MARCH 2, 2018

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EMPLOYMENT

Alabama's drop in jobless rate is best in the nation

With Alabama's unemployment rate at a historic low, state Labor Department officials are now touting new numbers that show the state's year-over-year jobless rate drop as the biggest in the country.

Labor Secretary Fitzgerald Washington announced Wednesday, using data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, that Alabama's decrease of 1.5 percentage points was the largest drop in the U.S.

In 2017, the state's annual unemployment rate was 4.4 percent, down from the 2016 average of 5.9 percent. Next up was Wyoming, which experienced a 1.1 percent drop, and Tennessee, which went down a full percentage point.

January 2018's unemployment rate is scheduled to be released on March 12.

Washington said the number recognized the work that state, county and local governments, as well as Gov. Kay Ivey and companies, have done to bring down unemployment.

"What we are doing is working. Alabamians are working and employers are hiring. We are proud to lead the country in decreasing our unemployment rate," Washington said. — William Thornton
State’s jobless rate sets mark

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Alabama saw the largest decrease in annual average unemployment in the nation in 2017, a drop attributed to the health of the economy statewide and nationally.

Alabama’s average annual unemployment rate in 2017 was 4.4 percent, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics released by the Alabama Department of Labor on Wednesday.

“We have been working very hard, collaborating with Gov. Kay Ivey, other state agencies, county and local governments and Alabama’s employers to bring down our unemployment rate,” Alabama Labor Secretary Fitzgerald Washington said in a statement released by his office. “What we are doing is working. Alabamians are working and employers are hiring. We are proud to lead the country in decreasing our unemployment rate.”

In 2016, the state’s average annual unemployment rate was 5.9 percent. Arizona was

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second in 2017 with a half-
percent drop in its average
annual unemployment rate.
Regionally, Georgia had an
average annual unemploy-
ment rate of 4.7 percent,
Florida was 4.2 percent, Mis-
sissippi was 5.1 percent, and
Tennessee was 5.7 percent.
Alabama's economy, like
the U.S. economy, did well in
the latter half of 2017 com-
pared with the first of the
year, according to Ahmad
Ijaz, executive director and
Director of Economic Fore-
casting for the University of
Alabama's Center for Business
and Economic Research.
"Most of the drop in
unemployment rate last year
was primarily due to the
drop in number of unem-
ployed, albeit some decline
in the civilian labor force
also contributed to the drop
in unemployment rate," Ijaz
said. "Going forward, the
state's economy is expected
to grow at a slightly higher
pace than last year. Although
we may be getting close to
full employment levels, there
is still enough slack out there
in the labor markets for the
economy to grow at a higher
pace."
State law authorizes ride-sharing

Tuscaloosa
approved services
like Uber in 2016

Staff report

Starting this summer, ride-sharing services like Uber and Lyft will be legal across Alabama. Gov. Kay Ivey on Thursday made Alabama the 45th state in the union to sanction these services by signing ride-sharing legislation into law during a bill-signing ceremony at the State Capitol in Montgomery.

She was joined by state Rep. David Faulkner, R-Birmingham, and state Sen. Bobby Singleton, D-Greensboro, along with ride-share drivers and members of the Ride for Alabama coalition, a group that has publicly supported the bill throughout the legislative process.

This organization consists of multiple Chambers of Commerce and entities such as the Alabama Hospitality and Restaurant Association, the Birmingham Urban League, the National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives and the Alabama Association for the Deaf, among others.

"Today, we are paving the way for ride-sharing throughout all of Alabama, regardless of location or proximity to major metropolitan areas," Ivey said in a news release. "I am proud to have supported this bill throughout the legislative process and commend the hard work of Rep. Faulkner and Sen. Singleton for sponsoring the bill and the Ride for Alabama coalition members for their strong support throughout the legislative process." This legislation will level the playing field across the state where ride-sharing services were legal only in select areas and municipalities that had authorized them.

The city of Tuscaloosa amended its vehicle-for-hire rules in 2016 to accommodate these services.

By enacting statewide legislation, suburban and rural communities will now have access to certain benefits the ride-share industry provides, including the chance to earn an income through driving opportunities.

"Rural parts of our state will now have access to these innovative transportation methods, and more Alabama residents will have the opportunity to earn additional income," said Singleton, who represents parts of Tuscaloosa County. "With Gov. Ivey giving her signature to this legislation, Alabama's economy will move forward, public safety will increase and Alabama residents will experience greater quality of life."
**Mockingbird’ Author’s Will Is Unsealed, but the Mystery of Her Life Only Deepens**

*By SERGE F. KOVALESKI and ALEXANDRA ALTER*

When the novelist Harper Lee died in her sleep two years ago, at 89, she left a trail of lingering questions about her life and work. Why had she decided, in her final years, to publish a second novel, 55 years after her breakout success, “To Kill a Mockingbird”? Were there other unknown works? Who would inherit her literary papers, sought by many universities, as well as her estate, estimated to be worth tens of millions of dollars?

On Tuesday, an Alabama court unsealed Ms. Lee’s will, but the mystery surrounding one of American literature’s most cherished authors only deepened.

The will, signed on February 11, 2016, eight days before her death, directed that the bulk of her assets, including her literary properties, be transferred into a trust she formed in 2011.

Trust documents are private, so all questions about what will become of her literary papers and who beyond her closest relatives might benefit from her assets, will remain unanswered for now.

It is also unclear how the will differed from any prior document Ms. Lee may have created to distribute her assets.

Ms. Lee never married or had children, and the court papers identified her heirs and closest living relatives as a niece and three nephews, who are expected to receive an undisclosed portion of the estate through the trust.

The will named Tonja B. Carter, Ms. Lee’s longtime lawyer, as the executor, or personal representative, of the estate, and it provided her with wide-ranging powers to shepherd Ms. Lee’s literary legacy and the rest of her assets.

Ms. Carter had gone to court in 2016 to successfully persuade Probate Judge Greg Norris of Monroe County to seal the will, citing Ms. Lee’s desire for privacy. And while the estate had stressed in court papers that making the will public could lead to the “potential harassment” of individuals identified in it, the document itself is strikingly opaque.

It was unsealed Tuesday on the basis of a lawsuit filed by The New York Times seeking to review the document. Lawyers for The Times argued that wills filed in a probate court in Alabama are typically public records, and that Ms. Lee’s privacy concerns were no different from those of others whose wills are processed through the court system.

“It’s a public record, and the press and the public have a right to public records,” said Archie Reeves, the lawyer who represented The Times.

Last week, as both sides prepared to depose witnesses, the estate withdrew its opposition to making the will public. It did not disclose its reasoning.

The document’s lack of transparency will likely fuel skepticism among those who feel that Ms. Carter had amassed too much power over Ms. Lee’s career and legacy. The will gives Ms. Carter substantial control over Ms. Lee’s estate and her literary properties, which are assigned to the Mockingbird Trust, an entity that was formed in 2011. Ms. Carter served as one of its two trustees at the time.

“It is not an uncommon will, and it is typically what we term a pour-over will where anything in the estate goes over to the trust and they don’t have to disclose the terms of the trust,” said Sidney C. Summey, an estate and trusts lawyer in Birmingham.

“It is done quite often by people of means, people with notoriety and people who just want to be private,” Mr. Summey said.

Ms. Lee’s relatives had supported efforts to seal the will. Phone calls to reach several members of her family were unsuccessful.

As a personal representative, Ms. Carter is entitled to compensation for her work. The will allows the personal representative to earn additional fees as part of an organization, like a law firm, that does work for the estate.

