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AD Greg Byrne receives 3-year extension, raise to $980K

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 2017-18 was the second-highest in the SEC among athletic directors. It would now top the league and be ranked eighth nationally based on the previous academic year’s numbers.
Saban, Byrne contracts approved

UA also approves deals for coaches in other sports

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

The University of Alabama System compensation committee approved new contracts for several athletics employees on Friday morning, including director of athletics Greg Byrne and football coach Nick Saban.

Byrne’s contract calls for a salary of $980,000 for the 2018-19 academic year. The seven-year deal increases his base compensation by $25,000 annually, finishing at a base salary of $1.13 million for the 2024-25 year. The total base salary is $7.385 million over the seven years.

According to research by USA Today and Athletic Director U earlier this year, Byrne’s $980,000 salary would have made him the seventh highest-paid athletic director based on 2017-18 salaries. Its database includes salaries for 115 of 130 Division I athletics directors. Byrne’s initial contract when he arrived at Alabama in 2017 called for a $900,000 salary through June 2018, then increased by $25,000 per year.

Saban’s previously-announced new deal includes a base salary of $75,000 each year through 2025-26 and a talent fee of $7.225 million for 2018-19. The talent fee increases by $400,000 each year through 2025-26, finishing with a salary of $10.025 million. The combined base salary and talent fee of the deal is worth a combined $62.775 million through 2025-26 before bonuses.

Saban receives an additional $800,000 at the end of the 2019, 2020 and 2021 football seasons if he remains as head coach through the final regular season games of those seasons.

The contract also contains wording that it will be See CONTRACTS, A6

See CONTRACTS, A6

The Tuscaloosa News

Saturday, August 25, 2018
re-evaluated if Saban’s “total guaranteed annual compensation” falls behind the average of the five highest-paid NCAA football coaches or the average of the three highest-paid SEC football coaches. If that occurs, Alabama agreed to increase Saban's guaranteed compensation to the higher of those two averages.

The contract also stipulates that the university will pay $100,000 to the Nick’s Kids Foundation annually through 2025.

The committee also approved new contracts for all three assistants with the men’s basketball program. John Pelphrey’s contract is worth $435,625 per year. Antoine Pettway’s deal is worth $281,875 a year. Yasir Rosemond received a deal worth $256,250 annually. All three contracts extend through June 2020. The contracts also include bonuses if the basketball program reaches the NCAA Tournament, Sweet Sixteen, Elite Eight or Final Four.

The committee also approved a new contract for women’s basketball coach Kristy Curry. Her contract runs through the end of the 2021-22 basketball season and includes a base salary of $275,000 with a talent fee of $100,000 per year.

Softball coach Patrick Murphy received a five-year deal with total compensation of $375,000 for this year, rising by $15,000 per year through 2022-23.

Women’s golf coach Mic Potter’s five-year contract was also approved. It includes total compensation of $240,000 through June 2023. Men’s golf coach Jay Seawell also received a five-year deal. His annual compensation is $242,000.

New rowing coach Glenn Puttyrae received a four-year contract worth $150,000.

Men's tennis coach George Husack had a three-year contract approved. His base salary is $135,000 through June 2021.

Bob Welton, hired earlier this year as director of player personnel for the Alabama football program, received a two-year deal worth $200,000 annually. Reach Ben Jones at ben@tidesports.com or 205-722-0196.
Museum’s closure means breaking up of unique art collection

By: Mary Hughes Cobb / Staff Writer

Two days from now, it’ll require a labyrinthine road trip to view the amalgamation often described as the finest privately held American art collection in the world.

The Westervelt Co. will close the Tuscaloosa Museum of Art after Friday’s regular opening hours. There’s a final Art With Friends reception Thursday night, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. It’s free and open to all.

Some core art, including Basil Ede’s Wild Birds of America series, and some of the Founding Fathers works, will remain in Westervelt headquarters at 1400 Jack Warner Parkway NE, but will no longer be viewable by the public. There are currently no plans to offer tours.

“The remaining works are being prepared for sale, for shipment,” said Susan Poole, Westervelt’s corporate communications manager, though no sales have been announced.

Asked why the museum was closing, Poole said “It aligns with our long-term strategy as a company, our long-term strategy and growth plan.”

Westervelt’s core business builds around forestry, forest recreation, renewable energy and wood products manufacturing, she said. “It aligns with those core competencies.”

Thursday night’s final Art With Friends offers a chance for patrons to say goodbye.

“We called the monthly receptions Art With Friends because every single piece in this collection is a friend of mine,” said Will Hawkins, who’s worked with the Warner collection almost a decade, dating back to when it was part of an even larger grouping housed in the Anchorage at North River. He’s still processing the shutdown.

“For years I’ve worked to understand how Jack spiderwebbed this together, to where everything is related to everything else. It’s still astounding.”

Jonathan Westervelt “Jack” Warner, CEO and chairman for almost 50 years of Gulf States Paper, the family business which became the Westervelt Co., helped turn the American art market around with the wave of a hand. Collectors who saw Warner walk into an auction at Sotheby’s or Christie’s would often turn and walk away.

“Jack would stand there and just hold his hand up, and never put it down” until he’d won, Hawkins said. But even while running from Warner at auction, collectors followed his vision. “He was one of the forebearers of bringing American art back into prosperity.”

Inspired by his love of John James Audubon’s paintings, Warner commissioned Ede’s wild birds series, and segued from there into Hudson River painters. He then followed a chronological and
geographical progression west, to painters of the Rockies, the Grand Canyon and elsewhere throughout the raw, early United States, all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

After another collector paid $7 million for Frederic Edwin Church’s 1857 “Niagara” painting, the American art market exploded. Warner helped lead the charge, investing in paintings and sculpture built around his personal hero, George Washington, and in American impressionists such as John Singer Sargent, Mary Cassat and James McNeil Whistler.

Warner was largely self-taught, working by instinct. As he told Kathie Thurman, a coordinator of the collection for 12 years: “You want to collect? Buy what you like.”

“He had a relationship with every piece,” she said. Warner, who died last year at 99, loved giving tours, where he’d explain not only the art and artist, but tales of how he came to acquire the work, and why he’d longed to own it, how it spoke to him. “We had more than one person say taking a tour with Jack was like walking through the painting.”

Touring other museums or collections with Warner was always entertaining, Hawkins said. “The guide would say, ‘Mr. Warner, here’s our Bierstadt. But yours is better.’”

At its height, Warner’s collection included hundreds of paintings, pieces of neoclassical furniture, sculpture and decorative objects representing virtually every major American artist, and numerous other artists and craftspeople less-known, but fitting within his vision. Spread originally throughout Gulf States headquarters, the University Club and other residences around Tuscaloosa, the collection became a who’s who of American art: Thomas Cole, Church, Sargent, Cassat, Whistler, Albert Bierstadt, Asher B. Durand, William Merritt Chase, Edward Hopper, Winslow Homer, Andrew Wyeth, Jamie Wyeth, Paul Revere, Duncan Phyffe, Sanford Gifford, Robert Henri, Edward Potthast, Charles Bird King, Rembrandt Peale, Evan Wilson and more.

Both Art and Antiques and American Art Review magazines named Warner as among the top collectors in the world. In 2010, he was given the Frederic Edwin Church award for assembling the collection, some bought with his personal funds, but the majority purchased through the corporation.

That division was key to the breakup of the collection in 2011, when the Westervelt Co. -- Jack stepped down as president and CEO of Gulf States in 1995, and named his son Jonathan Westervelt Warner Jr., known as Jon, to succeed him -- took advantage of a 2010 tax change to cash in, selling off major works for undisclosed amounts, but estimated in the tens of millions, or even more.

In 2002, Warner had brought the collection together, operated by his personal foundation as the Westervelt Warner Museum of American Art, into NorthRiver’s Anchorage building. To his surprise, early in 2011 Durand’s “Progress (The Advance of Civilization)” was boxed and shipped out to a new owner, who remains to this day unknown. “Progress,” considered one of the
central masterworks of the collection, had alone been valued as potentially high as $50 million, though that’s the high end.

Mike Case, CEO and president of Westervelt at the time, said the company was taking advantage of a one-year-window provided by the Small Business Jobs Act of 2010, a federal stimulus bill passed by Congress. “Our obligation is to maximize the value for our shareholders. We want to grow,” Case said, in a February 2011 story in The Tuscaloosa News, “…and we kind of know the things we want to spend (the proceeds) on.”

Other works continued to go out the doors, often surprising Hawkins and Thurman as they arrived at the Anchorage; at one point, robbery was feared. Among those sold to private collectors -- where their fate remains unknown or unrevealed to the public -- or at auction include Cole’s “The Falls of Kaaterskill,” Daniel Garber’s “Tanis,” a rare historical work by Edward Hopper, and Church’s “Above the Clouds at Sunrise,” which illuminates the cover of the coffee-table book “An American Odyssey,” about Warner’s collection.

At the time of the sell-off, Warner lamented ceding control of the company, and thus losing the bulk of the collection.

“I regret the lack of communication I have with the company,” Warner said, in that same 2011 Tuscaloosa News story. “I don’t talk with (Jon) and he doesn’t talk with me about anything like this.... We don’t know how much of (the collection) they want to sell.”

After the Westervelt Co. declined to renew its partnership with the the Jack Warner Foundation, which had been operating the Westervelt Warner Museum at losses of $250,000 to $300,000 annually for years, Warner moved his privately collected art out, and the Westervelt Co. began shifting the remainder to company headquarters. Even after the sales and split, thousands of pieces remained in the collection, which opened as the Tuscaloosa Museum of Art in December 2011.

Although Warner’s assemblage was renowned throughout the world, it remained too often without honor in its hometown.

“It was one of of Tuscaloosa and Alabama’s hidden gems,” Hawkins said. “It’s a one-of-a-kind art collection that will never be duplicated: One man’s vision spanning the scope of American history from pre-Columbian South America through the early 20th century.

“You can walk through the story of America inside the collection, through the eyes of master artists.”

The museum saw visitor upticks each quarter, Hawkins said, but they still continued to hear “I never realized!” The next most common reaction were oohs and ahhs, Thurman said.
“We heard a lot of ‘Oh my god. This is in Tuscaloosa,’ ” she said. “A lot of people are astounded that a collection like this ever existed.”

Thursday night’s final Art With Friends, 5:30-7:30 p.m., will offer the usual wine and light hors d’ouevres, and give all a chance to say goodbye. Since the announcement earlier this month, hundreds of calls, emails and Facebook messages have rolled in, offering condolences, memories of visits and commiseration. Thurman and Hawkins have one plan in common: Do not cry. But that resolve may fail, both admitted.

“My kids have literally grown up in this museum,” Hawkins said. They’re still working with the 4-year-old on not touching. “My 10-year-old can come in and tell you all about her favorite painting, every detail....She loved it, and she’s attempted to draw it hundreds of times.”

As to where various works might travel, it’s anyone’s guess. The Walmart family’s Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, in Bentonville, Arkansas, apparently purchased at least two of the older collection works, and more could now go that way. Thurman and Hawkins hope some of the art stays in the region, at places such as Atlanta’s High Museum of Art, the Montgomery Museum of Fine Art, or the Birmingham Museum of Art. Each hopes for anything better than the unknown, private-collector fate of “Progress.”

“Any place public, I would be ecstatic,” Hawkins said. “This is art that tells the story of us, and it needs to be seen, outside of somebody’s private home, or private collection.

“Art is made to be seen, not tucked away in a corner.”
Where in the world do you want to go? Birmingham airport seeks more nonstop flights

By: Erin Edgemon

Want to see more nonstop flights out of the Birmingham airport?

So does Mayor Randall Woodfin.

As the Birmingham Airport Authority seeks to hire a consultant to help secure more nonstop domestic and international flights, Woodfin told AL.com he would like to see nonstop flights (or more flights) to Boston, San Francisco, New Orleans, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Miami. Nonstop flights are already offered to New York City, Charlotte and Washington D.C., he said.

Nonstop flights to these cities would spur economic development and foster relationships in those cities, he said.

A request for proposals (RFPs) from qualified consultants was first advertised on Aug. 10. The airport authority approved sending out an RFP in March.

The Birmingham Airport Authority will pay $150,000 for the consultant's services, which include developing a five-year air service development strategy for attracting and securing new international passenger and cargo routes; and new domestic service inclusive of low-cost carriers. These low-cost carriers include: JetBlue, WestJet and Virgin America.

"The city of Birmingham is experiencing a revival under the new administration, and this is the time for the authority to build upon the city's synergy by doing everything within our capacity to bring the city, businesses, and community leaders together to promote economic development," Toni Herrera-Bast, airport public relations/marketing manager, said in a statement. "In the coming months, we will be paving the way for stronger partnerships and innovative approaches for realizing our passengers' top priority, access to more nonstop flights."

Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport serves as the economic engine of the city of Birmingham, according to the airport authority's request for proposals. The airport had an economic impact of more than $32 million on the city in 2017 and has directly or indirectly created more than 272,000 jobs.

Pursing new nonstop flights to link major international markets with Birmingham and new domestic service, inclusive of low-cost carriers, is in the best economic interest of the city, according to the authority.

Consulting services are required to evaluate and report on the passenger and cargo traffic potential between BHM and targeted top international markets not currently linked via non-stop service to Birmingham, according to the authority.

"A consulting firm brings with it a wealth of knowledge and data in which to equip our staff, so that we may be in the best position possible to acquire new service," Herrera-Bast said. The authority expects the firm to be a robust resource for developing a solid air service strategy for Birmingham and its surrounding areas.
The consultant will be required to prepare a five-year air service development strategy that will include plans for attracting and securing new international passenger and cargo routes; new domestic service inclusive of low-cost carrier engagement and recruitment, along with efforts/resources/timeline needed to complete the tasks.

While airport staff wouldn't disclose air service strategy, Herrera-Bast said these are Birmingham's top underserved markets (where no nonstop flights are offered):

- Southern California (LAX & SAN)
- Northern West Coast (SFO & SEA)
- Phoenix
- Boston
- Newark
- Fort Lauderdale, Fla.
- Austin
- Raleigh/Durham, NC

The requests for proposals are due by Oct. 2.
A Rebirth for Alabama Democrats? Not So Fast

By: Alan Blinder

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — When Doug Jones won a Senate seat in Alabama last December, many Democrats celebrated the outcome as a watershed, while Republicans saw it as a blip.

Who turns out to be correct will depend on when their answers are graded.

Less than a year after Alabama surprised itself by electing its first Democratic senator in a quarter-century, Republicans are primed to reassert what they regard as the state’s hard-won political order. And the Democrats, though emboldened and enchanted by Mr. Jones’s victory, are only beginning to rebuild the long-atrophied political muscles they need to compete.

“This year, you’re not going to see a giant blue wave coming across the state of Alabama,” Mr. Jones said in an interview. “But there are opportunities in the state where we can make some strides.”

The stakes this autumn for both parties, and the state as a whole, are significant. With a few exceptions, every statewide elected office will be on the ballot in November. So will every seat in the Republican-dominated Legislature — and the lawmakers elected this year are expected to be in power through the redistricting process that will follow the 2020 census.

Alabama’s electoral calendar makes the question that has loomed for eight months — how well will Mr. Jones’s success transfer to other Democrats? — Especially stark, particularly in a state that has tilted almost entirely toward Republicans in recent years.

“There’s got to be a stemming of that tide, before you can say that his election was a high-water mark that stopped the Republicans from winning,” John H. Merrill, the Republican secretary of state, said in his Capitol office.

Republicans have plenty of reasons for confidence despite the Senate setback. For one thing, none of the major Republican candidates running this year are as perennially controversial or, at this point, as politically radioactive as Roy S. Moore, the former State Supreme Court chief justice who won the party’s nomination in the Senate race, only to see his campaign collapse after he was accused of sexual misconduct. For another, Alabama’s most powerful Democrats are far from united; there have been open clashes, including an attempt this month by Mr. Jones to oust the state party chairwoman.

Most of all, there are the numbers: More than twice as many voters cast ballots in the Republican primary for governor as in the Democratic primary. Studies consistently rank Alabama among the nation’s most conservative states, and among the least elastic, meaning there are relatively few swing voters. And even against an opponent who had become a pariah, Mr. Jones won by just 21,924 votes out of more than 1.3 million cast.

Mr. Jones acknowledges that his victory was “not in and of itself indicative of a long-term trend.” But he and other Democrats say it laid a foundation for them to mount competitive campaigns in certain races this year, including some for statewide office.

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“Alabama is a ruby-red state,” said Representative Terri Sewell, who was Alabama’s only Democrat in Congress before Mr. Jones’s election. “It was the day Doug was elected, and it definitely was the day after he was elected. But there were some lessons learned that will help us race by race.”

Even so, after years of turbulence in state politics — scandals, convictions, skulduggery, a rescheduled Senate special election, and an impeachment proceeding against a governor — the 2018 general election is shaping up to be remarkably conventional and ordinary, at least so far.

“Under the normal conditions existing this fall, I’m confident lightning will not strike twice for the Democrats in Alabama,” said Luther Strange, the Republican former state attorney general who briefly filled the Senate seat that Mr. Jones now holds.

