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Airbus deal lifts Bombardier's jets

Plan is to build planes in Mobile

Lawrence Specker  Ispecker@al.com

Canadian jet-maker Bombardier has picked up some new orders for its C Series airliners, which some analysts see as a favorable response to a plan to build them in Mobile.

In early October, Airbus and Bombardier announced a deal in which Airbus will take a majority stake in a C Series Aircraft Limited Partnership (CSALP). The arrangement calls for Mobile to receive a C Series assembly line, leveraging Airbus' experience establishing a Final Assembly Line in the city for its own A320 family.

Since then:

- On Oct. 25, Bombardier responded hotly to a decision by Moody's rating service to downgrade Bombardier's credit rating and outlook. Bombardier argued that the decision "does not accurately reflect the value of our partnership with Airbus and is completely disconnected with the market reaction, which has been overwhelmingly positive."

- On Nov. 2, as Bombardier issued its third quarter financial report revealing that a European customer, which it did not name, had signed a Letter of Intent for the purchase of up to 61 C Series aircraft, including 31 "firm" purchases. Based on list price, the firm purchase of 31 jets would be a $2.4 billion deal. The company expects to deliver 20-22 C Series jets this year, an output impacted by engine delivery delays from Pratt & Whitney.

- This past week, the company announced that EgyptAir had signed a Letter of Intent for a 12-jet purchase, with an option of 12 more.

Still, the number of C Series orders is relatively modest. As of Sept. 30, Bombardier had taken 360 total orders for CS100s and CS300s, and delivered 19. By contrast, Airbus figures released in October show that it has received orders for more than 13,000 A320-family jets and delivered nearly 8,000.

Because the C Series jets are so new, every order counts as a vote of confidence in its future. A Bloomberg report said the EgyptAir buy was "especially significant for Bombardier, which gains another customer for its new jet less than a month after the company agreed to cede control of the C Series to Airbus in exchange for the European plane-maker's marketing heft and manufacturing expertise."

The Bloomberg story suggests that Airbus bought into a struggling but promising program: "The C Series was two-and-a-half years late and more than $2 billion over budget when it entered service at Deutsche Lufthansa AG's Swiss International unit in July 2016. Swiss and Air Baltic Corp., which began flying the CS300 in December, have reported better-than-expected fuel efficiency, which is key to the jet's appeal."

According to the Financial Times, EgyptAir Chairman Safwat Musallam said that Airbus' new stake in CSALP hadn't provided motivation for the purchase plan. EgyptAir had thoroughly evaluated the CS300, he said, and "We were going to buy it anyway."

The Airbus-Bombardier partnership hasn't received regulatory approval yet. Bombardier recently filed documentation suggesting that the proposed assembly line in Mobile would create 400 to 500 direct jobs and other economic boons.
Airbus lands giant order
And Mobile will help fill it

Lawrence Specker lspecker@al.com

Airbus has landed a massive order for more than 400 new jets, and indications are that at least some of them will be made in Alabama.

In Germany, Der Spiegel took notice of the news as the largest single deal in the company's history. In the U.S., Kristi Tucker, director of communications for Airbus Americas, said that the agreement struck at the Dubai Air Show had a definite connection to Airbus' Final Assembly Line in Mobile.

According to the report in Der Spiegel, the U.S.-based investment company Indigo Partners will buy 430 medium-range jets. The plan is to purchase 273 A320neo jets and 157 A321neos. They'll go to four airlines owned by Indigo: Frontier Airlines in the U.S., Chile-based JetSmart, Mexico-based Volaris and Hungary-based Wizz Air.

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Airbus builds its A320-family jets at four locations: Toulouse, France; Hamburg, Germany; Tianjin, China; and Mobile. The company is often coy about saying exactly which plant will build the jets in a given order. However, the Alabama line was built primarily to serve customers in North and South America, where most of the jets ordered by Indigo Partners will be flown.

Tucker said that Frontier Airlines already had been scheduled to receive Mobile-built jets in 2018. "We certainly expect that some of the aircraft included in this order will also be produced here," she said via email.

A Frontier news release quoted John Leahy, chief operating officer for customers for Airbus Commercial Aircraft, as saying that Frontier had been "a great partner" since 2001. "Airbus offers efficient aircraft that is a basis for their growth, and we are particularly proud to start delivering Frontier aircraft from our U.S.-based Mobile, Alabama, production facility next year," Leahy said.

Frontier said its allotment of 124 A320neos "will triple the size of the low-cost carrier over the next 10 years." It valued those jets alone at a list price of more than $15 billion. It valued the total Indigo deal at $49.5 billion. (Industry sources frequently note that purchases rarely pay full list price, however, especially on large orders.)

According to a BBC report, Leahy said that "Regretfully, Indigo will not be paying $49.5 billion," when asked about discounts.

Frontier said its company growth would mean 5,000 new jobs throughout the United States.

The "neo" suffix stands for "New Engine Option" and refers to next-generation powerplants whose benefits include better fuel efficiency. So far the Airbus Final Assembly Line in Mobile has built A320s and A321s with the older Conventional Engine Option or CEO designation. It has not yet delivered any neo jets.

But company officials have said that the plan all along has been for Mobile to churn out neo-powered jets. UTC Aerospace in Foley, a company that preps the engines used in Mobile-built jets, has undertaken a major expansion that will be dedicated primarily to neo engine preparation.

According to the BBC report, Airbus' previous record deal had been "a 2015 order for 250 single-aisle planes valued at $27 billion by Indian budget carrier Indigo."
TPD officer cleared after probe

Woman ejected for smoking inside stadium on Nov. 4

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

A Tuscaloosa police officer who ejected a cigarette-smoking Alabama fan from Bryant-Denny Stadium on Nov. 4 has been cleared after an internal investigation.

TPD announced the outcome of the investigation Monday and posted just more than 20 minutes of the officer's body camera footage on YouTube. The department later removed the footage because the woman's personal information was read aloud by an officer.

"Based on our review of the incident we do not feel the officer involved acted inappropriately," a Facebook post by TPD said Monday.

Cellphone videos of the officer asking the woman to leave her seat went viral after the Nov. 4 game against LSU. In the video, the officer asks the 60-year-old Fairhope woman to extinguish her cigarette before she holds it in his face. She has said in media interviews that she was giving the cigarette to him to extinguish.

She then collapsed on the ground and refused to move as he tried to escort her from her seat.

The officer was called to the seat at 7:16 p.m., just after the

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SMOKING

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7 p.m. kickoff.
"You've got to put that out, you can't smoke in the stadium," he said to the woman. She refused to follow him out of the stands, and fell to the ground as he tried to escort her from the aisle.
"I'm not going to fight you, so you can stand up and walk out with me on your own," he said to her. "Are you coming?"
"She had a death grip on those seats down there, she said 'I can't get up,' and I said 'I'm trying to help you up,' " the officer told someone later as the woman was being checked out by a paramedic.
"You're going to be Facebook famous," the other person, another officer or a paramedic who can't be seen on the body cam footage, said to the officer.
"The cellphones came out 'wa-bam', I looked around, and there were about two dozen," the officer said. "That's when I stopped trying to get her out, and that's when I called for some help."
He said the woman claimed to suffer from severe nephropathy.
At least six other officers including a supervisor responded to the woman's seats. Other fans filmed the incident at first, then seemed annoyed as the game continued.
"What is she doing?" one woman asks, as the woman who had the cigarette continued to sit on the ground in front of the row of seats.
A paramedic eventually led the woman up the stairs and into the concourse. She was examined and did not require any further medical attention.

