### Articles of Interest

**May 11, 2018 – May 18, 2018**

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500 University Boulevard East  
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35401  
(205) 348-5938  
kreinhart@uasystem.ua.edu  
http://uasystem.ua.edu
GREAT MAN,
GREAT FRIEND

Kevin Scarbinsky Special to AL.com

It was Good Friday 2015.

We'd just finished breakfast at Salem’s Diner in Homewood, his favorite early morning hangout, when Mike Slive’s phone rang. The caller ID said Columbus, Ohio, but didn’t include a name. Slive said, “I’m intrigued.”

He answered, and the voice on the phone belonged to Urban Meyer. The coach was calling to apologize to the commissioner for the way Meyer had left Florida and the SEC years before.

Actually, Meyer had been writing a letter of apology to Slive and thought, hey, why not pick up the phone? It was a touching show of humility from an elite coach coming off a national title at Ohio State, a telling sign of respect for the most powerful man in college sports.

Best of all, the call wasn’t motivated by sympathy. Meyer didn’t know at the time that Slive was in the middle of a brutal battle with prostate cancer.

That phone call was the ultimate Mike Slive moment, his professional power and personal touch coming together at a quiet intersection that was a privilege to visit.

The world lost a great man Wednesday when the former commissioner of the Great Midwest, Conference USA and the SEC passed away at the age of 77. So many of us lost a great friend. Has anyone of his stature made more true friends while making such an indelible impact on his world?

I was late to his breakfast table in lowering my stubborn wall built to maintain a professional distance as a journalist. I’m grateful he was just as stubborn in his kindness. He wanted nothing more than to spend time and share stories because he loved people and words and ideas.

He labored over his speeches as I did over my columns, searching for just the right quote from the likes of Winston Churchill, and we found common ground in those labors. He was a terrific storyteller, especially when those stories were personal.

He shared a favorite that day at Salem’s. His daughter, Anna, had served as a field hockey umpire in her early 20s. One day, a man in the sparse crowd started heckling her. He wouldn’t stop until Slive approached him and said, in no uncertain terms, “Sir, that umpire is my daughter. I would appreciate it if you would stop.”

He did. Slive’s grin in the telling was priceless.

It was a hidden pillar of his legacy, but Mike Slive would fight you. Not physically, but intellectually, passionately. Imagine the strength it took to hammer out consensus among 12 and then 14 SEC schools on a sea of complex issues, to forge a collection of self-interested institutions into an unstoppable collective force.

SEE SLIVE, A9

Has anyone of his stature made more true friends while making such an indelible impact on his world?
SLIVE
FROM A1

Now imagine the strength he found to fight prostate cancer twice, the battles separated by two decades, and then take the fight to another level by lending his iconic name and powerful presence to the Mike Slive Foundation for Prostate Cancer Research.

He honored me with the opportunity to tell the story of the foundation’s origination. Sitting down with him and his daughter, hearing the frightening details of the fight that touched their entire family, I was struck more than ever by his uncommon blend of power and humility. He’d found the perfect balance of Godfather and grandfather.

And even as he was expanding that fight to help others, he took the time to counsel me as I contemplated a career change.

Last fall, he texted me this message: “Have a good football weekend. Let’s talk soon about you. We have talked enough about me.”

For once, he was wrong. I could never say enough about Mike Slive. I saw him nervous on the Rose Bowl sideline before Alabama played Texas. I saw him thrilled in a hotel ballroom as his granddaughter turned SEC Basketball Media Day into her personal playground.

I wish I could see him at Salem’s for breakfast one more time.

Kevin Scarbinsky is the vice president of marketing for Bruno Event Team. He is a former sports columnist for Alabama Media Group.
COMMENTARY

Slive was a man of wisdom, understanding

Cecil Hurt

The praise and accolades, the personal reminiscences, the various plans for ways to honor former SEC Commissioner Mike Slive, who passed away on Wednesday in Birmingham, continued through the day on Thursday.

The warm words were well-deserved. In a time when prominent, powerful public figures grow more distant, Slive was accessible and humble — not in a loud, boisterous way, not with bear hugs and belly laughs. But he would remember details, ask questions and, most importantly, pay attention to the answers.

He came along at a time when college athletics were set for a financial explosion. He guided the SEC through the bonanza, not with mere competence but with proficiency. Slive, though, has inspired far more emotion than the passing of some skilled chairman of the board who kept stock prices high and expanded into new and lucrative markets.

There was an

See HURT, C2
intangible accomplishment, though, one that has run through my mind over the past 48 hours, one that is hard to quantify in dollar figures or even championship trophies.

A common observation about Slive was he was well-read and that he especially loved history. One conversation in particular we had involved a book about Abraham Lincoln, a subject that clearly piqued his interest. Slive studied Lincoln, not as the Great Emancipator but as the man he was early in his first term, trying to hold together an increas-ingly fractious union.

When Slive became commissioner of the SEC in 2002, the league may not have been on the verge of dissolution but there were squabbles and mistrust and NCAA troubles that were damaging to the league’s reputation and to its success. Given the atmosphere at the time, things needed to change and that is said without assigning any blame to anyone or any institution in particu lar. Alabama certainly had its faults, which is enough said about that.

Slive’s greatest strength may have been that he understood what needed to be done and saw that the league office needed to more than constantly deal with issues on the basis of balancing one institution against the other. More importantly, he understood it was not a zero-sum game, a short-range balancing act in which complaints and issues were dealt with on a piecemeal case-by-case basis.

Perhaps it had nothing to do with being a student of Lincoln, perhaps it did. But Slive knew, either from instinct or education, that a house divided itself could not stand. Certainly, it could not stand as strongly if it was perpetually squabbling.

He didn’t change things by waving a magic wand. But he earned respect. He could make a tough decision, but at the same time, he could make the involved parties see his reasoning. He would not act arbitrarily, without explanation. Athletics are a competitive world but he made the SEC institutions believe it was better to channel that competitiveness into the national scale rather than gnawing on one another. When you hear Big Ten or ACC fans respond quizically to the chants of “SEC!” at a championship event, you realize that they have missed this point.

The greatest achievement of Mike Slive, then, was not the exponential growth in prestige experienced by the SEC. It was making the ground fertile, which made that growth possible.

Mike Slive will be laid to rest on Friday. I will remember him with the words of Proverbs 3:13.

“Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding.”

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225
SEC Visionary: Former Commissioner Dies at 77

Mike Slive, 1940-2018

The Birmingham News
Friday, May 18, 2018
SLIVE
FROM B1

"Mike was a giant in our industry and as remarkable as he was professionally, he was an even better person," ACC Commissioner John Swofford said in a statement.

Big 12 Commissioner Bob Bowlsby called Slive "a true visionary."

Slive played a pivotal role in the creation of the College Football Playoff. He first formally proposed the idea of a four-team playoff for college football in 2008, but it was shot down by most of the other conference commissioners.

"I think there were many who were not all the way supportive, some wanted larger and some not at all," Bowlsby told the AP. "Mike's position was known and not everybody agreed with it. But he was statesman."

Finally, after two SEC teams, LSU and Alabama, played in the BCS national championship game after the 2011 season, the rest of college football's power brokers came around and constructed the current postseason system.

"He was a very good communicator, built relationships inside his conference and outside his conference," Big Ten Commissioner Jim Delany told the AP. "He was also a friend. We were competitors, too, but we were always able to talk through it. Disagree and come back to the table. I respected his flexibility and human qualities. But he was a force because of how smart he was."

During tumultuous conference realignment across the nation, the SEC expanded from 12 to 14 schools with the additions of Missouri and Texas A&M in 2012 under Slive. He was the catalyst behind the creation of the SEC Network, which launched in 2014.

Slive also played a major part in ushering in a new governance model for the NCAA in which the SEC and the other four most powerful and wealthy conferences were given autonomy to create and pass legislation.

"Not just an innovator, but a creative person who had the insight to kind of peer around the corner a little bit and know what opportunities might come next," Sankey said.

Slive was born in Utica, New York, the son of a butcher. He became an attorney and founded a law firm that assisted schools with NCAA issues before starting a long career in college sports. He was the founding commissioner of both the Great Midwest Conference and C-USA.

"Mike Slive is one of the best people I have ever met," said Charles Bloom, a former associate commissioner at the SEC who is now an administrator at South Carolina. "His impact on me was tremendous. He was a father-type figure, someone I could talk to about life issues and then we would work together on SEC office matters. He was a great leader, mentor and friend."

After surviving cancer, Slive founded the Mike Slive Foundation for Prostate Cancer Research.

Slive is survived by Liz, his wife of 49 years; daughter Anna; son-in-law Judd Harwood; and granddaughter Abigail.

See next page
Mike Slive literally changed the world through his life."
SEC commissioner Greg Sankey

“Commissioner Slive was one of the most impactful leaders to positively shape college athletics, and so many universities, athletic departments and student-athletes have benefited from his leadership and vision.”
Alabama AD Greg Byrne

“His leadership and decision making forever enhanced the landscape of our profession and the SEC.”
Auburn football coach Gus Malzahn via Twitter

“His contributions to the SEC are countless; his legacy cemented in history.”
SEC Network personality Paul Finebaum via Twitter

“Commissioner Slive left an indelible mark on college sports. He was an innovator, a tremendous leader, and one of the driving forces behind the establishment of the College Football Playoff and the creation of the SEC Network.”
ESPN statement

Mike was one of the wisest most generous men I knew. His foundation for Prostate Cancer is making a huge difference.”
Auburn basketball coach Bruce Pearl via Twitter

“He nurtured and guided me through many things as a new coach. A True Leader, Fighter, Builder and Visionary! A leadership Legend!”
Georgia basketball coach Tom Crean via Twitter

“Commissioner Slive was revered because of his visionary leadership, and he will be missed by admirers from coast to coast.”
Auburn AD Allen Greene via Twitter
Amazon eyeing Bessemer for distribution center – sources

William Thornton wthornton@al.com

Amazon is considering the city of Bessemer for a distribution center, sources have confirmed to AL.com, a move that would be an employment windfall for the area.

Last week, officials said a “well-known” company is considering locating there in a project which could mean up to 3,000 jobs.

The target site is U.S. Steel-owned property off Powder Plant Road near Bessemer City High School and Alabama Splash Adventure.

The acreage of the property has not been released. Fulfillment centers typically use about 800,000 square feet, where workers choose, pack and ship small items such as

SEE AMAZON, AS

AMAZON
FROM AL

books, electronics, household items and toys to fulfill customer orders. Just Wednesday, the Internet retailer announced a center for Tuscon, Arizona.

Several sources would not comment publicly on the identity of the company considering the development.

Earlier this month, Jefferson County Commission President Jimmie Stephens said the project would mean a “sizable capital investment” in western Jefferson County and Bessemer.

Reached Wednesday, Stephens said the state of Alabama, Bessemer and Jefferson County are in negotiations with an unnamed “well-known” company under the codename Project Bluebird.

“We can neither confirm nor deny that Bluebird is Amazon,” he said.

Stephens said he is confident the company will decide to locate in Bessemer, and a public announcement will be made in 30 to 45 days.

“This is a win-win in bringing much-needed jobs to western Jefferson County,” he said.

Attempts to reach Amazon for comment were not immediately successful.

Starting wages for the employer, officials said last week, will be at least $14 an hour.

Josh Gluskin, regional manager for ONIN Staffing, said should Amazon come into the Bessemer market, “We are prepared to provide staffing services as we have with Amazon Distribution Centers in other markets in the U.S. Our offices in Alabama can work to see that there is a ready-workforce on hand.

“This could surely be a great game changer for the Bessemer market and the state,” he said.

Headquartered in Birmingham, ONIN Staffing is the largest staffing firm in the state, and one of the largest industrial staffing firms in North America.

Of Alabama’s neighbors, Florida and Tennessee have five fulfillment centers, while Georgia has three.

Last year, Amazon opened a $30 million, 362,000-square-foot “sortation” center in west Mobile off Interstate 10 that promised to employ up to 1,000 seasonally.

Both Birmingham and Huntsville made public pitches for the Amazon H22 project last year, among other U.S. cities, which promised $5 billion in investment and 50,000 jobs, as well as affiliated investment and job creation.

AL.com reporter Erin Edgeman contributed to this report.
HudsonAlpha to use $150K grant to further genomic education

By: William Thornton

HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology is using a grant from the Alabama Power Foundation to bring genomic education to Alabama's college students.

Five Alabama colleges and universities will take part in the program this year, and another 25 schools are slated to be added in the fall.

"We hope this experience will inspire more Alabama students to pursue a career in the STEM fields such as genomics and bioinformatics," Neil Lamb, vice president for Educational Outreach at HudsonAlpha, said.

The program is being funded through a $150,000 grant from the Alabama Power Foundation. "Characterizing Our DNA Exceptions" or CODE, will bring HudsonAlpha together with small groups of college students to produce authentic genomic research.

Current sequencing technologies make it possible to obtain the entire genetic code of an individual in a matter of days. The process also finds DNA variants, or genetic changes, which have not undergone the same amount of study and are therefore not as well understood.

As Michele Morris, workforce development lead at HudsonAlpha explained, these changes, known as variants of uncertain significance, or VUS, may have roles in the development of traits or diseases.

Through CODE, students will work to computationally analyze DNA variants – a practice known as bioinformatics – from real-world, anonymous clinical samples. This kind of analysis can be time consuming, which is one reason it has been historically conducted at large universities.

CODE will bring the research to students at the Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine, Alabama State University, Birmingham Southern College and Lawson State and Wallace State Community Colleges.

Each school will select a faculty member to serve as program adviser, who will then select five to 10 students to participate in CODE. HudsonAlpha researchers and educators are hosting a two-day workshop for the advisers today and tomorrow.

"Programs like this one can be real game changers for these students, and we are proud to provide support," Myla Calhoun, president of the Alabama Power Foundation said.

Pilot schools will participate in CODE for the 2018-2019 academic year. Students will present their work at a pilot group symposium next March. Then the pilot schools will be eligible to continue participation for a second year. This fall, HudsonAlpha will begin recruiting 25 more schools.

See next page
"Enormous amounts of genomic data are being generated on a daily basis, so CODE participants will have access to that data and work to characterize newly identified DNA variants," Lamb said.
PROTECTIVE LIFE ACQUIRES
BOSTON INSURANCE COMPANY

Protective Life Corp., through its subsidiaries, has acquired all of the individual life and annuity business of Lincoln Financial Group's Liberty Life Assurance Co. of Boston through reinsurance.

The reinsurance transaction closed in conjunction with Lincoln's acquisition of Liberty Life from affiliates of Liberty Mutual Group Inc. "We are pleased to announce the closing of our 49th life and annuity acquisition, the largest in our history," said Richard J. Bielen, Protective's president and CEO.

"The addition of this stable, high-quality block of business provides us with a solid stream of earnings along with the unique opportunity to expand our distribution network and significantly grow our retail business. It is a testament to the strength and flexibility of our acquisition capabilities here at Protective."

The transaction, originally announced in January, is expected to represent a capital investment by Protective of approximately $1.2 billion.

As of Dec. 31, 2017, Protective Life Corp. had assets of approximately $79.6 billion.

Protective has long ranked among Birmingham's largest companies.
Governor spells out priorities for state

Kay Ivey spoke during a Chamber of Commerce event

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Gov. Kay Ivey on Tuesday briefly laid out her priorities for the state including improving rural hospitals and access to education, expanding broadband internet access and reforming the state budgets, prisons, and ethics commission.

"I want all Alabamians to achieve their dreams, and I want our state and people to be envied the world over," Ivey said.

Ivey, 73, will face Huntsville Mayor Tommy Battle, state Sen. Bill Hightower and evangelist Scott Dawson in the June 5 Republican primary for governor.