Ms. Carter declined to discuss the will, citing Ms. Lee’s penchant for privacy. “I will not discuss her affairs,” she said.

One of the two witnesses to the will, Cynthia McMillan, a former resident assistant who had helped care for Ms. Lee at a facility where she had lived, said in an interview that Ms. Lee seemed cognizent when she signed it. “In my opinion, she was,” Ms. McMillan said.

The estate was built largely on the outsize and enduring success of Ms. Lee’s Pulitzer Prize-winning debut novel, “Mockingbird,” which since its publication in 1960, has sold more than 40 million copies worldwide and remains a staple on American school curriculums. In addition, “Go Set a Watchman,” her second novel, was the best-selling book of 2015 in the United States, and sold more than 1.6 million hardcover copies, according to NPD BookScan.

“Mockingbird” alone sells more than a million copies a year worldwide, generating some $3 million in royalties for the copyright holder, according to court documents.

Ms. Lee had always lived simply, despite her fame and mounting wealth, and long shared a modest brick home in Monroeville with her older sister, Alice, who died in 2014. Ms. Lee could be seen around town in sweatpants looking for bargains at a Dollar General Store, washing her clothes at a local Laundromat, drinking coffee at a McDonald’s or eating at David’s Catfish House, where her usual iced tea and a small plate of catfish would cost about $6.

Often mistrust as reclusive, she was not hermit, but she was as fecklessly private as she was famous, and shunned interviews.

She was thrust into the spotlight three years ago, when “Watchman” was released. Its publication sparked a debate about whether or not Ms. Lee had been pushed into publishing the novel, one that she had abandoned in the 1950s as an early effort at the story that would become “Mockingbird.”

At the release of “Watchman,”

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there were already questions about Ms. Lee’s vulnerability and her mental and physical condition. She had suffered a stroke in 2007, had severe vision and hearing problems and had moved into an assisted living facility. In 2013, in a copyright dispute that went to court, Ms. Lee’s lawyers said she had been taken advantage of and coerced into signing away her copyright because she was “an elderly woman with physical infirmities that made it difficult for her to read and see.”

The controversy surrounding “Watchman” divided Ms. Lee’s hometown, pitting some of her longtime friends and acquaintances, who doubted she had approved of the publication, against Ms. Lee’s lawyer, agent and publisher, generating the kind of public spectacle Ms. Lee abhorred. But an Alabama agency investigated whether Ms. Lee was a victim of elder abuse and financial fraud and determined that no abuse had occurred.

Some scholars and fans embraced “Watchman” as a long awaited sequel to Ms. Lee’s debut work, while others dismissed it as an inferior rough draft, one that was eventually polished and reshaped into a masterpiece. Many fans were shocked to discover that Atticus Finch, the crusading lawyer who fights for racial equality in “Mockingbird,” is depicted in “Watchman” as an aging racist and segregationist who clashes with his daughter, a grown-up Scout, over her support for civil
rights.

Ms. Carter emerged as polarizing figure in the debate. She was at first credited with recovering Ms. Lee’s long lost novel, and recounted how she discovered the manuscript for “Watchman” in a safe deposit box in the summer of 2014. But others disputed that account and said Ms. Carter had been present when the manuscript was discovered in October 2011 during an appraisal by a rare books expert. The appraiser had come to inspect what was thought to be a “Mockingbird” manuscript, and Ms. Carter later said she had not realized at the time that actually a different manuscript had been reviewed.

Still, many viewed Ms. Carter as Ms. Lee’s staunchest protector; and with a coterie of friends from the area, she is now helping to expand Ms. Lee’s literary legacy.

Ms. Carter helps run a nonprofit, Mockingbird Company, that Ms. Lee created in 2015. It puts on a dramatization of “Mockingbird” in Monroeville each year.

A different production, drawn from the novel and scripted by Aaron Sorkin, is headed for Broadway this year. A “Mockingbird” graphic novel, adapted by Fred Fordham, was approved by Ms. Lee’s estate and will be published in the fall. And there are new plans for the Harper Lee Trail, which local officials hope will attract hundreds of thousands of tourists a year to Monroeville.

Planned attractions include a museum dedicated to Harper Lee and replications of characters’ houses in “To Kill a Mockingbird.”

How this all would have sat with Ms. Lee also remains a matter of debate. She took pains to protect her intellectual property and often scorned attempts to commercialize her novel. In 2013, she sued a local museum, arguing that it had infringed on her trademark by selling “Mockingbird” themed T-shirts and trinkets (the suit was settled in 2014).

And in a letter to a friend in 1993, she complained that Monroeville was turning into a “Mockingbird” tourist attraction. She expressed particular irritation at the strangers lingering in front of her house.

“They came in VANS,” she wrote.
Effort to censure Shelby not a good look for GOP

Alabama Republicans owe Richard Shelby a debt of gratitude. Instead, the state’s GOP tried to censure him last week, because he refused to support Roy Moore’s failed bid to join him in the U.S. Senate. Moore’s campaign was a disaster and his election would have been a national embarrassment.

Shelby was first elected to the state Senate in 1970 as a conservative Democrat and served there for eight years before being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, representing the 7th District, which included Tuscaloosa. In 1986, he was first elected to the U.S. Senate and has been re-elected five times—four times as a Republican. In 1994, Shelby switched to the GOP and he’s been a loyal Republican ever since.

The effort to censure Shelby fell short, but that was even launched shows how the political landscape has become win-at-all-costs and no longer has the best interests of voters in mind.

Despite pressure from the state and national GOP leadership, Shelby didn’t waver in his position that Moore was not fit to represent the state in the U.S. Senate. Undoubtedly, Shelby’s refusal to support Moore was a big contributing factor in Democrat Doug Jones’ narrow victory over Moore last fall in the special Senate election to replace Jeff Sessions. It was a test of Shelby’s resolve and his character. And he did something few other state politicians were willing to do. He did the right thing, for his state and for his nation, even if it wasn’t the best for his party. That’s called statesmanship and we salute him for it. Our state and our nation would be better off if more politicians had enough backbone to follow his lead.

Despite Moore’s horrendous campaign, including shocking allegations of sexual impropriety involving much younger women, the state’s GOP power structure overwhelmingly supported his candidacy, because to them it was more important to place an unfit Republican in the seat than to relinquish the seat to a Democrat, even though it was for a shortened term and Jones’ Senate tenure could end with the next General Election.

Shelby drew the ire of many in the state’s GOP when he refused to endorse the embattled Moore and instead announced that he would write in another Republican rather than cast a vote for Moore.

Contrast that with Gov. Kay Ivey, who is filling out the term of Robert Bentley, who resigned under a dark cloud of controversy involving allegations of sexual impropriety of his own. Ivey said she believed the allegations from several women against Moore, but would vote for him anyway because he was the Republican candidate. But Ivey wasn’t alone. The state party and the vast majority of Republicans holding public office took the same stance.

A Moore victory in the election would have been a colossal black eye for a state that has already damaged itself too many times in the past.

What Shelby did deserves praise. He put decency above partisan politics, something that is increasingly rare among Democrats and Republicans.
Jesse Jackson to speak at UA

Wednesday speech is free and open to public

Staff report

The Rev. Jesse Jackson will speak at a free event Wednesday night on the University of Alabama campus.

Jackson, a longtime civil rights leader who ran for president in 1984 and 1988, will discuss "New South, New Challenges" at 7:30 p.m. in the ballroom at the Ferguson Student Center, 751 Campus Drive W.

Jackson's speech is open to students, faculty, staff and the community.