The sergeant told the officer it was his decision whether to arrest the woman.
"I'm going to try to give her a break. If she'll walk out peacefully, I'm going to let it go at that," he said. "But I can't let her go back and sit down after she refused to do what I told her to."

The woman said she wanted to go back and watch the game, but the officer refused. She was led from the stadium by a man who had been with her in the stands.
University tests metal detectors at Bryant Denny to bolster security

By: Camille Studebaker

Holding a capacity of 101,821 fans, Bryant-Denny Stadium can get hectic as a cluster of crimson, white and houndstooth flow in. Hosting a top-ranked football team, it is one of the largest stadiums in college football bringing in a large number of fans for every University of Alabama home game.

As a potential added security measure for the stadium, UA tested the use of metal detectors at selected gates upon entrance on Saturday’s home game against Mercer.

“Any stadium that attracts a fan base of that size, any type of enhanced security is always a positive,” said Monica Watts, associate vice president for communications in the division of strategic communications.

Watts said there were no issues with current security in the stadium. This was just a way to try to help security on campus in regards to game day because UA is always looking for ways to improve and enhance security.

“This is a proactive effort to just test increased security procedures at the stadium,” she said. “We’re continually exploring ways to increase security around game day events for our fans and our visitors.”

Ralph Clayton, assistant vice president for public safety, said the University really wanted to work hard to ensure smooth flow into the gate access. They had additional staffing on hand at the entrance during the process, where each person came through and was asked to remove prohibited objects and hold them over their head before walking through the detectors. If an item was detected, then a secondary screener came with a wand, and if a prohibited item was detected, the person had to either dispose of the item or return it to his or her car before entering the stadium.

Some prohibited items in the stadium include weapons, umbrellas, artificial noisemakers, flags and banners, strollers, computers, video recorders, outside food and drink and coolers. Watts said metal detectors help UA enforce existing rules that are already in place about prohibited items.

“The trial use of metal detectors at Bryant-Denny Stadium went well,” she said. “There were no complaints from attendees, and the screening process did not appear to delay entrance to the gates where they were used. Campus officials will evaluate the results of this test and continue discussions about the possibility of any further implementation.”

Metal detectors are already set in place at other institutions and most all professional sports leagues require them, so this is something worth evaluating, Watts said.

“We’re just trying to be proactive and looking at every effort to ensure our fans’ safety as well as ensuring a great game day experience for the fans,” Clayton said.

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Kayleigh Westbrook, a sophomore majoring in communication studies and political science, went to the game Saturday but did not pass through a metal detector because she said none of them were set up at student gates. She does not know what gates were chosen for testing, however, she thinks implementing metal detectors will be helpful in the future for UA’s game day security because they can detect prohibited items that were missed in the initial bag search.

“I think sometimes when the crowds get super heavy, it’s hard for the people who are supposed to be checking bags and everything to check everyone’s bag,” she said. “So I think a metal detector could be good for things that are missed.”
The Machine would do well to adapt to change coming to Greek life

Much has been written about the nefarious activities "The Machine" has been involved in over the years. Wrapped in a false and nearly transparent veneer of mystery, The Machine is supposed to be some big secret organization on the campus of the University of Alabama. In reality, it never was what many wanted to believe and it no longer is even what it used to be.

In local folklore and for many decades and many election cycles, The Machine was some sinister secret society that was never to be spoken about out loud and only mentioned in whispers by those in the know.

In reality, it was a "good-old-boys" club made up of primarily rich, and entirely white, kids who were in fraternities and sororities at Alabama. They rigged campus elections by following the classic good-old-boy playbook. As these young students from homogenized backgrounds matriculated through the Capstone, they formed bonds around their Greek life social gatherings and demanded loyalty to a voting bloc that could ensure their candidates dominated student government and other campus organizations.

As the students became adults, many went on to enter business and politics. And, when possible, they leaned on this old system to help. After all, Greek life is supposed to be about forming lifelong friendships. And it is also only natural that some students from these Greek organizations are from the privileged classes of society. One would reasonably expect many of them to achieve prominent positions in business and government.

But there were occasions throughout the years when campus candidates were able to upset The Machine and win in spite of it. There were also other occasions when The Machine was able to successfully boycott businesses for not playing along. Still, there were others, such as the times it has interfered with city elections.

But times are changing. Greeks no longer have the grip on campus politics that they once had, and their influence elsewhere is slipping also.

There are many positives to Greek life, too numerous to list here. And the Greek community on Alabama's campus remains among the most vibrant in the nation. It would be hard to argue that football and Greek life are not the two most dominant influences on campus culture all across the South, and Alabama has been at the top of the hill on both counts for a long time.

But just as head injuries threaten to change football forever, change is sweeping through the Greek community also.

Last week, Ohio State University suspended 37 fraternities on campus. This month, Florida State University and Texas State University suspended all fraternity activities. Hazing and binge drinking that has led to death or recently on several college campuses, including Louisiana State University and Penn State, along with sexual assaults at others, has led to the crackdown on Greek organizations.

The Machine would do well to preserve itself by shedding the sinister cloak of secrecy and reinventing itself through good works and transparency.
Million Dollar Band starts digital fundraiser

Effort would buy new musical instruments

Staff report

The University of Alabama's Million Dollar Band hopes to raise $40,000 through a new digital philanthropy tool. The effort is the first project for UA Crowdfunding — an online fundraising platform for groups at UA that will be used to connect the power of social media, peer-to-peer relationships and collective giving.

UA Crowdfunding will eventually allow donors the opportunity to support a variety of different projects created by those within the UA community. Supporters can make gifts of any size and

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track the overall progress of projects, which will typically run for 30 days.

The fundraiser for the 400-member Million Dollar Band began Nov. 17 with the goal of providing enough money to buy an entire section of new musical instruments.

"Unlike most college bands, the Million Dollar Band does not have a matching set of instruments. A successful campaign will enable us to improve our sound, enhance our image and replace aging instruments," Kenneth Ozzello, UA’s director of bands, said in a news release.

As of Sunday afternoon, the effort had raised $6,106 from 55 donors. The crowdfunding site allows donors to choose the amount they give, from as little as $10 to as much as $5,000. For more information or to make a gift to the Million Dollar Band’s campaign, visit crowdfunding.ua.edu/mdb before Dec. 15.

Managed by the Office of Annual Giving, UA Crowdfunding will build support for projects that might otherwise go without funding. Beginning in spring 2018, campaigns will be created and run by academic departments, student groups and other members of the UA community in need of support.

"It's amazing what can be accomplished with a large number of small donations. Our theme ‘Great Ideas. Legendary Impact.’ encompasses that spirit. We are excited to debut this new way of supporting the university and know our alumni and friends will respond by helping fund the Million Dollar Band," said Mary Lawhorn, UA’s director of annual giving.
Hot Tide topics

Alabama's new AD discusses Saban, scheduling, fans, and even 'Dixieland Delight'

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

Greg Byrne was introduced as the University of Alabama's athletics director in mid-January and started work on March 1. He left the same position at Arizona to join the Crimson Tide, and headed the athletics program at Mississippi State before that.

The Pocatello, Idaho, native is the son of an athletics director and knew early on he wanted to follow in his father's footsteps. Byrne, who will turn 46 later this month, sat down with The Tuscaloosa News to talk about his vision for UA athletics, in particular the football program, and topics such as scheduling and his relationship with head coach Nick Saban.

