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Bezos’ rocket company to build in Alabama

Staff and wire reports

Blue Origin, the rocket company started by Amazon chief Jeff Bezos, has won a major contract to build its new BE-4 engines for the next generation of United Launch Alliance rockets and will build those engines in Huntsville.

ULA said Thursday that two BE-4 engines will power the booster stage of the company’s new Vulcan Centaur rocket due to take off for the first time in 2020. The upper stage will be powered by engines made by Aerojet Rocketdyne, which is also building a new Huntsville plant.

The Blue Origin plant will cover 400,000 square feet in Cummings Research Park, employ 400 workers and represent an investment of $200 million. Groundbreaking is expected in 2-3 months, officials said.

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Blue Origin

FROM A1

“Our new rocket will be superior in reliability, cost and capability — one system for all missions,” ULA President and CEO Tory Bruno said in a statement.

Blue Origin had said it would build a plant to produce the new engines in Huntsville if it won the contract. Gov. Kay Ivey and U.S. Sen. Richard Shelby praised that decision in statements today.

“This is outstanding news,” Shelby said. “With Blue Origin’s first stage engine work in Huntsville, along with ULA’s manufacturing, assembly, and integration in Decatur, most of the Vulcan rocket will be made in Alabama. It is long past time that we build an exclusively American-made rocket, providing our nation with assured access to space.”

“I am pleased to learn that ULA has selected Blue Origin and new investments will be made in Alabama to expand our growing aerospace industry,” Ivey said. “Alabama has a rich history in aerospace and titans of innovation continue to choose Alabama as the place to develop new technology and develop 21st century engines for future space utilization.”

Huntsville Mayor Tommy Battle said the Blue Origin and Aerojet Rocketdyne plants add to the city’s Rocket City reputation.

“We always knew we needed commercial space,” Battle said. “This will add to our portfolio and truly make us the center of rocket propulsion for the world. There will be a lot of Huntsville in that rocket.”

Blue Origin said it chose Huntsville because of its high-tech aerospace manufacturing workforce and the presence of NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center, nearly 300 private aerospace and defense contractors, and the University of Alabama in Huntsville, a top university for NASA research funding, the governor’s office said. The rocket itself will be built in a new plant near Cape Canaveral, Florida.

“United Launch Alliance is the premier launch service provider for national security missions, and we’re thrilled to be part of their team and that mission,” said Blue Origin CEO Bob Smith. “We can’t thank Tory Bruno and the entire United Launch Alliance team enough for entrusting our engine to powering the Vulcan rocket’s first stage.”
Blue Origin wins ULA engine contract, will build facility in Huntsville

By: Liz Hurley

HUNTSVILLE, AL (WAFF) - Blue Origin is expected to announce plans to build a rocket engine plant in Huntsville after landing a contract with the United Launch Alliance.

The Blue Origin BE-4 engine will be used to power the new Vulcan rocket.

A source knowledgeable and close to the negotiations tells WAFF’s Liz Hurley that the aerospace giant, owned and funded by Amazon’s Jeff Bezos, won the United Launch Alliance engine contract for the powerful first stage. Blue Origin announced in June 26th, 2017, that the company would build the BE-4 engine in Huntsville, only if it won the contract over Aerojet-Rocketdyne’s AR-1 engine.

The BE-4 will power the first stage of ULA’s new massive next-generation rocket that will replace the Atlas V.

The engine will also replace the Russian workhorse – the reliable, but controversial Russian-made RD-180.

Congress, under the Obama Administration, mandated that American-made rockets needed to be powered by American-made engines.

ULA has delivered more than 125 satellites into orbit that provide critical location, navigation and communication capability for troops in the field.

WAFF’s Liz Hurley asked ULA’s CEO, Tory Bruno why it’s taken so long to announce the engine selection for the new Vulcan. The announcement was scheduled for last year. He told her it was not schedule based, but instead, test based.

Clearly, time and maturity played a major role. BE-4 is further along in testing. This spring, Blue Origin was testing at a full-scale level. Aerojet Rocketdyne was testing at a component full scale level.

Aerojet Rocketdyne is still a winner with Vulcan.

The company won the engine contract for Vulcan’s Upper Stage. That engine though, is the RL10.

Aerojet Rocketdyne’s presence in the Rocket City is growing.

The company moved its east and west coast operations to Huntsville and is building a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in the North Huntsville Industrial Park off Pulaski Pike, near Toyota. The company says it plans to hire 800 new employees.

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Meanwhile, Blue Origin’s massive rocket engine plant will take some time to construct and eventually employ some 400 people with an average salary of $75,000 per year. Blue Origin’s factory in Huntsville represents a $200 million capital investment.

The BE-4 uses a combination of liquid oxygen and liquid methane (or natural gas) for fuel and it will be used not only by ULA for its Vulcan Rocket, but for Blue Origin’s own New Glenn launch vehicle.

No construction date has been announced for the planned facility, but presumably dirt will turn soon on a new 400,000 square foot facility at Cummings Research Park.

That engine plant will be erected to the west of HudsonAlpha near Explorer and Farrow Roads. That's just east of the Indian Creek Greenway.

Blue Origin is headquartered in Kent, Washington, has a suborbital launch and engine test site in West Texas. It has a massive and ever-growing footprint at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida with a new rocket factory and in the not-too-distant future, an rocket engine plant in the Rocket City, building on the moniker as the propulsion capital of the world.
Research Chief to Be Next Daimler CEO

BY WILLIAM BOSTON

BERLIN—Mercedes-Benz owner Daimler AG said long-time Chief Executive Dieter Zetsche would stand down next year and be succeeded by its research-and-development chief, who has been leading the car maker’s push into electric vehicles and self-driving cars.

The appointment of Ola Källenius marks a changing of the guard at the German auto maker at a time when its sales have slowed and, like much of the car industry, it grapples with technology-driven changes and a fragile global economy.

With that challenge in mind, several auto makers have turned to younger executives, closer in age to a new generation of customers who have grown up with the internet.

Mr. Källenius, a 49-year old Swede, would be the first non-German to run Daimler. He succeeds Mr. Zetsche, 65, who with his 12 years as CEO is one of the longest-serving leaders in the industry. Mr. Zetsche will join Daimler’s supervisory board and is expected to become its chairman after a mandated two-year cooling-off period.

Mr. Källenius had been viewed by analysts as a likely CEO since he was promoted to Daimler’s executive board in 2015. He joined the company as a management trainee in 1993 and has held various executive positions in the U.S. and Germany. He also has experience in the performance-car business with stints at McLaren Automotive Ltd. and Daimler’s Mercedes-AMG GmbH.

Daimler Chairman Manfred Bischoff praised Mr. Källenius as a “recognized, internationally experienced and successful Daimler executive.”

Mr. Källenius was also welcomed by Carlos Ghosn, chief of the Renault-Nissan-Mitsubishi alliance, which also maintains an alliance with Daimler for sharing engines and technology. Mr. Ghosn, who has had a close working relationship with Mr. Zetsche, said Mr. Zetsche was “rightly admired across the automotive industry” but that the change of CEO at Daimler wouldn’t affect their partnership.

Arndt Ellinghorst, an auto analyst with the brokerage Evercore ISI, said Mr. Källenius “is a charismatic and fresh leader and understands Mercedes Cars very well,” but added: “He will need to spend a lot of time dealing with the other businesses and, importantly, shareholders.”

The new CEO is set to take over as Daimler faces a number of challenges. Revenue growth has slowed considerably, rising 1% to $90.5 billion ($94.52 billion) in 2018’s first half, while earnings before interest and tax plunged 21% to $6.9 billion.

Daimler warned earlier this year that earnings would be hampered as a result of global trade disputes and rising costs to meet tougher emissions standards in Europe and to develop technology for electric vehicles and self-driving cars.

The company is also preparing a major reorganization next year that will split its operations into three business units—trucks, cars, and new businesses such as car-sharing—a move that analysts say could lead to one of the divisions being spun off.

Daimler also must deal with Li Shufu, the Chinese billionaire who stunned the company earlier this year by amassing a 10% stake in the auto maker.

Mr. Li controls Zhejiang Geely Automotive, a fast-growing company that is eager to become China’s first global auto manufacturer. He has maintained a hands-off strategy with Daimler, but he and Mr. Zetsche have been engaged in talks about developing joint projects.

“The big issue for Daimler is Li Shufu,” said Ferdinand Dudenhöffer, director of the Center for Automotive Research at the Duisburg University. “How will they deal with China and Geely?”
Vernon native takes winding path to career in sports management

By: Becky Hopf

As a kid, he dreamed of becoming a fighter pilot. Instead, he has soared on the ground. At age 54, Vernon native Mitch Covington is a major player in global sports marketing. The 1982 Lamar County High School graduate is vice president for sports marketing for Monster Energy. He’s been with the beverage giant, based in Corona, California, for 10 years. The road that led him there would not, perhaps, be considered traditional -- early on it was waste management, not sports, that built his career -- but he is quick to point out that each job, each role he assumed along the way, led him to this moment.

“This wasn’t even a consideration. I never even dreamed of meeting these people, let alone living in California and doing it every day. It never crossed my radar. My plan was to get any degree that they would give me that would get me a pilot’s license. My dream was to be a fighter pilot,” Covington said.

“These people” whom Covington refers to are athletes -- brand ambassadors -- he has played a major role in landing. One of those, on Sunday, made one of the greatest comebacks in sports history. Covington was there at Atlanta’s East Lake Golf Club following Tiger Woods, who, after a drought of five years without a win and years of setback after setback, claimed the PGA Tour championship.

“Tiger Woods’ comeback -- seeing him carrying our bag and walking the back nine with him -- I don’t know if I’ll ever be able to top that as a memory or an experience,” Covington said.

The stable of brand athletes -- and one, American Pharoah, literally lives in a stable -- has included NASCAR, Ronda Rousey and UFC, Super Bowl champion Rob Gronkowski (they’ve become close friends), racecar driver Kurt Busch, Motocross and super cross champion Jeremy McGrath, drag racing champion Brittany Force, top-ranked Formula 1 racer Lewis Hamilton, and, well, the list goes on and on. The pilot dream was born when he was a teen and worked a job at Columbus, Mississippi, Air Force Base where he watched the pilots train. He joined the ROTC program as a student at the University of Alabama where he graduated with a management degree in 1987. He went to Air Force pilot training, serving six years in inactive reserves.

The pilot dream ended when he married and took a job with a new company his father-in-law started and moved to Florida. It was in trucking and hazardous waste. He initially worked in sales. Their partnership was a success, and he stayed with it for about 15 years, eventually moving back to Vernon to grow his father-in-law’s company there. The road also took him through Marathon Equipment company which manufactures trash compactors. A couple of other
successful business jaunts along the way, he met up with a successful off-road truck racer named Johnny Greaves, who talked Covington into becoming his agent.

“Little did I know then that he was one of the winningest off-road truck drivers of all time,” Covington said.

Covington, at the time, was planning to take time off to spend with his family. But he agreed to work with Greaves. He worried he didn’t know enough about being an agent, but Greaves solved the problem by buying Covington a ticket to Las Vegas to attend a Super Cross race. “He told me to walk through the pits and see some of those sponsors and see if any of them would be interested in sponsoring me and one of my trucks,” Covington said of Greaves’ plan.

As fate had it, he ran across a party hosted by Monster, then a new brand. He knocked on the door -- and opportunity answered. Thanks to Covington’s pitch, Monster signed Greaves, making the driver one of the company’s biggest sponsorships at the time and getting Covington’s own foot in the door. Soon, Covington and Ricky Johnson established TORC -- The Off-road Championships -- racing series. They struck gold with their venture, eventually selling the series to Monster in 2008. Monster knew a good thing, and persuaded Covington to join its staff as a freelancer of sorts, initially with no title, then that of Director of Athletic Management. He worked on special projects, including purchasing, for the company, the Monster House in Park City, Utah, a place athletes could go to ski in the winter and train in the summer.

Within two years, his experience in motor sports -- including knowledge from having a world-class son, Thomas, as a motocross champion -- led Monster to hire him as its director of motor sports. Around 2013, he was promoted to vice president. In May 2017 Covington won an Emmy award as an executive producer in the category of Outstanding Long Form Sports Documentary, for “Unchained: The Untold Story of Freestyle Motocross.”

