t have mental toughness. I’ve complained on many occasions about people who make predictions that there is no basis at all for, no basis at all. This team has a lot to prove and until you do prove it, you haven’t done much of anything.

“We’re going to play games in weather like today, probably three or four. How many of you were at Ole Miss (for Alabama’s mid-September game) last year? One hundred degrees and we played 100 snaps. You better be a grown man if you are going to do that. Are we there yet? Probably not.

“How much are you giving the other team by making mental errors, not being able to focus on technique. Most of you all, including Miss Terry, my mom and Aunt Fran all want to call the plays, but most of the time when the play called doesn’t work, it’s execution.”

There was much more in the same vein, although Saban did let Aunt Fran off the hook for the rest of the press conference. Saban fights an unending war against two opponents — complacency and inconsistency — and Wednesday was yet another skirmish. There was no explosion although the coach did cross the family-language line in an answer about defensive back Minkah Fitzpatrick, who was named a preseason All-American by Sports Illustrated on Monday. Saban had no ire for Fitzpatrick — who he called “phenomenal.”

He didn’t praise Fitzpatrick for his interceptions, or any game-day exploits. Then, he used him as a counterpoint for guys who coast at practice and say they are “saving it” for game day.

“I’ve coached those guys,” Saban said. “And not any of those guys are worth a (expletive).”

At this point, the picture should be clear. Saban has no patience with any topic other than practice. The local media, blessed with the self-preservation instincts that have been honed over time, didn’t ask anything about Florida State. There is plenty of time for that later, and Saban was in no mood for it. Besides, his point — and his focus — was abundantly clear.

— Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
QB play could settle SEC West

By: Cecil Hurt

There was never much of a likelihood that there would be a major quarterback controversy at the state of Alabama’s SEC schools, Alabama and Auburn, this August. People are always infatuated with hypotheticals, but both teams knew what they had returning. In Alabama’s case, that is Jalen Hurts, a quarterback the coaching staff was happy with, one that the team supports. At Auburn, that was Sean White, who, in my limited observation, seemed solid enough, and is clearly a fierce competitor. Auburn, though, wanted better — as schools should. Having had success with the transfer route before, the Tigers brought in Jarett Stidham, a sensation in a brief stint at Baylor.

On the surface, that only seems logical. The status quo at Alabama, after all, is the SEC Championship and a narrow miss in the College Football Playoff Championship. With the expected freshman-to-sophomore improvement by Hurts and some fine-tuning in other areas, that slim margin of defeat could easily be reversed this year. There are other factors, of course. The overwhelming question at Alabama, although it rarely is articulated bluntly, is “will the defense be as good?” At most places, the answer would be an immediate “no.” What college program could be expected to replace an NFL exodus of talent and stay at the same level? At Alabama, the answer is a qualified “maybe.” Observers of the first scrimmage last Saturday generally stopped short of saying the defense was “as good” as the 2016 unit but even conservative practice watchers did not think the dropout was nearly as steep as might be expected.

The defense last year, in nearly every game, gave the offense a tremendous margin for error. The offense needed that sometimes. If the defense can do the same thing this year, and the offense is better — and “better” can mean both more explosive and, in other cases, more cautious, then that’s what Nick Saban wants.

Auburn was a good team last year, especially before a plague of injuries, but the status quo — no trip to Atlanta, no win over Alabama — will eventually get an Auburn coach, any Auburn coach, into hot water. Therefore, a change that might catapult the Tigers is the smart play. If it works out, happy days are back at Jordan-Hare Stadium. If it doesn’t and Stidham struggles, has anything really been lost? You aren’t going to hit the Cam Newton jackpot with every spin of the wheel, but it’s fair to note that the last national championship quarterback at both Auburn (Newton) and Alabama (Jake Coker) was a transfer.

