

7 DAY FORECAST

Friday Feb. 21	Saturday Feb. 22	Sunday Feb. 23	Monday Feb. 24	Tuesday Feb. 25	Wednesday Feb. 26	Thursday Feb. 27
High: 43 Low: 22	High: 52 Low: 24	High: 55 Low: 27	High: 64 Low: 37	High: 67 Low: 37	High: 66 Low: 43	High: 60 Low: 38



Page 2B

The Gadsden City girls basketball team made it to the Northeast Regional Tournament Class 6A semifinals earlier this week at JSU.

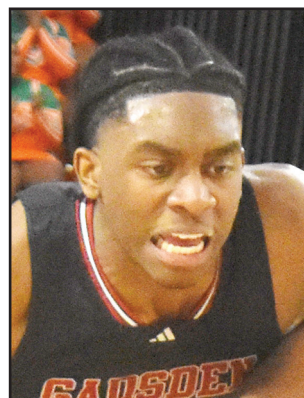
Photo by Chris McCarthy



Page 8B

The Hokes Bluff boys basketball team played in the Northeast Regional Tournament Class 4A semifinals at Jacksonville State.

Photo by Alex Chaney



Page 1B

The Gadsden City boys basketball team defeated Huffman in the Northeast Regional Tournament Class 6A semifinals earlier this week at JSU.

Photo by Chris McCarthy

Glencoe cagers win regional basketball championship



Chris McCarthy/Messenger

The Glencoe High boys basketball team gather for a photo after its 77-63 victory over Piedmont in the Northeast Regional Tournament Class 3A championship game on Tuesday, Feb. 18 at Jacksonville State. Pictured, kneeling, from left: Wayne Nowak, Davis Honeycutt, Jalen Hunter, Wade Segrest, Aiden Johnson, Tracy Jones, trainer Jacob Goss, NEO trainer. Standing, from left: assistant coach Lacey Buchanon, head coach Ryan Chambless, Jayden Patton, Cole Potter, Garrett Morgan, Grant Smith, Bruce Borntrager, Levi Lasseter, Durrell Hampton, Jace White, Cooper Gomez, assistant coach Beau Stewart, assistant coach Wes Weems. For article and more photos, see page 1B.

Gadsden approves welcome signs, transportation plans

By Kaitlin Hoskins
News Editor

The City of Gadsden will welcome four new welcome signs along U.S. Highway 411 and U.S. Highway 431.

One such sign will sit on property purchased by the City of Gadsden at its Tuesday, February 18 meeting of the city council. The property located at 2510 Rainbow Drive will now feature a welcome sign that Gadsden Mayor Craig Ford describes as “really nice” and “in compliance with department of transportation regulations.”

Prince Metal Stamping Abatement
Tax abatement agreement with Prince Metal Stamping, Inc.

The City of Gadsden voted to allow a 10-year tax abatement agreement with Prince Metal Stamping, Inc. for a “major addition to their production facility.” The agreement abates construction related transaction taxes and non-educational property taxes for a period of 10 years. This project involves a capital investment of \$5.5 million from Prince Metal Stamping and, as part of the agreement, will not have to pay the city \$140,000 in taxes.

“The city is giving up approximately

\$140,000 over 10 years total in taxes for this piece of equipment but the flip side of that is we’re generating about \$120,000 in new money for the school system,” Ford said during the Tuesday meeting. “The bottom line and the silver lining is that by doing this, it is allowing Prince, by their words, to save 340 jobs here in the Gadsden area.”

The council approved the resolution unanimously.

Bus Route Study
The council also voted on a resolution authorizing an agreement with Volkert, Inc. for a transit study. The study would examine current public transportation routes within the city.

“This is something that has to be done every so often and we’re redoing our routes to make it more feasible for people to get transported around,” Ford said. “We’re trying to keep it simple and shorter so more people can use our public transport service.”

The resolution was passed with unanimous approval.

2050 Transportation Plan
The council voted to approve another agreement with Volkert, Inc. at the regular

meeting. The agreement would be for the amount of \$229,000, 80 percent of which would be reimbursed through Alabama Department of Transportation funds. The agreement would be to develop the 2050 long range transportation plan for the Gadsden Etowah Metropolitan Planning Organization.

The approval was unanimous.

New business

Councilman Chris Robinson for council district 7 introduced an item of new business from the engineering department. The resolution authorizing agreement with CDG, inc. to provide the required construction, engineering and inspection service for the sidewalk improvement project along Chestnut Street and Sixth Street was read as an item of new business.

The sidewalk project will improve the sidewalk and landscape along Chestnut Street between Sixth and Seventh Street, and the sidewalk and landscape from Sixth Street from Chestnut down to Broad Street. The agreement is budgeted for \$159,751. The amount is covered by an ALDOT grant.

The resolution passed with unanimous

approval.

Robinson introduced a second item of new business, requested by the parks and recreation department, for an amendment to admission and rental rates for Noccalula Falls Campground, as well as adjustments to rules and policies for rental facilities.

“This is getting our rates ready for the new campground to open up so we can start taking reservations,” Robinson said. “The new rates are comparable to the other two campgrounds in our city. They did go up, but they are comparable. They were so cheap before.”

Standard hook-ups at the campground have increased to \$65 per night and premium pull through campsites are now \$75 per night. The price does not include lodging taxes, surcharges or additional fees. There are several discount options for individuals. A 20 percent discount is offered for stays lasting longer than eight days. A 10 percent discount is offered for military members, senior citizens, Good Sam members and AARP members. Cabin rentals will now be \$150 per night with an additional \$125 cleaning fee.

Gadsden City Council - page 3A

GSCC students earn scholarships

Giaus Spurgeon and Dyaamond McCadney — two Gadsden State Community College students from the Valley Street Campus — attended the inaugural Thurgood Marshall College Fund Workforce Development Summit held Jan. 30-Feb. 1 in Birmingham.

The summit, which serves as a forum for Historically Black Community Colleges (HBCCs) to connect with workforce talent and industry partners, provided a three-day experience for the students to learn the skills required to thrive, grow and lead in their chosen fields. In addition to the summit experience, both students received the Cal and Annette Johnson Scholarship worth \$15,000 each. The scholarships are a part of the summit’s commitment to sup-

porting the education and professional development of students from HBCCs.

“We are very proud of Giaus and Dyaamond,” said Ricky Tillis, director of the Valley Street Campus. “A scholarship worth \$15,000 is substantial and will significantly ease their financial burdens. It allows them to continue their studies with full focus.”

McCadney, a 27-year-old native of Union City, Tenn., is pursuing a degree in Diagnostic Medical Sonography at the Valley Street Campus. McCadney, who is in her second year at Gadsden State, chose the community college for its proximity to her home and its status as an HBCC.