“I guess around 2010, it just really hit home that this is a great fit. It kind of fit like a glove. All of my experience in negotiating in sales and being in business with my father-in-law in the garbage industry -- even though they were totally separate products from what I’m doing now -- the business end is a lot the same. It’s making good business decisions and building good relationships. I developed those skills in my past experiences.”

His job is challenging. He signed jockey Victor Espinoza just before American Pharoah won horseracing’s Triple Crown. “I made a deal with the jockey for cash 30 minutes before the race,” Covington said.

“It’s a wild ride. I don’t know where I’m going to be tomorrow. It’s a lot of traveling, a lot of stress. But it’s exciting to get to experience it all. Sometimes I have to remind myself to enjoy the trip, enjoy the experience, enjoy the long lines at airports. It can be the highest of highs and the lowest of lows, but I enjoy it. I’ve met some of my favorite people along the way.”
City faces housing challenges

Families, retirees will fill market in the next few years

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

Ensuring adequate housing for future Tuscaloosa residents could pose a challenge during the next few years.

While Tuscaloosa's largest median age group is in the 18-24 range, or about 25 percent of the city's 96,352 residents, their housing needs are expected to be fulfilled by multifamily, or apartment, housing units that peaked in construction in 2014 and 2015.

It's the housing needs for those age 35 to 44, typically households with children and families, or those 65 and older, such as empty nesters and retirees, that could bring the greatest demand in the next five years, according to data presented by Ninigret Partners of Providence, Rhode Island.

"It's literally a housing issue across a range of price points," said Kevin Hively, founder of Ninigret Partners, a firm that focuses on management consulting, economic development and strategic communications. "And you're not the only community in the United States having this conversation."

Hively detailed his findings in a presentation -- available soon at the city's master plan website, framework.tuscaloosa.com -- during the planning project's third steering committee meeting Wednesday at the Tuscaloosa River Market.

Hively's findings showed that the bulk of Tuscaloosa's housing supply was constructed in the past 40 years and, because of this, many of these homes and apartment units will need repairs or upgrades in the coming years.

But for new homes, decisions will have to be made on how best to manage land costs, approval and permit fees, construction costs, financing fees and returns on investment, Hively said.

"The only places that can

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get a really good handle on it are the places that can go after all five," Hively said.

For example, homes, apartments and condominiums constructed near the University of Alabama campus and Bryant-Denny Stadium may appear to meet housing need totals, but not by appealing to the game-day market.

And for single-family homes within the $50,000 to $99,999 price range, which is projected to need 1,300 households and stands to be among the most in-demand over the next five years, local developers said it's practically impossible to build new houses within the city limit for that amount.

Instead, homes of this price are being built in unincorporated Tuscaloosa County or Northport.

There also will be a need to manage the non-student rental market, which currently is in limited supply with rental rates distorted by student housing prices, Hively said.

"You have to come to an agreement on how to address this that the community can get behind," Hively said.

Hively and his company, Ninigret Partners, were brought on by "planning NEXT," the Columbus, Ohio-based consultants hired in April by the City Council hired for $731,000 to guide the process of updating Tuscaloosa's comprehensive plan.

Jaime Greene, principal of planning NEXT, told the steering committee that the planning process named Frame/Work is now in the "listen and learn" stage.

Following the "Forum on the Future" public involvement meeting set for Nov. 27, the group will proceed with crafting the plan through the remainder of the year with recommendations for land use, mobility and transportation, infrastructure, community facilities and services and other aspects being developed during the first two months of 2010.

Finalizing an updated master plan for the city of Tuscaloosa could take up to two years.

"We're still early in this process," Greene said, "but there's a lot of knitting-together of the various components that will be needed in order to complete a comprehensive plan."

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Historic Sixteenth Street Baptist Church vying for $150,000 in national contest

Erin Edgemon  eedgemon@al.com

The historic Sixteenth Street Baptist Church is one of 20 finalists across the United States competing for $150,000 in grant money.

If the church wins the Partners in Preservation competition, the grant money would be used to install protective glass on the outside of all the church’s recently restored stained glass windows and make repairs to the cupola and twin bell towers.

This year’s competition, sponsored by American Express and The National Trust for Historic Preservation, in collaboration with Main Street America, is focused on sites that celebrate diversity and the fight for equality.

Sixteenth Street Baptist Church is well known as the site of the 1963 Ku Klux Klan bombing that killed four little girls and injured 22 others, shocking the world and galvanizing the American Civil Rights Movement.

“Sixteenth Street Baptist Church is a symbol of hope,” said Birmingham Mayor Randall Woodfin. “While it reminds us of a painful past that we must never forget, it also proves how far we’ve come. Through its doors enter people of all colors, classes and backgrounds to experience today’s Birmingham — a place where, despite our differences, we work together. We unite as a city, region and state to support this sacred place.”

CHURCH HISTORY

Sixteenth Street Baptist Church was built in 1911 by a group of African Americans who a few years earlier had been ordered to raze its 1883 building because the steeple was too tall. Black architect Wallace A. Rayfield designed the church that is now known as a national civic rights landmark.

During Birmingham’s turbulent 1960s, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church was a venue for the organization of mass meetings and demonstrations. On Sunday, Sept. 15, 1963, the church was bombed, killing Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Cynthia Wesley and Carole Robertson.

When the bomb exploded, many of the stained-glass windows were damaged and some destroyed, but the center window of “Jesus knocking at the door” had just the face of Jesus missing, a detail that many interpreted as a symbol of Jesus’ shame of the racial divide in Birmingham and America. Once the building was restored in 1964-65, a gift of a stained-glass window from the people of Wales arrived depicting a “Black Christ” holding up the world and at the same time extending help to the world.

“The tragic death of four little girls in the bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church diminished our world in ways that we cannot fathom,” said the Rev. Arthur Price, church pastor. “Yet, this terrible act of terror motivated a movement to support the passage of long overdue civil rights changes in our country. Sixteenth Street Baptist Church will always be a place of service, a place of significance, and a place of social change. Please help us to preserve it by lifting your voice!”

GARNERING GRANT MONEY

In 2017, Birmingham’s Alabama Theatre won a $120,000 grant through the same competition that helped fund the replacement of its 18th Street vertical Alabama sign.

This year the campaign will award $2 million in grants to historic sites on America’s Main Streets.

REV Birmingham, a Main Street American organization championing historic preservation, nominated Sixteenth Street Baptist Church for this year’s Partners in Preservation competition and is working with the church to run the month-long campaign for votes.

“Not only is Sixteenth Baptist Church an important civil rights landmark, it’s also a beautiful, historic church designed in 1911 by African American architect Wallace Rayfield,” said David Fleming, REV Birmingham CEO. “Preservation of our city’s unique historic assets is essential to the continued success of Birmingham. This Partners in Preservation opportunity allows everyone, no matter the size of your bank account, to invest in saving a piece of our history — by simply voting.”
Council passes $209M budget

Spending plan has few changes from mayor’s proposal

By Jason Morton
Staff Writer

A unanimous Tuscaloosa City Council on Tuesday approved a $209 million operating budget for fiscal 2010.

After accounting for adjusted tax revenue estimates of $224,780 and a $110,000 reimbursement from the Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority, the City Council approved essentially the same budget proposed by Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox in August.

It did add in some expenses after requests from city departments, such as an extra $134,000 for operations of the Tuscaloosa Metro Animal Shelter and $20,000 for new uniforms and protective clothing for the Tuscaloosa Fire and Rescue Service.

The council also agreed to allocate an extra $50,000 from an overall request of $124,520 for an anti-gun violence campaign as proposed by Councilwoman Raevan Howard.

“Gun violence affects everyone in all communities in our state and our nation,” Howard said, noting that she intended to push for the full amount in the future. “I believe in it.”

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BUDGET

It’s going to be a successful behavior change campaign," Howard said. When factoring in the additional revenue projections and expenses, the remaining contingency fund for fiscal 2010 is projected to be $530,679, which is about $4,000 less than the contingency that Maddox’s proposed budget kept in reserve.

With fiscal 2018 coming to an end Sept. 30, the council also agreed to spend much of the remaining contingency fund for the current fiscal year.

It steered an estimated $285,000 of the remaining $521,126 toward a number of departmental requests, including $100,000 to replenish the Office of the City Attorney’s law enforcement liability fund, which goes toward the defense of cases related to police misconduct, $35,000 for a new bomb suit for the Tuscaloosa Police Department and $70,000 toward new or upgraded street lights across the city.

“We’re accomplishing a tremendous amount here,” said Councilman Matt Calderone, who chaired hours of the council’s budget hearings over four consecutive Tuesday mornings.

Despite pitches from a number of outside agencies seeking additional funding, the council elected to keep the $12.32 million allocated by Maddox for annual outside agency funding.

This keeps these agencies -- more than 30 received funding in fiscal 2018 -- at the same amounts they received last year except for the Tuscaloosa County Park and Recreation Authority, which is being cut by $130,000.

This decrease comes from Maddox’s proposal that City Hall take over the maintenance and upkeep of Annette Shelby Park at the corner of Queen City Avenue and 15th Street along with three boat landings on Lake Tuscaloosa.

“In terms of the general fund, I’m very happy with the mayor’s recommendations,” Calderone said, noting that he was “very comfortable with level funding” these agencies.

The fiscal 2010 budget as approved by the City Council totals a combined total of $220.9 million. Of this, $155.4 million is dedicated to the General Fund with the remaining $54.4 million set aside for the Water and Sewer Fund.

The budget includes a rate increase for garbage, trash and recycling as well as a 1 percent increase for water and sewer services. Combined, these hikes are expected to total about $1.60 a month for the average residential customer.

There also are pay increases for the city’s nearly 1,300 employees. Combined, the proposed 2 percent cost-of-living adjustment and a one-step pay raise amount to almost $2.52 million.

Along with the funding appropriated for salaries and equipment, the budget includes funding for the permanent addition of 10 new security guards to work full-time in the city’s elementary schools.

At an estimated cost of about $350,000, these guards are expected to be retired police officers or deputies who have maintained their annual law enforcement certifications.

Another $350,000 is set aside for the creation of the similar Water and Sewer Facility Renewal Fund for improvements on this side of the budget, funded with proceeds from water and sewer sales, among other sources.

These funds would go toward the annual maintenance and upkeep of all city facilities except for the Tuscaloosa Amphitheater and Tuscaloosa River Market, which have their own established maintenance funds through lodging tax revenues.

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Wednesday, September 26, 2018

The Tuscaloosa News
Inside the fascinating relationship between ESPN and Alabama

By: Rainer Sabin

The most surprising episode in Alabama's young season didn't happen during a game. It took place in the moments after one.

As the Crimson Tide's band played a victory tune following a 37-point rout of Louisville earlier this month, ESPN reporter Maria Taylor sidled up to Nick Saban and stopped him for an interview.

The first question she posed to the Alabama coach was about the resolution of the team's quarterback question that had dominated headlines for the past eight months as Tua Tagovailoa and Jalen Hurts competed for the starting role. In a matter of seconds, Saban became agitated.

"Why do you continually try to get me to say something that doesn't respect one of them?" he huffed. "I'm not going to. So quit asking."

That Saban became testy with a member of the media wasn't noteworthy. There is a catalog of rants he has delivered in news conferences throughout his tenure that speak to his ornery disposition. What was shocking in this instance, however, was that he scolded someone who works for ESPN -- the sports broadcasting giant that has nurtured a strong relationship with Alabama at the same time it has intensified its coverage of the nation's top college football program. Because of this, Saban immediately realized his error in judgment and called to apologize to Taylor.

Almost overnight, both parties moved on and continued as they had been during the last eight months -- ever since the Tide's theatrical overtime triumph in the national championship game versus Georgia. Stretching from last winter and deep into the summer, the Crimson Tide has maintained a constant presence on the network's fleet of outlets while earning regular placement in the top headlines on ESPN's website.

During that period, the Worldwide Leader -- as ESPN bills itself -- has aired an all-access series focused on Alabama's preseason camp, filmed a segment on Saban's pickup basketball games, featured the Crimson Tide's coach on the cover of its magazine and carried three of Alabama's first four games on its main channels.

The only win ESPN didn't show live was the Tide's rout of Texas A&M last Saturday that CBS grabbed as its SEC Game of the Week. Yet ESPN still dispatched an army of talent to Tuscaloosa during this past weekend. Paul Finebaum and the crew from SEC Nation posted up outside Bryant-Denny Stadium, while inside the 102,000-seat venue were multiple Internet reporters and Marty Smith -- the hyper-caffeinated talking head with the thick Southern drawl.