The rest of the SEC West, except for Texas A&M, went into August with their quarterback position settled. The Aggies are having a competition between four candidates, none of whom promise to be an upgrade over the departed Trevor Knight. The stability at quarterback and most of the division schools is one reason that 2017 might be a better year, SEC-wise, than 2016. The speculation continues to grow, though, that this will be another Alabama-Auburn showdown year. Results can change that speculation, and LSU, in particular, has enough athletes to throw a monkey wrench into anyone’s plans. But if both Hurts and Stidham live up to expectations, leading to a rare year of quarterback excellence on both sides of the state, it’s hard to imagine anyone else winning the league.
Could be some anxious special team moments for UA

By: Cecil Hurt

Let’s fast forward to Atlanta on Jan. 8, 2018. The Alabama Crimson Tide and the Clemson Tigers are playing for the College Football Playoff Championship for a third consecutive year. The hour is growing late, nearly Jan. 9 on Eastern time. The game is tied. In fact, let’s up the ante. Clemson leads by a point, 25-24. Jalen Hurts has driven Alabama to the Tiger 25-yard line. Four seconds remain.

You’re an Alabama fan. So, as Bob Dylan famously asked:

“How does it feel?”

Are you excited? Are you too terrified to watch, like it was the final minutes of “Get Out” or “Evil Dead?” Do you simply throw a quilt over your head, mute the volume and resolve to find out in the morning? If you are in the Mercedes Dome, do you watch from your seat, or listen from the nearest restroom?

Did Nick Saban make you feel any better on Saturday?

Alabama had its first scrimmage of preseason camp at Bryant-Denny Stadium, and while the media didn’t get to watch the actual action, Saban’s post-scrimmage reports on special teams didn’t make field goal kicking sound like a strength at this point. There are many possible explanations, especially with essentially no experience (other than JK Scott) at the kicker/holder/snapper positions. You wouldn’t expect perfection at a first scrimmage. However, no Alabama fan lets his or her fingers stray far from the panic button when the Crimson Tide send the field goal team in.

“We missed a couple of field goals,” Saban said. “We got a couple (of field goals) blocked because we didn’t have really good protection. We really need to work hard on that part of it.”

To Alabama fans, that’s about as comforting as a dentist saying “the good news is we can save some of the teeth, but I have some bad news about the anesthetic.”

Last year, Adam Griffith got off to a slow start and while he improved over the course of the season (he made 11 of his last 12 attempts), he never won the confidence of the fans, no matter how much Saban lobbied for some confidence. There are several reasons — Alabama fans expect perfection, or close to it. They are also conditioned to believe that Alabama under Saban automatically lands the best player in the country at every position. That’s not a criticism of fans, who should have high expectations. That’s just a description of a mindset.

There’s also the issue of “margin of error,” which Alabama teams are not allowed to have. There were other SEC teams last season that struggled mightily with field goal kicking. In some cases, that deficiency might have meant the difference between going 6-6 and 7-5. But with Alabama, where the only expectation is winning the national championship (and that isn’t strictly fans, but Saban as well), every missed field goal can be fearfully viewed as a potential tremor that brings

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the entire goal structure crashing down. Remember, the field goal that was returned wasn't the only missed field goal in Alabama's last loss to Auburn in 2013.

So what happens this year? Will the kicker be Joseph Bulovas, Andy Pappanastos or Scott? If it is Scott, that raises another issue. Saban described Scott's punting as "fantastic" on Saturday, and he may be the best in the country at punting. So does it put an extra burden on your "fantastic" punter if you start giving him other things to do? That question is rhetorical — it might matter and it might not be a problem. See if that stops anyone from fretting about it, though.
ALABAMA FOOTBALL

Tide looking to create role for The Technician

Former walk-on Levi Wallace among discussion in defensive backfield

Matt Zenitz mzenitz@al.com

Levi Wallace's fellow Alabama defensive backs have a nickname for him, "The Technician."

Even at a school that regularly lands four- and five-star defensive backs, the former walk-on has developed into a valuable member of the Crimson Tide secondary and is more of a factor in the competition for playing time than most outside the program probably realize.

"I think Levi is one of the guys that we're looking to create a role for," coach Nick Saban said.

While Trevon Diggs is the clear favorite to win the starting cornerback job opposite Anthony Averett, Wallace is a dark horse in that competition. Even if Wallace doesn't win that job, the redshirt senior could still see a good amount of playing time on defense.

Alabama has been experimenting with Wallace at Star while still also using him at cornerback.

One of the potential scenarios is that Wallace could step in and play Star when the Tide goes into its dime defense, which is usually in passing situations.

