



CECIL  
HURT

Bill Battle has  
some phone  
calls to make

The Alabama Crimson Tide is off this weekend, taking a breather in the midst of a stretch of brutal football games. That means Bill Battle, the UA director of athletics, doesn't have to make a long plane ride, or arrange for extra security for Lane Kiffin. He can sit at home, drink some sweet tea and study the first-ever College Football Playoff poll. And, after he has studied it for a while, he can take some time out of his quiet weekend to make a few telephone calls.

That's because, if Battle and the rest of Alabama's decision makers take a hard look, they will see that one of the few intelligible priorities of the Selection Committee is strong out-of-conference scheduling, with a preference for home-and-home series.

At this point, it should be clear to everyone that I do not like the concept of the Selection Committee. That doesn't mean I don't like or respect the individuals involved. It's just a bad process, and seems determined to pick teams by all sorts of bad criteria designed to do anything other than find the four best teams.

But, regardless of my opinion, the fact is some truly annoying things, like head lice or Florida-Georgia Line, are impossible to eradicate, and the Selection Committee is on that list.

Their initial poll did not adhere strictly to "strength of schedule," but you could tell there was a preference for games like Michigan State at Oregon, Notre Dame at Florida State and Auburn at Kansas State. Furthermore, those games got more respect than non-campus contests like Alabama-West Virginia or LSU-Wisconsin. Certainly, many of Alabama's peers in the SEC West are moving to home/away scheduling. In the last few weeks alone, we have had news of future series like LSU-Texas, Auburn-Cal and Texas A&M-Clemson. There is a reason. Going beyond trying to stay in step with the Selection Committee, there are other good reasons to bring a Power Five opponent to Bryant-Denny Stadium, then return the visit.

First, let's drop the silly "Alabama is afraid" insult. Alabama is playing high-quality, neutral-field opponents: West Virginia, Wisconsin, USC. If you made those into home/away series, Camp Randall Stadium or the L.A. Coliseum would be no more daunting than the biannual trips Alabama makes to Baton Rouge or Auburn or next year's visit to Athens, Ga.

Alabama cancelled its series with Michigan State, not out of fear (the Spartans didn't exactly inspire any the last time the teams played), but because there was uncertainty at that time about a possible 9-game SEC schedule. That isn't an issue now, so a similar series should be booked.

You make more money with a neutral-site game? True, but every now and then, Alabama can afford to do something different. You help recruiting going into Atlanta or Dallas? Probably true, but I suspect Notre Dame helped themselves going by Tallahassee, too.

Plus, and this is a big plus, you reward your home fans, and your

SEE HURT | 6C

CORRECTION

The prep football schedule for this week's games was incorrect in Thursday's edition. The corrected list of tonight's games is on page 5C.



COLLEGE FOOTBALL



PHOTOS | DAN BYERS, COLORADO STATE ATHLETICS

Jim McElwain was the offensive coordinator at Alabama and helped the Crimson Tide win two national championships in three years (2009, '11). McElwain is the head coach at Colorado State and the Rams are 7-1 and are eying a Mountain West Conference championship.

In the right  
direction

Former Crimson Tide offensive coordinator  
has Colorado State experiencing success

By Aaron Suttles  
Sports Writer

The players gathered on the field in jubilant celebration after two 46-yard field goals in the last 1:50 of the game propelled them to another win. The celebration followed in the locker room, green jerseys and gold pants gathered in a circle dancing around euphoric.

The shouting continued as their head coach popped up in the middle, donned in a bright white wind breaker, and let forth a "Hell yeah!" that set off another round of deep-throated yells.

It's easy to tell Jim McElwain is having fun at Colorado State, and, as his record indicates, he's winning in the process.

Spurred on by former University of Alabama running back Dee Hart, McElwain and the Rams are off to a 7-1 start and have their eyes set on a Mountain West Conference championship and a possible marquee bowl game appearance if things break right for them over the remaining fourth of the season.

McElwain is in his third season at Colorado State and his Rams are knocking on the door of a Top 25 ranking, currently residing at No. 26.

It's been three seasons since McElwain departed Alabama fresh off helping the Crimson Tide to its second national championship in three years. In that time he turned a proud Colorado State program in the right direction.

There were no shortcuts, only the lessons he learned along the way in a nearly 30-year coaching career, four coming as the offensive coordinator for Nick Saban at Alabama.

"We really kind of focused on how we think," McElwain said. "Not only in our program but how we think of ourselves. What I mean by that is never allowing the acceptance of mediocrity to slip into our mindset. So there were a lot of core issues that we had to attack. Until you get one of those kind of handled then you can't move onto the next one."

It didn't happen overnight — the Rams went 4-8 his first season — but the seeds took root and McElwain and his program are now on the national radar.