Q: Let's start with your office here. You've been in this office for a little while and had a chance to get settled in. I couldn't help but notice the notebook on the wall. How old were you when you did that, and what's the story behind it?
A: That was my fourth-grade career report at Flying Hills Elementary School in El Cajon, California, outside of San Diego. My dad was working at San Diego State and most kids wrote about being a doctor or a fireman or a veterinarian. I wrote about being an athletics director.

My dad was retiring in 2012, as athletics director from Texas A&M, (my parents) had built their home that they were going to retire to and they were going through a bunch of old file cabinets and my mom found that, and so she got it framed for me. It's been a real conversation piece.

Q: So when you look back, are there things that you've used from that?
A: Actually, back then I think I wrote that they get to go to games, get to be around the coaches and I probably called them players and they talk on the phone a lot and go to lunch. (Laughs) So probably not a whole lot of insights from a fourth-grader.

Q: That actually sounds like a pretty good job description. There's some truth to that. Back then, of course, we didn't have desktop computers, we didn't have cell phones, but you still do talk on the phone a decent amount. You write a lot more emails now more than anything.

Q: But you do get to hang out with coaches and players.
A: You do. You get to be around the coaches and the players. Now you do it as the athletic director so you're not doing it as a fan. You become a fan, obviously, but still you have to always balance your fandom with your professional responsibilities.

Q: I don't know if you come in through a side door or if you come in through the front door and go up the stairs...
A: Yeah, I go to the stairs right over there (next to his office).

Q: So you don't come down the hall with all the national championship team displays and the Heisman Trophies and all that?
A: No, but I get around. I'm probably in that area three, four times a week. Sometimes multiple times a day.

Q: And your office overlooks three football practice fields and you've got a little balcony here where you can watch over them. How much appreciation do you have for that? I'm sure you've been around, you know Alabama football is pretty big, but from the inside does it look bigger or not?
A: I can tell you I had great appreciation coming in from the outside because I'd been around it quite a bit. Mal treated me very well, Coach Moore. I had tremendous respect for Coach (Bill) Battle (Byrne's predecessor), Coach (Paul W. "Bear") Bryant – certainly never met him but I've met Mr. Bryant Jr., Paul Jr. (the late coach's son) – and had been in some meetings with Coach Saban a few different times, so part of the reason why I wanted to be here when Alabama called was because it's Alabama, and the respect that I have and Regina (Byrne, his wife) has as well.

My respect has done nothing but increase since I've been here. The way we are united as a university is something that is very special, from the leadership of university with Dr. (Stuart) Bell and the trustees to the campus embracing our athletic department, our football program, and the way the student body and the community and the state – even the country; Brad Bohannon, our new baseball coach, who had a lot of experience in the SEC before recruiting (here) said it's just amazing the doors you are able to get open now nationally because he's calling...
from Alabama. What a strength that is of ours that you don’t take lightly, that you’ve got to make sure we do everything we can to maintain that and, hopefully, continue to improve.

Q: What is your relationship with Nick Saban like?
A: It’s been great, and I’m not saying that because it’s the right thing to say. From the first time he and Miss Terry (Saban’s wife) and Regina and I sat down on a Saturday in January, the week after the Clemson (national championship) game, he’s been outstanding.

We usually talk at least once a week. Often times it can be a very short discussion, or sometimes it will be a little longer depending on what each of us has to talk about. But on top of that, the way I’ve watched him run his program, one of the things I’m convinced of is that I think whatever he did professionally, personally, because of his focus, because of his drive, I think he would have incredible success as a leader in really anything.

Q: So when you meet with him on that weekly basis, does he come to your office or does he come to yours?
A: Usually stop by and see him on Sundays.

Q: He’s pretty busy on Sundays, too, but he makes time for you.
A: He does, he does. Absolutely.

Q: Moving forward on football, let’s talk about scheduling. We’ve heard that in the future, marquee home-and-homes might be something that is being worked on. What can you tell us about that?
A: Home-and-homes are on the radar screen. The formula that we have right now has worked very well for us, and we want to be extremely respectful of that, and at the same time, want to keep in mind. One, scheduling has to be a two-way street where we might want to schedule somebody and that may not be something they want to do and, there may be a school out there that we decide we don’t want to play for whatever reason. And the other challenge is how far out in advance you have to go with those home-and-homes. There are schools that have games scheduled into the 2030s now, so we’re exploring at what those options can look like, and what that right model is for us as scheduling continues to evolve.

Q: Is there thought of dropping the traditional PCS (Football Championship Subdivision) game that usually comes late in the season, the week before Auburn (like Saturday’s game against Mercer)?
A: No. Well, you never know how the SEC schedule will evolve, too, so I can’t say that will always be the same time every year, but I do think from a scheduling perspective that gives your program—obviously whoever we play we’re going to have great respect for—if we’re fortunate enough in those games to have success on the field, you can sometimes get some guys out there, get some experience playing who don’t always get those opportunities. That can be good for the development of your program.

So the FCS part of the schedule, coach and I haven’t had any discussion about that. And unless he brings it up, I don’t anticipate it.

Q: On the home-and-homes, who would you personally like to see Alabama play?
A: Oh, I don’t want to show my cards quite yet on that one. (Laugh)

Q: I can understand that, but I want to ask about one in particular. The one that I would think seems to be the biggest obstacle playing in a one-off at a neutral site is Notre Dame, because of them being tied into NBC—They’ll let them play home-and-home, where they get to televising one of two, but not a solo game if they don’t get to teleview it. Is that something that could possibly happen?
A: I saw Jack’s comments about that—Jack Swarbrick (Notre Dame’s athletics director) — and so obviously that, as you’re going through programs that make sense, that’s one that could make some sense, but a lot of factors go into that.

Q: Another thing that is an issue that the sport is facing is attendance. It’s hard to beat big-screen, HD television and not fighting the crowd and all that. Especially with what they’ve done at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta with fan-friendly pricing of the actual game experience—a $2 bottle of water versus a $6 bottle of water—what is Alabama looking at to enhance that?
A: We actually have our contract coming up on our concessionaire, so we are doing a deep dive into our program.

We are looking, on top of that, though, we are looking at the entire game-day experience for our fans. Knowing that attendance across the country is a challenge, I saw another prominent school that’s had recent success that said they’re having a hard time keeping their students at the games. We’re dealing with the same thing.

We actually sold more tickets to Alabama football games this year than maybe any time in our history. We can track what percentage gets used, though, and we’re down right now. They’re sold, but we’re down from where we were. Since 2010, when Bryant-Denny (Stadium) was last expanded, the percentage of seats that are being actually used are down, so we need to pay attention to that.

So take that a step further, I’ve really been impressed with the customer service our ticket office, Tide Pride, gives. That has to be the case. We understand that when you have 100,000 people show up on a Saturday evening or afternoon, you’re not going to park everybody right next to the stadium five minutes before kickoff and walk right into the stadium. There is a sacrifice that you have to go into understanding, but with that said, you want it to be as efficient as you possibly can. You can’t have unlimited buses going back and forth, but making sure they’re running as efficiently as possible, the ones that you have. Understanding that having our gate attendants warmly greet our fans walking in, having the concessions and restrooms be good —we’ve got some work to do there. Bryant-Denny Stadium is on a very small footprint for 100,000 people, and if you look around, there’s not a lot of other places to expand that footprint. So what can we do to modernize that experience from a restroom/concession/ ingress/egress, that’s a very, very expensive proposition that I don’t know what that is yet, but that doesn’t mean that we don’t continue to look at what we do.