"He's a very smart player that has done a good job when he's had an opportunity," Saban said, "and certainly had a good camp so far."

SEE ALABAMA, B5

ALABAMA FROM B1

Wallace was a top backup last season and played a lot at cornerback in the Iron Bowl and SEC championship game in place of an injured Marlon Humphrey.

After arriving at Alabama in 2013 weighing only 170 pounds, the 6-foot Wallace is up to 185 pounds and has gotten both stronger and faster.

During the Tide's 2015 spring testing, Wallace ran the 40-yard dash in 4.69 seconds. His time this spring: 4.59.

In addition, Wallace bench-pressed 315 pounds this spring, up from 225 pounds in 2015 and 275 pounds last year. He also squatted 425 pounds this spring, up from 365 pounds last year.

Most importantly, Wallace continues to make plays and continues to hold his own at cornerback.

The Technician was a standout during the Tide's second spring scrimmage in March, posting several pass breakups and faring well even when matched up against Alabama's top wide receivers. During the Tide's spring game, Wallace recorded two pass breakups and an interception.

Wallace was then responsible for one of the early standout moments at Alabama's open scrimmage last Saturday. During a 7-on-7 drill, Wallace jumped in front of a wide receiver on a short pass over the middle and intercepted freshman quarterback Mac Jones.

"He's definitely one of our top cover guys," fellow Tide cornerback Anthony Averett said. "He's got great technique and doesn't really give up big plays at all. He plays correctly and plays right."
Instead of hating Rosen for that Alabama crack, thank him for debate

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Do you realize what Josh Rosen did?
In the middle of fall camp, with opening day
three weeks away, a quarterback got college
football fans, players, former players, coaches and media
members talking about ... wait for it ... school.

School. That thing we don’t care about unless it prevents a
key signee or critical returnee from suitin up for our favor-
ite team.

School. That think we don’t think about while we’re
oohing and ahhing over a great block, tackle, pass, catch or
run on a fall Saturday.

School. That thing we don’t talk about until someone
questions its relative importance compared to the over-
whelming significance placed by institutions of higher
learning on a game that increasingly fattens the wallets of
everyone attached to it but the student-athletes who play it.

That’s what Rosen did in that fascinating interview with
Matt Hayes of Bleacher Report. The UCLA quarterback
sparked a national conversation on the challenge of being
a true student-athlete at a Power 5 program that plays its
home games in the Rose Bowl and just began a $280 million
relationship with Under Armour.

For that act of provocation alone, the UCLA quarterback
should be awarded the Heisman Trophy. Or the Campbell
Trophy, a.k.a “the academic Heisman.” Or some other prize
for public service.

For the purposes of an honest debate, it’s important to
point out what Rosen did and didn’t say. He didn’t say it
was impossible to perform at a high level as a college stu-
dent and a college football player. He said it was extremely
difficult especially if, like him, you’re majoring in a subject
such as economics at a school such as UCLA.

“Look, football and school don’t go together,” he said in
one of his most arresting comments. “They just don’t. Try-
ing to do both is like trying to do two full-time jobs.”

He’s not alone in that first-hand observation. A 2015
Pac-12 student-athlete survey found, among other things,
“they are spending an average of 50 hours a week on ath-
letics in-season.”

SEE SCARBINSKY, B5
An earlier NCAA national study revealed that “football players in the Football Bowl Subdivision reported spending 42 hours per week on their sport during the season.”

What do you call a commercial enterprise that involves your participation for 42-50 hours a week? A full-time job. That’s another discussion entirely, but to their credit, the NCAA and the Power 5 responded by passing legislation to reduce time demands.

Back to Rosen. His comments reminded us that student-athletes aren’t “given” an education. They’re given an opportunity to get an education, which requires they find time to go to class and study hall, write papers, pass tests and master new material to try to earn a degree — all the while they’re going to practices and meetings, learning the playbook and earning playing time to try to win games and perhaps a shot at the NFL.

Whether those degrees when achieved are meaningful or not is another aspect of the debate.

All of this activity is taking place in an environment where, in Rosen’s case, your head coach will make $3.55 million this year before bonuses and — did we mention — your athletic department has a $280 million deal with Under Armour.