The event is sponsored by the Black Student Union, University Pro-
grams and UA's Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Late last year, Jackson disclosed that he has Parkinson's disease, a chronic neurological disorder that causes movement difficulties. He told the Associated Press that he relies on daily physical therapy, medication and prayer to manage the disease's progression.

The Associated Press said that Jackson has scaled back his travels a bit, though he still keeps a busy itinerary.

"My time is used more strategically," the 76-year-old told AP. "I'm traveling a little less and focusing more."

Jackson still leads the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, the Chicago-based civil rights organization he founded over two decades ago.

Jackson brings message of unity

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Ahead of the anniversary of the 1965 Selma to Montgomery voting rights march, the Rev. Jesse Jackson reflected on the message of unity during last staff meeting he had with the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Jackson said King's last meeting in Atlanta began with a lesson on multicultural liberty.

"We have a charge to learn to live together or die apart as fools," Jackson said.

The civil rights leader also reflected on the current debates over immigration, gun ownership and other issues dividing the nation and said, "This an interesting, yet a strange season for our country."

Jackson's comments were part of a speech titled "New South, New Challenges" on Wednesday night to a crowd of about 500 at the Fergusson Student Center at the University of Alabama. The event was sponsored by the Black Student Union, University Programs and UA's Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Jackson, leading the audience in chants, encouraged them to remain engaged in the political process and committed to a vision of unity. Jackson encouraged the students to register to vote in Tuscaloosa.

"There is a tug of war for the soul of the nation," he said. Jackson said he watched with interest the special election and the surprising victory of Democratic U.S. Sen. Doug Jones in a reliably Republican state.

"I wanted to see how Tuscaloosa County would come out, how Lee County would come out, the home of the University of Alabama, the home of Auburn University," Jackson said. "On that big game night, Lee County and Tuscaloosa County won the right side of history."

Jackson used Alabama's latest football national championship team as an example of the necessity of working together.

"Maybe that is what Roll Tide really means," Jackson said. "When they hit the

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Jackson said the challenge to live together transcends national borders, reflecting on President Donald Trump's denigration of neighboring counties and calls for a wall on the country's southern border. "Haitians fought the war that freed America. Haiti is our neighbor and has great meaning to our past," Jackson said.

Americans do not live in isolation and most of the world's inhabitants are non-Christian, non-white, poor and female, he said. "We must learn to live in that world. In some sense, that is what Selma is trying to say to us tonight," he said.

Two weeks removed from the latest mass shooting that has reignited debate on gun control, Jackson argued there was no functional reason for civilian ownership of semiautomatic rifles like the AR-15-pattern weapon used in the attack on a high school in Parkland, Florida. "You don't hunt rabbits with AR-15s. You don't hunt deer with Ar-15s," Jackson said.

Jackson again reflected on King's work as he talked about the debate on gun ownership. King's mission was to end the Vietnam War and end the violence at home, Jackson said. "Somebody has to have sense in this world," Jackson said.

Jackson, a longtime civil rights leader who ran for president twice in the 1980s, disclosed last year he has Parkinson's disease, a chronic neurological disorder that causes movement difficulties. He told the

Associated Press that he relies on daily physical therapy, medication and prayer to manage the disease's progression.

The Associated Press said that Jackson has scaled back his travels a bit, though he still keeps a busy itinerary.

Jackson leads the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, the Chicago-based civil rights organization he founded over two decades ago.
Rev. Jackson speaks on social, political climate

By Sam West and Annie Hollon | CW Staff

The Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. spoke to a packed ballroom in the Ferguson Student Center about the current political and social climate Wednesday night.

Jackson is a prominent civil rights and faith-based activist who worked with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and was the first black candidate to win contests in a presidential primary. He addressed the importance of standing united in a harshly divided country in an event hosted by the Black Student Union, University Programs and the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

“What makes America great is the right to fight for the right,” Jackson said, encouraging students to vote and get involved in politics.

The presentation opened with the sounds of the Amazing Afro’s Gospel choir, followed by a brief introduction by associate dean of students Stacy L. Jones. Vice president of the BSU Darnell Sharperson spoke about Jackson’s journey, his achievements and accolades, as well as his political influence and organizations he has founded over the years.

Jackson discussed the tensions stirring the political and social climate of the United States, noting the divisive influence of President Donald Trump. With a scattered Alabama football metaphor or two, Jackson relayed his message of unity, compassion and the need to take action to a full audience.

The Reverend stood firm on his stance on assault weapons during his speech and later stated his beliefs in more detail in a short press conference following the presentation and question-and-answer session. He condemned the “3,700 JROTC programs in high schools teaching children to shoot,” as well as violence in media and rhetoric that normalizes guns and assaults rifles.

“The easy access to these assault [weapons] does not make us more secure,” Jackson said. “We must fight fire with water, with hope and healing. What I fear now is the copycat effect.”

On campus, off campus, you’re going to find these instances of racial resistance.

- Jesse Jackson

In regards to how students should handle racist commentary and actions at school such as the ones made by Harley Barber late January, Jackson pushed for students to fight back against aggressors and for administrations to take actions against these negative behaviors.

“On campus, off campus, you’re going to find these instances of racial resistance,” Jackson said. “When you find these, don’t adjust to it, just resist it and fight back. Administration must not tolerate it at all, because this must be a safe haven for learning.”

A swarm of students surrounded Jackson prior to the presentation, during a separate reception and in the press conference and unofficial photo opportunity thereafter. His message about engagement in politics and voting resonate strongly with students like junior political science major Teryn Shipman.

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“Him coming and shedding light on his experiences being a civil rights activist, being a leader in faith-based organizations, being a leader in the community is really important,” Shipman said. “For him to share that knowledge with us, because as he said, it is the time to act. It is the time for you and young people to do the same things that they’ve done historically – things that we know have worked to change the nation and the world.”

In an interview with The Crimson White, Jackson said he felt hopeful about the future of the “rainbow coalition,” even in the age of Trump. He said Doug Jones’ win in last year’s special election was an example of “The New South.”

“I was delighted when the big Dec. 12 election came around,” he said. “Tuscaloosa County and Lee County voted for Doug Jones. That’s significant to me, because given our football fanatics here and in Lee County who love blacks on the field, to see them vote in a progressive way was significant. It was a statement.”

Jackson said that he believed the age of Trump was a “tug of war for the heart and soul of America.” He criticized the president for acting aggressively toward Mexico, our nearest neighbor, and for leaving many diplomatic and State Department positions unfilled. He said that many international problems could be solved with diplomacy rather than military force.

He also spoke further on gun violence. He said AR-15s were unnecessary for defense, and that the desire to own the weapons instead had to do with “the psyche” and “masculinity.”

In describing what holds the South behind, Jackson said poverty and pride were one issue. Despite the economic stagnation in Alabama, he said many people did not want to accept government assistance that could help them.

“Many people in the South wanted affordable healthcare, but they didn’t want Obamacare. They wanted an omelette without the eggs,” he said.

The spectre of racism was another he said plagued states like Alabama. “One of the things is multicultural living as opposed to racial supremacy,” he said. “There’s no such thing as a supreme race. Or a cursed race. Multicultural living is when we learn to live together.”

Jackson has campaigned for voting rights his entire life, and students had the opportunity to register to vote after tonight’s event. He said that getting people on voting rolls is a persistent challenge because of efforts to suppress the vote. No one should feel their choice in an election doesn’t matter, he said, because if the vote wasn’t valuable, people wouldn’t be trying to take it away.

