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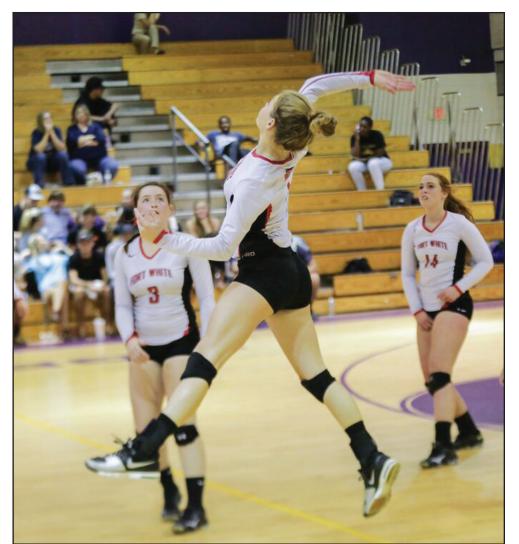
Section B

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.



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

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 peep 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

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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 REEDYAssociated 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.

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

 $\textbf{FISHER}\ continued\ on\ 2B$

Saban: Playoffs to blame for bowl skipping

By JOHN ZENORAssociated 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 McCaffrey 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



FIL the

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 offseason 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.

SCOREBOARD

TV LISTINGS

Today **COLLEGE BASKETBALL**

1 p.m. FSN — Texas A&M-CC at Oklahoma St.

4:30 p.m.

ESPNU — Diamond Head Classic, first round, Tulsa vs. Stephen F. Austin, at Honolulu

6:30 p.m.

FS1 — UNC-Greensboro at Georgetown

7 p.m. BTN — Furman at Michigan

CBSSN — Marshall at Cincinnati

ESPN2 — Diamond Head Classic, first round, San Diego St. vs. Southern Miss.,

at Honolulu

ESPNU — Yale at Temple

SEC — Morehead St. at Mississippi St.

8:30 p.m. FS1 — Las Vegas Classic, DePaul vs.

Wyoming, at Las Vegas

9 p.m.

BTN — Delaware St. at Iowa

CBSSN — Kansas at UNLV

ESPN2 — UNC-Asheville at Ohio St.

ESPNU — LSU at Wake Forest

SEC — South Alabama at Mississippi

11 p.m.

ESPNU — Diamond Head Classic, first round, Utah vs. San Francisco, at Honolulu

FS1 — Las Vegas Classic, Southern Cal vs. Missouri St., at Las Vegas

ESPN2 — Diamond Head Classic, first round, Illinois St. vs. Hawaii, at Honolulu

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

7 p.m. ESPN — Famous Idaho Potato Bowl, Colorado St. vs. Idaho, at Boise, Idaho

> CRICKET 2 a.m. (Friday)

 ${
m NBCSN-Big\ League\ Bash,\ Sydney}$ Sixers vs. Hobart Hurricane

NBA BASKETBALL

8 p.m. TNT — L.A. Lakers at Miami

10:30 p.m.

TNT - San Antonio at L.A. Clippers

NFL FOOTBALL 8:20 p.m.

NBC & NFL - N.Y. Giants at Philadelphia

NASCAR to be Monster Energy Cup Series starting next season

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — NASCAR's top series will be called the Monster **Energy NASCAR Cup Series beginning** next year.

The change of name from the Sprint Cup Series comes with Monster Energy's NASCAR's top division.

The new name was released Monday along with a new official brand identity that replaces the bar mark used by the sanctioning body since 1976. The new logo has been in development since early 2016 as NASCAR sought to refresh its brand. It was designed to pay tribute to the storied history of NASCAR, incorporating elements of all four previous marks since the company's inaugural

FISHER CREWS

Continued From 1B

reporters about the opening at LSU after Les Miles was fired, Fisher said wasn't asked about it too many times from members of his coaching staff, play-

ers or potential recruits. The 10th-ranked Seminoles (9-3) wrapped up the first portion of practices for their Dec. 30 game against No. 6 Michigan in the Orange Bowl. The players are off until Saturday, when they will travel to South Florida and resume

preparations. Fisher said he would have preferred spending Christmas in Tallahassee but that the timetable did

not work out. "We'll practice a little bit on Christmas day then we'll have a dinner that night and everything together like a family and try to spend a lot of time with them," he said. "We start school a little bit later than normal, (Jan. 9) so they get back a couple extra days for the holidays. It'll be good to be with them and everybody."

and I had to keep the

According to Hunter, Crews didn't just tell her teammates how to play,

"She was a leader by example," Hunter said. 'She wasn't a very vocal leader but she did what she had to do on the

Crews is a dual-sport athlete, and is also one of the star player on Fort incredible arm strength has no doubt helped her on both teams.

The senior is currently verbally committed to Webber International University, where she will join the Lady Warriors as a utility play-

family. "I already miss it," the sport."

Continued From 1B

girls motivated."

she showed them.

court to get the job done." White's softball team. Her

er upon graduation.

While she plans to try and play volleyball for fun in college, she is truly going to miss her Fort White volleyball

Crews said. "I like being with all my girls and playing with them. I just love

NFL

Jags trying to avoid 1st winless season at home

By MARK LONG

Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE — Jacksonville's worst season in team history could become even more dreadful Saturday.