Rosen, like all of his teammates and their opponents in uniform, has no salary or bonus structure.

Speaking of compensation, the money quote in Rosen’s interview that grabbed headlines and generated Twitter buzz invoked the No. 1 college football program in the nation in a controversial way. He didn’t say Alabama football players are as dumb as a box of pet rocks, although some people whose favorite color is crimson reacted that way.

Here’s Rosen’s entire answer on that question for context.

“Look, football and school don’t go together. They just don’t. Trying to do both is like trying to do two full-time jobs. There are guys who have no business being in school, but they’re here because this is the path to the NFL. There’s no other way. Then there’s the other side that says raise the SAT eligibility requirements. OK, raise the SAT requirement at Alabama and see what kind of team they have. You lose athletes and then the product on the field suffers.”

The Alabama crack wasn’t wrong, but it was far too limiting. Raise the current entrance requirements at any Power 5 school to an elite level and eliminate exceptions. You will keep out some talented athletes — as well as non-athletes — and the product on the field will suffer.

Rosen didn’t belittle the many academic accomplishments of Alabama football players, including the nine who received their undergraduate degrees in May and the five who did so last weekend. Nick Saban did a nice job of highlighting those accomplishments when asked to respond, but that wasn’t the larger point of this discussion.

The larger point was emphasis. Which is more important to Alabama, UCLA and other Power 5 programs — football success or academic success? Why did Rosen feel compelled to put off a required class this spring because it conflicted with spring practice?

One reflection of emphasis is compensation. Saban’s contract, per industry standards, includes performance bonuses. The maximum he can receive in a year in bonuses for football achievement — for winning the SEC and national titles and receiving conference and national awards for coach of the year — is $600,000.

The maximum he can receive in a year in bonuses for academic achievement — for having an APR score above the NCAA cut line and a graduation rate in the top four in the SEC — is $100,000.

You can discuss the imbalance in those numbers from here until the Sept. 2 kickoff against Florida State. You can debate the meaning of Bear Bryant’s famous quote, “It’s pretty tough to rally around a math class.”

Which is really the point of Rosen’s worthwhile comments. There should be more discussion and debate about the relative importance of football vs. school. It’s a healthy thing when a prominent starting quarterback questions a system that gets farther away from the ancient concept of amateur athletics every day.

That may make the NFL question Rosen’s dedication to football. It probably will make more Alabama fans cheer for Texas A&M in its Sept. 3 opener at UCLA.

What it doesn’t do is make Rosen a bad guy. It makes him a bold, thoughtful student-athlete, the kind everyone connected to college football should applaud rather than dismiss.

Now if you’ll excuse me, I have to go check on what happened at Saturday’s Alabama and Auburn scambles. Hey, this isn’t the School section of the newspaper. It’s the Sports section.
Tide backs get tips watching the pros

By Aaron Suttles
Sports Writer

The New England Patriots took over the NFL long ago. Now, it seems, the juggernaut has made its impression on Alabama, too, with first-year offensive coordinator Brian Daboll (former Patriots' tight end coach).

The Alabama offense watches film of the Patriots on occasion, and, in all seriousness, it's not that abnormal for a team to watch film of another team to incorporate new ideas and learn how something is meant to be run from lining up to the routes of the wide receivers.

When it's the New England Patriots, though, it creates headlines, but it's nothing really out of the ordinary.

"Yeah, we look at that every day," junior running back Damien Harris said. "Coach Daboll likes to show a lot of clips from back when he was with the Patriots to show us a lot of things that they did, show us exactly what he envisions us to do. Us as running backs, we

See TIPS, C4
watch the film on our own and we just kind of see what he likes to do with his backs, how he likes us to be used in the offense.

"So, we just look at that and then we go out on the field and we kind of tweak it and twist things around and train to be able to do whatever’s asked of us to do."

Saban still shows film from his time as head coach of the Miami Dolphins. If it helps absorbing the material easier, he’s willing to do it.

