AUGUST 24, 2018

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Alabama AD Greg Byrne nets pay raise, three-year extension

By: Rainer Sabin

Greg Byrne received a three-year contract extension and raise Friday.

The University of Alabama Board of Trustees compensation committee approved a pay increase and lengthened term of employment for the athletic director.

Byrne, who replaced Bill Battle in March 2017, recently spearheaded the launch of a $600 million campaign to upgrade Bryant-Denny Stadium, Coleman Coliseum and several other sports facilities.

Byrne is now set to receive $980,000 in base salary this academic year, a $55,000 bump from the figure he was set to earn in his original deal with the university.

Byrne's pay is scheduled to increase to as much as $1.13 million in 2024-2025, the final year of the extended agreement.

"[UA President] Dr [Stuart] Bell, a little over two years ago, began a process to try to find the best athletic director in the country to lead our department, and I think he is meeting and exceeding those expectations," interim chancellor Finis St. John IV said on a conference call announcing the approval of the contract. "I appreciate his leadership."

According to a database, sportsinfo.pro, Byrne's base salary in 2017-2018 was the second-highest in the Southeastern Conference among athletic directors. It would now top the league and be ranked eighth nationally based on the previous academic year's numbers.

Along with Byrne's enhanced deal, 11 contracts were approved by the compensation committee, including agreements signed by Nick Saban, football director of player personnel Bob Welton and the team's three assistant basketball coaches -- John Pelphrey, Yasir Rosemond and Antoine Pettway.

Saban's one-year contract extension and pay raise were announced in July.

**Notable Details from Contracts Approved Friday**

Nick Saban, head football coach: Annual talent fee increases to maximum $10.025 million in 2025-2026.

Bob Welton, Alabama director of player personnel: Two years, annual base salary of $200,000

Antoine Pettway, assistant basketball coach: Two years, annual base salary of $281,875

Yasir Rosemond, assistant basketball coach: Two years, annual base salary of $256,250

John Pelphrey, assistant basketball coach: Two years, annual base salary of $435,625
Gulf’s new lodge is a sight to behold

Mike Bolton  AL.com

I remember hearing the television news report when Hurricane Ivan struck the Alabama Gulf Coast in 2004. The anchor said the Gulf State Park Lodge and hotel were destroyed.

I remember thinking that the statement was probably a little overdramatic. I knew the lodge and hotel had been designed to survive hurricanes. They may have sustained a lot of damage, but there was no way they were destroyed. Boy, were they destroyed. I remember visiting Gulf Shores shortly after Hurricane Ivan and seeing the concrete pillars that once supported the hotel units sticking 20 feet out of the sand. I couldn’t believe the damage.

It was a sad day in the lives of my family members. We spent many vacations there. It was our favorite spot because there was so much to do in the area. My kids loved the Friday night luau at the lodge. The hula dancers would get the kids on stage, show them how to hula dance and pose with them for pictures. It was big deal for the kids.

That now seems like another lifetime. My kids are grown now. It has been 14 years since Hurricane Ivan struck and for the longest time I believed we would never see another Gulf State Park Lodge and hotel. A lot of people fought it and kept it tied up in the courts as long as they could. Whether the state of Alabama should compete against the private sector in the lodging business was a divisive issue. All the while, Gulf Shores was missing out on millions of dollars in convention business. The loss of the Gulf State Lodge left the area without a facility large enough to host any convention or conference of any size.

It does my soul good to know that the Lodge at Gulf State Park, a Hilton Hotel is on track to open in a few months. I have seen the photos and the place is beautiful. It will feature 350 rooms, an interpretive center, new walking trails and many other amenities. The lodge can host up to 1,000 people for conferences and conventions.

There are also several other smaller meeting and conference rooms. The lodge has a 7,500-square-foot terrace in the rear overlooking the Gulf. The pool has a Gulf view and a bar and grill. There is a restaurant with a view of the Gulf.

Maybe most important of all, it will be something Alabamians can be proud of. That was true of the original Gulf State Park Lodge and hotel at first, but eventually it fell into such disrepair that it was embarrassment for the state. As a Gulf State Park fan that stuck around to the bitter end, I would cringe at the crumbling concrete, the 1970s tacky furnishings and just about every other aspect of what was once Alabama’s showplace.

I can’t wait to take my family and my new grandson to Alabama’s newest showplace.

Mike Bolton is the editor of Alabama Outdoor News magazine. He may be reached at outdoors@aol.com.
Alabama on hot seat in national opioid litigation talks

By: Lawrence Specker

Some people would really like to see Alabama thrown out of court proceedings that could lead to a national settlement on opioids. But Alabama also has its backers, including the attorneys general of 31 states and the District of Columbia.

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall says it's no accident an Alabama suit against drug manufacturers and distributors has been chosen as a test case. He said it simply reflects the reality of how hard the state has been hit by prescription drug abuse.

"I think the court recognized that Alabama is in a unique position," Marshall said.

The battle is playing out in Cleveland, where U.S. District Judge Dan A. Polster is overseeing a complex multi-district process. Hundreds of states, cities, counties, hospitals and other entities have filed suit against the makers and distributors of opioid painkillers, seeking to recover money spent dealing with a national epidemic of opioid abuse.

The defendants dispute claims that they created an oversupply of addictive drugs, or that they encouraged doctors to overprescribe them. They say the drugs they created were legal, were handled by a highly regulated system and dispersed only by professional physicians.

Numerous entities within Alabama have filed suits that have been consolidated into the process overseen by Polster, including Birmingham, Mobile and other city and county governments. Alabama got involved at the state level in February, when Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall announced a suit against Purdue Pharma, maker of OxyContin and other drugs. That suit, like hundreds of others, was consolidated in the multi-district process.

From the beginning, Polster declared a strong preference to broker a settlement, saying it would bring quicker relief to the victims of the epidemic than years of lawsuits and appeals. Some involved in the process see it as a parallel to a '90s settlement involving tobacco producers.

Despite Polster's efforts, a settlement is not guaranteed. The case got under way in December, and the first challenge was simply to establish an organizational structure for handling the mass of defendants and plaintiffs, and to establish who was representing whom.

In April, Polster filed the first of a series of Case Management Orders. It said that parties were making "good progress" toward a settlement -- but participants thought it would be helpful to have a "litigation track" in addition to the "settlement track." So Polster established what some have called "bellwether cases" in several categories. One involves local governments in Ohio and Illinois. One involves local governments in West Virginia, Michigan and Florida.

A third category is for "sovereigns," which includes states and Native American tribes. Polster picked Alabama v. Purdue Pharma as the representative state case.

In the case management order, Polster didn't spell out why he picked Alabama. Marshall said the pick makes sense because Alabama has been so hard-hit by prescription painkiller abuse. It's long been identified as the state with the highest per-capita prescription rate, for example. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the state's per capita prescription rate -- at

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141.1 opioid prescriptions per 100 persons -- was close to twice the national average. Those numbers have dropped some over time, but remain high.

In July, a Harvard study found that two Alabama congressional districts ranked among the five highest in the country for opioid prescriptions.

For Polster to pick the state's suit as a test case was "a recognition of the reality of where we are in Alabama, from a factual standpoint," Marshall said.

Polster's choice also hung a "kick me" sign on Alabama. By late June, Purdue and other manufacturers had filed a motion to dismiss Alabama's complaint. A distributor filed a similar motion.

Some documents in the case are sealed, including Alabama's complaint. The motions to dismiss it are not. The manufactures have spelled out multiple grounds why they think Polster should throw out the complaint, arguing that its claims for damages don't show causation, that its drug-law claims don't show violations of the Controlled Substances Act, that it hasn't shown the state's deceptive trade practices act is applicable and more.

The state's response to all this was filed Aug. 3. It's also sealed from public view. A related motion sheds a little light on how the state's legal team sees all this, calling it "a test case to brief threshold issues on common claims at the motion to dismiss stage."

In other words, it's a test to see whether the Alabama case -- and by extension, other states' suits -- are strong enough to make it to trial. Needless to say, other states are keenly interested.

Late last week, state attorneys general weighed in with two amicus briefs supporting Alabama -- one responding to the motion by Purdue and other manufacturers to dismiss, one to a motion by distributor McKesson to dismiss.

In the Purdue suit, Alabama got backing from Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, Wyoming and the District of Columbia. They argue that Alabama has standing to sue -- and so do they.

"Because the Amici States have or are considering bringing similar claims against one or more of the Manufacturer Defendants, they have a significant interest in the outcome of the Court's decision on the Manufacturer Defendants' motion to dismiss," says the brief. "... While the Amici States are not parties to this proceeding and are not bound by the Court's decision in this matter, a state's ability to protect the health and well-being of her citizens must not be infringed no matter the venue."

It remains to be seen how quickly Polster will rule on the motion to dismiss Alabama's suit. It's part of a far bigger process.
Polster has established a settlement track and a litigation track. Within the litigation track there are several bellwether cases to be handled, which means multiple sub-tracks. Track One doesn't even involve Alabama: it focuses on suits brought by county and city governments in Ohio and Illinois. For that one, a final pretrial hearing is set for late August 2019, with trial to start in September 2019.

In the near future, a conference will be held to set timetables for other litigation tracks. That might put Alabama's day in court on the calendar, if the case makes it that far.

Polster has called for confidentiality, limiting what parties are willing to say publicly about the process. In late July, Rhon Jones -- an attorney for the Alabama-based Beasley Allen firm who's also listed as a deputy attorney general in some filings, published some information on his company's website.

Hearing motions on test cases such as the Alabama suit will help "determine the viability of threshold legal issues that may assist in the settlement negotiations," he wrote, "and to prepare the test cases for trial in the event that a settlement does not occur."

In other words: The strength or weakness of Alabama's case could shape a settlement even if the case never makes it all the way to a verdict. And if settlement talks fail, the Alabama suit may provide the blueprint for the battle royal that follows.

Marshall declined to speculate on the chance of a settlement. "I think right now it would be inappropriate to comment on that," he said.

But he said two things are certain. The first is that while Polster has some ability to shape the overall process, he can't compel attorneys general to try their suits on his turf.

"If it goes to trial, it will go to trial in Alabama," he said. "We're not trying this case in Cleveland."

Secondly, he said, "this is not the opioid strategy for Alabama." The state has an Opioid Action Plan, he said, presented in December by the Alabama Opioid Overdose and Addiction Council, a body established by Gov. Kay Ivey.

With that plan as a guide, the state isn't waiting on the outcome of motions in Cleveland to launch efforts against opioid abuse.

"The exact opposite is the case," Marshall said.
These Alabama businesses made Inc. 5000

William Thornton wthornton@al.com

Fifty-five Alabama companies made it on Inc. Magazine's annual 5000 list.
Companies on the list are ranked according to percentage revenue growth from 2014 to 2017. To qualify, companies must have been privately held, U.S.-based and founded and generating revenue by March 31, 2014.
The minimum revenue required for 2014 is $100,000; the minimum for 2017 is $2 million.
The fastest-growing companies in America tallied collective revenue of more than $206.2 billion in 2017, and three-year revenue growth rates topped out at 75,661 percent.
Here are the Alabama companies on the list, their percentage of growth, their industry and their revenue.
235: Southern Veterinary Partners, Birmingham, 2,022 percent, health, $53 million.
252: Cintel Inc., Huntsville 1,942 percent, government services, $2.1 million.
373: Jennaration Boutique, Tuscaloosa, 1,330 percent, retail, $2.3 million.
539: StrategyWise, Birmingham, 929 percent, business products and services, $2 million.
673: Sparks Energy, Danville, 742 percent, energy, $127.1 million.