"There is a want for Alabama," said Lee Fitting, ESPN vice president of production. "There is an intrigue about Alabama. People like success. People like seeing really good teams lose. And

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people like learning about really good teams. When a team rates, it's like, 'Why not do more? Why not try to put more of their games in high-profile spots? Why not try to do access-type series and feature stories and interviews on that?' The viewers want it. We should be doing more of it."

ESPN's thirst for all things Alabama makes sense. The Crimson Tide has appeared in half of the ten most-watched cable telecasts ever, and Birmingham has been the No. 1 local market for ESPN's college football games ever since the network began tracking those ratings.

"Alabama has become the program, the team, the brand and the coach that people either love or love to hate," said ESPN College GameDay host Rece Davis, an Alabama alumnus. "Nick Saban is a really compelling figure. He's the most interesting person in the sport right now."

The Crimson Tide's coach is also one of the most guarded. Despite a wariness of the media and the "rat poison" they supply, Saban has embraced ESPN.

"They have given us a very fair shake in everything that we've done," Saban said.

ESPN has also provided him with a national platform to sell the program to recruits, influence the conversation about the sport's biggest issues and also get out in front of controversial stories. At the site of the ACC title game last December, he appeared on College GameDay and stumped for Alabama's inclusion in the College Football Playoff -- an event ESPN has had the rights to since its inception four years ago. He continued to make the Tide's case that evening on SportsCenter with Scott Van Pelt. Months later, when the battle between Tua Tagovailoa and Jalen Hurts started to percolate, Saban first planted the idea he could play both quarterbacks in an interview with ESPN's Chris Low -- bypassing outlets in the state in order to deliver the message to a wider audience.

Why Nick Saban is suddenly showing a softer side

Why Nick Saban is suddenly showing a softer side

Nick Saban crafted an image of a hard-nosed coach. But as of late, the Alabama coach showing a different side — one that is more fun and inviting. What gives?

"ESPN is one-stop shopping," said Finebaum. "If a story breaks on dot-com, it's disseminated a lot more quickly. I have worked in local and if something comes out on a more local or regional level, it will get picked up if it's Nick Saban. But it's a lot easier this way, so why bother? Just go to ESPN."

Finebaum did. Once recognized as a big personality in Birmingham, he parlayed a radio show that captured the zeitgeist of Southern football fanaticism into a national gig based in Charlotte. His meteoric rise occurred around the same time Alabama entrenched itself as the sport's modern dynasty and became appointment viewing.

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Since 2014, when Finebaum emerged as the face of the ESPN-run SEC Network, Alabama has played in seven of the 11 most-watched college games on any channel. Even the Tide's 62-7 victory over Ole Miss on Sept. 15--a humdrum affair decided midway through the second quarter--drew 4.1 million viewers and led all cable telecasts in ratings among the 18-to-49-year-old demographic that day.

"Alabama is not a local brand or a local market," said Fitting. "They are a national brand...As every year goes on and the team continues to win, and the team has more and more success, interest continues to rise. That's not unlike any other sport or any other program."

But it's fascinating nonetheless--particularly to those who recall where the Crimson Tide was positioned in the sports landscape prior to Saban's arrival in 2007. During the volatile days of Mike DuBose, Dennis Franchione, Mike Price and Mike Shula, Alabama's relevance didn't extend much beyond the South. A cloud of NCAA probation helped obscure the Tide and so did the absence of sustained success. In 2002, the same year the program was hit with major penalties and a bowl ban, two of its conference games were carried on Pay-Per-View and a showdown with Middle Tennessee State was broadcast on Jefferson Pilot Sports.

"Listen," Finebaum said, "I did a daily talk show. It wasn't like I was being called very often to talk about how great things were and how unique the program was. It wasn't. In many ways, it was a laughingstock."

Over at ESPN, the interest in Alabama was tepid. Davis, who delivered the highlights as an in-studio host at the time, remembers there wasn't a major push to spotlight the Tide. Alabama was merely acknowledged because of its great tradition and the championships won during Bear Bryant's legendary tenure.

"I worked closely with a producer on content and stuff like that, and I wouldn't say they were like, 'Hey, we got to get Alabama in,'" Davis said. "They were sort of there."

Between 2004 and 2005, at the height of somnolent Shula era, the set of College GameDay was at the site of only one Alabama game. During that same period, the show made seven appearances at venues where USC was playing. At the time, the Trojans were the dominant team, seizing the marquee in Los Angeles and beyond. ESPN, in particular, was obsessed with them -- loving the mixture of celebrity and sport that Pete Carroll, Matt Leinart, and Reggie Bush created in the backdrop of Hollywood.

The network eventually assigned Shelley Smith to track USC and file daily reports about a program that marched to two national championships and came within seconds of winning a third. As they experienced outrageous success, the Trojans had the feel of a dynasty -- much in the same way Alabama does now.
"USC was very glitzy and glamorous," Davis said. "They were L.A. flash and L.A. hot."

The Trojans were also based in the second-largest television market in the country, making it easy for ESPN to highlight USC much in the same way the network blanketed the Dallas Cowboys, New York Yankees, and New England Patriots. Aggressively following Alabama, which is located off the beaten path and 210 miles from the closest major city, isn't as natural. But as the Tide started winning at a historic rate, ESPN had no choice other than to cover Alabama with zeal and foster a rapport with Saban -- the cranky coach who had been in the network's crosshairs when he arrived in Tuscaloosa.

As Saban noted this week, the relationship between Alabama and ESPN has grown. The network has aired 20 of the Tide's last 33 games on its three major channels, including a 2016 matchup with FCS opponent Chattanooga broadcast live on ESPN2. Alabama, after all, has become the closest thing to a sure bet in sports television. On the way to winning five of the last nine national championships, it has proved to have more staying power than USC did during the height of its success. Both Davis and Fitting called Alabama's run "unprecedented."

"I think ESPN is an organization that is always interested in the best story," Finebaum said. "And there are some days in college football where there just isn't enough oxygen for anyone else once you get through talking about Saban and Alabama. But I think he understands that, too. I think Nick Saban is fully aware of who he is and the influence that he has, and sometimes he very masterfully uses the media to communicate something."

ESPN has been the beneficiary, especially this past offseason as Saban has worked to counteract the momentum Georgia accrued in the previous recruiting cycle by allowing a peek behind his program's iron curtain. The network approached other schools about producing an all-access show but was rebuffed. Alabama, which opened its doors for a similar series in 2010 but turned ESPN down in recent years, enthusiastically agreed this time as Saban wanted to portray his steely juggernaut's softer side. The result was a four-part program that satisfied both parties.

With the pithiness of an excerpted review featured on a movie advertisement, Saban called it "really quality."

Nick Saban: I could have handled ESPN interview better
Nick Saban: I could have handled ESPN interview better
Nick Saban apologizes for ESPN postgame interview.

As the show was filmed, reporters from the network eyed in and out of Tuscaloosa. Holly Rowe dropped in along with Taylor. Analyst Joey Galloway also made a pilgrimage to Alabama's campus. They wanted to catch a glimpse of the reigning national champion and its new sensation, Tua Tagovailoa -- a player with the kind of star appeal to rival Saban.
The sudden ascent of the Hawaiian sophomore that began in the second half of the national championship blockbuster has added a new dimension to ESPN's coverage of the Tide, making Alabama that much more compelling. Previous stars such as Julio Jones, Derrick Henry and Mark Ingram didn't move the needle in the same way.

With his flair for the dramatic, mind-boggling production and a first name that rolls off the tongue, Tagovailoa has the potential to be a powerhouse with the kind of wattage he generates.

"There have been some terrific quarterbacks at Alabama since Nick Saban has been there," Davis said. "But there hasn't been one that looked like that. This guy is special. He's really unique in the way he plays the game and I think it's captivating for players and people. I do think that gives that a layer that hasn't been there previously."

For ESPN, it's ratings gold.

Throughout the seven-month interlude between this season and the previous one, the media giant breathlessly tracked the competition between Hurts and Tagovailoa, tackling the quarterback battle from every angle.

Saban grew weary of the subject, repeatedly deflecting questions or heading them off before they were even posed.

And then he finally snapped at ESPN on ESPN's most-accessed channel, ABC -- creating yet another story for the network that can't get enough of Alabama football.

Nearly a month after he fumed at Taylor on live television in a way that surprised those working for the Worldwide Leader, Saban was asked about his relationship with the sports broadcasting empire.

He shrugged.

"I hope it's good," he said. "You'd have to ask them."

The answer, of course, is pretty obvious.

As Fitting said nonchalantly, "It just sort of works."
He's flipping into Tide fans' hearts

By: Bob Carlton

The clock ticks down to end the third quarter, and the Million Dollar Band strikes up its rendition of Green Day's "Basket Case."

At the south end of Bryant-Denny Stadium, the Alabama cheerleaders line up along the goal-line, the women sitting on the guys' shoulders and holding up four fingers to signal the start of the final quarter.

One of the cheerleaders, Tony Bell, stands by himself on the east sideline, his heart pounding and his adrenaline pumping.

Then Bell takes off, flipping and spinning his way across the entire width of the south endzone, flawlessly executing a series of handsprings and backflips until he nails his landing on the opposite side of the field.

The Bryant-Denny crowd -- which, by this time, has typically been lulled to sleep by another Alabama beatdown of an overmatched opponent -- roars back to life.

As he sprints back across the endzone, the infectious enthusiasm of Bell exchanges high-fives with the Tide fans and winks and waves on the stadium camera crew.

Along with Tua Tagovailoa's laser passes and DeVonta Smith's diving catches, Bell's acrobatic exploits are among the highlights of an Alabama football Saturday.

And he gets as much of a rush out of it as the fans do.

"Whenever I see the clock stop after the third quarter, my heart speeds up, and I'm like, I'm fixing to impress the hell out of everybody," Bell says before a Sunday evening cheer practice at UA's Hank Crisp Indoor Facility. "I'm going to give 'em a show."

Kirk Herbstreit and Sarah Patterson are big fans

During ABC's nationwide broadcast of Alabama's season-opening win over Louisville in Orlando, college football analyst Kirk Herbstreit gave Bell a big shout-out when the network showed a replay of Bell tumbling across the Camping World Stadium turf.

"That's the most impressive thing I've seen all night," Herbstreit marveled. "I mean, Tua's had a good night, but holy cow!"

One of Bell's biggest fans, though, is former Alabama gymnastics coach Sarah Patterson, whose teams won six NCAA national championships and who knows a perfect 10 when she sees one.

"Gotta love his gymnastics talent!" Patterson tweeted following Bell's performance at Alabama's home-opener against Arkansas State. "I'd give him a perfect 10!"

This is just Bell's second season on the UA coed cheer team, but his fourth quarter tumbling feats have already become an Alabama gameday tradition.

See next page
"There are so many people who look forward to the break between the third and fourth quarters to watch him tumble down the end zone," Jennifer Thrasher, the director of the UA spirit programs, says.

"He missed a game last year, a home game, and my phone blew up: 'Where was the guy tumbling?'"

In addition to the football games, Bell also performs with the UA cheerleaders at Alabama men's and women's basketball games, and he even made an appearance at a Crimson Tide baseball game last spring.

**A gym rat growing up in Mississippi**

Bell grew up in Crystal Springs, Miss., which is south of Jackson, but says he moved around the Jackson area after his parents, Antonio Bell and Joanne Bell Wright, got divorced when he was in elementary school.

He started tumbling when he was about 13, mainly to impress the girls.

"I played basketball, football, ran track, did almost everything," he remembers. "Me and my little brother were going to play basketball one day, and I saw a group of girls and wanted to show off.

"I was like, 'Let's tumble for them.' . . . So, I was in the middle of the street, and I just started going."

Bell got to be friends with one of the girls, Molly Holloway, who later taught him how to do a standing tuck (or backflip), and invited him to go with her to the Central Mississippi Cheerleading gym in Ridgeland, Miss.

"The first time I went in, I learned a new skill just like that," he says. "And I fell in love with it instantly."

He soon joined the CMC all-star team, where his coaches were David and Kendall Hanbery, who became, and remain, Bell's biggest cheerleaders.

"Those two, I say they are like Mom and Dad to me because they have done so much for me, my family, my brother," Bell says.

"Me getting great at tumbling was because of them," he adds. "They always left a key (to their gym) at the top of the door, and it was like, 'Whenever you want to go in, just go in."