“Well, I put the play in that we haven’t had here in the past. In the past, the way we always teach, what our teaching progression always is, we show the players the play in a diagram, then we show all the adjustments, and then if it’s a play that we’ve run in the past, we can use our film to visually give them an example of that play,” Saban said. “So they saw what to do, now they get a visual of how to do it. In some cases, some of the things that we’re doing, we’ve never done before. So if they look at the Patriots and that’s where we have to look at the film to get a teaching progression so they get a visual of how they run a route or how they’re supposed to run a play. That’s part of our teaching progression.”

Running backs more involved

Everyone has been or is still trying to figure out Daboll’s offense, including Florida State defensive coordinator Charles Kelly. It’s been sort of a hobby during the offseason to try and ascertain what the 2017 Crimson Tide offense will look like.

Many analysts, from the credible to the ill-informed, have surmised that the running backs could be utilized more in the passing game. On the surface it makes sense, especially given the talents of the five running backs on the roster.

Being used in different ways is something the backs are looking forward to.

“I mean, being a dual-threat back and somebody that can run the ball is definitely going to help, not only you as a player but help the team as well,” Harris said. “That’s something that we’ve been working on all offseason, becoming not only better receivers out of the backfield but being better at protections, being more well-rounded backs.

“I think that’s something we’re really focusing on because coach (Burton) tells us all the time, we came here to play running back so everybody knows we can run the ball. But you need those other intangibles, blocking, being able to run routes right, catch out of the backfield, that kind of stuff makes you a complete player.”

Balance

From the moment the offseason began, the UA offensive coaching staff had one overriding goal for the season: Become more balanced.

Running the football isn’t a problem for the Crimson Tide. However, passing the ball with consistency was a trait it struggled with a season ago.

Alabama defensive back Anthony Averett said he sees improvement.

“We can run the ball, we can pass the ball,” he said. “We’re a lot (more) balanced. Can throw the ball down field and just do a lot of different things. All our backs are good, all our receivers are good. Pretty balanced, you don’t know what you’re going to get. That’s pretty challenging.”

Reach Aaron Suttles at aaronm@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.
Florida doles out extensions, raises to 5 assistant coaches

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — Florida defensive line coach Chris Rumph got a three-year contract extension and a $100,000 raise after helping the Gators become a formidable front in 2016.

Florida released contracts for five returning assistant coaches Friday in response to an open-records request.

Offensive coordinator Doug Nussmeier's base salary jumped from $525,000 to $842,725 in 2017, but his overall raise is minimal since Michigan paid him $300,000 in 2016 as part of a buyout. Nussmeier and coach Brady Hoke were fired in December 2014. Nussmeier also received a two-year extension from Florida, keeping him under contract through the 2018 season. Linebackers coach Tim Skipper, tight ends coach Greg Nord and receivers coach Kerry Dixon also received two-year extensions through 2018. Skipper will make $456,000, Nord will earn $420,000, and Dixon will get $300,000.

Florida is paying its assistant coaches about $4.46 million, a $70,825 increase from a year ago.
Confederate monuments are being removed around the country under pressure from those who say they honor a regime that enslaved African-Americans. The pace has increased, however, in the wake of last weekend's deadly confrontation at a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia.

A look at monuments that have been removed, covered up or vandalized in recent days:

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND:
A statue of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Roger B. Taney, who wrote the 1857 Dred Scott decision that upheld slavery and denied citizenship to African-Americans, was removed from the grounds of the Maryland State House Friday and trucked away to storage. Three of four voting members of the State House Trust voted to move the bronze statue, which was erected in 1872.

HELENA, MONTANA:
The city removed a granite fountain Friday that stood in a park as a monument to Confederate soldiers since 1916. One of a few people on hand to oppose the removal was detained when she defied orders to vacate the grounds of the fountain. She was later released.

BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON:
The city near the Canadian border removed signs identifying Pickett Bridge, which was named for Confederate Capt. George E. Pickett. North of Vancouver, former highway markers honoring Confederate President Jefferson Davis were splashed with red or black paint at a park on private land Friday.

ARLINGTON, TEXAS:
The Dallas-area theme park Six Flags Over Texas will no longer fly the Confederate flag. The park named for the six flags that have flown over the state said Friday that will now fly six American flags.