SEE INC., A15
INC.: Alabama is well-represented in list of fast-growing companies

FROM A14

749: Yorktown Systems Group, Huntsville, 670 percent, government services, $75.3 million.
797: Hill Technical Solutions, Huntsville, 628 percent, government services, $8 million.
808: Knight Equity, Birmingham, 624 percent, advertising and marketing, $2.2 million.
1246: Alfaworx, Fairhope 389 percent, telecommunications, $6.1 million.
1263: R2C Support Services, Huntsville, 384 percent, government services, $3.8 million.
1296: Fulcrum Construction Group, Daphne, 368 percent, construction, $48.4 million.
1538: Pinnacle Solutions, Huntsville, 301 percent, government services, $56.7 million.
1582: Lake Homes Realty, Hoover, 295 percent, real estate, $11.6 million.
1638: Mission Driven Research, Huntsville, 282 percent, government services, $2.4 million.
1690: Shearer Associates, Huntsville, 272 percent, engineering, $3.6 million.
1741: Iron Mountain Solutions, Huntsville, 260 percent, government services, $30 million.
1791: Matt Curtis Real Estate, Madison, 252 percent, real estate, $3.8 million.
1817: Wilson Shaw Information Technology, Montgomery, 246 percent, IT management.
2283: Home Health Solutions, Carbon Hill, 248 percent, health, $3.1 million.
2387: MSB Analytics, Huntsville, 246 percent, government services, $9 million.
2026: Spartan Value Investors, Birmingham, 221 percent, real estate, $22.7 million.
2047: Spur Inc., Huntsville, 218 percent, human resources, $38 million.
2079: B&B Heating and Air, Birmingham, 214 percent, construction, $2.8 million.
2272: Hospicelink, Birmingham, 194 percent, health, $81.4 million.
2298: Kord Technologies, Huntsville, 191 percent, government services, $33.3 million.
2360: aLogic, Huntsville, 185 percent, government services, $41.6 million.
2386: PaceRunners, Bessemer, 184 percent, logistics and transportation, $134.4 million.
2394: IMT Solutions, Daphne, 181 percent, telecommunications, $3.7 million.
2578: Martin Federal, Huntsville, 165 percent, government services, $6.1 million.
2651: ProjectHousel, Birmingham, 159 percent, real estate, $4.2 million.
2791: Simpson Plastering, Birmingham, 148 percent, construction, $20.4 million.
2853: Sentar, Huntsville, 144 percent, government services, $24.5 million.
2887: SourcePak, Birmingham, 144 percent, government services, $34.3 million.
2860: Ventiuri, Huntsville, 144 percent, government services, $34.3 million.
2922: J-Pak, Decatur, 140 percent, engineering, $11.4 million.
3007: Triad Homes, Daphne, 134 percent, real estate, $88.8 million.
3040: TriVector Services, Huntsville, 122 percent, government services, $7 million.
3145: PharmaPoint, Birmingham, 126 percent, health, $27.5 million.
3235: Thompson Gray, Huntsville, 122 percent, government services, $33.4 million.
3266: Momentum Telecom, Birmingham, 120 percent, telecommunications, $99.3 million.
3338: Monte San Research, Huntsville, 117 percent, government services, $10.8 million.
3360: Starnes Media, Birmingham, 115 percent, media, $3.6 million.
3396: nou Systems, Huntsville, 113 percent, government services, $16.5 million.
3397: Torch Technologies, Huntsville, 113 percent, government services, $349.4 million.
3782: Keel Point Partners, Huntsville, 98 percent, financial services, $16.1 million.
3798: Oakworth Capital Bank, Mountain Brook, 96 percent, financial services, $24.9 million.
3904: LSINC, Huntsville, 91 percent, government services, $8.7 million.
4001: Hargrove Engineers + Constructors, Mobile, 85 percent, engineering, $266.8 million.
4192: Counselman Automotive Recycling, Mobile, 82 percent, consumer products and services, $12.6 million.
4258: American Family Care, Birmingham, 79 percent, health, $334.5 million.
4408: Bell Media, Birmingham, 75 percent, advertising and marketing, $6 million.
4545: Employment Screening Services, Birmingham, 71 percent, human resources, $26.4 million.
4718: Digital Marketing Services, Pelham, 66 percent, advertising and marketing, $6.3 million.
4870: Tideum, Huntsville, 61 percent, government services, $22.7 million.
4903: enVentive, Huntsville, 60 percent, government services, $3.6 million.
4999: Taziki's Mediterranean Cafe, Birmingham, 58 percent, food and beverage, $26 million.
States with most Confederate monuments ranked

By Leada Gore
Alabama Media Group, Birmingham

Last year's violence in Charlottesville, Virginia — unrest sparked by the relocations of a Confederate statue — led to the removal of similar monuments around the country.

The number of remaining old South monuments varies widely from state to state, with concentrations naturally found in the states that made up the Confederacy during the Civil War. Stacker looked at the states with the most Confederate monuments, including statues and memorials, as well as parks, schools, streets or highways.

Twenty-one states have no Confederate memorials; 21 have at least one:

**States with only one memorials**
- Iowa — Gen. Lawrence Sullivan "Sul" Ross
- Indiana — Battle of Morgan's Raid
- Nevada — Jeff Davis Peak
- South Dakota — Gettysburg Police Uniform

**The rest of the rankings**

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<th>2 memorials</th>
<th>13 memorials</th>
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<td>Idaho</td>
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<td>Washington</td>
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**Three memorials**
- Montana
- New York
- Pennsylvania

**Four memorials**
- New Mexico
- Arizona
- Ohio

**Five memorials**
- Alabama — including the statue of Robert E. Lee in Montgomery, dedicated in 1908; Jefferson David Community College in Brewton, dedicated in 1965; and Confederate Heroes Monument in Alexander City, dedicated in 1923.
- Oklahoma
- Missouri
- West Virginia

**Six memorials**
- Kentucky
- Arkansas
- Florida

**Seven memorials**
- 83 memorials
- Louisiana
- 99 memorials
- Tennessee
- 121 memorials
- Alabama — including the statue of Robert E. Lee in Montgomery, dedicated in 1908; Jefferson David Community College in Brewton, dedicated in 1965; and Confederate Heroes Monument in Alexander City, dedicated in 1923.

**147 memorials**
- Missouri
- 170 memorials
- North Carolina
- 194 memorials
- South Carolina

**199 memorials**
- Georgia
- 209 memorials
- Texas
- 242 memorials
- Virginia
Tuscaloosa Museum of Art to close

By Mark Hughes Cobb
Staff Writer

The Westervelt Co.'s Tuscaloosa Museum of Art, home to a world-renowned collection of American and Asian paintings, furniture and decorative art, amassed by former CEO Jack Warner, will close Aug. 31, according to Susan Poole, corporate communications manager for the company.

Core pieces will remain in the collection, including some of its early American-themed art, and the "Wild Birds of America" series by Basil Ede, commissioned by Warner, but others will be "prepared for shipment," and not available for viewing by the public.

"We have not sold any pieces" at present, Poole said, but added "They're being prepared to sell to private buyers."

Art has been on display at the corporate headquarters on Jack Warner Parkway for decades, though other works had been housed elsewhere.

See MUSEUM, A5

MUSEUM

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See MUSEUM, A5

The Westervelt Company's Tuscaloosa Museum of Art is closing Aug. 31. Items in the collection, compiled by former CEO Jack Warner, are seen Tuesday, Aug. 21, 2018. (STAFF PHOTO/GARY COSBY JR.)

The Westervelt Company's Tuscaloosa Museum of Art is closing Aug. 31. Items in the collection, compiled by former CEO Jack Warner, are seen Tuesday, Aug. 21, 2018. (STAFF PHOTO/GARY COSBY JR.)

Throughout the city. Gulf States, founded in 1884, moved its headquarters to Tuscaloosa in 1927, when it became one of the South's largest landowners and employers. Warner, who became CEO in the late '50s, succeeding his mother, designed the Asian-inspired company headquarters on River Road, which was renamed Jack Warner Parkway in May 1999.

The Tuscaloosa Museum of Art was created after the company sold off core works from the collection, including Asher B. Durand's "Progress (The Advance of Civilization)," Thomas Cole's "The Falls of Kaaterskill," Daniel Garber's "Tanis," a rare historical work by Edward Hopper, and Frederic Edwin Church's "Above the Clouds at Sunrise," which illuminates the cover of the coffee-table book "An American Odyssey," about Warner's art collecting.

Some works were sent to auction at Christie's, and others were sold privately.

In the early part of the century, Warner sought to unify the collection, which had also been on display at the Mildred Warner House and the University Club, gathering it in the Anchorage Building at NorthRiver, where it became known as the Westervelt-Warner Museum of American Art. Most works had been collected by Warner during decades as president, CEO and chairman of Gulf States, which became the Westervelt Co. after his retirement. Most was bought with corporate funds, though Warner, who died in February 2017, gathered a smaller but significant collection with personal funds.

In 2011, the Westervelt Co. declined to renew the partnership with the The Jack Warner Foundation, which had been operating the Westervelt-Warner Museum at losses of $250,000 to $300,000 yearly for several years. The Warner Foundation moved Warner's personal collection out of the Anchorage in June, and the Westervelt Co. maintained the bulk of the collection at the Anchorage, while preparing to shift it to the company headquarters as the Tuscaloosa Museum of Art. The museum opened in December 2011.
William Thorsm

art curator brings ‘impressive’ record

Haliee Ringle is the Birmingham Museum of Art’s new Hugh Kaul curator for contemporary art. Coming from the curatorial team at the Studio Museum in Harlem, Ringle will join BMA’s contemporary art collection.

Ringle will also lead the museum’s Circle for Contemporary Art, a group overseeing growth and development of the temporary art collection.

Ringle said she wants to further community dialogue, enhance the museum’s collection, and tell stories through contemporary art.

"I am delighted to join the BMA at an exciting time in a dynamic city when the museum is increasingly using contemporary art throughout," Ringle said in a press release.

Ringle brings with her an impressive record of groundbreaking exhibitions — working with both emerging and established artists and a deep commitment to community engagement," said IDM Graham-Beckner, director of the New York City museum’s signature art program.

She has written extensively about artists of African descent and has contributed to several publications.

Ringle will oversee the BMA’s permanent collection of more than 3,000 American and contemporary African art, from the University of Texas at Austin.

The BirmingHam News
Friday, August 24, 2018
The real story behind hush agreements for residents with Alabama practice views

By: Michael Casagrande

Moving into their new apartment near Alabama's campus two years ago, Michael Arkin and his roommates were eager to use its biggest perk.

They grabbed a few chairs and set up a viewing stand from the balcony near the elevators of the now three-year old Central Park complex. Of course they wanted a look at Crimson Tide football practice.

And Central Park has the prime view over the fenced in complex of manicured fields where the work of Nick Saban's program is done in secret. The building is one of three built since 2008 in the exploding real estate market on the edge of the Alabama campus with a view over the covered fence line. In the past, single-story structures lined Hackberry Lane opposite the practice fields, so these views were relatively new.

With these residential structures ranging from four to six floors came talk of hush agreements tenants must sign. This is, after all, the era of heightened paranoia among college football coaches afraid any inside info could help an opponent.

A 2016 ESPN.com story stated Alabama had an agreement with one of the buildings that resident leases spell out rules preventing tenants from watching practice from their balconies. Lane Kiffin, a former resident of one of the buildings, tweeted Saturday it was "actually true."

The developer of the 10-year old The Chimes where Kiffin lived and the newly-built Champions Place confirmed that's partially true for his buildings. They won't sell any condo to someone unless they sign an agreement that states they won't stand on balconies during practices but it didn't come under pressure from the school.

"We're all big supporters of Alabama," developer Kenny Short said. "This is not kids that are renting this out. These are people who like to come home to Alabama and support the program. So, we're not going to do anything -- anything -- to take away or cause any kind of confusion from our standpoint at any of our condominium projects. That's the reason everybody signs that and abides it from Day 1."

Down the street at Central Park, it's a different story.

Neither Arkin, nor Marshall Williams, another former Central Park resident, had to sign any kind of lease provision that stated anything of that nature.

J. Case McNeill, property manager of the company that owns the building, confirmed there are no rules for residents about watching football practice. He's also not aware of the university or football program making any official requests about it.

Short didn't need any direction to set this policy for the buildings he developed.

See next page
"No, it was just something that we put in there because that could be an issue and a problem," Short said. "We're all about Alabama around here and we're not going to do anything that would upset anyone over there. That's the reason we have our rules in place and we've never had an issue."

Over at Central Park, residents are free from binding leasing language but not from Scott Cochran. Not long after Arkin and his roommate set up chairs to watch their first practice in their new building, Alabama's boisterous strength and conditioning coach voiced his disapproval of their presence.

"Y'all better get the hell away from here' from the field," Arkin remembered hearing Cochran's famous vocal cords shout across the street.

After that, they left the chairs in the unit but would occasionally "hide behind a little corner" to watch a few minutes here and there.

While Arkin's unit was on the other side of the building, Marshall Williams' had a perfect balcony view of the fields.

He had binoculars and preferred to watch from inside where it was more comfortable.

On occasion, he'd go outside and watch from the balcony. Nobody ever yelled, even the day he put a gas-station cardboard cutout of Nick Saban on the porch.

"Nobody ever said anything about it," said Williams, a senior from Kansas City majoring in mechanical engineering. "I thought it would be on Twitter for sure."

Most of the time, he'd just catch a quick glimpse coming back from class.

"You never really sit and watch a full practice because, I mean, football practice isn't the most glorious thing ever," Williams said. "But like when they're doing team later -- when they're actually running plays and stuff -- is when it's cool to watch to see who is performing better."