That's the reason the Colorado State administration came to McElwain before the season with a new five-year contract that increased his base salary to \$1.5 million and also included a hefty buyout of \$7.5 million.

It turned out to be a visionary move, considering the season the Rams are having, which includes a win over instate rival Colorado and a road victory at Boston College.



Dee Hart, a former Alabama running back, has 690 rushing yards for Colorado State this season.

McElwain has led his team to 13 wins in its 16 games, a total bettered only by Florida State (16-0), Michigan State (15-1), Auburn (14-2), Marshall (14-2) and UCF (14-2).

Recruiting Hart from Alabama had a lot to do with it, too.

Hart's 690 rushing yards and six touchdowns this season pace the rushing attack while Rashard "Hollywood" Higgins leads the nation in receiving.

Beyond Hart's production on the field, it's his attitude that McElwain cites as a key to this season's success.

"One of the most important things is how he affects people around him in a positive way," McElwain said of Hart. "His smile is infectious. He loves to play and practice. When he first hit the field in August, I could see some guys looking on both sides of the ball and in special teams saying, 'Oh, this is what coach was talking about' as far as your energy and the energy needed to prepare in practice to be successful on a Saturday."

"What he's been able to do is really elevate the people around him and a lot of guys realized it's OK to work my tail off. There's no reason to hold anything back. Because of the

SEE DIRECTION | 6C



PREP FOOTBALL

Brookwood  
caps season  
with victory

By Tommy Deas  
Executive Sports Editor

HOLT | Ricky Bush studied more than game film going into Thursday night's game against the Holt Ironmen.

Brookwood High School's head coach also studied history.

Maybe that's why a 44-8 victory in a game with no playoff berth on the line meant a little more to the Panthers.

"This is the first group of seniors at Brookwood that has gone 4-0 against Holt," Bush said. "The all-time series is 57-19, Holt."

Brookwood finished 5-5 for the second year in a row behind a strong performance from senior quarterback DeVonta Jenkins, who completed 9 of 10 attempts for 239 yards with two touchdown passes and one interception. He hit Grant Larson for a 70-yard score and Christian Capps for a 24-yard touchdown.

Running back Tavares Brown Jr. ran for 82 yards on 11 carries, scoring on runs of 1 and 5 yards.

Offensive lineman Billy Spitzley recovered a fumble in the end zone for a Brookwood score to cap a 93-yard touchdown drive to start the game and Lardez Thomas sprinted 61 yards for a touchdown.

Holt's first three drives all started within five yards of midfield, but the Ironmen couldn't get anything going.

SEE BROOKWOOD | 6C



PHOTO | JACOB FORD

Brookwood's Lardez Thomas streaks down the sideline for a 61-yard touchdown in the Panthers' game with Holt on Thursday.

Patriots hold off  
Demopolis rally

By Jeremy D. Smith  
Special to the Tuscaloosa News

DEMOPOLIS | Despite a late comeback attempt from Demopolis, the Hillcrest Patriots made an early 20-point lead stand up en route to a 39-29 win Thursday night in high school football action.

Brian Robinson Jr. iced the win for the Patriots with a 33-yard touchdown run with 2:46 to play.

The game's final score came after a late flurry from Demopolis that saw the Tigers score on a 4-yard Rashad Lynch run before William Wilkins recovered an onside kick. Two plays later, Jamarcus Ezell went over the top to Antonio Mackins for a 52-yard strike and Demopolis knifed the deficit to 32-29.

Cahlil Ellis opened the scoring for Hillcrest, punching it in from two yards out with 10:43 to play in the opening quarter. Robinson, who finished the night with 147 yards on 22 carries, scored on a 3-yard run to stretch the lead to 13-0.

Darnell Webb later caught a 20-yard pass from Chad Wyatt Jr. to leave Hillcrest up 20-0.

"We executed well, especially early on," Hillcrest coach Samuel Adams said. "We kind of hit a little lull in the middle part of the game there, partially because of the way they were changing up their fronts. It was

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AISA FOOTBALL:  
Tuscaloosa  
Academy wins  
in a shootout | 6C



SPORTS



PREP FOOTBALL | TUSCALOOSA ACADEMY 36, SOUTH CHOCTAW ACADEMY 34

# Knights win shootout with South Choctaw Academy

By Joey Chandler  
Sports Writer

Tuscaloosa Academy picked up a 36-34 victory over South Choctaw Academy on Thursday in an offensive battle. Both teams featured a high-powered offense, and the Rebels played an almost unstoppable run game. Led by Joe Turner, who finished with 232 yards on 35

carries and three touchdowns, South Choctaw Academy amassed 385 of its 427 yards on the ground. “I’m so proud of our players and coaches,” Knights coach Robert Johnson said. “That is a dang good football team we just played. They are extremely well coached and played as hard as they can. I can honestly say right now that our team is a South Choctaw fan. We are rooting for them to win in the Class A playoffs.” Tuscaloosa Academy’s offense was led by junior quarterback Keonte Chambers, who finished with 189 yards rushing and four touchdowns. Chambers also completed 6 of 17 passes for 206 yards, including a 69-yard touchdown pass to Robins Bonner. “It felt great. It was a big win for us,” Chambers said.