NEW YORK:
Transit officials will alter subway tiles at a Manhattan station that have a cross-like design similar to that of the Confederate flag. The design at the 40th Street entrance to the Times Square stop isn't flag-related but transit officials said they want to avoid confusion about their meaning. Earlier this week, plaques honoring Gen. Robert E. Lee were removed from the property of a now-closed Brooklyn church. Meanwhile, Gov. Andrew Cuomo has called on the Army to rename two streets at Fort Hamilton

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that honor Lee and another Confederate general.

DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA: A statue of Gen. Robert E. Lee at Duke University was found defaced Thursday. The statue in the entryway to Duke Chapel had damage to its nose. Another monument of a Confederate soldier that stood in front of a government office building in town was pulled down by protesters Monday night. Four people have been arrested, and authorities say more arrests are planned. Earlier, two statues in Wilmington were defaced with spray paint.

LEESBURG, VIRGINIA: A statue outside a courthouse dedicated to Confederate soldiers was vandalized. Obscenities and other graffiti were spray-painted on the 1908 monument sometime before dawn Thursday. The damage was repaired.

MADISON, WISCONSIN: A plaque honoring Confederate soldiers was removed Wednesday from a cemetery and a second monument will be taken down later. The plaque lauded “the valiant” Confederate soldiers buried there. Mayor Paul Soglin said the Civil War was “a defense of the deplorable practice of slavery.”

PHOENIX: A Confederate monument outside Phoenix was found covered in tar and feathers on Thursday. Earlier, the Confederate Troops Memorial outside the Arizona Capitol was spray-painted white. It was the second time in a week that the memorial had been vandalized.

Baltimore: Four Confederate-related monuments were hauled away on trucks under cover of darkness late Tuesday night and early Wednesday. Mayor Catherine Pugh said she was concerned that such statues might spark violence.

KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE: A 1914 monument honoring fallen Confederate soldiers was splattered with paint earlier this week. Opponents are signing a petition to have it removed from a neighborhood near the University of Tennessee campus.

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA: A 52-foot-tall obelisk honoring Confederate soldiers and sailors was covered by wooden panels at the mayor’s order. The 1905 monument is in a downtown park. The cover-up Tuesday prompted a lawsuit by Alabama’s attorney general, who argues that it violates a new law prohibiting the removal of historical structures, including rebel memorials.

LOS ANGELES: Hollywood Forever Cemetery, where many movie legends are interred, removed a 6-foot Confederate monument that was erected in 1925. The stone and attached plaque stood near the graves of more than 30 Confederate veterans and their families.

SAN DIEGO: The city removed a plaque naming Confederate President Jefferson Davis from a downtown plaza Wednesday. The 1926 plaque honored San Diego as the Western terminus of the Jefferson Davis Highway between Virginia and California.
Charlottesville shakes Trump's presidency

Ed Rogers  Special to the Washington Post

President Donald Trump had a news conference on Tuesday because he had something to say. Unfortunately, what he wanted to say and what the staff had prepared for him to say were two wildly different things.

Since everyone knew the president was going to get questions about the events in Charlottesville, Virginia, it is plausible to assume there was some plan for how to deal with the obvious. Undoubtedly, the president didn't share his plan with anyone else.

Time and again, Trump takes the bait offered by his media critics. He takes all the bait. Every time. The president must really like bait. In some ways, that makes it easy for the communications staff to plan. They know he will take the bait and never be reliably on message. So, inevitably the White House communications office has become a cleanup operation. The communications office isn't really about affirmative message management. They can never plan on the president doing his part in a disciplined way. But that is process.

In the case of Charlottesville, the substance of what the president had to say was the problem. It wasn't a failure of the communications team.

Any news conference, or public appearance for that matter, is about style and substance. Trump's style on Tuesday was the most stunning, jaw-dropping and out-of-character display by a president I have seen. He was hyper and angry from the first question. His thoughts were fragmented and his demeanor was the opposite of poised. He was gushing and full of rage.

It was disturbing to watch.

On substance, because I am a white southern Republican, I appreciate how careful some politicians have to be when talking about race. You can't give the biased media what they want. But Trump gave it to them by the shovel-full. When asked about the alt-right's motivations behind the protests and attacks in Charlottesville, Trump's response was: "OK, what about the alt-left that came charging at 'em ... Do they have any semblance of guilt?