Both Arkin and Williams said they felt privileged to know the status of injured players before anyone. Williams noticed linebacker Mack Wilson was back wearing a crimson non-contact jersey last November before the Iron Bowl when it was unclear if he'd be back from the broken foot he suffered a few weeks earlier.

Wilson was wearing a black jersey for injured players during media viewing periods.

"We kinda saw the development of Tua (Tagovailoa), in a way," a Arkin, who graduated last year and now lives in Atlanta. "We didn't watch for a while. It would be a couple of minutes, but we saw Tua. We saw Terrell Lewis coming back from injury last year -- how he was looking in his black, non-contact jersey. It was simple things like that but we didn't want to watch too long or anything like that."

Three to five minutes is about the max Arkin spent watching after the Cochran warning.

"Oh yeah," he said, "we didn't want to mess with Scott."
This paranoia, apparently, isn't a new thing along Hackberry Lane.

Tuscaloosa resident Stuart Hartley remembers his grandfather telling a story about his time with a dental practice in a one-story building where the new Champions Place condos now stand.

Dr. George Hartley, who retired in 1993, was working late on patient files next to the window one day in his office. A knock at the door produced a young man with a whistle around his neck and a tired look on his face.

"Coach Bryant saw you writing notes," the coach told Hartley, "and just wanted to check on what you were writing down."

That property, assessed in 1998 with a land value of $33,600, is now home to the multi-million-dollar Champions Place condo building. Units sold for as much as $1.89 million with only two of 27 still available.

The 10-year old Chimes building has units that sold for as much as the upper six-figures. It doesn't have quite the view as Champions Place or Central Park.

A unit there also comes with rules the developer said are not negotiable.

"We respect the team," Short said, "They don't need any distraction and we're certainly not going to be a distraction and we're certainly not going to be a distraction around here at any of our properties."
The latest stage of evolution

Bryant-Denny: Announced renovations emphasize quality over quantity

Michael Casagrande mcasagrande@al.com

Just eight years ago this month Alabama rolled out the latest expansion of Bryant-Denny Stadium.
Adding more than 9,600 seats to the south end zone, the stadium was finally mostly symmetrical again. That was 2010 coming off the first of Nick Saban's national titles at Alabama.

After No. 5, the school is reimagining that $65-million project as part of the $288 million in updates announced Thursday.

Why, you ask?

A lot has changed in less than a decade.

That 2010 expansion came toward the end of the building frenzy in college football that emphasized capacity. There were 34 new luxury boxes added back then along with two 45-person party suites to go with the 8,500 bleacher seats up top. Half of those slots went to the student section, which added 2,000 to make their bloc 17,000 amid growing enrollment.

A picture in the June 27 edition of The Birmingham News showed athletics director Mal Moore proudly posing in the stadium with the south end zone project wrapping up.

Moore at the time said the demand for tickets pushed the waiting list past 10,000. There was a need for more luxury boxes, too.

"All of that said build it bigger," Moore said. "So, we have."

At the time, the 101,821 seats made Bryant-Denny Stadium the fifth-largest in college stadium. It's now No. 7. Texas A&M and LSU moved past Alabama in the final days of the seating capacity arms race.

Meanwhile, the downsizing began elsewhere.

Michigan Stadium remains the largest at 107,601 even after dropping more than 2,000 seats in favor of increased premium options. Penn State plans to drop more than 3,500

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seats from the 106,572-seat Beaver Stadium that ranks second. And at Tennessee, Neyland Stadium seats 102,455, which is down more than 2,000 from its peak.

Alabama athletics director Greg Byrne said he didn't know the exact capacity of post-renovation Bryant-Denny Stadium. It'll likely be less than 100,000, he said. Some of the seating lost to the video board will be made up on the student terrace that creates standing room.

That's part of the evolution in stadium design that allows for different experiences beyond traditional seating in bleachers.

Those seats that will be axed haven't always been occupied in their brief lifetime. Byrne said the lost bleacher space "had been in an area we have a hard time getting our students to be in and stay during the game."

It's also no secret that sellouts aren't necessarily the expectation for every game. Single-game tickets are still for sale through the school for all home games outside of Auburn and Texas A&M. Mississippi State, Missouri and Texas A&M each returned tickets from their visitors allotment and seats for the November visit from FCS foe The Citadel are being sold for as little as $40 face value.

That student terrace area also creates more money-making opportunities. And make no mistake about it, this is not designed to be revenue neutral. Putting 10 luxury suites in the area currently occupied by the press box will alone add $50 million to the project.

New club offerings come with suggested contributions of $10,000 apiece for the champions and terrace levels. A loge box has a suggested gift of $150,000 plus $16,000 a year for four tickets.

The final phase of this big project will expand concourses and update restrooms and concessions. Byrne touched on the bottleneck that comes on the west sideline with ramps and entrances packed into a small area with wasted space outside the gate. There will be more room to move about (and buy things) when the footprint of the in-stadium area extends as far as the curb.

Byrne was quick to point out all of this requires the proper approvals from the board of trustees and president. It's also hard to imagine a world where that governing body throws up too many roadblocks for Alabama football facilities.

"I think we built what Alabama needs," Mal Moore said after expanding the soon-to-be reduced stadium, "and what the name Crimson Tide deserves."

Those needs have just changed in the eight years since.

Michael Casagrande is an Alabama beat writer for the Alabama Media Group. Follow him on Twitter @ByCasagrande or on Facebook.

ALABAMA ATHLETIC FACILITY UPGRADES

Phase I: Bryant-Denny Stadium

When: After 2019 season
Cost: $78 million (tentative)
Highlights
  ➢ A massive video board will replace a big chunk of the seating in the middle of the upper deck that has 9,683 seats.
  ➢ A deck will be constructed for standing room viewing.
  ➢ The press box is being relocated to the west side of the stadium to the east side of the stadium. In the place of the existing press box, 10 new suites will be built. They are $5 million apiece and eight have already been sold.
  ➢ The north end zone field level will have a bunker style club similar to what Mississippi State built in recent years.
  ➢ The locker room and recruiting room in the stadium will also be rebuilt.
  ➢ Outside, the Walk of Champions will now include a tunnel that leads directly into the locker room.

Phase II: Coleman Coliseum

When: After 2021-22 season (best-case)
Cost: $115 million (tentative)
Highlights
  ➢ The existing structure will essentially be gutted, and a new arena will be built inside the cavernous structure that looks like an airplane hangar.
  ➢ Capacity expected to be in 9,500 to 10,000 range for a net loss of approximately 4,000.
  ➢ The first row will be seven feet from floor (currently 17 feet).
  ➢ Students will be seated from baseline to baseline in a specially crafted student-section.
  ➢ There will be a more open-air feel with the seating bowl opening up to the concourse.
  ➢ A second tier of seating will be added to bring those upper seats closer to the floor.
  ➢ Premium, bunker style club seats will be added to one of the end lines.
  ➢ Additional club seats will be added near midcourt just above the student seats on one side.
  ➢ The women's basketball offices and locker room will be moved back to Coleman from Foster Auditorium.

Phase III: Bryant-Denny Stadium

Cost: $210 million (tentative)
Highlights
  ➢ Extend west side concourse all the way to the street to allow more room to move people in and out as well as sell concessions.
  ➢ Renovations to the luxury boxes on the north, east and south suites in the future.
Saban has input into renovations

Michael Casagrande mcasagrande@al.com

From the outside, it's assumed Nick Saban has his say on everything within the Alabama football program.

No doubt, his fingerprints are all over the facilities that have been built, renovated or expanded in the 12 seasons he's been in Tuscaloosa.

So, did he have a big hand in how the Bryant-Denny Stadium renovations were planned?

"Not really," Saban said. "I think it goes the other way a little more."

There are people with more expertise in these kinds of things, Saban said.

"Those people do the research," he said. "They do the planning and then they come and ask me do I think that's a good thing, bad thing, is there something else we could do better."

And Saban certainly has opinions on how things should be done — and how things should be built.

"I draw stuff on a piece of paper, and then you all figure it out," Saban said. "I drew our lake house on a napkin. We didn't have an architect, we didn't have any of that. The guy built it and it came out pretty good. So same thing with this building."

Some of the reconfigurations in the Alabama football complex came through Saban's suggestions. He said he suggested turning the old weight room into team meeting rooms and the players' lounge when the new training facility was built in 2013. He wanted the Mal Moore athletics building connected to the indoor practice field and it was done.

"And then you all go figure it out," Saban said of the athletics staffers in charge of facilities. "And they did a good job of that. And the only part of that we didn't really address was we didn't do a lot to the locker room and we didn't do a lot to the training room. So, we're going to re-do those two things here as a part of this whole plan."

As far as expanding the concourses, Saban defers.

"I don't spend any time in the concourses during the game, but what I get told is it's pretty crowded and we need some significant improvements to be made," Saban said.

"So, I'm taking their word for it on that. Maybe you can tell me more about that because I've never been in the concourse so I wouldn't know."

Saban and his wife Terry Saban announced Thursday they were donating $1 million toward the 10-year, $600-million fundraising initiative to upgrade Alabama athletics facilities.

Michael Casagrande is an Alabama beat writer for the Alabama Media Group. Follow him on Twitter @ByCasagrande or on Facebook.
UA program aims to boost rural health care

BAMA-Care will prepare 36 primary care nurse practitioner students to practice in rural and underserved communities in Alabama. [PHOTO BY THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA]

Staff report

Primary care nurse practitioners will train to work in rural and underserved areas across the state under a new program in the University of Alabama’s Capstone College of Nursing.

A news release from UA states that the BAMA-Care program will help relieve one of the top health concerns in Alabama: access to medical care.

The BAMA-Care program will prepare the nurse practitioner students through academic and clinical training via an academic-practice partnership with Whatley Health Services, headquartered in Tuscaloosa, Whatley Health Services is one of the largest federally qualified health centers in West Alabama.

The Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently awarded more than $650,000 for this academic year to support the program’s launch. The money was allocated after an Advanced Nursing Education Workforce grant proposal was submitted by Dr. Robin Lawson, senior associate dean for academic programs in the Capstone College of Nursing.

“We will create longitudinal immersive clinical experiences in rural and underserved areas for our family and psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner students to facilitate their employment in those same settings upon graduation,” Lawson said.

The program will increase the number of nurse practitioners in rural areas and boost rural residents’ access to physical and mental health care.

BAMA-Care will recruit and enroll a diverse pool of 36 primary care nurse practitioner students over a two-year period to help increase diversity in the health profession workforce. The program calls for at least 50 percent of participants to be from underrepresented minority groups and/or disadvantaged backgrounds. The Capstone College of Nursing is now identifying eligible students for the first year.

Program participants will be placed in Whatley Health Services’ clinics across West Alabama, in addition to other health-care facilities around the state. Students will receive traineeship support for tuition, books and living expenses while enrolled in the program. After graduation, students will be eligible to take the family nurse practitioner and/or the psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner certification examination.

“We are extremely excited about the potential this program has to positively impact the health professions workforce in rural and underserved areas,” Lawson said. “It’s an honor to have the capability to improve access to care in Alabama.”
What a best-selling author learned telling Nick Saban's story in podcast series

By: Michael Casagrande

James Andrew Miller's interview subjects cover a staggering range. He once profiled Nancy Reagan for Life Magazine and has penned several New York Times best sellers.

Perhaps best known for his deep dive on ESPN "Those Guys Have All the Fun, Inside the World of ESPN," Miller has spent considerable time in the past year telling stories in audio form. His podcast series "Origins" debuted in 2017 with an immersive look at Curb Your Enthusiasm before taking a six-episode look back inside ESPN.

For Season 3, he set out to trace the story of Nick Saban and what he's done with the Alabama football program. The third of three episodes was released Monday featuring interviews with Saban and those who surround the 66-year old football coach. His wife Terry Saban plays a prominent role along with strength coach Scott Cochran, former players Barrett Jones and Greg McElroy along with Lane Kiffin and friend Joe Girardi, the former New York Yankees manager.

The same month Nick Saban is on the cover of ESPN the Magazine and the network is dedicating four one-hour behind-the-scenes episodes to Alabama on ESPN2, this project is a little different.

It captures the broad strokes of who Saban is while drilling down on specific details and anecdotes from inside the sometimes-secretive program. Kiffin discussed his abrupt departure from the Alabama program less than a week before the 2016 season ended in the national title game.

Miller, a journalist with degrees from both Oxford University and Harvard, spent some time in Tuscaloosa with Saban to discuss life, football and how he got to this place.

Miller spoke with AL.com recently to talk about the project, how it changed from the original idea and what he learned from looking into what made Saban the coach he is today.

You can listen to the three-part podcast on various platforms including iTunes and the Cadence 13 website.

The conversation with Miller edited for length and clarity.

