

Story ideas?

Contact
Eric Jackson
 or **Kayla Lokeinsky**
 754-0420
 754-0421
 ejackson@lakecityreporter.com
 klokeinsky@lakecityreporter.com

Thursday, December 22, 2016

www.lakecityreporter.com

Section B

LOCAL VOLLEYBALL



BRENT KUYKENDALL/Special to the Reporter

Columbia outside hitter Madison Plyn is shown playing against Suwannee earlier this season. The Lady Tigers fell in the district tournament's semifinal round.



FILE

Fort White outside hitter Kylee Crews skies to return a shot against Columbia earlier this season. Crews led the team in kills and serving percentage.

QUEENS OF THE COURT

Madison Plyn and Kylee Crews are the Lake City Reporter's Volleyball Players of the Year.

Plyn led the team in kills for a second straight year.

By **ERIC JACKSON**
 ejackson@lakecityreporter.com

The Lady Tigers have big shoes to fill next season. It won't be easy to replace any of the five graduating seniors – especially Madison Plyn.

Whenever the going got tough for Columbia, Plyn always seemed to be there for a timely point or quick pep talk. The deceptively powerful outside hitter was also an obvious threat to every opponent the Lady Tigers faced this season.

Plyn didn't disappoint in her final season. She led the Lady Tigers to eight wins and compiled 31 aces, 220 digs and a team-high 219 kills.

Plyn's leadership, demonstrated on and off the court, helped her earn the Lake City Reporter's Columbia Volleyball Player of the Year for a second straight season.

"I spent four years with some of the

girls," she said. "So in my last year I just wanted to be a leader and make it fun. I think I accomplished that really well."

Since Plyn stepped into a leadership role last season, she has been an anchor for the Lady Tigers to lean on – tallying nearly a hundred aces in two years.

A shining light even when Columbia's volleyball team fell on dark times.

"She was the center of our team," Columbia coach Heather Benson said.

"We're going to miss her as a captain and leader on the court. It's going to be hard filling her shoes. I told the girls that in our last game."

The Lady Tigers' season ended quicker than hoped as Columbia lost to

Forest in the semifinal round of the district tournament. But Plyn was consistent throughout, all the way down to the final set of her career.

All of Columbia's seniors will be missed, but nobody more than Plyn.

Crews finished year with superb serving percentage.

By **KAYLA LOKEINSKY**
 klokeinsky@lakecityreporter.c

Outside hitters play a pivotal role on any volleyball team. They need to be able to jump high, think quick and get the ball to hit the hardwood.

For Fort White, there was no one who stood out more at the net than senior Kylee Crews.

The outside hitter didn't just jump, she flew. Her serves were like lasers and her spikes were dead on. As the captain for the Lady Indians, she led her team with a positive attitude and instilled in them a desire to perform to the best of their abilities.

She is the Lake City Reporter's Fort White Volleyball Player of the Year.

"She's definitely a leader on the team," Fort White head coach Kali Hunter said. "She led the team in kills and had a great serving percentage as well."

The national average height for an outside hitter is 6 feet. At 5-foot-7, Crews may not have the height, but she has the vert. Crews could get well above the net, making her spikes even more deadly.

"It's really a blessing I can jump high because I can still get up and hit the ball pretty good," Crews said.

Crews has been playing volleyball since the sixth grade, and she was happy to spend her final season leading the tribe of Lady Indians through a 5-12 season.

Although they didn't record many wins this season, the team has improved tremendously since last year. Crews knew she had to keep a positive attitude no matter what the scoreboard said.

"I always kept my team up," Crews said. "I was especially hard on myself, and sometimes I would get down on myself if we were not playing well, but I had to remind myself that I'm the captain

CREWS continued on 2B

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Jimbo Fisher wants to stay at FSU 'a long time'

By **JOE REEDY**
 Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE — Jimbo Fisher lauded Florida State University President John Thrasher Tuesday for "seeing the big picture" the day after the school announced the coach's contract extension.

Fisher, 77-17 in seven seasons at Florida State, signed a two-year extension that will keep him at the school through the 2024 season. It is the second time in two years Fisher has had his contract redone by Thrasher.

"We've really built something really special and I want to continue it for a long time," Fisher said. "I think President Thrasher has been awesome with that and seeing the big picture with everything that goes on. He loves it and understands what we do.

We understand our importance to this university too and how we represent it and things that go on."

Since Fisher took over the program in 2010 after the retirement of Bobby Bowden, Florida State has redone its practice fields, built an indoor facility, overhauled the locker room and added a player's lounge.

A bigger renovation of Doak Campbell Stadium is a long-term priority but something that is more immediate is adding new athlete dorms along with an athletics academic center. Thrasher said he is hopeful that he can begin adding private funding for that early next year and is hopeful that more concrete plans can be finalized before the fall.

Even though he received plenty of questions from

FISHER continued on 2B

Saban: Playoffs to blame for bowl skipping

By **JOHN ZENOR**
 Associated Press

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — Alabama coach Nick Saban believes it's hard to blame players for skipping the bowl games when the playoffs have overshadowed most of them anyway.

Saban reiterated concerns Wednesday that he has voiced before that switching to the playoff format would diminish the importance of other bowl games, and he says that has happened. LSU tailback Leonard Fournette and Stanford tailback Christian McCaffery have announced they won't play in their teams' bowls to focus on preparing for the NFL draft.

"Everybody's interested in the playoff," Saban said after practice. "Nobody's interested in anything else. So now that that's trickled down to the players, how can you blame the players

for that? I can't blame the players for that.

"What every player has to decide, and what I would say to every player, is I think every player probably benefits from playing really, really well. When you play in big games and you play really, really well, I think it enhances your value as a player. That's what I think. Every player would have to make the decision on whether is that more important relative to protecting yourself. I think that's every player's choice and every player's decision."

Tide tight end O.J. Howard said of players skipping bowl games that he can see both sides and "you can't be mad at the kids, because you can see where they're coming from."

Howard believes it's unlikely a Tide player would make that call.

"Coach Saban, he would encourage us to do it but I really don't think a lot of guys on our team



FILE

Stanford's Christian McCaffery has opted to skip the Sun Bowl to focus on NFL Draft preparations.

would want to do it," said Howard, who returned for his senior season instead of entering the NFL draft. "We build such a bond off-season training hard with each other, no one would quit on anybody without anything bad happening.

Unless it's an injury that takes you away from the season, but no one would, I don't think, just quit on us."

Alabama plays Washington in the Peach Bowl on Dec. 31 at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta.

