



The Crimson White

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Serving the University of Alabama since 1894

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UA leads all-academic team

University reclaims top spot after being edged by Harvard last year

By MEGAN NICHOLS
Student Life Editor

Five UA students have been named to the USA Today All-USA College Academic Team, more than any other college or university in the nation.

The University had four team members last year and five the year before. With the

addition of this year's five, UA has had 14 over the last three years, which is also more than any other school.

Nationwide, 84 students were selected this year.

The winners were announced at a press conference in UA President Robert Witt's office conference room in Rose Administration Building Thursday afternoon.

"Having five students on the USA Today All-USA College Academic Team underscores one point about our University," Witt said during the conference. "That the best students at the University of Alabama can

compete with anyone, anywhere, anytime."

The second-place school this year is Yale University, with three team members, and there are 10 or 12 schools tied for third with two students each, Witt said.

Cody Locke, a junior majoring in biology; Katie Marchiony, a senior majoring in management information systems; and LeeAnn Wilson, a junior majoring in chemical engineering, were named to the second USA Today team.

Jason Spruell, a senior majoring in chemistry, was named to the third team and William Norvell, a senior

majoring in banking and financial services and former Interfraternity Council president, received an honorable mention.

All five team members are in-state students.

UA spokeswoman Cathy Andreen said students are usually nominated by faculty members they have worked with, though anyone can nominate them. There is no centralized University effort to choose students to nominate, Andreen said.

"There's some coordination of it, but basically it's up

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Carroll/Luke Buckley
(From left) Cody Locke, Mary Katherine Marchiony, Jason Spruell, William Norvell Jr. and Stephanie LeeAnn Wilson stand alongside a poster displaying the number of members on USA Today's All-USA College Academic Team. The University held a press conference Thursday to officially announce the members.

Not Your 'Average' Guy

METI simulator gives students more realistic learning experience

By SAORI HASEGAWA
Staff Reporter

A new guy at the Capstone College of Nursing is helping nursing students learn emergency care. All the nursing students know him and talk about him; in fact, he may be the most recognizable face in the college.

If you're interested in meeting this guy yourself, don't worry; he isn't going anywhere.

He is from Florida and has a lot of

brothers who just look like him. He is 5 feet 11 inches tall and always wears gray sweat pants. You might like his white teeth, too.

Sure, he looks like a healthy guy, but unfortunately he isn't; he has already endured multiple heart attacks, countless collapsed lungs and several severe strokes, so lying down on the bed all day is just his routine.

Fortunately, having multiple serious illnesses is his main job. He is an Emergency Care Simulator named METI after Medical Education Technologies, Inc. METI has also been used to train military medics, as well as medical students in universities around the world.

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University Relations
The new METI dummy is used to give nursing students a simulation of real life emergencies they may encounter with patients. Included in METI's list of talents are heart attacks, strokes and collapsed lungs.

Pres candidates talk accessibility

By MEGAN NICHOLS
Student Life Editor

SGA election campaigning begins Monday, and Mary Margaret Carroll and Zac Riddle, this year's presidential candidates, said they are ready to get started.

Carroll is the chairwoman of the SGA's senate assistance committee. That group's purpose is to work as a mediator between student groups and SGA senators to help senators know of any problems groups might be having.

As the committee's chairwoman, Carroll said she worked to get the smaller, less-visible student groups the SGA's help.

"It kills me that some groups get more exposure, and I think by reaching out to these groups, we can have a more unified SGA," Carroll said.

Carroll worked as a Senate assistant under 2003-04 SGA Executive Vice President Joshua Silberberg and is the Panhellenic Association representative for Chi Omega sorority. She was involved with Lambda Sigma honorary her freshman year.

Asked if she was the Machine-backed candidate for SGA president, Carroll said, "I have no control over who votes for me. None, whatsoever. We're all adults. We can go in there and vote for whoever we want to."

Riddle said he was not the Machine-backed candidate.

The Machine is a select coalition of traditionally white fraternities and sororities designed to influence campus politics.

Though she has little SGA and leadership experience, Carroll said she thinks she is more than qualified and prepared for the job.

"I'm fully aware that I've been somewhat of an obscure person as far as SGA is concerned, but I would not start something I didn't think I could finish," Carroll said. "Since I haven't been such a high-profile person in the SGA, I've been able to sit back and learn from others and make my own ideas that I plan to implement."

She said she thinks she is equally qualified with Riddle.

"I'm not ever going to go into anything unless I think I can handle it," she said. "I feel like I can bring such a new and creative mind to our campus this year. I have leadership experience in the SGA so far and my ideas really have potential."

Carroll said she would restructure and enlarge the entire SGA through the committees. She said there is currently no emphasis placed on SGA committees and that she would "categorize them, put some together or take some out" to make committees more efficient.

"I want to condense the whole slate of them by making them bigger," she said.

Carroll also wants to see a regular SGA newsletter next year. She said it should come out every other week before formal Senate so students could see what was happening. Such a newsletter has been a perennial

See **SGA**, Page 3



Carroll



Riddle

UA experts: Sunni inclusion vital in Iraq

Shiites, Kurds to dominate new Iraqi National Assembly

By NICK BEADLE
Metro/State Editor

The Iraqi National Assembly will have a narrow Shiite majority, according to certified results of Iraq's Jan. 30 election, which were released Thursday.

The alliance garnered 140 seats, while 75 went to Kurds, 40 to secular Shiites and 20 to smaller groups.

Kurdish and Shiite leaders have said they want Sunni participation in the new government in

hopes of quelling continued insurgency, which has strong Sunni ties. Sunni turnout for the election was low because of a boycott advocated by clerics who opposed the U.S. military's presence and the fear of violence on election day.