The Knights’ defense made a number of key stops late in the game, including one on a fourth-and-4 situation with 1:42 remaining. “Our defense really showed up tonight when they needed to,” Johnson said. The win wraps up the Knights regular season at 8-2. They travel to Monroe Academy next week for the first round of the AISA, Class AAA playoffs.

“Monroe is a great team. They were state champions last year, and that is going to be a heck of a challenge for us,” Johnson said. “We are excited about tonight, and ready to get back to work tomorrow.” *Joey Chandler can be reached at joey.chandler@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0223.*

**“That is a dang good football team we just played. They are extremely well coached and played as hard as they can.”**

Tuscaloosa Academy coach Robert Johnson

## HURT

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community, by not taking back-to-back marquee openers to north Texas. No one says you can’t ever play at a neutral site again. Just spread some love (and economic impact) at home. Anyone who remembers the games with Oklahoma, UCLA and Penn State knows the atmosphere in Tuscaloosa was great. Imagine if the visitor were Ohio State or Stanford. When Texas A&M booked its Clemson series, it did so because it couldn’t work out dates with Oregon. That means the Ducks have two vacancies. Nike’s Phil Knight probably wouldn’t mind helping to facilitate a meeting of two of his high-profile college partners. It wouldn’t be a difficult phone call to make, Coach Battle. Now is the time to make it.

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

## DIRECTION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C

practice habits we’ve gotten better as a team.” If that sounds familiar, it’s because Saban has previously said the same thing about Hart, who spent three injury-riddled seasons at Alabama. After graduating at Alabama, Hart looked at the depth chart and surmised that this best chance to play was via transfer. So, he looked around and found his old offensive coordinator.

“If I’d have to chose to go anywhere else, I’d have to learn new people, get a relationship with a new coach and learn a new offense,” Hart said. “Coach Mac is a guy I’ve known for a long time. It’s just been an easier transition for me, and I know with coach Mac that he’s going to treat me like a son. He’s going to coach but at the same time he’s going to talk to me and help me.” He wasted little time showing his new team and fans what made him a five-star recruit out of high school with 139 yards rushing in the season opener against Colorado. The performance didn’t escape his former teammates either, with multiple UA players taking to Twitter to brag on their guy. Hart still communicates with his guys, players like DeAndrew White, Nick Perry, Christian Jones and Trey DePriest. He hears from Alabama fans, too. “At Alabama, when they say ‘We live it’ that’s real,” Hart said. They really live that football, that family, just that whole football life.” McElwain, too, treasures his years in Tuscaloosa, and this family will always remain connected. His three children, JoHanna, Elizabeth and Jerret, have or will graduate from the University of Alabama. “It’s certainly a special place that I would have never in my wildest dreams thought I’d ever had a chance to be at a place like that.”

*Reach Aaron Suttles at aaron@tidesports.com or at 205-722-0229.*



PREP FOOTBALL

# Something Special

## West Blocton looks to keep perfect season intact

By Joey Chandler  
Sports Writer

After back-to-back 2-8 seasons, the West Blocton High School football team is on the cusp of something special. The Tigers (9-0) host Greensboro (6-3) tonight, with hopes of finishing out the regular season with a perfect record. “That would be great. It would be awesome not only for them, but the community and the school,” Tigers coach Gregg Farnetti said. “To be 9-0 right now, even if we finish 9-1, that’s still huge for us. These kids worked their rear ends off and poured their heart and soul into it, but to finish out undefeated would be really, really sweet.” Farnetti said after last year’s season ended, his players held an impromptu meeting amongst themselves. The players talked about what they wanted to accomplish in 2014, and didn’t waste any time getting to work. The Tigers are region champions, one win away from finishing 10-0, and ranked eighth in the state in Class 4A. “We are always trying to win every game that we play, but I think they realized we kept preaching to them that their day is coming if they keep working hard and plugging away, and they bought into that.” This year’s upperclassmen received an ample amount of playing time as freshmen and sophomores. Two years ago the team was made up of only seniors and underclassmen, meaning last year there were no seniors, and in turn, the younger players took on plenty of responsibility. “They got a lot of playing time



West Blocton’s Kaleb Shadwick runs for a gain during the Tigers’ game against Sipsevy Valley on Sept. 5. West Blocton is 9-0 entering tonight’s game against Greensboro.