The governor served as the keynote speaker at the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama’s "Chamber in Session: State of the State" luncheon.

She highlighted the state’s economy and economic development announcements during her year as governor including expansions in the automotive industry in Tuscaloosa County. Ivey became governor on April 10, 2017, when Robert Bentley resigned and she was elevated from the lieutenant governor’s office.

The state must be innovative in its approach to the challenges facing rural hospitals, Ivey said.

"There is no one-size-fits-all solution for our rural hospitals. We have to deal with them one at a time, and I will continue to meet with the stakeholders of these rural hospitals," She said. "We have got to figure out what works in that community the pull together to make sure it happens."

Ivey didn’t offer further specifics on her plans, but did note some communities had approved additional taxes to support their rural hospitals.

See STATE, A5
She also pointed to a legislative act signed earlier this spring to create the Alabama Rural Hospital Resource Center within the UAB Health System that would allow smaller nonprofit public rural hospitals access to the expertise of the larger system at no cost in an effort to help them remain viable and improve health care in rural areas of the state.

By 2022 as part of her "Strong Start Strong Finish" education initiative, Ivey wants to see all third-graders reading at or above the level by the end of the third grade and she wants every high school to offer at least one computer science course.

The education initiative is a "full spectrum" effort meant to cover education from pre-kindergarten to the workplace, she said. Ivey's goal is to have more than 500,000 Alabamians to earn a post-secondary degree or credential by 2025.

"The goal is clear - we must prepare our students and our people, whether leaving high school of the community college or four-year university, to earn and work and have a good wage," she said.

The state's economy and residents' daily lives to fix it," she said.

Ivey cited lawmakers' approval this spring of a grant program to encourage investment to bring Internet to underserved areas of the state as an example of efforts to address the issue.

Ivey called the state's budgets and prison system antiquated and pledged to work with lawmakers on reforms. The state's department of corrections has been neglected and underfunded, she said, raising the specter of a possible federal takeover of the system.

"Both of these issues, budget reform and prisons, deserve our attention and support. I will not turn away from them just because I inherited them," Ivey said.

Ivey proposed changing the appointment process for the Alabama Ethics Commission.

"It is not lost on me that I stand in front of you today as governor because of an ethical lapse of my predecessor," she said.

Ivey noted the scandals that unseated Bentley and Speaker of the House Mike Hubbard.

Ivey proposed transferring the appointment authority of the governor, lieutenant governor and the speaker of the house to the chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, the presiding justice of the court of criminal appeals and presiding judge of the court civil appeals.
Bracing talk from the mayor

Stimpson hits Mobile's challenges head-on

Lawrence Specker lspecker@al.com

Despite the overarching theme that the state of things is good, Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson did address some challenges Thursday at the State of the City & County Lunch — and he put several of them squarely on his own plate.

The annual event is presented by the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce. Chamber President and CEO Bill Sisson said that a high degree of cooperation between Chamber, city and county leaders is helping the area capitalize on its opportunities.

SEE MAYOR, A9

Mobile Press-Register
Friday, May 11, 2018

MAYOR
FROM A1

"I think the phrase 'Let's make hay while the sun shines' certainly applies to this region right now," Sisson said.

Mobile County Commission President Connie Hudson likewise praised the spirit of cooperation, and cited a long list of positive developments. She also announced one bit of news: A June 1 grand opening has been set for the county's new Emergency Operations Center, which will serve as a multi-agency command center in a hurricane or other large-scale disaster.

Stimpson, like the others, spoke of a growing spirit of civic excitement that he attributed to a crop of innovators and entrepreneurs. But he also said that the city will have to embrace some potentially unsettling changes if it really wants to move forward.

Stimpson said that the city's stagnant population level "is one very disturbing indicator that cannot be ignored."

"Change is never easy and it makes people uncomfortable," Stimpson said. "But we must grow, and we must grow within the city. It will take a tremendous community collaboration to do that, but it can be done. And it must be done."

Stimpson said that one game-changing development would be swapping commercial air service from Mobile Regional Airport in west Mobile to Downtown Mobile Airport at Brookley, which enjoys close proximity to the city's core and two interstates.

A feasibility study of the swap, being conducted by the Mobile Airport Authority, is nearing completion.

Stimpson said education is another key issue, and that it's clear that "Mobileans want to explore options. Options that will lead to all of our children getting a better education. Our job is to advocate for our students. We can and we must do better."

The mayor went on to cite three issues for which he as mayor has special responsibility. "First and most importantly is fighting crime," he said. "The amount of violent crime we are experiencing is unacceptable by any measure." He credited Police Chief Lawrence Battiste with progressive leadership, but said the city will redouble its efforts. "We will drive crime down," he said.

Secondly, Stimpson cited a goal for the Mobile Fire-Rescue Department to receive a rare top-tier ISO 1 rating. Thirdly, he reiterated a vast need to fund deferred maintenance on city-owned buildings. "The chickens have come home to roost," he said of the need to find a new revenue stream to address maintenance issues.

Stimpson stressed that good things are happening in the city and that there are many signs that economic growth will continue, bringing better quality of life and more jobs. "To me it's almost mind-blowing," he said of the potential.

"But based on the historical trend," he said, "if we do not reduce the crime rate, improve public education and improve our housing stock, we will be providing lots of jobs for people living outside of the city."

Stimpson said, "Again, great things are happening and many things are going well, but we can't sit on our laurels. When things are going well, that's the time to address the difficult issues. The call to action is to myself, and to everyone else in this room, to set the bar higher."

He said, "We have before us the opportunity to fix things that have prevented the growth of the city for decades ... The challenges I've laid out today will be more easily solved if we have love in our hearts, love for God and love for each other. We've shown it, we have it, let's let it shine brighter."
Savage: ‘The time was right’ to exit

Reflects on Senior Bowl tenure, departure

Mark Heim  mheim@al.com

It was just time. That's what Phil Savage said Thursday, a day after the Reese's Senior Bowl announced, per a news release, that the game and its executive director were "mutually parting ways" after six years.

"I felt like the time was right to make a move like this," Savage said during an interview on "The Opening Kickoff" on WNSP-FM 105.5 sports radio in Mobile. "I think the Senior Bowl is in excellent shape. It's in good hands. I can't say enough about the people I worked with over these last six years. They did a phenomenal job as we tried to build out some new things in relation to the local community."

SEE SAVAGE, A8
SAVAGE
FROM AI

Savage said that a "new opportunity or two" is possible in the near future. Meanwhile, he'd like to continue being an analyst for the Crimson Tide Sports Network, he said. He became part of the Alabama radio broadcast team in 2009.

Savage, 53, appeared to be the ideal executive director for the Senior Bowl, with credentials suited for the task. As a Mobile native, he understood the importance of the college all-star game to the community.

In addition, Savage could draw from his experience as general manager for the Cleveland Browns from 2005 to 2008 and as director of player personnel for the Baltimore Ravens when aligning the game's interests with those of the NFL.

Furthermore, Savage's role with the Crimson Tide Sports Network and SiriusXM allowed him to keep his finger on the pulse of college football.

Reflecting on the Senior Bowl and his work there, he said Thursday: "It certainly was never a retirement job in my mind, because I felt like it could be a true living, breathing entity that could play an important part in the role of the NFL Draft."

A search committee will be formed by the Mobile Arts and Sports Association to identify candidates for the Senior Bowl position that Savage is vacating.

Following Wednesday's surprise announcement, speculation swirled locally about possible unspoken reasons for Savage's departure. This speculation focused on Savage's comments in January about the state of Ladd-Peebles Stadium; recent lean attendance at the game; and the time that Savage must devote to his other professional endeavors.

In January, in expressing concern about Ladd-Peebles, the Senior Bowl's home since 1993, Savage said, "I'm talking about finding a venue that our game and this event is deserving of having. It's an A-plus event, and I hope people recognize that it's not by accident that a Heisman Trophy winner, the entire National Football League, and 600 members of the media show up to Mobile, Alabama. They're not here to see Mardi Gras. They're not down here to go fishing. They were down here for the Reese's Senior Bowl, and we need to make sure we understand that."

On Thursday, he was asked if those comments factored into the mutual parting of ways. "I don't know if it did or didn't. It didn't come from my standpoint," he said, adding, "Obviously, the stadium has been a topic of conversation this spring for a lot of us along the Gulf Coast and, specifically, Mobile."

He pointed out that the University of South Alabama seeks to push ahead with construction of a second major football stadium in Mobile. This would be an on-campus stadium for the university's Division I team. "That's something in the backdrop to all of this," Savage said.

He said, "My relationship with city officials, the county, the mayor is very strong and very positive. The people over at Ladd did as much as they could possibly do in terms of making Ladd-Peebles as good as it can possibly be."

Savage was asked if the game's attendance or "spreading himself too thin" were issues leading to the decision.

"No," said "If you look at college football, in general, attendance numbers have declined in the past six years. ... It was something we were always cognizant of from really the moment I got here all the way through. I wouldn't say that was more emphasized or de-emphasized this last game vs. any other games I was here for. That's certainly a piece of the puzzle, but let's face it, the reality of live events and television, the comfort of being at home ... everyone faces the challenge of getting people to come to their event, so I wouldn't say the Senior Bowl was immune to that."

Savage will continue with the Reese's Senior Bowl until May 15.

"I have nothing but positive things to say about my experience here," Savage said. "It was a perfect fit and perfect job for me at that point in my life. The landscape of things changes in terms of your own personal goals on where you are in your own career."

"He said, "I don't know if there is anything to point fingers out one way or another. It was a situation where I thought the game was in good shape."

Savage's looming departure from the Senior Bowl fold appeared to cause dismay in the ranks of pro football, according to ESPN's Chris Mortensen. "Bunch of NFL teams disappointed to learn Phil Savage is leaving the Senior Bowl," Mortensen tweeted. "Senior Bowl and Mobile are mutually parting ways. As executive director, Phil did indeed take game to higher level the past six years," Mortensen wrote in a tweet.

According to NFL.com, six first-round picks and 44 total selections from the 2018 NFL Draft attended this year's Senior Bowl. One of them was No. 1 overall pick Baker Mayfield, winner of the Heisman Trophy.

Savage had grand ideas for the Senior Bowl in January when he shared a vision for a Junior Showcase. "There should be a Junior Showcase," he said in January. "I think they should bring 150 to 175 Juniors that look like they have a reasonable chance of coming into the NFL," he explained. "Let everyone get a height and weight. Sit down and interview the young man. Say, 'Look, these are the things you need to work on. You know what? You are a legitimate prospect. You absolutely stay healthy. Have a great year. You'll be a top pick next year.'"
AOL cofounder Steve Case and the Rise of the Rest bus tour made a highly anticipated stop in Birmingham on May 9.

It's a visit the local startup world is hopeful can be a catalyst to even bigger things in Birmingham.

The stop included a pitch competition at Sloss Furnaces that saw Mixtroz take home the top prize and $100,000 in funding.

The tour also made stops at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, Innovation Depot, Shipt's headquarters and Pack Health.

One of the main goals of Rise of the Rest is to highlight startup ecosystems outside of Silicon Valley and traditional startup hubs.

The BBJ had a chance to speak with Case about tech ecosystems, what Birmingham is doing right and more.

What was your impression of the Birmingham startup ecosystem before your visit? Well, I'd say my impression a few years ago was it was kind of off the radar. It wasn't something getting a lot of focus. In the last few months, we've been hearing more and more about it. I think it's getting noticed. Looking for the next places to go with Rise of the Rest, and our research, we were finding out about all the great things - the fact that it was No. 1 for millennial entrepreneurs, No. 3 for female entrepreneurs, the success of Shipt with the acquisition by Target - there are a bunch of things happening that are really getting our attention. So we wanted to see it first-hand, but it's clear to me, based on what we've already heard and seen, that it really is one of the rising cities in America and kind of pivoting from steel to startups. The Magic City seems to be growing again and has a great opportunity to emerge as one of America's (top) startup cities, but also one of the most inclusive startup cities. A lot of people (who) think of Birmingham, don't think of Birmingham and (tech) startups in the same sentence. I think that can change and it's starting to change and our visit here will kind of move it forward a bit.

Why did you choose the Southeast region for Rise of the Rest this year? Every year we do a spring tour and a fall tour. This is our seventh tour, and we've been in different parts of the country, but it felt like time to do another Southern swing. We have done Southern cities before - we've been to Nashville, been to New Orleans, we've been to Atlanta, Raleigh-Durham, cities like that - but it felt like this was the time, so this week it was Dallas, Memphis, Birmingham, Chattanooga and Louisville. It's been a great week so far.

What makes the South good for tech startups and development? I think one of the dynamics that is beginning to come clear is this third wave of the internet, which is really integrating the internet in much more seamless and pervasive ways throughout our lives. It's going to disrupt some big institutions like health care, education, transportation, food, agriculture, logistics, smart cities - a bunch of different things. The expertise that exists in the middle of the country really plays
into the hand of the entrepreneurs. You're trying to have that third wave, and partnerships are more important, being able to partner with companies. Most Fortune 500 companies are in the middle of the county — that is a big strength.

What can ROTR cities do to stand out and distinguish themselves? Do exactly what Birmingham is doing. Having the community to rally together to focus on startups and celebrate startups and tell the stories of startups and mentor startups and invest in startups. The successes, like Shipt, get people's attention around the country. A half-billion-dollar exit to a Fortune 500 company like Target helps put it on the map, but it's a mix of talent and capital. A lot of people who grew up in Birmingham left Birmingham because they felt there was better opportunity elsewhere. So how do you get those people to stay, slow that brain drain, get some of the people who left to come back, kind of a boomerang for talent? That kind of leads to more capital willing to be invested in Birmingham. (When) there's more capital, more people would want to stay here, and it kind of creates this increasing returns dynamic. Birmingham is on the move, and it is rising. We are just trying to do what we can to help it rise a little faster.
Sheriff: Truth prevailed in Rondini case

‘Unjust accusations’ made against law enforcement, he says

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

Tuscaloosa County Sheriff Ron Abernathy called a press conference Wednesday to discuss a lawsuit and publicity surrounding the Megan Rondini case.
Abernathy has not commented extensively on the case since it garnered widespread attention after BuzzFeed News published an online story in July. The story detailed how the former University of Alabama student committed suicide months after reporting that she was raped by a man from a prominent Tuscaloosa family.
Investigators said there was not enough evidence to prosecute T.J. Bunn Jr. and sent the case to a grand jury.

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which found no probable cause. Bunn has denied the allegation, saying he had consensual sex with Rondini.

The story sparked a wave of criticism directed at law enforcement by people who believe the case wasn't investigated properly because of Bunn's family connections. Abernathy remained quiet on the matter, citing the pending litigation after he

and the two investigators were among the defendants in a wrongful death lawsuit filed by Rondini's family.

A judge dismissed the case against the sheriff, and the family later dropped their cases against the individual investigators. On Wednesday, Abernathy issued a statement, saying that "after several months of unjust accusations against my office and other Tuscaloosa law enforcement agencies, the truth has indeed finally prevailed."

The Alabama Attorney General's Office reviewed the investigation, he said, and "approved our investigators' actions, and the investigative process."

"We hope this incident will serve as a lesson to all that social media cannot, and should not, be the venue in which any case is tried, and that social media sites should not be trusted as a reliable source of substantiated information regarding important matters. False allegations made by internet bloggers and perpetuated by local political hacks have done damage to our community in that some victims have been reluctant to come forward to report cases, fearing that their information will be made known on social media."

He said that some people who have commented on the case on social media could face civil litigation, but he declined to say who could be named as defendants.

"For those who have facilitated these injustices on Facebook and other sites, civil litigation should be expected, if for no other reason than to prevent this from occurring in the future. Baseless slander directed against innocent parties should be addressed and the offending parties held accountable. Those who perpetuate the false allegations for their own political gain should be held accountable. Their lack of integrity and self-serving disregard for the truth resulted in an unjustified attack on our community and many of its most respected institutions. Our message must be strong and clear, that libelous behavior will not be tolerated."