So I think the reality is stadiums right now—you look at the NFL, they’re at 60-, 65-, 70,000 in most of their venues. We’re different than the NFL, and at the same time, too, I think it’s important to look nationally at how people are consuming their sports. It’s still extremely popular and there’s no place more popular than the University of Alabama, and we need to make sure we don’t take that for granted.

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TIDE

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Q: The model in athletics, in entertainment, has beenget as many people in the building as you can and take as much money from them as you can. Do you think that pricing across the board – whether that’s tickets, whether that’s Quad space for tailgating, whether that’s parking, whether that’s hot dogs – do you see that becoming more fan-friendly?

A: I think you have to be very sensitive to that, yes.

Q: You brought up students, but there’s a song they really like ...

A: “Friends in Low Places”? (Laughs)

Q: They like that, too, I think, but this is about a Tennessee Saturday night of all things. I’m not sure why they want to sing about that, but it’s been banned, apparently, or it’s no longer played. Is there any chance that comes back?

A: I think if you look at the history on that one, the question kind of answers itself. And to expand a little bit more, we have fans of a lot of different ages at the game, and I have had a lot of people who bring their children to the games who have – even though that was stopped before I got here – who have come up to me and said that would be very difficult to bring my kids to the games with certain things that happen with the games.

We want to have a great, loud, festive environment with traditions that are very important, but also making sure it’s an environment that we can bring our children to.

(Note: The song “Dixieland Delight” is no longer played during Alabama home games because students shout profanities in unison in reply to some of the lyrics.)

Q: So I take that as no more “Dixieland Delight”?

A: (Laughs)

Q: What is your vision for what Alabama football and this athletic department will look like in, let’s say, 10 years?

A: Obviously from a football standpoint, we have incredible history with Coach Bryant and Coach (Gene) Stallings and Coach (Wallace) Wade and all, and we need to make sure we honor that. And I think we do a good job of that, but we also need to recognize that we’re under historical times right now and we need to not take that for granted. I don’t think we are, but I also think that for each and every one of us who wants to see the Crimson Tide perform at the highest levels, being at the games, supporting the program is critical for it. And so we need that to continue.

We need to prepare for what college football looks like 10 years from now. I don’t know if anybody’s got a perfect answer to what that is, but (we need to) do our best to forecast that and understand that and make decisions based off of that.

We want Coach Saban to finish his coaching career here at Alabama, and he sure has given us every intention that that’s what will take place, but we need to make sure we’re in as solid a foundation as we can be when that transition takes place, hopefully many, many, many years down the road. But you’ll always have to be prepared for those next steps in whatever you have, whether it’s business, whether it’s your teams, whether – any organization that’s out there, you always have to be thinking about the future.

From the athletics department standpoint, we want to go compete with Florida to be one of the top athletic departments in the SEC. Coach Saban said it best: Let’s be great at what we do. When I introduced him to Brad Bohannon right after we hired (Bohannon), he said if we’re good in baseball that’s good for Alabama football, it’s good for the University of Alabama. When you think about it this way – and all of the sports are important – if we’re great in football then we’re going to be part of the discussion in the late summer, really throughout the summer, nationally. And we’re going to be part of the discussion throughout the fall and into the winter. And then if we’re good in men’s basketball and women’s basketball, we’re going to be part of the discussion – look at the interest in Mississippi State with their women’s team making the run that they did – then you’re going throughout the winter into the spring if you’re good at men’s and women’s basketball. And then if you’re good at softball, baseball and track, you’re going to be part of the discussion for the spring into the summer,

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and that’s good for Alabama athletics, that’s good for the University of Alabama, that’s good for Tuscaloosa and the state of Alabama.

Look at (golfer) Justin Thomas being here (for LSU) weekend. You can be the best in the world and come to school here at the University of Alabama. Justin shows that.

And what an advantage for us when we can go out and recruit, not just for football but all of our other sports, and say look at the successes you can have by being here.

Q: You mentioned Saban spending the rest of his career here and hoping that will be a long time. Every athletic director says they carry a list of candidates around: If you had to look for a new head football coach sooner rather than later, do you have thoughts of who that might be, knowing that changes over time?

A: The way I’d answer that is, the goal is to keep Coach Saban here for a long time. That’s what our focus is. At the point that he decides to retire, we’ll be as prepared as we possibly can be, but we want that to be many, many years down the road.

Q: And the final question, we’re aware of plans that include some changes around the football stadium – a Hall of Fame type thing in the Walk of Champions area – and some other things like that. What can you tell us about that, what it might look like and a timetable for it?

A: We’re working on a facility master plan collectively for the entire footprint of all our athletic facilities, so recognizing and honoring your past is a part of it.

What that looks like, right now we don’t know. It’s too early to say.

Q: Any more statues that you’re sure of at this point?

A: Too early to say.

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An impressive cancer breakthrough

Teen’s science project could combat metastasis

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When you picture a high school student’s science project, you think baking soda volcano or the like. What you don’t expect is an honest-to-goodness breakthrough in breast cancer research.

Kenneth Jiao, a 17-year-old senior at Indian Springs High School in Pelham, just took our expectations and spewed them like so much fake lava at the Siemens Competition in Math, Science and Technology held last weekend at the University of Texas in Austin.

Kenneth won the individual category in the Siemens regional, taking home a $3,000 scholarship and moving on to the final round of the nation’s premier science research competition for high school students. At the finals in Washington, D.C., on Dec. 4 and 5, he could win as much as $100,000 in scholarship money.

Just the name of his project is mind-boggling: “Retain CHD7, and Epigenetic Regulator, in the Nucleus to Combat Breast Cancer Metastasis.”

In his research, Kenneth discovered a new role of the gene, CHD7, and its molecular processes that could help combat metastasis, or the spreading of cancer cells from a primary site to other organs.

An estimated 90 percent of breast cancer deaths are a result of metastasis of breast cancer cells to other vital organs such as bones, the lungs, liver or brain, according to a Siemens news release.

"Despite great progress in cancer therapy, treatments to cure metastatic breast cancer do not exist," the release states. "(Kenneth’s) research could lead to an improved molecular understanding of the growth and progression of breast cancer, as well as better methods of developing treatments for patients with breast cancer.”

Even the judges at the Siemens competition were amazed that Kenneth’s high school science project could result in a major breakthrough for cancer research.

"Kenneth’s research could bring scientists one step closer to developing a new biomarker for breast cancer metastasis and saving lives,” said competition judge Dr. Z. Jeffrey Chen, D.J. Silvey Centennial Professor of Molecular Biosciences at The University of Texas at Austin. "It’s rare to see this level of progress achieved in an independent project. Kenneth’s work is phenomenal, and could help reveal the underlying mechanisms in breast cancer metastasis.”

It helps to be from the Birmingham area, home to one of the nation’s most prestigious medical centers. Dr. Lichong Wang of the UAB School of Medicine was his mentor on the project. Plus, his own genetics are predisposed to scientific research.

His mother, Dr. Qin Wang, is a professor of cell, developmental and integrative biology at UAB and his father, Dr. Kai Jiao, is an associate professor of genetics there.

Kenneth decided to pursue this research after his mother had a breast cancer scare two years ago.

She was diagnosed with a breast tumor that had to be removed. It turned out to be benign, but it was still a frightening experience for the entire family.

"While waiting for the pathological report, I was so worried and scared,” Kenneth said. "From this personal experience, I understood the patients’ vulnerability, and the desperation their families feel," Kenneth said. "Therefore, I decided to do research on breast cancer. I hope my efforts will help to create a world where nobody worries about breast cancer anymore.”