**AL.com: Where did you get the idea to feature Alabama football and Nick Saban?**

James Andrew Miller: "Well, I'm a big college football fan and wrote a three-part series in New York Times on college football. Obviously, working on covering ESPN and working on the ESPN book, college football has always been something to report on. In terms of this podcast, last year we did a series on College GameDay. I just felt like I wanted to do something else with college football and I thought Alabama would be a great opportunity to examine what makes them so successful."

**AL.com How did you arrange it logistically?**
James Andrew Miller: "Just the usual requests, working together and just trying to figure it all out. People don't realize the details and logistics involved with a podcast. It's all just making sure there's a process there that would work for both of us."

**AL.com: Was it your first time in Tuscaloosa?**

JAM: "I had been there once before but that had been years ago. So, it was great to be back. It was just really impressive."

**AL.com: What was your biggest takeaway from the whole process?**

JAM: "I think it's interesting understand how everything fits together. You might think that it's all about physical training or weeks on the field. And you have Nick Saban, you have Scotty Cochran, you have Terry Saban, you have the whole -- the nutritionist. So, I think the idea that a comprehensive holistic approach to the athletes including the classwork and getting them ready to graduate and be functioning adults."

**AL.com: Outside of Nick Saban, who was the most interesting person you interviewed?**

JAM: "I had heard about Terry Saban and read a lot about her, but I thought she was incredibly fascinating. She has a beautiful way of speaking. It's just, you get a real sense, not only of how important their partnership is, but I think talking with other players, just about how important she is to the team. I thought it was great to have her be a part of this. I'm very grateful that she cooperated."

**AL.com: And Lane Kiffin was in there too.**

JAM: "Yeah, that was kind of interesting because I thought there was a very powerful duality to a lot of the things Lane said. I think he was trying to be very respectful ... I think there things in Episodes 2 and 3, there was stuff in there that you could see it plays on a lot of different levels."

**AL.com: Were there any people that were difficult to pin down for interviews?**

JAM: "I mean, it's not like people sit around waiting to be interviewed. I think everything takes effort. That's why I'm so appreciative."

**AL.com: Scott Cochran is a pretty big figure around here. Did that surprise you?**

JAM: "I watched him on YouTube before and I had heard about him, but listen, he's definitely his own guy and I think that there's a reason why he's so popular and I think it's kind of an amazing way he threads the needle because you can tell that he's so passionate about the way he does his business and yet at the same time, he's equally passionate about the fact Nick Saban is the magic ingredient. He said to me at one point 'If I'm not here, Nick Saban is still winning. So, I don't think there's a lot of hubris on Scotty Cochran's part and it's a pretty impressive cooperation that they have between each other."

The conversation moved on to the audience's reception to the podcast.
JAM: "What I'm finding now is people who don't even like Alabama football, like they're from the Big Ten or whatever. But more importantly, people who are outside sports. With Episode 2, you're really talking about the fact that Saban puts on a master class in psychology, motivation, leadership and team building -- not just athletic team, but anywhere. So, I had a guy who manages a 100-person salesforce write me a note saying that he came up with a whole new direction that he's going to do with his salesforce.

"So, I think that is in a way, one of the measures of a guy like Saban. When you start to realize, P.S., it's football. You know what I mean? This is about life. This is about making boys into men. This is about making them responsible figures in society and this is also about the difference between discipline and punishment and motivation. You're changing behavior and incentivizing people and then, P.S., it's also, at the same time, just as important because it's about winning. I've just been very gratified this past week to hear how people have no interest in football or Alabama talking about the qualities that they talk about here."

"By the way, how about Barrett. Barrett, oh my God. Like are you kidding me? The guy should run for office ... I interview people for a living and this guy speaks in complete paragraphs. It's just fantastic."

**Thanks for your time. I was curious to see what you thought about everything coming out of the experience as somewhat of an outsider in Alabama.**

JAM: "Again, I come back to this idea that I went down there thinking this was about football and I came away thinking, P.S., it's about football. It really is. It's that whole approach and that whole world down there. The culture they've created and the dynamics with the players. I'm sorry, but it's just about way, way more. And a lot more in front of football."
Turning a ripple into a wave

UA students get involved in community service projects

By Drew Tayor
Staff Writer

While classes at the University of Alabama start Wednesday, hundreds of students began early by doing work in the Tuscaloosa community.

On Monday, 440 students took part in different Ripple Effect programs across Tuscaloosa County as part of the university's Center for Service and Leadership. The program, which has been held the Monday before classes start every year for the last 22 years, is designed to allow students to participate in different organizations in the community.

"I think it was a great day to start a ripple," said Courtney Thomas, the center's director. "We want them to have their first exposure in the community that will hopefully continue on." During the day, groups of students went to different parts of the Tuscaloosa area to do volunteer work — some helped teachers out in different schools, while others cleaned up at housing developments. In addition to work at the UA Arboretum, students worked on a Habitat for Humanity house on Elizabeth Street, and some students volunteered at Westlawn and Eastwood middle schools as well as Crestmont, Holt, Matthews, Southview and Woodland Forrest elementary schools.

Eric Ward, a team leader for a student group working Wednesday at Southview Elementary, said one aspect of the program is finding something students can be passionate about in Tuscaloosa.

"We want there to be a feeling that while you might be miles and miles away from home, you have a home here.

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RIPPLE

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on campus," Ward said.

Southview Principal Yosondra Lett said having student volunteers help out with classes was a positive influence for her students.

"Any time we can get help, we are always happy about that, not only because of the extra hands, but I just love my students being able to see college students because we are getting our students ready so they can learn about different careers and possibly going to college," Lett said.

Thomas said she has been encouraged by the growth of the Ripple Effect program throughout the years.

"It's been incredible to see how students have gravitated to it and know that service is part of life," Thomas, said. "It's just exciting and uplifting to see a generation say 'This is important to us.'"

Reach Drew Taylor at drew.taylor@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0204.
Plaudits and new beginnings

UAB Hospital is again ranked the No. 1 hospital in Alabama by U.S. News & World Report. Four of its medical specialties are ranked in the top 20 in the nation, and six more are ranked in the top 50 in the 2018-19 Best Hospitals rankings announced Tuesday. The specialties ranking in the top 20 are rheumatology (10), nephrology (13), pulmonology (16), cardiology and heart surgery (18). Those in the top 50 are gynecology (25); diabetes and endocrinology (28); ear, nose and throat (29); urology (34); neurology and neurosurgery (36); and geriatrics (42).

With 10 specialties ranked in the nation’s top 50, UAB topped several peer institutions, including the University of North Carolina and Emory University, which had five and four ranked specialties, respectively. Meanwhile, less than a half-mile away, UAB School of Nursing students will head back to class next week to a new 72,000-square-feet building in the wake of an expansion and renovation that cost $32 million. There are more than 2,000 students currently enrolled in the nursing program. — *Staff reports*
Focus: Solar Wind Shock Wave Gives Ions a Push

By: Katherine Wright

Measurements made by NASA’s New Horizons spacecraft show that shock waves in the solar wind transfer significant energy to ionized interstellar atoms, confirming a decades-old prediction. Space is a windy place, with a constant gale of high-energy particles blowing out from the Sun. As this “solar wind” expands, it imparts energy to interstellar atoms and molecules that are continuously flowing into our solar system. Now researchers have used instruments onboard an interplanetary spacecraft to measure this energy exchange inside a solar wind shock wave as it passed beyond the orbit of Pluto. Their results indicate that shock waves give a significant energy boost to ionized interstellar atoms, while solar wind particles caught up in the wave actually suffer an energy loss. The finding provides an important puzzle piece in understanding the origin of high-energy particles in the outer solar system.

The solar wind consists of fast-moving charged particles—mostly electrons and protons—that spread out to form a 19-billion-kilometer-wide cloud around the Sun. Intermixed with this cloud is a stream of neutral atoms that come from outside our Solar System. When these interstellar voyagers interact with solar wind particles, they can be ionized and accelerated in a process known as pickup. Scientists know that this process happens, but they don’t have all the details. Determining when and how so-called pickup ions are energized would help astrophysicists reconstruct the history of these ions and would shed light on the interstellar medium from which they originate. Moreover, studying energy transfer processes in our solar neighborhood could provide clues about what is happening around other stars.

One possible source for energizing pickup ions is a solar wind shock wave. These shock waves occur when a fast-moving pulse of solar wind particles plows into the rest of the slower-moving solar wind. Such a pulse can be created by a solar flare or other kind of solar eruption, for example. Particles in “fast” solar wind can travel up to two times faster than those in “slow” wind, which still zips along at speeds more than 1000 times faster than the speed of sound in air. The wave crest, where fast ions hit slower ones, is a compressed band of wind that has increased pressure, density, and temperature compared to the surrounding solar wind.

In 1996, theorists predicted that at large distances from the Sun, solar wind shock waves would impart significant energy to pickup ions they encounter [1]. The prediction indicated that pickup ions would provide the primary mechanism by which solar wind shock waves lose energy as they travel out through the solar system, says Gary Zank of the University of Alabama in Huntsville, one of the scientists who made the prediction. Measurements made by the two Voyager space probes, which have both had multiple solar wind shock wave encounters during their 40 odd years in space, hinted that the prediction might be correct. But the spacecraft couldn’t confirm the prediction, as neither has instruments capable of detecting pickup ions.

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Enter NASA's New Horizons spacecraft, which launched in 2006. This probe is fitted with a spectrometer called SWAP—Solar Wind Around Pluto—that was specifically designed to measure how pickup ions interact with the solar wind. At Pluto's distance from the Sun, pickup ions move faster and have a wider range of speeds than the ions in the solar wind, says Eric Zmient of Princeton University, who, along with colleagues, has been studying SWAP's data. SWAP distinguishes the two ion populations by separating incoming particles into energy bins.

Analyzing data taken by SWAP on 5 October 2015, the team observed a transient jump in the solar wind speed from 380 km/s to 440 km/s, indicating the arrival of a shock wave. Data taken before and after the event show that pickup ions gained more than 30% in energy, whereas solar wind ions experienced an 85% energy decrease. The team also observed that the pickup-ion energies remained above normal in the wake of the shock wave and only after three days did this high-energy "tail" disappear. The results confirm theoretical predictions that the faster-moving pickup ions are more effective at extracting energy from shock waves than the slower-moving solar wind ions, explains Zmient.

These measurements are important for understanding how different particles interact in our solar system, says Zank. Joe Giacalone, who studies high-energy particle physics at the University of Arizona, agrees. He is particularly interested in the observed high-energy pickup-ion tail and its role in delivering energy to particles. "It would be really great if we could grab each particle and ask it about its past and how it came to be," Giacalone says. "This study takes us a step closer to being able to do that."
Foundation Builds Support for Local School Systems

By: Amy Guckeen Tolson

Tennessee Valley students may have headed back to school earlier this month, but The Schools Foundation works year-round to ensure the next generation has everything they need to succeed after graduation.

“My job is always to think of more ways to support what’s happening in our schools,” said Elizabeth Fleming, executive director.

Summer learning programs. A college and career fair. Development forums for principals and school leaders. Investment in Advanced Placement courses. An annual breakfast for education and community leaders to come together to talk about the state of the schools. Since 2000, The Schools Foundation, a nonprofit, has advocated for the some 55,000 public school students within Madison County, whether they attend Huntsville City, Madison City or Madison County schools. It’s an outreach that has one mission in mind – to expand opportunities for students, thus raising the bar for education in North Alabama.

“When I think about the work that our three systems are doing to make sure that our students graduate college and career ready, it’s starting so much earlier than parents are even aware,” Fleming said. “That’s on purpose. We’re not telling your student they need to go into this field or that field, but we’re teaching them to be critical thinkers, and we’re teaching them how to work with others. We’re teaching them the importance of learning can be fun. It starts at such an early age.”

The opportunities available for students after graduation will be on display Aug, 30 and 31 as The Schools Foundation, in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and University of Alabama in Huntsville, presents the annual College and Career Fair for approximately 6,500 local juniors and seniors. The event will bring together colleges and universities, both 2-year and 4-year institutions and in-state and out-of-state, as well as representatives from local industry. If a student isn’t planning on pursuing a formal college education, they can still learn about workforce opportunities and expectations.

“If you’re a parent, make sure your student goes there ready to talk to various schools and universities that are going to be there as well as the career folks,” Fleming said. “Ask them the tough questions. ‘How did you get into engineering? How did you get into manufacturing? You’re at Boeing but you work in accounting?’”

For the second year in a row, in partnership with the Community Foundation, six Summer Adventures in Learning sites were available throughout Madison County, serving 550 students in an effort to reduce summer learning loss. Each summer low-income students lose two to three
months in reading and math skills, according to Fleming, which by the fifth grade translates to a loss of at least two years. Students who participate in SAIL see gains, instead of losses.