against tough opponents, and they did well, but fell short. We lost three games last year by a total of 12 points, one by six and two by three,” Farnetti said. “They’ve been through a lot because of it, and they learned a lot.” All of Greensboro’s losses this season were against quality programs, including undefeated

Gordo, Aliceville (9-1) and Bibb County (6-4). “They are a really, really good football team,” Farnetti said. “They are big, they are fast and they are physical.” *Joey Chandler can be reached at joey.chandler@tuscaloosanews.com or 205-722-0223.*



WEST ALABAMA FOOTBALL

## Tigers’ rally comes up short

Staff report

LIVINGSTON | Valdosta State held off a late West Alabama rally to defeat the Tigers, 24-17, in Gulf South Conference football action Thursday at Tiger Stadium. Trailing the entire second half, UWA cut the Valdosta State lead to 24-17 with 1:51 to play on a 22-yard scoring pass from Kyle Caldwell to Daryl Collins. With three timeouts left, UWA elected to kick deep and play defense. The Tigers forced a three-and-out from the Blazers. Following the punt, UWA started on its own 30 with no timeouts and drove to the VSU 37 before Donatello Brown intercepted Caldwell in the end zone as time expired. “The defense gave us a shot to win there at the end. In fact they played well the entire game,” UWA coach Brett Gilliland said. “They consistently gave us good field position, but we didn’t do enough to sustain drives offensively.” Valdosta State won its fourth straight game, improving to 5-2 overall and 4-2 in the GSC. West Alabama dropped to 4-5 and 1-4. The loss was West Alabama’s third straight at home, marking the first time since 2007 that the Tigers had dropped three consecutive at Tiger Stadium. Chad Toocheck finished with eight receptions for 181 yards and a touchdown and Daryl Collins with 10 catches for 115 yards as West Alabama passed for 337 yards and rang up 457 total



Chad Toocheck led West Alabama with 181 receiving yards and a touchdown in the Tigers’ 24-17 loss to Valdosta State.

yards to 376 for Valdosta State. Kyle Caldwell was 24 of 48 for 337 yards, two touchdowns and two interceptions. Tiger running backs didn’t fare as well. Tyler Rogers and Markeyus Johnson led the UWA ground attack with just 27 yards each. Brandon Keel and Quinton Harton had seven tackles each to lead the UWA defense. West Alabama travels to Mississippi College on Nov. 8 and then ends its season on Nov. 13 by hosting North Alabama.



ALABAMA VOLLEYBALL

## Crimson Tide looks to stay hot against Aggies

Staff report

The University of Alabama volleyball team will host 23rd-ranked Texas A&M tonight at Foster Auditorium. Alabama is coming off back-to-back victories over Auburn and Arkansas last week. Texas A&M has won three matches in a row, beating South Carolina, Georgia and No. 16 Kentucky in its last three outings. Alabama’s Krystal Rivers and Kat Hutson are both ranked among the top five in the SEC in kills. Junior setter Sierra Wilson leads the SEC with 1,026 assists and is one of just 12 players in the country with more than 1,000 assists this season. Alabama leads the SEC with 145 aces, led by Rivers with 32. Bruna Evangelista leads the team in hitting percentage (.353), while Leah Lawrence leads the team in blocks (87). Freshman libero Natalie Murison leads the defense with 259 digs. Alabama has played 12 matches on Halloween dating back to 1975, when Alabama defeated Jacksonville State, 2-0, at the Athens Tournament in Athens. Overall, the Tide is 7-5 in Halloween matches and 2-1 in Halloween home matches. Alabama’s first Halloween home match was in 1992 when the Crimson Tide lost to sixth-ranked Florida, 3-0. Alabama will visit eighth-ranked Florida (16-3, 10-0 SEC) on Friday, Nov. 7.



Alabama’s Krystal Rivers and the Crimson Tide host Texas A&M tonight at Foster Auditorium.

**No. 23 Texas A&M at Alabama**  
**■ When:** 7 p.m., tonight  
**■ Where:** Foster Auditorium  
**■ Records:** Alabama 18-5, 6-3 SEC; Texas A&M 14-6, 6-3 SEC  
**■ TV:** SEC Network  
**■ Radio:** 90.7 FM



PHOTO | JACOB FORD

Holt’s JaVonte Brooks is tackled by Brookwood’s Devonta Jenkins during Thursday night’s game.

## BROOKWOOD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1C

“It was huge for us not to give up a big play in the first half when the field was flipped,” Bush said. Holt put together a 13-play, 80-yard drive late in the first half for its only score. Tight end Ke’Monta’ Stockdale caught three passes from Brooks on the drive, including a 20-yard touchdown reception. Holt finished 2-8, breaking a 17-game losing streak along the way under first-year coach Phillip Merryman. “I think the most important thing we overcame was never quitting no matter the score,” Merryman said. “We’ve got a pretty young line and they’re still developing. We’ve just got to get them in the weight room and get them stronger and give the quarterback more time.”