"My ultimate goal is to save human lives and improve population health through medicine,” he said. "I want eventually to become a leader in the biotech and pharmaceutical industry,” Kenneth said.

Oh, and while he’s not making amazing scientific discoveries, Kenneth dabbles in chess, where he’s led his school’s team to two state championships and is currently ranked as the 28th best player in Alabama.

Haskins writes about points of pride statewide. Small your suggestions to shaskins@al.com, or tweet them to @Shelly_Haskins using #AlabamaProud.

Crafted in The Birmingham News
UAB accuser blames Jones for ‘hypocrisy’

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A woman who sued her university in 2001 over sexual abuse she allegedly suffered as a 15-year-old said Democratic Senate candidate Doug Jones questioned the timing and motivation of her accusations while defending employees of the University of Alabama at Birmingham in a $40 million lawsuit.

Brittany Benefield said she has been thinking about the case a lot in recent days as allegations surfaced that Jones' opponent, Roy Moore, engaged in inappropriate relationships with teen girls during his early 30s. Jones has said he finds Moore's accusers credible.

"I find it to be the height of hypocrisy that he sets his campaign to be on the moral high ground against Roy Moore," said Benefield.

In public statements about the case, in his role defending university officials, Jones cast doubt on her claim that the university officials were responsible.

"The charges against UAB administrators and coaches are entirely without merit and represent nothing more than a cynical attempt to extort money by slandering this institution and its employees," Jones said at the time.

John Whitaker, an attorney who represented Benefield at the time, said Jones acted professionally in his defense of UAB and did not mistreat the victim. Attorneys are required to vigorously defend their clients, and can be disciplined for failing to do so.

"Never, ever, do I think that Doug Jones did anything inappropriate," Whitaker said.

Benefield said she can't discuss the details of confidential court proceedings, but has very bad memories of the mediation process.

"He was not a victim's advocate," Benefield said. "He was all for blaming the victim, honestly."

It was an ugly episode for the school and its fledgling football program, which was implicated in the scandal. Benefield, originally identified in court documents as Jane Doe, had been hailed as the youngest student ever admitted to an Alabama university. She began attending the university soon after she turned 15.

UAB in 2001 hired Jones to defend a football coach and the university police chief against allegations they didn't protect Benefield from older athletes who sexually exploited her and exposed her to drugs and alcohol. One campus officer was also alleged to have had sex with the student.

"[Jones] has always fought for justice for victims and to make sure that everyone gets a fair shake in court," said campaign spokesman Sebastian Kitchen in a statement. "After litigation in this matter was
filed, Doug represented the former football coach and former chief of police, who were ultimately dismissed from the case. Doug was not the lead lawyer in the case for the University.

Benefield said she has been watching allegations unfold against Roy Moore and other high-profile men and is glad to see discussions happening about sexual assault. She describes herself as "fairly liberal" and said she's registered as a Democrat.

Benefield said at the time of the lawsuit, the publicity around the case was almost as bad as the abuse itself. Lawyers, including Jones, often spoke to the press.

According to The Birmingham Post-Herald, Jones mentioned her hometown in one of his first media appearances. Her attorneys originally filed the case as Jane Doe. The case was later refiled under her legal name.

"Although there was a question regarding whether or not the rule of law would allow for anonymous lawsuits, [Jones] treated the victim and her family with the utmost respect," Kitchen said.

The parties settled the case in 2003, almost three years after the sexual abuse was said to have begun. During litigation, UAB attorneys said the school never put into writing promises that they would protect Benefield.

The case is sealed and the university responses are not publicly available. In the press at the time, attorneys for the university did not deny the sex occurred, but denied the university officials had violated an agreement to protect Benefield. Administrators from UAB claimed attorneys representing the student and her family shopped the story around to media outlets, "in hopes of causing maximum damage to the athletic department," according to The Birmingham News.

When Benefield's lawsuit dropped on the first day of football season, Jones's voice was among a chorus questioning its timing, according to news reports from 2001. Jones argued the plaintiff hadn't gotten proper permission to file the case anonymously and instead rushed it into court.

"I guess they were a little too anxious to get it filed on the first day of football season," Jones said in The Birmingham Post-Herald in 2001.

Supporters of Moore have repeatedly questioned why his accusers would speak out now, in some cases four decades later. Moore has been accused of inappropriate conduct by half a dozen women who lived in Gadsden in the late 1970s and early 80s. Jones has remained mostly quiet on the subject, although he has said he finds the allegations more credible than the denials.

"Like I have said, like so many Republicans have said, like so many people across this country have said, it seems to me that the statements made by the women up in Etowah County have much more credibility than the denials whether it's by Roy Moore himself or his handlers," Jones said on Wednesday.

Benefield also said she has no reason to doubt the women who have come forward regarding Moore.
Benefield's admission to UAB began with fanfare and high hopes. School officials allegedly promised her parents they would protect the unusually young freshman, although news reports at the time say Jones argued there was no paper trail of the alleged agreements.

When she moved into a co-ed dorm filled with student athletes in her second semester, her life soon spiraled out of control. The lawsuit claimed that Benefield was used as a "play thing" by more than 20 student athletes.

Benefield's GPA slipped from 3.5 her first semester to 1.9 in her third, when her parents withdrew her from school and placed her in a rehabilitation facility. Benefield's lawsuit said she was 15 when she began drinking and having sex with older UAB students - younger than the legal age of consent in Alabama.

The conduct occurring in her dorm room was widely known by coaches and campus police, according to the lawsuit, which included emails about the situation between school officials. Her parents said they were not told about any problems until the end of Benefield's third semester. In newspaper articles, the mother said she attempted to file criminal charges, but was turned away by campus police.

Student athletes alleged to have been involved in the sexual misconduct were not disciplined.

Jones did not defend any of the people accused of sexual misconduct with Benefield. His clients were sued for failing to adequately protect the 15-year-old student.

Benefield said in a recent interview that she's limited in what she can say about the case. But Benefield recalled moments she felt defense attorneys put the blame for her assault squarely on her parents, and sometimes on her.

Some of the things Jones said during the process "really made my jaw hit the floor," Benefield said.

"I just think Doug Jones is full of ... something," Benefield said. "He was cold, uncaring, unfeeling and calculated throughout the case."

After the resolution of the civil case, Benefield did not pursue criminal charges. If she had, she says now, she might have had to endure dozens of trials against the alleged perpetrators, a prospect she couldn't face after one-and-a-half years of civil litigation.

Ultimately, she said the settlement forced UAB to change some procedures and provide more protection for students. Benefield has made her peace with what happened, for the most part.

"Every day of my life for three years had been about the trauma, and I was tired of it," Benefield said. "I wanted to move on, but then you realize that never happens. It's always, always, always there."
Student satisfaction on rise at UAB – survey

Erin Edgemon, eedgemon@al.com

A recent survey shows student satisfaction at UAB is higher than the national average, the university announced Thursday.

“The results are evidence of just how hard our students, faculty, staff and many supporters have worked to identify and create opportunities that enhance the student experience,” UAB President Ray L. Watts said. “I want to thank everyone who has played a part in building such positive momentum, making UAB a first-choice destination and home for students.”

According to the university, student satisfaction at UAB is now at an all-time high and higher than national averages among four-year public universities in several categories: student centeredness, campus life, instructional effectiveness, recruitment and financial aid, campus support services, academic advising, registration effectiveness, concern for the individual, service excellence, responsiveness to diverse populations, and campus climate.