Scholarships- page 4A

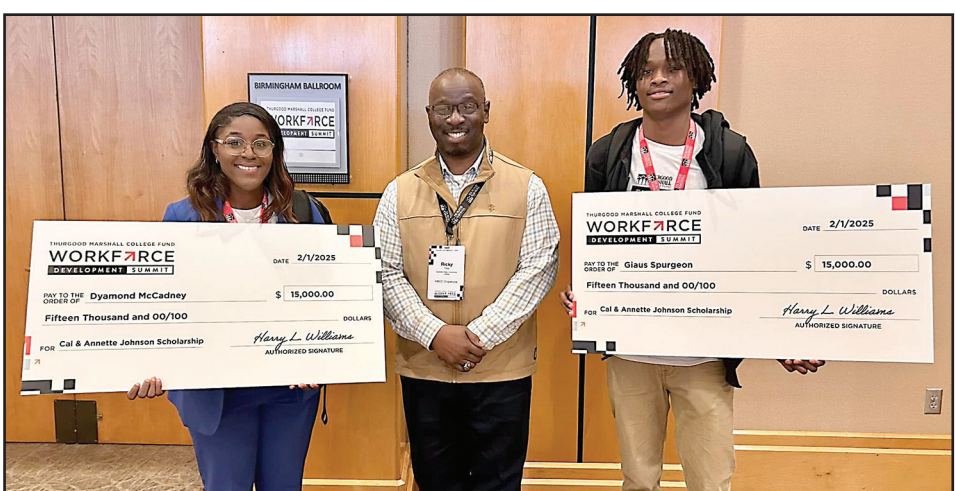


Photo courtesy of Gadsden State Community College

From left, Dyaamond McCadney, Gadsden State Valley Street Campus Director Ricky Tillis and Giaus Spurgeon.





NEWS



YMCA hosts Father-Daughter Dance

Fathers and daughters show their moves on the dance floor during the YMCA of the Coosa Valley's Father/Daughter Dance on Sunday, Feb. 16 at The Venue at Coosa Landing. Photo by Chris McCarthy/Messenger. **See more photos on 4A.**

RVSP offering help on tax returns

RSVP of Etowah County is offering free income tax preparation for 2024 federal tax return forms. Please bring photo ID, Social Security card, a copy of 2023 tax return and all W2 and 1099 forms. The program is sponsored by RSVP of Etowah County, the Etowah County Commission and the IRS.

Tax assistance will be available at the following locations. For more information, call 256-549-8147.

The East Gadsden Community Center (921 Wilson Street) from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. on March 1, 15 and 29 and April 12.

The George Wallace Senior Center (407 Hollingsworth Park Lane) from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., Tuesdays and Fridays through April 11.

The Rainbow City Community Center (3702 Rainbow Drive) from 11:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m., Wednesdays and Thursdays through April 11.

Carnes Rec Center (102 Case Avenue) from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays through April 15.

Etowah County Courthouse, second floor, Room 221, from 11 a.m. - 3 p.m., Monday-Fridays through April 15.

Hokes Bluff Public Library (3310 Alford Bend Road) from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., every Monday through April 14.

Walnut Grove Public Library (5151 Walnut Grove Road) from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. on March 5 and 19, and April 2.

Sardis City Public Library (1310 Church Street) from 1 - 5 p.m. on March 12 and 26 and April 9.

GSCC launches Behavioral Team

Gadsden State Community College is launching a Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) to enhance campus safety and support student well-being.

"This proactive initiative is a cross-disciplinary team that identifies, assesses and addresses concerning behaviors before they escalate into serious incidents," said Chief Jay Freeman of the Gadsden State Police and Public Safety Department.

The BIT is a part of the Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Strategy, which creates a safer and more supportive learning environment for students and employees.

"The BIT is crucial in identifying and addressing concerns before

they escalate, ensuring that students receive the support they need while maintaining a safe learning environment," Freeman said.

- The BIT has four main goals:
- Centralize referrals for students in distress
 - Provide training for employees to recognize warning signs
 - Ensure early intervention and connect students with appropriate resources
 - Strengthen Gadsden State's commitment to a safe and secure campus

"This initiative aligns with national best practices in preventing targeted violence and ensures that Gadsden

State remains a leader in campus safety and student success," he said.

Freeman is joined on the BIT by Cody Beck, director of Enrollment Services; Ricky Tillis, director of the Valley Street Campus; Lynn Patterson, director of Student Activities; Gerri Langley, Office Administration instructor; Lt. Colton Harden, Gadsden State Police; Melissa Davis, orientation instructor; Randi Wright, director of Gadsden State Cherokee; and Dr. Dana Davis, director of the Advising and Retention Center.

"By working together as a community, we can develop a culture of care and early intervention that benefits everyone," Freeman said.



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Gadsden City Council Meeting

- From 1A

The renovated campground is set to open in the spring.

The resolution was approved with all members of the council voting in favor.

In other business, the Gadsden City Council:

- Approved unanimously a settlement agreement introduced as an item of new business. According to City Attorney Jack Lee Roberts, the legal settlement regarding a "negligence action arising out of a nuisance abatement." The resolution stated the agreement was between Investment Property Unlimited, LLC and the City of Gadsden. No further clarification was provided during the meeting.
- Was reminded of Gadsden Court Amnesty Day on March 4, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. The amnesty program provides an opportunity for those with certain municipal court charges to clear their cases without concern of being physically arrested. Amnesty is offered to all individuals who have received traffic, misdemeanors, failed to appear, owe fines, has a warrant and any pending charges. On Amnesty Day, Judge Welch will accept one half of the amount that

is owed to the court, which must be paid in full that day, and the court will remit the balance owed.

- Commended city public works department for their work after a tree had fallen on a home Monday night.
- Heard report from Mayor Craig Ford about a visit to Montgomery by Ford, Tena King and David Hooks. The visit's mission was to meet with the city's delegation in Montgomery.
- Was reminded of Operation Spring Cleaning in Gadsden, which includes re-painting road stripes, clearing trees and right of ways, clearing litter and more. The operation consists of city crews focusing their efforts on one community at a time and then moving

to the next area. Ford commended the litter crew for their hard work.

- Commended the high school basketball teams for their performance in a recent championship.
- Heard an update from Ford on the Eastern Connector project. The project has been stalled recently due to issues in acquiring signatures on documents for the city's purchasing of land. Ford stated that he, along with Etowah County Commission, the local mayor's alliance, and others have met with or been in contact with local, state and federal officials and departments to get the project back on its feet.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the City of Gadsden City Council is set for February 25 at 11 a.m.

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Fathers and daughters show their moves on the dance floor during the YMCA of the Coosa Valley's Father/Daughter Dance on Sunday, Feb. 16 at The Venue at Coosa Landing. Photos by Chris McCarthy/Messenger.

Etowah County Commission presents check to Gadsden State Police Dept.



The Gadsden State Police and Public Safety Department recently received a check from Etowah County Commissioner Craig Inzer Jr. and the County Commission. The provided funding will help the department purchase bulletproof vests and body cameras for its officers.

"Providing our officers with the tools they need to stay safe and effectively serve our communities is invaluable," said GSCC Police Chief Jay Freeman. "This investment in protective equipment ensures that our team can operate with greater confidence and accountability. We are truly thankful for the unwavering support from our county leaders and administration."