Bunn is the only defendant remaining in the Rondini family's wrongful death suit.

His attorney, Ivey Gilmore, issued a statement Wednesday afternoon that called the BuzzFeed story and lawsuit a "horrible ordeal" and said they were based on "false accusations and financial motives." He said the case was based on "outright lies that were then perpetuated using social media" to libel and slander those involved.

"It is now time to demand accountability from those who have misused the legal system and conducted character assignation through social media," he said.
UA begins work on $22M parking deck

A portion of Paul W. Bryant Drive and the section of Second Avenue between Bryant Drive and University Boulevard is closed for construction. A new parking deck is being constructed on the corner. (STAFF PHOTO/GARY COSBY JR.)

Four-story structure will have about 1,000 spaces available

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

The University of Alabama has begun work on a $22 million parking deck on Second Avenue across from the Moody Music Building.

The work, which will replace the current Moody surface lot, began following the end of the spring semester and will see sections of Second Avenue and Paul W. Bryant Drive periodically closed this summer, according to the university.

Workers are now relocating water lines, said Tim Leopard, associate vice president of construction. The four-story parking deck will have about 1,000 spaces and be completed by August 2019, Leopard said.

The deck will also provide additional storage space for the marching band and is designed serve as shelter for larger vehicles during severe weather.

Plans for a pedestrian bridge from the deck over Second Avenue remain on hold while university considers future designs for the Moody Music Building, Leopard said.

The university resurfaced the Million Dollar Band’s practice field to fix drainage issues and installed a new turf surface in 2015.
Three books named Harper Lee prize finalists

Award is given to novels that demonstrate role of lawyers

Staff report

The University of Alabama School of Law and the American Bar Association Journal have named three authors as finalists for the 2018 Harper Lee Prize for Legal Fiction.

The prize is named in honor of iconic Alabama author Harper Lee and is given annually to the author of a book-length work of fiction that best illuminates the role of lawyers in society and their power to effect change. It was created by the law school and the ABA Journal in 2010 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the publication of Lee’s “To Kill a Mockingbird.”

The three 2018 finalists are “Exposed” by Lisa Scottoline, “Proof” by C.E. Tobisman and “Testimony” by Scott Turow.

There were 27 entries for this year’s prize, and a team of reviewers called the winnowing committee narrowed the pool down to those three finalists.

“The winnowing committee has chosen three great novels that you can add to your summer reading list, all written by lawyers and with timely topics,” said Molly McDonough, editor and publisher of the ABA Journal. “This year’s grouping includes drama and intrigue surrounding international justice, elder law, legal ethics and protections for people with disabilities. As legal journalists, we see the essential role of lawyers in the real world and think now, more than ever, it’s important to have genuine and inspiring depictions of their work in pop culture.”

The winner will be chosen by a panel of four judges and in part by the public, who is invited to cast votes for the best book on the ABA Journal website, www.abajournal.com. The result of that poll will act as a fifth judge, with a vote equal in weight to that of a selection committee member.

Voting will be open through the month of June.
Work begins to ‘Raise the Roof for Sonya’

Staff report

The big day for Sonya Kemp of Tuscaloosa finally came on Thursday when construction on her new Habitat for Humanity home began in earnest.

After the site was prepped by Wells Fargo volunteers in late April, volunteers from Keller-Williams Realty in Tuscaloosa worked all day Thursday to construct and raise the wood frame for the house.

University of Alabama students, including the UA Habitat Campus Chapter, a Culverhouse College of Commerce Master of Marketing project group, and a group from the College of Communication and Information Sciences, teamed up to raise much of the funding necessary to build the house through their “Raise the Roof for Sonya” campaign. The UA Habitat Campus Chapter was assisted by State Farm with a matching grant for the first $10,000 and surpassed that goal. Other major donors included Wells Fargo and the City of Tuscaloosa.

Kemp lives in the Rosedale area of Tuscaloosa. Her previous home was significantly damaged by the April 27, 2011, tornado, but she was never able to repair it. The plumbing was not functional, the electricity only worked in half the house, and the roof leaked so badly she slept in her car when it rained. When she applied to Habitat for Humanity of Tuscaloosa for repairs, their construction team determined the house was not repairable and was structurally unsound.

Through the generosity of McAbee Construction, her old home was demolished and the debris was hauled away, after Habitat Tuscaloosa moved Kemp to a temporary rental home.

The Tuscaloosa Association of Realtors, the Tuscaloosa County Bar Association and Mercedes Benz U.S. International are scheduled to work on the home in the coming weeks. Additionally, Project Children, a non-profit from Northern Ireland which in late June will make its seventh trip to Tuscaloosa, will bring a college-age group of Catholics and Protestants to work on the house.

Habitat Tuscaloosa plans to dedicate the house in August, when the UA students who worked so hard to raise funds for the home will be back in town.
Study says Alabama’s bioscience industry is thriving

By: Ken Roberts

University of Alabama researchers say the state’s bioscience industry generates nearly $7.3 billion in economic activity annually.

The study was conducted by a team at the Center for Business and Economic Research at UA’s Culverhouse College of Business in conjunction with BioAlabama, an industry trade group.

Those conducting the study defined the bioscience sector as a combination of research institutions, medical labs, startups, international pharmaceutical manufacturers and more, encompassing around 780 companies and nearly 48,000 jobs in Alabama.

“Alabama should continue to keep biosciences as a focus in its economic development strategy since these industries provide high-wage jobs and are highly productive,” said Sam Addy, a senior research economist at UA and a member of the research team.

Among the key findings of the UA report:

• The bioscience industry’s 47,980 direct and indirect jobs in Alabama support a total yearly payroll of $2.3 billion.

• The industry contributes $3.9 billion annually to Alabama’s gross domestic product, nearly 2 percent of the state’s total economic output.

• The industry’s earnings impact generates $161.4 million in tax revenue annually, including $74.7 million in state income taxes and $86.7 million in state and local sales taxes.

The study says work conducted at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Southern Research, the HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology and the University of South Alabama’s Mitchell Cancer Institute provide the foundation for the state’s bioscience research.

These organizations have focused on such specialties, such as drug discovery and development, genomics and personalized medicine. These groups have also frequently collaborated to make new discoveries. For instance, the Alabama Drug Discovery Alliance, a partnership between UAB and Southern Research, has developed a pipeline of potential therapeutics for diseases such as cancer and diabetes.

Alabama is also home to multinational companies involved in pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturing. In March, Germany’s Evonik, for example, announced plans to expand production of biomaterials and launch a Global Competence Center for Medical Devices at its Birmingham facility.

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Other bioscience manufacturers operating in the state include:

• Kowa Pharmaceuticals in Montgomery

• Nektar Therapeutics in Huntsville

• Baxter and Pharmavite, both in Opelika

• Oxford Pharmaceuticals, Avanti Polar Lipids and Biohorizons, which are all in Birmingham.

The study also points to a number of startup companies that have sprung up in Alabama, with many of them based at HudsonAlpha and Birmingham’s Innovation Depot, the Southeast’s largest technology business incubator.

Promising startups include Birmingham’s Blondin Bioscience, Huntsville’s GeneCapture, Mobile’s Swift Biotech and Auburn’s Vitruvias Therapeutics.

“We are fortunate to have started our business in Alabama because we have benefitted from the highly collaborative entrepreneurial spirit throughout the state, including Alabama Launchpad and the various Small Business Development Centers, and especially our connection with HudsonAlpha and the University of Alabama in Huntsville,” said Peggy Sammon, BioAlabama’s president and CEO and co-founder of GeneCapture.

“We have been able to find highly skilled molecular biologists, chemical engineers, optical engineers and lab specialists,” she said. “Our membership in BioAlabama has connected us with other scientists and business professionals who have significantly helped us advance our business plan.”

Alabama’s research universities are key players in the bioscience ecosystem and contribute to the industry’s economic impact, according to the study. The network includes Auburn University, the University of South Alabama, Tuskegee University, Alabama State University, Alabama A&M University and the three University of Alabama System campuses.
UAB names dean of School of Public Health

By: Erin Edgemon

The University of Alabama at Birmingham has named a new dean of the School of Public Health.

The new dean of the UAB School of Public Health is Paul Campbell Erwin, a former professor and head of the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, Department of Public Health, College of Education, Health and Human Sciences.

Erwin's first day at UAB will be Aug. 1, succeeding Peter Ginter, who served as interim dean.

UAB President Ray L. Watts credits UAB Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Pam Benoit and a committee -- representative of the UAB School of Public Health and of the UAB community, and chaired by UAB School of Dentistry Dean Michael S. Reddy-- for a successful search.

"The search committee did a tremendous job identifying and recruiting strong candidates for this important position," Watts said. "I want to commend Dr. Reddy and the faculty, staff and students who participated in this process for the time and careful attention they gave, as well as Dr. Benoit for her leadership."

Erwin earned his bachelor's degree from the University of the South (Sewanee), his medical degree from the UAB School of Medicine, a master's in public health from John Hopkins University and a doctorate in public health from the University of North Carolina. He is certified in internal medicine, public health and preventive medicine, and a leader in establishing formal Academic Health Department collaboratives with public health practice partners.

"The position of dean is the opportunity to bring all of my life's experiences and knowledge in both public health practice and academia to the highest level, for the ultimate purpose of improving the health of populations," he said.

"I can give many reasons for my interest in the UAB School of Public Health," Erwin said. "Chief among those reasons are UAB's reach - from bench science to communities across the state, the South and the world; its reputation - because of the accomplishments of stellar faculty, staff and students; and its familiarity - a place known and comfortable to me."

Erwin's research interests include evidence-based public health and health disparities, particularly in rural areas, and prior to joining the UT faculty, he was director of the East Tennessee Regional Health Office for the state Department of Public Health, overseeing 15 county health departments, most in Appalachia. He is an associate editor of the American Journal of Public Health and a member of the editorial boards for Medical Education Cooperation with Cuba Review and the Journal of Public Health Management and Practice.

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Erwin welcomes the opportunity to build on UAB's reputation and positive momentum in the public health arena, and he is particularly interested in the great potential he sees to help people in the new role.

"The position of dean is the opportunity to bring all of my life's experiences and knowledge in both public health practice and academia to the highest level, for the ultimate purpose of improving the health of populations," Erwin said.

"We are grateful for the leadership of Dr. Peter Ginter during the transition period," Benoit said. "He has been an excellent communicator, compassionate, and a decisive and enthusiastic advocate for the School of Public Health."
UAH offers $1M in engineering scholarships to disadvantaged students

By: Lee Roop

One of Alabama's top engineering universities - the University of Alabama in Huntsville - has $1 million in new scholarships for financially disadvantaged transfer students.

Students in the program will be working on engineering research in subjects such as ion thrusters, 3D printed materials and UAV butterflies. UAH graduate and current PhD student Destin Sandlin, whose science website Smarter Every Day has 5.5 million subscribers, explained some of the research possibilities in a new YouTube video for the university.

The scholarship program is called MATRIX (Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering Assistance for Transfer Improvement and Excellence), and UAH announced it today. It is funded by the National Science Foundation.

"Those selected for MATRIX will receive scholarships about $10,000 per year for up to two consecutive years beginning with their first fall semester at UAH," assistant professor and program manager Dr. Kavan Hazeli said in a statement.

"Their first year in the program will focus on community building and undergraduate research, and their second year will focus on professional development, networking, and internships," Hazeli said. "They will also have the possibility of staying in the program for a third year based on their performance."

UAH's engineering program promotes its roles in aerospace research at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center and military research at contractors working for the Army centers based Redstone Arsenal.

"Another major benefit of this program is the professional development, networking, and internship opportunities available to our MATRIX students, thanks in large part to our long-standing partnership with engineering companies here in the Tennessee Valley," Hazeli said. "The internships in particular will provide these aspiring engineers with valuable hands-on experience, which will give them a competitive edge when they enter the professional workforce after graduation."
Women of Influence: NASA astrophysicist Dr. Colleen Wilson-Hodge

By: Staff

Alabama has been home to many pioneers in many different industries, but after several new astronomic discoveries, long-time Huntsville resident and NASA astrophysicist Dr. Colleen Wilson-Hodge has set herself apart in a big way.

From an early age, Wilson-Hodge had a love for astronomy and space few could match. In the sixth grade, she took an overnight field trip to the Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Ala., where she toured NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center.

“I think that was the first time I realized I could actually work for NASA as a grownup,” she said.

In college she became a NASA co-op student, alternating between classes and working for NASA she met Dr. Gerald Fishman, who was managing the Burst and Transient Source Experiment (BATSE) at the time. She caught his excitement for the project, and began studying gamma ray bursts in 1989.

Wilson-Hodge graduated with a Master’s degree in Physics from the University of Alabama in Huntsville in 1996, and immediately began studying for her Ph. D. in Astrophysics, which she obtained in 1999.

In 1999 Wilson-Hodge discovered a special type of pulsar called an X-ray pulsar, which led her to the finding of two new stars. X-ray pulsars emit X-rays and gamma-rays and are powered by accretion, stars gobbling up material from a companion star.

“For just a little while, the universe is putting on a show that only I, and members of the gamma-ray team know about,” Wilson-Hodge told the Marshall Space Flight Center.

She continued to work on the BATSE project until 2000, when the monitor was de-orbited. Wilson-Hodge continued working at the Marshall Space Flight Center, and made another discovery in 2011, when she and her team revealed unexpected changes in X-ray emission from the Crab Nebula.

“For 40 years, most astronomers regarded the Crab as a standard candle,” she told UAH. “Now, for the first time, we’re clearly seeing how much our candle flickers.”

In August of 2017, Wilson-Hodge and the Fermi Gamma-ray Burst Monitor (GBM) team gave the world its first detection of light from the same source as gravitational waves, which according to NASA are “ripples in space and time.”

“This new way of learning about the universe is kind of like gaining a new sense. It’s as if we’ve been watching the news for all of human history, but the T.V. has been on mute, now with gravitational wave detectors, we’re finally able to turn on the sound,” said Wilson-Hodge’s associate Tyson Littenberg.
“When we built GBM and launched it on Fermi in 2008, we designed it to detect gamma-ray bursts well,” Wilson-Hodge told NASA. “Back then, it was only slated to fly for five years. Today, GBM is at the forefront of an entirely new type of science, ushering in this new era of multi-messenger astronomy.”

Her findings won her, and the GBM team the 2018 Bruno Rossi Prize, the top prize in high-energy astronomy.

Wilson-Hodge is a extremely “bright star,” in the world of scientific discoveries, and was kind enough to take time out of her busy schedule to answer some of Alabama Today’s questions about her life, work and influences:

**How have other women influenced your success?**

Several women in my life have had a positive influence. The first is my Mom, Carol Wilson, who always encouraged me to pursue my dreams, even if they were out of the ordinary. She has always believed in me and celebrated my successes, and still does!

Another was Ms. Sutherland, my high school speech and drama teacher. She taught me much about public speaking that I still use today. I hear her voice in my head sometimes when I’m preparing talks. Early in my career at NASA, I worked with mostly men. One woman did have a big impact on me though. Her name is Dr. Jean Swank. She was the project scientist for the Rossi X-ray Timing Explorer, a satellite that I used quite a bit of data from in my PhD Dissertation. She is an excellent scientist and an extremely capable leader and she is a quiet person like me. She was my first in person example of someone like me leading a space experiment, something that I always wanted to do, and she was a mentor to me.