Such assessments are a balm for Republicans, commonplace among analysts, and no surprise to Democrats, who have largely foundered in the state since Republicans captured the Governor’s Mansion in 2002.

Walt Maddox, the Democratic nominee for governor, campaigning at a senior center in Atmore, Ala. Though Mr. Maddox is still widely considered a long shot to unseat Gov. Kay Ivey, donors energized by Mr. Jones’s success have helped him match her in fund-raising.

But there is also widening agreement that Democrats are better positioned in Alabama now than they have been in at least a decade, and perhaps longer.

That is not saying all that much. And many Democrats say it reflects the strengths of individual campaigns, not those of the party as a whole.

In the days after Mr. Jones’s victory, Don E. Siegelman, the last Democrat to serve as governor of Alabama, spoke for many Democrats when he said the state party was still “an organizational flop” that had “been of little or no value to candidates.” Another Democratic former governor, Jim Folsom Jr., said that the state party was “in shambles.” And Mr. Jones said last week that “the party infrastructure continues to be just stagnant.”

Yet even before the votes were cast in December, Democrats were boasting about how the Jones campaign would single-handedly modernize a party structure that had rotted, with fresh voter data and reconstituted and broadened networks of donors and volunteers. Now armed with a surge of energy, they also believe, as Democrats across the country do, that dissatisfaction with President Trump will help attract centrist voters.

Whether they can keep assembling the coalition that elected Mr. Jones is a more daunting and urgent question. Mr. Jones, who is expected to seek a full six-year term in 2020, earned resounding support from black voters in the state, as well as a much larger share of white voters than his party has generally attracted in recent years.

And he benefited from the reality that many Republicans simply stayed home rather than vote for Mr. Moore.
This year, officials in both parties believe that the strongest Democratic prospects in the state are three white men: Walt Maddox, the mayor of Tuscaloosa and the party’s nominee for governor; Joseph Siegelman, the former governor’s son, who is running for attorney general; and Robert S. Vance Jr., who nearly defeated Mr. Moore in a State Supreme Court race in 2012 and is again running for chief justice.

“There is energy and there is passion, and that’s the effect of the Doug Jones race, especially since he won,” Mr. Maddox said. “People, rightly so, felt like their efforts contributed to a win, and when you win, you want to do it again and again and again.”

Mr. Jones, for his part, is urging his party’s candidates to “be authentic, engage the voters and don’t take any voting segment for granted.” Democrats, he said, were “finally waking up to the fact that we have to play what I call long ball.”

Through a campaign spokeswoman, Mr. Maddox’s opponent, Gov. Kay Ivey, declined to be interviewed for this article.

But Terry Lathan, the chairwoman of the Alabama Republican Party, questioned the significance of the Democratic Party’s nascent recovery in Alabama, even as campaign-finance records showed Mr. Maddox’s fund-raising keeping pace with Ms. Ivey’s in July and his having more cash on hand than she did.

“If you’re on life support, and all of a sudden you don’t need an oxygen machine, I guess that’s a step in a better direction,” Ms. Lathan said. “But it doesn’t mean you’re ready to run a marathon.”

Democrats, some more tentatively than others, sense the possibility of a sustained opening, the first they have seen in many years. But beyond social media, even the most seasoned and stalwart Democrats qualify their expectations.

“Maybe Doug Jones was a perfect storm,” said John D. Saxon, a Birmingham lawyer and a longtime figure in Democratic politics in Alabama. “Last year was special. But if the question is, ‘Can we find the magic again?’ I would say, quite possibly. Not an easy road, not a sure thing, not even a safe bet. But it’s quite possible.”
REGIONS NAMES NEW EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT IN PLANNING

Kate Danella, who previously served as head of private wealth management for Regions Bank, has been named executive vice president, head of strategic planning and corporate development.

Leslie Carter-Prall will succeed Danella as head of private wealth management.

In this expanded role, Danella will lead a team responsible for enterprise-wide strategic planning, mergers, acquisitions and divestitures, and corporate development.

She joined Regions in July 2015 as the wealth strategy and effectiveness executive and was named head of private wealth management in May 2016.

Prior to joining Regions, Danella served 13 years as vice president for Capital Group Companies, a global wealth management organization, managing more than $1.4 trillion in assets. During her career at Capital Group, she was a senior sales and service leader for Capital's institutional business, senior marketing leader for the global marketing organization, and strategy and business manager for the American Funds mutual fund business.

Carter-Prall most recently served as private wealth management central region executive.

As executive vice president and head of Regions Private Wealth Management, she will be responsible for leading a team of private wealth management professionals providing banking, trust and investment management services to affluent and high-net-worth individuals and families across Regions' 15-state footprint.

Her industry experience spans more than 25 years and includes branch management and bank operations, sales and marketing, commercial banking and wealth management.

She joined Regions in 1991 and previously served as Indiana area president.
The sounds of a million dollars

Some members of the University of Alabama's Million Dollar Band warmed up for the first football game of the season by serenading residents of Capstone Village on Thursday afternoon. The Million Dollar Band will be in Orlando for the Crimson Tide's 2018 football season opener against the University of Louisville on Saturday night at Camping World Stadium.

UA's marching band dates back to 1912 and got its nickname in 1922 from alumnus W. C. "Champ" Pickens, who was impressed by the band's ability to raise money for a trip to a game in Atlanta. During that game, a loss to Georgia Tech, a sportswriter asked Pickens, "You don't have much of a team; what do you have at Alabama?" Pickens said, "A Million Dollar Band."

Online

For more photos and video from the Capstone Village performance, visit www.tuscaloosanews.com.

Majorettes Brenna Dotson, Jessica Patterson and Ann-Margaret Swindall dance in front of Capstone Village residents as members of the Million Dollar Band play behind them.
Celebrating her service
Mary Allen Jolley honored on her 90th birthday

The Alabama Civil Justice Foundation and the Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers threw a 90th birthday party for Mary Allen Jolley on Sunday at the Indian Hills Country Club in Tuscaloosa. [PHOTO/ALLY ADRAGNA]
Staff report

Friends of Mary Allen Jolley gathered Sunday to celebrate her 90th birthday and her legacy of service to the state, nation and West Alabama.

The Alabama Civil Justice Foundation and the Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers threw a 90th birthday party for Jolley on Sunday at the Indian Hills Country Club in Tuscaloosa.

Jolley has had a long career of public service as an education, congressional staff member, college administrator and consultant.

Jolley is a native of Ward in Sumter County and alumnus of the University of Alabama. She began her career as a teacher in Cullman County, but in 1955, she was invited to serve as a staff member with U.S. Rep. Carl Elliott.

Jolley helped develop the National Defense Education Act of 1958, which provided $1 million dollar education fund contributed by four law firms who represented plaintiffs in a successful environmental lawsuit.

Jolley was also instrumental in the creation of the Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers.

After Elliott's death in 1999, she assisted Bevill State Community College in developing the Carl Elliott House Museum in Jasper.

Jolley has received an honorary doctorate of humane letters from the University of West Alabama and UA. She also earned UA's Distinguished Alumna Award in 2008.

Jolley remains active as a consultant, advocate and speaker with community organizations.
UA Transportation Services reworks parking

By: Jackson Fuentes

The University of Alabama’s Transportation Services established parking changes for each parking deck on campus in addition to unveiling the new Tutwiler Parking Deck and announcing construction for the newest deck, the Capstone Parking Deck.

The University also modified the parking process by adding an additional weekend and evening permit, making parking access simpler due to new chip technology, and changing the payment process by prohibiting cash payments.

Chris D’Esposito, director of Transportation Services, said the new parking permit will help enhance campus security and provide students the ability to get on campus earlier than in the past. Students now can access some parking decks at 4:30 p.m. as opposed to 6 p.m. in previous years.

The Ferguson, Campus Drive, North ten Hoor and Magnolia parking decks will be accessible to students from 4:30 p.m. to 7 a.m. during the week and on weekends. Students can also access the Stadium Drive parking deck and all surface lots between 6 p.m. and 7 a.m. Monday through Friday and on weekends.

The evening and weekend permit, which will be enforced in January 2019, will require students without a current permit to pay a prorated amount of $50 in order to park on campus after 6 p.m. during the week and throughout the day on weekends.

Lydia Powell, a junior majoring in marketing, said she feels the University is trying to attain funds in any way possible by adding another expensive permit to the collection of permits already sold to students on campus.

“It honestly just makes me feel like they’re trying to get as much money out of us as possible,” Powell said. “It’s getting to the point where it’s almost too expensive to justify having a car on campus.”

Kendall Jordan, a first-year master’s student studying communicative disorders, said she feels the University already charges enough for parking permits with costs varying from $240-$660, depending on the permit.

“I think the University already charges an amount for parking permits that should be sufficient enough for any time of day,” Jordan said. “The price of our permits are notably higher than a lot of universities.”

The University announced the evening permit will not be required for students who already have another separate permit.

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D’Esposito said the implementation of the new evening and weekend permit will contribute equity to the self-funded transportation services by requiring those who utilize the parking services in the evening to pay off the debt created by the construction of the Tutwiler and Capstone parking decks. “We’re not a funded department,” D’Esposito said. “We’re not trying to get more money out of people, we’re just asking for the people that use the same system to contribute to that system.” The University has also made technological changes regarding access to parking decks so students do not have to roll down their window and swipe their ACT Card.

“Every permit has an RFID [radio-frequency identification] embedded in it,” D’Esposito said. “When you approach the gate, there’s a reader up there, so the gate will actually open up automatically.”

The payment process for entering each parking deck has also been modified. Starting this semester, the University will do away with cash payments at each parking deck. “If you go to the Ferguson and you don’t have a parking permit, you can still use your ACT Card if you have Bama Cash, or you can pay with credit card,” D’Esposito said. D’Esposito said Transportation Services often got complaints from students about the previous $5 flat rate to use the Ferguson Parking Deck.

Now, students are only allowed to either use Bama Cash or their credit card to pay for parking as a $1 per-hour rate as opposed to paying a $5 fee. Additionally, Transportation Services implemented a $10 parking maximum that would be reached after 10 hours of continuous parking use.

Students will also have access to more parking in the Orange Zone near Tutwiler Residence Hall and the Moody East Parking Deck near Moody Concert Hall. Tutwiler’s new parking deck holds a maximum of 1,455 vehicles throughout seven different levels. Additionally, a delay in construction will allow Tutwiler’s surface lot to remain in service throughout the course of this academic year.

“We were anticipating losing the surface lot this coming year with the start of the construction of the new residential community,” D’Esposito said. “We will actually have plenty of parking in that area, and hopefully nobody has any problems in that area.” Julianna Kearney, a junior majoring in public relations, said she was excited to hear about the new amount of spaces in the Orange Residential Zone because of the convenience it will provide residents in that area.

“I think the new lot in Tutwiler is going to be really good because I know parking there used to be a huge struggle,” she said. The newest parking deck on campus will be named the Capstone Parking Deck, and is scheduled to be built by August 2019 where the current Moody East parking lot is located. This parking lot aims to provide 950 spaces for vehicles throughout four different levels.
We're climbing inside The Machine at UA

It must be tough to figure when you're outside the Alabama bubble. I mean, what are people thinking?

Why are otherwise well-adjusted full-grown adults so absorbed by The Machine at the University of Alabama?

Can they not move on to more mature pursuits without staring back at the not-so-secret society that has run student life on the Tuscaloosa campus since Teddy Roosevelt was president?

Why does a 66-year-old man, like Steve Flowers, a guy with a long political career and a mouth as loud as mine, still refuse to acknowledge whether he, during college all those years ago, was a Machine rep for his fraternity?

It's the hold of The Machine.


It's the grip of opposing The Machine.

Why does a guy like me keep writing about the power and the mystery of those brothers and sisters of the True Bond?

Because once you've seen it, you can't look away. Because the Machine motto — "Little is known and what is known is kept secret" — is an invitation to intrigue. Because what happens at UA does not stay at UA.

**How to listen**

Reckon Radio presents "Greek Gods," an examination of politics, privilege and race hosted by Amy Yurkanin and John Archibald. In a four-episode miniseries, Yurkanin and Archibald take listeners downstairs into the fraternity basements where an anonymous group of leaders-in-training learn the dark arts of dirty politics. All four episodes will be available on Aug. 27. To listen or subscribe to the podcasts, go to al.com/reckon.

Oh no.

The history of The Machine — Theta Nu Epsilon is its given name — is the history of Alabama.


It gave us Joe Espy, the lawyer to Alabama's political stars, who are ever in need of a good lawyer.

It wasn't just the Machine that groomed politicians. Many others learned the ropes fighting the Machine. Zeigler beat it as an independent, and so did Secretary of State John Merrill.

George Wallace fought the Machine on campus and lost. I guess he vowed never to be out M-worded again, and built his own real-world political machine.

MSNBC's Joe Scarborough learned politics fighting the Machine, and media across the country is filled with journalists — I'm one — who learned skepticism in its shadow.

Because the stories, the outrages, are endless. Crosses have been burned in sorority yards, independent candidates intimidated regularly. One candidate — who claimed in college he was run off the road by Machine thugs — went on to become a federal agent.

The daughter of a governor reported that she was cut with a knife for daring to run for SGA president when she was not the Machine choice. Members of the Machine surrounded the school newspaper and stole whole runs of papers. Members bugged offices, helped to ruin a beloved pizza joint and interfered with real-world elections.

Little is known and what is known is kept secret?

Maybe. Maybe not.

Amy Yurkanin, a reporter for AL.com and Reckon, spent the past year looking into The Machine for a podcast — "Greek Gods" — that seeks to burst the bubble to see inside. She has no ties to UA, no baggage to carry like those of us who grew up in it.

If you want to hear it, if you lived it or simply want to know how so many grown humans can act so childish when they talk of The Machine, go to your favorite podcasting app and subscribe to Reckon Radio. The podcast drops Monday. I get to serve as co-host.

You'll start to understand.

The Machine is more than a school for scoundrels. It's an unceasingly entertaining education about how Alabama politics came to be, and how it can be resisted.

Archibald is a Pulitzer Prize-winning opinion columnist for AL.com.
A UAB team now embraced by city rolls in season opener

By: Joseph Goodman

Like any good football coach, UAB's Bill Clark is always recruiting.

Birmingham mayor Randall Woodfin knows this firsthand.

Shortly after Woodfin was voted in as Birmingham's mayor last year, he was given his city-issued cell phone. The first text message was from Clark, who congratulated the 36-year-old mayor on his historic victory.

"That's the dead truth," Woodfin said on Thursday night at Legion Field during UAB's 52-0 victory against Savannah State.

"I'm glad to have you as mayor," Clark wrote. "I look forward to working with you."

Woodfin's response: "Hey, I'm glad to have you as our coach. If there's anything you need, don't hesitate."

Well, actually, now that you mention it...

To be sure, Clark was on the periphery of the new stadium deal that's coming to downtown Birmingham, but, from the beginning, his influence and presence has been an important force. Does Birmingham get a new stadium without UAB football? Absolutely not. Does UAB have a football team today without Clark. No way.

"He has a quiet-storm style of leadership," Woodfin said. "He's calm and assertive. We're very similar, in my opinion, style wise."

The First Fan of UAB knows his football, too.

"That's a good team, man," Woodfin said.

He's right.

This is the most talented football team UAB has ever fielded. That's a strong statement considering the Blazers beat Nick Saban and LSU back in 2000, but that team didn't have the depth of this squad.

For example: In the Blazers' backfield for the season opener was a transfer running back from Michigan, and a transfer running back from Ole Miss. And neither of them were even the starters. The four NFL scouts in attendance -- Bills, Saints, Rams and Jets -- watched intently.

See next page
UAB returns 17 starters from last year's team that set a program record for wins (eight), so the goal this season is a conference championship (and, let's all cross our fingers, hopefully against Lane Kiffin and FAU).

As expected, the Blazers burned through their sacrificial lamb of an opening opponent with ease. In addition to 52-0 tying for the second largest victory in school history, it was also the first shutout since 2008 when the Blazers won at Central Florida 15-0.

UAB starting running back Spencer Brown of nearby Kimberley led the team in rushing with 102 yards on 18 carries, and didn't play in the second half. Spencer's first drive of the game was his best, five carries for 42 yards and a touchdown.

Brown is a testament to the importance of a football team in Birmingham. He was lightly recruited out of Mortimer Jordan High School, but has transformed himself into one of the top young backs in the country. He'll graduate before the new stadium is completed in 2021, but he'll always be a part of the energy and motivation that helped make it a reality.

That's important. Investing in local talent, says Woodfin, is what the stadium is all about.

"Here's where I am as the mayor," Woodfin said. "I acknowledge that a lot of relationships we have are contractual, and this relationship with UAB, they are part of this new stadium. Not only financially, but its very fabric. They wanted it, they needed it and we're here to support them. Period."

Woodfin met with the team on Wednesday night, and delivered the first pregame pep talk of the new season.

"UAB is Birmingham, and Birmingham is UAB," Woodfin said.

And, of course, football is Birmingham. On a beautiful Thursday night, over 27,000 fans celebrated their new season, and the future. It was a great crowd, and the student section showed up and was engaged.