The Sunni-headed Iraqi Party only garnered five seats in the election.

Despite their small presence, Sunni inclusion in a government whose main task will be to draft an Iraqi constitution would be wise, UA political experts said.

There will be insurgency in Iraq as long as there are unhappy Sunnis, said Don Snow, UA professor of political science. "It's a matter of how magnanimous the

parties turn out to be and include the Sunnis and thus undercut the Sunnis' popular base," he said.

Getting Sunnis to identify with the Iraqi government and not the insurgency is key to the survival of democracy in Iraq, said John Oneal, another UA political science professor.

He said the stability and fairness of the new government is aided by the lack of an overwhelming Shiite majority and favorite for secular government.

"Islam would be the official state religion [but] not be the official set of laws, and that's what the U.S. has abdicated," Oneal said.

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AP/ Hadi Mizban
Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim, the pro-Iranian cleric who headed the Shiite ticket that won Iraq's national elections, at his headquarters in Baghdad, Monday.

THE CORNER PHOTO



Courtesy of Scott and Allison Rainey Gibson
After 20 years, the University now offers scuba diving as a college-credited course. Instructors Scott and Allison Rainey Gibson own Venture Sports and Outdoors located on 15th Street. The Gibsons (center) and students celebrated Valentine's Day.

the World IN Brief

CAMPUS

UA's first black SGA president to speak today

Cleo Thomas Jr., a former UA System trustee and the University's first black SGA president, will be the featured speaker for the School of Social Work's 17th annual African-American Heritage Month program today at 2 p.m. in 223 Little Hall.

Thomas, a resident of Anniston, is chairman and chief executive officer of A. G. Gaston Corporation, the holding company for Booker T. Washington Insurance Company and its subsidiary companies.

After graduating from the University in 1977, Thomas received the George C. Marshall Scholarship to Oxford University in England and was awarded a bachelor's degree in philosophy, politics and economics from Oxford in 1980. He received a degree from Harvard Law School in 1982 and served as law clerk to U.S. District Judge J. Foy Guin Jr. from 1982-83.

For more information about this event, please contact Vickie Whitfield in the School of Social Work at 348-3942.

School of Music to remember Frank Moody with concert

The UA School of Music will remember Frank Moody, after whom the University's music building is named, with a memorial concert featuring the Alabama Symphony Orchestra Sunday at 3 p.m.

Held in the Moody Music Building Concert Hall, the concert will highlight the works of renowned composers such as Giuseppe Verdi, Ludwig van Beethoven and Richard Wagner. Conductor Alastair Willis and pianist William Wolfram will accompany the orchestra.

Tickets for the event are \$7 for students. For a more detailed preview, go to www.cw.ua.edu.

Dragon statue, video games stolen on campus this week

The following crimes were reported to the UA Police Department this week:

Feb. 11

- An unlawful possession of marijuana arrest was made.
- A DUI arrest was made.
- Twenty-six Crimson Tide gymnastics T-shirts valued at \$390, 24 Tide gymnastics sweatshirts valued at \$720 and 32 Tide basketball T-shirts valued at \$494 were stolen from Coleman Coliseum.

Sunday

- Criminal mischief was reported on 9th Street when \$350 of damage was done to the rear passenger window of a 1999 Ford Explorer.

Monday

- Burglary was reported at the Beta Theta Pi fraternity house. A \$2,000 dragon statue was stolen.
- A Dell Inspiron 1100 laptop computer valued at \$900 was stolen at the Biology Building.

Wednesday

- An Xbox valued at \$150 and four Xbox games valued at a total of \$80 were stolen from the School of Law. In another incident, three Xbox games valued at a total of \$80 were stolen.
- Harassing communications were reported.

— Aneesa McMillan

LOCAL

Council signs off on plant design, approves fishing tournament

The Tuscaloosa City Council took the following actions, among others, at its Thursday night meeting:

- Paid \$55,802.65 to CH2M Hill for professional water treatment plant membrane design.
- Authorized the Tuscaloosa Police Department to throw away its Canon H-12006 fax machine.
- Mayor Al DuPont declared Feb. 26 Tuscaloosa Cinderella Day.
- Approved the Lakeside Bass Club's April 9 bass-fishing tournament on Lake Tuscaloosa.

— Carrie Stewart

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“Students at the University of Alabama can compete with anyone, anywhere, anytime.”

— UA President Robert Witt

See “UA leads all-academic team,” Page 1

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SGA SENATE

Committee removes language about racism from resolution

By MALCOLM IFEKAUCHE
Senior Staff Reporter

The SFA Senate removed language from a resolution concerning hazing and racism passed its last formal meeting, and its author was not happy about the changes.

The phrases, “[The SGA] does not support racist acts on or off campus. In addition, the University of Alabama Student Senate [requests that] students have easier access to their designated harassment resource person and the hazing hotline so that their complaints can be recorded, investigated and resolved” were removed from the resolution passed Thursday.

The harassment resolution states racist acts committed on campus last year were the impetus for its writing. ‘KKK’ was scratched onto two UA students’ cars, and a derogatory phrase was scratched into the NAACP office door at the Ferguson Center, it states.

A main problem is students do not know where to report incidents of hazing or harassment, said Graduate School Sen. Elizabeth Hendrix, the resolution's author.

One of the professors in Hendrix's department mentioned he had a student who did not know where to report a racist attack, she said. Hendrix said it was important to let students know that there is a hotline, 348-HALT, to call when these incidents occur.

“This type of information should be given out at orientation,” Hendrix said.

Hazing, as defined by the UA Greek Life Web site, includes any act which inflicts extreme physical, emotional or psychological pressure or injury on an individual or which purposely degrades or disgraces an individual.