Scholarships

- From 1A

"Gadsden State has been a perfect match for me," she said. "The program also has an amazing success rate for sonographers."

After graduation, McCadney plans to apply for Gadsden State's Echocardiography Certificate Program and is considering continuing her education at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Reflecting on her experience at the summit, McCadney said it was phenomenal.

"I learned so many skills, such as taking control of my credit and negotiating my salary," she said. "The job fair was an incredible opportunity, and we were able to meet with a number of companies."

McCadney expressed her gratitude upon receiving the \$15,000 scholarship.

"I have been working the entire time I've been in college," she said. "It's unbelievable to think that not only is my tuition paid now, but I can also fully focus on my studies. I am so grateful for the summit and the scholarship fund for giving me this amazing opportunity."

Spurgeon, an 18-year-old from Albertville, is working toward a short-term certificate in Construction Technology at the Valley Street Campus. He chose the program because of his hands-on learning style and his passion for carpentry.

"I've really enjoyed helping others with the work the program does for Habitat for Humanity," he said. "It has been awesome to help build houses."

Spurgeon plans to pursue an associate degree in general studies at Gadsden State and hopes to become an entrepreneur in the construction field.

"I'm still trying to figure out my life's path, but I know I want to help people by building homes that low-income people can afford," he said.

Spurgeon said he was shocked and thrilled to learn he had received the \$15,000 scholarship.

"I never considered that I would be a scholarship recipient," he said. "I didn't even realize they called my name. I just sat there shocked for a minute."

The Valley Street Campus,

which was once the only vocational training school for Black Americans, earned its HBCU designation in 1997 and continues to serve as a beacon of educational excellence for under-served communities. The campus was one of six community colleges in Alabama selected to join the Thurgood Marshall College Fund in 2023, providing students with additional access to scholarships and professional development opportunities.

The Workforce Development Summit is a part of the college fund and aims to deepen partnerships between HBCCs and employers seeking work-ready talent. Spurgeon said he is grateful for the opportunity to learn from others at the summit.

"I learned so much at the summit, including the importance of being my authentic self," he said. "Always be yourself and take time for yourself. Also, take advantage of networking. Don't be afraid to communicate with others. That next handshake could be a job opportunity."

For more information about Gadsden State Community College's Valley Street Campus, visit www.gadsdenstate.edu/hbcu.



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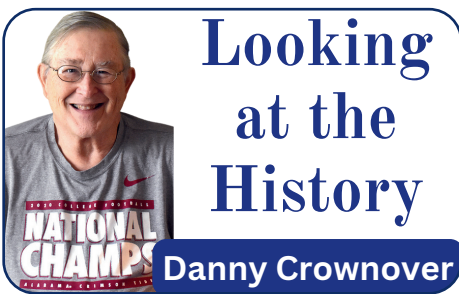
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LIFESTYLE

Hitching posts and sidesaddles in downtown Gadsden



Looking at the History

Danny Crowover

The parking meters in downtown Gadsden reminds The Vagabond of the old hitching posts that were scattered around town back in the day.

The last of those posts that were located on Broad Street and Forrest Avenue disappeared in 1949 when it was sold to a resident on Argyle Circle through a want ad in a local newspaper. It was used as a relic of

the horse and buggy days.

Another hitching post at that time was planted in front of the home on South Fifth Street that was once occupied by E.W. Whipps, a real estate dealer. He also placed a post in front of his real estate office on North Fourth Street.

In the residential sections of town, many of the iron hitching posts were ornamental as well as useful. They were topped with the head of a horse cast from iron.

Some posts were plain iron standards with rings attached to the tops for fastening bridle reins. Some were wood with the hitching rings fastened to the tip by ordinary staples. On Broad Street, there were a few rings fastened in the cement sidewalks with spikes. When trees existed downtown, some of them were used as hitching posts.

R.B. Kyle kept his buggy horse tied to a

post in front of his office next door to the First National Bank. His son Stonewall kept his fine saddle horse tied to a post nearby.

Some of the downtown stores that used delivery wagons tied their horses to a heavy piece of iron, and there were times when the horses ran away with those blocks, dragging them along the ground.

In the early days of Gadsden, farmers hitched their teams in the middle of Broad Street, fastened them to the wheels and went about their business. The hitching posts disappeared when women began riding astride, but back in the day, you could find them in front of almost every house in the rural sections.

A few posts were in the city in the late 1870s and early 1880s when women used sidesaddles. They mounted the block that had two or three steps and sat down in the

saddle. Some horseblocks were built of stone, but many were constructed by sawing three pieces off a large log, all of different heights to form steps.

A sidesaddle had two horns, one straight up and the other shaped like a half circle. A woman would climb the steps, sit down in the saddle, curl her left leg at the knee over the half circle, put her right foot in the stirrup and ride off without ever showing even a tiny bit of calf or ankle.

The women wore a riding skirt that reached almost to the ground, which they kept on until after she had safely dismounted. Many women became fine riders on what would appear to be unsafe and unsure anchorage, and they frequently rode long distances.

Contact Danny Crowover at dkcrown@bellsouth.net.

Chocolate pudding, glazed dandelions and red lettered comments



Memoir Musings

Sandra Bost

I have a vivid memory from fourth grade, circa 1981. I pull this memory out whenever I'm trying to break the ice with students or answer one of those dreaded "tell us something about yourself that nobody knows" polls during a faculty meet and greet. Once you hear it, you'll understand why my colleagues wonder if I'm okay, sometimes.

During a perfectly sunny day at Liberty School, I was sliding down the big silver slide on the playground, eating chocolate pudding in a can (if you know, you know), all while singing "John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt." Just as I was nearing the end of my jaunt, I took a big bite and belted the word "Schmidt!" At that exact moment, I became intimately aware of the nasopharyngeal anatomy's function during the production of nasal sounds, as chocolate pudding came straight out of my nose. That is also the day I learned that you should not sing with your mouth full.

I got to go to Liberty School once a week with some of my best friends from elementary school as part of the gifted program. That trip was the highlight of my week as it functioned as my respite from the world. We were bused to the old rock schoolhouse for a day of creativity, intellectually challenging activities, leadership boosting projects, and the like.

The part of the building that was still inhabitable contained one big classroom with a coat closet, two restrooms and a kitchen. Off the kitchen was an old snack machine standing beside a Coke machine that dispensed glass bottled drinks for 35 cents. They were the stuff dreams were made of!

There are so many memories of that special place. It is where I learned that glazed dandelions are a delicacy in Paris. In the same unit about France, I learned to speak a little Français and prepare an entire French meal.

The Liberty School was also where I discovered a knack for creative writing. It is the place where I felt belonging and where I didn't feel like the weirdest person in the room. It is the place where it was okay to be "too much."

You see, in the general classroom, which I dearly loved, I struggled to fit in. Even though I had straight As in reading, writing and arithmetic, the comments in my conduct section from first through sixth grades

lacked a little luster. Accompanying the Us for "Unsatisfactory" were the red-lettered comments, which said among other things, "Sandra talks too much," "Sandra annoys others," "Sandra daydreams." I can't say that any of those remarks were untrue. In fact, that was the problem. My "too muchness" was unacceptable, and rightly so, during the structured learning times. So, I had to learn to hold it in and tone it down. I also began to reckon that "too much" annoyed most people.