The city is invested in the success of UAB football, so it was important for Woodfin to be at the home opener, but his embrace of Clark just before the game let you know everything about how close they've become over the last year.

The last person Clark high-fived and hugged moments before kickoff wasn't the star running back, or an assistant coach. It was Woodfin, who was an honorary team captain for the pregame coin toss.

That relationship started with a simple text message, and the determination to make a difference.
UAH alumni, students recipients of Pi Kappa Alpha prestigious awards

By: Joyce Anderson-Maples

The Pi Kappa Alpha (ΠKA) Chapter at The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH) was recently honored with the prestigious Robert A. Smythe Award, during the biennial convention in Richmond, VA, to celebrate its 150th anniversary. The award, named after the organization’s junior founder, Robert A. Smythe is the international fraternity’s most prestigious honor, and is given out once a year.

The university chapters that win this award are tops on their campus and the "best of the best," among all Pikes. The award formally acknowledges the top 10 per cent of high-performing chapters across the United States and Canada. UAH’s Theta Pi Chapter was recognized for overall chapter superiority and prominence.

Qualifications for the Smythe Awards are as follows:

A Chapter Performance Score of at least 85.00 (out of 100)

Active membership level of at least 65 initiates

Alumni advisory board as deemed by regional president

Chapter representation at all PIKE University events (including at least one Leadership Summit)

In addition to the Smythe Award, the Theta Pi Chapter won their fourth Orians Excellence Award, and recognition for Health and Safety, Recruitment, Scholarship, 100 percent participation in giving to the Pike Foundation, and for attendance at PIKE University leadership training events.

UAH alumnus Mark Reavis (’92, MS Engineering, Engineering Management), received the Chapter Advisor of the Year award for service as a volunteer advisor for the university’s Theta Pi Chapter of ΠKA. Chapter Advisor of the Year is awarded to one person per year out of 220 chapters in the United States and Canada. Reavis also serves on the Board of Directors for the UAH Alumni Association

David Soetekouw (’11, BSBA, Marketing), received the Outstanding Young Alumnus Award for his contribution as a volunteer for the fraternity. In addition to his service as the Vice President of the Huntsville Area Alumni Association, work on the UAH Theta Pi Chapter of ΠKA Alumni Advisory Board, and as an integral part of the 150th ΠKA Founders Day celebration at the Davidson Center for Space Exploration (Huntsville, AL) last March. The ΠKA International Fraternity biennially seeks and accepts nominations of alumnus members under the age of 35 for the Outstanding Young Alumnus Award. The award recognizes a class of up to 12 young alumni

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for their professional accomplishments, contributions to their community, and their involvement as a volunteer for ΠΚΑ while displaying the values of a True Pike.

Tyler Brennan ('10, BS, Marketing /Acquisition Management), President of ΠΚΑ Huntsville Area Alumni Association received the William R. Nester Award as a top 10 percent alumni association among 150 alumni associations in North America. The Nester Award recognizes alumni association excellence based on structure, communication, and activities as judged by the ΠΚΑ International Headquarters Awards Committee. This is the fifth consecutive Nester Award given to the Huntsville Area Alumni Association. Brennan is also a member of the UAH Alumni Association Board of Directors.

The Theta Pi Alumni Advisory Board (AAB) was awarded its sixth consecutive AAB of the Year award recognizing it as a top 10 percent AAB among 185 ΠΚΑ AABs in North America. This year, the AAB consists of 12 members, which advise the UAH chapter on specific areas of chapter operations such as Health and Safety, Recruitment, Member Education, and Alumni Relations. The AAB is led by Mark Reavis, Chapter Advisor.

The ΠΚΑ International Fraternity is composed of more than 275,000 lifetime members, 220 chapters and 150 alumni associations in North America. In the last 10 years, ΠΚΑ membership grew by 51 percent and maintains the largest average chapter size of North American fraternities. Between 2014 and 2015, Pikes raised over $2.125 million dollars and contributed more than 300,000 hours in community service.
Cutting-edge research seeks to develop low-cost rapid diagnostic to detect pathogenic bacteria

By: Diana LaChance

If personalized medicine is on the cutting edge of disease diagnosis and treatment, Dr. Surangi Jayawardena’s research is on the cutting edge of personalized medicine. In fact, it’s hard to get much more pioneering than designing theranostic systems that incorporate both in-vitro diagnostic and therapeutic elements to nanosystems, the former through the inherent properties of nanomaterial fluorescence magnetic or surface plasmon resonance and the latter through the surface and core modification of nanomaterials for the purpose of transporting biorecognition molecules, small molecule drugs for targeted therapy.

"There is only a small scientific community working on nanomaterials and interfacing with microorganisms, like bacteria/viruses," says Dr. Jayawardena, an assistant professor of chemistry in the College of Science at The University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH). "I synthesize my own nanomaterials and make the surface modifications to do biological conjugation to target microorganisms. So I’m really glad to be here at UAH, because I bring a different angle to research here, one that is geared toward medical application." Dr. Jayawardena earned her Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Massachusetts, Lowell under Dr. Mingdi Yan, researching applications of carbohydrate-conjugated nanomaterials known as glyconanomaterials. She then went on to accept a postdoctoral position with MIT, where she worked in the labs of Robert Langer on projects funded by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. One of the key projects was the thermostabilization of the oral polio vaccine. "The Gates foundation wanted us to see if we could prolong the stability of the vaccine by improving the vaccine formulation," she says. During that time, she and her colleagues also started looking into rapid diagnostics of tuberculosis (TB), in keeping with the World Health Organization’s mission of ending TB by 2030. Though not as prevalent in the U.S. as it is in Africa and Southeast Asia, TB rivals HIV/AIDS as the leading cause of death from infectious diseases; moreover, TB is rapidly becoming the leading cause of death among patients immunocompromised with HIV. "If you can detect TB, you can prevent the disease from spreading, but all existing methods require you have to go a clinic that has the facilities," says Dr. Jayawardena. "We wanted to find a way to diagnose it quickly in the field, like a pregnancy test. So it would have to be portable, quick, and have no storage requirements."

Before they could crack the case, however, a positive pregnancy test of her own led Dr. Jayawardena to take a step back from the project and a step toward the stability of a full-time tenure track position. "I wanted to join a community where I could make the greatest change, and during my interview with UAH, I really liked what I heard about the opportunities to collaborate," she says. "Now that I’m here, I have found the department to be most welcoming. I have also been given a light teaching burden, which allows me more time to do research."

See next page
By building on the research she conducted at MIT, she has already developed a low-cost diagnostic method to detect Mycobacteria sp. in sputum. Like the aforementioned TB test, this one requires no instrumentation and can confirm detection within a couple of minutes thanks to an external magnet that draws the Mycobacteria from the patient’s sample. "The work came to being through the fruitful efforts of my graduate and undergraduate students," Dr. Jayawardena, who recently obtained a provisional patent for the test. These students include two Ph.D. candidates from UAH’s biotechnology and science engineering program, Kavini Rathnayake and Unnati Patel, and three students from UAH’s Research or Creative Experience for Undergraduates (RCEU) program, biology majors James Johnson and Melinda Mustain, and biology and chemistry double-major Veer Manohar Devarasetty, in addition to undergraduate chemistry major Andrew Sentell.

She is also working on developing a low-cost rapid point-of-care diagnostic to detect Chlamydia trachomatis. "Chlamydia is a challenge, because most people infected are asymptomatic," she says, adding that young adults are especially at risk as they are the least likely to talk to their partners or health-care provider about the disease. "There’s also no easy way to get access to a test if you don’t speak to a heath care provider, and it’s expensive." A quick, cheap, easy-to-use test could change that – and time is of the essence. "The rate of chlamydia has increased steadily in the U.S. since the 1980s," says Dr. Jayawardena. "Chlamydia diagnostics make up a significant portion of the global STD diagnostics market." To that end, she is partnering with Dr. Leonard Petnga, an assistant professor in UAH’s Department of Industrial & Systems Engineering and Engineering Management, to come up with a mathematical model that will help them avoid the time-consuming lab work required to determine the stability of a vaccine antigen in different formulations. Dr. Jayawardena relies on a combination of awards and student labor to help fund her research and staff her two labs in UAH’s Materials Science Building, a synthetic one and a biosafety level 2 (BSL-2) one that can safely handle pathogenic microorganisms. In addition to generous startup provided to her upon arriving at UAH, she has received a 2017/2018 New Faculty Research award from UAH’s Office of the Vice President for Research and Economic Development (OVPRPRED), a 2017/2018 Research Infrastructure Fund award from UAH’s Office of Sponsored Programs, a 2018 Charger Innovation Fund award from UAH’s Office of Technology Commercialization, and a 2018 Individual Investigator Distinguished Research award from the OVPRPRED.

Going forward, Dr. Jayawardena hopes to secure funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). "When you need to fund applications related to infectious diseases, you look to the NIH," she says. "But before that, I have to strengthen my core research to be able to compete against other top-tier researchers." Fortunately, there’s plenty of work to go around. "The field of nanomaterials is still in its stage of infancy, application-wise," she says, "and there’s a whole world to explore."
**BASKETBALL**

**AU adjusts Pearl's contract, increases assistants salaries**

Auburn increased the salary pool for Bruce Pearl's coaching staff and made changes to his buyout and ticket sales bonus. Recently hired assistants Ira Bowman and Wesley Flanigan will earn $250,000 and $235,000 annually, for the next two years, according to documents provided to AL.com on Wednesday in response to a Freedom of Information Act request.

A memorandum of understanding for Bowman, who was hired last month, and a letter of understanding for Flanigan, who was hired in April, guarantee their salaries for next season.

That's a slight increase from the combined salaries of former associate head coach Chuck Person (about $280,000) at the time of his firing and former assistant Harris Adler (approximately $184,000), according to payroll records.

That does not include a new contract for assistant coach Steven Pearl, which was not released. He earned approximately $160,000 last season, according to Auburn payroll records.

A memorandum of understanding extending the contract Bruce Pearl through April 2023 was also released and includes changes to his buyout if he were to leave Auburn and a modified ticket sales incentive bonus. — James Crepea

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**COLLEGES**

**Auburn self-reports 22 secondary violations**

Auburn self-reported Florida fans throwing money at its men's basketball players last season, but it was not considered an NCAA secondary violation, according to the school.

The bizarre February incident was among 22 NCAA secondary violations Auburn self-reported in 2017-18, up from 17 in each of the previous two academic years, according to records provided to AL.com on Wednesday in response to a Freedom of Information Act request.

Football again led the department with six violations, up from five in 2016-17 and four in 2015-16, though three violations were for mistaken phone calls to recruits before permissible dates to do so. Two of the other three were recruiting related, one for the institution providing "additional decorations in a restaurant during official visits" and the other for a "person of athletics interest" transporting a recruit to campus. The last football violation was for a scholarship player giving a walk-on teammate an electronic code to an online textbook, which is in impermissible benefit.

Most of the other violations involved impermissible communication between assistant coaches and recruits or their families, most of which was inadvertent, or impermissible benefits.

Other violations totals were as follows: women's golf, 3; softball, 3; equestrian, 3; men's basketball, 2; women's swimming, 2; men's swimming, 1; women's soccer, 1; women's volleyball, 1. — James Crepea
Air University

STUDIES IN MONTGOMERY SHAPE MILITARY STRATEGY
IN THE U.S. AND AROUND THE GLOBE

Students all over the state are returning to college this month, prepping for courses such as algebra, English lit and chemistry.

But at Air University at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, the coursework goes far beyond reading, writing and arithmetic. It’s more about classes like Foundations of Military Theory, Tools for the Senior Warrior, and National Security and Decision Making, all real courses at the university that is “the intellectual and development center in the Air Force,” says its commander and president, Lt. Gen. Anthony Cotton.

Air University — which includes divisions such as Air War College, Air Command and Staff College, Squadron Officer College, and the USAF Center for Strategy and Technology — “touches just about all enlisted members and commissioned officers in the USAF,” says Phil Berube, chief of mission partner support for Air University Public Affairs. “AU also has a robust international officer population ... as well as sister service and Department of Defense civilian students.”

The university offers programs for associate and master’s degrees, as well as doctorates through its Air Force Institute of Technology and the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies. “After completing our courses, students typically move on to leadership roles and positions within their respective career fields, military services and government agencies,” Cotton says.

There, they help shape future U.S. military strategy and operations.

“With the rapid nature of change we’ve seen around the world, we also work to study and understand trends and potential adversaries, to provide insights for senior Air Force leaders,” Cotton says. “Air University, particularly through the LeMay Center for Doctrine Development and Education, is uniquely positioned to provide world-class experts that provide valuable insights as we work to maintain the U.S. military’s competitive advantage.”

There are about 2,000 students at Air University in Montgomery each day, Cotton says. The university educates more than 68,000 people annually at resident and on-site schools, as well as 145,000 via distance learning through various schools and programs.

Major Katherine Mack, director of operations, 321st Missile Squadron, F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming, recently graduated from Air University with a master’s degree in military operational art and science.

“It was an amazing, in-residence educational experience and also an opportunity to spend a year learning from other mid-level officers from different career fields in the Air Force, the other services and with officers from our international partners,” says Mack, who has been in the Air Force since 2005.

Mack, who also attended the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies for a master’s degree in philosophy in military strategy, says both incorporated history, international relations and military strategy, with an emphasis on air power history, space and cyber capabilities.

Air University exists to make the U.S. military stronger and smarter.

“The National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy are the foundation of the courses taught at Air University,” Cotton says. "The readiness and lethality of the U.S. Air Force is built on the educational foundation that we provide.”

Written for This Is Alabama by Alec Harvey.
The long road that Last Chance U's Kingston Davis took to UAB

By: Evan Dudley

He steps out the door -- earbuds in, hoodie drew tight on a chilly November day -- and saunters through the brisk air to the car with his father a few feet behind him. As he slips into the passenger seat of the pre-warmed vehicle, his father reminds him to keep a positive outlook and appreciate the opportunity the day holds.

It's been three weeks since Kingston Davis was dismissed from the Independence Community College football program and he's back home for Thanksgiving break. The all-time single-season rushing leader in Prattville Lions' history still has exams to finish in Kansas before the semester ends but could not be more relieved to be away from the drudgery of the dust bowl after a chaotic season in junior college.

Davis' father, Leroy, merges onto the interstate and plots their destination into the GPS. His casual conversation is falling on deaf ears as his son stares out through the pines and begins to replay the past year-and-a-half in his mind.

It was a rough first month for Davis in Ann Arbor as he struggled with the rigid demands of being a student-athlete at a football powerhouse like Michigan. But he finished fall camp on a high note and felt good about getting playing time in the Wolverines' 2016 season opener against Hawaii.

Davis waited 58 minutes before his first collegiate snap, but he made his limited time count for 17 yards and a first down on two carries in the closing moments of a 63-3 win. At the time Davis had no clue those would be the only carries of his Michigan career.

The elation of the opening win dissipated quickly after Davis tore a meniscus during practice and was not cleared to return until after the bowl game. Soon, Tyrone Wheatley, his position coach and primary recruiter, left the program to take the same position with the Jacksonville Jaguars.

"I went into spring ball and my name wasn't on the running back depth chart anymore but rather the fullback chart," Davis said. "That was one thing I didn't believe in doing. Coach Wheatley had always defended me whenever position changes was presented to him and him leaving was an opportunity for the staff to move me to fullback."

The position change did not sit well with Davis, and he asked and received his release to pursue other options.

He begins to fade in and out as light rain beats a soothing rhythm on the windshield. Leroy gives his son a nudge, jarring him and eliciting a hearty laugh that has been absent in Davis the past few months. He seemed optimistic about his options after leaving Michigan, but the reality of his eventual decision has worn on Davis and his usual upbeat demeanor.

The burst of emotion surprises Davis and a promising feeling begins to form after enduring a desponding season at ICC. He remembers his other post-Michigan offers from the likes of Cal, Duke and Oklahoma State and silently asks himself if the additional year sitting out would have better served him than taking a chance at the latest Last Chance U.
A package deal sent Davis to Independence, Kansas and head coach Jason Brown. The sly, smooth-talking coach from Compton sealed the deal by adding Davis' former teammate K.J. Lawrence and his cousin Cedric Stevens.

"At the start I wasn't thinking about going the JUCO route, but Coach Brown contacted my dad," Davis said. "I came home from Michigan after the semester and Coach Brown was calling every day. He eventually came to our house with the running backs coach, Jesse Ornelsa, and talked a good game. I was still undecided but offering to bring in my cousin and friend and give them an opportunity eventually persuaded me to give it a chance."

Davis adapted quickly -- despite the absence of familiar amenities beyond a Walmart, a gas station and what campus services provided -- and had a productive beginning to fall camp before a simple stomach virus snowballed into Brown's doghouse.

"The doctor told me to take a day off and let it run course," Davis said. "But the way everything was organized was just off. When I was at Michigan I was used to when something happened the training staff knew about it, they would send you to a doctor, and he would get back with them. It was one big circle and everybody was in the loop. It wasn't like that up there. I contacted the trainer, Raechal Martin, and told her what the doctor said but it was never relayed to the coaches. They wondered where I was and I told them, but the message never got to them."