More recently Dr. Linda Sparke from NASA HQ spent a year leading the project that I now lead. She is also an excellent scientist and leader and an extremely good reader of people. She was leading a project where she wasn’t the expert in the specific science area, so she led collaboratively, getting the inputs she needed from the experts on the team to make decisions. She wasn’t afraid to say she didn’t know, but knew where to go to get the information. She was a great mentor to me as I became the principal investigator of the Fermi Gamma-ray Burst Monitor.

**What shaped your desire to work with NASA, specifically high energy astrophysics?**

I was fascinated by the Voyager images coming back from Jupiter and later Saturn when I was a child. I would clip the photos out of the newspaper and collect them. In the third grade, I told my classmates I wanted to be an astrophysicist, partially because I liked the big word and partially because I was interested in space.

In the sixth grade, my school from Athens, TN, took an overnight field trip to the Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Ala., where we toured NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center. I think that was the first time I realized I could actually work for NASA as a grownup!

When I was in college, initially at University of Tennessee in Chattanooga, I was hired as a cooperative education student at NASA MSFC. Initially I wasn’t working in astrophysics at all,
and I thought my interest was to go into radio astronomy. While I was at MSFC, I walked down the hall to the Astrophysics Division and met Dr. Gerald Fishman who led the Burst and Transient Source Experiment (BATSE) which was to be launched on the Compton Gamma ray Observatory (launched in 1991). It was designed to study gamma-ray bursts, which were discovered in 1976, in my lifetime! I thought that was really cool that there were astrophysical objects that people had known about for less than my lifetime. I worked on BATSE from 1989 until it was deorbited in 2000. I’ve been in the same group here at MSFC ever since. The group has changed around me as people have retired or left and new people have joined. Now I am in charge!

**What has been your favorite area of service, and what is your favorite thing about that position?**

I have had several favorite areas that I’ve worked in, but I’ll highlight one that is different from other things I’ve mentioned. From 2012-2014, I was part of a project called High Energy Replicated Optics to Explore the Sun (HEROES). This was a balloon flight mission that flew a hard X-ray telescope up above most of the Earth’s atmosphere for about a day. I was responsible for the astrophysics science for the mission and for testing and operating the detectors.

I loved the hands on part of that project, the time in the lab, and the time out at the balloon facility in New Mexico. We had to solve any problems that arose ourselves. I really enjoyed figuring out new things and inventing solutions and data analysis approaches. I think many of my favorite things in my career map to that same thing, figuring out something new, either how a new astrophysical object behaves or how to analyze new data or how to build an instrument to get the data we need. I loved puzzles as a child and apparently I still do!

**Have you read any books that have shaped your perspective on life?**

Some of my favorite books as a child were a Wrinkle in Time, A Wind in the Door, and a Swiftly Tilting Planet by Madeline L’Engle. I didn’t realize until I saw the recent movie how important Dr. Katherine Murray was to me, as she demonstrated how be both a scientist and a mom. I felt like her character was minimized in the recent movie and that really bothered me, because I realize that she had been a bit of a role model to me growing up. Meg was also an important character to me, because like her, I was intelligent, but often felt like I didn’t fit in because of it. I loved the definition of the tesseract in the book and the idea of folding space and time in order to travel.

What advice would you give to young women who want to pursue work within the space or science technology industries?

I think it is extremely important to know how to work as part of a team, because science is not achieved by individuals. It takes a team! The recent Bruno Rossi Prize would not have been possible without the contributions of my team of 20+ people who are spread out between Huntsville, Ala., Maryland, New Mexico, Germany, Italy, and Ireland. Everyone had an important role, from those who wrote the papers to those who kept normal operations going while the papers were being written. I am honored to lead them.
I would also advise young women to find a mentor and a sponsor/promoter if at all possible. These may not be the same person. A mentor helps to show a person the ropes and to give some career direction, while a sponsor/promoter is someone who is ready to bring up a person’s work to others who may not know about it, and who can recommend a person for new opportunities. It is important to seek out these people as early as possible in one’s career. These relationships take effort on both sides. If a young woman is an introvert, like me, she may feel overwhelmed in networking events or conferences where there seems to be a need to circulate and talk to many people. What has worked for me is to set goals for these meetings to talk to some fairly small number of new people. It takes a lot of my energy but I can find a balance where I can broaden my network but not feel too drained.

**How do you spend your (rare) free time?**

I am an ultra runner. Last September I finished my first 100 mile race, A Race For The Ages in Manchester, TN. I’ve run 27 races of marathon distance or longer. My happy place is running trails with my friends! I’m married with two kids, so I love to spend time enjoying the outdoors with my family. We have done several backpack trips in the Grand Canyon and love to hike and ski. My kids amaze me and I love to watch them grow as people and as individuals. Work-life balance is important to me. I think everyone needs time away from work to relax and recharge.

For her endless pursuit of astronomical discoveries, her willingness to share with the world her findings in universe and its wonders, and for doing it here, in the Yellowhammer state, Dr. Colleen Wilson-Hodge is undeniably an Alabama woman of Influence.
Test engineer helps make science fun at camp

By: Preston Benson

Astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson once said “kids are born scientists.” Many may doubt that statement, but one of the earliest scientific experiments around proves the point: making paper airplanes. Children can spend countless hours liberating sheets and sheets of loose leaf paper from notebooks, trying to create the perfect paper airplane. Different folding techniques and throwing styles are technically scientific experiments using elements of what is now commonly referred to as STEM, or science, technology, engineering and math.

STEM is becoming more of an educational force in schools across the country, and these skills and disciplines are on full display in the Huntsville area, including at the Redstone Test Center. An example of a STEM-student success story is that of Zachary Whitfield, a contractor test engineer who works in the center’s Missiles and Sensors Test Directorate.

Whitfield participated in STEM Camp 2018, hosted by the Minority Graduate Student Association at the University of Alabama in Huntsville April 21, which featured several STEM-related activities and games. Participants were broken into teams to take part in a variety of challenges including the following: designing and creating a PC game; solving a fictitious crime by extracting human DNA from samples; and calculating probabilities. This brings us back to those paper airplanes.

Working as a counselor, Whitfield assisted with a challenge which called for students to learn about different materials and methodologies and then apply those concepts using paper airplanes.

“The project revolved around testing the variables that affect a paper airplane’s performance,” Whitfield said. “We considered airplane design, build quality and throwing ability. The need for testing is common among all of the disciplines of STEM. It’s important to understand the impact various variables have on outcomes.”

Whitfield said he uses a similar approach every day at Redstone Test Center.

“When it comes to testing, I always consider what are my variables, controls, outcomes, and limitations,” he said. “Those are some basic principles that I learned in school that still fit into what I do. From setting up an experiment in the lab or performing field exercises on a range, I think those factors always apply at RTC.”

The camp concluded with students delivering presentations to showcase the skills and concepts they learned. Whitfield said the goal of the event was to encourage and inspire students as they pursue their education. “It’s a great opportunity for everyone. Students get a sneak peek into the future that their education might take them,” he said. “Everyone has fun. Kids are in school all the time, so you hope events like these can keep them motivated to focus on their studies.”
Don't Tell Anyone, But We Just Had Two Years Of Record-Breaking Global Cooling

By: Staff

NASA data show that global temperatures dropped sharply over the past two years. Not that you'd know it, since that wasn't deemed news. Does that make NASA a global warming denier?

Writing in Real Clear Markets, Aaron Brown looked at the official NASA global temperature data and noticed something surprising. From February 2016 to February 2018, "global average temperatures dropped by 0.56 degrees Celsius." That, he notes, is the biggest two-year drop in the past century.

"The 2016-2018 Big Chill," he writes, "was composed of two Little Chills, the biggest five month drop ever (February to June 2016) and the fourth biggest (February to June 2017). A similar event from February to June 2018 would bring global average temperatures below the 1980s average."

Isn't this just the sort of man-bites-dog story that the mainstream media always says is newsworthy?

In this case, it didn't warrant any news coverage.

In fact, in the three weeks since Real Clear Markets ran Brown's story, no other news outlet picked up on it. They did, however, find time to report on such things as tourism's impact on climate change, how global warming will generate more hurricanes this year, and threaten fish habitats, and make islands uninhabitable. They wrote about a UN official saying that "our window of time for addressing climate change is closing very quickly."

Reporters even found time to cover a group that says they want to carve President Trump's face into a glacier to prove climate change "is happening."

In other words, the mainstream news covered stories that repeated what climate change advocates have been saying ad nauseam for decades.

That's not to say that a two-year stretch of cooling means that global warming is a hoax. Two years out of hundreds or thousands doesn't necessarily mean anything. And there could be a reasonable explanation. But the drop in temperatures at least merits a "Hey, what's going on here?" story.

What's more, journalists are perfectly willing to jump on any individual weather anomaly — or even a picture of a starving polar bear — as proof of global warming. (We haven't seen any stories pinning Hawaii's recent volcanic activity on global warming yet, but won't be surprised if someone tries to make the connection.)

We've noted this refusal to cover inconvenient scientific findings many times in this space over the years.
Hiding The Evidence

There was the study published in the American Meteorological Society's Journal of Climate showing that climate models exaggerate global warming from CO2 emissions by as much as 45%. It was ignored.

Then there was the study in the journal Nature Geoscience that found that climate models were faulty, and that, as one of the authors put it, "We haven't seen that rapid acceleration in warming after 2000 that we see in the models."

Nor did the press see fit to report on findings from the University of Alabama-Huntsville showing that the Earth's atmosphere appears to be less sensitive to changing CO2 levels than previously assumed.

How about the fact that the U.S. has cut CO2 emissions over the past 13 years faster than any other industrialized nation? Or that polar bear populations are increasing? Or that we haven't seen any increase in violent weather in decades?

Crickets.

Reporters no doubt worry that covering such findings will only embolden "deniers" and undermine support for immediate, drastic action.

But if fears of catastrophic climate change are warranted — which we seriously doubt — ignoring things like the rapid cooling in the past two years carries an even bigger risk.

Suppose, Brown writes, the two-year cooling trend continues. "At some point the news will leak out that all global warming since 1980 has been wiped out in two and a half years, and that record-setting events went unreported."

He goes on: "Some people could go from uncritical acceptance of steadily rising temperatures to uncritical refusal to accept any warming at all."

Brown is right. News outlets should decide what gets covered based on its news value, not on whether it pushes an agenda. Otherwise, they're doing the public a disservice and putting their own already shaky credibility at greater risk.
Flash memory: Caveat emptor

By: Brian McEvoy

We all love new tech. Some of us love getting the bleeding edge, barely-on-the-market devices and some enjoy getting tech thirty years after the fact to revel in nostalgia. The similarity is that we assume we know what we’re buying and only the latter category expects used parts. But, what if the prior category is getting used parts in a new case? The University of Alabama in Huntsville has a tool for protecting us from unscrupulous manufacturers installing old flash memory.

Flash memory usually lasts longer than the devices where it is installed, so there is a market for used chips which are still “good enough” to pass for new. Of course, this is highly unethical. You would not expect to find a used transmission in your brand new car so why should your brand new tablet contain someone’s discarded memory?

The principles of flash memory are well explained by comparing them to an ordinary transistor, of which we are happy to educate you. Wear-and-tear on flash memory starts right away and the erase time gets longer and longer. By measuring how long it takes to erase, it is possible to accurately determine the age of chip in question.

Pushing the limits of flash memory’s life-span can tell a lot about how to avoid operation disruption or you can build a flash drive from parts you know are used.
SMDC builds, tests satellite components with ACES RED

By: Staff

When dealing with the future of Army satellite technologies, SMDC keeps its ACES RED.

The Army Cost Efficient Spaceflight Research Experiments and Demonstrations, or ACES RED, is a U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Forces Strategic Command technology demonstration for small satellites in support of Army and command technical objectives with support from Radiance Technologies and the University of Alabama in Huntsville, or UAH, System Management and Production Center.

ACES RED was developed in the USASMDC/ARSTRAT Technical Center's Concepts Analysis Laboratory, or CAL. The CAL brings together high school and college students, under the supervision and mentorship of SMDC Tech Center government employees, to perform hands-on tasks for government projects and SMDC research.

'ACES RED is built to increase the technology readiness level of different components for flight-based missions for other programs within the command,' said Mason Nixon, ACES RED principle investigator. 'We are taking different technologies and trying to advance them while reducing risks so other programs don't have to. We also want to train the incoming workforce and build up technical competencies in those core areas that support our missions.'

This experiment looks to quickly mature various commercially available off-the-shelf technologies that will reduce the cost and complexity as well as maintain the performance of future Army small satellites.

Its main technical goal is to solve vectoring problem solutions by implementing multiple sensors in various combinations or configurations. ACES RED's secondary objectives include maturation of non-traditional and commercial off-the-shelf, or COTS, industrial-grade components in the place of traditionally hardened and more expensive space systems, such as flight computers, memory devices, imaging sensors and attitude determination devices.

'We are also using ACES RED as a pilot program to build up test capabilities for space hardware,' Nixon said. 'We are hoping to gain future capabilities such as more refined attitude determination and control for satellites to help orient them when in space, as well as taking industrial-grade computers and testing them in a space environment.

'Where you might see possibly tens of thousands of dollars for a piece of existing hardware, we are looking at hundreds of dollars,' he added.

One engineer added that this will mean SMDC can create something in-house with most of the parts that are going into space being designed and assembled here on Redstone Arsenal by in-house engineers.
'In the future the turnaround time, lead time and creating another iteration of ACES RED is going be quicker, faster and we are going to be able to get space hardware up there a lot faster and all the capabilities were designed here so we won't have to outsource any of the design,' said Gauge Day, ACES RED chief engineer.

Day said initially his main role on ACES RED was working with the mechanical team and they had to figure out what direction the team was going to take with the design. He then took on the role of lead structural designer.

'My main focus and what I want to see come out of ACES RED is that we design a modular system for space,' Day said. 'With it we are able to take modular trays out and can plug and play with different hardware, and any time we need to change something or something fails, we are able to swap it out and replace it. There is no stack feature so it is different from what most space systems have seen before with CubeSats.

'I want to see this become successful. Through vibrations and environmental testing so far we have been successful with something that is not native to space,' he added.

Day explained how the ACES RED modular system design is more convenient than a stackable system because replacing parts in stackable system is more difficult.

'With a stackable system, if your fourth board breaks, then you have to take the three on top of it off to get to the fourth one,' Day said. 'ACES RED actually had this problem during an environmental test where a board needed replacing and we were able to slide a board out and replace it with a new one and it worked just fine.'

ACES RED is scheduled to be launched on a Falcon 9 rocket and attached to the outside of the International Space Station through the Department of Defense Space Test Program.

'Right now our payload is down at Johnson Space Center in Texas and it is being integrated into a full launch payload pallet with other experiments on it,' said Elizabeth Neilson, ACES RED lead systems engineer and integration specialist. 'That pallet will then go through its own iteration of environmental testing and once it is finished we will be able to fix any issues that may come up during that time.

'We have definitely had a lot of lessons learned with ACES RED,' she added. 'Our team was almost entirely composed of young engineers or college students and recent college graduates. There was a big learning curve and this was one of the first projects for a lot of people where people are actually designing space hardware that is going to be launched. There were a lot of things that tripped us up that we didn't know going into it.'

Neilson said the support team at SMDC, leaders, and the research and technology team are always there to help them whenever they discover a problem.
She described how the CAL trains and mentors college students and young professionals via the Department of Defense's Science, Mathematics And Research for Transformation, or SMART, scholarship, which pays students full scholarship, stipend, insurance, and more to encourage science and technology studies.

Neilson also added that students at UAH can also work in the CAL via the Students working at the Army in parallel, or SWAP, where they are hired through a contract with UAH.

'Everybody on this team brought their own unique flair to it,' Neilson said. 'The more experienced engineers know how things are supposed to work whereas it is nice to have younger engineers who get tripped up with issues and they have to think through the process.