### WEST ALABAMA SCORES

**Thursday’s Games**  
 Brookwood 44, Holt 8  
 Gordo 50, Pickens County 7  
 Hillcrest 39, Demopolis 29  
 Homewood 24, Tuscaloosa County 12  
 Lamar County 34, Winfield 27  
 Mortimer Jordan 34, Fayette County 6  
 Northridge 28, Walker 21  
 Northside 31, Akron 6  
 Parker 13, Central 0  
 Sulligent 21, South Lamar 20  
 Tuscaloosa Academy 36,  
 South Choctaw Academy 34





CECIL HURT

## Nothing wrong with a little exuberance

There is nothing wrong with decorum.

The good old-fashioned value of “act like you’ve been there” is vanishing, as I wrote a couple of months ago after Clemson students stormed their basketball court to celebrate a win. A win over Belmont. In the NIT. In the quarterfinals.

Even a curmudgeon like me, though, doesn’t mind a little spontaneous emotion in sport, especially if it doesn’t involve taunting opponents or opposing fans. Athletes should be happy when they win, and especially happy when they win something important like a Southeastern Conference championship, a tangible reward for a full year of hard work. Something to be celebrated.

Thus, it is time to defend the dogpile.

On Friday night, Alabama’s softball team clinched the outright SEC title with a 3-1 win in Columbia, Mo. The victory wasn’t routine. Alabama lost the opening game of the series with ace pitcher Jaclyn Traina in the circle, and turned to promising but relatively untested Sydney Littlejohn for the Friday game, hoping to clinch the title and deny surging Missouri a chance to play for a share of that SEC title on its home field on Saturday. So there was nothing routine about the four-hitter Littlejohn pitched, or the Crimson Tide’s 3-1 win.

So Alabama celebrated with a dogpile, a rush of players jumping on each other between the pitching circle and first base. According to the UA players on social media, they didn’t jaw or taunt — they just celebrated, as happy as if they had found themselves inside the chorus of a Pharrell song.

That does not mean that everyone was happy.

“I think it’s bush league,” Missouri coach Ehren Earleywine said. “I understand the excitement but I think that they, like a lot of SEC schools, take it a little too far.”

First, as Patrick Murphy observed in response, it isn’t bush league, or all that far out of the ordinary in softball. Certainly, it was a disappointing outcome for the Tigers, who were just two wins away — in front of a raucous home crowd — from their own share of the SEC crown. But the fact the dream didn’t survive doesn’t obligate Alabama to act like they are attending a memorial service.

Second, it is not worthwhile to get into provincial sniping at the SEC’s new members. Missouri has been a good addition and trips to Columbia — aside from nearly drowning at the 2012 football game — have been fun and welcoming. But if Earleywine doesn’t like being in the SEC because its student-athletes take softball seriously and celebrate championships exuberantly, it might be wise to express that in less of a condescending way.

It is certainly within the bounds of tactics for a coach to use an opponent’s celebration as motivation for his own team. That is a little different than calling the opponent “bush league” in the morning paper.

To leave it on a positive note: Alabama overcame a good bit of adversity this season to win the SEC by a comfortable margin. Murphy deserves a lot of credit. So does the fiercely competitive Traina and the rest of the roster. And if they choose to celebrate winning by forming a happy pile of humanity, that is just what they should do, regardless of what SEC city they are in.

Reach Cecil Hurt at [cecil@tidesports.com](mailto:cecil@tidesports.com) or 205-722-0225.

# BATTLE TESTED

## After 14 months, Bill Battle has settled into role of Alabama’s AD

By Aaron Suttles  
Sports Writer

Less than two months into the job, Bill Battle settled in for a relaxing evening with his wife, Mary, for a Saturday night dinner.

It was then, a little after 8, he realized things were different.

Earlier in the day, Battle, the University of Alabama’s recently hired director of athletics, made his first hire, agreeing in principle to name Kristy Curry the new Crimson Tide women’s basketball coach.

The plan called for Curry to fly back to Lubbock, Texas, and meet with her Texas Tech team to tell them the news face-to-face she was headed to Tuscaloosa. Before that could happen, the news was released.

Battle received an email informing him of what had transpired, and within three minutes he had a press release to review.

That was the moment Battle fully understood the dynamics of an athletic department were vastly different than they were in the 1970s when he was the head coach at Tennessee.

“That kind of stuff used to take three days to turn around,” Battle said, laughing. “Things go at warp speed now.”