Jackson will continue a tour of the South through Sunday, visiting a high school in Montgomery, Tuskegee University and the city of Selma.
See Film, C4

Yves, Helene, Tarryn, Puerto, Wexley, Francesca, and Jeffrey will be playing the roles of student, professor, and producer for the upcoming student film "The Professor's Chair," which was written and directed by Sian Thomson. The film is a modern retelling of the classic novel "The Professor's Chair" by Emile Zola.

Media students Alex Perry, Sarah, and Emma will be playing the roles of journalists and creative writers. The film will be shot in a real-life setting and will feature discussions about the impact of media on society.

The film will be shot in the afternoon and evening, with the final screening scheduled for the weekend. The film will be screened in the college's screening room.

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FILM

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Sabina Vafina and Abigail Armstrong, with moderator Zoë Winston, education coordinator of UA’s Women and Gender Resource Center. The hour will address bringing more diversity into the industry behind the camera, as producers, directors and showrunners.

- Saturday from 4:30-5:30 in Ferguson Room 3104, panelists Easton, Thomason, Connor Simpson, Corey Carpenter and Yasmine Nana-Yeboah, with moderator Nick Corrao, will discuss industry creatives, and the paths they’ve taken from internships to first jobs, to dream jobs.

- Throughout Saturday there’ll be blocks of films screened, in experimental, narrative, dance, documentary and more. For lists of title and times, see www.blackwarriorfilmfest.com.
Witness: Uber driver spurred altercation with Humphrey

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

A woman who witnessed the dispute between Marlon Humphrey and an Uber driver that led to Humphrey's arrest testified in court Thursday that the driver was the aggressor, and talked about how he wanted money from the NFL player.

Humphrey, a former Alabama football player, is a defensive back with the NFL's Baltimore Ravens. The dispute occurred during the early morning hours of Jan. 13 after driver Mitchell Patton dropped off Humphrey, 21, and a woman at Hotel Capstone on Bryant Drive. Patton, 30, said Humphrey took his phone charger and became aggressive when he asked him to return it. University of Alabama Police responded to the hotel and returned the charger to Patton, without filing any charges against Humphrey. A University of Alabama police officer testified at the Thursday hearing that Patton called police between 10 and 15 times during the hours after the incident, saying he wanted to press charges. He ultimately spoke to a magistrate and had a warrant issued for Humphrey's arrest on a third-degree robbery charge. "He seemed to become more alarmed as the incident unfolded," UAIPD Investigator Hunter Christian testified during the preliminary hearing. "He was very anxious to move forward with this." The hearing in Tuscaloosa County District Court was held to determine whether there's probable cause to prosecute Humphrey on the felony charge. Judge Joanne Jannik said she would issue an order after considering the evidence and testimony presented at the hearing. "I feel Judge Jannik will look at the evidence and see this case for what it is," said Tuscaloosa attorney Paul Patterson, who is representing Humphrey along with attorney Chuck Malone. "It's these types of cases that clog up our system. It's a $3 phone charger, it was mistakenly picked up and given back the same night."

Patton picked up Humphrey and the three women from Waffle House on the Strip after they had been at Rounders Bar. He dropped off Humphrey and one woman at the hotel on Bryant Drive before driving the other two women to their residence. The witness, a 21-year-old passenger, testified that the driver became angry when Humphrey exited the car, saying he had damaged a speaker and wanted him to pay $200 for it. Patton told police that Humphrey had grabbed a charger and damaged his sign and charging port. The police report doesn't mention a speaker. Patton said Humphrey elbowed him and "balled up his fist and acted like he wanted to fight," and "took a fighting stance,"

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HUMPHREY

From Page A1

to record the driver saying he would "beat the (expletive) out of Marlon." She said everyone had been drinking that night but that she remembered "110 percent" everything that happened. Uber drivers can bill the customer's account in case items are taken or if cleaning is required. Patterson said he is hopeful the judge will dismiss the case.

"It's going to be interesting the way it turns out," he said. "Judge Jannik gave us a very fair hearing. Hopefully we'll have a ruling in the next few days."

according to police. Patton showed no signs of visible injuries, police said. The witness, however, said the driver got out of the car with his fist clenched, and that Humphrey's move seemed defensive. "Marlon put his arm up in, what I would say, self-defense," she said. "I honestly thought the Uber driver was going to punch Marlon." She also said she used her phone
UAPD chief: Threats require vigilance

Faculty, campus community can help assess danger

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The University of Alabama campus community and faculty are important partners in assessing and tracking threats, the UA police chief said in an emergency preparedness presentation to the Faculty Senate.

"You are a force multiplier for the police department. You help us get what we need to make sure something gets done," UA Police Chief John Hooks said in the presentation, made last week in the wake of a school shooting in Florida that left 17 dead on Feb. 14.

Hooks said the UA Office of Threat Assessment relies on information from community and faculty about concerns and potential threats.

Hooks and Office of Emergency Preparedness Director Donald Keith talked with the faculty senate roughly a week after a 19-year-old was accused of killing 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

The shooting prompted a discussion of campus security, ranging from security concerns about specific buildings, how to evaluate threats and emergency messaging during crises.

Hooks' advice regarding threat evaluation was not to take chances considering the history of active shooters. "If we get over there and it is nothing? Great, I would much rather you call us and it be nothing than not call us because you didn't want people to think (you overreacted)," Hooks said.

Hooks said the average response time on campus for police was 30 seconds to one minute. Part of the response will fall to the faculty and staff in the time before campus police arrive, he said.

"Your students are going to be looking to you for answers as well. This is just as much on you as it is on us. We want to help with that," Hooks said.

Hooks said the department is in the process of adding more police officers on campus.

"We will have community officers in every building before much longer," he said.

Hooks began his remarks by reminding the faculty that active shooters are not confined to campus.

"This is about situational awareness and developing and cultivating a mindset for how to deal with these situations," Hooks said.

Individuals must decide for themselves how they will react. Faculty members shouldn't wait until they are presented with an active shooter to consider their response, Hooks said.

Hooks' recommendations ranged from forethought about exits and escape routes, what furniture could be used to barricade a door, whether or not to shed shoes that might hinder running, possible weapons, and silencing cellphones. Hooks also recommended a run-hide-fight protocol, referring the faculty to law enforcement tutorials for the strategy. The strategy recommends individuals attempt to escape from the shooter, barricade themselves in a secure place and hide if they cannot, and fighting back aggressively as last resort.

"Do what you can to make yourself a tiny little target hidden behind something and very quiet," Hooks said. "Your object is to create time and distance between yourself and the person and give me time to get there and get in that building and start looking for that person."

Steps such as turning off lights and silencing phones may seem trivial but could help those under attack avoid the shooter, Hooks said.

"What we think we know about these guys ... they check doors. They are actively trying to hurt people," Hooks said. They are not going to spend too much time trying to get into a room if they don't know there are a bunch of people in the room. They are trying to work their way through and do as much damage as they can, so keep that in mind."

Hooks recommended meeting with building managers and faculty to develop protocols in buildings where the layout creates security concerns.

As the conversation turned to whether smart cards and other measures should be used by officials to remotely secure rooms and buildings, Hooks said each situation is unique. Hooks expressed hesitation about locking down buildings remotely and run the risk of trapping individuals in close quarters with an attacker.

"For every answer I give you, there are a hundred answers that tell you something else. That is why I said there is no 100-percent solution, but that doesn't mean we should give up and stop trying," Hooks said.
UA, Rondini family reach settlement

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

The University of Alabama will create a scholarship in Megan Rondini's name and has agreed to provide money to a new center that will treat victims of sexual assault.