'Then you have younger engineers who are asking questions and trying to learn along the way,' she added. 'There are people coming in who have only designed theoretical projects for their classes and by the end of ACES RED they are making something that is going into space. So they are making all the mistakes that can be made and have learned lessons for future reference and they will wind up being really good engineers for the next project.'
So far, little has changed under Greene

School’s new AD holding off on major decisions until he gets a better perspective

James Crepea  jcrepea@al.com

In politics, 100 days is a benchmark of administrative action, but in sports timelines for change can be much faster or tedious.

Allen Greene has been Auburn’s athletic director for 104 days and counting and so far the only major personnel change has been the swimming coach. Suffice to say, that wasn’t the reason why Greene was hired to replace Jay Jacobs.

In the three-and-a-half months Greene has been on the job one thing has become abundantly clear: He’s deliberate. If the idea is to measure twice and cut once, as the saying goes, Greene is making sure he knows all the ins and outs before implementing the changes he feels are necessary for the department.

““There are some things that I have in my mind,” Greene said before a meeting of the West Georgia Auburn Club in LaGrange on Monday. “When I talk about putting pen to paper it’s really trying to articulate and play out the long game and try to figure out what makes the most sense.

“I have a better understanding, but I don’t have a great enough understanding yet to be able to say, ‘Here’s what we’re going to do and here’s when we’re going to do it.’ It’ll come when it comes.”

With the spring semester over and the

See Greene, B4
summer semester about to begin, it's a natural time on the academic calendar for personnel changes. However, how soon changes are coming is still unclear and some major decisions need to be made, particularly when with men's basketball.

Greene has been supportive of Bruce Pearl since the season ended and while the sides have been discussing a contract extension for some time, a deal isn't done yet. Staff compensation is a major factor in the negotiations, as Pearl's staff ranks near the bottom of the league, and the contracts for multiple members of the staff expire in the coming weeks.

Last month, Auburn's board of trustees approved the final projects for facility upgrades for baseball and softball player development and basketball locker room renovations. The baseball and softball upgrades had been planned as part of multiphase projects that also will improve the seating and fan experience at Plainsman Park and Jane B. Moore Field.

Whether those plans will remain in phases and take the next several years to complete or be expedited, particularly for softball, where most SEC stadiums are significantly ahead of Auburn, is being decided as well.

"I wouldn't quite put labels on phases yet," Greene said last month. "I still need to get a better understanding of holistically what we're looking at in terms of capital projects. ... There's two components to it: One is acknowledging that something needs to be done and the second is a timeline and a plan to execute it. We know that expenses are going to continue to increase, we want to make sure that our revenues continue to increase so that we can support that.

"If money were no option and we had unlimited resources, obviously yeah there's things need to be done. Part of my responsibility and our team's responsibility is to be very thoughtful with our resources and to make sure that we're doing things that have high impact, but also remembering that there's a time frame in which we need to work. But we also need community and fan and donor support."

Finally as to men's basketball, plans for facilities and potential changes to administrative staff are all among the issues on Greene's plate, not to mention the typical day-to-day tasks and getting acclimated with the still new job and living on the Plains.

"I think that we're on track, and I guess I'm on track, with the timeline that I was thinking getting here," he said. "Trying to get an understanding of the culture, what our coaches and our student-athletes and our administration feel like is needed. Getting to know the president and his cabinet. Getting to know the community, which is why I'm here (Monday night), but then I introduced my family to Auburn a month ago. We're going through that process. We're still working really hard to get acclimated.

"In due time, my hope is this next phase will start, put pen to paper and start thinking about our future."

James Crepea is an Auburn beat reporter for Alabama Media Group. Follow him on Twitter @JamesCrepea.
Shelton State to expand auto program

The $1.25 million project will double capacity to train students

By Ed Enoch
Staff Writer

Shelton State Community College plans a $1.25 million renovation and expansion of its automotive technology building on the C.A. Fredd campus.

The Alabama Community College System board of trustees has approved the project, which would allow Shelton to double the capacity of its automotive technology programs.

The project, approved May 8, would renovate the existing building and add an additional 4,800 square feet of space. It would also update the building’s furniture, technology, and HVAC, according to a presentation to trustees in April. The size of the renovated building would be 13,400 square feet, according to the April presentation.

Shelton State President Bill Ashley said the college hopes to have the designs completed by July and bid the project in August with a goal of completing the work by next spring.

The project would be fully funded with money from a U.S. Department of Education program for historically black colleges and universities, Ashley said.

The C.A. Fredd campus was previously the C.A. Fredd State Technical College, a historically black institution. The campuses were consolidated in 1994, but the Fredd campus kept its designation as an HBCU, according to Shelton State’s website.

See PROGRAM, A11
The renovation and expansion of the classroom and lab space would allow the college to increase the enrollment in its two programs that train students to work as service technicians at dealerships or on manufacturing lines from 15 to roughly 30, Ashley said.

"We are effectively trying to double it," he said.

The renovation would also allow both programs to be housed in the same building, Ashley said.

The project would help the programs to better respond to the needs of local industries, he said.

"We are in the manufacturing-based economy here in our area, and we feel being responsive to the needs of the business and industry is an important role for the community colleges," Ashley said.

Alabama has grown into the No. 3 auto-exporting state in the U.S. The state's emergence in the auto manufacturing industry began in 1993, when Mercedes-Benz announced plans to build its first U.S. assembly plant in Tuscaloosa County. Since then, a host of automotive suppliers have flocked to the state and other automakers have built plants in Alabama, including Honda, Hyundai and Toyota.

According to the Alabama Department of Commerce, the automotive manufacturing sector employs nearly 40,000 people.

In 2017, Alabama automakers combined to produce around 1 million cars and light trucks.
UAB, Miami announce 2020 football date; Bill Clark cites bringing 'brand' to Florida

By: Mark Heim

UAB and Miami will square off for the first time in football when the Blazers and Hurricanes meet in 2020, the two schools announced Monday.

The game is set for Sept. 19, 2020 at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens.

"We have a lot of players on our roster from the state of Florida, so for them to have an opportunity to return home for a game like this is a big deal to the players and their families," UAB coach Bill Clark said in a release. "We also recruit the state of Florida very heavily and being able to bring our brand to them only helps."

The Blazers already have scheduled a non-conference home contest with Akron (Sept. 12) and a road game at in-state foe South Alabama (Sept. 26) in Mobile for 2020.

"We're excited about the addition of UAB to our schedule for 2020," Miami Deputy Director of Athletics and Chief Operating Officer Jennifer Strawley said in a release. "We are always striving for a competitive nonconference slate to complement our ACC schedule."

The Hurricanes are coming off a 10-3 record, including a 7-1 ACC mark. The Blazers, meanwhile, finished 8-5 overall and 6-2 in C-USA.

UAB's Future Non-Conference Schedule:

2018:

Aug. 30: Savannah State
Sept 8: at Coastal Carolina
Sept. 15: Tulane
Nov. 17: at Texas A&M

2019:

Sept. 7: at Akron
Sept. 21: South Alabama
Nov. 2: at Tennessee

See next page
2020:
Sept. 12: Akron
Sept. 19: at Miami (FL)
Sept. 26: at South Alabama

2021:
Sept. 11: at Georgia
Sept. 25: at Tulane
Oct. 2: Liberty

2022:
Sept. 10: at Liberty
Sept. 17: Georgia Southern

2023:
Sept. 9: at Georgia Southern
Act quickly to rid NCAA basketball of corruption

The FBI’s investigation last fall into corruption and fraud in men’s college basketball can’t really be called a wake-up call. Not when the problems — big money, flouted rules, sham classes and never any consequences for wrongdoing — had been so out in the open for so long. Good, though, that the scandal forced the National Collegiate Athletic Association to acknowledge the long-simmering problems by appointing a commission to examine the issues. Even better is that the commission took its charge seriously, delivering a series of recommendations that — while certainly not curing all the ills of intercollegiate athletics — would be improvements over the status quo.

At the heart of the report released last month by the Commission on College Basketball is the assessment that schools have lost sight of their central mission of providing higher education to students in what has amounted to an arms race to recruit the best talent to their lucrative basketball teams. “We need to put the ‘college’ back in college basketball,” said former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who chaired the 14-member commission.

Accordingly, the commission recommended ways to encourage college athletes to complete their degrees, including allowing undrafted players to return to school without penalty and enabling athletes who leave early to earn their diplomas cost-free. It sets out a separate path for athletes who have no interest in college by calling on the NBA to once again allow 18-year-olds to be eligible for the draft.

Noteworthy was the call for overhaul of the NCAA’s investigative and enforcement arms, using independent investigators and imposing stiffer penalties. That the University of North Carolina escaped punishment after being caught — and admitting — that athletes got credits for courses never taught by instructors showed the association’s inability or unwillingness to get its member institutions to adhere to rules. Such failures, as the commission pointedly noted, serve as a reminder that school officials as well as the NCAA bear responsibility for violations, and it recommended that university presidents be required to certify annually their due diligence in complying with NCAA rules.

The commission pointed on whether athletes should be paid or allowed to earn money from their name or likenesses, deferring to an ongoing court case it said would help sort out the legal parameters. Caution on this controversial issue is wise given the fraught issues of going to a professional model.

Urgency, though, is called for in implementing the commission’s recommendations. Although they were endorsed by the NCAA’s governing board, work is required in changing rules, drafting legislation and building consensus among the 351 men’s basketball Division I members. And it will be up to the NBA and the players association to determine if there will be an end to one-and-done. What they all need to keep in mind is the warning from the commission that “corruption and deception are now at a point that they threaten the very survival of the college game as we know it.”

A version of this editorial first appeared in The Washington Post.
A down year, but it's not over yet for Tide softball

By its own lofty standards, the University of Alabama softball team has had a down year.

At the conclusion of the Southeastern Conference tournament this weekend, the Crimson Tide's record stood at 33-18, and for the first time in the 22-year history of the softball program, the team did not post a winning record in SEC regular season play, finishing 12-12. In one 12-game stretch in the latter part of the season, Alabama stumbled to a 4-8 record, going 1-2 in four consecutive three-game series against conference opponents.

Before this season, the Crimson Tide had won at least 45 games in all but two campaigns -- the program's first year in 1997, when it finished 29-29, and in 1999, when it went 39-26.

Now for the good news. The season isn't over.

Alabama learned Sunday night that it would host an NCAA Tournament regional for the 14th year in a row.

This is also the 20th straight year the Crimson Tide has earned an NCAA tourney bid. But making the 64-team tournament field was a foregone conclusion, despite the subpar regular season. Alabama played a schedule that was rated the fourth-toughest in the nation and was No. 15 in the final RPI rankings for 2018.

Certainly that schedule was a factor in the NCAA Division I Softball Committee's decision to make the Crimson Tide the No. 12 overall seed and name the team a regional host. It didn't hurt that Alabama seems to have righted the ship. After that lackluster stretch in conference play, the Tide won five games in a row over ranked teams before being ousted by No. 4 Florida in the SEC Tournament in Columbia, Missouri. After a win over then-No. 5 Georgia, Alabama swept three games from then-No. 9 Texas A&M and in the conference tourney opener beat No. 15 Auburn.

"It never gets old," Alabama coach Patrick Murphy said upon learning that his team would host yet another regional. "I'm really, really glad that the seniors got to play at home at least one more weekend. I think we earned that down the stretch."

Murphy took over as head coach of the Tide in 1999, when the NCAA tournament streak began, and has been at the helm ever since. You could count on one hand the college softball programs that have had a run of success that would match Alabama's during his tenure.

Alabama has won the regional in its previous 13 years as host and has won 34 straight games in regional play. If the Crimson Tide wins this weekend's Tuscaloosa Regional, it will advance to the super regional round and would be the only team to make it to the super regional every year since 2005, when the format was introduced.

The Crimson Tide has also made it to the Women's College World Series 11 times, including nine trips to Oklahoma City in the last 13 years, and won it all in 2012. Even though this hasn't been their best season, perhaps they'll do it again this year.
Strong nucleus back for Tide gymnastics

By Terrin Waack
Sports writer

Immediately after the first semifinal of the 2018 NCAA Championships, Alabama gymnastics coach Dana Duckworth told her team she's sorry.

For just the third time since the format was installed 27 years ago, the Crimson Tide failed to advance to the Super Six, finishing its season eighth in the country.

The sting was real.

A 196.625 score put Alabama fifth in its session and ended its season one meet too early.

"When you look at the overall body of work that Alabama gymnastics really achieved this year and how much these ladies overcame this year, I'm just very proud of the face we were at the national championship," Duckworth said. "There's not a lot to be negative about in a sense that these ladies gave everything they had. It just wasn't enough, and sometimes it's not enough."

Alabama's average during the season was a 196.835. It posted a season-high 197.525 midway through and a season-low 195.675 in the opener. If averages determined final rankings, UA would have ended up sixth.

But they didn't.

The last time the Crimson Tide didn't compete in Super Six was in 2007, when Alabama placed ninth. Before that was 1997.

"As coach (Nick) Saban always says, 'Don't waste a loss,'" Duckworth said. "If you don't learn from it, then you will (waste it). I feel very strongly that we're going to use this as the best fuel and fire to be completely proactive this See GYMNASTICS, C4

Alabama gymnast Peyton Ernst and the Crimson Tide failed to make the Super Six for the first time since 2007. Ernst is part of a group of 11 returning gymnastics for next season. [STAFF PHOTO/ERIN NELSON]
GYMNASTICS

From Page C1

summer in our preparation, and I think all the returners feel the same way.”

There will be 11 back next season. Kylie Dickson, Lexi Graber, Bailie Key and Alonza Klopfer will be sophomores. Wynter Childers, Maddie Desch, Shea Mahoney and Peyton Ernst (redshirt) will make up the juniors. And the new senior class will be Abby Armbrecht, Angelina Giancroce and Ari Guerra.


It also bids farewell to Bryan Raschilla, who was the team’s associate head coach but did not have his contract renewed. There will eventually be a new face added to the coaching staff.

“What happens next is important,” Duckworth said. “Being able to rebuild and create this new identity for this next team is what’s important. That to me as a coach is what you focus on, the renewal of what’s next.”

Not so fast. Next year’s schedule isn’t out yet. To get an idea of when that will be released, though, last season’s home slate was announced in October.

Something else worth keeping in mind: This past season was the last year of the Super Six format. From now on — or until the NCAA changes it again — there will only be four teams competing on the final night. If that had been the case this year, Alabama’s eighth-place finish would have put it last overall at the NCAA Championships since only eight teams will advance from regionals to semifinals to begin with.

“I look back, and we were really good,” Duckworth said. “We weren’t great. That was the difference.”
SPORTS DIGEST

TRACK & FIELD
Alabama pulls in awards at championships

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — The Alabama track & field teams capped off their weekend at the SEC Outdoor Track & Field Championships in Knoxville, Tenn., with two conference event champions, six All-SEC performances and a school record in the women’s 100 meters.

Junior Shelby McEwen won the high jump with a personal best—equaling clearance of 7-4 1/2 (2.25m).

Junior Vincent Kiprop won his second individual title of the weekend with a victory in the 5,000 meters, finishing in 13:48.49.

Junior Kord Ferguson finished second in the discus with a throw of 193-8 (59.05m). Junior Keitavious Walter finished third in the 200 meters in a personal best— and UA season best—time of 20.33 and finished sixth in the 100 meters in 20.18.

The men took a fourth-place finish in the team standings.

Freshman Tamara Clark finished third in the women’s 100 meters in a UA school record time of 11.02 and finished third with a personal best of 22.65 in the 200 meters.

The women finished ninth in the team standings with 53.5 points.

ROWING
Alabama rowing earns 3 medals, finishes fifth at Big 12 Championships

OAK RIDGE, Tenn. — For the second straight year, Alabama rowing competed in all five Grand Final races on Sunday at Melton Hill Lake, earning a trio of event bronze medals and posting a fifth-place finish.