SEE BATTLE | 3C

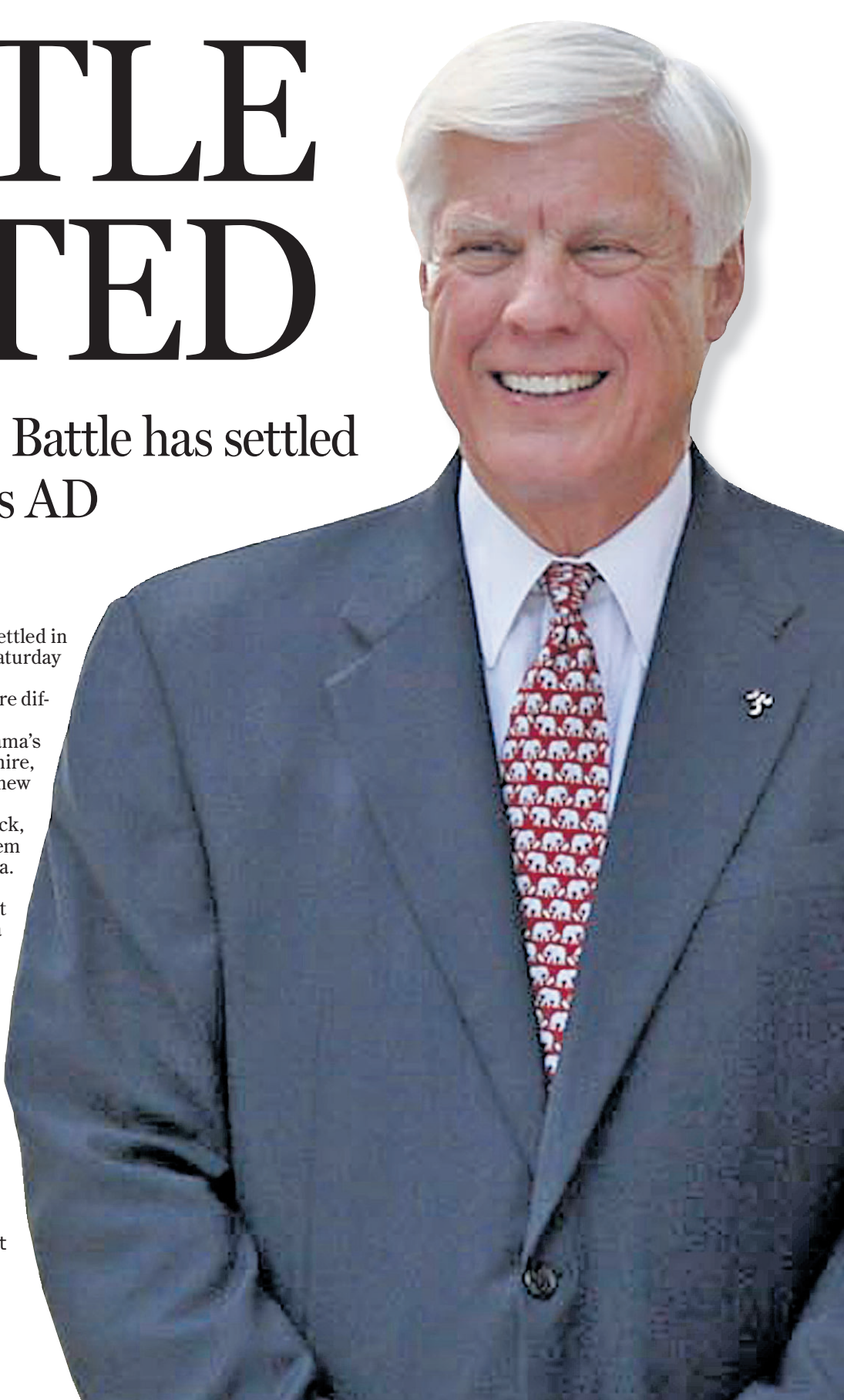
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Battle voted to keep SEC football schedule format at eight games | 3C

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Battle discusses Anthony Grant and direction of Crimson Tide basketball | 3C



### BASEBALL | FLORIDA 4, ALABAMA 3

Florida’s Taylor Gushue (17) is met by his teammates after hitting a home run in the sixth inning as Alabama catcher Wade Wass walks back to home plate in Saturday’s game at Sewell-Thomas Stadium. Florida won 4-3.

STAFF PHOTO | ERIN NELSON



## Gators grind out win over Tide

By D.C. Reeves  
Sports Writer

Statistically, Florida won’t wow anyone.

But the team that ranks in the bottom half of most major offensive and pitching categories grinded out yet another SEC road win with gutty relief pitching and timely hitting in a 4-3 win against Alabama at Sewell-Thomas Stadium on Saturday.

Alabama was left watching its early 3-1 lead evaporate and one late-inning opportunity to tie go to the wayside as the Gators won their 10th straight SEC game.