According to the Greek Life definition, hazing, though commonly associated with fraternities and sororities, can occur in any academic, social, military

or athletic organization.

Blake Barnes, chairman of the Senate's student affairs committee, said his committee removed the language regarding racism for clarity and structural concerns.

“The committee of student affairs doesn't support racism,” Barnes said. “The language was removed because the resolution was about harassment.”

“We didn't feel that the term hazing was germane to the resolution,” said Graduate School Sen. Pat Samples, a member of the student affairs committee.

The committee removed the language concerning racism because the issue has been covered thoroughly by the SGA in previous resolutions, Barnes said. The SGA recently lead a full campaign against racism on campus; leaving the language in would have been redundant, he said.

Samples said the language pertaining to hazing was left out because it did not fit

within a resolution dedicated to harassment.

“Normally, hazing is associated with fraternities and sororities,” Samples said. “We thought the resolution was supposed to be strictly about harassment, which is why it was cut out.”

Although mentioning of the 348-HALT hotline was removed from the resolution, Samples noted that the nearly two pages of harassment resource contact numbers were left on the final version.

“[Hendrix] had the opportunity to protest. We discussed [the changes] with her,” Samples said.

Incidents involving racism should not be allowed to continue undocumented, Hendrix said. It is affecting the University's image and inhibits its ability to recruit minorities, she said.

“Students shouldn't have to wait to schedule an appointment to report incidents like these,” Hendrix said.

IRAQ

Continued from Page 1

Though representation is not everything, Oneal said, the government these newly elected officials will frame would have to ensure its citizens basic services such as running water, electricity and law enforcement. “If it does those things, then the people will value the government and be opposed to the insurgency,” he said.

While the Jan. 30 election went better than expected, Snow said that does not guarantee Iraq will soon have a stable democracy. He said the country's political groups are in a honeymoon period right now and there will “undoubtedly” be tensions soon enough.

While there is continued violence and tension, an electoral debacle would have likely exacerbated the situation, Oneal said. “It hasn't eliminated the insurgency, but I think

it would have been a lot worse if there had not been a successful election.”

But don't buy into rhetoric that the country will soon be working together and “singing the Iraqi equivalent of Kumbaya” just yet, Snow said. He said it might take awhile for Iraq to take to democracy — if they ever do.

“[The elections were] not a disaster, and it was a success in some ways. But whether it is the first step toward Middle

Eastern democracy — it's a little premature to predict that,” Snow said. “Anyone who tells you they know how that's going to work out has been drinking some funny water.”

Information from The Associated Press was used in this report.

NURSING

Continued from Page 1

The University is the first in the state to use the dummy.

“He looks just like a real person,” said Jenny Marcilliat, a junior nursing major who has cared for METI. “His blood is red, his eyes blink, his chest rises and falls with every breath, he has a palpable pulse, he has a measurable blood pressure and he can even get drip infusion just like a human.”

“He simulates very closely [the responses a] normal human would have,” said Dr. Marsha Adams, associate professor of nursing and director of the undergraduate program of the University's Capstone College of Nursing. If METI's medical condition was changed because someone gave him too much morphine, for example, he goes unconscious, displaying blood pressure or electrocardiogram changes just like a human would.

In addition to morphine, there is a list of 60 medicines that METI can take from the computer. Not only can he take those medicines, he can also simulate any type of human from a standard man, to a heavy smoker, a drinker, a granny or a soldier.

After the type is chosen, the faculty member can put one of several preprogrammed scenarios such as heart attack into him and he reacts differently; for example, a standard man will get better sooner than an older woman. To get more realistic, they can write new scenarios and put them into METI too.

By the fall, all of the critical courses in the UA nursing curriculum will be using METI, said Becky Edwards, director of facilities, technology and distance education in the college and who, along with Adams, serves as one of the college's two METI coordinators.

“With an average dummy, our students can do a lot of skills such as bandaging, but it doesn't respond,” Edwards said.

Before this semester, students practiced with an average dummy and pretended to see responses that a human would have, but they couldn't see what actually happened, Adams said.

Now those students can see the effect of their action on the patient. Students are learning how drugs react with the body, how different diagnoses affect the body and how to make critical decisions related to different situations from METI.

“Students can see the laboratory experience, so when

they get to in the hospital, they can make better decisions,” Adams said.

Faculty members are still discussing how best to use METI with students at the training session. One group of students will have the opportunity to use METI in two weeks.

“I'm so excited to get chance to learn [with METI],” Marcilliat said. “This kind of thing doesn't come everyday.”

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Legendary Miller play to run at Bean Brown

By JACOB MARTIN SUMMERS
Staff Reporter

Two assistant professors of theater and dance, a records officer from graduate admissions and an owner of one local restaurant will all come together Friday.

They aren't family and they aren't friends, but they do enjoy each other's company, and they enjoy putting on a show. They are the actors, directors and workers at Theatre Tuscaloosa and this weekend they will be presenting "Death of a Salesman."

Written by Arthur Miller in 1949, this play is the story of a man struggling for happiness,

popularity and morality in a quickly changing culture.

Touching? Jeff Wilson, who plays lead character Willy Loman (the salesman), thinks so.

"I have worked with the theater for a long time now ... every actor wants to play this part," Wilson said. "Willy's big thing is that he wants to matter, he wants to be well known and he is constantly worried ... you feel sorry for him ... he thinks people don't like him."

However, people — at least viewers — do like him. The play presents to the audience what they see in themselves: an internal conflict of how to make all ends meet: family,

friends, job, acceptance, wealth and happiness.

Tina Fitch, director of the play, said she could closely relate to the play on an even more basic level.

"I can identify with the play, because, after all, my father was a salesman ... so I can relate to my father being gone a lot and having to make the sales," Fitch said.