"While it’s so critical and important that we have safe places for our kids to go in the summer, what we’re doing is enforcing and reenergizing the academic piece of it. Summer enrichment is important – it goes a long way," Fleming said.

It’s not just students The Schools Foundation is reaching out to, but teachers as well. The Principally Speaking Network provides a forum for some 200 principals and school leaders from 20 school districts across the state in which they can improve their leadership practices and collaborate across school districts. The Principal Leadership Academy, designed for principals in their first to third years as principal, provides an environment for educators to learn tools of the trade they need to know so they “don’t get blindsided.” Both programs are led by retired Decatur City Schools superintendent Ed Nichols.

The daughter of a public school teacher, and the mother of a public school student, being actively engaged in local schools is not just a day job for Fleming, it’s something she lives and breathes, which is why she’s so energized by the various programs offered by the foundation. As families continue to settle into the back to school routine, she had a piece of advice for parents as they navigate the new school year.

“Be excited with your student and their learning,” Fleming said. “Make sure that they see that you value the education that they’re receiving, be it in one of our local public schools or any one of our local private schools, or homeschool environment. The more that we as parents can show the value of education, the further our community will continue to succeed.”
New charter school brings integration to Alabama county

By: Trisha Powell Crain

At 7:50 a.m. Monday, when classes started at University Charter School, students in kindergarten through eighth grade began a new era, hardly aware of the history they were making.

Black students and white students were learning side-by-side in integrated public school classrooms in the west Alabama county. More than half of the school's 300-plus students are black, while just under half are white.

While not fully representative of the county's split — 76 percent black, 24 percent white — no public school in the county has come close to reaching the percentage at University Charter, according to historical enrollment documents.

The implications of the opening of the charter school weren't lost on parents, teachers and school administrators.

"This is an historic day and an historic mission," principal John Cameron said as he directed cars in the student drop off lane. Cameron is a native of this area of Alabama, known as the Black Belt first for its fertile soil and now also because the majority of residents are black.

Kindergarten teacher Brittany Williams, who is one of the school's 20-plus teachers recruited to open the school, graduated from the University of West Alabama in December. She said during last week's open house she was thrilled to teach at University Charter in part because she fell in love with Livingston and didn't want to leave.

Williams sees both the historical significance and the way students' lives can be changed by attending an integrated school.

"For me," she said, "I'm inspired because now students, when they come to this school as a kindergartner, that's all they will know is an integrated school."

Parent Robert Beard walked his first- and fourth-grade children inside the school. Beard said he hopes the school is able to bring everybody together and provide the support to build relationships in the community. "Hopefully we can keep everybody together and provide a great education program," he said. Beard said the quality of teachers and the state-of-the-art offerings are great for the students.

As students were dropped off, families waited with their younger children inside the school. The conference center was jam-packed with students and their families.

Parent Markeitha Tolliver waited with her fourth-grade son, Marquez. Tolliver's aunt is a teacher at the school. "The school will work wonders for the community," she said. "I'm praying they keep it for a very long time."

When the federal courts demanded Alabama integrate public schools in 1969, 15 years after the Supreme Court decision ending segregation, white students in Sumter County, as in many places across the state, left public schools and created their own all-white, private schools.
Sumter Academy, a K-12 school, opened in 1970 with more than 500 students, but by 2016 that number was down to 172, according to news reports. The school closed at the end of the 2016-2017 school year with school officials in part blaming the opening of the charter school.

According to the state, during the 2017-2018 school year, all but 11 of Sumter County's 1,500 students were black. Black students accounted for nearly 100 percent of enrollment in five nearby counties.

As Alabama's first rural charter school, University Charter joins the small but growing number of rural charter schools which, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, are only 11 percent of the nation's 7,000 charter schools. More than 3.2 million students attended charter schools during the last school year.

There are no admission requirements at University Charter, and students enrolled this year are assured enrollment in subsequent years. The school plans to add one grade each year, becoming a K-12 school by the start of the 2022 school year, and a lottery will be held if enrollment next year exceeds capacity.

The school plans to add football in the future, officials said, but will start with a wide array of middle school sports, including boys' and girls' basketball.

The school is housed on the site of the old Livingston High School, now called Lyon Hall, adjacent to the University of West Alabama. The campus became the center of controversy when the Sumter County Board of Education sued the college and the charter school claiming that when the university purchased the building from the county in 2011 they promised not to open a school in the building.

A circuit court judge ruled in the charter school's favor in July, clearing the way for the school's opening.
Auburn marine scientist gets grant to study oysters

The Associated Press

AUBURN — An Auburn University marine scientist has received a USDA grant to study oysters.

Bill Walton landed a $456,646 federal grant to help ensure that farmed oysters are safe to eat, the Opelika-Auburn News reported. The grant will fund a three-year study to determine whether an oyster farm's geographic location, handling practices and choice of equipment affect bacteria levels in farm-raised oysters.

The grant is one of 13 competitive food safety awards that USDA's National Institute for Food and Agriculture has announced as part of its Agriculture and Food Research Initiative.

"Our findings will help farmers understand and manage their preharvest production techniques to minimize the risk of foodborne illness in consumers," said Walton, associate professor in Auburn's School of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Aquatic Sciences and marine aquaculture specialist with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. "These folks absolutely want to provide the safest product they can, so this is critical information for these farmers."

The project could produce data for Gulf Coast oyster farmers, who focus on producing oysters for high-end markets. Those include upscale restaurants that offer the farmed bivalve mollusks on the half shell.

A bacterium that affects oysters is called Vibrio, which occurs naturally in warm ocean waters including the Gulf of Mexico. Vibrio vulnificus can cause foodborne illnesses in people who eat raw or undercooked shellfish.

Farmer grow their oysters in underwater baskets or cages that float above the ocean floor. The baskets are raised out of the water once a week to allow the oysters to air dry, which prevents barnacles, seaweed and other undesirable organisms from attaching to and marring the oysters.

"The frequent handling exposes the oysters to elevated air temperatures and also interrupts filter feeding, and those conditions cause Vibrio levels to rise," said Vicki Pruente, an Auburn doctoral student assisting Walton on the project.

Walton and Pruente will conduct the research to establish the impact of geographic location on Vibrio levels. The research will take place at the Auburn University Shellfish Lab's oyster research farm in Grand Bay, Alabama, and at a farm in Cedar Island, North Carolina.

"In our trials, we will look at how long after the oysters are resubmerged the Vibrio levels return to naturally occurring levels," Walton said. "Our results will help farmers as they evaluate their production techniques."
Alabama women have a lot of star power

By: Ian Thompson

The University of Alabama women’s golf team returns to tournament action for the 2018-19 season in about a month, and it will surely be the undisputed No. 1-ranked team starting out.

Want some proof? Just look to the fact that three of the four semifinalists in last week’s U.S. Women’s Amateur all play for the Crimson Tide. Making up a terrific trio are champion Kristen Gillman, who has had a summer for the ages, along with beaten finalist Jiwon Jeon, who played two years for Daytona State Community College, winning four times, and losing semifinalist Lauren Stephenson.

Throw in Italian native Angelica Moresco, who is entering her sophomore year and played regularly for the Tide last year; along with her compatriot Carolina Camisoli, who is an incoming freshman; transfers Kenzie Wright, who is from Frisco, Texas, and played two years for SMU, and Anna Reid, who is from Demopolis and played two years for Faulkner University in Montgomery; plus freshman Mary Mac Trammell from Mountain Brook.

Head Coach Mic Potter will look to his squad to hit the ground running and will be expecting great things.

“This year’s schedule is a little different from the last few years, but it’s no less challenging,” Potter said. “We will start against a very elite field in the ANNIKA Invitational to open the season, then have an opportunity to defend our 2017 title at the Schooner Fall Classic later in September.”

Alabama will open the season with an appearance in the ANNIKA Invitational, Sept. 17-19, at the Royal Golf Club in Lake Elmo, Minn. Along with the Crimson Tide, the field will include 2018 NCAA match play participants Arizona, Duke, Northwestern, Stanford, UCLA and USC.

Alabama will then travel to Norman, Okla., Sept. 28-30 to compete in the Schooner Fall Classic at the Belmar Golf Club for the third consecutive season and will be defending its title at the event.

The Tide will visit Austin, Texas, for the Betsy Rawls Longhorn Invitational, Oct. 19-21, at the University of Texas Golf Club. The fall schedule will close with the East Lake Cup at East Lake Golf Club in Atlanta, Oct. 29-31.

“Playing in the Longhorn Invitational gives Kristen Gillman a chance to play near her home in Austin, Texas,” Potter added. “The East Lake Cup will be a great finish to the fall as we will meet the semifinalists from last year’s NCAA Championships.”

See next page
For the fifth year in a row, Alabama will return to Southern California to open the spring portion of the schedule at the Northrop Grumman Regional Challenge in Palos Verdes Estates, Calif., Feb. 3-5. The Tide will then travel to Hilton Head Island, S.C., for the Darius Rucker Intercollegiate from March 8-10. The appearance will be the eighth for Alabama at the Darius Rucker, a tournament the Tide has won five times, including each of the last three seasons.

The regular season will wrap up with the Evans Derby Experience in Auburn March 23-25, and the Liz Murphey Intercollegiate in Athens, Ga., April 11-13. Alabama will be making its second appearance at the Evans Derby and will be returning to the Liz Murphey as the defending champion after winning last year’s event. The Tide will be making its 37th appearance in the Liz Murphey, one of the oldest tournaments in women’s collegiate golf.

Postseason play will begin with the Southeastern Conference Championships April 17-21 at Greystone Golf & Country Club in Birmingham. NCAA Regionals will take place May 6-8 in Auburn, Ala.; Cle Elum, Wash.; East Lansing, Mich. and Norman, Okla. The 2019 NCAA Women’s Golf Championships will cap off the season from May 17-22 at Blessings Golf Club in Fayetteville, Ark.

They will certainly be looking to make it all the way back to the championship match in the NCAAs, where they came so agonizingly close to a national title this year.

Gillman certainly won’t be fazed by what is before her and her teammates. Talking about her U.S. Women’s Amateur triumph:

“It feels incredible to be able to win a second time. It’s a great accomplishment and something that’s hard to do because this tournament has all of the best amateur players, so I’m really proud to be able to do it again.”

Her win capped a stellar summer for Gillman, who tied for 27th at the U.S. Women’s Open at Shoal Creek in June and was a member of the victorious U.S. teams at the Palmer and Curtis Cups in June and July, respectively. Then, in late July, she won the LPGA of Japan’s Century 21 Ladies tournament, beating a field that included more than 100 professional golfers.

The U.S. Women’s Amateur victory also earned Gillman an invitation to play on the U.S. team that will compete in the Women’s World Amateur Team Championship, Aug. 29-Sept. 1, in County Kildare, Ireland.

“Kristen’s victory places her among the elite female amateur golfers of all time,” Potter said. “Winning multiple U.S. Amateurs is a rare accomplishment. I’m also proud of Jiwon for making it to the finals. This will be an experience that will serve her well in the future. Lauren Stephenson had an amazing week as well, coming within one shot of playing in the final herself. It is truly an honor to have all three of these women associated with our program.”
Six critical games for the 2018 season

The Associated Press

Remember last year, when everyone was eyeing the season-opening Alabama-Florida State game as one of the most anticipated matchups?
The third-ranked Seminoles lost that game and several more, barely finishing with a winning record.
Even late in the season, a huge showdown between two top teams might not mean as much in hindsight. Consider the Iron Bowl between No. 1 Alabama and No. 6 Auburn. The Crimson Tide lost but still went on to win the national title.
So predicting the most important games of the regular season is a tricky proposition, but with that caveat out of the way, here are several matchups that already stand out when looking through this year's schedule. Here are a few of those games to watch in 2018:

See 2018, C3

2018

From Page C1

Michigan at Notre Dame (Sept. 1)

Jim Harbaugh is 28-11 since taking over the Wolverines. That's a clear improvement from where Michigan was, but a bit underwhelming considering the hype and expectations that accompanied Harbaugh's arrival. Specifically, the Wolverines have struggled against their big rivals, going 1-5 against Ohio State and Michigan State. This year's Michigan team has the potential to be terrific after adding transfer quarterback Shea Patterson, but it also faces a brutal schedule that includes road games against Notre Dame, Michigan State and Ohio State. Win this opener against the Irish, and it's a big step forward for Harbaugh's program. Lose, and the honeymoon is well and truly over.