Bell and his little brother, Joshua, sometimes spent the night at the gym, he says. They would watch YouTube videos demonstrating different tumbling skills until they fell asleep and then they would wake up the next morning and practice until they got them right.

"They were enjoying it so much," Kendall Hanbery says. "We couldn't get them out of the gym."

She remembers taking Tony and Joshua with them on a family vacation to Destin, Fla.
"We're hanging out, and the next thing we know, they are tumbling up and down the street of the place where we're staying, having a huge crowd gather around them," she says. "So that's kind of his element. He tumbles everywhere he goes."

Starting a new tradition in T-Town

Three years ago, when Bell graduated from Germantown High School in Gluckstadt, Miss., the Hanberys gave him a 2007 Toyota Corolla for his graduation gift.

"He never had a car in high school," Kendall Hanbery says. "And that (car) was kind of his incentive -- if he would graduate high school and keep his grades up and go to college.

Bell earned a scholarship to Coastal Alabama Community College in Bay Minette, where he was a cheerleader for two years.

Three of his teammates on that squad -- Josh Glidden, Baylen Beck and Kelsey Waters -- went on to cheer at Alabama, and Bell followed them to Tuscaloosa.

While in Bay Minette, Bell worked nights as a bouncer at a dance club, where he got to know some of the local police officers. It piqued his interest, and after he finished community college and transferred to Alabama, he decided to major in criminal justice.

At UA, he fit in right away, and during one of the early home games last season, Bell suddenly felt the urge to start tumbling across the south endzone, much like when he was a little kid trying to impress the girls back home in Mississippi.

"The band started playing, and I was like, 'Coach, can I tumble?"' he recalls. "She was like, 'Yeah, go for it.'"

So, what has now become an Alabama gameday tradition began as kind of a lark.

"It was spontaneous, and the crowd loved it," Jennifer Thrasher, Bell's cheer coach, remembers. "It wasn't on the big screen that (first) time. It was mainly just students, and they all just kind of went crazy when he did it. . . . It's kind of just taken off."

Bell's mentors, David and Kendall Hanbery, have yet to attend one of his games in person, but they still cheer for him from three hours away.

"We keep in touch regularly with him," Kendall Hanbery says. "We keep close watch on his grades, making sure he is still a good student, and, of course, we watch for him every weekend on TV when football season starts."

At the Arkansas State game earlier this season, Bell sprained his left ankle as he turned to run before he had finished his landing, and lots of fans noticed when he limped off the field into the locker room.

"I got people texting me," he says. "People were on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, asking, 'Hey, are you all right?'"
The ankle injury caused Bell to miss the following weekend's road game against Ole Miss in Oxford, but he was back on the sidelines and ready to tumble at this past weekend's Texas A&M game.

Patterson, the former Alabama gymnastics coach, was among the many who were thrilled to see Bell back in action, tweeting: "I'll never get tired of watching him!!!"

And for Alabama fans who tend to exit early when the games turn into a blowout, Tony Bell makes it worth sticking around.
Alumna tops multiple business magazine lists

BY RYLIE CURRY
STAFF REPORTER

For some new students like Julie Sommer, learning about Marilynn Hewson's success in the business world serves as a reminder that attending The University of Alabama was the right choice.

"As a freshman at UA, knowing the CEO of the Year attended this university is very encouraging and reinforces the idea that I made the right decision coming here," said Sommer, a freshman majoring in music.

Hewson, UA alumna and CEO of Lockheed Martin, was recently named CEO of the Year by Chief Executive magazine and was ranked No. 1 on Fortune Magazine's Most Powerful Women list of 2018. Lockheed Martin is a global security and aerospace company that creates military systems and innovative technologies.

While Hewson's success as current chairman, president and CEO of Lockheed Martin has earned her national recognition, she has gained further attention at The University of Alabama as students are inspired and encouraged by her triumph.

Alex Perry, a junior majoring in communication studies, said Hewson's accomplishments serve as a reassuring example of success.

"It's interesting to learn that the classrooms we as students spend most of our time in were the same that many notable alumni spent their time in as well," Perry said. "In a way, Hewson's accomplishments serve as a reassuring example of success and proves that current students can follow in the same footsteps of the ones before us."

Go for the opportunities that stretch you and push you to grow.

MARILYNN HEWSON

Hewson graduated from the University with a bachelor's degree in business administration and later earned a master's degree in economics. She also attended executive development programs at Columbia and Harvard.

Nathanael Jones, a sophomore majoring in finance, said it was encouraging to hear about Hewson's accomplishments.

"My perception has always been that it takes an Ivy League education and connections to rise to that level," Jones said. "Her success shows me that I can rise to that level as well."

Hewson began working at Lockheed Martin in 1983 as an industrial engineer. Before rising to CEO, she held a variety of operational leadership and executive positions at the company.

According to Fortune magazine, Lockheed Martin serves as the country's largest government contractor with about $1 billion in contracts in 2018 and a market value of nearly $100 billion.

Hewson said in an email that her education and experiences at Culverhouse laid the groundwork for her professional success and helped shape her approach to business leadership.

"I strongly believe that human beings learn and grow by taking on new challenges and adding to their breadth of experience," Hewson said. "The University of Alabama provided me with opportunities to do that, both inside and outside the classroom."

She said her time as an undergraduate at the University was not easy due to a full course load and working night shifts, but it helped her to prioritize and use her time wisely.

Hewson serves on a variety of boards and is currently a member of the President's Cabinet at The University of Alabama. She is also a member of the Board of Visitors of the Culverhouse College of Business.

In 2017, Hewson donated $5 million to the Culverhouse College of Business for a high-tech lab and research in business-data intelligence and cybersecurity. Hewson made the largest one-time financial contribution in University history.

Hewson said students should strive to get out of their comfort zone and learn something new each day.

"Go for the opportunities that stretch you and push you to grow," Hewson said. "Most importantly, don't put constraints on yourself because you want to be perfect. Just get out there. You will be amazed at what you can achieve as you discover strengths you didn't know you had and develop skills that will serve you for the rest of your life."
Avery Johnson talks with local lawyers' group

By Stephanie Taylor
Staff Writer

Hours before the University of Alabama's basketball team took to the court for the first practice of the 2018-19 season, coach Avery Johnson took an hour to talk with members of the Tuscaloosa County Bar Association.

Johnson talked about his hopes for this season's team and upcoming events as he enters his fourth year as coach of a team on the rise.

He teased that there may be another player with talents matching last year's star Collin Sexton, who was picked eighth in the NBA draft by the Cleveland Cavaliers after leaving UA.

"We have another guy like him in the pipelines, but I can't mention any names," he said.

He's not worried the team will suffer with Sexton's See COACH, A7

For more photos and video from Avery Johnson's talk with the local lawyers' group, visit www.tuscaloosanews.com.

COACH

From Page A1

absence, saying a balanced team can have just as much success.

"Last year, he was such an explosive player, he dominated the ball a little bit," Johnson said.

"Hopefully, we can spread the ball around a little bit more, and instead of having one guy average 20 and the next guy average eight or nine, we can have four or five guys average 12 or 14 points which will make us a more potent offensive team."

He said he took an analytical look at the team's non-conference schedule, which could ultimately lead to Alabama advancing further in the NCAA Tournament.

"We've got to be clicking on all cylinders come tournament time, playing our best basketball and giving ourselves a chance to do something we've never done here at Alabama, which is make it to the Final Four and have a chance to win the championship."

Johnson, a former NBA coach, answered questions about the difference between coaching pros and college students, saying coaching at the college level is rewarding because he has a chance to impact the lives of his players. NBA players come in, practice a few hours a day, get paid and go on with their lives, he noted. On the collegiate level, he feels responsible for his players around the clock.

"On the collegiate level, I feel like there's more responsibility throughout the day for these student-athletes. If something goes wrong with the kid, even if it's his fault, a lot of times it's the coach's fault first because he didn't teach him the right thing to do," he said. "If they're not in the right place at the right time, if they should've been somewhere else, the coach should've made sure.

"But that's where more gratification comes in, when they do the right thing -- when they go to class, don't get in trouble. When I'm getting compliments about how they're going to the Alberta Head Start program and giving back to the community."

Alabama plays its first game against Montevallo at home Oct. 30.

Extras inside and online

To read more about the Alabama basketball team's first practice of the season, see Page C1.

For more photos and video from Avery Johnson's talk with the local lawyers' group, visit www.tuscaloosanews.com.
Alabama alum Marillyn Hewson named most powerful woman in business by Fortune

By: Ben Flanagan

Lockheed Martin CEO and University of Alabama alumna Marillyn Hewson is the most powerful woman in business, according to Fortune magazine.

The site's annual "referendum on the state of women in business" says the Kansas native is "leading a cadre of women at the helm of defense contractors," as she becomes the new No. 1.

Chairman, president and CEO at Lockheed Martin, the 64-year-old Hewson took over that role in 2013, and the company's market cap has since doubled.

Forbes wrote the following about Hewson in their profile:

"Hewson has become the top purveyor of U.S. defense at a time when geopolitical threats (and the government funding that goes along with them) abound--not just on earth, but also in space and cyberspace. As head of the country's largest government contractor, Hewson rises to No. 1 this year, having positioned Lockheed Martin in the sweet spot to cater to the modern military's needs--from its humming F-35 fighter jet program to its ability to equip the White House's proposed "Space Force." Lockheed is also leading the charge to develop hypersonic weapons, which travel five times as fast as the speed of sound. Such new tech has become a U.S. national security priority given advances in Russia and China, helping Lockheed win about $1 billion in contracts so far in 2018. That's been a tailwind for the stock, with returns up 15% year over year, boosting Lockheed's market value to nearly $100 billion."

She was previously ranked third on the list.

Hewson is a 2-time graduate of UA with a bachelor's degree in business administration and a master's in economics. She is also a member of the Culverhouse College of Business Board of Visitors as well as a member of UA's President's Cabinet. Her husband James holds a bachelor's degree in communications.

In July, the couple made a gift of $15 million to UA to benefit the Culverhouse College of Business, which was the largest one-time financial contribution in the school's history.
Blazers calling for donations to Slive Foundation

Check presentation set for Saturday night’s game

Staff reports

As prostate cancer awareness month continues, the UAB football team is set to honor the late Mike Slive at its home game this Saturday at Legion Field.

UAB Athletics Foundation board members and head football coach Bill Clark made a promise to match every donation made to the Mike Slive Foundation in the month of September — up to $25,000. As of Thursday, that goal was just about met with donations nearing $20,000, for a total so far of about $40,000, according to Anna Slive Harwood, president of the Mike Slive Foundation.

The challenge will culminate during the first half Saturday, when the UAB Athletics Foundation will present a check to the Mike Slive Foundation.

Slive, the former Conference USA and SEC commissioner, was on the forefront of prostate cancer research until his passing earlier this year. The Birmingham resident fought through his battle with prostate cancer at UAB and his family still resides in the Magic City.

“We are so grateful for the support of UAB athletics for the Mike Slive Foundation for prostate cancer research,” said Slive Harwood. “My father’s relationship with UAB goes back to the early ‘90s with Gene Bartow and the Great Midwest Conference, which became Conference USA.

“This past spring we partnered with UAB basketball and coach Ehsan for a Block Cancer initiative. Now we are honored to partner with UAB football in a matching donation program that culminates tomorrow at their game against Charlotte, which they have dubbed the

Want to donate?

You can do so online at https://mikeslivefoundation.org/give/uab-football-match/

Prostate Cancer Awareness Game.

“When we launched the Mike Slive Foundation for prostate cancer research last fall, we knew that we had a special opportunity to utilize the platform of athletics in the fight against prostate cancer. Our ongoing partnership with UAB athletics is a perfect example of this.”

The Blazers look to make it nine straight home wins when they host Charlotte at 6 p.m. Tickets to the game can be purchased at uabsports.com or at the box office on game day.
UAH draws closer to milestone mark in enrollment
By: Paul Gattis

As the University of Alabama in Huntsville set another enrollment record this fall, the school is getting closer to a long-awaited milestone.

Using recent growth rates as a projection, UAH said it expects to eclipse the 10,000-student mark next year.

The school announced earlier this month that it had an enrollment of 9,736 for the fall semester, marking the fourth consecutive year of record enrollment. It was a 7 percent increase over fall 2017.