But what runs deeper among the attributes that viewers will identify with is the internal struggle of right and wrong.



Arthur Miller

"This play is a lot about morality, right and wrong, and really, we don't have defined roots for what is right; [most of the time] it comes down to a one-on-one person basis," Fitch said. "And with Willy, he faces the struggle of being right versus doing right."

Wilson agreed.

"One thing that Arthur Miller didn't do was that he didn't preach to you ... he just wrote the play, put it out there and made the viewers think," Wilson said. "But not everybody agrees with the play.

There is some cussing, but that's just part of it."

Miller died Feb. 11, which Fitch said makes the performance "more appropriate." Fitch said she and her co-workers are proud to be able to continue Miller's legacy this soon after his death.

Wilson said the crew even held a small get-together beforehand to pay proper homage to Miller and to make sure they get things right.

Theatre Tuscaloosa won't be the only place locally to continue to honor him this soon afterwards. The University Opera Theatre and The Huxford Symphony

Orchestra at the Capstone will be performing another of Miller's works, "The Crucible," on March 4 at the Moody Music Building.

Before Miller passed away, the University was attempting to coax him to attend to the performance of "The Crucible."

"Death of a Salesman" will open tonight 7:30 at the Bean Brown Theater on the Shelton State Community College campus. Performances will run through Feb. 27.

Tickets are \$17. City and county school students will receive a discount. For more information, call 391-2277.

ACADEMIC

Continued from Page 1

to faculty to put them up," she said.

After the five Academic Team members were introduced, a new commercial featuring them was shown. With Gary Glitter's "Rock & Roll, Part II" playing in the background and "Hey Harvard" chanted where "Hey Auburn" or "Hey Bulldogs" would be in the Rammer Jammer cheer, the University's new academic team member competition

with Harvard University is explained.

For the past three years either Alabama or Harvard has had the most students select-

"I think what this is about is not is the University of Alabama is better than these other schools, but that the best and the brightest can compete with anyone else," Witt said. "What pleases me the most is seeing our students recognized and a spotlight shone on the quality of academics at the University of Alabama."

For the second consecutive year, Locke was chosen as a

USA Today team member. Locke researches the molecular basis for epilepsy with UA biology professors Guy and Kim Caldwell.

For the full version of this story, check out The Crimson White online at www.cw.ua.edu.

In the fall, Locke was the lead author of research he presented at the American Society for Cell Biology's annual meeting.

"It feels wonderful to be

recognized once again by USA Today," Locke said, "to be able to stand by some new yet very admirable students. Really that's the best award — to be able to share this award with people I really respect."

Marchiony said she was really shocked that she could be chosen to the team because she was a business student, but it reflected very well on the Culverhouse College of Commerce and Business Administration.

"I think all the students here see we do have an extraordinary academic community here at the

University," Marchiony said. "It shows a state school, especially Alabama, is more than just a football school."

Marchiony designed and implemented an academic peer-mentoring program to help students struggling in courses. It is being used on the UA campus and is being examined by a panel of chief information officers representing Fortune 500 companies.

The first thing Wilson thought when she found out she was selected was, "Oh my gosh, this is incredible," she said.

SGA

Continued from Page 1

promise of SGA candidates.

Getting students involved in August's mayoral election and state government issues is another of Carroll's goals, she said.

"I want to have a program to have debates from Democratic and Republican people in the state so that we will know what the issues are and be educated," she said.

Campus-wide interaction with the SGA is another facet of Carroll's platform.

"I feel like our campus doesn't interact as a whole enough," she said. "We could have joint student group activities four times a year, twice a semester, make some memories that way."

Since this is his second consecutive presidential campaign, Riddle said he planned to use his experience well.

"We learned a lot from last year, and I think one of the main things we want to do is be more specific targeting students and groups of students," Riddle said. "Also, we want to run an honest campaign and a very clean campaign just like we did last year."

Riddle said "we" referred to the people helping with his campaign.

Riddle said he has thought about running again since current SGA President Hal Mooty defeated him by garnering 61 percent of the 4,428 votes cast. Because he is a senior, however, Riddle did not know if he would be going to graduate school at the University. But he opted to take a second try at the SGA's top job after deciding to seek a master's degree in accounting.

For the full version of this story, check out The Crimson White online at www.cw.ua.edu.

"I'm only taking 12 hours both semesters, so my class load will be a little lower," he said. "I'll be able to devote all of my time outside of class to the SGA."

Riddle said he is very excited to get the chance to pursue the job again and has several plans for the office.

One of his main ideas, Riddle said, is expanding the services the SGA offers students, such as student loans.

"We want to look at the possibility of a bicycle repair shop on campus and things along those lines," he said.

Riddle's also wants the SGA to stay in close contact with the Faculty Senate, other student leaders and state officials, he said.

"We want to make sure the SGA is not just out on an island doing our own thing," he said.

Riddle said his administration would look into a Tuscaloosa beautification project as well. He said beautification would make the city a more attractive place and would aid UA student recruitment efforts.

"I also want to increase the accessibility of the SGA, especially the executive office," Riddle said. "I would make the SGA an organization that is accessible to students."

The main way he would open the SGA up is by putting its budget on the SGA Web site and publishing it in The Crimson White, he said. "I think that's important so students can see where the money is being spent," Riddle said.

Because of extensive leadership experience in organizations other than SGA, Riddle said he was prepared

to be SGA president.

As a UA undergraduate, Riddle has served as president of the Student Leaders Council, student chairman of the Blackburn Institute, the vice president of Anderson Society and president of the Interfaith Council, which he also founded.

"Looking at Student Leaders Council and Blackburn, Student Leaders Council has enabled me to meet with leaders and groups and discuss with them ways to make the campus better," he said.

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Our View

Program too much for UA?