The measures were part of a settlement reached between UA and Rondini's parents, who filed a lawsuit against the university and others after the former student committed suicide. Megan Rondini reported to police that she was raped by T.J. Bunn Jr. in 2015, but the investigation ended when a grand jury failed to indict him. Bunn has denied the allegation.

Rondini's parents filed a wrongful death lawsuit against Bunn, Sheriff Ron Abernathy and the law enforcement officers who investigated the case, and accused the university and its president of constitutional violations involving the handling of their daughter's case.

A federal judge dismissed the cases against the law enforcement officers and the sheriff, but the Rondinis refiled a new complaint against the two officers. The lawsuits against Bunn and the officers are still pending in U.S. District Court.

UA released a joint statement from the university and the family Tuesday, announcing they had reached a settlement. The university agrees to actions that See RONDINI, A7
total $650,000 to be spent in scholarships and programs. 

In the course of litigation, the university and the Rondinis began discussing the matters that unite them," the statement read. "The understanding created by these discussions led both parties to agree to set aside their past disputes and work toward the future."

The settlement is not an admission of wrongdoing on the university's part, and the Rondinis had agreed to absolve UA and its employees of any wrongdoing. UA is not paying any money to the family.

Rondini reported to police that Bunn raped her at his home in Cottondale in July 2015. Police didn't charge Bunn, saying there wasn't enough evidence. The case went to a grand jury, which failed to issue an indictment. The lawsuit filed by Michael and Cindy Rondini claimed that their daughter took her life after suffering from PTSD she suffered as a result.

Bunn has maintained through his attorney that no sexual assault took place. His attorney, Ivey Gilmore, issued a statement Tuesday afternoon regarding the settlement between the Rondinis and UA:

"The University of Alabama must make decisions based on what it perceives to be its best interests. Our client now is anxious to lay before the court and the public the evidence from Ms. Rondini's own cellphone and her own written and recorded statements that led law enforcement and a grand jury to conclude that no sexual assault took place. Ms. Rondini's own words provide this proof."

As part of the agreement, UA will establish a scholarship to provide $50,000 annually for five years to a student focusing on biological science, veterinary studies or a STEM MBA and a desire to promote gender equity in those fields.

The university has committed $250,000 to the Tuscaloosa SAFE Center, a new facility that will serve victims of sexual assault. SAFE stands for Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner, the type of training nurses at the center will be certified in.

The center, which is a partnership among UA, the DCH Health System, the DCH Foundation, the Tuscaloosa County District Attorney's Office, local law enforcement and city and county leaders, was announced in late August 2017.

UA has existing programs that address sexual misconduct, and will commit an additional $150,000 by the end of 2019 to continue its efforts and add personnel to its team of employees that address sexual misconduct issues, according to the release.

UA also agreed to posthumously award Megan Rondini a magna cum laude bachelor of science degree with an accompanying certificate from the university's Honors College dated May 2018.

"The Rondinis are pleased they can now redirect their focus on the future through this collaboration with the university to further combat sexual misconduct to take advantage of any of the resources that are available, including the university's Title IX office, UA's Program, University of Alabama Police Department, counseling and gender resources at the Tuscaloosa SAFE Center, when it opens later this year, to assist them in addressing the significant issues that face sexual assault survivors."
TUSCALOOSA

Rondinis, university reach settlement on anniversary

Former student committed suicide two years ago after alleged rape

Carol Robinson  crobinson@al.com

The University of Alabama has settled its portion of a wrongful death lawsuit filed on behalf of Megan Rondini, a former student who killed herself after alleging she was raped by a man from a prominent family.

A joint stipulation motion of dismissal with prejudice was filed in federal court in Birmingham shortly before 2 p.m. Tuesday. The single-page court document does not specify any financial terms or agreement, but attorney Leroy Maxwell Jr. issued a news release stating the university will commit $400,000 in funding to facilities, services and personnel dedicated to combating sexual misconduct and uplifting survivors.

Also, Maxwell said, the university will dedicate $50,000 to a scholarship named after Rondini. And, at the May 2018 commencement, Rondini will be awarded a magna cum laude bachelor of science degree, with an accompanying certificate from the university’s Honors College.

This week marks the second anniversary of Rondini’s death.

“Megan was an honors student at the University of Alabama when she was sexually assaulted after a night out in Tuscaloosa. That night changed the course of her life,” according to Maxwell’s statement. “The PTSD and depression she suffered as a result of the assault became too much to bear, and in February of 2016, Megan passed away from suicide.”

Several months later, he said, Rondini’s parents filed the lawsuit against those responsible for their daughter’s death. Shortly after, the University of Alabama reached out to the Rondini family and began discussing their common goals.

“They had discussions about the many things that could be accomplished for sexual assault victims if the Rondinis and the University worked together,” the news release said. “Today we are proud to announce that the University of Alabama has decided to partner with the Rondini family in their effort to combat sexual assault.”

Rondini’s parents, Michael and Cynthia Rondini, issued this statement through their attorney:

“On this, the second anniversary of Megan’s death, we have worked together with the University of Alabama to reach a settlement accomplishing what we believe Megan would have wanted most, care and support for those in need. We hope this settlement will provide a lasting legacy that both benefits and helps others who have been sexually assaulted. We extend a heartfelt thank you to End Rape on Campus, Justice for Megan, friends everywhere, and our outstanding legal team. We view this as another important step in our continued fight for legislation and cultural improve-

ments for victims of sexual violence.”

The lawsuit will proceed against T.J. Bunn and two investigators.

The lawsuit, filed on behalf of Michael and Cynthia Rondini, identifies Bunn, the Tuscaloosa man implicated in the alleged sexual assault of Rodini, as being part of a family that is “well connected and powerful in the Tuscaloosa community, and were major financial supporters of UA.”

Bunn works at ST Bunn Construction Co., which is across the street from the Innisfree Pub, where Rondini reportedly became drunk, or was drugged, before being raped for 30 minutes in July 2015.

Rondini was a UA student from Texas when she reported to police she was raped by Bunn in 2015. Rondini’s story became public in a June Buzzfeed story, as told by her parents, family and friends. They claimed the 20-year-old was mistreated by Tuscaloosa County investigators, the university and DCH Regional Medical Center.

The lawsuit claims that authorities sided with Bunn’s version of events and did not thoroughly follow up on Rondini’s story, and that an investigating officer was more interested in finding out whether Rondini committed any crimes on the night of the alleged rape. The university allegedly “deliberately and repeatedly denied services and mishandled accommodations with hostility toward” Rondini, the suit goes on to say. The lawsuit claims Rondini confided in a UA counselor who told her she could no longer give her therapy because she was a family friend of the Bunn’s, and that a second counselor would not see Rondini unless she first took anxiety medication.
VAB doctor dead after reported assault

BIRMINGHAM  
Friday, March 2, 2018
Slive's next legacy: Prostate cancer research

Joseph Goodman
jgoodman@al.com

The new guy from Harvard called it unprecedented. Like something he had never seen before. “In my experience, this is unheard of,” he said.

Someone needs to tell Michael Bayer, the new president of the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center, that this is what we do in Alabama — we help each other, we pick a brother up when he’s down, we cook that extra casserole for the family down the street, we give more for the second collection.

Mike Slive has been cooking casseroles, y’all. Man, has our man Mike Slive been busy in the past six months.