LSU vs. Miami (Sept. 2)
The Hurricanes took a 10-0 record into their regular-season finale in 2017. Then a loss at Pittsburgh started a three-game losing streak that took some of the shine off Miami's resurgence. Both LSU and Miami may have tougher games down the road in conference play, but the winner of this early-season showdown in Arlington, Texas, will earn some immediate buzz.

Oklahoma at TCU (Oct. 20)

TCU takes on Ohio State in a huge nonconference matchup Sept. 15. If the Horned Frogs win that one, then this showdown a month later with the Sooners becomes even more intriguing. TCU had one of the nation's top rushing defenses last year, but Oklahoma's Rodney Anderson gained 151 yards on the ground against the Horned Frogs.

UCLA at Oregon (Nov. 3)

Chip Kelly's debut season at UCLA includes a trip to Oregon to face the Ducks. Even if neither team turns out to be a title threat in the Pac-12, this should be quite a scene when the star coach takes on his former team. See also: Dan Mullen and Florida playing at Mississippi State on Sept. 29.

Auburn at Georgia (Nov. 10)

These Southeastern Conference rivals split two meetings three weeks apart toward the end of last season. Auburn won 40-17 in November, only for Georgia to take the rematch 28-7 in the SEC championship game. There's every possibility that this matchup could impact the title race in both SEC divisions.

Wisconsin at Penn State (Nov. 10)

Given the uncertainty surrounding Urban Meyer at Ohio State, it may be Wisconsin that is the Big Ten's most likely playoff team. The Badgers appear to have a smooth path through their division, but they'll have a lot to prove in a pair of crossover matchups against teams from the East. Wisconsin plays at Michigan on Oct. 13 and has this trip to face the Nittany Lions.
A valid point from Saban’s latest ‘rant’

If nothing else happened on Saturday, Nick Saban gave an absolutely new perspective on roster management.

The Alabama head coach gave a quote that doesn’t quite fit in a Sunday morning family newspaper, even in 2018, concerning the impossibility of adding new players to a college roster once practice has begun. The quote has been reprinted widely on social media, where the rules are a little looser. If the kids are asking about it, just tell them it involves Cloning Process Number Two and see if they can figure it out from there.

Saban wasn’t trying to be vulgar. If he was unfiltered, then you at least knew you were getting his raw reaction. Here is the broader context. A defensive player, Chris Allen, who was going to be at worst an important backup at a thin position (outside linebacker) is now out for the season, having suffered a knee injury that will require surgery. This news came following Alabama’s second scrimmage, although the injury presumably happened before Saturday since Allen was not at Friday’s practice.

Add that to the fact second scrimmages are generally rough in any event. Players who are weary after three weeks of hitting one another, without even the distraction of classwork interrupting the routine, get tired of it. Saban is human, so he probably gets tired of it, too. That’s especially true of this preseason camp, when there has been dawn-to-midnight access for the ESPN cameras filming “Training Days.”

See HURT, C7
This also isn’t an entirely new topic for Saban. Like no other coach in America, he has to deal with what Einstein would have called the Alabama Paradox: no matter how much circumstances change, expectations remain constant. The question he was asked about “worry” pushed a button that has been pushed before. Remember “rat poison?” This wasn’t all that different.

“Everything is going to be perfect,” Saban railed. “All of our fans think that, you (the media) think that...I worry about (things) all the time. I may be the only one, but I do worry.”

The short clip from Saban’s press conference went viral, of course. The college football world loves nothing more than a good Saban rant, with a little spicy language for seasoning. I got it on Twitter as fast as I could, so I’m not criticizing anyone about knowing what draws eyeballs. If the rant did nothing else, it toned down the Tua/Jalen quarterback questions, which were dismissed with a terse ‘they both played well.”

Some people reacted like a frustrated (as opposed to angry) Saban was trying to be funny. He wasn’t. Others felt like he wanted sympathy. He doesn’t. He understands that injuries are a part of football. He knows that last year, there was just enough depth to get through a wave of linebacker injuries. He knows that Alabama recruits well. His concern is less with having adequate athletes and far more with having adequate experience.

But his point was that every unexpected moment must be dealt with and, as he pointed out last week, he can’t just fix things by waving a magic wand. Or by any other method, even a method that is more basic than magical.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
Alabama tops preseason poll

For third straight year, Crimson Tide starts season ranked No. 1 in football poll

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

Alabama led the way in the preseason Associated Press Top 25 college football poll released, which was released Monday. This is the third straight year the Crimson Tide has been ranked No. 1 in the poll to start the season and the fifth time overall to be No. 1 in the preseason under head coach Nick Saban.

It marks the second time that a team has been ranked No. 1 in the preseason AP Top 25 for three years in a row. Oklahoma was started out No. 1 from 1985-87.

Alabama received 42 of 61 first-place votes. Clemson came in at No. 2 with 18 first-place votes. Wisconsin received one vote for No. 1.

The SEC had five of its 14 teams included in the poll. Georgia was the highest-ranked team other than Alabama, sitting at No. 3. Auburn was ranked ninth, Mississippi State was 18th and LSU was 25th.

"You work to be No. 1, right? You work to stay No. 1, but at the same time that’s not our ultimate goal right now," sophomore linebacker Dylan Moses said. "We’re not really focused on the media right now, we’re focused on what we have to do right now as far as getting back to where we were last year and finishing strong. That’s the main goal.”

The preseason Top 25 includes three teams on Alabama’s regular-season schedule, led by No. 9 Auburn. Mississippi State and LSU are the other two teams.

Alabama is also ranked No. 1 in the Football Writers Association of America/ National Football Foundation Super 16 preseason poll, also released Monday.
Alabama leads way with five selections

From wire services

Alabama had five players named to The Associated Press preseason All-America team, tied with Wisconsin for most selections.

Offensive lineman Jonah Williams and center Ross Pierschbacher were first-team selections, while running back Damien Harris, defensive end Raekwon Davis and linebacker Mack Wilson were second-team inclusions.

Chosen by AP poll voters, the team announced Tuesday also features Heisman Trophy runner-up Bryce Love of Stanford and Outland Trophy winner Ed Oliver of Houston.

FIRST TEAM

Offense
Quarterback: Will Grier, senior, West Virginia.
Tackles: Jonah Williams, junior, Alabama; Mitch Hyatt, senior, Clemson.
Guards: Beau Benzschawel, senior, Wisconsin; Nate Herbig, junior, Stanford.
Center: Ross Pierschbacher, senior, Alabama.
Tight end: Noah Fant, junior, Iowa.
Wide receivers: A.J. Brown, junior, Mississippi; David Sills V, senior, West Virginia.
All-purpose player: Myles Gaskin, senior, Washington.
Kicker: Matt Gay, senior, Utah.

Defense
Ends: Nick Bosa, junior, Ohio State; Clelin Ferrell, junior, Clemson.
Tackles: Ed Oliver, junior, Houston; Christian Wilkins, Senior, Clemson.
Linebackers: Devin White, junior, LSU; Devin Bush, junior, Michigan; T.J. Edwards, senior, Wisconsin.
Cornerbacks: Greedy Williams, sophomore, LSU; Deandre Baker, senior, Georgia.
Safeties: Jaquan Johnson, senior, Miami; Taylor Rapp, junior, Washington.
Punter: Mitch Wishnowsky, senior, Utah.

SECOND TEAM

Offense
Quarterback: Trace McSorley, senior, Penn State.
Running backs: A.J. Dillon, sophomore, Boston College; Damien Harris, junior, Alabama.
Tackles: David Edwards, junior, Wisconsin; Greg Little, junior, Mississippi.
Guards: Alex Bars, senior, Notre Dame; Michael Dieter, senior, Wisconsin.
Center: Sam Mustipher, senior, Notre Dame.
Tight end: Kaden Smith, junior, Stanford.
Wide receivers: N’Keal Harry, junior, Arizona State; Anthony Johnson, senior, Buffalo.
All-purpose player: Deebo Samuel, senior, South Carolina.
Kicker: Rodrigo Blankenship, junior, Georgia.

Defense
Ends: Rashan Gary, junior, Michigan; Raekwon Davis, junior, Alabama.
Tackles: Dexter Lawrence, junior, Clemson; Jeffrey Simmons, junior, Mississippi State.
Linebackers: Cameron Smith, senior, Southern California; Troy Dye, junior, Oregon; Mack Wilson, sophomore, Alabama.
Cornerbacks: Byron Murphy, sophomore, Washington; Julian Love, junior, Notre Dame.
Safeties: Lukas Denis, senior, Boston College; Andrew Wingard, senior, Wyoming.
Punter: Jake Bailey, senior, Stanford.
Mike Slive's legacy is strong in the SEC, at UAB and beyond

Joseph Goodman  jgoodman@al.com

Bringing people together for the greater good was one of Mike Slive's greatest gifts.

The former commissioner did it for the SEC and Conference USA for decades, and transformed both conferences.

He's still doing it.

Now, posthumously, his power to unite is more important than ever.

Slive left us too soon in May after a long fight with prostate cancer, but his legacy is only getting stronger thanks to his Mike Slive Foundation for Prostate Cancer Research. The Mike Slive Foundation will be featured heavily throughout college football this season, and every helmet in CUSA this season will carry a sticker of Slive's name to honor him and raise awareness for prostate cancer.

There's more.

Much more.

And every fan of Slive, the SEC or CUSA can be involved.

On Monday, Slive's foundation announced a partnership with the UAB football team to raise money throughout the month of September for prostate cancer research. The UAB Athletics Foundation has donated $25,000 to get things started, and is challenging fans to match that amount by the end of the month.

UAB is designating its home game against Charlotte on Sept. 29 as its Health Awareness Game, and the night will be dedicated to the Mike Slive Foundation. At halftime, the final donation from the UAB Athletics Foundation will be announced. Tommy Brigham, president of the UAB Athletics Foundation, says he's confident fans will exceed the Mike Slive Foundation's goal of a $25,000 grant match.

The Mike Slive Foundation is calling it "25

Goodman

FROM B1

days to $25,000".

UAB fans, if you want to compete with the big boys of college football, here's your chance. The SEC donated $100,000. Why not send a statement and beat it? Why not make this charity so successful, UAB dedicates a home game to the Mike Slive Foundation every year?

Slive's legacy deserves it, and, after all, the money is going right back to UAB. The Mike Slive Foundation is already funding three separate prostate cancer research studies at the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Slive was a passionate advocate for UAB football, and, behind the scenes, he helped make the return of UAB football a success. Brigham and the UAB Athletics Foundation consulted with Slive often about how to transform UAB football and raise its profile.

"We started talking about the city of Birmingham, and what it would take to be successful as a Group of 5 program," Brigham said. "Through it all, we recognized that if we build a facility, the team becomes competitive and we build a stadium downtown, then all of sudden we've got a different conversation about the depth and the breadth and the success of the program."

Using the platform of UAB football for the greater good, says Brigham, was something Slive often emphasized during the team's return.

"The team represents the largest employer in the state, and the university was ranked the top young university in the country," Brigham said. "When the football team is on the field, it's playing for something more than the game of football."

On Sept. 29, it will be playing for the Mike Slive Foundation. Two days before the game, UAB's Alys Stephens Center will host the second annual "I'm With Mike" fundraiser. Finebaum, one of Slive's longtime friends, will host the event, which will include a silent auction.

According to Slive's daughter, Anna Slive Harwood, one of the items up for auction will be behind-the-scenes access to the College Football Playoff. Behind-the-scenes access to the SEC championship game will also be auctioned. In other words, gets your tickets now. And get checked.
Play ball!: Alabama QB commit Taulia Tagovailoa ready for 2018

By: Josh Bean

Who's going to have a better 2018 season -- Thompson quarterback Taulia Tagovailoa or older brother, Tua, at Alabama?

That's a question posed to Taulia last week, and his response -- complete with a wry grin -- shows the Thompson senior's maturity and poise.

"I guess we'll have to see," Taulia said.

Taulia's life has turned into a fishbowl since Tua threw three touchdowns, including the game-winner to Devonta Smith, to beat Georgia in the national championship game in January. That made Tua an instant Crimson Tide legend, complete with T-shirts emblazoned with the slogan "Roll Tua Roll."

Alabama's quarterback battle between Tua and Jalen Hurts has become a national sensation, and that's put Taulia in the spotlight, too.

After all, Taulia threw for 3,823 yards and 35 touchdowns last year and won the Class 7A Back of the Year award after leading the Warriors to the Class 7A, Region 3 championship and a 10-0 regular season. He committed to Alabama on A-Day, competed at the Elite 11 Finals quarterback competition and The Opening recruiting showcase, and made waves by visiting Tennessee.

How has Taulia and his family handled the hoopla and attention, especially in today's social media landscape?

"It's a lot on him," said Thompson running back Shad Byrd, "even though I know he gets a lot of questions about his brother, a lot of questions about the competition between them two. They're like the best of friends.