“I thought it was a good battle on both sides,” Alabama coach Mitch Gaspard said. “Florida’s pitching staff doesn’t give you many chances, but when you get them you’ve got to capitalize on them.”

The star for Florida (32-15, 17-6 SEC) was freshman A.J. Puk, who not only earned the victory with 2½ innings of scoreless relief on the mound but also picked up a bat and delivered the pinch-hit, go-ahead RBI single in the sixth inning.

On the heels of Friday’s 7-3 loss, Alabama came out swinging as it plated three runs in

the third to take a 3-1 lead.

But back came Florida.

UF’s Casey Turgeon hit an RBI double in the fifth to cut Alabama’s edge to 3-2. Catcher Taylor Gushue smashed a solo home run off the scoreboard in left center in the sixth to tie it 3-3. Later in the inning, Puk stepped in and hit the go-ahead RBI single to left-center.

Rated the No. 16 freshman prospect in the nation by Baseball America, Puk headlined a stingy freshman relief contingent that kept Alabama’s bats at bay. Puk was followed by Dane Dunning’s 2½ scoreless innings, and when Alabama had its best late inning threat of the game — a runner in scoring position in the eighth with only one out — Dunning struck out Mikey White and left-handed Kirby Snead stepped in and struck out Alabama lefty Georgie Salem to evade the threat.

Once the freshman compiled 5½ innings of stellar relief, Ryan Harris earned the save with a perfect ninth inning.

Until Harris entered, Alabama (30-17, 13-10 SEC) had at least one player reach base in the first eight innings.

SEE GRIND | 3C



### AUTO RACING

## Brian Scott leads RCR to ‘Dega pole

By Jenna Fryer  
The Associated Press

TALLADEGA | A group decision for all of the cars powered by Earnhardt Childress engines to work together at Talladega Superspeedway proved the correct call in NASCAR’s new knockout qualifying format.

Richard Childress Racing drivers and their affiliates swept the first three rows on the starting grid for today’s race, with the pole going to Brian Scott, who will lead the field to the green flag in just his fifth career Sprint Cup Series start.

“Who would have thought that, huh?” Scott asked after Saturday’s qualifying session.

Cars with ECR engines took six of the 12 spots in the third and final round of knockout qualifying, and they all waited patiently on pit road for someone to make a move. It came with roughly 2 minutes, 20 seconds remaining in the 5-minute session, when all 12 drivers made their way onto the track.

Tony Stewart posted the fastest lap as he worked with the other three Stewart-Haas Racing drivers, and as the

SEE POLE | 7C



Brian Scott gets out of his car after taking the pole after qualifying for today’s Aaron’s 499 at Talladega Superspeedway on Saturday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS





CECIL HURT

## John Servati understood what was important

I did not know John Servati. When the time comes to allocate coverage to the various sports at the University of Alabama, swimming and diving usually gets a small portion, if anything at all. That is no reflection on the prowess of swimmers, who are supremely conditioned, fiercely competitive men and women. But when it comes to television coverage or space in the newspaper, swimming rarely gets a mention unless it is in the context of an Olympic year.

So I only know John Servati through what has been said about him since his tragic, untimely death on Monday night by friends and teammates and stunned coaches, all of whom described a smiling, fun-loving teammate who turned into a focused, driven competitor during practice or meets. And I know a couple of other things: That the last entry on his Twitter feed was about his concern for those affected by a tornado in his hometown of Tupelo, Miss., earlier on Monday, and I know that in his final moments, he thought first of others, his girlfriend, whose life he may well have saved when a retaining wall collapsed around them.

I don't know Donald Sterling, either, although I have heard enough about him in the past 72 hours to fill a long, and rather sordid, novel. I watched the press conference in which Adam Silver cast him out from the NBA, exorcising Sterling to near-universal praise, in which I concur. But even as I watched, there was still a thought of John Servati. It wasn't there to make some simplistic and unfair comparison, but the thought was there about one difference.

Donald Sterling was a racist but, paradoxically, racism isn't so much what we think about others as what we think about ourselves. When we equate "different" — different color, different religion, different sex — with "inferior," we are simply trying to establish a sort of superiority, to feel good about ourselves based on some false automatic criteria. We are thinking, invariably, of ourselves. When Sterling complained about his girlfriend posting pictures of herself with black men on Instagram, or told her not to bring them to Clipper games, he was worried primarily about how her actions reflected on himself, about how it would make him look.

A billion dollars in the bank wasn't enough to make Sterling feel good enough about himself. He needed more.

John Servati wasn't a billionaire. He was a young man, so maybe he would have become one some day. But maybe that wouldn't have mattered so much to him. It seems he was already strong enough to think of others, routinely. Not because of how that would make him look, or make him wealthy, but because that is who he was. There isn't enough of that in the world. There isn't enough of it in me, in late middle age.