19% RESPONSE RATE
In the spring 2017 semester, all UAB undergraduates were invited to take the Student Satisfaction Inventory survey conducted by Ruffalo Noel Levitz. The survey asks students to rate a wide range of experiences and rate how important those experiences are to them and their satisfaction.

The response rate was roughly 19 percent, according to UAB, with 2,237 students answering at least some of the questions.

The highest scores students gave UAB were in response to the statement, “This institution has a good reputation within the community.”

Other top-performing areas included:
- “Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field.”
- “There is a commitment to academic excellence on this campus.”
- “I am able to experience intellectual growth here.”
- “There is a good variety of courses provided on this campus.”

LESS-SATISFIED AREAS
Students, however, were less satisfied with their access to parking.

Student satisfaction with campus safety and security improved from 2015 to 2017, but was under the national average. A 2012 study conducted by the School of Public Health demonstrated that the perception of crime on campus considerably outweighed actual crime, the university said.

According to the school, data shows UAB continues to perform as well as or better in safety statistics than urban and non-urban institutions across the state and country.

‘WORLD-CLASS’ SCHOOL
UAB Undergraduate Student Government Association President Mugdha Mokashi said she wasn’t surprised by the survey results.

“To me, UAB is a world-class institution that can compete with top public institutions,” she said. “The results provided data for things we already know: primarily, that UAB’s students have a commitment to academic excellence and an appreciation for diversity and inclusion that is evident in our student life activities.”
Scientists detect gravitational waves, observe stars colliding for the first time

By: Cassidy Grom

Turns out Albert Einstein was onto something with his speed of light theory.

For the first time, scientists observed two neutron stars colliding and confirmed that gravitational waves, or ripples in space and time, travel at the speed of light. Experts think the collision resulted in a black hole and sent the ingredients for gold and platinum into the universe.

The stars, which have been circling each other for ages, collided about 130 million light years away, outside of our galaxy. Using the new observatories in the U.S. and Italy, scientists were able to measure its effects. NASA spokespeople and others in the space science community took to Facebook to explain their findings on Monday.

"From our combined observations, (we) learned that gravitational waves travel at the speed of light, which is something we had never measured before!" Rachel Hamburg, a master’s student in University of Alabama in Huntsville department of space science, said.

The waves actually travel at the same rate “within one part in one quadrillion,” Adam Goldstein, a member of NASA’s Postdoctoral program said. The delay between the light and the gravitational waves was less than two seconds — probably because it took a moment for the stars to collide and a black hole to form. Or, it may have taken the photons from the explosion a moment to “escape” from the debris cloud of surrounding material.

The conditions of the explosion were right to produce gold and platinum, said Colleen Wilson-Hodge, a high energy astrophysicist at NASA. The readings weren’t good enough to pick out the “exact signature” of the two metals but scientists do know that star-collisions produce elements heavier than iron.

The space community was buzzing after the findings were announced in October. The discovery was made possible by lasers in the new observatories that measure the miniscule changes in distance between pairs of mirrors that are created when gravitational waves “wash” over earth, according to National Geographic.

Since then, the instruments have detected more events in space. Scientists announced the discovery of a new binary black hole merger last week, according to Tyson Littenberg, principal investigator of the LIGO research group at NASA.

“There are many of these events that will happen, but we can't pinpoint exactly when or where because we can't observe them before they merge,” Goldstein said. “We expect to see a few every year now that our instruments have become more sensitive.”
Scientists see gravitational waves in space for first time

By: Kody Fisher

NASA scientists at the Marshall Space Flight Center shared an exciting discovery Monday at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

A NASA produced video showed what the event might have looked like.

Two neutron stars collided 130 million light years away from Earth creating a gamma-ray burst of energy.

That event alone isn't special, but what makes this unique is that scientists were also able to see waves in gravity that the two colliding stars created in space.

"It was a special event. The first of its kind. Kind of an opening of a new area of science. My colleague has referred to it as, like we were watching silent movies and we turned on the sound, so we have a whole new dimension that we can study the universe in now," said Colleen Wilson-Hodge who is the Lead Investigator of the The Gamma-ray Burst Monitor at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center.

Wilson-Hodge said they want to use this event as a way to excite people about science and to get them interested in technical fields.
UWA trustees considering new rule changes

Board seeks greater authority over some decisions

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The University of West Alabama wants its trustees to have greater authority in setting rules about holding meetings by phone and streamlining procedures for removing board member and making senior personnel decisions.

UWA’s bylaws committee held a meeting to discuss legislative proposals that would give trustees those powers.

The committee discussed potential changes to the university’s bylaws and enabling legislation but took no action Friday in a meeting at the UWA regional office in Montgomery. Any amendments to the board’s authority in the university’s charter enabling the bylaw revisions would have to be approved by the Alabama Legislature.

Lawmaker will return for the 2018 regular session in early January. The committee discussed the possibility of preparing a proposal for the full board to consider in December when the UWA trustees meet for the board’s next regular meeting.

Board members have previously expressed interest in having authority to meet and vote by phone and review of some personnel decisions.

“I formed this committee because we did this a couple of years ago but nothing ever came of it,” board President Jerry Smith said. “I think we need to take a thorough look at this. We have a timeline and a window of opportunity.”

Smith is not a member of the committee but was present at the meeting along with members Victor Vernon and Justin Smith.

The discussion of telephone meetings weighed the ability of trustees to vote by phone against concerns that the ability to participate remotely would be a disincentive to attend meetings in person at the campus in Livingston.

“Here is what I feel. I am not trying to create a bylaw that will allow us as a whole board to do a teleconference. I would like to have the ability for the executive committee of the board to vote,” Jerry Smith said.

See UWA, B12
UWA attorney Mike Kendrick, referencing similar bylaws for other universities in the state, said none had "a clean slate" to conduct all business by telephone. Most had limits on how many members could meet by phone. Any meetings by phone would also have to carry public notices and include the ability of the public to listen to the calls, he said.

Justin Smith said he preferred not to give the board unlimited authority on phone meetings. "I agree with you guys," Vernon said. "I think there is a real motivation to become lax in participation."

Removing a trustee

Trustee participation also framed discussion about amendments to establish a process for removing a trustee.

Justin Smith and Jerry Smith argued that a defined process would act as an incentive for members of the board to attend. The proposal generally discussed would be a process to expel a member if they missed three meetings without an excuse for the absence.

"I think putting that in the bylaws and even stating that strengthens our case for telling people to come to the meetings," Jerry Smith said.

Vernon argued for a sanction rather than an expulsion.

"In terms of missing meetings, I think we should have authority to take some action. I am going to suspend the member or sanction them, I don't know that I want them removed," Vernon said.

Vernon said he would be in favor of removal for more serious offenses such as "moral turpitude," felony convictions, conflicts of interest, or sexual harassment.

Kendrick advised the trustees his current assessment of the law was the governor's office, which appointed board members, would have to initiate action to remove a trustee.

"If you are going to try to do something different that that, you are going to have something very specific in the enabling act," Kendrick said.

Any amendments would also have to include due process for the accused, including notice of the plans to remove them and an opportunity for the trustee to argue why he or she should remain, Kendrick said.

Making personnel decisions

The authority of the board to review and approve personnel decisions has been a periodic and ongoing debate about the division of authority between the board and the office of the president.

The university's charter was amended in 2006 to give the president the authority to hire employees, set salaries and define the duties. That amendment was part of organizational changes at UWA meant to satisfy concerns about trustee micromanagement raised during an investigation and probation imposed by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in 2003.