"It's becoming increasingly important that students view their choice for college as an investment. Prospective students are coming to realize that a diploma from UAH provides them with great value," UAH President Robert Altenkirch said in a statement. "The quality of our faculty and the opportunity to conduct hands-on research and gain practical experience through internships enhances their knowledge and helps develop their skills. UAH students are very well prepared upon graduation and are highly qualified to enter the workforce."

Altenkirch announced his retirement earlier this year but is remaining at the school's helm until a replacement is named.

Other enrollment highlights released by UAH:

The freshman class contains 1,428 students, largest in UAH's history, up 6.2 percent when compared to the same numbers last year.
This incoming class also scored a record average of 28.5 on their ACT, up from 27.9 a year ago.
The overall GPA for this incoming class is 3.88
45 percent scored 30 or higher on the ACT
45 percent had a high school grade point average of 4.0 or higher
Retention remains at historically high levels at 83.1 percent for 2018.
Stillman College renames education building

New name honors former chairman of trustees board

Staff report

Stillman College has named its education building the Houston H. Harte Center in honor of a long-time supporter and former chairman of the board of trustees at the private college.

The college had a dedication ceremony on Wednesday celebrating the name change and Harte's legacy.

Harte was a chairman of the board from 1987-93. He was awarded an honorary doctor of laws degree from Stillman in 1985.

Harte and his wife reside in San Antonio, Texas, and have three children. His daughter, Sarah Harte, currently serves as a trustee on the board.
UAB hasn't forgotten last year's letdown against Charlotte

By: Evan Dudley

There will be no lack of motivation for UAB this week as it opens conference play against cross-division rival Charlotte at Legion Field.

The table was set last season with the Blazers, entering with a 4-2 record, blew a 17-point second half lead in an overtime loss to Charlotte. It was the 49ers' only win of the season.

It didn't doom UAB's season -- the Blazers reeled off a 4-1 record to end the regular season - but it taught a valuable lesson in not underestimating opponents. One that the returning players haven't forgotten.

"There is always those things to look back at," head coach Bill Clark said. "I guess somebody who would say that is not the case, I just don't think that is true. As we say in college football, everybody wants to win and every game is important. Every game is a big deal because there are not that many of them. Maybe it is a little extra motivation and maybe that is an offseason thing. Of course, any conference game is a huge game."

One recent occurrence that should keep the team focused is Old Dominion upsetting previously ranked No. 13 Virginia Tech. Charlotte beat that same Monarchs team one week prior by only a field goal.

Transitive properties aside, Clark reiterated the notion of dismissing comparative scores given the loss to a winless 49ers team a year ago.

"You cannot compare scores," he said. "I think we all want to compare scores. They (Charlotte) beat a well-coached Old Dominion team and then Old Dominion goes and beats a good Virginia Tech team. I think that should tell our players that last year is an indicator of why we don't look at scores or records. It will be a good game against a good opponent. To that point, we will be plenty motivated knowing who we are playing against."

Who are the Blazers playing against? A 49ers team treading water in the middle of a packed Conference USA that is not the same as it was last year - personnel and scheme wise.

Charlotte head coach Brad Lambert brought in new coordinators during the offseason in former Youngstown State offensive coordinator Shane Montgomery - who was also head coach of Miami (Ohio) from 2005-2008 where he coached current Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger - and former Oklahoma State defensive coordinator Glenn Spencer.

Hassan Klugh, the starting quarterback from last season that scored the game-winning 2-point conversion in overtime, has been relegated to backup duty as redshirt freshman Chris Reynolds earned the starting nod following spring practice. Reynolds has been solid completing 62 percent of his throws with six touchdowns against one interception and should be a good test for a
Blazers' secondary allowing the second fewest yards per game and eighth in the nation in pass efficiency defense.

The 49ers boasts a conference-best top-15 rushing defense that is more than capable of slowing down the Blazers' talented ground game.

A far cry from 1-11, Charlotte is as dangerous as any team in the conference - an assumption proven correct following the Old Dominion upset. Clark is mindful of what CUSA is capable of week-in and week-out and doesn't ignore those factors when motivating this team against a 49ers' squad that got one over them last season.

"I have said this since 2014 of what a good league we are in," he said. "How well coached this league is. It is innovative. There is not a ton of difference in any of the teams in the league. The problem when you play some of these other teams is depth. I think that is always the question, 'How much more depth do they have than we do.' But this league is very capable. It is very well coached and there is not a lot separating us from anyone else in the country other than depth."

"When we have to go to these big home venues for other teams, it is tough. That's what happens to the non-Power 5 teams. For Old Dominion to get Virginia Tech at their place, that just tells you home field is a big deal. From watching their game, you saw the energy and motivation. That was a big deal. That tells you energy and motivation is huge in every game. You can't discount that factor."
Garcia-Williams takes his own path to success in family business

Evan Dudley  AL.com

It would be easy to assume that Jamell Garcia-Williams was destined to play football. His father, Jerrol Williams, did it at Purdue, turning it into a seven-year career in the NFL. His older brother, Jerrol Garcia-Williams, played at Hawaii and is currently in his second season with the Denver Broncos.

But football almost didn’t happen for the UAB senior linebacker. The elder Williams never pushed his youngest son down a path similar to his own. Of course, that didn’t stop mama from making her case.

“I played football when I was in second grade. My mom made me do it, and I hated it, and I never wanted to play it again,” Garcia-Williams said. “But then I started playing in high school again. The main reason was because my older brother played, and I wanted to be cool like him. I’m glad, because it was my own journey. I had my brother and my dad to help me a lot, but it was still my own process.”

The Las Vegas native began his college career at Eastern Arizona College before receiving a scholarship offer from the Blazers late in the 2017 recruiting cycle.

“He was one of those guys we got late ... which put him behind last year,” head coach Bill Clark said. “He’s one of those guys — you talk about potential; you talk about a guy that’s smart, cares and works hard. Coach (Nick) Gentry has done a great job with him, but he is one of those guys that’s getting better every single day. He’s a good student, he’s a good person and he’s got a chance to hopefully keep playing if he keeps continuing to get better.”

“He was a mature kid, not necessarily a mature football player, but he was a mature kid when we got him,” Clark continued. “Very quiet, and I like those guys. They’re serious, they want to get better, and the game is important to them. He’s one of those guys where they brag on him in the weight room and they brag on him in academics.”

Garcia-Williams found himself in a reserve role in 2017 at the beginning of his UAB career. He registered only a single tackle and one quarterback hurry in eight games last season. But he was also part of one of the most memorable plays in Blazer history: Along with Stacey Keely, Garcia-Williams helped block a potential game-winning field goal against Louisiana Tech.

He continued to improve throughout the 2017 season and carried that over into spring practice, where he finished with six tackles (one for a loss) and two quarterback hurries in the annual Green and Gold game. Couple that with an impres-
sive fall camp and Garcia-Williams found himself slotted behind Stacey Keely at Jack linebacker heading into the season opener.

When Keely aggravated a previous injury against Savannah State, Garcia-Williams stepped up and excelled. He’s now the starter at the Jack position on the depth chart.

“I think the biggest thing was always being mentally ready, like even last year, just being willing to do anything they ask me and be willing to do whatever to help the team,” he said. “My role last year was helping the team, and my role this year is still helping the team.”

Garcia-Williams actually started the first three games at defensive end. He is fourth on the team in tackles with 11 and leads the team in tackles for a loss (4.5 for 15 yards) and is tied in sacks (two) with quarterback-turned-linebacker Kylen Binn.

Clark praises Garcia-Williams’ intelligence on the field, but the senior linebacker says that’s only for practice purposes. He learns, corrects and reviews before letting it all loose on Saturdays.

“Playing off pure instincts,” he said, “I try and do all my thinking in practice — even on plays where I mess up, because I’m thinking too much. On Saturdays, I don’t think at all and just let my body move.”

With football IQ at a premium, along with Garcia-Williams’ recent success on the field, visiting NFL scouts have begun to talk about the 6-foot, 8-inch, 255-pound linebacker.

“Well, they like him,” Clark said. “Obviously they like the body type, they like his intelligence, and they like his athleticism. Does he keep getting better? We think he will.”

That’s far away for Garcia-Williams. The season is young, and he believes there is still a lot to learn and improve upon before considering a possible future as a professional.

“It’s the last thing on my mind right now,” he said. “I’m not even thinking about that. I’m just thinking about the next game. You can never master football. You can always get better at something, and I think that’s something that will always keep me coming back. Just the fact that it’s every single day you can get better.”

If the NFL thing doesn’t work out for Garcia-Williams, however, he does have another passion. The English major wants to write screenplays for the motion picture industry.

“I was always good at writing, and I love reading,” he said. “I was never really passionate about it until a teacher pulled me aside and said that I could do something with it. And I decided to listen.”
Classic at Legion Field through 2022

Erin Edgemon  eadgemon@al.com

The Birmingham City Council approved Tuesday an agreement with Alabama State and Alabama A&M to hold the Magic City Classic at Legion Field through the 2022 football season.

According to the Greater Birmingham Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Magic City Classic garners $0,000 attendees with an annual economic impact of $22.7 million.

This year's game, the 77th Classic, is set for Oct. 27. Kickoff is at 2:30 p.m.

Birmingham can spend up to $800,000 on this year’s event, it was announced Tuesday.

The city has $705,000 currently budgeted for the annual game and tailgating event, Councilor William Parker said during Tuesday's council meeting. The majority of those funds will go to the universities. Each will receive $212,500.

The city will give them a combined sum not to exceed $650,000 for 2019; $700,000 for 2020; $750,000 for 2021; and $800,000 for 2022.

Parker said some councilors are expected to hold yet-to-be announced events during this year’s Classic, and an extra $95,000 approved Tuesday will allow those councilors to spend money from their own discretionary funds for those events.

The remaining $280,000 out of the $705,000 will mostly be used for transportation and other equipment, Parker said.

Last year, the council approved expenditures of $665,944 on the 76th Classic.
Alabama QB Tua Tagovailoa now likely to win Heisman Trophy

By: Christopher Smith

It seemed like a bad bet before the season.

Alabama quarterback Tua Tagovailoa never had started a college game. He remained in a quarterback competition with Jalen Hurts, even if it seemed he was very likely to win it. Alabama has run the football often under Nick Saban. The team's defense deservedly gets a lot of credit for its success. And even last year, Hurts and Tagovailoa shared a healthy number of reps, especially in blowouts.

Also, the return on a winning bet was relatively small. So, the only way to a positive expected value was if you thought Tagovailoa was a once-in-a-lifetime type quarterback at Alabama.

I warned you not to bet on Tagovailoa to win the Heisman Trophy.

Well, through four games, it looks possible that Tagovailoa is exactly that. He's been so effective that it doesn't seem to matter that he's thrown just 80 passes in four games.

Right now, it looks like I was very wrong.

Oddsmakers released updated Heisman Trophy odds this week, and Tagovailoa now is the odds-on favorite to win the Heisman Trophy at some sportsbooks. In other words, if you bet on him to win the Heisman Trophy today, and you're right, you'll win less money than you risk.

There are other candidates. Ohio State QB Dwayne Haskins, West Virginia QB Will Grier, Oklahoma QB Kyler Murray, Wisconsin RB Jonathan Taylor and Penn State QB Trace McSorley remain in position to challenge at some point.

But as long as Alabama keeps winning and Tagovailoa stays healthy, he's going to be difficult to displace.

A unique Heisman Trophy favorite

Assuming Nick Saban continues to limit Tagovailoa's attempts in games like Saturday against Louisiana-Lafayette, the most unique aspect of his Heisman Trophy contention may be his usage rate.

Going back to 2007, the year Alabama hired Saban, eight quarterbacks have won the Heisman Trophy. They've averaged 389 pass attempts.

Even if you base Tagovailoa's numbers on a 14-game season, he's on pace for 280 attempts.

Until putting up 387 passing yards against Texas A&M, Tagovailoa wasn't even on track to throw for 3,000 yards.

See next page
Ohio State QB Troy Smith and Auburn QB Cam Newton are the only Heisman-winning quarterback to throw for less than 3,000 passing yards since Vinny Testaaverde in 1986.

Here are the passing totals of those eight quarterbacks in their Heisman seasons, ranked in order.