That belief system would go with me throughout the rest of my school career and into most of my young adult life. I would find myself in a scenario, feel like I was being "too much," try to reign it in and assume I was annoying. It was not until much later that I allowed a different set of red-lettered comments take root in my heart and guard my mind.

The red letters of Jesus in the New Testament began to mean more to me than report card comments or the whispers of the enemy of my mind telling me that I was "too much."

This past week, I was on schedule to give a presentation at our teacher conference. On the days leading up to the event, I heard a familiar whisper in my mind: "Don't do that, it's too much." Obviously, I was nervous to share in front of my new peers (consequently, a group I have not shared

my pudding story with), so the doubts and regret of agreeing to make a presentation were swirling. Eventually, the words of Jesus from Matthew 5:16 took their rightful place in the forefront of my mind and restored my confidence to "let my Light shine."

I don't always get it right. Sometimes, I succumb to the belief that I am an annoyance to the world and hide myself away. But I'm learning to recognize that old enemy lie and choose to believe the red letters of Jesus instead. I am not "too much" for Him. Neither are you, so shine on!

Sandra Mullins Bost, a Nationally Board Certified Teacher, has worked with Attalla City Schools, Coosa Christian, and St. Clair County Schools in her 17-year career in education. She currently teaches special education with Alabama Virtual Academy. Bost recently published her first book, "Real Sisters: A Sisters' First Story of Adoption," a children's story that explores the concept of family through the lens of love and adoption. Sandra and her husband of 30 years, Jeff, live with their deaf dog and have two married children who have blessed them with five adorable grandchildren. When she is not teaching, Bost enjoys time with her family and sipping coffee while porch-sitting to the happy sounds of nature. Visit www.sandramullinsbost.com for more information.

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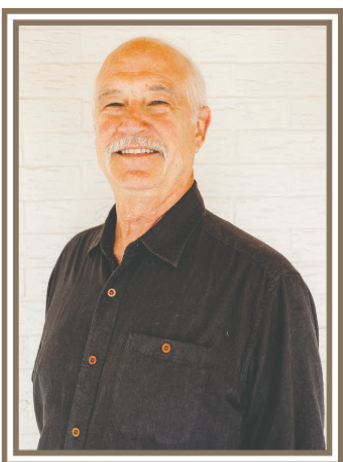
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Historical figures and celebrations

As I sat in the dentist office the other day (shout-out to Dr. Bailey! He and his office staff are amazing!), I scrolled through my phone while my girls had their teeth cleaned and I realized that February is Children's Dental Health Awareness month. My girls were not amused when I enthusiastically pointed out that we were celebrating appropriately.

February is full of things to celebrate, though! Groundhog Day, kids at the dentist, Valentine's Day, Presidents Day, Black History Month, the Super Bowl, Mardis Gras, and even Girl Scout cookies! I've already tasted some King Cake this month, laughed at a few groundhog videos, enjoyed my Valentine's treats, and even ordered Girl Scout cookies. There is something for everyone this month, and honestly, we need that this time of year.

As I looked at my planner and saw how quickly this month has flown by, I realized that even with everything I've enjoyed so far I've missed out on several Black History Month programs at work and in our community. Each year, there is an overall theme for Black History Month, and this year's has been "Labor." This is a poignant and heavy theme in some ways considering the historical relegation of Black Americans to laborious fields and careers, but I have also seen several articles and programs this month that have used 2025's theme to highlight and celebrate the achievements of the Black community and individuals in diverse careers.

In 1879 Mary Eliza Mahoney became the first Black nurse to graduate from an American school of nursing. Fanny Jackson Coppin was the first Black woman to become principal of a public school in the United States. Elizabeth "Bessie" Coleman was the first Black woman and first Native American person to become an official

aviator, and she is credited as the earliest known Black person to earn an international pilot's licence.

Katherine Johnson (whose life was highlighted in the fantastic movie Hidden Figures) was a pioneering Black woman in the world of aerospace engineering and technology and her calculations were essential to the success of NASA Project Mercury and the Apollo 11 NASA mission. Frank Greene is often credited as the "first Black technologist" for developing a high-speed semiconductor used in computer memory systems in the 1960s.

Valerie Thomas is also a pioneering Black woman in the field of technology and aerospace engineering. Thomas conducted large-scale experiments, developed computer data systems and spearheaded the development of the first satellite to send images from space. NASA still uses her technology called "Landsat." Septima Poinsette Clark was a teacher and civil rights activist who successfully fought to get public schools in Charleston, South Carolina to hire Black teachers. She was also part of the 1945 case that sought and earned equal pay for Black and white teachers.

Kelly Miller was another important person in education advancement. Miller was the first Black man to attend John Hopkins University and in 1865 he became the first person to teach sociology at Howard University. He continued his teaching career at Howard University until he died at his home on the school's campus in 1939.

Hiram Rhodes Revels made history in 1870 when he was elected to the United States Senate and became the first Black person to enter either chamber of Congress. Likewise, also in 1870 Joseph Hayne Rainey was the first Black person elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

Also in political history, in 1972 Shirley Chisholm became the first woman and the first Black person to run for President of the United States through a major party. Making history was not a new thing for Chisholm. She was a large figure in Black politics and in 1968 she was the first Black woman elected to Congress. Carol Moseley Braun was the first Black woman elected to the U.S. Senate and in 1993 she unknowingly helped challenge an unwritten congressional dress code for women that kept women from wearing trousers on the Senate floor. Later that same year, an official dress code was codified and allowed women to wear trousers or matching pantsuits, as well as dresses and skirts that fit the description of "business attire."

When discussing political figures that made history, one cannot overlook our first Black president, Barack Obama. Obama made history in 2008 when he won the vote for president as a Democratic candidate. He made history again in 2012 when he was re-elected to the position.

Reflecting on these and many other historical figures and reading and watching celebrations and specials has been educational, celebratory and sometimes just downright fun. It has also been a salient reminder of what many are going through in regards to their jobs and careers right now.

In light of our country's complicated and complex history and current climate, Toni Morrison's reminder that "You are not the work you do; you are the person you are" is worth remembering for those who are having to find new work, as well as those who may wrongly believe their own work will never be in doubt. Many people are finding out daily that their labor, their work, their




livihoods are not secure. Friends, neighbors, family and community members are being affected by hiring freezes, federal government layoffs and turmoil, as well as assumptions about the right to work.

James Baldwin said that "a country is only as good... only as strong as the people who make it up and the country turns into what the people want it to become... I don't believe any longer that we can afford to say that it is entirely out of our hands. We made the world we're living in and we have to make it over."

This month is nearly over, but this year has just begun. May we continue to celebrate the important things, and even the silly things. May we judge ourselves and others less on job titles and careers and more on who we are as people. May we hold on to what matters and to those around us as we journey through this year, this season and this chapter of history.