"He handles it really well, and I don't think he can handle it any better than he has."

Taulia appears at ease when talking about his brother, another sign of his maturity and poise.

"It's amazing," Taulia said. "Not a lot of kids can say they have an older brother who goes to Alabama and has done great things in his life. It's just a blessing for me to keep learning from him. I look up to him. It's good to learn his ways and just be a sponge."

Thompson opens the 2018 season Friday against James Clemens in the AHSAA's Champions Challenge at Montgomery's Cramton Bowl. That should help Taulia get more questions about football and fewer about his brother.

Despite the hoopla, the Thompson senior said it's "a blessing"

"Now it's time to just go play ball," Taulia said. "It's going to be a blessing. We've got to continue to stay strong in our faith and in our team and have confidence and go out and play."

And what about that Alabama commitment, who strong is it? "I feel real strong," he said, "and my family is the biggest thing and they feel comfortable about and so do I."
A&M reviewing allegations

Texas A&M says it is reviewing allegations of possible NCAA violations by football coaches made by a former player who transferred to Arizona.

Santino Marchiol, a linebacker who signed with the Aggies in 2017 when Kevin Sumlin was coach, told USA Today that Aggies assistant Bradley Dale Peveto gave him cash on two occasions to entertain recruits on unofficial visits to campus. Schools are allowed to pay expenses for recruits on official visits and NCAA rules allow student hosts to be paid $40 per day to entertain recruits.

Marchiol also claimed in Tuesday's story new A&M coach Jimbo Fisher's staff possibly violated NCAA rules by running mandatory team activities at impermissible times.

"Texas A&M Athletics takes these allegations seriously, and we are reviewing the situation with the NCAA and the SEC Office," the school said in a statement.

Marchiol, a former four-star recruit from Colorado who played at IMG Academy in Florida, left Texas A&M in June and rejoined Sumlin, now coaching Arizona. Marchiol is currently enrolled at Arizona and has been practicing with the team. NCAA rules require him to sit out this season, but Arizona is requesting a waiver from the NCAA to allow Marchiol, who red-shirted last season, to play immediately.
CAN SOMEONE CRASH THE PLAYOFF PARTY?

History suggests that a surprise guest is unlikely this season

Ralph D. Russo Associated Press

The College Football Playoff has yet to produce a real surprise team.
In four seasons, nine schools have reached the semifinals — and even the schools that came from outside the Associated Press preseason Top 25 were traditional powers.
The lowest-ranked team in the preseason media poll to make the CFP was Oklahoma in 2015. The Sooners were No. 19 to start the season, mostly because they were coming off a disappointing season (8-5) and few knew how good quarterback Baker Mayfield would be.

Clemson made the playoff that same year after starting the season ranked No. 12. The Tigers went 10-3 the season before, but quarterback Deshaun Watson was a sophomore coming off a knee injury, there was major turnover on defense and exactly what coach Dabo Swinney was building at Clemson hadn’t yet been fully revealed.

Washington was No. 14 going into the 2016 season before going on a playoff run. The Huskies were also coming off a mediocre season (7-6), but there was a sense coach Chris Petersen’s team was ready to take a significant step forward in year two of his tenure. Turns out it was even bigger than expected.

Last year, Georgia went from No. 15 to the CFP. The Bulldogs were 8-5 the season before, coach Kirby Smart’s first in Athens. The Bulldogs had an experienced team in 2017 that was favored to win the SEC East, and ended up being the second-best team in the country.

So what does this small sample tell us? If you want to pick a playoff dark horse, look for a brand-name team ranked somewhere in the teens of the preseason poll. Maybe one with a talented quarterback who still has some uncertainty attached to him.

And with that, predictions for the 2018 college football season:

See Playoffs, B6

If you want to pick a playoff dark horse, look for a brand-name team ranked somewhere in the teens of the preseason poll.
Playoffs

FROM B1

TOP 25
Three teams in the AP preseason poll that will not finish the season ranked: No. 16 TCU, No. 20 Virginia Tech, No. 25 LSU.

Three teams not in the AP preseason poll that will finish the season ranked: Boston College, Memphis, Utah.

CONFERENCE WINNERS

American Athletic Conference: Memphis (West) over Temple (East). The last two teams to win the American lost their coaches soon after, so where’s Mike Norvell going?

Atlantic Coast Conference: Clemson (Atlantic) over Miami (Coastal). The Tigers are stacked and freshman quarterback Trevor Lawrence could give the offense an explosiveness it was missing last year.

Big Ten: Michigan (East) over Wisconsin (West). Wolverines coach Jim Harbaugh finally quiets his critics.

Big 12: Oklahoma (No. 1) over (West Virginia No. 2). The Big 12 is the most likely Power Five conference to provide an unexpected champion. There is little separation among the top six or seven teams but when in doubt, pick the Sooners.

Conference USA: Florida Atlantic (East) over Louisiana Tech (West). Coach Lane Kiffin brings a second consecutive C-USA title to FAU.

Mid-American Conference: Ohio (East) over Northern Illinois (West). Ohio wins its first MAC title since 1968.

Mountain West: Boise State (Mountain) over San Diego State (West). Could be the Broncos best post-Chris Petersen team.

Pac-12: Washington (North) over Utah (South). The Huskies win their second Pac-12 title in three seasons, but the opener against Auburn could determine their playoff hopes.

Southeastern Conference: Alabama (West) over Georgia (East). This time only the SEC champion makes the playoff.

Sun Belt: Arkansas State (West) over Troy (East). Red Wolves win the first Sun Belt championship game.

HEISMAN TROPHY
The favorites are running backs Bryce Love of Stanford and Jonathan Taylor of Wisconsin, but the Heisman Trophy has become a quarterback’s award. Fifteen of the last 18 winners have been quarterbacks. Feels like a season where a not-so-obvious player makes a run. Top five vote-getters:
1. Justin Herbert, QB, Oregon.
4. Shea Patterson, QB, Michigan.
5. A.J. Dillon, RB, Boston College.

COACHING CAROUSEL
There seems to be no such thing as a slow season when it comes to coaching moves. Almost inevitably a few jobs that seemed safe in September open up by December — Florida, for example, just last year.

What job will unexpectedly open this season? How about Oklahoma, when Dallas owner Jerry Jones decides to hire another Sooners coach and brings Lincoln Riley to the Cowboys.

NEW YEAR’S SIX/COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF

Cotton Bowl: Alabama (1) vs. Washington (4).

Orange Bowl: Michigan (2) vs. Clemson (3).

Sugar Bowl: Georgia (SEC) vs. Oklahoma (Big 12).

Rose Bowl: Wisconsin (Big Ten) vs Oregon (Pac-12).

Fiesta Bowl: Boise State (Group of Five) vs. Ohio State (at-large).

Peach Bowl: West Virginia (at-large) vs. Miami (at-large).

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP
Clemson and Alabama make it four consecutive seasons meeting in the playoff. The Tigers even the series at two and win another national title,
Ohio State Suspends Urban Meyer for Three Games

By: Rachel Bachman

Ohio State University suspended football coach Urban Meyer for the Buckeyes’ first three games of the season without pay after finding in an investigation that Meyer and OSU athletic director Gene Smith “went too far” in their efforts to help an assistant coach accused of domestic violence.

Meyer, who has been on paid administrative leave since the start of August, will be suspended through Sept. 2 and will forgo six weeks of compensation. Ohio State also suspended Smith without pay from Aug. 31-Sept. 16. Ohio State starts the season Sept. 1 against Oregon State.

OSU concluded that neither man “violated any policy, rules, law or contractual obligation” in connection with the claims against former OSU wide receivers coach Zach Smith. But it punished them for waiting too long to report allegations of abuse by Smith to the university.

Zach Smith was fired by Ohio State on July 23, after a report surfaced that his ex-wife, Courtney Smith, had secured an order of protection against him. Smith has denied the abuse allegations. Zach Smith is a longtime Meyer aide who also was also accused of, but not prosecuted for, abuse while both men were at the University of Florida.

The findings, announced just before a Wednesday night news conference, concluded a dramatic three weeks that saw one of the nation’s most successful football coaches fighting for his job as troubling allegations swirled around him. Ohio State’s Board of Trustees spent the bulk of Wednesday meeting in executive session to discuss the results of the investigation.

“We believe Urban Meyer did not and does not condone domestic abuse,” Ohio State president Michael Drake said.

Meyer apologized and said, “I am fully aware that I’m ultimately responsible for this situation that has harmed this university as a whole. At every juncture, I gave Zach Smith the benefit of the doubt.” He added that he “should have demanded more from him and recognized red flags.”

Gene Smith said he was the first one contacted about the 2015 allegation against Zach Smith and that he’d taken it to Meyer but that the two did not share it with other Ohio State administrators.

Ohio State placed Meyer on paid administrative leave Aug. 1, after publication of a report alleging he might have known of domestic-violence allegations in 2015 against Smith. Meyer had told reporters at Big Ten Conference media day on July 24 that he “got a text late last night that something happened in 2015” and suggested that he’d been unaware of the 2015 allegations against Smith until then. “There was nothing—once again, there was nothing,” Meyer said at media day. “I don’t know who creates a story like that.”

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He contradicted those words in an Aug. 3 Twitter post, writing that he “was not adequately prepared to discuss these sensitive personnel issues with the media, and I apologize for the way I handled those questions.” Meyer indicated in the post that he was aware of the 2015 allegation of violence against Smith and wrote that he had elevated the issue to the “proper channels.”

Ohio State announced an investigation and convened a working group made up of three trustees and three outside members to direct the work of an investigative team. That team was led by Mary Jo White, former U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York and former Chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission, and her law partner, David Sarratt, at the firm Debevoise & Plimpton LLP.

The investigators shared their findings with the board Monday, and the board began meeting at 9 a.m. Wednesday at a campus building. The university issued a 900-word news release summarizing their findings just before 9 p.m.

“Although Coach Meyer and Athletic Director Smith failed to adhere to the precise requirements of their contracts when they concluded that they needed to await a law enforcement determination to file charges before they reported the otherwise disputed claims of spousal abuse against Zach Smith, they did so based upon a good faith belief that they did not have sufficient information to trigger a reporting obligation or initiate a disciplinary action in the absence of law enforcement action,” the findings read.

Coaches are among those on campus required to “report crime in a timely fashion,” according to a letter dated Aug. 1 from the Ohio State official who oversees the university’s compliance with federal crime-reporting law to those required reporters.

In the wake of the investigation, the university will undertake steps to make its reporting requirements clearer to employees, the news release said.

Investigators found that Meyer has “a sincere commitment to the Respect for Women core values that he espouses and tries to instill in his players” and that if Meyer “ever came to learn or believe that Zach Smith had physically abused his wife, Coach Meyer would have fired Zach Smith or any other coach on the spot.”

A lawyer representing Courtney Smith did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

For Ohio State and Meyer, the stakes were high. Meyer is 73-8 in six seasons at Ohio State, leading the Buckeyes to the 2014 national championship, and his career head coaching win rate of .851 is one of the nation’s best. Ohio State is ranked No. 5 in the Associated Press preseason poll.

But Meyer became ensnared in a harsh spotlight for continuing to employ a coach who had been accused of domestic abuse more than once.
Zach Smith was arrested in 2009 on suspicion of aggravated battery in Gainesville, Fla., when he was a University of Florida assistant under Meyer. Courtney Smith was in her third month of pregnancy during the alleged incident, according to a Gainesville Police report. Zach Smith wasn’t prosecuted, and Meyer has said that he and his wife, Shelley, helped counsel the Smiths at the time.


Meyer’s first college coaching position was in 1986-87 as a graduate assistant under then-Ohio State coach Earle Bruce, who grew into a mentor so close that Meyer said the relationship was “second only to my father.” Zach Smith is a grandson of Bruce, and he and Meyer both spoke at Bruce’s funeral in April.

On Wednesday, Meyer said loyalty to Bruce affected his judgment about Zach Smith.
Southern Colleges Grapple With History

Ties to Confederacy conflict with a push for a more diverse student population

BY CAMERON McWHERTER AND MELISSA KORN

SEWANEE, Tenn.—Shadé Shepard recently attended an orientation session addressing the slave-owner connections of her new college, Sewanee.

Also known as the University of the South, the liberal-arts school in the Tennessee mountains was conceived by slave owners who didn't want their sons going north for an education, and many ex-Con federates taught there after the Civil War.

"I appreciated them being blunt about it," said Ms. Shepard, an 18-year-old African-American first-year student from Washington. Life on the predominantly white campus "will definitely take some adjusting," she said, though so far, people have been welcoming.