The result was a demotion on the depth chart leading into the first game and confusion until a meeting to discuss the standards he was expected to uphold was held the day before the first game.

"I remember Coach Brown telling me "I don't think you've proven yourself yet," Davis said. "I didn't know what else to do because he told me he held me to a higher standard than everyone else and although I was a smart football player I hadn't bought into his coaching style and what they were doing at Independence. You don't want to come across wrong because ultimately he has the power to put you in your place, so I just shut up and kept my head down."

The frustration was evident with the cameras rolling for the third season of "Last Chance U" and Brown's borderline abusive behavior was more often than not directed toward Davis. While other athletes made similar mistakes, it was the young running back who took the burden of blame in a dysfunctional situation.

It was at its worst on Netflix's "Last Chance U" following a 70-21 opening season loss to Iowa Western. Davis was late for an early morning practice the following week after his car broke down a couple of miles from the practice field. It was dismissed as an excuse from the coaches and Brown made his true feelings known later that week in a coaches meeting.

"Kingston Davis, he's a f-------," Brown says while lamenting on what he perceived as broken athletes. "He can't f------ do right. He's missed how many times? He's late how many times? He's the epitome of a f-------. So, f--- 'em."

Despite the obstacles and self-doubt, Davis' father encouraged him to keep going and persevere through the adversity. Yet the situation never improved as Davis received carries in only six games and finished with 37 yards on 20 carries with two lost fumbles.
"It was shocking to me," Davis said. "I was down on myself and wondering why this was happening to me. It's not even the fact I wasn't getting in the games, but I wasn't even getting in during practice."

He continued to attend organized team activities, but it came to a screeching halt a few days before a 31-27 loss to Butler Community College. Davis arrived late to practice without his pads and helmet after finding his equipment missing from his car.

"Kingston is such a waste, he's horrible," Brown said on the show after learning of the mishap.

By the end of practice, Kingston Davis was no longer a member of the football team. Davis had hit rock-bottom and was unsure of what his next step would be. By chance, he received an unexpected call two days later from an Alabama area code and heard the voice of UAB head coach Bill Clark.

Davis wasn't sure what to expect as the car drove to UAB's new football operations complex. He knew the program had been reinstated - he was recruited by Clark coming out of high school - but was unsure of anything else. He admitted he had really only come to Birmingham in the past to go to the mall.

He didn't have much of a choice than to give UAB a chance, though. He had no other scholarship offers after crashing out of Independence and was only given a chance to walk on and try to earn a scholarship with the Blazers. Nothing was guaranteed and Davis was reticent about putting a financial burden on his family.

"I just got kicked off JUCO and it's not a good look, you transferred from Michigan out of nowhere, and you didn't play so there's not going to be a lot of opportunities out there," Davis said. "UAB was at a great location, an hour away from home and in-state tuition was low. At first, I didn't want to put my parents through that and find money for me to go to school but they were supportive and were willing to sacrifice a little to give me that opportunity."

The mystic of playing for Clark was not lost on Davis. The name is spoken in reverence in Prattville and a feeling of serendipity crept into Davis' mind - it was his former basketball coach at Prattville and UAB director of athletic performance Xavier Robinson who first made the connection to bring Davis in for a visit. The entire coaching staff was accepting of Davis despite his tumultuous year at ICC and the family-first attitude created by Clark was enough to secure a commitment less than a month later.

Said Davis: "I kind of fell in love with it."

Davis enrolled at UAB for the spring semester and took advantage of opportunities available after minor injuries to returning starter Spencer Brown and fellow transfer Jarrion Street. The first day of pads was an anxious feeling, but Davis quickly fit in. He had a productive spring which culminated in 117 total yards in the spring game and heightened expectations for this upcoming season.

"For us it was literally you can walk-on and earn something, but we don't have anything at the moment," Clark said. "He comes in and does that, works hard and goes to work every day and got chances for more carries and he took advantage of that and earned a scholarship. I think he has some stuff to prove as well and I don't think that's a bad spot to be in."
Davis has tried to put the infamy of "Last Chance U" behind him as he readies for UAB's season opener against Savannah State on Aug. 30. It's been a long journey to get back to this point but the trials and tribulations of the last two years have given Davis the perspective he needed to appreciate the journey.

"I give a lot of credit to my dad and the mentors in my life," he said. "My dad and Coach Wheatley always telling me that it's not over and that the potential in me is still there and don't waste it. It's really a blessing thinking about it because Coach Clark is all about family and I love that about him."
How UAB football approaches out-of-conference scheduling

By: Evan Dudley

For a UAB football program in only its second season since it was shut down, scheduling out-of-conference opponents can be tricky.

With college football programs making headlines recently for scheduling games as far out as 2030, it has become increasingly difficult to add an opponent only a year or two in advance especially one in close regional proximity.

UAB's first out-of-conference game in 2017 was against in-state Alabama A&M, and it drew the largest crowd in school history with an announced attendance of 45,212. UAB kept the momentum building as the program led C-USA in attendance with an average of 26,375 despite not competing for two seasons.

Although in-state FCS opponents are preferred, Ingram was faced with a tough decision heading into the 2018 season as most regional teams already had full schedules set.

"Savannah is not exactly close to us and scheduling Savannah State is the result of a couple of things," he said. "One being Alabama State and Alabama A&M were not available in week one and the second being that Savannah State was the next closest FCS opponent that was available."

UAB has an agreement in principle to open with Alabama State in 2019 - although it has not been confirmed through the athletics department - and the opportunities expand by one this season with the University of North Alabama stepping up to the FCS level.

The prospect of scheduling UNA is not out of the question on the football field as the basketball program is set to take on UNA during the 2018-2019 season.

"That wasn't unintentional, it's that way in basketball," Ingram said. "We're playing Mercer, for example, because they're only two hours away. Any opportunity to play teams that our fans can identify with and recognize as well as give their fans an opportunity to be a part of it, that's our plan."

UAB is currently following a scheduling pattern the next four seasons with home-and-homes with Mid-American and Sun-Belt Conference opponents as well as away games with SEC opponents Texas A&M, Tennessee and Georgia and a matchup with ACC opponent Miami.

The question remains - with utility work already in progress at the new downtown stadium site - if future home-and-home series with Power 5 teams are a possibility for UAB.

"We're not opposed to it," Ingram said. "We don't have any in the moment that are on the schedule but we're not opposed to anything. I think our plan is to be open-minded at all times and try to find the best option at that time."

The openness to a more daunting schedule is shared by head coach Bill Clark but he also likes the way the schedules are currently set up with UAB evolving from a dormant - and one-time dead - program.
"I think we start, especially in that FCS game, we want to entertain an in-state because they're going to bring a good fan base and it creates excitement," Clark said. "I think we're going to explore every good option out there and that's something all the time we're looking at for our fans and what gets the most folks there, rivalries and above."

"But I think it's something to look at. We want to play teams we can compete with always and similar resources. But at the same time, you'd like to step out and see where you are and who you are. I think we're going to be interested in a lot of things especially as we progress and get the new stadium, we got the facilities and will be interesting to see how all of that works out."

The new stadium is scheduled to begin construction by the end of the year at the earliest and 2021 is the most realistic date for UAB to begin competing inside the structure. A future schedule that includes more alluring opponents on a high-quality scale depends entirely on how the program evolves throughout the next few years.

"There's nothing that truly replaces the atmosphere and the sounds and the smell of being at the game," Ingram said. "We don't really feel like we compete with Alabama and Auburn when it comes to people choosing to go there on Saturdays. Our competition, truly, is trying to capture the guy that's staying at home and not going anywhere."

"When we're not televised, and it's our philosophy now, our kickoff is going be when Alabama and Auburn aren't playing. That's our plan so their fans can watch them on television and come and watch us play. We're welcoming everybody in and we want to wrap our arms around every sports fan that loves college football, or college sports of any kind, that lives here. We try to be a place where they can come and watch good Division I quality competition and still love their alma mater, whoever that is, and they can love us too because this is where they live."
The fairy tale over, reality sets in for Bill Clark, Blazers

Evan Dudley  For AL.com

Last year's feel good story of UAB's return to football ended abruptly more than 800 miles away in paradise, with the Blazers being overwhelmed by Ohio in the Bahamas Bowl.

It was an inauspicious conclusion to an otherwise awe-inspiring season that witnessed the resurrected program vastly exceed expectations after two years away from competition.

But that was then, and this is now.

"The 'Return' is over," senior safety Broderick Thomas said. "Now, we're just another football team trying to compete and win a championship."

While the bowl loss belied UAB's accomplishments, it is a sign of a program still in a state of adaptation and evolution. For head coach Bill Clark, that begins with being sound in both mind and body.

"We do a lot of mental training," Clark said. "I think that's the latest thing that has come around. We spent a lot of time this summer talking to them about 'what do winners look like?' and that meditation time and self-talk time you need. We talk about the total athlete."

One "total athlete" making the process easier is running back Spencer Brown. After rushing for 1,329 yards and 10 touchdowns en route to C-USA Freshman of the Year honors, Brown has his own expectations to deal with heading into his sophomore year.

He was named to watch lists for the Walter Camp Award, Maxwell Award and the Doak Walker Award, as well as the coaches' preseason all-conference team.

"I think all of us worry when great things happen, how do you handle it," Clark said. "He came in with a humble spirit and thanked his lineman and was appreciative and he was ready for the spring. He has done everything to give himself a chance to be great and that's all we can ask for. We're excited for him and we know he is as well."

Brown adds value to new coordinator Bryant Vincent's more liberal approach to offense. The Kentucky native is familiar to UAB fans, having led a Blazers offense to 33.2 points per game in 2014 before joining Joey Jones' staff at South Alabama for two seasons.

For now, however, Vincent is a new face in a program full of them. Only 53 players on UAB's roster are not transfers.

More than half the roster began their careers elsewhere — crucial in the early evolution of the reinstated program — and only four players remain from the 2014 team: center Lee Dufour, receiver Collin Lisa, offensive lineman Bryant Novick and kicker Nick Vogel.

Dufour, a preseason candidate for the Rimington Award, has witnessed the life, death and resurrection of the program and senses a new atmosphere surrounding a program that has proven it can rise to meet — and excel — the expectations of a team predicted to finish third in the league.

"I think we have all the capability to win as many games as we want this season," he said. "The community support has been great and there is nothing like Birmingham as far as a college fan base goes. I can't go eat a burger without someone stopping me and saying 'Hey man, I am going to be at all of the football games this year.' It's been real exciting."

Clark has the same confidence but is aware that his program is no longer an unknown and susceptible to the same pitfalls as any other team in the country.

"Having gone from nothing to something at other places, there is a lot of talk about expecting something and having people circle you and I say that all the time," he said. "We have people who are literally circling our game on their calendars, now granted we have a pen too, but we talk about earning the right to have people say good things about us.

"We earned that right last year but how do we take that next step and sustain it and it's just about work. It's about how much we work, how much we want it, how much we come together, love each other and all of those things. We expect it and they have heard it numerous times but we still have a ton to prove."
Standards for coaching have taken a major shift

By: Tommy Deas

Maryland coach D.J. Durkin, has been under fire for allegations of abusive, uncaring conduct toward players by the football staff that came to light from reporting in the wake of a player’s death during offseason conditioning drills. George Washington University and Rutgers fired basketball coaches in recent years over issues of physical, verbal and emotional abuse of athletes. A Georgia high school football team just last week walked out on a successful coach, claiming mistreatment and unsafe practice conditions.

Gone are the days when Paul W. “Bear” Bryant could take his Texas A&M team to Junction, Texas, for a harsh summer boot camp, or when Bobby Knight could launch profane tirades at basketball players at Indiana.

Coaches know there has been an accelerating shift in the landscape of interaction with players. Alabama coaches in several sports acknowledge it and say they are adjusting to better reach today’s athletes.

“I’m very aware of it,” UA swimming and diving coach Dennis Pursley said. “I’d be surprised if there’s a coach in existence in any sport today that’s not aware of it.

“You have to change with the times. The times are very different. I can speak for myself, been coaching over 40 years, my coaching style and methods when I first started coaching that were embraced by the athletes, their parents, the community, are not acceptable today.”

While standards of coaching conduct and player relations are changing, coaches are still charged with winning, and with building the mental and physical toughness it takes to win. Meeting that challenge has required changes in method and approach.

Old school

Decades ago, the generally-accepted method of driving athletes was by berating them. Pushing players meant pushing their buttons like a drill sergeant.

Jay Seawell, who has coached Alabama men’s golf to a pair of national championships, went through those drills when he was an athlete at South Carolina.

“Even in the 1980s, golf was tough,” he said. “We played with a lot of fear; not that we were going to get beat up, but we were going to get whipped — maybe verbally, maybe some stadium steps — if we did not do exactly what (the coach) said.”

Said Alabama men’s tennis coach George Husack, “I was taught to do what I was told. It was a top-down, preaching mentality.”

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That harsher, more military style of coaching doesn’t go over well these days. Yelling and screaming can be counterproductive.

“There are athletes who don’t take well to bluntness, and there are coaches who are blunt and they’re not going to sugarcoat things,” said Crimson Tide cross country runner Rebecca Buteau. “I do think sometimes it can be necessary where the athletes do respect it, but there can also be an abuse of power so there has to be a balance.”

Pursley, who began coaching at Alabama as an assistant in the 1970s and has coached internationally in the Pan Am Games and the Olympics, has seen shifting tides in coaching approaches. Bryant and Knight got results and engendered loyalty, but their ways wouldn’t work today. Figuring out what will work is the task.

“‘Bear’ Bryant, if he was alive today and coaching the way he did, they’d lock him up and throw away the key; same for me and same for everybody that coached back in that era” Pursley said. “And yet you talk to his payers and they’ll tell you, almost to a man, that he was the most positive influence in their lives.

“I’ll be honest with you, with the restrictions that we need to work with today — and I’m not passing judgment, I’m not saying it’s good or bad — the reality is that it probably is more difficult to develop mental toughness in the environment today. It’s no longer a my-way-or-the-highway approach, but there are ways to do it.”

A dialogue

Coaches have learned that modern student-athletes want to know why they are asked to do something as much as they want to know what to do or how to do it.

“There is more questioning,” Husack said, “not because they’re trying to be smart but because they want to understand it, they want to understand the process.”

Alabama track coach Dan Waters said it’s the job of the coach to understand how to get the best out of each athlete. Every athlete is a puzzle to be solved.

“I think especially with the track and field athletes it’s a lot of individual, one-on-one time, so you’ve really got to figure out what it will take to get the athlete to perform above and beyond what they thought they were capable of doing,” he said.

Athletes want two-way communication.

Said Buteau, “You can tell by the coach-athlete interaction how it is. A lot of times (things are) resolved by just going up to the coach and saying ‘This is where I’m missing what you want.’
“I think talking with your coach, that’s where the coach can be honest with you and say, ‘I’m not seeing it from you in practice,’ just kind of him being honest and saying, ‘I think you need to put in more effort here and here and here,’ and not saying you’re not tough enough but saying this is where you can get better, these are areas where I see you being weak.”

**Family time**

Coaches in all sports talk about building a family atmosphere. Families are sometimes dysfunctional, however, so the job of the coach is to create a nurturing environment that also creates successful results.

“You can cultivate a really good, positive, uplifting environment by addressing things and talking like you would in a family instead of ignoring it or brushing it under the carpet, especially when there’s conflict with teammates or coaching a player,” UA women’s tennis coach Jenny Mainz said. “If you have a respect level of talking about it and how can we get better, how can we be effective, how can we move forward, and that’s really the goal.”

Coaches also have to enforce discipline, just as parents have to sometimes make children do things that are good for them even when the children resist.

“I have to communicate with my guys all the time,” Husack said. “That doesn’t mean be buddies with them. It’s no different than parenting my own children — I have to have trust in them, I have to listen to them more than anything and not constantly tell them what to do or tell them my opinion but listen to where they’re coming from and allow them to express themselves

“I think it’s easy to jump on a kid (but) I think it’s important to really breathe — I know that sounds kind of corny — and really figure out what I’m trying to accomplish here, what lesson am I trying to teach, am I trying to just say it’s wrong or am I trying to say this is how it should be done?”

**Positive approach**

Coaches remember how they were coached and take the best from those experiences.

“I try to put myself in the mind of a player and what did I like about the coaches that during the course of my career — youth, high school, college, pros,” UA soccer coach Wes Hart said.

“There were so many coaches throughout that affected my life both positively and negatively, and everything I do today I try to take from coaches I liked.

“What motivated me was coaches that helped instill confidence in me and encouraged me to express myself and play freely and knew that I was going to make mistakes. That’s how I believe

See next page
I try to coach. I’ve never been one that has tried to intimidate by fear; I don’t believe that that’s long-lasting.”

Seawell has come to a similar conclusion.

“I’ve never been somebody that thought someone being belittled helps you get better because I was raised in that generation, and every time I got beat down a little bit I didn’t respond,” he said. “So I’ve always coached against that grain anyway.”

