

**ZONKERS'**  
Weaver's first victory since 2018 touched off championship-like celebration. 1B

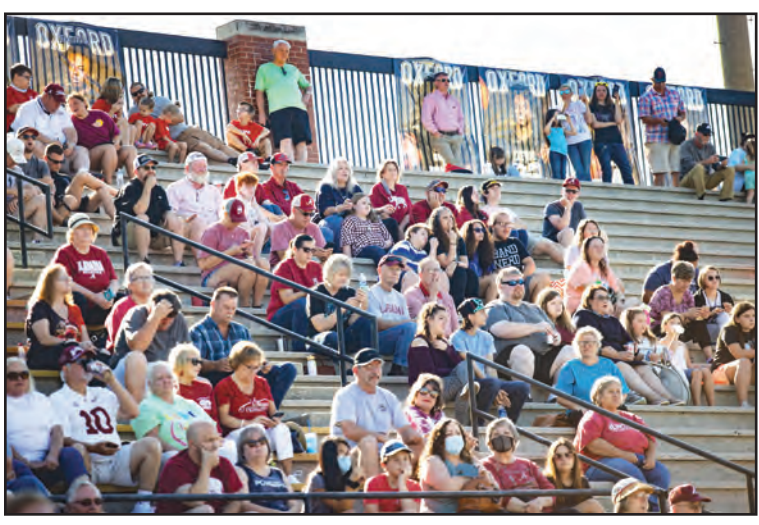
**ONE LAST CHANCE FOR SUMMERTIME GRILLING. 5B**

# The Anniston Star

Wednesday, September 8, 2021 A home-owned newspaper 75 cents

ON THE SCENE: ALABAMA'S 'MILLION DOLLAR BAND' PRACTICES IN OXFORD

## EARLY-MORNING PERFORMANCE



Photos by Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

The University of Alabama's Million Dollar Band stopped at Oxford High School's Lamar Field Saturday for a quick practice of its halftime show before hitting the road to Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta for the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game between the Crimson Tide and the Miami Hurricanes. For more photos from Saturday's rehearsal, SEE PAGE 4A.

### The stars of the 2020 team are gone, but Alabama still rolls and rolls

**ATLANTA** — This won't last forever, of course.

Alabama won't keep winning all the time. Still, this Crimson Tide football machine isn't slowing down anytime soon.

We see signs all the time saying, "We want Bama!" We've seen videos of whole stadiums chanting "We Want Bama!" I'm sure Miami wanted Bama.

Then they actually got Bama. Alabama whipped the Hurricanes 44-13 on

Saturday. Like that Sugar Bowl between these two schools 29 years ago, the score looks closer than the game really was. (Alabama won that one 34-13 to clinch the Tide's last non-Nick Saban national championship.)

Sports dynasties always end sooner than you think they will ... except the juggernaut Saban has built.

It just keeps going on and on and on and on. And it keeps getting stronger, too.

Last year, Alabama put together maybe the best season in modern college football history. At least, the analytics put together by College Football Reference and USA Today's

**INSIDE SPORTS**  
Why To'o To'o, Williams transferred to Alabama. 4B

**ONLINE SLIDESHOW**  
See more photos from the Million Dollar Band's Saturday practice in Oxford at [AnnistonStar.com](http://AnnistonStar.com)

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## JACKSONVILLE JSU to host 9/11 panel

This month marks the 20th anniversary of the attacks

BY JOHN D. HOMAN  
Special to The Anniston Star

Calling it a "significant" day, one that "resonated throughout their campus," Dr. Lori Owens, professor of political science at Jacksonville State University, has been busy this summer planning a 20th anniversary 9/11 remembrance.

The special ceremony is set to run from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Thursday at Stone Center theatre on Jacksonville State's campus.

The remembrance is sponsored by the JSU American Democracy Project and is open to the campus and community. A panel of speakers will include JSU employees and community residents affected by the events of 9/11. This event will be livestreamed on YouTube for those who cannot attend.

"I felt like this was a nice thing for us to do for those who died and for those families who endured the loss of a loved one," Owens said. It is also a tribute to those families, she said, whose sons and daughters were deployed to Afghanistan, Kuwait, Iraq and Pakistan in the aftermath of 9/11.

Owens said the American Democracy Project was formed in 2009.

"The idea was to get more students civically engaged and aware of 9/11... teach them how the attack impacted our country. We also hosted

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OWENS

## COVER STORY Weaver graduate hopes for miracle

**BY SHERRY KUGHN**  
skughn@annistonstar.com

Brandon Mathis's first job after graduation last year from Weaver High School was frying chicken at Jack's in Coldwater. He enjoyed the job and poured the same amount of love into the task that one of his favorite characters, SpongeBob SquarePants, pours into the making of the cartoon show's "krabby patties."

"I started cooking as a kid," Brandon said while sitting at a picnic table at Anniston's Hamilton Park on a

cool, breezy morning, "I have always loved being in a kitchen."

One day in March, Brandon was at work after a few days of medical tests for a bout of unusual symptoms. Suddenly, the employees told him his grandmother, Pat O'Leary, was there to pick him up.

"At first, I didn't know what was going on when they said she was asking for me," he said. "I went to a different counter, and she was there saying we had to drop by Advanced Imaging in Anniston, pick up some X-rays and drive to a hospital in Birmingham.

The news was very emotional."

Once they arrived at the hospital, a neurosurgeon spent that day and the next conducting tests, and then he performed a craniotomy to remove a large mass. The pathologists could not identify it and sent Brandon home a few days later until the surgeon could learn more about what to do.

Then came the news. Brandon was diagnosed with a cancer called anaplastic meningioma, grade three. The grade is so rare that only one to three percent of patients who have menin-



Sherry Kughn/The Anniston Star  
Brandon Mathis's faith has grown during his treatments for brain cancer.

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- W.E. "Duck" Connell Jr., Anniston
- Earl Daniel, Jacksonville
- James Evans, Anniston
- Larry Hicks, Oxford
- Carey Lane Hutton, Ohatchee
- Ossie Jackson, Jr., Heflin
- Deborah Jane McClintock, Oxford
- Julius R. Parker, Lineville
- Charlotte Faye Thompson, Anniston

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C.E. Hanna Elementary