"George Washington was a slave owner," he said, "So will George Washington now lose his status?"

To watch Trump's defenders struggle with trying to defend his bizarre statements is beyond sad, it is pathetic. Washington wasn't about slavery, but the Civil War and those who led it were about slavery.

My standard is simple. Like I have said before: "If a child asks what someone did that earned them a statue and the only possible answer is that he fought in the Civil War to defend slavery, then the statue should go."

Anyway, that is beside the point. The Republican Party is going to be allied with Trump on some things but not others. And right now, the president is somewhere I can't go and where the Republican Party can't afford to be.

Most of Trump's inappropriate, ill-fitting comments are usually quickly overtaken by a new inappropriate, ill-fitting comment. However, this time, Trump being out of line about matters associated with race and violence is something we can't just move on from. And it's not simply because of the media's preoccupation with the issue. It is because the conversation is so central to the American dream.

With his response to Charlottesville, Trump has marginalized himself and altered the potential that he has as president.

Whatever disaster occurs today or tomorrow won't make this disaster fade into the background. This one will linger, and it will be impossible for Republicans to completely disassociate themselves from it.

Charlottesville has shaken the Trump presidency. This one hurts.

Editor's note: Rogers, a conservative Republican who received his JD from the University of Alabama and worked for Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, has been a stalwart defender of President Donald Trump. He now works for the BGR Group, a lobbying firm which he co-founded with former Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour.
Why a 4-year degree isn’t the only path

There are about 30 million jobs out there that don’t require you to go to college to make a good living.

By Gail MarksJarvis
Chicago Tribune

If you aren’t sure college is for you, consider this: You don’t have to get a four-year degree to make a good living.

Contrary to the common belief that everyone must go to college, a new study from Georgetown University comes up with a surprising finding: There are still 30 million good jobs that don’t require a college degree, and people in them earn an average of $55,000 a year.

There is no question that some of the best jobs of the last generation have slipped away. Even after the recovery from the recession, there are still about 1 million fewer manufacturing jobs than there were in 2007 and about 1.6 million fewer in construction, according to researchers from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

Yet, despite the fact that blue-collar employment has declined 30 percent since 1991, there are still solid jobs that don’t require a college degree and offer pay that supports a middle-class lifestyle.

Of the 30 million good jobs for people without a bachelor’s degree, over half — 16 million — pay over $55,000, according to the Georgetown researchers. About 24 million pay over $45,000 annually.

The researchers consider a good job one that pays people $45 and older at least $45,000, or $22 an hour. For younger people, $35,000 is considered good as long as people advance and make $45,000 when they are more experienced in middle age.

To be sure, there are more good jobs for those who earned bachelor’s degrees than for those who didn’t — 36 million compared with 30 million, according to the Georgetown research.

Still, the four-year degree doesn’t guarantee top pay.

Anthony Carnevale, director of the Georgetown Center, has found that 28 percent of people who get associate degrees from community colleges end up with better jobs than those with bachelor’s degrees.

And although college graduation is considered the ticket for prosperity, certain degrees lag when it comes to pay. Among them: communications, art, and psychology. In previous research, the Georgetown researchers found that preschool teachers would be lucky to make $31,000 even though they earn bachelor’s degrees. People with jobs in psychology and social work were also at the $31,000 level.

Associate degrees can sometimes take people further, provided the degree isn’t general in nature and focuses on particular skills that are in high demand, such as nursing, computer specialists or mechanical technicians.

Since 1991, the number of good jobs suitable for people with only high school diplomas has dropped by more than 1 million positions. Yet workers who had two-year associate degrees were positioned for 3 million net new jobs during the same period, the researchers found.

Today, computer support technicians make $50,000 without a college degree. That’s similar to financial managers, sales representatives and engineering technicians, which are all good jobs that don’t require bachelor’s degrees, according to the research. The researchers identify good jobs in blue-collar categories ranging from welders, plumbers, heating mechanics, electricians and carpenters to skilled services such as bookkeepers, food service managers, security guards and industrial production managers.

“We find good jobs in skilled services industries, such as health care, finance and information technology,” the researchers said. “These new good jobs have steadily been replacing good jobs lost in traditional blue-collar industries.”

Sunday, August 13, 2017