The former Southeastern Conference commissioner, the guy who turned the SEC into Fort Knox, the guy who moved to Birmingham and stayed there because he

Mike Slive became the seventh commissioner of the SEC in 2002. He retired in 2015. Staff file

knows something special when he sees it — that guy is failing miserably at this retirement thing. Slive’s family and friends helped him start the Mike Slive Foundation for Prostate Cancer Research last year. Last week, UAB held a press conference to announce the foundation has raised $150,000 for three new, cutting-edge studies.

They’re measuring the metabolism of cancer cells.

They’re manipulating mitochondria.

They’re isolating proteins.

To hear the new guy from Harvard say it, UAB is doing all the stuff other scientists said couldn’t be done, and it’s all taking place right down there in Southside.

Here’s the thing, though. Slive says he’s just getting started.

“I just want to help people,” Slive said. “I really don’t want anyone to go through what I went through. That has been my motivation in developing the foundation.”

A survivor of prostate cancer himself, Slive wants the Mike Slive Foundation to be the country’s leader in the fight against the disease. To do that, it’s going to take a home

SEE LEGACY, A2
Goodman

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Joseph Goodman is a

Warren

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the Houston Zoo, the $600
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Blazers have the talent, experience and leadership for another historic run
Brown is the face of the new UAB, a homegrown kid who has the potential to
develop into a pro talent.

Now he just has to put in the work.

Brown ran at 235 pounds last season, but he’s down to 228 pounds this spring. It’s a
good start.

“I want to see him push himself to be an elite player,” said new offensive coordinator
Bryant Vincent. “He was a really good freshman last year, but now it’s time for every single person on this offense, and every single coach, to take that next step. So, from being a really good player, let’s be an elite player.”

Vincent, the new offensive coordinator, is actually UAB’s old offensive coordinator from 2014. He went to South Alabama after UAB ended football, but the band is back together after a three-year hiatus. He’s the coordinator who helped develop former UAB running back Jordan Howard into an elite college player before the program was shut down.

Howard then made a name for himself at Indiana before being drafted by the Chicago Bears. It’s easy to see Brown’s early development at UAB and think of Howard’s rise. Is it fair to compare the two backs? Vincent didn’t hold back this week when asked that question.

“You go back to ’14 when Jordan was a sophomore, you see some similarities with Spencer — their work ethic, they’re light on their feet, they run with speed, they run with power,” Vincent said.

The difference: Vincent says Brown has “got his body in peak performance, or close to peak performance, at an earlier stage than Jordan did.”

Howard rushed for 1,587 yards as a UAB sophomore. In his final game with the Blazers — the final game the team played before it was killed — Howard rushed for a school-record 262 yards in a road victory against Southern Miss. A few days later, UAB president Ray Watts broke the news to Howard and his teammates that everyone had to go.

Howard is returning to UAB next week for a football clinic hosted by UAB’s coaches. In a bit of serendipity, the Blazers’ old football building — the one where Watts delivered his death sentence — has been approved for demolition by the UA System Board of Trustees.

Maybe Howard will walk through it one last time before it’s torn down. Knowing UAB football, they’ll turn the demolition into a fundraiser.

“I think there will be a lot of people wanting to chip in for sledgehammers,” Clark said. When they finally clear the mud away from yet another construction site on campus, a practice field will take the place of the old building. Clark likes to call the future field “the front door of UAB” because it’s the first thing visitors to campus will see when they pull off of I-65. UAB’s current practice fields are made of artificial turf. The new space will be a natural surface, though. Clark says the team needs a practice field similar to its home field.

“I’m hearing the new stadium will be grass,” Clark said.

Joseph Goodman is a columnist for Alabama Media Group. He’s on Twitter @JoeGoodmanJr.
Huntsville-built weather satellite goes into space

By: Staff

An innovative piece of weather equipment built in Huntsville went into space on Thursday.

The GOES-S satellite launched from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida at 4:02 p.m.

The GOES-S carries a Geostationary Lightning Mapper. It's designed to watch for lightning. Data forecasters can use the information to track storms better.

The weather satellite was built at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. And it went up on the United Launch Alliance Atlas V that was built in Decatur.

GOES-S was redesignated as GOES-17 after it reached geostationary orbit.

NASA reports it is the second satellite in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellites R series.
Sen. Orr’s bill to create Alabama School of Cyber Technology and Engineering in Huntsville passes Senate, moves to House

By: J. Pepper Bryars

A bill to establish the Alabama School of Cyber Technology and Engineering for grades 7-12 in Huntsville unanimously passed the State Senate on Thursday.

Students from across the state will be able to apply for one of the 300 spots in the public school when it opens in 2020, according to the legislation.

“Our goal is to establish the best cyber engineering high school in the nation,” said the bill’s sponsor, Sen. Arthur Orr, R-Decatur. “And Huntsville is the perfect location: the Tennessee Valley has one of the highest rates of engineers per capita in the country, and there are dozens of brilliant engineering faculty members and graduate students at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.”

The proposal was mentioned prominently in Governor Kay Ivey’s State of the State address in January.

The Huntsville school will join the Alabama School of Math and Science in Mobile and the Alabama School of Fine Arts in Birmingham.

“With the Marshall Space Flight Center and Redstone Arsenal, Alabama is at the forefront of engineering and technological research,” Ivey said in a statement. “The Alabama School of Cyber Technology and Engineering will position Alabama as a leading education hub for cyber research and engineering in America.”

Orr’s proposal now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.
Former Alabama star joins UAB staff as 10th assistant

By: Evan Dudley

A two-time national champion has joined Bill Clark's UAB coaching staff.

The program announced the addition of Nick Gentry as the Blazers' 10th on-field assistant coaching outside linebackers.

"Nick is an excellent fit for our program and for the players he will be coaching," Clark said. "He brings championship experience as a player and a coach and is going to be a major asset for UAB football."

Gentry played for Clark at Prattville High School - graduating in 2007 - and helped lead the Lions to its second state title in 2006.

He was the 10th ranked player in Alabama and signed with the Crimson Tide where he was part of the 2009 and 2011 national championship teams and was named Co-Defensive MVP of the 2011 squad along with Courtney Upshaw.

When he was a senior in 2011, Alabama head coach Nick Saban said Gentry would make a "really good coach." Gentry began his coaching career in 2012 as a defensive analyst at Tennessee under the tutelage of his former position coach at Alabama, Sal Sunseri.

He joined Clark's staff at Jacksonville State in 2013 as a graduate assistant and was promoted to a full-time assistant in 2014 as defensive line and outside linebackers coach. Gentry held that position through the 2017 season and helped lead the Gamecocks to a FCS national championship appearance against North Dakota State in 2015.

"I am thankful for the opportunity to be coaching here at UAB and am excited to work with a great staff and a group of hungry players who are driven to win championships," Gentry said. "The success this program had in its first year back was truly remarkable and I am motivated to help elevate the expectations as a national contender year-in and year out."
Off to a strong start

Alabama notebook's best start since 2010 has come thanks largely to a strong start at the plate. The Crimson Tide (7-0) is one of 13 teams around the nation that remains undefeated after two weekends of play.

The offense ranks seventh nationally with a .348 batting average and third nationally with a .477 on-base percentage. It's also 12th nationally with 0.6 runs per game. Junior left fielder Keith Holcombe leads the nation with a .684 batting average and a .739 on-base percentage, among qualifying players. Holcombe, a Hillcrest product, is also a linebacker for the football team.

The bullpen has also done its part. Alabama's relievers went 25 straight innings without allowing an earned run until sophomore Davis Vainer gave up two in the series finale on Saturday. The bullpen closed out the final 3 2/3 innings of the game without giving up a run to begin a new streak.