1. Sam Bradford (Oklahoma): 4,720
2. Baker Mayfield (Oklahoma): 4,627
3. Marcus Mariota (Oregon): 4,454
4. Robert Griffin III (Baylor): 4,293
5. Jameis Winston (Florida State): 4,057
7. Tim Tebow (Florida): 3,286
8. Cam Newton (Auburn): 2,854

If you assume Tagovailoa will play in more than 12 games this season, you can probably slot him behind Manziel and ahead of Tebow.

But Manziel, Tebow and Newton combined to rush for 3,778 yards and 64 touchdowns in their Heisman seasons. Tagovailoa is on pace for fewer than 400 rushing yards and 8 touchdowns.

As a Heisman candidate, Tagovailoa is unique.

**Projecting Tagovailoa's stats**

Playing half-games against weaker competition should limit Tagovailoa's interceptions. But he'd never thrown 20 passes in a regular-season college football game until Saturday.

One assumes he'll need to do that at least a few times to win the Heisman Trophy, even if his efficiency numbers are all-time great.

The Texas A&M game also gave us an idea of how Saban will split up the reps when Alabama plays teams capable of competing with it.

Tagovailoa threw 60.3 percent of Alabama's passes in the first three games (about 17 passes a game), and 90.9 percent of its passes against Texas A&M (30 passes).

Let's assume those two rates more or less hold.

In Group A, we have games vs. Louisiana-Lafayette, at Arkansas, at Tennessee and vs. The Citadel. That's an additional 68 pass attempts. At his current completion rate of 72.5 percent, Tagovailoa would complete 49 of those. I'm expecting a little regression to the mean with his yards per pass attempt (he's currently at 12.9 yards per throw, including incompletions). But let's give him 11.0. And we'll knock down his touchdown rate just slightly.

See next page
Group A projection: 49 of 68, 748 yards, nine touchdowns, one interception

In Group B, we have games vs. Missouri, at LSU, vs. Mississippi State and vs. Auburn. That's an additional 120 pass attempts. I expect a little regression in those games in terms of completion percentage. Let's give him 68.5 percent. And let's give him 10.0 yards per attempt. We'll bump his touchdown rate down a little more.

Group B projection: 82 of 120, 1,200 yards, 13 touchdowns, three interceptions

Let's also assume that Alabama plays Georgia in the SEC Championship Game. Let's give Tagovailoa another 30 passes in that game, with the same rates as Group B.

SEC Championship Game projection: 20 of 30, 300 yards, 2 touchdowns

Add those numbers to his stats through four games, and we've arrived at a reasonable projection of Tagovailoa's passing stats that Heisman Trophy voters will consider in December.

Projected stats: 209 of 298, 3,281 yards, 70.1 percent completion rate, 36 touchdowns, four interceptions

If Alabama is 13-0 or 12-1 in those games and Tagovailoa puts up numbers similar to those, count on him winning the award.

**Hedging opportunities for preseason bettors**

Those of you who backed Tagovailoa with a Heisman futures bet before the season will have good opportunities to hedge soon, barring a drastic change.

According to SportsOddsHistory.com, which tracks odds on futures bets, Tagovailoa's odds plummeted from +1000 to +400 before the season. I found odds of +650 when I wrote about Tagovailoa's Heisman chances in early August.

Let's assume you put $100 on Tagovailoa to win the Heisman Trophy at +650. If he wins, you're in line for a profit of $650. Well, his odds to win now are -250, according to MyBookie.

You bought a stock and watched its price shoot up, essentially. Only you can't cash in yet. And you're one injury away from the stock price plummeting, perhaps to $0.

You do have hedging options, though.

Let's assume Alabama stays unbeaten through October, prior to facing LSU, Mississippi State and Auburn. And that Tagovailoa stays healthy and effective. It's likely that his Heisman Trophy odds will be at least as strong as they are now.

At that point, we'll have more data on the other contenders. You could bet, say, $50 on the four other most likely contenders. If Tagovailoa wins anyway, you're eating $200 of your $650 in profit.
But those prices are likely to be around +500 on average. A $50 bet would return $250 in profit, plus your original investment. So if Tagovailoa were to get hurt, or someone else overtakes him, you still would not lose any money. (You'd lose $100 on your bet on Tagovailoa and $50 three times for a total of $250 - the same amount you'd win on your other hedged bet.)

In other words, if you bet on Tagovailoa during the preseason, and you're willing to take out the equivalent of an insurance policy in another month, you may be able to guarantee yourself zero losses.
Tua Fever is high scoring and highly contagious

Joseph Goodman  jgoodman@al.com

You didn’t have to be an infectious disease specialist from the CDC to pinpoint ground zero of Tua Fever last Saturday in Tuscaloosa.

A tailgate across from Friedman Hall near Presidential Circle was the pulsing center of excitement for Alabama quarterback Tua Tagovailoa, the sophomore from Hawaii who has launched the Crimson Tide’s offense into a place it has never been.

The tailgaters drank from hollowed out coconuts and wore crimson and white floral patterned shirts. A cardboard Hawaiian totem pole stood in the corner and guarded the chicken wings. Officially, the tailgate’s hosts and hostesses called their party a “Tua Luau.”

I stopped by the tailgate for a few minutes, and it turns out Tua Fever is much worse than anyone thought to be medically possible.

“We bleed hibiscus and pineapple,” said Cissy Elliott, who then placed a lei around my neck that read “TUSCALOHA.”

If you haven’t noticed, the symptoms of Tua Fever are growing in Alabama at a frightening rate. With every quick-strike touchdown pass Tua throws, another few thousand people fall ill. Tua has 12 touchdowns through four games and still hasn’t thrown an interception.

He leads the nation in categories no one thought possible for a quarterback at Alabama in this era of Nick Saban. His quarterback rating is No.1 in the country at 230.47. Tua’s yards per passing attempt are an absurd 12.9. Again, tops in the country.

Is this state ready for the epidemic that’s about to hit it? Does it really understand what’s about to happen if Tua continues at this historic pace? Tua already delivered one of the best plays in the history of college football (second-and-26), and now he’s somehow living up to that standard every week.

The Tim Tebow phenomenon is the closest comparison, but Tua Fever might exceed even that irresistible Swamp-borne illness.

SEE GOODMAN, B4

Is this state ready for the epidemic that’s about to hit it? Does it really understand what’s about to happen if Tua continues at this historic pace?

See next page
Goodman

FROM B1

Stay frosty, Alabama National Guard. This is not a drill.

The Tuscaloosa County Sheriff's department, God bless its little heart, has already tried to stop the spread of this inevitable pandemic. Last Friday, a photo surfaced online of two deputies flanking Tua at a high school football game. Tua was at Tuscaloosa County to watch his little brother, Taulia.

The sheriff's office told me over the phone the deputies weren't specifically assigned to Tua. We can only assume then Tuscaloosa's finest recognized the potential of Tua Fever, and acted on behalf of the public to keep everyone safe. Tua Fever appears to be incurable, and highly contagious. Protect your children, Auburn fans, or you'll lose them before Thanksgiving.

Speaking of Auburn, what's the doomsday plan, Governor Kay Ivey? Or are you just ignoring Tua Fever right now and hoping it goes away like every other Auburn grad? Doomsday, of course, is the day Tua finally decides to speak with reporters on a regular basis. He hasn't wanted to talk since the team's preseason media day, according to Alabama's sports information department.

His words will be like an audible contagion. Tua Fever started with overconfidence and terrible puns, but we're so far beyond that now. The obnoxious naming of pets has begun as well as a sudden and intense love for our 50th state. Infirmaries will be filled with little Tua Bryants and Nicholas Tuus soon enough.

What's worse, Tua Fever has caused many Alabama fans to now show an irrational aversion to running plays. Alabama barely broke 100 yards rushing last Saturday against Texas A&M, and no one seems to really care. What alternate reality is this? What fevered dream?

Oh, people are going to act like they care about the running game, but they're not fooling anyone. You can spot Tua Fever from a mile away. Just watch the eyes pop open like saucers when Tua drops back to pass.

Las Vegas has Tua Fever, and the bookies don't seem to care about "running the dang ball." The Tide is a hysterical 49-point favorite this week against Louisiana.

Tua Fever is here, and there is no controlling it at this point. The best thing you can do for your family is stock up on the proper party supplies and flowered shirts.
Stadium changes coming after Moses hit fence on Saturday

A scary moment in Saturday's game will lead to changes at Bryant-Denny Stadium.

Alabama linebacker Dylan Moses went barreling into the fence near the corner of the end zone on a play that extended beyond the white lines. He was down for a few moments before walking to the bench and returning to the Tide's 45-23 win over Texas A&M.

Nick Saban on Monday said it's being corrected.

"They're going to try to do some stuff to the stadium there to shave that little corner off a little bit and pad it up a little better," Saban said. "That was something that, after being here all these years, I never even noticed that until that play. That is definitely something that we are addressing."

Moses was covering tight end Jace Sternberger when he went flying toward the fence. A security guard standing against the fence took a direct shot to the knees when Moses hit him into the padded wall.

Only a few feet separate the painted sideline and the fence that angles toward the field at that point.

Moses on Monday said he's still a little sore but knows it could have been worse.

"As far as the security guard, I feel sorry for him," Moses said. "But if it wasn't for him, I'd probably be in the hospital right now because he was really in between the wall and me. I know I ran into his knee, that was pretty bad, gruesome."
With new redshirt rule comes a lot more power for players

By: Terrin Waack

The NCAA’s new redshirt rule gives football players a lot more power. They can play in four games, redshirt and maintain the year of eligibility. That freedom further opens the door for players who are about to graduate, since the NCAA allows graduate transfers to play immediately at their next school.

“It’s a little bit of a slippery slope when players start to decide whether they’re going to play or not,” Alabama coach Nick Saban said.

News broke Wednesday morning that Clemson quarterback Kelly Bryant is transferring. He started the last 18 games for the Tigers, but coach Dabo Swinney told him last Sunday freshman Trevor Lawrence will be Clemson’s new starting quarterback. As a result, Bryant told Swinney on Tuesday he’ll be leaving.

Even though Bryant is in his final year of eligibility as a senior, he played only in the first four games this season and therefore has not burned his redshirt. He can transfer after graduation, have one year of eligibility remaining and play next season.

“I’m not saying that there’s not some circumstances out there where it’s not beneficial for the player to save a year so that they can play in another circumstance, but those things probably should be mutually agreed upon,” Saban said. “But it is what it is. I think the intent of the rule was to help in the development of young players. This is sort of an unintended consequence of the rule, which in some cases might help a player.”

Alabama junior quarterback Jalen Hurts’ current situation is similar to that of Bryant. Despite being 26-2 as a starter, Hurts lost his starting job to sophomore Tua Tagovailoa at the start of this season and has been playing in a backup role since. Hurts has said in the past he’s graduating in December, so if he were to decide to redshirt this season, he would have two years of eligibility left. He’ll have one regardless.

Saturday’s game against Louisiana-Lafayette will be telling since it will mark Game 5.

“Jalen has been very, very professional about the way he’s handled the situation he’s in,” Saban said. “... What he has done is he has worked every day to try to get better. He’s focusing on improving and the value that he can get from this season because we’re going to play him as much as we possibly can. He deserves to play. He’s a good player.

“And, you know, there may be a time in the future where he becomes the guy if something happens. We’re not hoping for that narrative certainly, but I think it speaks volumes of his character to stick with his teammates, be a part of this team (and) finish the season.”

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Watch lists

Wide receiver Jerry Jeudy has been added to the 2018 Biletnikoff Award watch list. The Tallahassee Quarterback Club-sponsored award recognizes the best receiver, regardless of position, in the Football Bowl Subdivision. The winner will be announced Dec. 6 during The Home Depot College Football Awards show on ESPN.

Tight end Hale Hentges has been named a semifinalist for the 2018 William V. Campbell Trophy, which honors a senior college football player who excels academically, athletically and in the community. Hentges is among 179 candidates and will receive an $18,000 postgraduate scholarship as a member of the 60th NFF National Scholar-Athlete Class. The National Football Foundation will announce the winner on Dec. 4 at the 61st NFF Annual Awards Dinner in New York, and his scholarship will increase to $25,000.

Hentges has also been pegged as one of the 30 semifinalists for the 2018 Senior CLASS Award, dedicated to players with notable achievements in the community, classroom, character and competition. The winner will be chosen in early January.

Stabler recognized

The National Quarterback Club will honor late Alabama quarterback Ken Stabler with a Legacy Recognition Award at its 2018 awards dinner on Jan. 19. Stabler passed away in 2015. He’s a part of the NQC’s 1994 Hall of Fame class.