A few women wanted to get together, recite some monologues and raise money for charity. It sounds like a good plan, but it's not happening on campus.

"The Vagina Monologues" was to be performed in the Ferguson Theater until its reservation fell through this week. The show has been played at hundreds of secondary schools across the nation and was even held at the Ferg Theater three years ago.

A group of nine UA women called the Feminine Alliance had an informal agreement to use the theater. But the group is not a registered student organization, so it does not get priority at the theater, said Ferg director Carl Bacon. But non-registered organizations can pay to use the theater, as long as there are no bona fide groups to take their spot, Bacon told The CW Wednesday. Tarin Nix, the director, offered to pay for use of the theater.

Instead, the UA Film Society is co-sponsoring "Team America: World Police" with Ferg tonight, according to Graham Flanagan, a member of the group and a CW staff photographer.

If the production of the play really came into conflict with another group's use of the space, then we can't fault the Ferg for bumping the "Monologues." That would indeed be, as Nix said she was told, "a paperwork issue."

Bacon told The CW that there was a waitlist of organizations wanting the space, but Flanagan said he wasn't aware of such a list. He said Ferg officials contacted the Film Society on Tuesday to offer the group the space.

We tried getting in touch with Bacon several times Thursday to clarify the issue, but we were unable to reach him.

The real problem with hosting the show, according to Nix, stems from the controversial nature of the show and its promotional poster, which shows a woman with her legs crossed and a flower covering her vagina. Apparently, it has offended some folks around campus.

Given that this is a university and not a preschool, people who dislike the poster should grow thicker skin. The poster is not obscene and no one is forcing anyone to see the show.

It's not unprecedented for UA officials to cite mundane regulations to inhibit speech that they find troublesome.

Last year, UA officials forced the Alabama Scholars Association, a group of professors known for criticizing the administration, to pay regular postage to circulate its newsletter by intra-campus mail. Provost Judy Bonner said the ASA was not a bona fide UA organization, but a similar group had used the same free system for its newsletter for 32 years. As soon as the ASA newsletter came about, officials mysteriously started caring about postal regulations.

We really don't know if this is a similar situation, but it's sketchy enough to at least raise an eyebrow. The bright side is the "Monologues" did find a venue, the Jupiter Bar and Grill on the Strip. The show is on Friday and Saturday at 6 p.m.

Our View is the consensus of The CW editorial board.



CW Anna Crabtree

My milkshake brings death closer

"No separate orders." Those three words stare back at me with contempt from the drive-thru window every time I don't have time to just dine out at one Tuscaloosa restaurant.

Because I've spent a good chunk of the last decade in a newsroom, I copy edit the whole world around me. It's my gift and my curse. I'm kind of like Spider-Man — except hot redheads really aren't into me that much.

So every time I get the craving for this restaurant, I ask myself questions like "Why even paint something on the window if you're not going to spell check it?" and "Wouldn't it have been more helpful to tell me I couldn't have a 'separate' order earlier in the drive-thru process?"

But then I realize the only reason I have time to notice the typo on the window, the only reason I have time to ask myself such picky questions, is I've been sitting at that drive-thru window for 10 minutes to fulfill my craving for this restaurant.

Hi, my name's Nick and I'm a slave for fast food.

Probably a third of the miles

I've put on my car in the last year have been from making pilgrimages to a drive-thru to get something battered and/or fried. I've driven across town and to three restaurants to find a place with a working shake machine on multiple occasions.

And sometimes, I would stab a man to death for some Guthrie's chicken.

Well ... OK, so maybe I wouldn't. But the important thing to note here is that I have an unhealthy predilection for Guthrie's chicken.

When I was Web surfing the other day, I found a January 2003 BBC News story about researchers at Princeton University and the University of Wisconsin who think fast food could be as addictive as some drugs.

The researchers studied the effects of feeding rats diets of fatty, salty and sugary foods.

After one batch of rats started having the shakes when they were taken off that diet, a Princeton researcher



DAMAGE CONTROL
Nick Beadle

concluded that such foods stimulated "pleasure chemicals" in the brain.

Prolonged exposure could have the same effects on the chemistry of the brain as repeated use of heroin or morphine, a Wisconsin researcher concluded.

I'm not going to relate my occasional craving for a milkshake to heroin addiction, but the "pleasure chemicals" make sense because fattening fast food is fantastic comfort food.

When I find myself extremely angry or under a lot of stress, I find myself at Hardee's ordering a Thickburger. The one on fried sourdough bread and smothered with bacon and cheese if the situation is really bad.

I think nurture and exposure to advertising plays a role here, too. Because didn't McDonald's birthday parties seem so cool when you were seven? When you could get a Happy Meal and play in the ball pit?

You know, back when you weren't so creeped out by the

Ronald McDonald statue that sits on the bench and leers at the ball pit? Not to mention that you really don't know what The Grimace is, and why he's so happy?

Yeah, well, whatever the reason, the big problem with being "addicted" to fast food is that most of it is fattening.

Yes, there are some (apparently) healthier choices on the drive-thru menu these days, but the guy who's going to the Wendy's drive-thru at 1 in the morning probably isn't ordering a side salad.

So maybe when we don't get immediate service, we should take it as a sign that we really should be eating better and finding something healthier (and maybe less expensive) to eat.

If not, you can pass off that 10-foot walk to the counter as a half-hearted attempt at cardio exercise.

Just find a way to get out of the drive-thru when I need a Thickburger.

Seriously, I will hurt you.

Nick Beadle is metro/state editor of The Crimson White. His column appears on Fridays.

Pass recycling laws to save the environment — or else

By ASHLEY BOYD

The time is now. Not in a week, not in a month and not in a couple of years. We are our own destroyers, and we are carelessly disposing of our most precious shelter: our world.