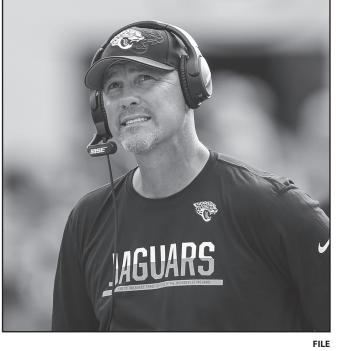
The Jaguars (2-12) have a chance to reach another low by failing to win a single home game for the first time in the franchise's 22 years. They need to upset AFC South rival Tennessee (8-6) to avoid the miserable mark.

"The fact that we don't have one at this point in the season, you just shake your head because it shouldn't be that way,' veteran linebacker Paul

Posluszny said. Jacksonville is 0-6 at EverBank Field in 2016 and has gone more than a year since winning at home. The Jags have dropped seven in a row since beating Indianapolis 51-16 on Dec. 13, 2015. Although they technically have a home victory against the Colts in London in October, players and coaches realize that

doesn't really count. So Jacksonville's home finale has something at stake for a team that has lost nine consecutive games and is coping with the firing of popular coach Gus Bradley.

"It would be embarrassing" to go winless at home, defensive tackle Sen'Derrick Marks said. "You play for yourself as a team first off and then you play for the organization. But you play for the fans also. They spend



Jacksonville head coach Gus Bradley was fired earlier this week after Sunday's loss to the Houston Texans.

their money to come out and watch us play. You're supposed to come out and perform and give them a show and actually give the city something to be proud

The Jaguars have had late chances to win five of their six home games this season, but have come up short in each. The biggest issue has been a lack of offense. Quarterback Blake Bortles and crew have averaged a little more than 17 points at EverBank.

"It's supposed to be a home-field advantage," Marks said. "You're supposed to have an advantage. You're supposed to know your field. Your crowd is supposed to be in and have the other team off-balance. We haven't done it. We can say we've

let down on that part. That's on us. We can't blame anybody else. We've got a chance this week to go out and change it, at least going into the offseason."

The Jaguars have experienced few, if any, home-field advantages this season. With losses mounting — the team was 14-48 in four seasons under Bradley, including 7-20 in Jacksonville — many season-ticket holders stopped showing up to games and seemingly sold their seats.

Green Bay, Baltimore, Oakland, Denver and Minnesota had huge contingents of fans on hand in Jacksonville. Two weeks ago, the Vikings-Jaguars game looked close to a 50-50 split.

"Yeah, very noticeable," Marks said. "Players notice it. We can't do nothing but blame ourselves. We're not winning. We can't expect nobody to show up and we lose. You think they're going to continue to show up? No. They're not going to continue to show up.

"We've got to take that on ourselves and go out and change that mindset that they may have. You can't ask people to buy tickets. As the team who has not been winning, you've got to make them buy. And you make them buy by going out and winning games and giving them something to cheer

Linebacker Telvin Smith, receiver Allen Robinson and defensive tackle Malik Jackson made headlines earlier this season by criticizing fans. Robinson said, "It's funny that we get our best home-field advantage when we go to Wembley" Stadium in London. And Jackson said, "It sounded like there were more people in the pools than cheering for the game."

Players have been considerably quieter of late, mostly because they realize they haven't done their part.

"I've never seen a losing team fill seats," Jackson said. "We hope we can put on good performances and give our team a chance to win and give the crowd something to cheer about. We understand this league's all about L's and W's, and the fans want to win and they're tired of losing, so we're going to try to win. But if you don't come support us, then that's your decision and I

Pouncey says injury isn't career threatening

By STEVEN WINE Associated Press

DAVIE — Miami Dolphins center Mike Pouncey says the hip injury that ended his season isn't career threatening, and he'll be ready for the

team's offseason program. But with a rueful smile, Pouncey acknowledged mixed emotions regarding the possibility the Dolphins will make the playoffs with-

out him. "That would be a nightmare, but obviously I'm rooting for that to happen," he said Wednesday. "I've been wanting to play in the playoffs for a long, long time. I'm ready for it. Let's go. I'll be there cheering."

The six-year veteran has never reached the postseason. This year

the Dolphins (9-5) are in the thick of the AFC wild-card race even though their three-time Pro Bowl center played in only five games. Pouncey broke his hip during the

preseason, came back for Games 5 through 9 and aggravated the injury, ending his season. "I probably came back too early,"

ouncey said. "It was just me wanting to play." Pouncey also had problems with both hips in 2014 and 2015, and underwent surgery twice to repair ligaments. He said no surgery is

him he should be fine for 2017. "Honestly with how I feel right now, I could play," Pouncey said. "But we'll let it rest and be ready for the

offseason."

needed this time, and a specialist told

Coach Adam Gase said the decision to put Pouncey on injured reserve last week was difficult, but done because of concerns the center risked his career if he tried to return this season.

"I wasn't going to put him in that kind of position to where I had to tell him, 'You might not be able to ever play again," Gase said. "I want to be around Mike as long as he can possibly go."

Jets place Brian Winters, Mike Catapano on season-ending IR

FLORHAM PARK, N.J. — New York Jets have placed starting right guard Brian Winters and backup linebacker Mike Catapano on sea-

son-ending injured reserve.

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