Stabler played for Alabama from 1965-67. He then went to the NFL, spending times with three teams but mostly with the Oakland Raiders from 1970-79.

In 2003, Stable founded the XOXO Stabler Foundation. It helped provide support to children and families with childhood diseases. It now also funds research and programs related to traumatic brains injuries, such as CTE.

Honorary captains

Paul W. Bryant Museum will host honorary captains Mike Hall and Bobby Johns for hour Friday from 2 p.m. Hall, a former linebacker, played for the Crimson Tide from 1966-68. Johns was a UA defensive back from 1965-67 and is a member of the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame.

The museum, which is open to the public, will also have extended hours Saturday. It’ll be open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Johnson looking for equivalent to football

As basketball practice starts, coach looks to improve his team's offense this season

By Cecil Hurt
Sports Editor

University of Alabama men's basketball coach Avery Johnson did not specifically say so, but the Crimson Tide head coach might be looking for his own Tua Tagovailoa — or at least a team effort that will improve his team's offensive effort in the upcoming season.

The Crimson Tide had a short workout on Tuesday afternoon as practice for the 2018-19 season begins. UA went 20-16 and advanced to the second round of the NCAA Tournament last season but has to replace first-round NBA draft pick Collin Sexton, last year's leading scorer.

"We may not have one person average 20 points a game, but maybe the ball will move a little more," Johnson said. "We'll be harder to scout. We've had a pretty decent defensive reputation. But our offense needs to improve.
JOHNSON

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"I'm not sure what the equivalent to Alabama football is, but we need that."

To replace Sexton, Alabama has a number of experienced scoring options. Three newcomers — freshmen Kira Lewis and Javian Davis-Fleming and Texas transfer Tevin Mack — will also be counted on in the rotation, although Johnson said he was "a long way away" from determining a starting lineup.

"One good thing is that we'll have experience to call on off the bench," Johnson said. "If I go to Riley (Norris, back from hip surgery) or Tevin — and I'm not saying they aren't starting, that hasn't been determined — but if I go to them, I'm going to guys who have experience in Power 5 games, not just freshmen."

There is also a strong returning group including Donta Hall, Daniel Giddens, Alex Reese and Galin Smith in the post, Herb Jones and John Petty on the wings and Avery Johnson Jr. and Dazon Ingram at the point. Ingram did not participate in the Tuesday practice due to an ankle sprain but is listed as "day-to-day."

"My idea of improving on offense is continuing to get teammates involved," Jones said. "I also need to improve my scoring. I've been working on my jump shot. Last year, I injured my wrist and it affected my shot but this year is better."

Johnson said he expected Alabama to be selected in the middle of the SEC but was still expecting to be in NCAA contention. "I've heard we are picked around seventh or eighth in the SEC," he said. "If we are, I want to see how we handle that. I think experience will help. Our guys know now that an extra two or three wins and maybe you're a 6-seed and not a 9-seed (in the NCAA) and you're playing in Nashville, not Pittsburgh."

Wood will miss 4 months

Freshman Diate Wood, the state's Mr. Basketball last season at Sacred Heart in Anniston, will miss four months with left ankle surgery, Johnson confirmed. The injury is expected to sideline Woods until February and Johnson said a redshirt was "one possibility."

Reach Cecil Hurt at cecil@tidesports.com or 205-722-0225.
Alabama SEC baseball schedule released

By Ben Jones
Sports Writer

Alabama baseball’s 2019 schedule was announced on Wednesday morning.

The schedule will match Alabama against all 10 SEC schools that made the NCAA tournament last season. The conference slate kicks off on March 15 with a three-game series against Ole Miss, which won the 2018 SEC tournament.

The Crimson Tide has road series at Ole Miss, Florida, Mississippi State, Auburn and Georgia. Its rivalry matchup with Auburn will take place from May 3-5. It plays home series against Arkansas, South Carolina, Vanderbilt, LSU and Texas A&M.

The schedule includes series against 10 of the conference’s top 11 schools in the 2018 standings. Texas A&M and Kentucky tied for 10th place last season, both going 13-17 in the conference. Alabama faces all nine SEC schools that finished .500 or better in the league in 2018 and does not face Missouri or Tennessee, which finished 12th and 13th in the conference.

Alabama finished the 2018 season 8-22 in conference play and missed the conference tournament for the second straight season. This season’s SEC tournament will take place from May 21-26 in Hoover.

Television broadcasts and game times will be announced at a later date. Nonconference games will be announced in the coming weeks.

Alabama baseball 2019 SEC schedule

(home series italicized)

- March 15-17: at Ole Miss (Oxford, Miss. | Oxford-University Stadium/Swayze Field)
- March 22-24: Arkansas (Tuscaloosa, Ala. | Sewell-Thomas Stadium)
- March 29-31: at Florida (Gainesville, Fla. | Alfred A. McKethan Stadium)
- April 5-7: South Carolina (Tuscaloosa, Ala. | Sewell-Thomas Stadium)
- April 12-14: at Mississippi State (Starkville, Miss. | Dudy Noble Field at Polk-DeMent Stadium)
- April 19-21: Vanderbilt (Tuscaloosa, Ala. | Sewell-Thomas Stadium)
- April 26-28: LSU (Tuscaloosa, Ala. | Sewell-Thomas Stadium)
- May 3-5: at Auburn (Auburn, Ala. | Plainsman Park)
- May 10-12: Texas A&M (Tuscaloosa, Ala. | Sewell-Thomas Stadium)
- May 16-18: at Georgia (Athens, Ga. | Foley Field)

Reach Ben Jones at ben@tidesports.com or 205-722-0196.
UA softball’s Kaylee Tow suspended

By Tommy Deas
Executive Sports Editor

Alabama softball outfielder Kaylee Tow has been suspended from the team, coach Patrick Murphy announced Tuesday. “Due to a violation of team rules, Kaylee Tow will not play in any fall games and will not participate in any team activities for two weeks,” Murphy said in a statement. The statement did not specify the nature of the rules violation nor indicate her status for the start of the 2019 season.

As a freshman, Tow earned second-team All-America and first-team All-SEC honors. The outfielder from Madisonville, Ky., batted .327 with 11 home runs. She drove in 31 runs.
Six freshman dot roster for UA women’s basketball team

By Carey Reeder
Special to The Tuscaloosa News

The University of Alabama women’s basketball season officially began Wednesday with the Crimson Tide holding its first official team practice of the 2018-19 season at Foster Auditorium.

Coming off their second consecutive 20-win season and quarterfinal appearance in the women’s National Invitational Tournament, the Crimson Tide return only seven players from last year’s team.

Eight newcomers are entering the program, including six freshmen. A revamped roster gives head coach Kristy Curry a mix of both experienced players and fresh faces.

“As inexperienced as we are, I like our youth too because sometimes they don’t know any better,” Curry said. “That blend of old and new will be exciting for our team and our fans.”

After the departure of seniors Hannah Cook (Greece) and Ashley Williams (Germany) last season, Lewis and senior guard Shaquera Wade are the highest returning scorers. Wade is the only returning senior who has started a game.

“Both Jordan and Shaquera are prepared for their role this season,” Curry said. “Those two bring great energy and effort every day and it’s contagious within the team. It’s exciting.”

Former junior college star Cierra Johnson is among the newcomers joining the Crimson Tide. Recruited by Curry out of high school in Mobile, Johnson made the most of her time at Shelton State earning the 2017 JUCO national player of the year award.

Johnson helped lead the Buccaneers to a 36-1 record last year and a third-place finish at the national tournament. The time Johnson spent at Shelton has helped both on and off the court.

“She’s even more mature now as a junior and her growth has been tremendous,” Curry said. “Today was special for

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both of us because she's worked so hard to get to that first day of practice with us."

The SEC sent three teams to the Sweet 16 in last year's NCAA tournament, including Miss. St. who advanced to the national championship game falling to Notre Dame. With a top heavy conference, the Crimson Tide still expect to compete for a spot in the tournament this season.

"Even though there are some great teams in our conference we feel like it is still wide open," Wade said. "I will do everything I can to get us there."

Alabama's first exhibition game is Oct. 21 against Faulkner University at 3 p.m. The first regular season game is Nov. 7 against Southeastern Louisiana. Both games are at Coleman Coliseum.
Wilder-Fury bout is in Los Angeles

By Terrin Waack
Sports Writer

Watch out, Los Angeles. Deontay Wilder and Tyson Fury are coming to the STAPLES Center for their Dec. 1 fight. All of the action will air live on SHOWTIME PPV starting at 8 p.m. CT.

"I can't wait to fight Tyson Fury in the biggest fight in the heavyweight division and all of boxing," said Wilder, a Tuscaloosa native. "I have tremendous respect for Fury for agreeing to leave England and come to the U.S. to challenge me."

There hasn't been a significant pay-per-view heavyweight fight in the U.S. since the 2002 Mike Tyson-Lennox Lewis showdown in Memphis, Tennessee. And this is going to be a blockbuster of undefeated heavyweight champions.

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WILDER

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Wilder is the World Boxing Council heavyweight champion and boasts a 40-0 record with 39 knockouts. Fury (27-0, 19 KOs) is the lineal champion since he beat Wladimir Klitschko in 2015.

“You’re talking about two really enormous guys in the ring,” Wilder’s co-manager and co-trainer Jay Deas said. “Everything you think about when you say heavyweight, you’re getting in this fight. This is 13.5 feet and almost 500 pounds of fighter in the ring when you combine their two heights and weights. So it’s a huge fight in every sense of the word.”

Tickets go on sale Wednesday at 2 p.m. CT, starting at $75, and are available at AXS.com.

Hall of Famers Joe Louis, Muhammad Ali, Vitali Klitschko and Lewis all fought major heavyweight title fights in the Los Angeles area.

“We’ve done a lot of things in New York, which has been really helpful for Deontay, and now we’re taking it to the other coast,” Deas said. “It’s going to be beneficial to hit both coasts and make Deontay as big as we want him to be.”

Twelve rounds will determine if Wilder gets to keep his WBC title and take over as lineal champion.

Fury used to have the International Boxing Federation, World Boxing Association and World Boxing Organization belts, but all three were ultimately relinquished or taken away within a year. His license was suspended in 2016, and then due to an investigation into anti-doping and medical issues, he took almost three years off from boxing.

Wilder hasn’t fought since March. Fury’s last fight was in August, his second since returning.

“The winner of this fight will show the world who is ‘The Man’ in the heavyweight division,” Wilder said. “As much as I respect Fury, I fear no man and fully intend to knock him out like every man that I’ve every faced in the ring.”
What's the best college major?
It's a snoozer

Riley Griffin  Bloomberg

Taking on student debt is a financial risk, but those who study such risks are best positioned to pay it off after graduation.

A Bankrate.com report released this month ranked actuarial science, the formal term for the study of insurance, the most valuable college major. Actuarial science majors earn an average annual salary of $108,688 and have a better-than-average unemployment rate of only 2.3 percent. And at a time when student debt has hit a record high, these graduates are less likely to incur the added expense of additional schooling and delayed earning potential. Fewer than one in four graduates pursue advanced degrees.

The study ranked 162 majors based on average annual income, employment status and whether those graduates went on to pursue a higher degree within 12 months. Science, technology, engineering and mathematics degrees continue to offer the best postgraduate prospects to college students, the study found. Zoology, nuclear engineering, premedical programs and applied mathematics dominated the five most valuable degrees, offering graduates low rates of unemployment and six-figure salaries.

The prospect of a high salary doesn't always win out. Petroleum engineering graduates boast the most lucrative average salary, at $124,448, but have an excessively high 7.9 percent unemployment rate.

The only students faring worse than fine arts graduates are niche fine arts degree holders. Those with degrees outside the traditional buckets of art, theater, music or creative writing earn the second-lowest average annual salary of $40,855.

By JOHN BRANCH
Gymnastics recently had 178 people on its list. Swimming had 183. An additional 31 are on the list from taekwondo, 29 from figure skating and 33 more from judo.

The lists reflect the hundreds of people who have been barred, often for sexual misconduct, from the federations running these sports as well as others overseeing the development of Olympic athletes. A few of the names are well known, perhaps none more than Lawrence G. Nassar, the former team doctor for U.S.A. Gymnastics who was sent to prison after being accused of sexually abusing scores of young female athletes.