Earth is host to a multitude of people, and that multitude of people is misusing its natural resources and producing harmful substances.

For those of us who watch the news, we are no longer surprised when we witness broadcasts of natural disasters in our very own living rooms.

Some of us are captivated and scared out of our wits. While the

majority of our fellow humans try and avoid problems of any sort, we face them head on. Once we make certain realizations, we attempt to pick up our broken pieces and mend them whole once more.

But can we honestly pick up the pieces of something so much greater than ourselves? We are speaking of a power greater than ourselves.

We are being held responsible for our own paralysis and suffering to come. Earth is not something to be taken lightly like singing along with Auntie Litter back in elementary school and being excited about getting to wear groovy glasses.

We empty our contents into a single trash can and that trash can is

collected along with others to amount to an indecently large trash can — an unfortunate deluge.

While listening to news briefs in the morning or skimming the paper before or after class, we have all heard widespread reports about the series of horrible disasters.

We are still experiencing the aftershocks of a fatal tsunami capturing the lives of thousands. There have been mudslides, tornados, melting glaciers and drastic changes in local temperatures.

Recently, scientists have reported global warming temperatures are increasing, so the flux in temperature is destined to vary even more. NASA scientists have stated 2004 was the

fourth-warmest year ever recorded.

What happened to the 1970s and our environment holding top priority in the White House and around the globe? It seems as if the environmental age has died at the most inappropriate time.

The time is surely now, and we will not find bliss in our ignorance.

With the Bush administration considering funding cuts to environmental programs, it is time to awaken from this devastating slumber.

Wake up, humanity, and regain what we once had. Take a walk today and take action. Pick up your fences and demand a future because at this point, that should be our top responsibility.

Don't take for granted each breath you take, and know that the carbon dioxide content is greatly increasing, which is one of the key contributors in global warming.

While you cannot mend what is lost, time is of the essence to protect the future.

Seattle has made a first in a series of hopeful firsts to come. They straightened their laces and made recycling a new law for 2005. Let us follow their example. Let us lighten up our news and brighten our television screens and our minds.

Ashley Boyd is a freshman in the College of Communication and Information Sciences.

Inside PREVIEW:

- Pitcher Wade LeBlanc hopes to avoid the sophomore jinx, *Page 6*
- A preview of the 2005 Crimson Tide softball team, *Page 8*
- Profile of softball pitcher Stephanie VanBrakle, *Page 8*

Friday, February 18, 2005

Page 5

Building a winner: Does Wells have the right pieces to construct wins?

By DENNIS PILLION
Assistant Sports Editor

Take the best pitching staff in the SEC from last year, add a lineup that remains nearly intact from last season, mix in a few key newcomers, and what do you get?

Alabama baseball head coach Jim Wells and his players hope the recipe gets them a trip to post-season competition in the SEC Tournament and the College World Series.

The Tide will have to improve itself vastly over last year when they finished 10-20 in the SEC, winning only one series against the Kentucky Wildcats.

"Last year we struggled, but we're optimistic with so many returning players," Wells said. "Usually teams that are good have a lot of guys back. No matter how good your recruits are, a lot of times you depend on the returning players."

The Rotation

Many of those key returning players will be on the mound for Alabama. Sophomore Wade LeBlanc heads a rotation that also features the talented arms of Brandon Belcher, Brent Carter and T.J. Large.

LeBlanc will be the team's No. 1 starter after one of the best freshman campaigns in school history. LeBlanc was named 2004's National Freshman of the Year by Baseball America and Collegiate Baseball after going 8-4 with a 2.08 ERA, eight complete games and four shutouts in 15 starts last year.

Collegiate Baseball also tabbed LeBlanc as a pre-season All-American for this year.

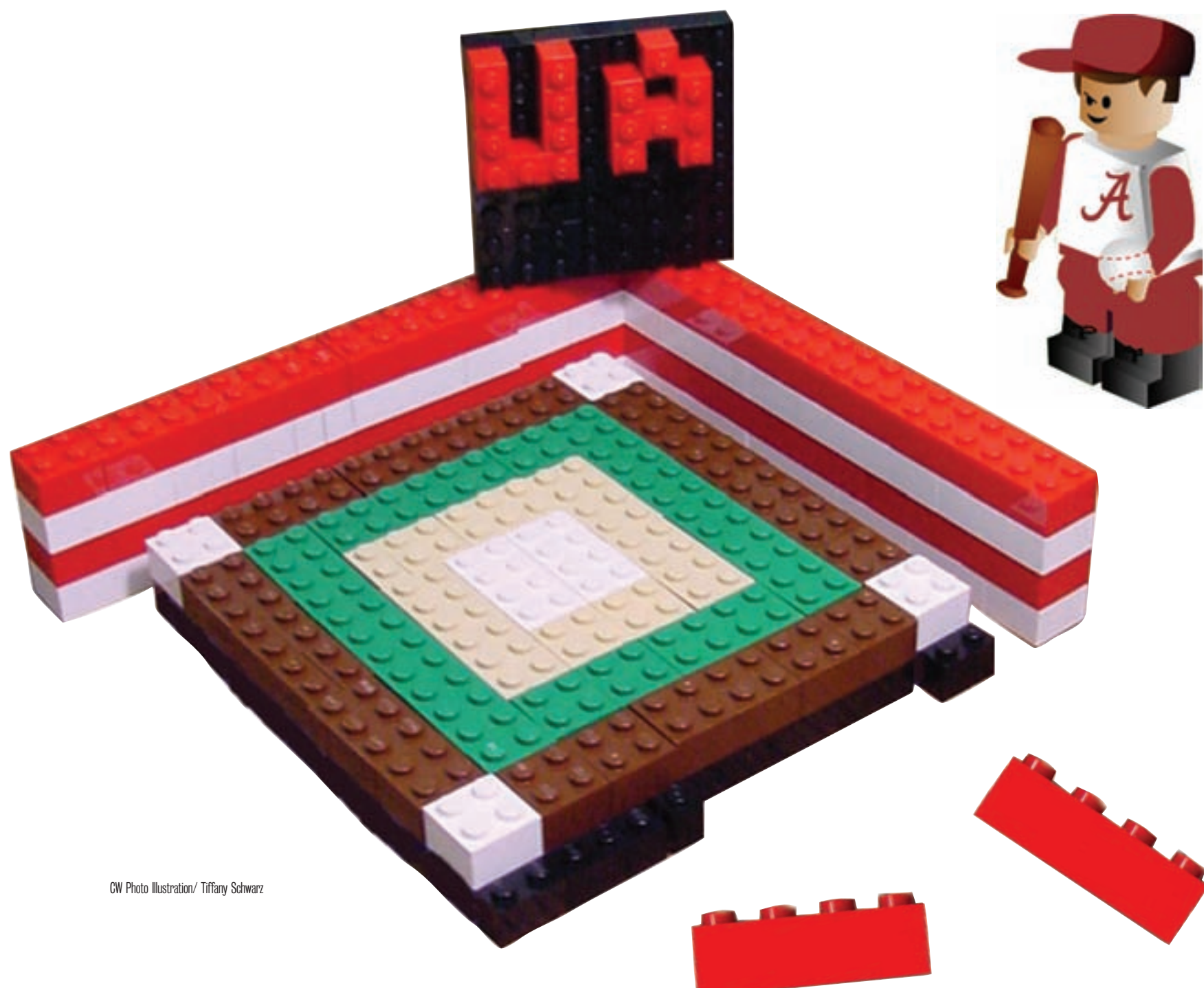
Despite all the attention he's getting, LeBlanc said his role on the team won't change much from last year before he attained star status.