The Crimson Tide will be tested this week with mid-week games at Samford on Tuesday and home against Alabama State on Wednesday. Samford (5-3) boasts a team ERA of 2.71 and beat Alabama in two of their last three meetings dating back to the 2016 season. Alabama State (5-3) and Alabama haven't played since 2011.

The game at Samford will be the first road game of the season for the Crimson Tide. Alabama will travel to Norman, Okla., for a three-game series against the Oklahoma Sooners over the weekend in its first extended road trip.

Davis, Norris to be recognized on Senior Night

The University of Alabama men's basketball program will honor seniors Riley Norris and Ar'mond Davis on Senior Night before the Crimson Tide's home game against Florida on Tuesday although both players could decide to seek additional eligibility after the season.

Norris, a 6-foot-6 forward from Albertville, played in nine games this season before a chronic hip injury caused him to opt for season-ending surgery. He could apply for an additional year under the NCAA rules allowing for medically-related red-shirts. Norris has played in 109 games for Alabama in his career.

Davis, a junior college transfer, played in 32 games for UA in the 2017 season, averaging 6.3 points per game. He initially announced that he would transfer following the 2017 season, then opted to return but was slowed by a knee injury. He has not played this season and will have a fifth year of eligibility which he could use at UA or at another institution where he would be immediately eligible under the NCAA's graduate transfer policy.

Norris graduated last spring, according to UA coach Avery Johnson and Davis is on track to graduate in May. Johnson indicated that no final decision will be made on their future until after the current season.

The ceremony honoring the two seniors will begin at approximately 5:40 p.m., 20 minutes prior to the
Alabama-Florida tip-off.

Gymnastics is 6th in Regional Qualify Scores

College gymnastics has reached the part of its season where Regional Qualifying Scores are used. Alabama's 196.85 RQS places it sixth in the nation, the team's highest ranking yet. Most recently, Alabama posted a season-high 197.3 at Auburn.

At the top of the list, Oklahoma (197.853), UCLA (197.61) and LSU (197.545) stand strong in order. Alabama's RQS is 0.4 away from breaking into the top five.

Now to break down the new scoring system.

To calculate a team’s RQS, first take its top three road scores. Then, take the next three highest scores overall—home or away. Drop the highest out of these six marks, and then average the remaining five. The answer is a team's RQS.

So, in Alabama's case, its top three road scores so far are the 197.3 at Auburn, the 197.075 at Florida and the 196.725 at LSU. Its other three highs are the 197 against Arkansas, the 196.925 against Kentucky and the 196.525 against Georgia. Ignore the season-high 197.3 and average the rest: 196.85.

RQS ultimately determines which 36 teams will make it to the NCAA Regionals. Alabama is one of the six sites, hosting a championship on April 7 in Coleman Coliseum.

Women's basketball has tough tournament road

Twice the Alabama women's basketball team led by two points on the last possession of regulation, and both times the Crimson Tide surrendered the game-tying basket with sparse time left on the clock. As a result, UA finished the regular season with back-to-back overtime losses to ranked opponents.

For Alabama's six seniors, it was heartbreaking.

The two close defeats kept Alabama's rating percentage index (RPI) in the mid-80s heading into the SEC Tournament, which is around 20 spots shy of where it needs to be for a chance at an at-large NCAA Tournament bid.

If there's any good news for Alabama, it's that a challenging road lies ahead for UA as the No. 8 seed in this week's SEC Tournament in Nashville. And yes, the difficult path is exactly what Alabama needs to improve its RPI before the NCAA Tournament selection show.

The Crimson Tide's first game will be on Thursday at noon (CT) against No. 9 seed Kentucky. The Wildcats have an RPI just three spots behind UA, and defeated Alabama by 25 points in the regular season.

Should Alabama get past Kentucky, the 30-0, No. 1 seed Mississippi State Bulldogs will be waiting. And while an upset of the Bulldogs would be unlikely, it's probably the only win (besides Connecticut) that could boost Alabama's RPI into the 60s.

Ben Jones, Cecil Hurt, Terrin Waack and Drew Hill contributed to this report.
Alabama wins SEC Men's Indoor Track & Field Championships

COLLEGE STATION, Texas – The Alabama Crimson Tide men stormed to their first conference title since 1972 on the final day of the 2018 Southeastern Conference Indoor Track & Field Championships on Sunday at Texas A&M's Gilliam Indoor Track & Field Stadium in College Station, Texas. In second place after Saturday's events, the Tide roared to the front of the pack behind a 21-point performance in the 5,000 meters and four additional top-three finishes on Sunday.

"This was a total team championship," head coach Dan Waters said after the meet. "Everyone contributed. One of the most impressive things was where the points came from. Our freshman triple jumper, Christian Edwards, finishing second when he wasn't expected to score. Kord Ferguson finishing second in the shot put with an amazing mark. Shelby McEwen winning the high jump for our only individual title. Our distance runners scoring 31 points in the 3,000 and 5,000. It was a total team effort and that's how we built the program. Everyone chipped in one way or another."

Alabama won the title with 91 points, three points ahead of runner-up Arkansas (88), Florida (83.5), Texas A&M (75.5) and Georgia (71) round out the top five.


The NCAA Indoor Track & Field Championships will be held at Texas A&M University on March 9-10. Final qualifiers for the NCAA meet will be announced later this week.
Tide seems to be missing its confidence

There has been a strong but understandable backlash to the lost homestand of the Alabama basketball team, which has placed the Crimson Tide back on the slippery side of the NCAA Tournament bubble. Fans had high hopes for this season. The preseason publicity coming from UA and its head coach Avery Johnson did little to tamp down the expectations. For much of the year, most Alabama fans stuck with the team. Then, when it frankly needed only a split of a two-game homestand to avoid the “bubble” and put itself solidly in the field — Alabama lost both games and did so in a way that would turn the most enthusiastic supporter into a cynic.

Alabama fell behind Arkansas, 14-2, although it did make enough of a comeback to at least keep the crowd around for the second half. Against Florida, there was no sense sticking around after the halftime entertainer had balanced an ironing board on his head. That’s taking your own home crowd out of the game before it can help you.

So it’s not unfair or unexpected that fans are frustrated and venting that frustration out loud. Instead of condemning those opinions, one should consider the very valid reasons for the noise.

The one area of player criticism that makes me wary is when an individual or a team is accused of failing to compete. You see it phrased in different ways — “quit,” is the most common, but there is “tanked” or “has no heart” among a hundred other variations.

In reality, that’s extremely rare. Athletes that have reached the major college level have had countless chances to “quit” along the way. There are far easier ways to spend your time. College players are competitive by nature.

They are, however, human. Sometimes they do get physically dominated and worn down. That can happen to the best teams — Alabama football has done it to opponents routinely under Nick Saban, and even had it happen the other way around a time or two, as when defensive

See HURT, B2
HURT

From Page B1

who were by no means "quitters" were on the field for 100 plays against Clemson in the 2016 season's championship game. They simply had no energy left.

That hasn't been the case, either.

There are psychological causes for seeming reluctant, too. That is what has afflicted Alabama. Nothing causes hesitation like confusion and for the better part of the last three games, Alabama has looked confused.

What, after all, is the offensive identity? In a 14-minute stretch without a field goal (allowing for the fact that there were some makeable shots that rimmed out in that stretch), what fundamental play do you call, and who on the floor makes sure that play gets run? If the players stand aside and wait for Collin Sexton to do something, a frequent complaint in recent weeks, does that mean Sexton isn't competitive? Or does it mean his role isn't clearly defined 30 games into the season?