Tabitha Bozeman teaches English at Gadsden State Community College, is the editor-in-chief of the Cardinal Arts Journal and is a published writer and poet. She is also the founder of Riverside Writers, a local workshopping group for writers. The opinions expressed are her own and do not represent any organization she is a part of. She may be reached at tabithabozeaman@gmail.com.




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DEVOTIONALS

We stand on the brink of a monumental moment



1 Chronicles 12:32 says, "And from the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, to know what Israel ought to do, the heads of them were two hundred. And all their brothers were at their command."

Matthew 24: 12-14 says, "Because lawlessness will multiply, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. This Good News of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come."

You might be wondering how these verses apply to our lives today. I recently came across an intriguing article from *Worthy News* that captured my attention and parked a deeper reflection and prayer in my heart about the times we find ourselves in. The piece highlights the ascent of Artificial Intelligence and its groundbreaking potential to translate the Bible into untouched languages at an unprecedented speed. This development is nothing short of revolutionary, positioning us on the cusp of an extraordinary moment in history. It stands as a good reminder that God can utilize any means to advance His Kingdom!

The article's pull quote reads, "AI boosts Bible translation: fewer than 900 languages left, completion expected by 2025."

The president of Wycliffe recently shared a remarkable vision. The company's goal is to translate the Bible into every language on earth by the year 2025. Incredible, isn't it? With just under 900 translations remaining, we stand on the brink of a monumental moment, an opportunity for the Gospel to reach every corner of the globe! This is not just news; it is a fulfillment of prophecy unfolding right before our eyes. The Scriptures proclaim that when this Gospel of the Kingdom is preached to all nations as a testimony, the end will come.

The rapidity with which biblical events are now occurring is nothing short of astonishing. We find ourselves in a pivotal moment, one that calls for action rather than complacency. It is an urgent rallying cry for each of us to move forward!

At the same time, however, I believe we are to be wise and aware of what moving forward may look like, and for each person, it will look a bit different. Will it always be easy? Will it require sacrifice? Will it cause us to "stand apart" from the rest of the world? All these questions are important to ponder and to pray through. Yet at the same time, I am eager to be part of this extraordinary movement. How about you?

I truly believe we're on the cusp of witnessing a wave of souls entering the Kingdom that will surpass all previous generations combined. The potential for change

is immense!

My prayer is that I would be sensitive to the Lord's voice so that I can be like the sons of Issachar, who understood the times and knew exactly what to do. We have marching orders from the Lord, which is to spread this gospel to the far corners of the earth and make disciples, teaching them to observe all that He taught us.

One does not have to be Billy Graham and speak to thousands in order to do what the Lord has commanded us to do. This is done one day at a time, and in many cases, one person at a time. Each day we are to be mindful of the opportunities God gives us to speak of Him and share the Gospel with others. We are essential instruments in the Lord's hand, proclaiming the good news, that Yeshua (Jesus) came, sacrificed His life for our redemption and will soon return to establish His Kingdom! Every day, it is incredible to witness the unfolding of the words of our Messiah! The signs and fulfillments are becoming more apparent, and it's an exciting time to be on this journey. Will you join in?

Lord, today we pray that You would open our eyes, ears and hearts to Your voice. May we not be fearful of the assignment You are giving each of us. May we not miss the opportunities You give us each day to share Your Gospel with others. Give us strength and boldness to share You with others. Thank You for what You are doing and allowing us to live in these days!

If you would like continued prayer, feel free to email me at tonif77@gmail.com. I would love to pray for you!

Bible Verse of the Week



“Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.

- Isaiah 43:18-20
King James Version



Verse for Kids

“Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name Jah, and rejoice before him. A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.

- Psalm 68:4-5
King James Version

Working toward a single-minded heart

Matthew 5:8 says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." This verse has haunted me for much of my life. I naturally took this teaching to mean "pure" and is the opposite of "impure thoughts." Lust, ever since I was introduced to pornography in middle school, has been a consistent battle. I've taught my children, along with others, that there are only a few things that have the power to become a god to us.

Greed, power and lust have the capacity to consume our minds and hearts. They possess the power to form, or deform, us into an image opposite of Jesus Christ. And if the goal of Christianity is for us to "be not conformed to this world" (Romans 12:2) but "be conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29), there is a very real ongoing battle for our soul.

For me, there was always a desperate struggle and a constant drum beat in my mind of a verse I memorized long ago: "How can a young man keep his way pure? By taking heed according to Your word.... Your word I have hidden in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:9-11).

So, does the goal of a "pure heart" simply mean a heart devoid of "the (lust) of the flesh, the lust of the eyes (greed), and the pride of life (power)" as stated in 1 John 2:16, or is it something else?

Rich Mullins, who is one of my favorite Christian music artists, had a heart extremely keen towards how to apply Scripture. He was sensitive to his own shortfalls and hypocrisy. In his many songs, you can hear the meditations of a heart that had spent decades wrestling with God and with sin.

Rich's insight is demonstrated in a song

entitled "My One Thing," in which he draws the conclusion that "pure in heart" equals "single of heart," meaning that you have "one thing" in your heart. In a declaration to Jesus and with an understanding of what makes a Saint, the song's chorus says, "You're my one thing, you're my one thing, and the pure in heart shall see God."

Is Rich correct? Absolutely. In James 1:2-8, the Apostle James warns of being a "double-minded man." He teaches that this double mindedness produces an unstable life, unstable in how one lives and unstable in how one prays, in effect a crumbling and incoherent Christian Walk. James teaches this in opposition to a person that is "perfect and complete" (verse 4).

Yes, the call of God on our life is to be perfect. Really? Yes. Jesus commands us to be Saints in Matthew 5:48: "Therefore you shall be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." James is simply echoing the command of Christ in teaching us that development toward Sainthood is designed by God as the goal of salvation. As stated above, we are to be "conformed into the image of His Son."

As we well know, this is extremely daunting to our very core, that if left to ourselves, this goal has zero chance of being achieved. But we are not left to ourselves, are we? Through the Sacraments of Jesus' Church and through the guidance of Scripture explained by the Holy Spirit through His Church, we can have every hope in Him that "He Who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

How can we do this? With full acknowledgement of the absolute necessity



of grace in our lives, we are to show up to this assignment by faith. We are to bring our lives into submission to Christ as best we can and confess when we cannot. We work towards this goal by demanding from ourselves that we have only one God on the throne of our heart, one master, one thing. We must work toward a "single-minded" heart - a resounding "yes" to God and a resounding "no" to sin. Lord willing, the purity of our hearts is that we choose Jesus Christ above all else and above all others, for "the pure in heart shall see God."

Brian Cook is a Cropwell native and a graduate of Pell City High School and Gadsden State Community College and studied music and history at Jacksonville State. He and his wife Hope have five children. A self-described "on-again, off-again bi-vocational part-time" Protestant minister for almost 20 years, Brian converted to Catholicism in April 2021. They attend Saint James Catholic Church in Gadsden. With no formal training (Acts 4:13), Brian is active in the Catechetical training of children and adults. His book "The Devotion to Christ" can be found on Amazon. He is available for speaking and teaching engagements in any parish, church, or group setting. He may be contacted at thedtc@protonmail.com or thedevoitiontochrist@gmail.com.