"As far as the pitchers have to think, there's no main guy," LeBlanc said. "There's just three guys that start on a weekend, so everybody has an equal amount of pressure, an equal amount of weight on his shoulders."

Most Alabama baseball fans will surely recognize Carter's name, as he looks to regain top form after an injury-plagued junior season last year.

"Brent was our number one a couple years ago, so we're looking for him to bounce back and have a great year," Wells said.

Belcher was also in the



CW Photo Illustration/ Tiffany Schwarz

starting rotation for last year's team, which was second in the SEC in ERA with a 3.36 overall mark.

The Tide will have to go without MLB first-round draft choice Taylor Tankersley, who worked as a starter and reliever last season and notched an SEC-best 2.00 ERA. However, the players believe they will be up to the task.

"I think we've got the potential to have a stronger staff this year than last year," senior Morrow Thomley said.

Thomley came to Alabama as a pitcher and outfielder but has been moved to the outfield for this season.

"We'll have Wade back; you know what he's going to do," Thomley said. "Carter and T.J. pitched very well in their first games this year. We've got a lot

of new guys out of the bullpen. Everybody that we've got is good. Even though we lost Tankersley, there's still a lot to build on."

Although the Tide will have several veteran players in its starting rotation, the bullpen will be a different story.

Read about the baseball team's trip to Hawaii online at www.cw.ua.edu

Junior Matt Downs has some experience, but the other two primary relievers Wells mentioned, Josh Copeland and David Robertson, are freshmen.

Five other pitchers will likely compete for innings out of the bullpen, all of whom are transfers or freshmen who have

never pitched in a SEC game.

The Offense

While the Alabama pitching staff excelled last season, the offense clearly needed improvement. Whereas the Tide finished with the SEC's second-best ERA, they also recorded the league's second-lowest batting average.

"You have to be pretty good in all phases," Wells said. "Pitching and defense wins, but you need to be able to score enough runs. You don't have to be great in anything, you just need to be solid in all the areas."

Putting some pop back in the lineup has been a priority for Wells and his club, but they hope to improve the offensive output by relying on

experience and consistency.

"The more experienced guys you have around, the better it'll be," senior second baseman Allen Rice said.

Rice, a four-year starter, was slowed by a shoulder injury last season but still hit .333 for the season. Starting with Rice on the infield will be third baseman Evan Bush, shortstop Cale Iorg and first baseman Zac Welch.

Bush, who is one of the team's top power hitters along with Welch, said the position players are not willing to concede that the pitching will be the strength of the 2005 team.

"We're hoping to change that as hitters, but we do have a great pitching staff," Bush said. "As hitters, we want to be the strong point, and I think we have the potential to do

that."

Thomley agreed, saying, "It takes everybody a while to get used to [SEC competition]. We had a lot of young guys last year, a lot of junior college guys. We are a better-hitting team this year."

Thomley, who appeared in only six games last year figures to play significant time in the outfield along with fellow seniors Gabe Scott and Matt Grooms and sophomores Emeel Salem and Michael McCallister.

Junior catcher Kody Valverde should also add some pop to the Tide lineup since his transfer from the University of New Orleans.

"He hit, like, .330 last year and was All-Conference, so that's probably the biggest pickup in the SEC," Bush said.

Former Alabama quarterback Spencer Pennington chose baseball over football this spring. Pennington finished the season as the Crimson Tide's starting quarterback because of injuries to quarterbacks Brodie Croyle and Marc Guillon. Pennington will be in the mix at first base and designated hitter for the Tide.

CW/ Kelly Lambert



Pennington returns to sport he loves

By RICHARD D. LEE
Senior Sports Reporter

Maybe it was his second concussion. Maybe it was because when he is older he wants to be able to play with his kids. Maybe it was because of the constant pressure and scrutiny one goes through as starting quarterback of the Alabama football team.