If that affects team chemistry, which it seems to do, where is the mandate that either the other players accept Sexton's role or, alternatively, that Sexton will be used differently? There is a difference in "not competing" and in "not having confidence in what's going on." But both can lead to paralysis. If it's the latter case, then the coaching staff should have fixed it long before now, settling on a lineup, defining the roles, building a foundation on something other than improvisation.

Avery Johnson said after the Florida loss that Alabama's season is not over, which is true. A win at Texas A&M on Saturday could get Alabama back on the good side of the bracket. It's a long shot, but still a shot. But it will take a plan that every player understands and has confidence in implementing. Just hoping it will happen isn't going to do, not after 30 games.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
Hawaii has gone Alabama crazy, and everyone is Tua's cousin

By: Joseph Goodman

Aerial fireworks are illegal in Hawaii.

It's a big deal on the island of Oahu, and the police there vigilantly enforce the law. Before New Year's Eve, for example, the Honolulu Police Department released a statement and phone number for tipsters to snitch on their neighbors. This all probably sounds ridiculous to folks in Alabama, considering our love of fireworks superstores, but in Hawaii, Roman candles, rockets, exploding mortars, fountains, tubes, novelties, spinners, heck, even sparklers, are illegal.

The state can and will prosecute anyone caught "purchasing, possessing, storing, setting off, igniting or discharging aerial devices" with a felony that could lead to five years in prison.

In other words, Crazy Bill would go to jail for a long time.

On the night Alabama quarterback Tua Tagovailoa launched himself into the national consciousness, Honolulu broke all the rules. Tagovailoa's national-championship touchdown throw to DeVonta Smith set off a spontaneous, and highly illegal, fireworks show.

"It was powerful," said Tichael Amosa, one of Tua's cousins who lives in Ewa Beach, Hawaii. "Honestly, it was so powerful. Fireworks were going off left and right."

Turns out, the biggest celebration of Alabama's stunning national championship the night of the game might not have happened in the state of Alabama. Or even the continental United States.

"When Tua won the national championship, it's kind of like the whole island won the national championship," said Adam Amosa-Tagovailoa, an offensive tackle for Navy, and another of Tua's cousins. "Everyone was so proud."

It's almost like everyone in Hawaii, on that one night, was a part of Tua's extended family. Only here's the thing. When everybody in Hawaii awoke the next day, a lot of people literally started claiming to be a part of Tua's family. Tua has over 40 first cousins, but the day after he became the hero of Hawaii he might have had 4,000.

"It got kind of crazy back home," said Diane Tagovailoa, Tua's mother.

So many people started saying they were related to Tua, that the phrase "Tua is my cousin" has become something of a running joke on the island. Some hilarious sketch comedy has popped up on YouTube, and, according to Diane, people have started making "Tua's my cousin" T-shirts.

Tichael and Adam, who were quoted in the beginning of this column, are Tua's first cousins. and they can prove it. That's kind of important because, apparently, arguments broke out after the national championship between people saying they were Tua's cousins, and Tua's actual cousins.

See Next Page
Galu Tagovailoa, Tua's father who now lives in Alabaster, had to break up some fights over the phone.

"I had friends calling me up, like, 'Hey, do you know this guy because he's saying that you guys grew up and he's family,'" Galu said. "I'm like, dude, you got to relax, man. If they want to be cousins, let them be cousins. But they take it personal."

Tichael, who grew up with Tua and is more like a sibling than a cousin, says she twice has been in awkward situations with people who have claimed to be Tua's cousins.

"They were trying to tell me they were Tua's cousins without knowing I was actually Tua's cousin," Tichael said. "It's so funny. I told my mom, I have never experienced anything like this before -- others trying to be someone's cousin because of their fame."

To fully understand the joke, some quick insight into Polynesian culture could help.

Large families are common, and, similar to Alabama's culture, friends often get lumped into the extended family as well. Everyone in Alabama has a few aunts and uncles who aren't actually aunts and uncles.

It's the same in Hawaii, only the families are bigger.

Add a little island pride to that folksy sensibility, and suddenly everyone is related when a kid from Ewa Beach shocks the country with one of the most stunning plays in college football history. Saying "Tua's my cousin" is a way of expressing pride, but with a touch of self-effacing humor.

"It's a joke, but at the same time it's real," Adam Amosa-Tagovailoa said. "It's a claim to fame, but at the same time it's like an honor. Islanders are proud of him, and want to be a part of Tua somehow."

Tua's actual cousins -- the ones he grew up with him in Ewa Beach -- are hoping their cousin's fame spreads the message of their Christian ministry. The tight-knit Tagovailoas were all raised by the family's grandfather, Seu Tagovailoa, in their family's church. Message of Peace Ministry helped shape Tua and his cousins into evangelical followers of Christ. The Tagovailoas want Tua's fame to help spread the message of the ministry in Hawaii and beyond.

"There are some new faces we've seen at the ministry because they want to see it themselves because of the way Tua carries himself," said Tuli Amosa, the church's pastor and Tua's uncle. "We want our kids to do great things. Tua has followed that path and people now look at him like, who is this guy, and where did he learn all of this stuff?"

Tua's cousins know, and these days that means the whole island.
OUR VIEW

The NCAA must end its exploitation of athletes

The NCAA makes billions. The conferences and the colleges make billions. The coaches make millions. The agents make millions.

The players producing all this money? They get squat, and their eligibility is in danger if they — or their mother — gets so much as a meal at Longhorn Steakhouse.

So who really comes out looking bad in the Yahoo report Friday giving a glimpse into money flowing under the table to college basketball players throughout the country? The players who received relatively tiny rewards? Or the NCAA and the college sports industrial complex, which has ridden those players for decades?

None of the Yahoo report is particularly surprising. Yet it seemed to surprise NCAA President Mark Emmert:

"These allegations, if true, point to systematic failures that must be fixed and fixed now if we want college sports in America," Emmert said. "Simply put, people who engage in this kind of behavior have no place in college sports. They are an affront to all those who play by the rules."

Or, as commentator Jay Bilas put it, how dare anyone exploit our players before we, the NCAA, are done doing so?

To be sure, the dozens of players named in the leaked FBI documents knew the NCAA rules banning their accepting "impermissible benefits" and all or most of them knew they were breaking them. Even so, the documents primarily spotlight the flaws in the system and in the NCAA's rules more than the players' wrongdoing.

The report shook the college sports world Friday and its timing couldn't be worse, with the lucrative men's basketball tournament tipping off in just a few weeks. But if this jars the NCAA and other leaders into taking a hard look at their fundamentally flawed system, then it's a welcome development.

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The NCAA has been running a lucrative scheme for decades now. Teenage superstars act as free labor and generate, these days, billions of dollars for everyone but themselves. True, they are offered college scholarships. But the athletic-academic scandal at the University of North Carolina revealed what a joke that can be, and how the NCAA is content to look the other way when college athletes are mistreated.

Because it's not about the player. It's about what he can do for the college, for the conference, for the NCAA's bottom line. That exploitation is done above the table for all to see. It's only when it's done by an agent, under the table, that the NCAA thinks the exploitation is a problem.

The current FBI investigation that led to Friday's revelations should prompt an overdue, clear-eyed assessment of all that is broken in college basketball — and football. The NCAA needs to reassess all its rules and scrap those that hurt student-athletes. The details will be complicated, but athletes responsible for generating massive revenue need to be compensated in some way, beyond their scholarships. Instead they are targets of a federal probe while the real beneficiaries — the NCAA and its member schools — sit back and count their dough.

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