Kids take to sports at first because they’re fun. Even though collegiate athletics is a higher competitive level, they still want to enjoy the experience.

“Our coach wants us all to be happy, and if we’re not happy he wants us to let him know about that,” said Emma Welch, one of Hart’s soccer players. “He tries to make practices light and fun and at the same time make sure we get all of our stuff done. I appreciate that.”

Getting tough

Encouragement and kind words go only so far. Coaches also have to prepare athletes for the physical and mental rigors of competition. Getting athletes to push themselves is still the goal, but the approach is different.

Hart, for instance, has his soccer players do much of their conditioning work by setting up three-on-three matches that require a lot of running. Three-player groups go head-to-head until one scores five goals.

“Sometimes soccer coaches try to punish players through running, and Wes, when he got there, said that’s not the way that he does things,” Welch said. “He normally gets our fitness in and really have competition within the game of soccer.”

Said Hart, “I don’t think building mental toughness is screaming at a kid, belittling them and making them feel insignificant. To me that’s not building mental toughness, that’s just bullying someone. Can we put our players in environments where it’s not easy for them, they’ve got to work to find solutions, think quicker, act faster? I think you can accomplish those things without mentally or physically abusing a person.”

Seawell has taken four Alabama golf teams to match-play national finals, high-pressure situations where every shot counts.

“It’s my job to put them through the practices, the schedule, the mindset, everything so that they’re prepared for that,” he said. “We set that agenda early to prepare for that, so all of our practices are about competition, about performance, how do you handle that?

See next page
"It’s about putting them as close as you can to the fire so that they understand what the fire may be like when they get there.

The UA women’s tennis team builds a lot of toughness training into its strength and conditioning regimen. Some parts are set up so a player has to push through one difficult task to graduate to the next, making it more of a competitive exercise.

"Not a lot of people want to do that stuff, but that’s what you have to get through to get better," Mainz said.

Coaching awareness

Coaches don’t have to look hard to see situations where their peers at other schools have lost jobs over interactions with athletes. They know an athlete or parent can go to an athletics director or take to social media to lodge complaints that will be heard.

“There’s obviously lines that obviously in no circumstances in any era that you cross,” Pursley said. “You have to consider the best interest of the student-athlete in your coaching style and methodology.

“What we today consider to be in their best interest is maybe different from what was considered in their best interest 40 years ago. There’s opinions on both sides of the fence, but that’s a moot point. It is what it is today whether you agree with it or not, whether you like it or not. If you don’t respond accordingly you’re putting your career and your program at risk.”

Said Waters, “I think everybody has to understand that anything they say to an athlete can be reported or taken out of context. You better be sure it’s super-positive and your message is super-clear and that there’s nothing that you wouldn’t want to see in the newspaper the next day. That’s good practice for all coaches, just finding different ways of reaching the athlete so they’re not going to go to an AD’s office and say so-and-so said this.”

It comes down to keeping the purpose of coaching in the forefront when interacting with athletes. Coaches who lose sight of that can find themselves in deep trouble.

“You’ve always got to be true to yourself and maintain your integrity and your character and remember that we all coach really important sports,” Mainz said. “And it is important, but the way that you treat people and treat athletes, they’re the most important thing.”
Bounce goes Alabama's way in soccer win

By Cody Estremera
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

Alabama's first soccer win of the season last week was an offensive explosion. The Crimson Tide had to work for its second victory.

Alabama edged Virginia Tech on Thursday night at the Alabama Soccer Complex as the Crimson Tide defense turned the Hokies away in a 1-0 decision. It was the Hokies' first loss of the season.

The combination of Brynn Martin, Nealy Martin, Kayla Mouton, and later Abby Bivens on the back line frustrated the Hokie offense.

"At halftime (head coach) Wes (Hart) just talked to us about mentality and giving it our all pretty much," Brynn Martin said. "We just wanted a shutout. We want a lot of shutouts this season, so that was our main goal. Just block as much (as possible) and stay laxed in the box. As much pressure as they were giving, we need to give it back on the defensive side."

This is the second straight shutout for Alabama keeper Alex Plavin. She made five saves in the win.

The lone goal came in the 15th minute of the first half off the head of a Virginia Tech defender. The ball bounced out to midfielder Taylor Morgan, who in turn hit the ball toward the double-teamed Emma Welch, before finding the unlucky Hokie.

See SOCCER, C3

Christina Maartensson takes the ball downfield during the Crimson Tide's soccer match against Virginia Tech on Thursday at the Alabama Soccer Complex. Alabama won, 1-0. [PHOTO/ ALABAMA ATHLETICS]

"Clearly, Virginia Tech is a tough team," Hart said. "We knew it was going to be a low-scoring affair, and I'm just proud in our group to find a way to get a goal, whether that's an own-goal, whether it's a bicycle kick, or whether it's a Kat Rogers 35-yard shot. They all count the same."

While Alabama's back line caused problems for Virginia Tech, the Crimson Tide offense was in the same situation. As a team, Alabama got off just six shots off and failed to score a goal.

"They were really good," forward Casey Wertz said. "They were really physical, (and) very talented. Definitely harder than any opponent we've played to this far."

Wertz said the offense tried to get space along the outside with Welch and Riley Mattingly.

Alabama (2-2-1) continues its six-game homestand with a matchup against Rice on Sunday.
A slight change on UA’s sidelines this season

Nick Saban has, in the past, put a new twist on an old adage.

On game days, Saban would keep his friends close — but his coordinators closer.

That’s a small detail but it was one which became a nationally-televised (and much enjoyed) spin-off of the actual games during Lane Kiffin’s three-year tenure as Alabama’s offensive coordinator. Cameras stayed focused on Kiffin, usually standing next to Saban when Alabama had the ball, with national audiences waiting for the occasional volcanic eruption or the counterpoint when Kiffin would dial up a perfect play call, often raising both arms in the “touchdown” signal just a second or two after the ball was snapped.

For entertainment purposes, either reaction was great considering the larger-than-life personalities involved. Brain Daboll, Kiffin’s replacement last season, got an occasional earful as well.

This time around, Saban is switching things up a bit. That might not be breaking news for some teams, but at Alabama and its fans, every detail matters.

Offensive coordinator Mike Locksley will be upstairs. One would think that means new quarterbacks Dan Enos would be on the sideline, but Saban did not answer that specifically.

See HURT, C6
"I think it's just as important to get good information during the game and have people to get good information, so there is good and bad in both."

Nick Saban, Alabama head football coach

"I allow the coordinators and give them the opportunity to do it the way they think is most effective for them," Saban said.

"Mike's been a coordinator a lot (including at Illinois and Maryland.) We've got other good coaches who have experience on the field so I'm fine with that."

Defensively, Saban will have Tosh Lupoi, in his first year as defensive coordinator, on the field.

Pete Golding, the co-defensive coordinator and defensive line coach who came from Texas-San Antonio in the off-season, will man the booth.

"Tosh is going to be on the field and Pete will be in the pressbox," Saban said.

"I think it's just as important to get good information during the game and have people to get good information, so there is good and bad in both."

Saban seems to implicitly reject the idea he was keeping Lupoi nearby while he learned his new role.

"I always wanted to be in the pressbox," Saban said. "Then when I worked for Bill Belichick in Cleveland, he said, 'You put all the stuff in, you worked with the players, you talked to them all the time (so) you've got to be on the sideline to make adjustments during the game. You're the only guy that can communicate with every group.'"

"It was a lot harder in the beginning because you couldn't sit around and look at your sheet of paper and figure out what you wanted to call. You had to know what you wanted to call in every situation in the game and I think that takes a little getting used to and a little experience."

Louisville, with Bobby Petrino calling the offensive shots, will provide an immediate challenge but Saban said preparation has been good.

"In the two scrimmages that we've had, we have not had issues in communication at all."

For Alabama fans, that sounds like good news. For fans of the good old days with Saban and Kiffin, well, there's always YouTube.

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
Fallen star's leg saved by a tweet

Tide's Anfernee Jennings will be back on the field Saturday thanks to Alabama's medical team and a random fan

Matt Zenitz  mzenitz@al.com

The scar is thick and stretches from the inner part of Anfernee Jennings' knee down through his calf.

It's an unusual spot for a post-surgery scar, but that's because this wasn't a normal injury or surgery.

For those who know the full extent of the Alabama defensive star's Sugar Bowl injury, it's amazing he's already back and ready to play when the Crimson Tide opens its season Saturday night against Louisville.

Until now, all that was known publicly was that Jennings had a knee injury and underwent surgery. It was far from that simple, though.

This situation could have played out much worse if not for the work of Alabama's medical staff.

And a random fan.

"I don't think people realize how serious of an injury that really was because no one's ever really talked about it," said Richard White, Jennings' high school coach. "It was a scary situation for him, his mom and everyone concerned."

See ANFERNEE JENNINGS, A6
Anfernee Jennings: ‘Sometimes we need a challenge’

FROM Al

HORRIFIC INJURY

If you've seen the slow-motion replay, you know Jennings’ leg bent in a way that legs aren't meant to bend.

While chasing a Clemson running back, he was unintentionally leg whiplashed by a teammate at the exact point he had planted his left foot in the ground. The leg swung and hit Jennings’ left knee with so much force that it pushed the knee backwards. Jennings’ leg looked like the left side of a diamond.

It was an unfortunate ending to the best game of the Dadeville native's college career; he had five tackles, a career-high three stops for a loss and a sack.

"I've been around football the last 25 years, and that was probably the worst knee injury I've seen in a long time," said Matt Harrison, a former Alabama offensive lineman who was Jennings' high school defensive line coach.

The initial diagnosis was a posterior cruciate ligament injury, but it ended up being much more serious. Alabama personnel, though, might not have figured that out as quickly as they did without the help of that random fan.

The fan tagged Jennings in a tweet of a picture that showed Jennings' knee bent at that disgusting angle. Normally, Jennings was scared when he saw the picture late that night and immediately sent it to an Alabama trainer who expedited the process of Jennings getting another exam the next morning.

Upon further examination, it was discovered the pulse in Jennings’ leg wasn’t as good as it had been the night before. Further testing confirmed Jennings had suffered artery damage and had a blood clot, which — if not tended to within a certain period of time — can put one at serious risk of losing their leg. Fortunately, it was caught early enough and Jennings underwent surgery in Birmingham shortly after Alabama arrived back home from New Orleans the day after the game.

It easily could have turned out much different. If as little as another eight or 10 hours had gone by without the issue being addressed, it's very possible the leg would have needed to be amputated. A promising football career could have been over.

"Thank God we got on it," Jennings said. "And thank God for that fan, whoever tweeted that picture. It's crazy, but I'm just thankful and just glad to be out here."

A LONG PROCESS

Jennings is lucky. Lucky it was caught when it was.

Lucky because, even though it was caught early, it's still a complicated surgery where a lot can go wrong.

It all worked out in Jennings’ favor, though, setting the stage for him to be able to play much sooner than originally expected. The initial belief was that additional surgeries might be necessary and it was probably unlikely Jennings would be back for the Louisville game. Instead, the PCL healed without additional surgery and the talented defender has been full-go since fall camp began in early August after sitting out in the spring. It's a credit to Alabama's standout medical staff led by Lyle Cain, Jeff Allen, Jeremy Gsell, James Robinson and vascular surgeon Will I larvey.

"It's been a long process and it's been a challenge," Jennings said. "But sometimes we need a challenge, and it challenged me to push even harder and to just be the best version of myself that I can be. I can't thank God enough for giving me a chance to continue to play football and just look forward to a great, healthy season."

Having Jennings back is a big deal for Alabama, especially when you factor in the Tide recently lost two other top outside linebackers to serious knee injuries.

To former Alabama star linebacker Rolando McClain, the 6-foot-3, 265-pound Jennings has some Courtney Upshaw-like characteristics. In his last two games — last year’s Iron Bowl and then the Sugar Bowl against Clemson — Jennings had 11 combined tackles with 5½ stops for a loss and a sack.

"He's just got like a mean demeanor about him," McClain said of Jennings. "But he's also way more athletic than Courtney."

It seems like that should still be the case. Jennings has consistently talked about feeling “great” and back to normal in recent months and is considered one of Alabama’s clear defensive leaders. He enters the season with high expectations as well-known NFL draft pundit Mel Kiper Jr. and Dane Brugler both have him ranked as a top-25 draft prospect.

That scar, though, Is a constant reminder of the scary journey to get back to this point. A reminder that his football dreams could have been extinguished had it not been for that random fan on Twitter and the quick reaction of Alabama doctors.

"I was worried early on that he may not be able to play again," Harrison said. "But it turned out OK. And for him to, right now, be able to participate and for there to not be any question about whether he's going to play in that first game or not, it's a huge testament to the medical staff at Alabama."
FOOTBALL

‘Forgotten’ 2-QB HS offense could cure Tide’s woe’s

Josh Bean  jbean@al.com

It’s been nearly 20 years since an Alabama high school team used a two-quarterback system.

Not alternating quarterbacks each series or on each play. Sumiton Christian coach David Campbell, an All-American defensive lineman at Auburn who played briefly in the NFL before returning home to Walker County as a high school coach, created an offense in which two quarterbacks lined up in a split-back, shotgun formation on every play.

Each quarterback lined up behind the two guards, with no one directly behind center.

“arerealized if you used two quarterbacks, the defense wouldn’t know which one of ’em was going to get the ball,” Campbell said in a phone interview earlier this week. “You know, they’d catch the ball on the run. We had about five or six different snaps. ... The kids loved it. It was a lot of fun.”

Despite the Eagles’ success — going 9-3 in 1999 in the school’s final AISA season, finishing 11-1 in its first AHSAA season in 2000, and quarterback Josh Russell winning the Class 1A Back of the Year award in 2000 — no other teams copied Campbell’s scheme.

“It’s pretty much forgotten,” Campbell said. But Campbell’s unique two-quarterback system deserves at least a speculative second look as Alabama’s murky quarterback situation becomes clear. Alabama fans from Elkmont to Eight Mile want to know who Nick Saban will chose as Alabama’s starting quarterback — two-year starter Jalen Hurts or national championship game hero Tua Tagovailoa — in Saturday’s season opener against Louisville.

Campbell, 70, is long retired from coaching but said he still follows college football closely. Yes, he watched last year’s national title game. Yes, he’s followed Alabama’s quarterback race. Yes, he’s also toyed with how Tua and Jalen would fare triggering his split-back, two-quarterback system.

“Yeah, I would run it, especially to keep ‘em happy,” said Campbell, referring to both Alabama quarterbacks being underclassmen and the incessant online speculation that one or the other might transfer.

Campbell’s offense worked in part because defenses couldn’t always make pre-snap calls about whether a play would be a run or a pass. Russell served as the primary passer and fellow quarterbacks generally excelled as the better runners, but Russell sometimes ran, too.

“Here’s the deal: They have to be able to run the ball,” Campbell said.

Hurts, of course, has already run for more than 1,800 yards in two seasons, and Tagovailoa flashed scrambling ability in the second-half comeback against Georgia in the national championship game.

“What’s intriguing is that Jalen and Tua, especially Jalen, looks like a running back,” Russell said. “I don’t know if in college this offense is going to work as a regular offense. In college, there’s so much (defensive) penetration. Do I think it works? Absolutely, especially as a mix-up because nobody sees it.”

Campbell’s two-QB offense lined up in a base formation with two wideouts and two wingbacks, essentially making it a four-receiver set. But one of the wingbacks would sometimes line up directly behind a guard, creating an overloaded formation perfect for a power running play.

Even that formation, though, sometimes was used for a long pass when defenders crowded near the line of scrimmage.

“There was a lot of trickery and misdirection in it as well,” Russell said.

Alabama, of course, has never played two quarterbacks simultaneously during the Saban era, so there’s essentially zero chance of seeing Campbell’s offense in Saturday’s opener.

Campbell and Russell agreed it’s fun speculation.

“I played defense and always looked at offense from that perspective,” Campbell said. “I looked at offense with the thought, ‘Boy, I’d hate to see somebody do this against me.’

“This offense, it would drive people crazy.”
Tua Tagovailoa has to be Alabama's starter

By: Joseph Goodman

It has to be Tua.

It's nothing against Jalen Hurts, who is an excellent college quarterback, and one of the best to suit up for Alabama. But, to begin the season, for the first snap, in the name of fairness, it has to be Tua Tagovailoa under center for the Crimson Tide.

The quarterback controversy at Alabama this offseason has been quite unlike anything we've seen during Nick Saban's historic run, or maybe ever. It's not just that Saban benched his starter at halftime of the national championship, a starter who had led Alabama to back-to-back title games. If Alabama had lost the national championship game, there still would have been a quarterback controversy this offseason.

But Alabama won, and not only did Tua lead the comeback, but second-and-26 was one of the most historic throws in the history of college football. You can't reward history with a seat on the bench. In the spirit of football, you just can't.

Hurts was pulled from the game because he couldn't move the offense. He lost the position because he was about to lose the game. Has Tua done anything to lose the position? No, and until he does, he should be the starter.