After medaling in three events last season, the Tide equaled that performance this weekend by grabbing third in the Third Varsity 8+, Second Varsity 4+ and First Varsity 4+. Alabama finished fifth with 23 team points.

In the 3V8+, Alabama pushed across the line in 7:08.299, just six-tenths of a second ahead of the Volunteers in 7:08.912 to secure a bronze medal. The Tide’s 2V4+ and 1V4+ took third in the next two races.

Senior Nicole Lane, a member of Alabama’s conference 1V8+ crew, earned All-Big 12 honors.
MR. GOLF

Emma Talley is a favorite, for good reason

Ian Thompson

I've never met anyone with a bad word to say about Emma Talley. Always smiling, always upbeat, always with time for everyone.

Last week I reached out to her to interview her after she qualified for the U.S. Women's Open (my story ran in Thursday's paper). We talked for over 30 minutes and she would have gladly gone longer. I texted her to thank her for her time. I know she wouldn't mind me quoting her response: “No, thank you so much! Love hearing from you and appreciate you keeping up with me!”

I've written about golf for 25 years and counting and don't ever recall someone thanking me for thanking them for their time.

Martha Lang is another person who oozes class. A standout golfer at the University of Alabama back in the day, she has had an incredibly storied life in golf as a top player, high-level administrator, Rules of Golf expert, USGA Executive Committee member and, simply put, as a doer. A very

See MR.GOLF, C2
right back with a birdie. I admire that in her. She’s got grit and determination and a never-give-up attitude.

"After she qualified Monday for the Women's Open at Shoal Creek, I think the whole club must have been texting back and forth delighted she had made it. I’m thrilled beyond belief for her. So, so much fun for her."

Talley is at one with Shoal Creek and can't wait for the U.S. Women's Open there May 31-June 3.

"I love Shoal Creek. I've made so many wonderful friends there. I can't wait for all the girls (in the championship) to see Shoal Creek, my piece of heaven on earth."

Talley is a member of Shoal Creek and is sure to have a huge following. She is part of the club's "Tour Hopefuls" program where they offer complimentary club and course privileges to local players on major golf tours including the LPGA.

Talley estimated she had played "hundreds of rounds at Shoal Creek. I'm very excited, confident and comfortable on the course. I think the entire town of Princeton (Kentucky, her hometown) will be there cheering me on, plus so many of my Birmingham and Tuscaloosa friends and lots of Shoal Creek members."

She noted she felt like she had an idea of how the course would be set up for the championship.

"When we played Regionals, we were like the 'guinea pigs' for the course set up. I know the course has been redone since then, but I also feel I have a strong idea of how they (the USGA) will set it up.

"I want to keep the week as normal as possible. I know that won't be easy, but that's my desire. It will be my third event in a row playing King'smill and ShopRite leading into it. I like that. I feel I play my best golf in my third or fourth week in a row of events. I like to play my way in, not rest."

Visit www.uswomensopen.com for much more info on this national championship.

**Regions Tradition is this week**

A reminder that the best PGA Tour Champions golfers from across the world will descend upon Greystone Golf & Country Club's Founders Course this week for the always super popular Regions Tradition.

This major on the PGA Tour Champions always attracts a very strong field, who will all be gunning for two-time defending champion Bernhard Langer, the ageless one!

The Wednesday NCR Pro-Am is also always eagerly anticipated as Coaches Nick Saban, Gus Malzahn, and many, many others coaches and celebrities taking part.

Visit www.regionstradition.com for much more information, including ticket info. Children (18 and under) get in for free with a paid adult, as well as all active and retired military, and their guests, receiving free grounds access upon arrival with valid military ID every day.

Ian Thompson has been writing about golf in Alabama for 25 years and counting. His weekly "Mr. Golf" column concentrates on golfers, golf events and people associated with the sport of interest to the Tuscaloosa and Birmingham areas. Reach him with story ideas at thompsonitesoff@gmail.com
FOOTBALL

Time set for Tide’s opener,
other early season games

National champion Alabama will face Louisville in ABC’s first Saturday Night Football game, and Miami plays LSU on Sunday night of the season-opening weekend.

ESPN announced Wednesday its schedule for the first three weeks of Saturday night games. The Crimson Tide meets Louisville in Orlando, Florida, at 7 p.m. on Sept. 1. The next day Miami and LSU square off at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, at 6:30 p.m. It will be the third straight season ABC airs a Sunday night game on Labor Day weekend, when college football doesn’t compete against the NFL.

In Week 2, Penn State will face Pittsburgh for the ABC Saturday Night Game. Ohio State faces TCU at Arlington, Texas, the following Saturday night.
Bama switches gears with future football scheduling

Home-and-homes against Texas, Notre Dame signal change in philosophy

Michael Casagrande mcasagrande@al.com

The second of two home-and-home announcements came Wednesday for Alabama.

Not only will it visit Notre Dame next decade, it will also take a trip to Austin, Texas, in 2022 before the favor is returned in 2023. The news came less than month after the Notre Dame series for 2028 and 2029 went public.

Alabama athletics director Greg Byrne spoke briefly with AL.com on Wednesday after finishing his round at the Regions Tradition pro-am outside Birmingham.

"Coach (Nick) Saban and I have been talking about different scheduling options over the past year-plus," Byrne said. "Both thought that if there were some home and homes that made sense for the program to do that. So, I had some of the conversations. Coach and I talked about the scenarios. We found dates that worked for both programs and (Texas AD) Chris Del Conte and I got it worked out. And I'm glad we did."

The moves broke almost a decade of precedent of Alabama playing these high-profile non-conference opponents exclusively in neutral sites.

Saban always explained it as an exposure thing that had financial considerations. There was an annual payout that came with the neutral-site games that won't come with the Texas and Notre Dame games. In the Notre Dame contract, each school agreed to pay the visitor $1 million, but that obviously comes out revenue neutral.

Byrne explained why that thinking evolved.

"The paycheck is nice and we're going to have to budget accordingly," Byrne said. "We also think long term, from a season-ticket standpoint, that will help continue to keep people engaged and invested for the entire season. These two series made sense for us."

There has been more and more grumbling from season-ticket holders paying high prices

Attendance for the non-conference home games has sagged since the long sell-out streak ended in 2012. Though announced figures were at least close to the 101,821 capacity of Bryant-Denny Stadium in recent years, empty seats have become the norm for games with teams from outside the Power 5 conferences.

Alabama last played a top-tier conference team home and home in 2010 and 2011 with Penn State. It's been a rotation of Atlanta and Arlington, Texas since. This year, the Tide opens in Orlando, Fla., against Louisville.

There are obvious connections between Alabama, Notre Dame and Texas. The Tide met both in national title games in the past decade after having played historic series years earlier. Byrne said he's been friends with Texas' Del Conte for more than 20 years. He's not sure who picked up the phone first to initiate these talks.

"One of the things people kind of forget about scheduling is you have to find dates that work for both programs," Byrne said. "That's easier said than done. Those were the times that worked for both Texas and us and Notre Dame and us."

For Texas, finding that two-year window to fit Alabama in meant postponing a Texas series with Ohio State, the Austin American-Statesman reported. They will now play in 2025-26.

The cancellation of a 2023 game between Texas and UCF also went public Wednesday. It was the final part of a long-delayed series with the only FBS team that finished 2017 unbeaten. A three-game deal that started in 2007 and continued in 2009 was supposed to have one final meeting, the Orlando Sentinel reported. It was pushed all the way back to 2023 before the finale was canceled again Wednesday with no plans of rescheduling.

"Texas handled that," Byrne said.

It's pure coincidence that the program that claims a 2017 national title got in the middle of this whole scheduling dance.
UA announces series with Texas

By Tommy Perkins

The Tuscaloosa News
Thursday, May 17, 2018
How Nick Saban's Alabama 'Process' is being channeled in Cajun Country

By: Rainer Sabin

By the time Billy Napier ambles through the door with a Starbucks Venti in tow, the room is packed. Thirty-five people have grabbed their seats -- fanning out from a long center table to each of the walls. It's 7:45 on a pleasant April morning and another four months will pass before the first game is played.

Inside the nerve center of the University of Louisiana's football program, Napier plops down in a chair, peers down at his notes and in his sleepy, Southern voice begins to outline the day's agenda. In exacting detail, the coach runs through the practice schedule -- commenting on the execution of specific drills and the time budgeted for each of them.

His audience is captive.

Among those listening is a small cohort of staff members whose professional roots were established 403 miles away in Tuscaloosa, home of mighty Alabama. There is Mark Hocke, a supercharged Scott Cochran clone serving as the strength and conditioning guru. Nearby is Rob Sale, the offensive coordinator who played for Nick Saban at LSU and then apprenticed under him with the Crimson Tide. A few feet away is Katie Turner, the bubbly director of on-campus recruiting and former president of Zeta Tau Alpha's Alabama chapter. Lurking in the vicinity is Andrew Burkett, the Gardendale native and the director of recruiting research and evaluation.

They have joined Napier, the Tide's former wide receivers coach, in a mission to spread the Bama gospel to Lafayette -- a city nestled in the heart of Acadiana, the pocket of Louisiana known to the rest of the world as Cajun Country. It's here where the food is rich and so too is the culture. The people in these parts have their own vernacular, and their strong connection to Catholicism stands out in a Bible Belt intertwined with Protestant sects.

It's why it is rather ironic the university they support has been in the throes of an identity crisis for quite some time. The college has cycled through a series of names -- starting out as Southwestern Louisiana Industrial Institute in 1898 before eventually morphing into the University of Southwestern Louisiana 62 years later and then switching to Louisiana-Lafayette at the tail end of last century only to recently brand itself as Louisiana for athletic marketing purposes.

To most everyone outside of this region, the school is recognized for the colorful sports nickname attached to it -- the Ragin' Cajuns. It raised the profile of a football team that was a perennial also-ran and had never been to a bowl game until 2011. Mark Hudspeth, Napier's predecessor, led them there and then repeated the feat four more times as the Ragin' Cajuns won 36 games during a four-year span. Attendance surged, the school ditched Russell Athletic, inked

See next page
an apparel deal with Adidas and erected a fancy student-athlete performance center housing a state-of-the-art weight room. The program had entered a golden age.

Then, almost overnight, it receded into darkness. In 2015, Louisiana lost twice as many games as it won. The following year, the NCAA levied sanctions after an assistant coach was charged with securing fraudulent entrance exam scores for recruits, leading to the loss of 11 scholarships and 22 victories being vacated. It was a crushing blow and the Ragin' Cajuns couldn't recover, stumbling to losing records each of the past two seasons.

To make matters worse, scandal rocked the Sun Belt Conference member when 13 players were arrested last April for felony theft after surveillance video allegedly captured them taking items from a dorm room. Following a 63-14 defeat to Appalachian State on Dec. 2, Hudspeth was fired.

The athletic director, Bryan Maggard, set out to find a replacement who had experienced winning at the highest level, established a track record of developing relationships, understood the value of player development and had the recruiting chops necessary to build a formidable roster. Maggard had major ambitions for the Ragin' Cajuns, believing they could create a national footprint and become the top Group of Five team in college football, usurping the likes of Central Florida and Boise State to reach those heights.

"The sky's the limit," he says.

For much of the same reasons Nick Saban once saw LSU as a sleeping giant before settling in the SEC in 2000, Maggard believed his own football program could succeed at the highest level because of the deep talent pool present in the parishes.

All he needed to find was someone who shared the same lofty vision and had the plan to make it a reality. He zeroed in on Napier, Arizona State's 38-year-old offensive coordinator who was determined to replicate the model he saw transform Alabama into the sport's supreme power. Napier's grand scheme was to copy the Crimson Tide's personnel infrastructure, workflow, recruiting system, practice regimen and strength programs in a cost-effective manner. Maggard liked the sales pitch.

"Fully on board," Maggard says. "My job was to hire somebody who could be the CEO of our football program and knew what that could and should look like. He has the blueprint. We just need to adapt it right now to our abilities and our resources and continue to improve on it each and every year."

So on Dec. 15, 13 days after the 2017 season ended in crushing disappointment, Napier began the process of resurrecting the Ragin' Cajuns and giving them a new identity colored in crimson.
Billy Napier's office is roomy. Save for a few religious texts that rest on the corner of a desk, a business-card holder and some football memorabilia on the walls, it's also barren. Casually, Napier says he needs to invest some time into decorating his new digs. But it's clearly not a priority. He's been too consumed with his job, the one he has wanted since he realized he wouldn't be able to play quarterback at the pro level. Upon entering coaching, Napier had always envisioned running his own program. He thought he'd do so at the high school level, just as his father had at several programs in north Georgia.

Yet Napier's trajectory changed soon after he threw his last pass at Furman, emerging as a rising star in his chosen profession. At 29, while on Dabo Swinney's staff at Clemson, he became the youngest offensive coordinator in the country. His future couldn't have been brighter. But then Clemson's attack stalled and so too did Napier's career. In 2011, two years after his biggest break, he was fired. A man of faith, Napier sought salvation at Alabama, taking an analyst role at a reduced salary.

What Napier experienced in Tuscaloosa was an awakening.

"I would say that in that first year with Coach Saban I probably learned more in that year than in the ten prior," he explains.

At Alabama, Napier became a student of Saban's "Process" -- a methodology often misconstrued as some socialist construct aimed at promoting the collective good over everything else when in reality it's a philosophy that appeals to an individual's self-interest and personal ambition. Specific role descriptions, expectations and the "Do Your Job" mantra clarify each worker's purpose, reinforcing the notion that he or she can be the difference in the program's success or failure.

"You do this to the best of your ability and you try to be the best in the country about that," says Burkett, who was a recruiting specialist at Alabama.

The "Process," to put it simply, is about people. Saban built Alabama into a machine by recruiting the top players, hiring the best coaches and attracting the most talented off-field employees -- creating the kind of infrastructure that would insulate the Tide from losing.

Upon coming to Louisiana, Napier resolved to do the same. His first step in laying the foundation was to create a deep organization -- one that included quality control coaches at each position, more personnel devoted to recruiting, a graphic designer, nutritionists and an enhanced strength and conditioning department. According to Maggard, the pool of money allotted toward paying assistant coaches increased by $600,000 and another $150-200,000 was set aside for the support staff. Napier is earning roughly $750,000 -- approximately $350,000 less than Hudspeth netted in his final season.
The rebudgeting within the football program is an indication of how motivated Napier was to create a framework resembling the one at the Capstone. In 2016-2017, according to a February 2018 financial statement, Louisiana devoted $3.3 million to coaching and support staff salaries. In the same year, Alabama earmarked $22.6 million for its army of workers -- an employee base so enormous that other Power Five schools complained it gave the Crimson Tide an unfair advantage.

"And we have the same [basic] structure as Alabama," Sale says.

In Napier's eyes, it was essential the Ragin' Cajuns had at least the skeleton of the Alabama monster they'll face Sept. 29 at Bryant-Denny Stadium.

Following his one year with the Crimson Tide as an analyst, Napier witnessed how former Alabama offensive coordinator Jim McElwain tried to apply the "Process" at Colorado State, another Group of Five school. As the quarterbacks coach for McElwain during the 2012 season, Napier worked on a small staff as the Rams went 4-8 during their ascent toward respectability.

"I felt there was a missing component there because we didn't have all of those second-tier type roles," he says.

Napier, a thoughtful person wired with a high-voltage attention span, ruminated about how he would fill those positions and the ones above them. He likened it to a malleable puzzle, saying each new addition changed how he planned to fit the pieces together. Napier searched for young up-and-comers looking to establish themselves. He also eyed veterans like Alabama alumnus Rory Segrest, a former player under Gene Stallings who went on to work in the NFL.