In 2014, some on the board sought more authority over personnel decisions after the public dispute between the board, senior administrators and then-President Richard Holland.

"I am careful about micromanaging," Jerry Smith said. "We hire the president, the president is then authorized to hire faculty and staff. But I think there should be some approval process by the board on some of the senior administrative positions."

The positions discussed by the committee include vice presidents, the provost and athletic director. The process discussed would mirror appointments by the governor and approval by the Alabama Senate. The UWA president would appoint the senior administrators with the advice and consent of the board.

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Tide soccer continues steady improvement

Zach Fidel
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

It takes time to perfect something, it’s just not going to happen overnight.

In Year Three under coach Wes Hart, the Alabama soccer team won 12 games and reached the NCAA Tournament for only the third time in program history. Alabama lost to Clemson in the first round of the tournament.

Every year under Hart the Crimson Tide has improved its win total. In his inaugural season the team won five games, and last year it won 10.

This year Alabama had something missing since Hart arrived in Tuscaloosa, a dynamic freshman class. With Alabama football and basketball known to sign plenty of freshmen to improve their roster, it was time soccer did the same. Freshman Chloe Malise, Brynn Martin, Taylor Morgan, and Casey Wertz were all consistently in Hart’s starting 11 throughout the season. The Crimson Tide had a total of 15 freshmen on their roster.

“I think we had some very talented freshman this year that helped us win a lot of games,” Hart said. “The senior class we had was a big part of our success this season, but we feel like we have a good group of young talent behind them that can step in and fill the void.”

Another key part in the season for Alabama was when they earned their first-ever victory over a top-10 ranked opponent back in August. They defeated then-sixth-ranked Florida State 1-0 at home where freshman Taylor Morgan had the game-winning goal. That win had a little more meaning for Hart since he had served as an assistant coach for Florida State prior to becoming the head coach for the Crimson Tide.

“The win against Florida State early on in the season was a huge step for us, especially internally for our confidence,” Hart said. “It also gave us some respect around the country that we can compete with anybody.”

In sports the captain of the team is your leader, the one that makes sure the team is ready for battle. Senior Midfielder Celia Jimenez Delgado served as that person for the Crimson Tide this season. After suffering a season-ending injury last year, Delgado promised herself that she would bounce back stronger than ever for the team.

Delgado played in all 20 matches this season, and led Alabama to their third appearance in the NCAA tournament. She played a total of 1,639 minutes. It’s safe to say that she had put last year’s’ season ending injury in the rear view mirror. While serving as the team’s captain, Delgado hoped she made a lasting impact on her teammates that they can take into next season and beyond.

“My biggest thing that I wanted my teammates to learn from me is that you should be the first one pushing yourself and evaluating yourself,” Delgado said. “If anything I wanted them to realize that in order to become a good team you first have to have the mindset on what aspect of the game do I need to improve on.”
Another 100-yard receiving day for star Tide receiver

By Tommy Deas
The meaning of the game

This Iron Bowl has more at stake than most

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

Every Iron Bowl is meaningful. But the meaning hasn’t always been the same.

Alabama and Auburn face each other on Saturday for in-state bragging rights, the SEC West division title and more. The 2013 game was the only winner-take-all Iron Bowl of the Nick Saban era.

“There’s a lot of significance in this game, and I think the fact that it does have significance and has had significance in the past makes it even more interesting on a national level as well as for our fans, their fans, and all the people who have passion for the game,” Saban said.

That wasn’t the case when he arrived in Tuscaloosa in 2007. Auburn won that game for its sixth straight win in the rivalry, the longest winning streak the Tigers have ever had in the rivalry.

“To be honest with you, 11 years ago, I can’t necessarily remember what I was thinking,” Saban said. “I was thinking they were pretty good and we weren’t so good and we needed to get better. I know I was thinking that. But I’ve always had a lot of appreciation for this rivalry even before being here.”

The game had a different meaning in 2008, when Alabama won to complete an undefeated regular season. The game in 2008 was also the final edition before the Iron Bowl took yet another turn: In every year since 2009, the winner of the Iron Bowl has gone on to play in the College Football Playoff or the BCS National Championship game.

The Iron Bowl has had an edge to it in recent years. The national interest has risen and will rise again with a top-10 matchup this year. But it always meant something to players from the state.

“I watched a lot of Iron Bowls growing up with my grandaddy and my daddy,” said defensive lineman Da’Ron Payne, a Birmingham native. “I don’t know, it’s something that you can’t wait to watch yearly.”

There are other reasons for this year’s Iron Bowl to be

See IRON BOWL, C3

The rivalry itself may have become bigger as well, but it’s never been small.

“It always means a lot. It means a lot to our fans,” Saban said. “It means a lot to the coaches who work hard and all the people who have worked hard to put us in this position. So everybody kind of knows what’s at stake.”

There’s more at stake this year than most. There’s no avoiding what this game always means, and what it means now. “To our fans, regardless, and to our players and to the coaches and the people who work so hard around here, I think that this is always a game of significance,” Saban said. “This particular year, there’s a lot on the line for both teams and that should make it a great game.”

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The ‘Mother of All Iron Bowls’ is about to have a son

As predicted, next week’s Alabama-Auburn matchup arrives with national implications

For the second time in Gus Malzahn’s five years as the Auburn head coach, for just the second time since the SEC split into divisions in 1992, the road to all of those opportunities for the Tigers and the Tide runs right through the Plains.

Malzahn and his team never stopped believing. For their resilience, they deserve credit. For their persistence, they get Alabama, which showed its own mettle from the opening game, refusing to give in to the plague of complacency, a surplus of raw poison and one injury after another.

For the first time since 2013, this game doesn’t look like a foregone conclusion. If Alabama plays the way it did this month against LSU and Mississippi State, the Common Tide is vulnerable. If Auburn plays the way it did last week against Georgia, the Tigers are more than capable.

If both teams rise to the occasion the way they did the last time everything was on the line, it may take another historic finish to separate them one way or the other.

We can only hope.

Auburn coach Gus Malzahn has his team on roll, and a potential win over Alabama could boost the sixth-ranked Tigers into the conversation.
Now we can turn our attention to the 'Game of the Year'

Now we can all talk about what we've all been talking about anyway.
Now we can dispense with the loser-takes-paycheck game and proceed to the winner-takes-all game between Alabama and Auburn. We can compare scores. Auburn will lead with Mississippi State while Alabama will counter with LSU and, you better believe, Mercer, a 24-10 loser at AU

See HURT, C2
HURT

From Page C1

in September. There might even be an Auburn fan that will compare Saturday’s win over Louisiana-Monroe to the Crimson Tide’s 2007 loss to the Warhawks. That’s not relevant but it’s Alabama-Auburn week so there are no holds (or insults) barred.

The issue isn’t picking a winner. There is still an entire week to settle that. The question is whether Alabama is fine-tuned heading into the regular-season finale, to the limited extent that Mercer can be a measuring stick.

There were positives to calm a fan base that was on the verge of a nervous breakdown after a close win in Starkville last week, if you looked hard enough. For one thing, some of the more distraught observers can take solace — and a step or two back from the ledge — because of the simple fact Alabama was dominant, regardless of the level of competition. That’s what people expect, and what was jarring about having to win the Mississippi State game in the final minute. It is comforting to see what you expect to see so this Saturday was more palatable for the faint of heart.