Sure, Tua and Jalen might split time against Louisville on Saturday night in the season opener. They might even take the field together to start the game. But, make no mistake, the team should be Tua's to start the season. He should make the first throw, and he should take the large majority of meaningful snaps under center.

And it shouldn't be a difficult call for Saban to make, either. He's waited this long to announce the starter because he wanted both quarterbacks to push each other, and he didn't want Jalen to transfer. But it's an easy decision.

Sometimes a good player gets benched for a better one. It happens. Drew Bledsoe was a fine quarterback, but he got hurt and Tom Brady was his backup.

The quarterback depth chart this season only turns into a problem for Saban if he mismanages it. He won't. The correct choice is too obvious.

In the end, Alabama can win with both quarterbacks, and Tua and Jalen give Alabama an advantage over every team in college football. They are two of the top five quarterbacks in the country. (My top five, in no particular order: Tua, Jalen, Jarrett Stidham of Auburn, Trace McSorley of Penn State and McKenzie Milton of UCF.)
This isn't a video game or computer simulation, though. There are egos involved, and there is a future to consider.

If Tua starts, and he underperforms, then no one is going to have a reason to complain when he's replaced. Does Tua transfer if he's not the starter? It would be a career blunder, but it's something for Saban to consider.

Tua's younger brother also must factor into the decision. Taulia Tagovailoa, a senior at Thompson High School in Alabaster, is committed to Alabama. He's scheduled to enroll at Alabama this winter. Saban could lose both Tagovailoa's if Tua isn't the opening day starter.

A strong case can be made for Jalen to be the opening-game starter. I know, because I've made that argument, and we've all seen Jalen win games for two years. All things being equal, and last year didn't happen, then Jalen might be the pick based on seniority alone. Alabama can win with both players.

Hurts also is the safer choice, and it's pretty hard to refute that based on last season, but the upside for Alabama's offense seems far greater with Tua. Alabama is loaded at wide receiver and running back. The best choice at quarterback in college football isn't always the better passer, but for Alabama that appears to be the case this season. Louisville's secondary might look pretty silly on Saturday when Tua goes play action.

The long offseason of quarterback speculation is almost over. It has been a stressful few months for both players, and for their families. Resolution hopefully will come on Saturday.

It's an unprecedented situation, benching a quarterback of Jalen's caliber who is 26-2 as a starter, but Tua is the right choice for right now.

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It's an unprecedented situation, benching a quarterback of Jalen's caliber who is 26-2 as a starter, but Tua is the right choice for right now.
‘Do it again’ is Saban’s likely answer

By: Cecil Hurt

If you have access to Alabama football practice, or if you take advantage of the chance to see those practices on “Training Days,” you will quickly pick up on Nick Saban’s favorite practice phrase.

“Do it again.”

“Do it again.”

“Do it again.”

The repetition is not eternal but can seem like it. The end comes with kickoff. But until kickoff arrives, Saban, a perfectionist, believes in doing a thing until it becomes second nature. The characteristic is so ingrained in Saban that one wonders if, at this point, he isn’t doing the same thing to his own fan base as they await, not too patiently in some cases, for an announcement on the starting quarterback.

Monday was the same drill that Saban has been running for years, again and again. Anticipation rises at various media opportunities — SEC Media Days, the opening of practice, the first scrimmage, the arrival of game week. Definitive answers are not forthcoming.

Subliminally or overtly, the message from the head coach remains the same: Do It Again.

Wednesday is Saban’s final press conference before the season opener. Thursday is his listener-participation format radio show, on which Saban does sometimes break news. Saturday morning is spent with the media members involved in the telecast of the evening game, and whether Saban tips his hand or not, there will be an outpouring of winks, nods and inside sources looking to be two minutes ahead of the next outlet.

No one should blame fans for being acutely interested in whether Jalen Hurts or Tua Tagovailoa starts against Louisville. That fan interest drives the media bus. This is college football history unfolding.

Quarterback controversies are nothing new. Alabama has had such controversies for decades. So have other programs. There have even been a fair amount of Established Starter vs. New Hotshot battles over the years. But when has there ever been a starter so established that he has started two consecutive national championship games in a two-year career vying against a hotshot so hot that he not only threw the game-winning pass for a national title, but is the betting favorite to win the Heisman Trophy? Never.
Saban has his reasons for not making a public announcement. He says there has been no decision, which sounds incongruous, but is a clear “do it again” answer. The scales have to be tilting in one direction or another at this point. But nothing is over, to paraphrase John Belushi, until Saban says it is.

The safest hedge, and it’s one where I find myself hiding along with the other rabbits from time to time, is that both quarterbacks will play. Taking the first snap of the first offensive possession makes someone the “starter,” the theory goes, but that’s not more valuable than the fifth snap of the second quarter, is it?

Saban, however, didn’t respond to a question (or, worse, an “assumption”) that both quarterbacks would play when that was floated in his Monday press conference. The change in his inflection may have been irritation at any “assuming,” but it was notable. Perhaps things won’t be done by committee. Perhaps Louisville’s offense and Alabama’s inexperienced defense mean that there’s a football game to be won, which is more important than a lab experiment in “quarterback playing time” being conducted.

So the answer is likely to be “do it again,” for a few more days.
Depth chart filled with slashes, questions

By Terrin Waack
Sports Writer

An “or” has been replaced with a slash for Alabama’s first depth chart of the 2018 season.

The coveted list of names and positions was released Monday. And no, it does not reveal who will start at quarterback. Both Tua Tagovailoa and Jalen Hurts are listed in the first-team slot. There’s a slash between the two names, which signifies that one or the other could start.

Kicker is another position up in the air. Both Joseph Bulovas and Austin Jones are listed.

“We haven’t made that decision yet,” Alabama coach Nick Saban said. “So we’ll keep letting both guys kick this week, and we’ll sort of see what happens.”

Josh Jacobs and Trevon Diggs share kickoff return honors. Either Thomas Fletcher or Scott Meyer will be the long snapper.

Defensively, Saivion Smith and Patrick Surtain II are next to each other for a cornerback position, while Diggs is alone for the other.

Otherwise, all the slashes are reserved for players competing to be listed on the second team.

“In this game, it takes everybody to win,” linebacker Christian Miller said. “It doesn’t really matter exactly where you’re at on the depth chart. You never know what can happen.”

Nine true freshmen occupy 11 positions on the two-deep chart, including Surtain and punter Skyler DeLong as primaries.

No rookies made their first career start during last year’s season opener, but don’t count them out. Seventeen played throughout the course of the season.

“Anytime that we have guys that leave or guys that go down, we know we have a lot of younger guys that can step in and fill the role,” running back Damien Harris said. “We had a lot of guys who did that last year, so we never panic.”

Based on how they talk about the depth chart, the players aren’t concerned. Nothing is set in stone. The piece of paper is a formality.

And Saban will be the first to remind anyone: Whoever is ready will play.

“I owe that to every player on the team to play the best players,” Saban said. “And if a guy hasn’t done that, then somebody else should play.

“So I think there’s competition whether there’s a depth chart or not. Or whether we have a slash or not.”

Defending the pass

Louisville lost its 2016 Heisman Trophy-winner Lamar Jackson to the NFL, as he declared early following his junior season.

Now, it has redshirt sophomore quarterback Jawon Pass, who played in six games last season and competed 23 of his 33 passes for 238 yards and two touchdowns. He also rushed for 62 yards and a score on 13 carries.

“I think we’re going to do our best to affect him up front to help our secondary out,” Miller said. “I think that’s going to be our game plan, affect the passer.”

Which is no surprise.

But Alabama lost all of last season’s starters in its secondary. Deionte Thompson is probably the most experienced returner since he started both playoff games.

So, it’s not so much who’s behind center for Louisville that matters to Alabama. It’s how the defense is going to perform overall on its side of the ball.

“I wouldn’t say it’s a concern,” Saban said. “But I’d say, how are we going to establish an identity on defense with the players that we have? Are they going to be able to play together? Are they going to be able to sustain performance? If something bad happens, are they going to be able to respond the right way?”

Team motto

On his right wrist, Alabama defensive lineman Isaiah Buggs wears two rubber bracelets. One is black with white writing. The other is red with black print.

They both say: Don’t Waste A Day.

“That’s a team motto,” Buggs said. “Every time we come here, we can’t waste a day. We got to get better each and every day, and that’s the standard here that Coach Saban has no matter who you are.”

The Tuscaloosa News
Tuesday, August 28, 2018

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Legacy, talent define Year of the Quarterback in Alabama

By: Joseph Goodman

This is the year of the quarterback in Alabama.

From the elite college level all the way down to high school, a collection of talented signal callers around the state are poised to take aim at a 2018 season quite unlike any other. Alabama and Auburn are both rich in quarterback history, but this season a unique set of circumstances at the two schools has put some added emphasis on the most important position on the field. For just the second time in the history of college football in this state, starting quarterbacks return for Alabama and Auburn following 10-win seasons for both schools.

There's nothing quite like a returning starter at quarterback coming off a big season to raise preseason expectations to impossible heights. It happened first in 1975 with Phil Gargis at Auburn and Richard Todd at Alabama, but hasn't occurred again until now.

Auburn went 10-2 in 1974, but followed that season with a record of 4-6-1. It was Ralph Jordan's final year at Auburn. Meanwhile, Alabama went 11-1 in 1974, and won the SEC. Todd followed that season with another 11-1 campaign, and another SEC title.

What sets this preseason of intrigue apart from the rest is the quarterback controversy at Alabama following a national championship, the potential for greatness at Auburn and family ties reaching down into the prep ranks that could affect future teams at both schools.

At Alabama, Jalen Hurts returns after starting as a freshman and sophomore, but he could lose the starting job to backup Tua Tagovailoa, the hero of the national championship. Having both Hurts and Tagovailoa gives Alabama some offensive options (and security) unprecedented for the position during Nick Saban's run.

At Auburn, quarterback Jarrett Stidham returns for his second season after throwing for 3,158 yards in 2017. A 3,000-yard passer has never returned for an encore at Auburn. In fact, Stidham already is just the second Auburn quarterback to throw for over 3,000 yards in a season. Dameyune Craig holds the record (3,277 yards), but he did that his senior year.

Three quarterbacks, two schools, one goal: win the national championship.

Alabama needed both of its quarterbacks to get the job done last season, and the way it happened set the stage for this preseason's great anticipation. The last play of the previous season has been a preamble for the next.

That's what made this offseason so unlike any other for the Crimson Tide.

The throw -- you know, the throw -- ended the 2018 national championship game with one of the greatest plays in the history of college football, but Tagovailoa's miracle strike to DeVonta Smith was just the beginning of something else.

"Second and 26" launched Tua into the national spotlight, and triggered a wave of speculation about Alabama's quarterback position for the next season. The next season is here, finally, at long last, and college football will soon have an answer, Tua or Jalen? That question was the biggest story in all of college football for most of the summer.

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The anticipation and hype for Tua's second season is unprecedented for an Alabama quarterback during the Saban Era, but so is the beginning of Hurts' career at Alabama. The starting quarterback at Alabama since the second game of his freshman season, Hurts is 26-2 in two seasons. In terms of wins, it's the greatest beginning to a quarterback career in the history of Alabama football.

Despite that, speculation persisted all summer that Hurts would transfer. As if he could just walk away from a team he helped build brick by brick since his freshman season.

"I just brush it off. It's funny to me," Hurts said. "It's all silly. That's the world we live in. It's the reality of it. Like I said, ever since the championship game people have said I'm going to go to Texas or here, whatever it is. Alumni have said that. The list goes on.

"Regardless of what people are saying, I'm still here and as far as I'm concerned my job is to be the best quarterback I can be and that's what I strive to do everyday."

Now Alabama coach Nick Saban must choose between Hurts and Tagovailoa.

But here's the thing, regardless of which quarterback starts for Alabama on opening day in Orlando against Louisville, the Crimson Tide's cross-state rival has a quarterback who might be better than both.

Auburn's Stidham was the only quarterback in the country to defeat two No.1-ranked teams last season. He dispatched Georgia with ease, defeating the Bulldogs 42-14, and then made his Iron Bowl debut in style by scorching Alabama 26-14. Stidham won the SEC West, but couldn't win the rematch with rival Georgia in the SEC championship game.

Auburn was the state champ last year, but Alabama sidestepped its way into the College Football Playoff, and then made history with Tua's overtime heroics. Stidham could have gone pro after his masterful run through the SEC, but, with more to prove to himself and the world, he returned to Auburn to finish the job.

"From a quarterback standpoint, in this league, experience, there's nothing like it," Auburn coach Gus Malzahn said, "because the defenses are different than other leagues, and I just really like the way [Stidham] handled himself.

"He's a very tough young man, mentally and physically. And I think our offense is in very good hands going into this second year."

Stidham's second year at the helm for Auburn, combined with Alabama's glut of quarterbacking talent has set the stage for the year of the quarterback, but attention surrounding the all-important position will extend to the high school level for the state's rivals.

Three high schools in the Birmingham-metro area will feature three of the best prep quarterbacks in the country. Two are committed to Alabama, one is committed to Auburn and all three are connected by legacy to those schools.

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Quarterbacking Hewitt-Trussville High is Alabama commit Paul Tyson, who is the great-grandson of legendary Alabama coach Paul Bryant. At Thompson High School is Alabama commit Taulia Tagovailoa, who is Tua's younger brother. Lastly, Auburn commit Bo Nix, who might be the best of all three, is at Pinson Valley.

"I've seen all three, and they're all three great kids, and all three are different quarterbacks to some degree," said Marc Tyson, who is Paul's dad and Bryant's only grandson, "but they're pretty much pocket passers. In college, they'll be pocket passers."

Tyson's Hewitt-Trussville plays Tagovailoa's Thompson on Oct. 26 in one of the state's biggest prep games of the season. The game will televised nationally by ESPN2. Both Tyson and Tagovailoa lost to eventual 7A state champ Hoover last season in the playoffs. That's a significant detail for Auburn fans closely watching Nix this season. His Pinson Valley team plays Hoover in a preseason jamboree.

Nix, Tyson and Tagovailoa all threw 36 touchdown passes last season, according to statistics by MaxPreps.

"There have been a lot of good quarterbacks come out of this state, which is sometimes overlooked, but I think this year, with Auburn and Alabama both getting these quarterbacks, that has changed things," said Patrick Nix, Bo's father and the coach at Pinson Valley. "This is one of those unique years where both schools are getting local quarterbacks."

Patrick Nix says Auburn wasn't a foregone conclusion for his son despite the family's connection to the school. It wasn't until Malzahn signed his extension that Bo committed to the Tigers, according to his father. Paul Tyson tried to keep an open mind going into the recruiting process as well, but when Nick Saban offered him a scholarship it was one of the biggest days of his life.

Taulia committed to Alabama outside Bryant-Denny Stadium before this spring's A-Day Game. If the Year of the Quarterback wasn't fascinating enough, that added an extra level of fascination to everything. Could Taulia's commitment somehow affect who Saban picks as his starter this season? That would be out of character for Saban, but Alabama's coach already said a lot would go into the decision.

"We don't have a straw vote on the team as to who they think the quarterback ought to be," Saban said. "Most people don't get elected unanimously, therefore it would be a divisive vote that probably would not be healthy for the togetherness of the team. I think these things have to be made at a little higher level based on a set of circumstances relative to consistency and performance, other players believing in leadership, a lot of factors that come into that. As a coaching staff, not just me, we have to make a determination as to how we should play the quarterback."

Winning would be the biggest factor. Which quarterback gives Alabama the best chance to lineup and outthrow Stidham at Auburn? In the Year of the Quarterback, that question might remain unanswered until the Iron Bowl.
Alabama has two great quarterbacks, but who'll be catching the passes?

Michael Casagrande  mcasagrande@al.com

So much oxygen has gone to who'll throw the football for the Crimson Tide in 2018. The Jalen-Tua derby took quarterback conversations right over the edge even in football mad Alabama. As a resolution nears on that front, the small matter of who'll catch those passes — you know, Part II of that transaction — remains intriguing.

Considering first-round draft pick Calvin Ridley took such a chunk of the 2017 passing game production to the NFL, there’s relatively little anxiety about where this group of Alabama receivers enters a new season.

Not only did Ridley depart, starters Robert Foster and Cam Sims — Nos. 4 and 5 respectively on the catch list last year — are playing for NFL roster spots.

That talented group of sophomores so prominently displayed in the national title game helps ease the concern with that experience moving on to the big league. Throw in a few talented newcomers and there appears to be a different level of balance with this group of targets for whoever throws the ball this season.

Of course, DeVonta Smith already has a career-defining moment for his 2nd-and-26 reception after midnight that January night in Atlanta.

Jerry Jeudy has the best stat line for returning receivers after catching 14 passes for 264 yards and a pair of touchdowns. He comes from the growing line of South Florida receivers that started with Amari Cooper and continued seamlessly with Ridley.

Then there’s former high school track star Henry Ruggs III of Montgomery. Half of his 12 receptions as a freshman went for touchdowns.