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SPORTS

Roundups & Rundowns

Boys golf

Westbrook Christian opened the season on Thursday, Feb. 13 with a 131 to 189 victory over Gadsden City at Twin Bridges in Gadsden.

J.D. Berndt paced the Warriors with a low medal score of 3 32. Cove McHugh followed with a +1 36 score, while Max Carr posted a 41 score and Braxton Wolfe carded a 42 score.

Girls golf

Low medalist Hadley Hilgers finished with 41 score to lead Westbrook Christian to a 131 to 143 win over Gadsden City on Thursday, Feb. 13 at Twin Bridges. McKinley Yancy and Crimson Mitchell both carded a 45 for the three counting scores for the Lady Warriors, while Addison Vann shot 52.

Mens basketball

Four players scored in double figures in Gadsden State's 72-68 loss Lawson State in Alabama Community College Conference action on Saturday, Feb. 15 in Birmingham. Tyla Tatum paced the Lady Cardinals (10-14, 2-9) with 18 points, followed by Kyla Torok with 16 and Jaxon Sizemore and Kamariah Gaines with 14 each.

Womens basketball

Gadsden State improved to 6-5 in Alabama Community College Conference play and 19-8 overall after defeating Lawson State, 75-71, on Saturday, Feb. 15 in Birmingham. Demarreon Baldwin paced the Cardinals with 21 points, while Keyshawn Morris delivered 14 points and eight rebounds. Mekhi Fitts delivered a double-double of 10 points and 10 rebounds, while Shannon Jones contributed 10 points, eight rebounds and seven assists. Keishawn Morris chipped in eight points and seven rebounds.

College softball

Gadsden State split a doubleheader with Cleveland State on Saturday, Feb. 15 at Jacksonville State. The Lady Cardinals (6-8) dropped the first game by a score of 6-3 and posted an 11-10 victory in the game 2.

In the opener for Gadsden State, Ally Croy had two hits, Chloe Gattis had a hit and an RBI, and Madison Allen had a hit and a run scored.

In the nightcap, Tenny Johnson went 2-for-3 with two RBI and two run scored; Barit Snead had a three-run double; Ally Croy had a two-run double and a run scored; Abby Payne had a two-run single and a run scored; Lanie Williams had a hit, an RBI and a run scored; Lauren Farmer and Hartlie Rice each had a hit and an RBI; and Madison Allen had a hit and a run scored.

College baseball

Gadsden State improved to 5-2 with a 12-5 victory over Wallace State-Selma and a 12-1 win over Calhoun on Saturday, Feb. 15 at Hoover.

Against Wallace for the Cardinals, Daniel Munoz went 2-for-3 with a double and five RBI; Jayden Roberts went 2-for-3 with three RBI; Cooper Jarvis went 2-for-5 with an RBI; Andrew Hardy went 2-for-4 with an RBI; Jackson Morgan had a hit and an RBI; and Aaron Wallace and Blake Hall each had a hit and an RBI. In three innings, winning pitcher Zac Miller allowed three hits, one earned run and one walk.

Jackets jam up Piedmont to win regional title

By Chris McCarthy
Publisher

Glencoe boys basketball head coach Ryan Chambless did not hesitate when asked for the primary reason why the team will make its first Final Four appearance since 2005. "We did a very good job of controlling the ball and playing with the lead."

Facing Piedmont in the Northeast Regional Tournament Class 3A championship game on Tuesday, Feb. 18 at Jacksonville State, the Yellow Jackets led for all but 1:36 of game time en route to a 77-63 victory and a berth in next week's state tournament. Glencoe (25-7) will face Mars Hill Bible in the state semifinals on Tuesday, Feb. 25 at the Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Complex. The Class 3A state final is set for Friday, Feb. 28 at 2:15 p.m.

Tuesday marked the fourth time the Area 12 rival have met this season. Piedmont won the first two games by a margin of six points before Glencoe beat the Bulldogs by seven points in the area tournament finals.

"I'm extremely proud of how hard we played and how hard we competed," said Chambless. "I can't say enough about the effort they put forth. Piedmont's a good team, and we knew they were going to keep battling and weren't going to go away. But there's no substitute for experience, and our guys have a lot of games under their belts. I think across all sports, the teams that have been there and done that have a better chance at being successful."

Leading by four points at halftime, the Yellow Jackets pushed the Bulldogs back on their heels with a barrage of three-pointers during the third quarter - two by Garrett Morgan and one apiece from Jalen Hunter and Jayden Patton. Morgan's runner with three seconds left pushed the GHS advantage to 52-25.

"We've handled the ball pretty well all year," said Chambless. "So I trust our guys when we're ahead to make the right decisions and take the good shots or the let other team foul."

Glencoe continued to press the issue early in the fourth period. Patton's steal and resulting layup 12 seconds in, followed by Wade Segrest's trey 32 seconds later, made it a 21-point cushion.

The Yellow Jackets did not score from the field over the next few minutes, however, and the Bulldogs gradually chipped away until three straight three-pointers from Ish Bethel narrowed the gap to single digits at 68-62 with two minutes on the game clock.

Glencoe - page 2B



Photo courtesy of Alex Chaney

Glencoe's Garrett Morgan (2) prepares to shoot as Piedmont's Ish Bethel (4) defends during the Yellow Jackets' 77-63 victory in the Northeast Regional Tournament Class 3A championship game on Tuesday, Feb. 18 at Jacksonville State.



Chris McCarthy/Messenger

Gadsden City's Devin Barksdale (4) leans into a jump shot as Huffman's Timothy Austin (12) and Antonio Hill (10) look on during the Titans' 60-46 victory in the Northeast Regional Tournament basketball semifinals on Monday, Feb. 17 at Jacksonville State.

Titans touch up Huffman in 6A region semifinals

By Chris McCarthy
Publisher

Whatever else is in store for Gadsden City this postseason, the Titans proved on Monday, Feb. 17 that they are among the cream of the crop in Class 6A basketball.

Facing a Huffman squad that was ranked for most of the regular season as the No. 1 team in the state and beat GCHS by 15 points during a holiday tournament, Gadsden City (21-11) took the Viking best shot and delivered a knockout blow on the way to a 60-46 victory in the Northeast Regional Tournament semifinals at Jacksonville State.

The Titans will play for their region championship since 2016 against Oxford on Thursday, Feb. 20.

"We were prepared for this atmosphere, and I thought we played extremely well," said GCHS head coach Raphael Graves. "We knew it was going to be a packed house, and I thought our kids kept their poise under the circumstances. We got to play Huffman twice earlier in the season, which paid dividends because we got to see what tendencies they had and how we could possibly exploit them."

"6A is the deepest classification in all of AHSAA basketball, and you have to be mentally prepared to play in that environment."