But it was no coincidence the meticulous Napier installed former Tide employees in the positions of greatest influence. Sale is one of the top two assistant coaches. Burkett and Turner oversee the management of recruiting. And Hocke runs the strength and conditioning program, which is a fundamental aspect in team building.

For the first time in a while, Hocke feels at home and it has little to do with the New Orleans native's ties to Louisiana. It's because he has been allowed to carry out his job the way he learned how to do it while working as Alabama head strength and conditioning coach Scott Cochran's protege from 2009 to 2014. Away from the field, Hocke is more calm and cerebral than adrenaline-fueled. Between the lines at practice he is just as highly-caffeinated as Cochran, who is known to squawk like a bird and bellow catchphrases when the team stretches.

Hocke spews similar nonsense during Louisiana's flex period.

"Like an animal!" he crows at one point.

"Hot chili!" he screams at another.
And just like Cochran, Hocke balls one hand into a fist and punches the other to punctuate his exhortations while strutting around with the bouncy swagger of a peacock.

"That routine is something you believe in not just because you have been successful but because that's how you have been raised, your belief system or whatever. That's probably the most comforting thing being here is you get a real feel for how we do things very similar to the way things are done there," Hocke says, referring to Alabama.

After leaving Tuscaloosa following the 2014 season, Hocke ran the football strength and conditioning departments at Georgia, Florida State and Texas A&M. With more responsibility and control than he had at Alabama, he should have been able to carry out his role as he saw fit. Yet Hocke was restricted. He'd make suggestions and they'd fall on deaf ears. He'd want to run the players after practice and was met with resistance.

At Alabama, Hocke remembers how spent he was after a day's work. When he left the field, he recalled, he was "exhausted" and "whipped." That wasn't the case at his other stops, where he didn't expend nearly as much energy.

"You don't feel like you've even had practice," he says.

Hocke struggled to accept the lower intensity of life outside the Crimson Tide's walls. Sale did too, when he moved on from Alabama after 2011. They realized Saban's taxing approach to everything is strangely seductive. The emphasis on efficiency, the obsessive infatuation with detail, the camaraderie that develops in a stressful work setting and the relentless pursuit of excellence became intoxicating to the point that the culture anywhere else could never measure up. It was like pledging the most elite fraternity that ever existed.

"You don't fully comprehend it until you see it with your own two eyes and experience it," Napier says wistfully. "That's the thing I tell people all the time, especially those young people [at Alabama] that have never been anywhere else: You're going to get out of here and you're going to realize not everywhere is like this."

Napier, who has a softer touch than Saban and is characterized as more "personable" by at least one person who has worked for both, is doing all that he can to ensure the Ragin' Cajuns come as close to becoming as reasonable a facsimile as possible. With Hocke leading the way, Napier created an offseason conditioning regimen that parallels Cochran's grueling "Fourth Quarter Program." It's one segment in a year-long system broken down into eight phases intended to establish the basis of a routine that has reference points and can be repeated and improved over the course of time.

Not surprisingly, the Ragin' Cajuns' played their spring game on the same day as A-Day, April 21, and staggered the practices that preceded the glorified scrimmage like Alabama did. In turn, Napier has incorporated Saban's repetition-based approach to drill-work, which he says has "80

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percent" of the structure that exists at Alabama and is largely concentrated on situational football. Like Saban who oversees the secondary because it's his area of expertise, Napier also supervises a position group. His focus, naturally, is the quarterbacks. Napier roams near them as the players run between drills, staying active during idle moments.

"He's expanded our mental toughness to lengths we never thought we would reach," says defensive back Deuce Wallace, a former walk-on. "It's so different."

But for those who have been at Alabama it's awfully familiar.

"There is never any standing around," Sale says.

The same mindset applies to recruiting, which proceeds in a similar fashion as it does at Alabama. The Ragin' Cajuns copied Saban's evaluation model -- one that is rooted in developing a consensus opinion of individual prospects. In the search for recruits, coaches are assigned a position and a geographic region, which leads to multiple sets of eyes judging talent. Scouting reports circulate from one person to another, becoming more comprehensive as the process unfolds. A competitive spirit among the staff keeps the cycle moving. No one wants to have too many evaluation folders in their inbox, according to Sale.

"We're trying to run the same program," Burkett says. "You can't do it exactly. But we're getting it as close as we possibly can with the resources we have."

And that's what makes Napier's undertaking so intriguing, sparking curiosity about whether he can apply Alabama's methodology toward revitalizing a sagging, mid-major football team with a much smaller budget. Maggart is banking that he can, saying the university is preparing to conduct a feasibility study on a new football stadium with the hope Napier could transform the Ragin' Cajuns into a championship outfit in one to three years. Turner is also confident in Napier's prospects.

The Buffalo native and former Alabama student recruiter didn't know much about Lafayette or the university before she was offered a job there. But she believed in Napier. More acutely, she understood the value of what he was selling.

"I really took a blind leap of faith because I trust the head coach so much, and I trust his vision and the mentors that he's had in the past and the experience he's had and where he's come from," Turner says. "We may not be where we want to be right now. But it's not a matter of if; it's a matter of when we get there. We have all seen it done."

Yes, they have -- exactly 403 miles away from here in Tuscaloosa, where Napier unwittingly began to realize his plan to resurrect a football program in Cajun Country.
Michigan State Agrees to Pay $500 Million to Sex Abuse Victims

By MITCH SMITH and ANEMONA HARTO COLLIS

Victims of Lawrence G. Nassar, the Michigan State University physician who sexually abused young women under the guise of medical treatment, would receive $500 million from the university in a settlement that is believed to be the largest ever reached in a sexual abuse case involving an American university.

It dwarfed the size of the settlement reached in the sex abuse scandal at Pennsylvania State University. And it was larger than many of the settlements that followed the child sex abuse crisis in the Roman Catholic Church.

"I think the number being so large sends a message that is undeniable, that something really terrible happened here and that Michigan State owns it," said John Manly, a lawyer for many of the 332 women who sued the university over abuse by Dr. Nassar.

"When you pay half a billion dollars, it's an admission of responsibility." Women who say they were abused by Dr. Nassar still have lawsuits against U.S.A. Gymnastics, the United States Olympic Committee and others, and the settlement with Michigan State could add pressure in those cases.

The settlement by Michigan State, Continued on Page A13

Michigan State Settles With Sex Abuse Victims

From Page A1

a public university that is the state's largest, also sent a loud warning to other colleges about the potentially devastating cost of ignoring misconduct.

The agreement comes as officials at the University of Southern California are under fire for failing to report a gynecologist who faced allegations of misconduct for decades, and as other colleges face revelations gripping with a growing number of sexual abuse and assault complaints over the last few years. By Wednesday afternoon, officials at U.S.C. said they had received about 75 complaints about George Tyndall, the gynecologist.

"People now know that these scandals can happen at any university, and they need to understand and be prepared for that," said Thomas Harrison, director of state relations and policy analysis at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

It was unusual that the settlement would be paid by Michigan State, an institution that has already seen its credit rating downgraded because of the Nassar scandal, On Wednesday, officials at the university did not respond to questions about how it plans to pay, but taxpayers and Michigan State students, officials signaled earlier, are likely to shoulder at least some of the cost. The university is also expected to try to re- cover some of its costs from insurance.

The financial toll is the latest fallout for Michigan State over Dr. Nassar, who worked at the Insti- tution for about 20 years, even as women said they made com- plaints about his conduct to university coaches, trainers or coun- selors since at least the late 1990s.

Many women said the university, by its inaction, enabled Dr. Nassar's abuse and for years ignored those who came forward with complaints, and top leaders at Michigan State have lost their jobs over the matter, including Lou Anna K. Simon, the president. Michigan's attorney general is overseeing a crimi- nal investigation into how Dr. Nassar was permitted to work at the university for as long as he did. The federal Education Depart- ment is investigating the university's actions. And the F.B.I. is conducting an internal review of what its agents knew about Dr. Nassar's conduct and when they knew it, Christopher A. Wray, the agency's director, told Congress on Wednesday.

The settlement was approved by the university's elected trustees in a conference call on Monday, but key details still had to be hashed out. For the women, some of whom shared their stories of abuse in emotional testimony before judges who sentenced Dr. Nassar to more than 100 years in prison, the financial settlement was a step toward healing, but not a fix for systemic failings at Michigan State.

"I hope that our experiences at M.S.U. have opened up the world's eyes to the suffering that survi- vors of sexual assault deal with every day," said Amanda Thomas, who complained to university officials in 2014 about Dr. Nassar's conduct. "And I hope that we can change our attitude toward victims. And I hope that our cul- ture shifts from enabling predators to empowering survivors.

For about 30 years, Dr. Nassar preyed on young women who came to him for medical care at a Michigan State clinic. When some patients, Dr. Nassar's illegally performed in- nocuous medical treatment, and university officials failed to prevent him from continuing seeing patients.

All the while, Dr. Nassar's repu- tation grew. Big-time athletes sought treatment from him. He traveled abroad with the national gymnastics team. He was on the sideline during the Olympics. Dr. Nassar's victims included some of the best gymnasts in the world, as well as local girls who trained at- ter school at a Michigan club.

Many experts said they be- lieved the settlement was the larg- est involving sexual abuse for a uni- versity, though there have been higher settlements outside of uni- versities. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles agreed in 2007 to pay up to $500 million. Until now, perhaps the biggest

Some of the money is expected to come from students' tuition.

Lawrence G. Nassar at a hearing in January. He was sentenced to more than 100 years in prison.

"It certainly makes sense for Michigan State to try and rebuild and enhance its reputation by quickly resolving all of these claims with these 300 people, without forcing them further dam- age by litigation," Mr. Feiberg said, "it makes sense.

In the months ahead, Michigan State leaders have promised to change policies to prevent future abuse and to begin resting the university's battered reputation. Mr. Roach, 73, a 1986 gradu- ate of Michigan State, said he was relieved to learn of the settlement, which he hoped would spare the university a lengthy lawsuit and troubling media attention.

"It's bringing some closure, for the survivors and the university," said Mr. Roach, who plans to con- tinue donating to the college. "If they need money to pay my 'lesser' for the settlement, he said, "I guess I would be willing to say, 'O.K.'

No day is complete without

Michigan State to Pay Victims of Larry Nassar Abuse $500 Million

By: Douglas Belkin, Louise Radnofsky and Melissa Korn

Michigan State University agreed to pay $500 million to more than 300 victims of sexual abuse by Larry Nassar, the sports-medicine doctor it employed, a sum that is among the largest for victims of abuse and leaves unclear the future financial path for one of the nation’s top public universities.

Officials at the 50,000-student campus declined to say how they would pay for the settlement, and it isn’t clear if they have figured out how. They declined to rule out raising tuition or a state bailout, and they can’t use the university’s endowment. Michigan State’s interim President John Engler also didn’t rule out bankruptcy in testimony before the Michigan State Senate in March.

The East Lansing, Mich., university will pay $425 million to the victims, or about $1.25 million each. It will set aside an additional $75 million in a trust to protect any future claims of sexual abuse against Nassar.

The settlement dwarfs the more than $100 million issued by Pennsylvania State University to settle civil claims filed by more than 30 men who said they were sexually abused by retired assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky.

The Michigan State settlement covers lawsuits filed by young athletes, many of them gymnasts, who claimed that Nassar was abusing his patients for two decades.

The university’s board of trustees agreed to the settlement terms Tuesday night. On Wednesday morning, the board’s chairman, Brian Breslin, issued a statement saying the board was “truly sorry to all the survivors and their families for what they have been through, and we admire the courage it has taken to tell their stories.”

Michigan Sen. Tonya Schuitmaker, chair of the subcommittee for higher education appropriation, said the university hadn’t approached the state for money to cover the settlement.

“I would certainly hope before they agreed to a settlement they figured out how to pay for it,” she said. “Whether it’s endowment, or licensing or asking donors or having insurance pay for it.”

A Michigan State spokeswoman said the university “will be working on the solution in the near future” and that the school was in negotiations with its insurer about how much of the settlement it would cover.

In testimony earlier this year before the state legislature, Mr. Engler warned that the costs for the settlement ultimately would be borne by “students and taxpayers.”

“I don’t know if it would force bankruptcy [for the university] or not,” he said. “I hope not.”

Ms. Schuitmaker said she didn’t believe the costs would be passed on to students in the form of higher tuition. The state allocated the university $289 million for the current year, or 11% of its budget. That money comes with a cap on tuition. If the school tried to raise tuition to pay for the settlement they would lose $289 million, she said.

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The school’s estimated annual revenue for this year of $1.36 billion is matched by its expected expenditures.

Nassar pleaded guilty last year to 10 counts of sexual abuse in Michigan state court to resolve the claims of scores of women who alleged he sexually abused them under the guise of medical treatment. He also pleaded guilty to child-pornography counts and was sentenced to more than 200 years behind bars.

The settlement doesn’t address similar claims also brought by athletes against USA Gymnastics, the United States Olympic Committee and others.

The Nassar case rocked the world of elite gymnastics and spurred leadership overhauls at USA Gymnastics, the U.S. Olympic Committee and Michigan State, where the president and athletic director resigned.

USA Gymnastics issued a statement Wednesday saying it was “very encouraged” by the settlement in principle, adding: “We remain committed to continuing our mediation efforts to reach resolution as well.”

Michigan State still faces an investigation by the Michigan Attorney General’s office into its handling of complaints against Nassar, as well as investigations by the U.S. Department of Education and at least two congressional committees.

Elite gymnasts including 2012 Olympic gold medalists McKayla Maroney, Aly Raisman and Jordyn Wieber alleged negligence by Michigan State in failing to act on reports of abuse going back to the late 1990s. The three are covered by the Michigan State settlement, their lawyer said.

National-team gymnasts are also suing USA Gymnastics and the U.S. Olympic Committee, as well as individual officials and coaches in some instances, alleging negligence. Meanwhile, some of the Michigan girls and women have also filed suit against USA Gymnastics, alleging that Nassar’s link to the elite team allowed him to attract new patients and that USA Gymnastics knew or should have known about his actions.

The per-victim settlement amount tracks closely with the $1.25 million USA Gymnastics agreed to pay Ms. Maroney, in December 2016, to resolve her sexual-abuse claims against Nassar, The Wall Street Journal has reported. Ms. Maroney filed a lawsuit in December against Michigan State, the U.S. Olympic Committee and others, seeking in part to be released from the confidentiality agreement attached to that earlier settlement.

Mr. Engler said at the time of his legislative testimony that he hoped insurance would cover settlement costs. But, he said, “sometimes insurers don’t pay,” citing the example of Penn State and its drawn-out legal battle with its insurer over the Sandusky matter.

Since 2013, Penn State University paid more than $100 million to settle those civil claims. Mr. Sandusky is serving a 30-to-60 year sentence in state prison after being convicted in 2012 of sexual abusing 10 boys.
Judy Galliher, a spokeswoman for United Educators, which provides insurance for Michigan State, said Wednesday that she couldn’t share any information related to the insurer’s portion of the settlement.

A person familiar with higher-education insurance policies said an insurer could try to lump together all of the losses related to a serial offender into one policy year, capping their liabilities at the one-year maximum—in this case, $39 million. The person noted that universities generally have additional liability coverage as well, besides the primary insurance policy.

The school could argue, however, that claims should be paid from multiple years’ of insurance policies, because the claims allege abuse from different years. “There would be an argument that a separate policy and a separate limit would come into play. This happens a lot in asbestos, and it’s a very complex issue legally,” said James Lynch, chief actuary of the Insurance Information Institute, a trade group representing insurance companies.

At Penn State, costs associated with legal fees, fines and settlements related to the Sandusky matter reached nearly $250 million. That includes more than $100 million in settlements with at least 33 people.

Penn State has said it is still seeking reimbursement for some expenses from its insurer.