Then there are a few freshmen who have caught Nick Saban’s eye in camp. “I don’t want to put a lot of pressure on them by talking about them right now,” Saban said after the first scrimmage Aug. 11, “but they’ve done really, really well. I think that will be helpful. I think some of the older players that we have need to improve and accept the role, as well. I think a lot of the depth at that position is a little bit up in the air right now. That’s one of the things I would allude to when I talked earlier about guys being able to mature that have not played to be able to make a positive contribution because of their discipline, toughness, ability to sustain, those types of things. Past those first three guys, we’ve really got to work on it.”

Saban didn’t name names with the newcomers, though quarterback Tua Tagovailoa dropped a few. He mentioned Jaylen Waddle, the freshman from Texas, as a potential “asset” in the offense. And slightly off the radar, Tagovailoa said senior Xavier Marks has impressed him.

“I think we’ll be fine as far as what we can do at receiver,” Tagovailoa said with confidence.

For Jeudy, an injury that limited his spring is well in the past with the opener against Louisville in Orlando looming. Asked what he brings to this Alabama offense, a lack of hesitation spoke to his confidence.

“My style, I feel like I’m a great route runner,” Jeudy said. “I know how to make plays when the ball is in my hand.”

Jeudy said he’s been learning from Ridley since they were in high school outside Fort Lauderdale.

The relatively soft-spoken DeVonta Smith said life hasn’t really changed much since catching the game-winning pass in the national title game. People don’t recognize him in public, though he had one of the longer autograph lines at Fan Day in early August. Smith also quickly dismisses any talk about the past as he prefers to look forward to 2018.

That doesn’t mean he didn’t take away plenty from Year 1 in crimson. He was struck by the speed of the game and not necessarily in the way most young players would say it.

“Just really how slow everything was in the game,” he said. “You come out here and practice and do what you’re supposed to do — do what the coaches want you to do — when you get to the game, it’s slower.”

Like Smith, Ruggs III had a touchdown catch against Georgia in the championship game. His 6-yard score in the third quarter was Tagovailoa’s first touchdown pass of what became a historic performance. Jeudy also had a big 20-yard catch on the game-tying drive that moved Alabama to the 13-yard line late in the fourth quarter.

With Ruggs, his track speed became a weapon with this offense. His first five catches went for touchdowns as something of an end zone specialist coming off the bench.

“He’s a good dude,” Smith said of Ruggs. “On the field, off the field, always the same person. Always uplifting, an exciting person. That’s him.”

Often, the three rookies would come into the game at the same time like a hockey line change. It built the kind of continuity that would seemingly make the transition to bigger roles as sophomores a smooth one.

It’s just a matter of who’ll be throwing the passes their direction this fall.

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

Returning offensive leaders

Jalen Hurts, QB: 2,081 yards passing, 17 touchdowns, 1 interception, 855 yards rushing, 8 touchdowns in 2017.

Damien Harris, RB: 1,000 yards rushing, 11 touchdowns.

Najee Harris, RB: 370 yards rushing, 3 touchdowns.

Josh Jacobs, RB: 284 yards rushing, 14 receptions, 168 yards, 2 touchdowns.

Jerry Jeudy, WR: 14 receptions, 264 yards, 2 touchdowns.

Henry Ruggs III, WR: 12 receptions, 229 yards, 6 touchdowns.
At just 25, Weis Jr. stands with Kiffin

Former Tide grad assistant youngest O.C. in the nation

Tim Reynolds Jr. Associated Press

BOCA RATON, FLA. — Charlie Weis Jr. has been on the field celebrating Super Bowl wins. He's worn a headset on the sidelines at Notre Dame games, studied under Nick Saban and interned for Bill Belichick. He's learned from the best.

And he's a mere 25 years old.

Age is just a number to Florida Atlantic coach Lane Kiffin, a former coaching prodigy himself who decided to hire Weis Jr. — the namesake son of the longtime coach probably best known for his stint at Notre Dame — as the Owls' offensive coordinator this season, letting him oversee a group that is expected to pile up a ton of points in 2018.

"From the time he was a little kid, this is what he wanted to do," Charlie Weis Sr. said.

That makes sense. Then again, the time Weis Jr. was a little kid wasn't all that long ago.

When his dad was leading the Fighting Irish, Weis Jr. went to high school literally across the street from campus. After school, he sent to the football office and essentially was right back in class, learning every nuance of football. It didn't take long for him to decide that he wanted to coach, and that's the only job he's ever had. And now he's believed to be the youngest offensive coordinator in major college football history.

"Coaching, I felt, was my calling to help people," Weis Jr. said. "You know, not just the schematics and the fun of all that stuff, but helping young players develop and become better people."

As an undergrad at Florida, Weis Jr. was a coach with the offense and was tasked with prepping then-Gators coach Will Muschamp for weekly news conferences, educating him on that week's opponent. He interned with the Patriots, helping chart the production of Tom Brady and the other New England quarterbacks. He had about a half-dozen jobs at Kansas when his dad was the coach there.

And when he went to Alabama as a grad assistant, he worked with Kiffin.

Weis has been someone Kiffin wanted to have around him ever since.

"I'm trying to help him not make some mistakes that I made," said Kiffin, who, like Weis, is the son of a highly successful coach. "But he'll be fine. He's a lot more probably balanced than I was at that age and more mature. So we do talk about that, but I don't think he's going to have issues."

Kiffin, who knew very quickly that he was going to follow his dad into the family business, understands how that whiz-kid label feels. At 31, he was the youngest head coach modern in NFL history when the Oakland Raiders hired him in 2007. Sean McVay of the Los Angeles Rams now holds that title, after being hired last year as a 30-year-old.

Kiffin didn't handle fast fame well. Weis Jr. doesn't seem to have that problem.

He's still boyish-looking. He walks around FAU's campus unnoticed, largely because he definitely can still pass for an undergrad. He smiles a lot. He's soft-spoken. He's only a couple years older than most of FAU's best offensive players, yet he has unquestioned respect in the locker room.

"I'm not going to say that it's been the easiest transition," Weis Jr. said. "But over time, especially in this new role, I've gotten better at it and I'm starting to develop with it. And whenever I have questions about it I go to coach Kiffin, because he's obviously gone through it. He was a coach at a very young age so he's gone through a lot of the same experiences."

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Harvard accused of ‘outright racial balancing’

By Marla Deriolo, Collin Binkley and Eric Tucker
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In its latest push to end the use of race in college admissions, the Trump administration on Thursday accused Harvard University of “engaging in outright racial balancing” and sided with Asian-American students who allege the Ivy League school discriminated against them.

Harvard denied the bias claim and said it would defend the right to consider race as a factor in admissions.

The Justice Department weighed in on a lawsuit filed in 2014 by Students For Fair Admissions, which argues that one of the world’s most prestigious universities discriminates against academically strong Asian-American applicants in favor of others who may be less qualified.

The agency said in a “statement of interest” that Harvard has failed to demonstrate that it does not discriminate on the basis of race and that its use of personal qualities in determining worthy applicants “may be infected with racial bias.”

The Supreme Court permits colleges and universities to consider race in admissions decisions, but says that must be done in a narrowly tailored way to promote diversity and should be limited in time. Schools also bear the burden of showing why their consideration of race is appropriate.

In Harvard’s case, Justice Department officials said, the university hasn’t explained how it uses race in admissions and has not adopted meaningful criteria to limit the use of race.

“No American should be denied admission to school because of their race,” Attorney General Jeff Sessions said.

Sessions said Harvard’s use of a “personal rating,” which includes highly

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subjective factors such as being a "good person" or "likability," may be biased against Asian-Americans. Sessions said the school admits that it scores Asian-American applicants lower on personal rating than other students. Sessions also argued that Harvard admissions officers monitor and manipulate the racial makeup of incoming classes.

Harvard said it was disappointed the department was "recycling the same misleading and hollow arguments that prove nothing more than the emptiness of the case against Harvard."

"Harvard does not discriminate against applicants from any group, and will continue to vigorously defend the legal right of every college and university to consider race as one factor among many in college admissions, which the Supreme Court has consistently upheld for more than 40 years," the university said in a statement.

"Colleges and universities must have the freedom and flexibility to create the diverse communities that are vital to the learning experience of every student."

Edward Blum, president of the group that sued Harvard, hailed the administration's action. "We look forward to having the gravely troubling evidence that Harvard continues to keep redacted disclosed to the American public in the near future," he said.

The department's court filing opposes Harvard's request to dismiss the suit before trial.

"Harvard's failure to provide meaningful criteria to cabin its voluntary use of race, its use of a personal rating that significantly harms Asian-American applicants' chances of admission and may be infected with racial bias, and the substantial evidence that Harvard is engaging in outright racial balancing each warrant denial" of Harvard's request, the department said.

The department is separately investigating Harvard's admissions policies.

There was no immediate comment on the move from the Education Department.

The filing follows a July decision by the those departments to abandon Obama-era guidelines that instructed universities to consider race in their admissions process to make the student body more diverse. Democrats said the Trump administration was taking away protections for minorities.

The Center for Equal Opportunity, a conservative think tank, cited Harvard's own analysis of its admissions data and said it "demonstrates that being African American, Native American, or Hispanic was a 'plus' factor in the competition for admission, but being Asian American proved to be a 'minus.'"

But Kristen Clarke, president of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, criticized the Justice Department for "signaling abandonment of the agency's longstanding historical mission of working to address racial discrimination and promote diversity."

She said the department's filing "ignores the well-documented racial bias embedded in grades and standardized test scores."

Shaun Harper, head of the Race and Equity Center at the University of Southern California, said that grades and test scores alone should not be the only factors when deciding whether to admit a student.

"Is the DOJ saying that it is in favor of Harvard being 100 percent Asian-American because if we are looking just at GPAs and test scores, it could very well be that those with the absolute higher scores would be Asian-Americans," Harper said. "Is this what the DOJ is saying it wants?"
DeVos Plans to Reshape Sexual Misconduct Rules

By ERICA L. GREEN

WASHINGTON — Education Secretary Betsy DeVos is preparing new policies on campus sexual misconduct that would bolster the rights of students accused of assault, harassment or rape, reduce liability for institutions of higher education and encourage schools to provide more support for victims.

The proposed rules, obtained by The New York Times, narrow the definition of sexual harassment, holding schools accountable only for formal complaints filed through proper authorities and for conduct said to have occurred on their campuses. They would also establish a higher legal standard to determine whether schools improperly addressed complaints.

The new rules would come at a particularly sensitive time, as major institutions such as Ohio State University, the University of Southern California and Michigan State University deal with explosive charges that members of their faculty and staff have perpetrated serious sexual misconduct. But for several years, higher education administrators have maintained that sexual misconduct rules pressed by the Obama administration unnecessarily burdened them with bureaucratic mandates that had little to do with assault or harassment, and men's rights groups have said the accused have had little recourse.

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Planned Sexual Misconduct Rules Shield Schools and Rights of Accused

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Unlike the Obama administration’s guidance documents, the Trump administration’s new rules will have the force of law and can go into force without an act of Congress, after a public comment period.

Liz Hall, an Education Department spokeswoman, said on Wednesday that the department was “in the midst of a deliberative process.” She added that any information obtained by The Times “is premature and speculative, and therefore, we have no comment.”

Last fall, Ms. DeVos rescinded a 2017 letter prepared by the Obama administration that outlined the responsibilities of schools and colleges that receive federal funding to address episodes of sexual misconduct. Victims’ rights groups praised the Obama-era guidelines for aggressively holding schools accountable for complaints of sexual harassment, assault and rape that they said had often been played down or ignored. But critics contended that too often they trampled due-process rights for accused students.

In announcing the rescission of the letter, Ms. DeVos assailed the guidelines as federal overreach that coerced schools into setting up quasi-judicial systems fraught with inconsistencies.

“The truth is that the system established by the prior administration has failed too many students,” Ms. DeVos said in September 2017. “Survivors, victims of a lack of due process and accused students have all told me that the current approach does a disservice to everyone involved.”

Ms. DeVos has also criticized the Obama administration for imposing rules without following the legal processes that would allow for a public comment period.

The department’s proposal would preserve much of the law that protects against sex discrimination, called Title IX, which for the first time in its history has extended beyond gender-specific discrimination to include sexual misconduct as a form of denying students access to an education. But for what appears to be the first time in this administration, the rulemaking process would go beyond guidance and recommendations to codify how it defines and handles sexual harassment in the nation’s schools and the steps institutions are legally required to take to address it.

A protest at Michigan State University in January in support of students who were sexually assaulted. Right, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, who is weighing new rules.

They could also be revised before they are formally published. There is still disssion among employees in the Education and Justice Departments about whether more of the standards from guidance issued in 2011 should be codified in the new regulations, and whether some of the provisions should apply only to higher education, according to people familiar with the administration’s deliberations.

While the issue has centered on allegations against students on college campuses, it also applies to elementary and secondary schools and allegations against teachers, professors and other employees.

The department recognizes that despite well-intentioned efforts by school districts, colleges and universities, advocacy organizations and the department itself, sexual harassment and assault continue to present serious problems across the nation’s campuses, the department wrote in the draft rule. “The lack of clear regulatory standards has contributed to processes that have not been fair to all parties involved, that have lacked appropriate procedural protections and that have undermined confidence in the reliability of the outcomes of investigations of sexual harassment allegations.”

After the department rescinded the Obama letter and a subsequent question-and-answer document, it reinstated temporary guidelines, which drew from guidance issued in 2001 and a subsequent letter issued in 2006. The Obama administration built upon that guidance but had notable differences.

The new regulations cement some of the most debated policy positions in the interim guidance, such as allowing schools to choose the evidentiary standard — "preponderance of evidence" or "clear and convincing" evidence — to apply in determining whether accused students are responsible for alleged misconduct. They also leave it to schools to decide whether to have an appeals process.

The most contested part of the Obama administration guidance was the mandate that schools use the preponderance-of-evidence standard, the lower standard of the two, in determining whether the accused should be disciplined or expelled. The Trump administration rules propose that a school’s choice of evidentiary standard must apply to any investigation of civil rights violations.

The rules also maintain Ms. DeVos’s year-old policy of using mediation to reach informal resolutions, and would add the ability for victims and their accused perpetrators to request evidence from each other and to cross-examine each other. The rules also allow the complainant and the accused to have access to any evidence obtained during the investigation, even if there are no plans to use it to prove the conduct occurred.

The Obama administration held that mediation was not appropriate, even if voluntary. It also strongly discouraged parties from personally questioning each other during hearings, believing it would be "traumatic or intimidating, thereby possibly escalating or perpetuating a hostile environment." The previous administration also recommended that schools provide an appeals process.

The new rules would adopt a new Supreme Court definition of "sexual harassment" that appears to be reserved for repeated complaints or the more egregious allegations. The new rules would define sexual harassment to mean "unwelcome conduct on the basis of sex that is severe, pervasive and objectively offensive that it denies a person access to the school’s education program or activity." In its guidance, the Obama administration defined the act more broadly as "unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature," that includes "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

The proposed regulations do not define what constitutes a "hostile environment" for victims of previous guidance did, but do allow a school to remove an accused person from campus after conducting a safety and risk assessment.

The new rules would require that institutions only be held legally responsible for investigating formal complaints and responding to reports that school officials have "actual knowledge" of harassment. A formal complaint is one made to "an official who has the authority to institute corrective measures," not, for instance, a residential advisor in a dormitory.

The regulation contrasts with the standard, dating to 2001, that a "school knows, or reasonably should know, about possible harassment." College leaders have long complained that was too broad and held them accountable for allegations of which they were not aware.

Under the new rules, schools would be held to a new standard for determining whether they took the proper steps to address the allegations. That standard, called "deliberately indifferent," means that an institution is found in violation of the law "only if its response to the sexual harassment is clearly unreasonable in light of known circumstances." The new rules would also hold schools responsible only for investigating episodes reported to have taken place within their own programs, or on their campuses, not, for instance, in off-campus student housing. The Obama administration required that schools investigate a complaint regardless of where the conduct initially took place.

The rules also say that the government will not penalize schools if they provide "supportive measures" to victims who choose to forgo filing a written complaint. The regulations encourage measures that are "nondisciplinary in

A policy shift that comes at a sensitive time for colleges.

dividualized services" and "non-punitive, time-limited and narrowly tailored" to keep students in school. The rules provide an extensive list of options, such as counseling, deadlines extended, no changes in class schedules, campus escort services, mutual restrictions on contact with the parties, changes in housing, leaves of absence or increased security and monitoring.

The regulations go to great lengths to require impartiality in investigations and provide "prompt, fair and equitable" in hearings. For the first time, the administration explicitly says that just as an institution's treatment of a complainant could constitute sexual discrimination, so would the treatment of the accused.

The regulations require that schools approach all investigations under the presumption that the accused is innocent until proved guilty.
College Football’s Growing Problem: Empty Seats

Announced attendance dropped 3.2% in football’s top division last season, but schools’ ticket scans show even fewer fans in stands

By: Rachel Bachman

When Minnesota hosted Nebraska at TCF Bank Stadium last year, the game featured charismatic new Golden Gophers coach P.J. Fleck, a home team fighting for a bowl berth and a big-name opponent. The announced attendance was 39,933—an OK crowd for a crisp November day in Minneapolis—but it didn’t tell the whole story.