The score was tied seven times and the lead changed hands five times before Gadsden City began to pull away in the early stages of the fourth quarter. After Peyton Wiggins' basket pulled the Vikings within 44-42 with 4:34 remaining, the Titans put together a 14 to 4 run that was capped by Jakobi Sharp's jump shot with less than two minutes to play. The key part of that stretch was when Devin Barksdale was fouled while attempting a three-point basket. The senior point guard sank all three foul shots to provide the Titans with their first double digit lead of the game at 52-42.

Gadsden City - page 2B



Chris McCarthy/Messenger

Gadsden City's Naomi Wise protects the ball from a Mountain Brook defender during the Lady Titans' 43-30 loss in the Class 6A Northeast Regional Tournament basketball semifinals on Feb. 17. See page 2B.



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Local Sports Schedule

Feb. 21 - Feb. 27

High School Basketball
Tuesday, Feb. 25
 Class 3A boys state semifinals at BJCC
 Glencoe vs. Mars Hill Bible
Wednesday, Feb. 26
 Class 6A boys state semifinals at BJCC

Baseball
Friday, Feb. 21
 Guntersville at Sardis
 Cedar Bluff at West End
 Gadsden City at Lincoln
 Etowah at Madison Central
Saturday, Feb. 22
 Glencoe, Alexandria at GCHS
 Coosa Christian at Southside
 Sardis, Fairview at Oneonta
 Etowah Starkville at Pell City
 Ashville/Fayetteville at Lincoln
 Hokes Bluff, Oxford at Piedmont
 Westbrook at Shelby County
Monday, Feb. 24
 Southside, Glencoe, Gaston at Sardis
Tuesday, Feb. 25
 West End, Hokes Bluff at Sardis
 Moody at Gadsden City
 Collinsville at Etowah
 Douglas at Westbrook
 Hanceville at Ashville
Thursday, Feb. 27
 Springville at Gadsden City
 Briarwood Christian at Etowah

Softball
Friday, Feb. 21
 Coosa Christian at Gaylesville

Monday, Feb. 24
 Victory Christian at Ashville
 Hokes Bluff at Sand Rock
Tuesday, Feb. 25
 Glencoe at Gadsden City
 Springville at Southside
 Cherokee County at Etowah
 FCA, VCA at Gaston
 Sand Rock at West End
 Coosa Christian at Clay-Chalkville
Thursday, Feb. 27
 Southside at Etowah
 Oneonta at Sardis
 Alexandria at Coosa Christian
 West End at Appalachian

Tennis
Friday, Feb. 21
 Westbrook at Etowah
Monday, Feb. 24
 Cherokee County at Westbrook
 Southside at Mortimer Jordan
Tuesday, Feb. 25
 Boaz at Sardis
 Victory Christian at Westbrook
Thursday, Feb. 27
 Oneonta at Sardis
 Gadsden City at Albertville
 Glencoe at Sand Tock

Golf
Friday, Feb. 21
 Southside at Madison County
Tuesday, Feb. 25
 Boaz vs. Etowah at Twin Bridges
Thursday, Feb. 27
 GCHS vs. Etowah at Twin Bridges
Soccer
Friday, Feb. 21

Southside at Grissom
Monday, Feb. 24
 Arab at Etowah
 Westbrook at Collinsville
Tuesday, Feb. 25
 Coosa Christian at Westbrook
 John Carroll Catholic at Southside
 White Plains at Etowah
 Geraldine at Glencoe
 Gadsden City at Grissom
Thursday, Feb. 27
 Oxford at Gadsden City
 Etowah at St. Clair County

College Basketball
Monday, Feb. 24
 Bishop State at Gadsden State
Thursday, Feb. 27
 Gadsden State at Southern Union
Baseball
Friday, Feb. 21
 John Wood at Gadsden State (DH)
Saturday, Feb. 22
 John Wood at Gadsden State (DH)
Softball
Saturday, Feb. 22
 Gadsden State at JUCO Clasic
Tuesday, Feb. 25
 Chattahoochee Valley at Gadsden State (DH)
Wednesday, Feb. 26
 Gadsden State at Motlow State
Tennis
Friday, Feb. 21
 Gadsden State at Coastal South
Saturday, Feb. 22
 Gadsden State at Shorter

Gadsden City beats Huffman at regionals

- from 1B

“When Devin made those free throws right there, it gave us some separation and made Huffman play more desperate,” said Graves.

Huffman managed only one field goal the rest of the game. Sharpe iced the win by going 4-for-4 at the free throw line over the final 90 seconds. GCHS shot 82 percent at the foul line in the second half.

Barksdale paced the Titans with 18 points, followed by Sharp with 17 and Franklin with 13.

Sharp pulled down 10 rebounds, followed by Keshawn Curry with six and Barksdale with five. Sharp and Barksdale both had two blocks.

Wiggins led Huffman with 14 points, while Kevon Walker added 13.

The teams traded baskets for the better part of the first half, with neither squad leading by more than five points. Gadsden City led 12-11 after one quarter. The Titans went ahead 18-13 at one point during the second period before a foul shot by Antonio Hill closed the gap to one point. Kai Franklin’s basket with five second remaining provided GCHS with a 24-21 advantage at the half.

Franklin netted seven points during the third quarter to help extend Gadsden City’s lead to eight, but the Vikings finished off the period with a 9 to 4 stretch that narrowed the gap to 38-37 heading into the fourth quarter.

“We started back in February and March on putting a plan in of getting back here,” said Graves. “Our kids brought into it, and here we are. When you get to this point, you’re able to see how the other players and coaches react under this kind of pressure.”

Gadsden City and Oxford did not play each other in the regular season.

“With Oxford, we know all of them and they know all of us, so it will be a fun matchup to see who gets to go to Birmingham,” said Graves.

Lady Titans can’t climb out of early hole against Mtn. Brook

By Chris McCarthy
Publisher

The Gadsden City High girls basketball team made a game of it in the second half against Mountain Brook in the Class 6A Northeast Regional Tournament semifinals, but the 20-point hole the Lady Titans dug for themselves in the first 16 minutes proved too much to overcome in a 43-30 loss on Monday, Feb. 17 at Jacksonville State.

Trailing 26-6 at intermission, GCHS (16-16) opened the third quarter with a 6-0 run that led to a Mountain Brook timeout. The Lady Titans wound up outscoring the Lady Spartans 11 to 8 during the third quarter, putting themselves within striking distance at 34-17 at the start of the fourth period.

Four points from Destiny Whiteside, three from Madison Tinker and two from Naomi Wise trimmed the deficit to 12 points with just under three minutes to play, and Whiteside’s steal and resulting layup drew GCHS within 40-30 with 51 seconds to go.

“We stayed in out halfcourt man-to-man [defense] and got some turnovers,” said GCHS head coach Jay Tinker. “But as time went on, we had to turn the pressure a little bit.”

But the Lady Titans were up against the game clock at that point, and Maddie Walter salted away the victory for Mountain Brook (24-6) with three points over the final 30 seconds.

Whiteside finished with 10 points and three assists, while Tinker added eight points. Wise ended up with seven points and eight rebounds, while Karleigh Sheffield chipped in four points and five boards.