Yet the sheer scope of the lists, and the inconsistencies within them because of differing standards among the organizations, raise plenty of questions — not the least of which is whether an effort to collect and publish the names is even legal, given that until recently, people were disciplined by the governing bodies, each with its own brand of justice. There are also questions about transparency and whether individual sports are divulging all past offenders.

The plan, as the United States Olympic Committee vows to throw open the curtains and let in the light, is to get all the names, from all the years and all the Olympic sports, in one place so that people can easily check them before joining a team or hiring a coach or a trainer.

"What we want is an environment where, across the entire Olympic and Paralympic family, the names of individuals who have been banned are readily available," said Rick Adams, the United States Olympic Committee executive who oversees the effort to create a central clearinghouse, under what is called the SafeSport initiative.

The Olympic committee created the U.S. Center for SafeSport, which it spun off as a separate entity in March 2017. The idea was to have a single agency empowered to investigate and rule on accusations of misconduct, taking those responsibilities away from the organizations that run individual sports, like U.S.A. Gymnastics, U.S.A. Swimming (caught up in a scandal of its own) and others.

SafeSport does not publish a list of all people barred from the sports, but it does provide links to the individual federations' lists.

The number of coaches who are predators on the banned lists is quite huge. The number that are not on these banned lists is, quite possibly, even larger.

RACHAEL DENHOLLANDER, lawyer and former gymnast

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on its site and it maintains a searchable online database for all the cases in which SafeSport has handed down bans or suspensions — sometimes interim, as investigations continue. From its inception last year through the end of August, SafeSport handled 1,368 reports of sexual misconduct across nearly every sport, the organization said, with 800 of those cases still open. SafeSport has met out 149 lifetime bans so far, the organization said.

(Signs of its early influence, and the broader cultural shift toward reporting sex crimes, can be seen in some of the lists provided by various sport governing bodies. Before SafeSport, U.S. Track and Field had one person on its banned list. Now it has 47.)

When taken together, the continually updated lists of barred people, which include more than 220 lifetime bans for sexual misconduct or abuse in the past 17 months alone, ensure that the frequency of child predation in youth sports in America is more fully exposed.

“This goes a whole lot deeper than stopping someone like Larry,” said Rachael Denhollander, a lawyer and former gymnast who was the first to go public with accusations against Dr. Larry Nassar. “The number of coaches who are predators on these banned lists is quite huge. The number that are not on these banned lists is, quite possibly, even larger.”

SafeSport received the backing of federal legislation this year. It has an office in Denver, a growing crew of investigators and one set of policies and procedures for jurisprudence. (What it does not have, critics like Ms. Denhollander say, is the necessary funding or the independence from the U.S.O.C. and sports organizations whose years of oversight fueled the crisis in the first place.)

The effort to more rigorously compile the names is proving to be a delicate and difficult goal. There are about 50 groups that govern individual sports under the Olympic and Paralympic umbrella, some with painful checkered pasts when it comes to handling accusations of sexual misconduct. Not all have these lists or want to share them.

For now, SafeSport’s public database does not include all the people, however many of them there are, who were barred before it came into existence in March 2017. SafeSport left it up to the governing bodies to make those names public.

Before SafeSport, each sport’s governing group handled its own investigations and ejected from its own discipline. Handling abuse claims could be unwieldy, expensive and uncomfortable. Revealing them could create public relations nightmares, which could affect everything from sponsorship to medallations.

The structure fostered environments of secrecy and unevaluated allegations. Part of the concern was legal exposure.

Nudged by congressional hearings after the Nassar case, Suzanne Lyons, acting chief executive officer of the U.S.O.C. (she has since been named chairwoman), sent a letter to all national governing bodies on May 31. She in-

Legal experts said that SafeSport and the U.S.O.C. have the right to publish the information from the sports governing bodies, if it is true and accurate. Claims of defamation would have to prove that the information is intentionally false. Arguments about the lists being an invasion of privacy would be hard to win, lawyers said, unless there was some prior agreement to keep names secret, such as a settlement.

“By further pushing this information out, they’re somewhat vouching for its accuracy and thoroughness,” said Donald Lewis, a lawyer with experience in sexual misconduct cases. “That could create potential problems.”

SafeSport has no interest in re-litigating prior cases, officials said, but it may need to examine them. Jodi Balsam, a law professor at Brooklyn Law School who teaches sports law there and at New York University, said SafeSport might consider informing people that their names will be a part of the public database and offering them a way to present reasons they should not be included.

“But you can’t be immobilized by those litigation risks,” Professor Balsam said. “There is good to be done here with the publication of this information. It should be done responsibly, in a way that is not only legal but ethical.”

For now, SafeSport’s database
reveals little even about the cases it has investigated since 2017 — only a name, the sport, the decision date, a couple of words to categorize the violation ("sexual misconduct") and the person’s status, such as "suspended" or "permanently ineligible."

The pre-2017 reports from sports organizations are far more varied — everything from just a list of names to detailed descriptions of the cases, as is the case with U.S. Figure Skating, which has posted its list online for years.

"The information is useless if it stays internal," said Patricia St. Peter, a past president of the skating organization. "The purpose is protection — to make sure that this doesn't happen again somewhere else."

Other governing bodies, like U.S.A. Hockey and the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association, have not made their lists public, trusting that internal mechanisms and background checks keep the organizations from inadvertently employing those with troublesome pasts.

There remain some sports organizations with no lists at all because they have no barred members. Others are shrouded in cryptic language or blank spaces.

U.S.A. Volleyball’s Suspended Membership List, for example, contains 53 people, including more than 20 barred in the past year by SafeSport. Of the others, dating as far back as 2002, it can be hard to discern what the infraction was. Many simply say a person was suspended for a violation of the organization’s code of conduct. Others are blank.

U.S.A. Field Hockey has four people on its barred list, but only their names. U.S.A. Diving has eight barred members listed, most accompanied by a list of code numbers and letters referencing the violation. The relevant bylaws, when searched separately, are vague enough that one person listed was either involved in sexual misconduct or drug use, or both.

Of the 183 people barred or permanently suspended by U.S.A. Swimming, at least 100 were banished explicitly for sexual misconduct (including about 18 by SafeSport.) About 25 others were punished for felonies related either to sexual misconduct or drugs; the information does not delineate. Most of the rest do not contain information to explain why the people were barred.

U.S.A. Gymnastics may have the longest barred list. But none of the names have dates associated with their bans, and about half have no violation listed. But 44 refer to SafeSport, which means that they were sexual misconduct cases since 2017. Nearly 50 others violated an unexplained bylaw that when found elsewhere, covers those on sex-offender lists or people who have been deemed to have committed sexual misconduct or sexual abuse violations.

Dr. Nassar’s name is on both the list at U.S.A. Gymnastics and in the database for SafeSport. In neither place is there an explanation of what actions led Dr. Nassar to be barred — nothing about the hundreds of women who accused him of sexual abuse at his sentencing or the conviction and prison sentence he received amid a maelstrom of attention this year.

At U.S.A. Gymnastics, all it says is that Dr. Nassar violated something called Bylaw 9.2 (a) (iii). You have to look it up to see that it pertains to sexual misconduct and child abuse.

At SafeSport, his entry merely reads, “Sexual misconduct — involving a minor.”
In Lieu of Higher Wages, Companies Turn to Perks

By BINYAMIN APPELBAUM

WASHINGTON — One of the most perplexing questions about the nation’s economic recovery is why a tight labor market has not translated into faster wage growth. Part of the answer appears to be that American workers are receiving a growing share of compensation in the form of benefits rather than wages.

The average worker received 32 percent of total compensation in benefits including bonuses, paid leave and company contributions to insurance and retirement plans in the second quarter of 2018. That was up from 27 percent in 2000, federal data show. The rising cost of health insurance accounts for only about one-third of the trend. And the data do not include the increased prevalence of non-monetary benefits like flexible hours or working from home, or perks like gyms and “summer Fridays.”

Best Buy, the electronics retailer, began in July to offer four weeks of paid time off to its employees, including part-time workers, to take care of family members. The company decided that paid leave was the best way to show appreciation for its employees, said Jeff Sherman, a company spokesman. “Our philosophy is that our employees are our most important asset, and we want to take care of them and allow them to take care of the people that matter most to them in their lives,” he said.

The shift toward nonwage compensation has helped to persuade the Federal Reserve to keep pushing up interest rates. The central bank is expected to increase its benchmark interest rate on Wednesday for the fourth consecutive quarter, to a range between 2 and 2.25 percent. Asset prices already reflect the full increase, leaving only the formality of the Fed’s announcement, scheduled for 2 p.m.

For many workers, the returns

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auto repair company that operates in the United States as Gerber Collision & Glass, said it was struggling to hire enough technicians to meet the demand for repairs. So the company plans to spend $4.5 million this year to sweeten benefits for its United States workers, including additional paid vacation and larger contributions to employees’ 401(k) retirement accounts.

“The objective is to make ourselves a more attractive employer within the context of the collision repair industry and, therefore, take advantage of opportunities to attract people from our competitors,” Brock Bulbuck, the company’s chief executive, said on a conference call with investors in May.

The White House Council of Economic Advisers argued this month that the economic performance, and the benefits for workers, should be judged by the growth of total compensation rather than wages.

Even using the White House measure, there is no sign of an acceleration in compensation since President Trump took office, but Michelle Meyer, an economist at Bank of America, said it made sense to use broader measures. “I think it goes back to the idea of whether our old models are as valuable as they once were,” she said. “The story changes over time, and I do think the fact that there are other ways of being compensated means that simply looking at average hourly earnings is not going to be a comprehensive measure of how the economy is responding to tightness in the labor
Companies have kept most of the benefits of economic growth in recent years in the form of higher profits, so the shift toward benefits appears to be a rare example of workers getting something they want, albeit a consolation prize. There is longstanding evidence that workers would prefer a larger share of compensation in the form of benefits. Unionized workers, who have greater leverage to negotiate the mix of wages and benefits, have long used that power to insist on better benefits. The average unionized worker last year received 40 percent of their compensation in the form of benefits, compared with just 29 percent for the average nonunionized worker, the federal data shows.

"Employers mostly care about the level of compensation, so the composition of it, they'd generally be glad to do what their workers want them to do," said Josh Bivens, the director of research at the liberal Economic Policy Institute. "When workers actually have an effective voice, the benefit share tends to be a little higher."

Employers, too, may prefer to offer increased compensation in the form of benefits, because they may find it easier to cut benefits during a downturn.

"You can increase benefits, bonus payments and other perks to keep your workers happy without creating a permanent adjustment in how they're compensated," Ms. Meyer said. "If they go away, it doesn't give the same perception of a change in their value to the company."

The rise in nonwage benefits is not spread evenly across the workforce. Jared Bernstein, an economist at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, calculated that benefit compensation has increased 15 percent since 2009 for workers in the 90th percentile of the income distribution, while workers in the 10th percentile are receiving less such compensation than they did in 2009.

For the median worker, benefit compensation has increased 5 percent.

"When I talk with blue-collar or service workers, they're generally pretty unhappy about wage stagnation and about inadequate benefits," Mr. Bernstein said.

The benefit that appears to be in the highest demand is paid time off.

The Society for Human Resource Management, which conducts an annual survey of the benefits offered by more than 3,500 corporations, reported that the share of participants offering paid maternity leave increased to 35 percent in 2016 from 26 percent in 2010. It also reported a significant increase in the share of companies offering paid leave to fathers, adoptive parents and surrogate parents.

One recent survey reported that the share of Fortune 1000 companies offering "summer Fridays" — days on which employees were allowed to leave early for a long summer weekend — doubled from 21 percent in 2015 to 42 percent in 2018.

The White House Council of Economic Advisers calculates that increasingly generous paid leave benefits mean that the average American worker is getting an additional half-day of paid leave each year, compared with five years ago.

Large companies are more likely to offer such benefits. In February, Lowe's became the last company among the nation's 20 largest employers to offer paid parental leave to its salaried and full-time hourly employees. The company now pays for mothers to take 10 weeks of leave, and for fathers to take two weeks off.

In surveys, younger workers often place a greater emphasis on benefits, and some analysts expect the shift toward nonwage compensation to continue as the millennial generation replaces the baby boomers in the work force.

Ms. Meyer, the Bank of America economist, pointed to the tech industry as a harbinger. The median employer in the tech industry, she said, spends about 2.5 times as much on paid leave benefits as the median employer across the economy as a whole.