In specific terms, the revelation of the day was the play of freshman Dylan Moses, who finished with more tackles (11) than commandments (10). The performance came just as Alabama was looking for manna from heaven at the linebacker position (that’s the last Old Testament joke, I promise), so much so that some fretful fans were starting a GoFundMe effort to buy Mack Wilson a bionic foot. It remains to be seen which linebackers will be back from injury in time to play at Auburn and it’s certain that Moses will have a tougher time dealing with the Tigers’ shiftiness, to say nothing of dealing with Kerryon Johnson.

The quarterbacks looked fine, relative to the defense they were playing against. Jalen Hurts completed everything he threw and Tua Tagovailoa, who played for nearly a half, made some big plays with his arm and avoided potential trouble when he tried to force a couple of things. Bo Scarbrough, as Nick Saban noted, had one explosive run on which he “looked more like his old self.” Minkah Fitzpatrick didn’t play at all, to the relief of virtually everyone concerned. Neither did kicker Andy Pappanastos, although Saban said he could have. JK Scott handled PAT chores without a problem in Pappanastos’ absence.

Now comes the transition from a game that few people will still remember by Tuesday to one that will be remembered for generations. What an Alabama player does against Auburn matters, regardless of the external stakes. When you make it a game for a division championship, a potential SEC championship and all the ramifications that go with it, there’s nothing better. It will come without rat poison — many sages, citing Alabama’s vulnerabilities, will pick Auburn to win and they might be right. Jordan-Hare is a great home environment and the fans will be frothing. GameDay will be on hand and the nation will be watching. This is the Game of the Year for one side, a massive disappointment for the other.

Isn’t that everything we wanted all along?

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Harvard Faces DOJ Probe Over Affirmative-Action Policies

Justice Department accuses university of failing to cooperate in investigation of whether its admission policies discriminate against Asian-Americans

By: Melissa Korn and Nicole Hong

The Justice Department has opened an investigation into the use of race in Harvard University’s admissions practices and has accused the university of failing to cooperate with the probe, according to documents reviewed by The Wall Street Journal.

The Justice Department is investigating complaints that formed the basis of a federal civil lawsuit filed in 2014 in Boston, according to the documents. That suit alleges Harvard intentionally discriminates against Asian-Americans by limiting the number of Asian students who are admitted.

The lawsuit, brought by a nonprofit called Students for Fair Admissions, said the practices violate federal civil-rights law and asks a federal judge to prohibit Harvard from using race as a factor in future undergraduate admissions decisions. The suit is pending.

The Justice Department, whose Civil Rights Division is conducting the investigation into similar allegations, said in a letter to Harvard’s lawyers, dated Nov. 17 and reviewed by the Journal, that the school was being investigated under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bars discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin for organizations that receive federal funding. The letter also said the school had failed to comply with a Nov. 2 deadline to provide documents related to the university’s admissions policies and practices.

The department told Harvard it “may file a lawsuit” to enforce compliance if Harvard doesn’t hand over the documents by Dec. 1, according to a separate letter dated Nov. 17 from John M. Gore, the acting assistant attorney general for the Civil Rights Division. The department wrote that the materials requested by the Justice Department have already been provided by Harvard to the plaintiffs in the lawsuit.

The documents reviewed by the Journal confirm the existence of an investigation that the Justice Department in August indicated it would pursue and suggest that Harvard has challenged the authority of the department’s Civil Rights Division to conduct it.

In a statement, Harvard said: “As we have repeatedly made clear to the Department of Justice, the University will certainly comply with its obligations under Title VI.” The school added that it was seeking to engage the department in the best way to share relevant information while protecting applicants’ privacy.

The Justice Department’s investigation escalates a longstanding national debate over the role of race in college admissions—an issue the U.S. Supreme Court has intermittently wrestled with since the 1970s. As recently as last year, the court upheld the use of racial preferences in public university admissions.

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In early August, the Justice Department posted an internal job listing for attorneys to investigate racial bias in college admissions, as it prepared to review a separate 2015 complaint filed by a coalition of 64 Asian-American associations claiming Harvard discriminates against Asian-American applicants.

Harvard has previously said its admissions process is consistent with the legal precedents set over the past 40 years by the Supreme Court, which have allowed universities to consider race as a factor in admissions to obtain the benefits of a diverse student body.

Justice Department spokesman Devin O’Malley said: “The Department of Justice takes seriously any potential violation of an individual’s civil and constitutional rights.” He declined to comment on the details of any continuing investigation.

In letters sent to the Justice Department in October and November and reviewed by the Journal, Harvard’s lawyers questioned why the investigation was being conducted by the Civil Rights Division.

Seth Waxman, a partner at WilmerHale, the law firm representing Harvard, called the investigation “outside ordinary practices” of the Justice Department because responding to a complaint filed more than two years prior wouldn’t meet the department’s standard of “prompt” action.

Mr. Waxman also denounced the investigation on the grounds that identical issues are being litigated in federal court. The Education Department declined to investigate the same complaint largely because the private lawsuit against Harvard covered the issues, Mr. Waxman wrote in an Oct. 6 letter to the Justice Department.

He also said any investigation would more appropriately come from the Justice Department’s Office for Civil Rights, inside its Office of Justice Programs, not the Civil Rights Division.

The Justice Department in its letters to Harvard’s lawyers defended the investigation’s delegation to its Civil Rights Division.

At a meeting on Sept. 11, Harvard representatives “offered to work collaboratively” with the Justice Department’s lawyers, according to the Nov. 17 letter from Mr. Gore.

The Justice Department gave the school a Nov. 2 deadline to provide the requested information. But over the past two months, “Harvard has pursued a strategy of delay and has not yet produced even a single document,” according to another Nov. 17 letter sent from the agency to Mr. Waxman.

Mr. Waxman expressed concern in his Oct. 6 letter about the privacy of information that would be shared with the Justice Department, including applications from high-school students “and
candid evaluations of those students.” He pointed to the fact that Freedom of Information Act requests had been filed asking for information about a possible probe of the school.

Harvard asked the Justice Department for information on any complaints that prompted the investigation, according to the department’s letters. In his Oct. 6 note, Mr. Waxman also requested copies of written communication about Harvard or the investigation between Justice Department offices and Students for Fair Admissions, its outside legal counsel, and a few affiliated groups.

The government said in one of its Nov. 17 letters that the Students for Fair Admissions lawsuit captures the complaints under investigation and wouldn’t give Harvard further details “because the release may interfere with an active investigation.”

Why Harvard’s Endowment and Its Peers Are Switching Gears
Harvard University’s endowment fund, which is the largest in the world, is planning to make big changes to its investment approach. Here’s why Harvard and many of its endowment peers are making similar moves. Photo: Getty Images (Originally Published January 25, 2017)
According to experts in civil-rights law, there are many potential outcomes to the investigation. One possibility is that it could lead to litigation in court between the Justice Department and Harvard. In that case, if a federal judge finds Harvard has violated Title VI, the court has broad authority to issue a remedy, such as ordering the university to change its admissions policies, the experts say.

Schools in violation of Title VI can also lose access to federal funds.

The plaintiffs in the lawsuit are members of Students for Fair Admissions, which advocates for the elimination of affirmative action in college admissions and includes Asian-Americans who were denied admission to Harvard. The group is led by conservative legal activist Edward Blum.

Asian-American groups have been raising concerns about the fairness of Ivy League admissions practices since at least 1989.

Mr. Blum also spearheaded a challenge to affirmative action brought by a white applicant against the University of Texas, which was decided by the Supreme Court last year.

In the 4-3 ruling, Justice Anthony Kennedy left the door open to future legal challenges by saying universities should continue to review their affirmative-action policies to assess their positive and negative effects.