Only 25,493 ticketed fans were counted at the gates, 36% lower than the announced attendance and about half of the stadium’s capacity. More than 14,000 people who bought tickets or got them free didn’t show up.

College football has an attendance problem. Average announced attendance in football’s top division dropped for the fourth consecutive year last year, declining 7.6% in four years. But schools’ internal records show that the sport’s attendance woes go far beyond that.

The average count of tickets scanned at home games—the number of fans who actually show up—is about 71% of the attendance you see in a box score, according to data from the 2017 season collected by The Wall Street Journal. In the Mid-American Conference, with less-prominent programs like Central Michigan and Toledo, teams’ scanned attendance numbers were 45% of announced attendance.

Even teams in the nation’s five richest conferences routinely record thousands fewer people passing through stadium gates than they report publicly. The no-shows reflect the challenge of filling large venues when nearly every game is on TV, and they threaten a key revenue source for college athletic departments.

“Attendance drives recruiting, attendance drives donations, merchandise sales,” said Rob Sine, who until earlier this year was president of IMG Learfield Ticket Solutions, which works with dozens of colleges. If fans don’t use their tickets, he added, “they’re more likely to not come back.”

Most schools scan and keep count of tickets used at football games. The Journal requested access to those counts under public-records law, and most public schools supplied them. Private schools aren’t subject to public-records law.

Minnesota’s gap between scanned and announced attendance could have been worse—its announced attendance doesn’t include stadium staff, marching bands or media, as many other schools do. A Minnesota spokesman said officials were unavailable to comment.

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When Arkansas hosted No. 21 Auburn, scanned attendance was more than 25,000 lower than announced attendance. Overall last season, Arkansas’s scanned home attendance was 58% of its announced attendance as the Razorbacks went 4-8. Nonetheless, Reynolds Razorback Stadium is reopening Saturday after a $160 million renovation that increased capacity by about 4,000. An Arkansas spokesman declined to comment. Florida State, which won the 2013 national title, last season had a scanned attendance that was 57% of its announced attendance. FSU spokesman Rob Wilson blamed personnel and technical issues in scanning tickets and said, “We do not believe the difference is as large as the data appears to show.”

Sine, the ticketing expert who’s now chief revenue officer at ticketing company AXS, said technology has improved to the point that scanning errors generally have a minor effect on ticket counts.

Attendance is more than a vanity issue. The NCAA requires schools to maintain a 15,000 “actual or paid” home attendance on a rolling two-year average to stay in football’s top division.

Many schools take a generous approach in compiling announced attendance, by including ushers, security guards and even the guy at the concession stand who sells you a Coke. That partly explains how Purdue’s announced attendance last season spiked 13,433 per game—the largest jump in college football. (Purdue didn’t report how many tickets it actually scanned last year, citing what a spokesman called “outdated equipment, connectivity problems and user error.”)

The NCAA accepts the announced attendance numbers schools submit “at face value,” NCAA spokesman Christopher Radford said.

Despite the rising value of TV-rights contracts, football ticket sales and donations often make up more than half of athletic-department revenues. College sports officials say many factors are incenting fans to stay home including: affordable big-screen TVs; the availability of more games on TV; ever-changing kickoff times that make it difficult to plan ahead; games that span more than four hours; traffic; and rising ticket prices.

Sagging student attendance remains a problem, even at perennial power Alabama. As part of a recently announced renovation of Bryant-Denny Stadium, the school plans to add a student terrace to create “a more interactive and social environment,” athletic director Greg Byrne said.

The renovations also will add more club and lounge areas and slightly reduce the stadium’s 101,821 capacity, part of a trend of downsizing college football stadiums.

Crowds at South Carolina have ebbed in recent years and scanned attendance made up 78% of the Gamecocks’ announced attendance last season. South Carolina held a one-day sale for the season opener against Coastal Carolina: $18.01 per ticket in honor of the school’s founding year. It sold 3,100 of those.

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“If you’re in the upper deck and buying a ticket for 45 bucks, and the choice is, I can sit on my couch and have a really good view, you might do that,” said Lance Grantham, associate athletic director for ticketing and customer relations. “The [TV] product is just outrageously good.”

Public attendance numbers are part of some schools’ identity. Michigan Stadium, the “Big House,” whose 107,601 capacity is the nation’s largest, still claims a streak of 100,000-plus attendance games dating back to 1975, even though two games last year showed fewer than 80,000 scanned tickets.

A Michigan spokesman said surges of fans at gates just before kickoff sometimes prompt workers to tear tickets rather than scanning them. Michigan counts the media, stadium workers and marching bands in its announced attendance.

Nebraska boasts a sellout streak that dates to the 1962 season. But during last year’s 4-8 record, there was an average gap of more than 18,000 per game between scanned and announced attendance—mostly no-shows, a spokesman said.
How to Tame Health Care Spending? Look for One-Percent Solutions

By: Margot Sanger-Katz

The health care system in the United States costs nearly double that of its peer countries, without much better outcomes. Many scholars and policymakers have looked at this state of affairs and dreamed big. Maybe there's some broad fix — high deductibles, improvements in end-of-life care, a single-payer system — that can make United States health care less expensive.

But what if the most workable answer isn't something big, but hosts of small tweaks? A group of about a dozen health economists has begun trying to identify policy adjustments, sometimes in tiny slices of the health care system, that could produce savings worth around 1 percent of the country's $3.3 trillion annual health spending. If you put together enough such fixes, the group points out, they could add up to something more substantial.

This is a shift from the kind of research that is typically rewarded by big journal editors and tenure committees, but it could turn out to have a crucial role in understanding why our health care system is so expensive, and so unusual.

"I think focusing on the forest misses the fact that there are trees encroaching out of the forest," said Fiona Scott Morton, a health economist at the Yale School of Management. "And we need to start cutting them down."

A working paper published Monday proposes one possible fix. In the 1980s, Congress carved out a small group of hospitals from its normal rules for payment. These "long-term care hospitals," which treated patients with tuberculosis and chronic diseases, could earn far more money than traditional hospitals and nursing homes if they cared for patients who stayed with them for an average of 25 days. Since then, the number of these hospitals has mushroomed, from a few dozen to more than 400, most run by two for-profit chains.

For years, analysts and policymakers have wondered about the value of these hospitals, which tend to treat very sick patients who need a lot of care, such as mechanical ventilation or dialysis. Several analyses have suggested that Medicare may be overpaying for their services. And Congress has made some small changes to limit the number of patients who are eligible for such care.

The new paper, from researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Chicago, took a close look at what happened to patients as new long-term care hospitals opened around the country in places that had none.

The study, covering 1990 to 2014, found that when such a hospital opened, the odds increased that very sick patients leaving a normal hospital would end up going next to a long-term care hospital, generating a growing bill for both Medicare and the patients themselves. But the researchers found no benefit when it came to patients' chances of dying or going home within 90 days.
The researchers concluded that the health care system could probably save a lot of money — around $5 billion a year — by paying the long-term care hospitals the same prices that are paid to skilled nursing facilities, the places that most long-term patients end up in when there is no long-term care hospital nearby.

The hospital industry disagrees with the paper’s conclusion and disputes the notion that the extra money they get is wasteful. The American Hospital Association noted that since the study ended, Congress has changed the rules for long-term care hospitals so that fewer of their patients qualify for the highest payment rates. That means that the study results might be different if they looked at long-term hospital care in more recent years.

Select Medical, one of the large chains of long-term care hospitals, said in a statement that measuring only whether the long-term care patients died or went home did not capture other, more subtle health benefits that the hospitals provided compared with other options. But the industry does not collect such measures of quality in a standardized way, making that theory hard to test.

The National Association of Long Term Hospitals, a trade group, also noted that the paper’s policy proposals were more extreme than those from other critics, who had suggested more minor changes to how the hospitals should be paid.

Neale Mahoney, a health economist at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, who was one of the working paper’s co-authors, said the history of long-term care hospitals fit together with the economic analysis to suggest that the special hospital payment probably wasn’t appropriate.

“What’s convinced me that these institutions are a source of waste is a constellation of evidence rather than one piece of evidence,” he said.

Dr. Jeremy Kahn, a critical care physician and professor of health policy at the University of Pittsburgh, who has studied long-term care hospitals extensively, said there are some patients with particular ailments who benefit from the setting, but agreed with the economists that the hospitals are a historical accident, defined more by payment rules than patient needs.

“Long-term care hospitals aren’t to blame here,” he said. “If you see a dollar on the ground, you will pick it up, and that’s what’s going on here.”

Mr. Mahoney said the economics profession is fond of broad conclusions. The typical paper takes a narrow case and tries to draw a broader conclusion about how the world works. But he increasingly thinks that there may be value in thinking small, doing more of what he calls “forensic economics.”

One of his co-authors, Amy Finkelstein, says she has been inspired by a colleague who works in development economics, Esther Duflo, who recently delivered a speech titled “The Economist as Plumber,” arguing that her colleagues should not look down on tinkering as unworthy of the profession.
"We may need to do more health care plumbing rather than health care big theories," said Ms. Finkelstein, a health economist at M.I.T. "The history of long-term care hospitals suggests the industry will always innovate ahead of you, and you may actually have to roll up your sleeves and find these pockets of waste."

The researchers have begun to chat during coffee breaks at conferences and in long phone conversations. Small possible sources of inefficiency, like drug co-payment coupons for generic drugs or high out-of-network payments for emergency room care, could start to add up.

The scholars involved in the project know that they are not the first group to think small. The sort of deep and narrow investigations they are undertaking have long been the focus of groups like the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, a group that recommends changes to Congress and that had even flagged long-term care hospitals for overhaul years ago. Washington policymakers and think tanks have long assembled briefing books of options to help them nip and tuck dollars out of government health programs.

But the new effort by academics may expand the impact of such suggestions. New data about not just government spending but also private insurance has enabled researchers to examine spending and inefficiency in the health care system more broadly than ever before. After all, the health care system is much bigger than just Medicare.

"I think people say that’s too small — it’s not going to change the trajectory — therefore we shouldn’t spend time on it," said Ms. Morton, the Yale economist. "And they are forgetting how many dollars there are."
Meyer's texts raise open records question

By Andrew Welsh-Huggins and Jim Vertuno
The Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Any attempt by Ohio State coach Urban Meyer to eliminate work-related text messages on his university-issued phone to hide information would be illegal, open records experts said following a two-week investigation into his handling of domestic violence allegations against an assistant coach.

Ohio State suspended Meyer for three games after investigators concluded he mishandled Zach Smith's repeated professional and behavioral problems and instead protected his protege for years through domestic violence allegations, a drug problem and poor job performance. Among the many questions raised by the investigation into the highly successful coach of the fifth-ranked Buckeyes was how he responded when the story broke.

On Aug. 1, investigators say, Meyer and the team's director of operations discussed ways to change the settings on his phone to eliminate messages older than a year. The discussion came the same day a story said Smith's then-wife had shared allegations of domestic violence with Meyer's wife, Shelley Meyer, via texts.

"A bad article," Brian Voltolini, director of football operations, told Meyer on the practice field, according to investigators.

Courtney Smith alleged her husband attacked her in 2015. Zach Smith has never been criminally charged with domestic violence. The university put Meyer on paid leave and began investigating after Courtney Smith spoke out publicly, sharing text messages and photos she traded in 2015 with Shelley Meyer, who is a registered nurse and instructor at Ohio State. Zach Smith was fired last month after his ex-wife asked a judge for a protective order.

When the university obtained Meyer's phone on Aug. 2, it was set to only retain texts within a year. Investigators said they couldn't determine if that setting was made in response to the breaking news story.

"It is nonetheless concerning that his first reaction to a negative media piece exposing his knowledge of the 2015-2016 law enforcement investigation was to worry about the media getting access to information and discussing how to delete messages older than a year," the report said, referring to Meyer.
Back-to-School Advice for College Trustees

By Allen C. Guelzo

For everyone from kindergartners to collegians, the aisles at the big-box stores are filling up with back-to-school pens, calculators, paper and notebooks. But there is one educational contingent that won’t find much help in the pens-and-paper department: incoming college trustees. Only about half of public institutions provide training for newly arrived board members. Here’s some unsolicited advice from someone who has spent a few decades with wing tips on the ground.

• Learn the language. Like any business, higher education has its own language and a lot of land-mine vocabulary—diversity, vocationalism, tenure, teaching load. People who live inside higher education are masters of words, but not necessarily of clarity. Learning the dynamics of higher-ed speak is indispensable. That will be particularly true when phrases common in the business world—incremental budgeting, strategic planning—turn out to have entirely different meanings on campus.

• Make time. Being a trustee of a college or university requires more attention to more problems than ever before. Sexual harassment, free-speech confrontations, presidential turnover, money and new students, students and new money—all these issues will demand your attention. It's no longer possible, even for trustees of small colleges, to regard the job as consisting of four volunteer weekends a year. Think instead about how to arrange visits between board meetings, touring on-campus research institutes, sitting in on classes, and making yourself and your colleagues visible and available.

• Ignore the resistance. The first response you are likely to receive for these efforts will disappoint you: suspicion. It will come first from the faculty—already primed to mistrust authority figures. Its members will wonder what dark agenda is driving you. But faculty suspicions will fade quickly. In fact, eventually professors will be relieved to find trustees who respect their work and take a genuine intellectual interest in it. You will be dismayed to find more suspicion coming from administrators. Years ago, I worked for a president who frankly regarded board meetings as his greatest annoyance. He cheerfully encouraged his underlings to tell the trustees whatever would make them happy. If you encounter this, push back. It is a sign of deceit.

• Seek mentors. Many colleges and universities impose term limits on their boards. This pumps new outlooks into the veins of an institution, but it also leaves new trustees wishing they had more experienced hands to seek advice from. Look for the veterans on your board, and identify a trustee with a particularly deep interest in one facet of academic life—for example, state and federal regulations, which impose staggering overhead costs—and make yourself into that trustee’s successor. In some colleges where trusteeship is taken seriously, new trustees are actually assigned mentors, and an internal governance committee might do a biannual assessment of a new trustee's performance.

• Read the books. Faculty publications and breakthrough books on higher education will enable you to see your institution in the larger, and more ominous, context of higher education’s challenges. About trusteeship itself, turn to “How to Run a College” (2018) by Brian Mitchell and Joseph King. For administrative sclerosis, study Benjamin Ginsberg’s “The Fall of the Faculty” (2003), “Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses” (2011), from Richard Arum and Josipa Roka, is an excellent primer on the failures and successes in learning. Once you’ve read the books, ask embarrassing questions: How does hiring more-and-more adjuncts affect teaching and learning? What are faculty actually rewarded (or punished) for doing? Does the college need to do everything? And, above all, why does this institution exist?

• Find—and follow—the money. This is what people frequently think is the trustee’s first, and sometimes only, responsibility. It is true that the trustees are the first line of a university's financial defense. The future is not an indefinite series of tuition increases. But it also means, for that same reason, that you are the air-brake on the many varieties of politically correct hooliganism and administrative pusillanimity that have defaced campuses like Middlebury, Lewis and Clark, Reed, Berkeley, Evergreen State and the University of Oregon. If you find the money, you have a responsibility to ask how the money is spent and on whom.

American colleges and universities were once little more than finishing schools for the wealthy. At the end of the Civil War, there were only 112,000 undergraduate students in the U.S., according to the National Center for Education Statistics. A century and a half later, the Education Department estimates the student population at 20 million, and the bachelor's degree is regarded as the middle class's key of promise. Whether it can—or even should—stay that way will rest on the shoulders of college faculties, administrations, government overseers and even parents. But it will rest mostly on you. Welcome back to school.

Mr. Guelzo is a professor of history at Gettysburg College.

Peggy Noonan is on leave and will return in the fall.
At Ohio State, a Living Legend Looked Away

This article is by Marc Tracy, Serge F. Kovaleski and Joe Drape.

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The warning signs flared: delinquent payments for university travel expenses, a $600 night at a Florida strip club with at least one high school coach, a rash of missed meetings on recruiting trips for football players and late arrivals at practices. But Zach Smith, the Ohio State assistant coach at the center of it all, not only kept his job but got raises along the way.

Even before these episodes, described in a university report released Wednesday, he had been accused in 2009 of throwing his pregnant wife against a wall while an assistant at the University of Florida, though no charges were filed. At the time, as he did recently at Ohio State, Mr. Smith had a powerful benefactor looking after him: Urban Meyer, a living legend of a football coach whose mentor was Mr. Smith's grandfather, Earle Bruce, another revered Ohio State coach.

The question, however, is whether Mr. Meyer, 54, one of the best-known and highest-paid coaches in college football who has won three national championships, looked the other way or was cut a wide berth by those who dared not challenge him regarding an individual so close to him.

The report, conducted by investigators commissioned by the university, led to the university's trustees and its president, Michael V. Drake, suspending Mr. Meyer for three games on Wednesday night for mishandling Mr. Smith's recurring professional and behavioral issues, including

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THE REPORT'S FINDINGS How the university's leadership responded to troubling accusations against an assistant coach. PAGE B8
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.”

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.”

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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.

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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.