The toppling of a Confederate statue by protesters on Monday at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is the latest skirmish in an intense debate over the future of such monuments and imagery on Southern campuses. Institutions from Virginia to Mississippi are trying to come to terms with statues, markers and building names linked to their Confederate past, without alienating alumni and donors.

While Sewanee removed Confederate banners from the All Saints' Chapel and moved a general's monument to a cemetery, the campus still has stories commemorating Confederate officers and a stained-glass window bearing the Confederate Seal in the chapel.

"We are all wrestling with this in one way or another," said John M. McCardell Jr., vice chancellor at Sewanee. He said he has to walk a fine line between acknowledging the school's history while no longer paying homage to "the Confederate shadow that looms over our institution."

For many Southern schools, a core issue is economics. They need to appeal to a more diverse student population, and Confederate symbols can scare off black and Hispanic families or prospects from outside the region.

The population of new high school graduates is expected to increase nationally by 23% between the 2000-01 and 2025-26 school years, according to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. While the number of new Hispanic graduates is projected to triple during the same period, and new black graduates will increase by 40.5%.

The fast-growing South is diversifying, but Sewanee has struggled to keep up. Black students made up just 5.8% of the first-year class in the 2017-18 school year, up slightly from a decade earlier, according to the school.

Caroline Graham, 20, a sophomore, said all "images of hate" should be removed. The school's history cannot be erased, "but we don't have to keep worshipping it," said Ms. Graham, who is white.

Tim Huebner, a history professor at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tenn., who has studied the legacy of Confederate memorials, recommends contextualizing Confederate markers with signs or new courses.

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rather than removing them.

"I don't think you take all of these remnants of the past, take all these artifacts, and grind them into dust," he said.

Last summer, after a white nationalist gathering in Charlottesville, Va., erupted in violence, Confederate statues and symbols were removed across the U.S., including in Baltimore and Helena, Mont.

Earlier this month, Duke University President Vincent E. Price announced the school would leave empty a space at the entry to its chapel where a statue of Robert E. Lee had stood. That statue was vandalized last year, and Dr. Price said the void would "provide a powerful statement about the past, the present and our values," representing, as the chapel's dean phrased it, a hole left by the sin of racism.

Black students comprised a near-record 11.6% of Duke's first-year class last year.

"How do you get kids to get interested and apply and feel like this is a place they want to be?" said Nicholas S. Zeppos, chancellor of Vanderbilt University. Vanderbilt, which draws students from across the country to its Nashville, Tenn., campus, announced in 2016 that it would pay $1.3 million to the United Daughters of the Confederacy to rename 'Confederate Memorial Hall as Memorial Hall.

The school said the prior name contradicted its goals of inclusion. Last year, 12.5% of first-year Vanderbilt students were black, nearly double the number from a decade earlier.

Administrators at Washington & Lee University in Lexington, Va., are expected to respond in coming weeks to a commission report, released in May, that recommended a building erected with proceeds from a slave sale be renamed, and that Confederate leader Robert E. Lee no longer be referred to as a general. It also recommended that official college functions no longer take place inside Lee Chapel—or if they do, to remove the memorial to Confederate soldiers and use a portrait of Lee in civilian dress.

"W&L's affiliation with its namesakes—particularly R.E. Lee—greatly limits the school's ability to attract diverse students, faculty and staff," the report said. The percentage of black students at Washington & Lee hovered between 2% and 3% for most of the past half-dozen years; this coming fall, it is 6%.

Some older alumni see the changes as an effort to abandon history and tradition.

Sewanee alumnus James K. Polk Van Zandt, a 65-year-old retired Episcopal reverend, said he was on the university's board for decades but became frustrated by repeated efforts to erase the institution's past.

"Whether we like it or not, it is part of our history," said Mr. Van Zandt, who is white. "If they got kids from New Jersey who don't want to go there, let them go somewhere else."
EDITORIAL

Do more to curb crisis of fatal drug overdoses

Graphic evidence of America’s severe drug crisis played out over the past week. In a gruesome tableau on the New Haven Green in Connecticut, scores of people collapsed and were rushed to emergency rooms suffering violent reactions to synthetic marijuana. Meanwhile, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported preliminary estimates that more than 72,000 people died of drug overdoses in the United States last year, an increase of 9.5 percent from the year before. A big reason for the increase was illicit and deadly fentanyl, which has increasingly been cut into heroin and cocaine.

The most concerning problem is fentanyl overdose. Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid pain reliever 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine. It can be prescribed for legitimate uses such as for cancer patients. But most of the overdoses and deaths are from illegally manufactured fentanyl, sold on the street for its heroin-like effects, often combined with heroin or cocaine, with or without the user’s knowledge. It originates in China and cartels in Mexico, and some laboratory production may be occurring in the United States. Fentanyl–heroin combinations are a main driver behind the escalating death rates. A second crisis is the flow of illicit opioid painkillers from doctors and pharmacies to people who abuse the drugs. While by no means a crisis resolved, there is some evidence that these deaths may have reached a plateau with more strenuous efforts to control the pills, although it is still a huge problem.

Far more people are being killed each year in the United States by drug overdoses than in car accidents. The country must not accept business as usual. President Donald Trump coarsely but correctly commented during a Cabinet meeting Thursday that China is “sending that garbage and killing our people. It’s almost a form of warfare.” He asked Attorney General Jeff Sessions to “look into” legal remedies to stop the illicit fentanyl. Anything that works would naturally be welcome; despite promises, including directly to Trump last year in Beijing, China has not done enough to choke off the supply. U.S. prosecutions of crimes involving fentanyl are on the rise. Because small quantities of fentanyl can be easily concealed and dealers reap lucrative profits, it is clearly a major challenge on the supply side.

However, this crisis calls for more than just bravado and better policing. Intense efforts need to be made in
Hospitals closing at a rate of 30 annually

Cristin Flanagan  Bloomberg

Mergers and acquisitions may be no savior as the pace of hospital closures, particularly in hard-to-reach rural areas, seems poised to accelerate.

Hospitals have been closing at a rate of about 30 a year, according to the American Hospital Association, and patients living far from major cities may be left with even fewer choices as insurers push them toward online providers like Teladoc and clinics like CVS Health Corp’s MinuteClinic.

Morgan Stanley analysts led by Vikram Malhotra looked at data from roughly 6,000 U.S. private and public hospitals and concluded eight percent are at risk of closing with another 10 percent considered “weak.” The firm defined weak hospitals based on criteria for margins for earnings before interest and other items, occupancy and revenue. The “at risk” group was defined by capital expenditures and efficiency, among others.

The next year to 18 months should see an increase in shutdowns, Malhotra said in a phone interview.

There are already a lot of hospitals with high negative margins, consultancy Veda Partners health care policy analyst Spencer Perlman said, and that’s going to become unsustainable. Rural hospitals with a smaller footprint may have less room to negotiate rates with managed care companies and are often hobbled by more older and poorer patients.

Also wearing away at margins are technological improvements that allow patients to get more surgeries and imaging done outside of the hospital. They are also likely to be forced to pay more to attract and retain doctors in key areas, Bloomberg Intelligence analyst Jason McGorman said.

They “are getting eaten alive from these market trends,” Perlman cautioned.

Future M&A options could be too late; buyers may hesitate as debt laden operators like Community Health Systems Inc. and Tenet Healthcare Corp. focus on selling underperforming sites to reduce leverage, Morgan Stanley’s Zachary Sopcak said.

The light at the end of the tunnel is some hospitals are rising to the occasion, Perlman said. Some acute care facilities are restructuring as outpatient emergency clinics with free-standing emergency departments.
Ohio State could have sent stronger message

Urban Meyer will live to coach another day, a day that will come sooner rather than later, given the slap on his wrist meted out by the Ohio State University administration Wednesday following an investigation into how he handled domestic-abuse allegations against a former assistant coach.

The punishment: Meyer, who was placed on administrative leave as Ohio State’s head football coach on Aug. 1, will be suspended without pay for the first three games of this season, and he won’t be paid for the time he’s been on leave. Also, Ohio State athletics director Gene Smith will be suspended for the period covering those three games.

The suspensions were based in part on the ad hoc investigative committee’s finding that Meyer and Smith did not follow proper procedure in reporting what they knew about domestic-abuse allegations made by Courtney Smith in 2009 and 2015 against her then-husband Zach Smith, who was coaching under Meyer on both occasions.

We won’t get into the entire 23-page summary of the investigation, except to make a couple of observations — first, that investigators decided Meyer had not “deliberately” lied about what he knew; second, that no text messages more than a year old were found on his phone and that an assistant athletics director had discussed with Meyer — on Aug. 1, the day a news report came out that referred to text messages between Courtney Smith and Meyer’s wife — how to adjust the settings on his phone so that text messages more than a year old would be deleted. (The committee said it could not determine whether Meyer’s phone settings were adjusted before Aug. 1 or in response to the news report.)

Clearly, Ohio State didn’t want to fire Meyer, one of the best coaches in college football, and found a way to avoid it despite plenty of public pressure to do so. If Nick Saban is No. 1 among active coaches, which he is, then Meyer would be 1A. His record in 16 years as a college coach is a ridiculous 177-31, a winning percentage of .851. And like Saban at Alabama, Meyer is an economic engine for Ohio State, where he is 73-8 during his six years there.

But his behavior and comments since this controversy came to light have seemed designed to protect himself, with no sincere expression of concern for Courtney Smith. They have not appeared to be in the interest of transparency from someone with nothing to hide. With his $40 million contract on the line, we get it.

And based on what we know thus far, we won’t argue adamantly that Meyer should have been fired. A three-game suspension, however, strikes us as the product of a negotiation, rather than the objective result of an independent investigation. A one-year suspension would have been more palatable. Still, we concede that firing him would have been justifiable (though not as cut-and-dried as a legal matter as some have made it out to be).

The abuse allegations against Zach Smith are troubling, and though no criminal charges resulted, subsequent revelations about his inappropriate behavior paint a picture of a man who was enabled by the failure of those around him to hold him accountable — Meyer, in particular.

We live in a society that too often downplays, even looks to excuse, domestic violence. Ohio State had a chance to send a powerful, countervailing message by punishing Meyer more severely. Football and money mattered more.
OSU ruling on Meyer not surprising

Cecil Hurt

Urban Meyer won't get a chance to add to his career win total in the first three weeks of Ohio State football season.

Make no mistake, though. Meyer got a win on Wednesday night.

The win wasn't unexpected, any more than the Buckeyes' upcoming win in its opening game against Oregon State will be unexpected. Meyer, who has been embroiled in controversy over reporting domestic abuse by an assistant coach and, following that, lying about it at Big Ten Media Days, had the home field advantage, so to speak.

There was some initial speculation that Meyer might lose his job but when an investigative committee was formed, chock-full of Ohio State trustees, most observers knew the deck was stacked in Meyer's favor.

See HURT, C4
I'm going to stop here to make a point without climbing on a pedestal: Ohio State is not the only institution that would not want to fire a highly successful coach. A highly successful coach at Alabama would, in any circumstances short of the most egregious, be difficult to remove. I'm not saying "Nick Saban" here because it is not fair to him, or to University of Alabama president Dr. Stuart Bell, who I've met only briefly, to sit here and play a hypothetical game of "What if he did this? What if he did that?" This is simply to acknowledge that a successful head football coach at Alabama or Georgia or a basketball coach at Duke or North Carolina or Kansas is going to have a strong base of support.

Some of that depends on the school, some on the coach. Firing a Mike Price isn't the same as firing an icon — although the UA president at the time, Dr. Robert Witt had to stand up to Price supporters on the UA Board of Trustees at that time, even though Price had never coached a game at UA. (The decision has been proven right over time.)

So what of Meyer and the half-measures taken by Ohio State on Wednesday night? The wording of the release and the answers at a press conference after it was released made it sound like this: Ohio State knew that Meyer's actions rise to the level of a fireable offense, but had no one, not a president or an athletic director, with the strength to wield the ax.

No matter how answers were twisted, there seemed little remorse. The kind of legalese where a coach "did not tell the truth" in answering direct questions at a public forum where he was representing Ohio State but "did not deliberately lie" only insults the intelligence of listeners. And the lack of a single mention of Courtney Smith, and only the most bland criticisms of domestic violence, spoke volumes in their silence.

But that wasn't anything new in this case, where Meyer has been silent in one way or another for nine years now, since his days at Florida.

I am for second chances but this wasn't some isolated incident that escaped notice.

That's why Ohio State should have done more, a one-year suspension from all football activities at least. Better still would have been an immediate firing.

The great debate today around college football is whether Ohio State should have fired Urban Meyer or not. But whether they should have, or they shouldn't, we know one thing for sure: there is no one at Ohio State, at any level, that could.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.