That is what made his death a tragedy: Not the fact that he was young and promising, or that he competed for Alabama. But he seemed, at a young age and with so much promise for the future, to already understand what was important in life, something that many of us, older but not wiser, tend to forget or ignore.

I did not know John Servati. But from what I know of him, I will miss him.

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## ALABAMA WOMEN'S TENNIS

# Tide No. 2 overall seed for NCAA Tournament

By Aaron Suttles  
Sports Writer

What has already been a season for the ages for the University of Alabama women's tennis team added another historic footnote Tuesday afternoon.

Coach Jenny Mainz and her Crimson Tide (22-4) received the No. 2 overall seed for the NCAA Tournament during the selection show. UA hosts the four-team Tuscaloosa Regional beginning May 9.

"It's incredibly exciting," Mainz said. "This obviously is the first time and making program history. It's thrilling to be in this position."

Georgia, which edged Alabama for the Southeastern Conference Tournament title, is the No. 1 seed. UA topped the Bulldogs, 4-3, in the regular season matchup and claimed the regular season SEC title with a 12-1 league record. It was the program's first SEC title and its first time to appear in the SEC Tournament

SEE No. 2 | 7C



PHOTO | ALABAMA ATHLETICS

Members of the University of Alabama women's tennis team celebrate after hearing the team received the No. 2 overall seed for the NCAA Tournament.

# SARAH & SUZANNE



STAFF FILE PHOTOS

**ABOVE:** Alabama coach Sarah Patterson watches her Crimson Tide in a meet against Oklahoma.

**LEFT:** Georgia coach Suzanne Yoculan reacts after one of her gymnasts competes on the beam in a meet against Alabama in Tuscaloosa.

## Film examines the rivalry that has fueled two championship gymnastics programs

By Aaron Suttles  
Sports Writer

It's almost as if they came straight out of central casting. In a lot of ways, they did.

Sarah Patterson in white. Suzanne Yoculan in black.

The two most dominant coaches in college gymnastics were polar opposites in many ways, but were more alike than they let on.

During a quarter-century of head-to-head competition, they combined for 14 national championships and 21 Southeastern Conference titles.

In "SEC Storied: Sarah & Suzanne," which airs tonight on ESPNU at 6, director Joie Jacoby brings viewers a look back at the rivalry that fueled two championship-level programs

and the sport of college gymnastics for more than two decades.

The film makes it clear they were "two fearless women 275 miles apart building powerhouses on very different philosophical foundations."

Despite radically different approaches, Patterson and Yoculan, both from the northeast (Patterson from New York, Yoculan from Pennsylvania), shared a burning desire to market their respective programs and win at the highest level. They succeeded wildly at both.

"Years ago, there weren't fans for college gymnastics, and I do really feel like one of the best outcomes that came from this rivalry is that Suzanne and I worked really hard to

SEE FILM | 7C



## ALABAMA BASEBALL

# Gaspard wants to see more energy in midweek games

By D.C. Reeves  
Sports Writer

Alabama coach Mitch Gaspard was clear following a couple of his team's recent midweek defeats: He wants the team to play with more urgency between crucial SEC series.

After a smarting loss to midweek opponent Southern Miss at home eight days ago, a home loss to UAB two weeks before that, and with a chance to earn some footing as an NCAA Regional host, Alabama should have plenty of motivation to bring its best baseball to Samford tonight. First pitch is at 6:05 p.m.

"Our guys have to come out ... with more energy and perform at a higher

**No. 12 Alabama at Samford**

- **When:** 6:05 p.m.
- **Where:** Joe Lee Griffin Field, Birmingham
- **Records:** Alabama 29-15; Samford 26-18
- **Radio:** 99.1 FM

level," Gaspard said following the 6-3 loss to USM last week.

The Crimson Tide (29-15), ranked No. 12 in Baseball America's latest top 25 poll released Monday, will start freshman Geoffrey Bramblett (3-1, 3.77 ERA). Making his third start of the season, Bramblett has allowed two earned runs in 11⅓ innings as a starter.

Alabama also had no trouble top-

ping the Bulldogs (26-18) in their earlier meeting as Alabama took an 11-0 lead in an eventual 12-1 win on March 11, Alabama's last game before Southeastern Conference play began.

Samford will start freshman right-hander Cody Pugh (3-3, 5.24 ERA), who took the loss at UA last month. He gave up six hits, three walks and five earned runs in 3⅓ innings.

Today's game was originally scheduled for Tuesday but was postponed because of the weather.

Alabama's midweek focus will be tested again by a big weekend. UA hosts Florida, which leads the SEC at 15-6, starting Friday at 6:35 p.m.

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STAFF PHOTO | ERIN NELSON  
Freshman Geoffrey Bramblett will start tonight's game at Samford.