As part of the settlement, there will be no confidentiality agreements or nondisclosure agreements, according to attorneys for the survivors.

“This historic settlement came about through the bravery of more than 300 women and girls who had the courage to stand up and refuse to be silenced,” said John Manly, an attorney for the victims. “It is the sincere hope of all of the survivors that the legacy of this settlement will be far reaching institutional reform that will end the threat of sexual assault in sports, schools and throughout our society.”
Georgia State, Leading U.S. in Black Graduates, Is Engine of Social Mobility

By: Richard Fausset

Shantil Jones’s Volkswagen Jetta sat marooned in the driveway of the little townhouse she shares with her mother in College Park, a mostly black suburb just south of Atlanta. The front end had been badly crumpled in an accident, and Ms. Jones did not have the money to fix it.

Her car wasn’t going anywhere. But she was.

Ms. Jones, 24, put on a cap, gown and high heels on Wednesday afternoon and walked past the hobbled Jetta on her way to graduate from Georgia State University. Her sister would be giving her a ride to the ceremony.

For decades, Georgia State was downtown Atlanta’s rather unremarkable commuter school, founded “as a night school for white businessmen,” as the college’s spokeswoman, Andrea Jones, says, and kept racially segregated until the 1960s.

But the college has been reimagined — amid a moral awakening and a raft of data-driven experimentation — as one of the South’s more innovative engines of social mobility.

By focusing on retaining low-income students, rather than just enrolling them, the college raised its graduation rate to 54 percent in 2017 from 32 percent in 2003. And for the last five years, it has awarded more bachelor’s degrees to African-Americans like Ms. Jones than any other nonprofit college or university in the country.

That record is a bright spot for a state that ranks among the 10 worst for graduating black males from high school, according to a 2015 report by the Schott Foundation for Public Education. It has also changed the educational landscape in Atlanta, home to some of the nation’s most renowned historically black colleges. They came into being because the State of Georgia used to reject or neglect black students seeking a college degree. But now a state-funded college is serving as an inspiration for them.

Obie Clayton, a sociologist at Clark Atlanta University, a historically black college with a history that dates to the 1860s, said his administration has been borrowing elements of Georgia State’s undergraduate advising program, which monitors the daily progress of more than 40,000 undergraduates, uses data analysis to predict potential academic problems, and encourages advisers to swoop into students’ lives at the first sign of trouble.

The innovations have attracted visitors from hundreds of colleges eager to replicate the school’s successes. They have come from the Netherlands, from South Africa, and from across town. “I think everyone in higher education is paying attention” to Georgia State, Dr. Clayton said. “Especially at Clark Atlanta.”

Ms. Jones and her sister drove through the working-class subdivision, past rows of clean carbon-copy townhouses whose gabled roofs seemed like arrows pointing incessantly upward. Fay Jones, their mother, rode with them. She had worked her whole life as a cook, and raised her children in a single-parent household, just as her own mother had done in Montgomery, Ala.

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Her daughter had decorated her mortarboard with a blank notebook and the words, “I am the author of my own life.”

“A lot of times we feel like we’re a product of our environment,” she said. “But I just feel like we have to use the tools we have around us to create our own environment.”

She decided years ago that life was not to be wasted. She learned she had stomach cancer at age 10, and did not beat the disease until age 13. Some of the friends she made in the hospital died.

Her grades in high school were good and she considered applying to Clark Atlanta, where the civil rights leaders Ralph David Abernathy Sr. and Hosea Williams had studied, but she was scared off by the private-school tuition. So she enrolled at Georgia State.

Analyzing her background, administrators there identified her as “academically at risk” and required her to enroll in a seven-week summer session, where she was introduced to the college’s tutoring, advising and financial literacy programs.

The summer session is one of several experiments that have stuck at Georgia State, part of a broader vision generally credited to the university president, Mark P. Becker, a statistician who began his academic career at a community college, and Timothy M. Renick, a religious studies professor whose job title is now senior vice president for student success.

When Mr. Becker took office in 2009, the college seemed adrift. “There was a period when Georgia State lacked an identity,” Mr. Renick said.

He said Georgia State found its “moral compass” in the fact that Atlanta’s working class had been hammered by recession, producing rising numbers of applicants who met the federal definition of low-income students.

“We really became comfortable with saying we’re not about being the next University of Georgia or Chapel Hill,” Mr. Renick said. “Rather than trying to find a way to get students other than the ones that enroll at Georgia State and then find a way to serve them, why don’t we just find new ways to support the students who we do enroll, and who come to us in great numbers?”

To prevent dropouts, Georgia State has developed a series of linked programs meant to provide the kind of safety net for poor students that wealthier students usually get from their families. For example, in 2011 the administration began disbursing microgrants of a few hundred dollars at a time to help students deal with unpaid tuition and fee balances, citing a California State University finding that only 30 percent of students who stop attending for a semester ever graduate.

Shantil Jones met her adviser, Christopher Almond, at the summer program, and he monitored, counseled and prodded her for the rest of her college career. Advisers like Mr. Almond start each morning checking to see if any of their undergraduates have tripped one of the 800 alerts that could signal potential academic trouble, based on reams of previous student data. It could be something as small as a single poor quiz grade.
Ms. Jones welcomed the help. Few in her family had ever been to college. She was working up to 20 hours a week at part-time jobs, and her bus ride to campus took an hour.

When she faltered in prerequisites for an accounting degree, Mr. Almond helped her find a new major, criminal justice. When her grade-point average dipped and she lost her state-funded Hope Scholarship, he helped her figure out ways to try to get it back again (she never did). The school also gave her several microgrants over the years.

Her phone is still full of her adviser’s emails: “I checked your grades as soon as I got to work,” Mr. Almond wrote in May 2015. “Congratulations on an outstanding job. I am very proud of you.”

Mr. Almond, 53, is a soft-spoken man who graduated in 1990 from Morehouse College. His mother was a postal worker, and his father was not in the picture when he was a child. His own journey from matriculation to graduation was a complicated one that took eight years.

“This is personal for me,” he said. “It’s one of those rare things in life where you get to work for an organization whose mission and vision is so much aligned with your own personal mission.”

Georgia State’s graduation ceremony took place in the Atlanta Braves’ former stadium, bought by the college in 2016 and converted into a football field festooned in royal blue, the school color.

Ms. Jones took her place with others from her graduating class — strangers, mostly, from an array of backgrounds, some with stories that could be the plots of novels. Dulce Arizmendi, 22, earned a business degree even though her mother, the only parent who raised her, was deported to Mexico in her junior year (“Gracias mami,” her cap declared). Abraham Chung, 28, lived in Georgia until he was 5, then moved to South Korea after his father was the victim of an Atlanta jewelry-store robbery. When Mr. Chung returned at age 17, he had forgotten most of his English, and it took him a decade to complete a finance degree.

After Ms. Jones walked across the stage, she could not say what her long-term future might hold: Criminal justice was one of many interests. But she was sure that good things would come, and the data appears to be on her side. According to a 2017 Brookings Institution report, the median income for Georgia State graduates at age 34 is $38,900.

For now, she has landed a part-time job managing a UPS Store, to start later in May. But how will she drive to work without the Jetta?

“I don’t know,” she replied. “But I’m going to figure it out. I’m going to get there.”
How Betting Will Change the Sports Media Business

By: Kevin Draper

The sports television industry is struggling. There is an onslaught of competition from streaming services, video games, social networks and mobile phones. Fans can’t see the vast majority of games without an expensive cable subscription, and millions are opting to “cut the cord” or never install one. Rights costs are increasing while ratings are decreasing. Viewers are getting older. The advertising outlook is grim.

But the Supreme Court injected a dose of optimism into the industry when it ruled Monday to strike down a 26-year-old federal law that largely prohibited sports betting in the United States. The ruling is likely to produce the next major boost to the value of live, televised sports, industry executives and experts say, at just the time when it is most needed.

Nearly everyone agrees the appetite for sports consumption both online and on traditional television will surely rise, as more fans might suddenly have a vested interest in tuning in to a Tuesday night matchup in June between the Cincinnati Reds and the Miami Marlins. History has shown that the ability to place a bet on a sporting event makes fans pay closer attention to the action, and watch more.

According to a Nielsen Sports study, commissioned by the American Gaming Association, sports bettors made up 25 percent of the N.F.L.’s television audience in 2015 but accounted for 47 percent of all minutes viewed. Sports bettors watch about twice as much sports coverage as non-bettors do. So it stands to reason that making it easier for people to become sports bettors will make them more likely to watch sports.

“Hands down, it’s a huge deal,” said Brad Humphreys, a sports economist at West Virginia University. “How huge it is depends upon how quickly states move and how many states move to legalize sports betting.”

The eventual size of the legalized sports betting industry in the United States is anyone’s guess. Almost $5 billion was bet on sports in Nevada last year, but that figure is dwarfed by the amount bet on the illegal betting market, which is estimated to be anywhere from tens to hundreds of billions of dollars.

In Britain, home to just 65 million people and a far less-diverse sports market, bettors wagered nearly $20 billion for the fiscal year ending in March 2017, the last year for which figures are available, according to a report from that country’s Gambling Commission.

The revenue generated from that betting quickly finds its way into the pockets of sports broadcasters, as well as leagues and teams. British betting companies are estimated to put 20 to 30 percent of revenue back into advertising, mostly on television.

Consider, for example, Bet365, one of Britain’s largest bookmakers, which generated $3 billion in revenue (and $666 million in profit) for the fiscal year ending in March 2017. In addition to spending hundreds of millions of dollars on media advertising, the company also has had a sponsorship with the soccer club Stoke City, which was recently relegated from the Premier League but had the Bet365 name on its jerseys and stadium.
"If Bet365 invest 25 percent of their revenue back into sports, that’s $700 million per year" said Laila Mintas, the deputy president of Sportradar, a sports data company that distributes instant statistics and other information for professional sports. "You can imagine what that means."

Even less high-profile events are likely to see a boost in interest. That would likely benefit ESPN, which recently introduced ESPN+, the company’s long-awaited sports streaming service, that will feature thousands of live games and original programming for $4.99 a month. The company hasn’t solidified its plans to produce shows that target sports betting fans, but Connor Schell, ESPN’s executive vice president for content said Tuesday that such programming has been on the ESPN+ "content road map” from the beginning.

“We’ve thought about betting and the conversation around betting in line with what Doug Kezirian is doing on the ‘Behind the Bets’ podcast,” Schell said after the network’s annual presentation to advertisers in New York City on Tuesday.

The longtime ABC and ESPN broadcaster Brent Musburger, who was known for making sly betting references on-air, retired last year and co-founded Vegas Stats & Information Network. The network streams 12 hours of betting-focused video a day, which is simulcast on Sirius radio.

Joe Asher, the chief executive of William Hill US, a bookmaker, cautioned that it might take a few years for the big advertising money to find its way to national channels like ESPN, Fox and NBC, as states need to go through the legislative process to legalize and regulate sports betting.

“It’s hard to see the national advertising being effective now, when you are dealing with a finite number of states,” he said.

Targeted advertising on regional sports networks in states where gambling becomes legal first seems more likely.

While some expansion of sports betting will happen soon — New Jersey, the state at the center of the Supreme Court case, could be ready to take bets in weeks, and a handful of other states have recently passed sports betting laws — a full build-out won’t be immediate. Betting could eventually be legal nationwide, but there is a legal morass to navigate before that happens.

Both the N.B.A. and N.F.L. have called upon Congress to pass federal legislation to regulate sports betting, rather than having a patchwork of 50 state laws, and Senator Orrin G. Hatch of Utah has said he intends to do so. Sports leagues, unions representing players, casino companies and Native American tribes are jockeying to shape the laws that will regulate sports betting to make sure they get a big cut of the action.

After Monday’s ruling, the major sport leagues were careful to focus on the need for consistent regulation and measures to maintain the integrity of their competition, rather than any potential windfalls from increased interest and sponsorships.

"Congress has long recognized the potential harms posed by sports betting to the integrity of sporting contests and the public confidence in these events,” the N.F.L. said in a statement released Monday. “Given that history, we intend to call on Congress again, this time to enact a core regulatory framework for legalized sports betting.”
Beyond the impact on media rights, the court ruling is poised to change everything about the way Americans consume sports. Imagine betting windows inside of stadiums; casino advertisements everywhere the eye can see, as they are in Britain’s soccer stadiums; in-game betting on your phone while sitting inside an arena (or while sitting at dinner with your family); and a crop of new shows on ESPN and other sports networks dedicated to betting lines.

Daily fantasy has always been a hair’s width away from sports betting, and the companies involved have a couple of big advantages in becoming bookmakers. The two largest of the daily fantasy companies, DraftKings and FanDuel, announced on Monday they intend to do. DraftKings says it has 10 million registered users, while FanDuel has 6 million, all with credit card numbers already on file. Both companies say they hope to be up and running when the N.F.L. season starts in September.

If they can follow-through on that commitment, it may give the N.F.L. a better chance of reversing two years of declining television ratings than any marketing campaign that emerges from the league’s Park Avenue headquarters.
Supreme Court made a good call on sports betting

By: Cecil Hurt

Sometimes even the Supreme Court of the United States decides to punt.

In this case, it was the right call. The court — on the broad principle that there are many matters that states can best decide for themselves — overturned a law that prevented states from allowing legalized sports betting, handing New Jersey a victory over entities that included the NCAA. That doesn’t mean that sports betting is necessarily good or bad, or that a state can’t prohibit such wagering if it wants. The decision does, however, mean that states can decide for themselves.

That brings us to Alabama. And having been brought to Alabama, that brings us to football. It’s certainly not the only sport on which a sporting man or woman might put down a dollar or two and take a flyer. In places like Las Vegas, where gambling is a huge, legal industry, you can bet on anything from the Kentucky Derby to the Soap Box Derby, from ski jumping to sumo wrestling. But when you talk about this state, the No. 1 passion (or addiction) is football. I’m not breaking any code of silence by pointing out that millions of dollars are already wagered on football, pro or college, in this state. It’s just done outside the bounds of regulation and taxation.

People are going to bet on football. The state may or may not get involved. The Legislature doesn’t have to legalize something just because people are already out there doing it, and just because something is legal in Colorado — to pick a state at random — doesn’t mean it necessarily has to be legal here. In a different form (the lottery), gambling has already been shelved here, over and over, which has made hamlets like Ardmore, Tenn., Bowdon, Ga. and Paxton, Fla., into familiar weekly destinations for some Alabamians.

Football, though, is different, one of the unifying threads in the culture of the state. Also, revenue is revenue.

That doesn’t mean that anything is going to happen quickly here. Mississippi appears ready to field the Supreme Court’s punt, rush the offense onto the field in the casino version of the no-huddle offense and have sports wagering ready to go before Ole Miss takes the field against Texas Tech on opening weekend. Some of that is an infrastructure advantage: Mississippi has a number of “riverboat” casinos already in place in places like Tunica and Biloxi. In Alabama, the gaming infrastructure is less organized — a few casinos, bingo halls and racetracks — and the legislative history of the gambling industry has been contentious at times.

There isn’t anything wrong with proceeding cautiously and seeing what, if anything, works. I’m not going to jump out ahead of the editorial board at The Tuscaloosa News and endorse one course of action or the other without more information. I will be interested to hear what some of our 2018 gubernatorial candidates have to say on the matter.

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In the meantime, the Southeastern Conference and the University of Alabama are in “wait and see” mode. UA director of athletics Greg Byrne said on Monday that UA was “aware of today’s ruling by the Supreme Court, and we will monitor the developments closely as they occur.” If tax revenues from gambling are earmarked for higher education, as is the case in many lottery states, then it isn’t just athletics that will be involved.

Right now, there are a limited number of things that you can bet on in Alabama. But if you wanted to bet that we are a long way from the finish line, one way or another, you would probably win.