

Ronnie Royal, Jett Smith steam ahead, Anniston's bad timing, and Saks' surge. 1C.

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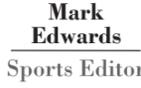
COVER STORY

COMMENTARY

What it means with Saban off of the sideline

Anyone remember the last time Alabama played a football game without Nick Saban on the sideline?

It happened Dec. 28, 2006, when defensive coordinator and interim head coach Joe Kines led the Crimson Tide in a 34-31 loss to Oklahoma State in the Independence Bowl. Alabama had fired Mike Shula about four weeks earlier.



Mark Edwards

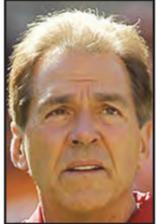
Sports Editor

Kines' one game in charge of Alabama football was probably more memorable for his halftime interview with the TV network, rather than the result of the game. Asking what he would tell his team, the Piedmont native won over folks with his unpolished, excited response: "We gotta stop that little inside trap!"

Asked about what he would do in the second half, Kines yelled, "Aww, we just gonna go play. We just gotta keep playin'."

Six days after Kines' one game in charge, then-Alabama athletics director Mal Moore brought Saban from Miami, where he had been coaching the NFL's Dolphins.

Now, in his 14th season on the job, Saban is set to miss Saturday's nationally televised showdown between No. 2-ranked Alabama and No. 3 Georgia. Saban was told Wednesday he had tested positive for COVID-19, although he told reporters later in the day



SABAN

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Stephen Gross/The Anniston Star

RMC health care workers lined 10th Street to greet a caravan of Alabama Power Co. employees that drove past to offer thanks and support for all that RMC is doing to help the community.

'Like the floodgate opened'

Local COVID hospitalizations spike over weekend; could be sign of predicted fall second surge

BY TIM LOCKETTE

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Regional Medical Center saw an unexpected increase in hospitalizations for COVID-19 over the weekend, forcing the hospital to reopen its second coronavirus unit.

"It's like the floodgate opened," said Dr. Raul Magadia, who runs the coronavirus ward at RMC.

Health officials say it is a sign of how fast the situation can change as the pandemic spreads. And they can't rule out the arrival of a long-predicted second wave of the virus as the weather cools.

On paper, Calhoun County and the rest of Alabama look like they are marching slowly toward victory over the virus. While 3,922 people in the county have had the virus since March, the number of new infections discovered daily has declined through most of October.

Magadia and his RMC colleagues were seeing success, too. On Oct. 5, they closed down one of two COVID-19 units they were operating at the hospital. Magadia said the hospital at the time was taking in only two or three new COVID-19 patients per day. By the middle of last week, there were only 18

COVID patients at RMC. Last Friday, new patients started showing up in the emergency room, positive for COVID and needing a hospital bed.

"In the last week, we've basically gone from 18 to running in the upper 20s, and we hit 31 one day," said Louis Bass, CEO of RMC. The hospital sent three patients to other hospitals for care, and on Sunday reopened its second COVID wing.

Health officials don't know why hospitalizations are up when the number of

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OXFORD

Bridgewater expansion to add 35 jobs

BY TIM LOCKETTE

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It might not seem like a good year to be in the car business, but one local auto supplier is planning to expand its operations.

Bridgewater Interiors, an Oxford company that makes car seats and the systems associated with them, announced earlier this week that it plans a \$10 million expansion to its plant. That's expected to create 35 new jobs.

"The best compliment a company can give a community is when they decide to grow in the place they already know," said Don Hopper, director of the Calhoun County Economic Development Council, a nonprofit agency that recruits new businesses to the area.

Opened in 2003, Bridgewater employs around 350 people at an Oxford plant that

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COMMENTARY

The AHS Bulldog headed for Anniston's council

Thirty-one years ago, almost to the month, the best football team ever to wear Anniston High red



Phillip Tutor

won the state championship. Its victories were brutal, demoralizing, often unfair. The Bulldogs oozed speed and attitude, and the city loved them for it.

Demetric Roberts, the councilman-elect for Ward 2, started on that team. Jersey number: 54.

"I was probably the most important person on offense," he says. "I touched the ball on every play."

Roberts played center, a 155-pound beanpole known then as D.D., not Demetric. He even scored a touchdown against Gadsden. The following spring, he graduated with what he calls "the greatest class to ever come out of high school," the class of 1990.

"We had classmates. There were no white classmates, black classmates ... We had *classmates*. Our class was the

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Bill Wilson/The Anniston Star/File

Demetric Roberts celebrates winning the runoff election for Ward 2 on Anniston City Council on Oct. 6.

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