It took Gadsden City some time to get settled out of the gate. The Lady Titans came up empty on their first five possessions of

the first quarter before Wise knocked down a three-point basket to draw GCHS within 4-3.

Consecutive treys from Geisliser made it 10-3, however, and Mountain Brook took a 12-4 lead into the second frame.

Matters didn’t improve for Gadsden City during the next several minutes, as the Lady Titans failed score from the field the remainder of the first half. Their second period points came from respective free throws by Madison Tinker and Sheffield.

“We knew we might start off a little slow, but I didn’t think it would be that slow,” said Jay Tinker. “We knew that we were probably going to have a hard time, being that we haven’t been down here to Jacksonville in a few years. But we made a few adjustments at halftime and came out and played really strong in the second half.”

Geisliser paced Mountain Brook with 20 points, followed by Walter with 17. The Lady Spartans finished with a 29 to 23 advantage in rebounds and a 26-16 edge in points in the paint.

“We may have spotted [Mountain Brook] 20 points, but our girls never gave up and they played hard all the way through,” said Jay Tinker. “I’ve been coaching most of these girls since they were in the first or second grade, so they’re all like my daughters.”

Jay Tinker was not surprised that his 2024-25 team won the area tournament and made the regional tournament with seven underclassmen on the roster.

“From Day 1, this was our intention from the beginning. That’s why we lined up such an intense schedule, so that we would be ready for moments like this. Coming in last year, not making regionals was a disappointment, and I expected this year’s group to have a chance to get out of Jacksonville.



Chris McCarthy/Messenger

Gadsden City’s Destiny Whiteside (4) attempts a shot as Mountain Brook’s Avery Davis (3) and Ellie Halpern (24) defend during the Lady Titans’ 43-30 loss in the Class 6A Northeast Regional Tournament girls basketball semifinals on Monday, Feb. 17 at Jacksonville State.

We’re looking to put together a small little dynasty, so the bar isn’t going to be [getting to Jacksonville]; we want the bar to be

set at getting to (the state tournament at) Birmingham. We want to play for the blue medal.”

Glencoe defeats Piedmont in Class 3A regional finals

- from 1B

“I knew we couldn’t [stall] that early,” said Chambless. “I just want to make sure that we were getting layups or getting to the [free throw] line.”

But Piedmont (19-9) had to start fouling in order to regain possession, and their fate was sealed when Morgan and Hunter combined to go 5-for-6 at the free throw line down the stretch.

Glencoe wound up shooting 71 percent 12-for-17) from the foul line in the fourth quarter and 68 percent (14-for-21) overall.

Morgan paced the Yellow Jackets with 20 points, followed by Segrest and Smith with 16 each, Patton with 11, Jalen Hunter with eight and Bryce Borntreger with six.

Smith grabbed six rebounds, followed by Morgan and Borntreger with five each and Patton with four.

Bethel scored 28 points for Piedmont, with Rollie Pinto adding 14 and Colton Proctor chipping in 12.

Smith fired up the Yellow Jackets’ engine by scoring their first nine points of the game. Borntreger netted the next two baskets, while Segrest’s three-pointer at 1:57 gave Glencoe the lead for good. Patton’s buzzer-beating trey provided the Jackets with a 21-13 advantage.

“Bryce got us off to a really good start, and Grant played his tail off from start to finish,” said Chambless. “Jalen Hunter came in and did a good job of guarding Ish, who probably was their best player today.”

Glencoe gained its first double-digit lead of the game 30 seconds into the second quarter when Smith’s three-point basket staked the Yellow Jackets to a 24-13 lead. Segrest scored six more points during the period, but Piedmont drew within 34-30 at intermission.

“To our boys’ credit, they’ve been nothing but a joy to work with every day,” said Chambless. “I can’t think of another group that I’ve coached that is more deserving of this honor. They’ve made the most of this opportunity, and that’s what I’m most proud of. It’s not an easy job to win games, especially [this] late [in the season] when there are so many good teams. To continue to keep playing is a blessing.”

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Eagles grounded by Madison Academy in regional semifinals

By Chris McCarthy
Publisher

The Hokes Bluff offense cooled down at an inopportune time on Feb. 13 at Jacksonville State.

After averaging 65.5 points per game this postseason coming into the Class 4A Northeast Regional Tournament semifinals, the Eagle sharpshooters misfired on one too many occasions on the way to a 36-33 loss to Madison Academy at Pete Mathews Coliseum.

Hokes Bluff (24-8) shot 30 percent from the field, including 21 percent in the fourth quarter. The Eagles connected on only 25 percent of its three-point baskets attempts, going 1-for-7 from the perimeter in the second half.

Still and all, Hokes Bluff was very much in the game at the end of the third quarter while leading the Mustangs 31-30. The Eagles came up empty on their first four possessions of the fourth period until Drew McCarver converted a layup with 6:11 remaining.

Unfortunately for Hokes Bluff, that basket was its last of the game. The Eagles went a combined 0-for-8 from the field and foul line down the stretch, while six points from Madison Academy secured the Mustangs a berth in the championship game against Plainview.

"I thought we made throughout the process of the game, we just didn't make enough of them," said Hokes Bluff head

coach Ryan Smith. "Hats off to Madison Academy - they made plays and won the game. We just came up a little bit short. But at the end of the day, I'm proud of these young men."

McCarver and Anderson Morgan each scored eight points, while Bryce Whitaker and Logan Carr each scored seven. McCarver grabbed eight rebounds, followed by Whitaker with five and Noah Johnson with four. Johnson also had three steals.

Tony Wilson paced the Mustangs with 10 points, followed by J.R. Howard and Bryce Curtis with seven each.

The teams traded baskets and free throws for much of the first quarter. The Eagles led five points at one point before a three-point basket by Tahj Phillips and a jump shot from Wilson tied the game at 12-12 after the first eight minutes.

Respective three-point baskets from Carr and Morgan during the second frame helped Hokes Bluff go into halftime ahead 21-18.

The Eagles were able to maintain their slim advantage through the third quarter and half of the fourth before Madison Academy gained the upper hand for good.

"We've had some hard practices and had had some tough games and we've beaten a lot of good teams," said Smith. "[Our] guys fought their guys out, day in and day out. Nobody likes to end their season in this situation, but there's a lot of positives. These guys have done a lot of Hokes Bluff basketball."



Photo courtesy of Alex Chaney

Hokes Bluff's Bryce Whitaker drives to the basket as Madison Academy's Bryce Curtis (12) and Shane Duke (30) defends during the Eagles' 36-33 loss in the Class 4A Northeast Regional Tournament semifinals on Feb. 13 at JSU.



Courtesy of Average Joe's Sports Talk

The Class 3A All-Northeast Regional Tournament team gathers for a photo following Glencoe's 77-63 victory over Piedmont in the regional championship game on Tuesday, Feb. 18 at Jacksonville State. Pictured, from left: Grant Smith (MVP), Glencoe; Ish Bethel, Piedmont; Wade Segrest, Glencoe; Rollee Pinto, Piedmont, Isaac Slaton, Fyffe; Garrett Morgan, Glencoe.



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