Or maybe baseball was simply his first love.

After spending three years on the gridiron, Spencer Pennington returns to the game he originally grew up playing.

"It feels really good to finally get back after a year and a half away from the game," Pennington said. "To come in

and have my teammates accept me the way they have, it's a big credit to them.

"Everybody on this team, much like the football team, considers themselves brothers with each other."

In his time away from baseball, Pennington's presence has not only been missed on the field, but off as well.

"The bad times won't be as bad with Spencer around," senior first baseman Zac Welch said. "He's a great person to have around. I've missed him the past two years. I myself can't imagine trying to do two sports. I have trouble doing one."

Already this year, the junior from Fayette has had an impact on the team.

Pennington made his triumphant return to the diamond on Feb. 12 at Hawaii.

In that game he added a pinch-hit single in the Tide's six-run ninth inning that led to a 9-5 win.

The base hit was his first since a pinch-hit single against Rhode Island on March 2, 2003.

"He's a good left-handed bat off the bench for sure. He also can play the infield pretty well," Welch said. "It's like riding a bike, I do believe; as soon as he figures out how to do it again, he'll be out there."

Coming out of high school, Pennington originally turned down lucrative offers to play professional baseball in order to be a two-sport athlete for

the Crimson Tide.

A utility infielder and outfielder, he played sparingly in 2002, splitting time between spring practice in football and baseball games.

He was granted a medical redshirt year in baseball after suffering a shoulder injury in the Crimson Tide's 2003 football game against Georgia forced him to miss the 2004 baseball season.

This year, though, Pennington said his football injuries will not affect his play on the diamond.

"Both shoulders and my knee are fine," Pennington said. "I've not taken the hits during the games that I would

See PENNINGTON, Page 6

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL



Alabama guard Monique Bivins drives past an Auburn forward Louise Emeagi early in the first half of the Crimson Tide's loss to the Tigers. *CW/T.G. Paschal*

Bama falls to rival Auburn by 11

By RICHARD D. LEE
Senior Sports Reporter

For some reason the Alabama women's basketball team always brings out the best in Auburn's Natasha Brackett and Nicole Loudon.

Brackett scored 32 points and Loudon scored 23 points while pulling down 13 rebounds in Auburn's 74-63 win over the Crimson Tide.

The pair each set new career highs in points, which they had previously established against Alabama.

The Tide's third straight loss drops them to 13-11 (4-7 SEC), while Auburn improves to 14-10 (5-6 SEC) after notching its fourth straight win over the Tide.

"Brackett and Loudon kicked our tails tonight, and they deserve all the credit," Alabama coach Rick Moody said. "They played with a swagger and cockiness all

night long."

Brackett scored 22 of her 32 in the first half as Auburn raced out to a quick 24-16 lead. At one point Brackett scored 13 straight for the Tigers.

"They were overplaying me, so I was able to drive to the bucket and get some easy shots," Brackett said.

Alabama hung tough though, as Navonda Moore matched Brackett almost point for point. The sophomore guard scored Alabama's first six points on her way to 13 in the half.

"I felt good coming into the game," Moore said. "My teammates got me the ball when I was open, and I knocked down the shots."

The Tide's defense was also up to the test in the early going as it forced the Tigers into 12 first-half turnovers that it converted into 12 points.

In fact, Auburn had more turnovers in the first half (12)

than made shots (11). Still, the Tigers held a 34-28 edge at the break on the strength of Brackett's gaudy numbers.

"Brackett came out and got their team into a good flow," Moody said. "They knocked down the shots, and we didn't."

On the outset of the second half the Tide went on a 10-0 run, highlighted by a Natasha Gamble jumper that gave Alabama its first lead of the game at 41-40.

The lead wouldn't last for long though as Loudon started to heat up, picking up right where Brackett left off.

The senior scored 13 of her 19 second-half points during a 17-4 Auburn run that closed the door on Alabama.

"We kept our composure when they made a run," Loudon said. "We have a lot of seniors, and we used our experience to our advantage tonight. My mindset was to just keep going to the basket."

Alabama could get no closer than 11 the rest of the way as the Tide once again turned in a poor shooting performance against the SEC's second-ranked defense.

"When we started missing shots towards the end of the game it sort of became contagious," Moody said. "We didn't execute at critical times when we had to."

While the offense was struggling, the defense wasn't doing much better. After committing 12 first-half turnovers, Auburn committed only three turnovers in the second half while the Tide gave the ball up a total of 12 times.

"We had mental breakdowns on the defensive end — that's my only answer [as to why Alabama lost]," Moore said. "If we had stopped them, we would have won the game."

Moore finished with a team-high 20 points, while Gamble added 15.

LeBlanc looks to avoid sophomore jinx

By Richard D. Lee
Senior Sports Reporter

The sophomore jinx has been described as infamous, dreaded, unavoidable and maybe even apocryphal.

Just don't tell that to Wade LeBlanc.

After turning in a freshman season like no other in the 111-year history of Alabama baseball, the lefty returns this year hoping to avoid the dreaded sophomore slump.

"The big change this year is I know what to expect," LeBlanc said. "I'm just going to go out there and pitch my game like I did last year, get people out and win ball games for us."

In 2004, LeBlanc racked up just about every post-season award possible as he became the first Alabama player ever to earn National and SEC Freshman of the Year honors.

He also garnered such honors as 2004 National Freshman of the Year by Collegiate Baseball and First-Team Freshman All-American by Baseball America.

"Last year was crazy," LeBlanc said. "I never thought I would have a year like that and be named SEC Freshman of the Year."

LeBlanc set Crimson Tide freshman records for innings pitched (112.2), strikeouts (98) and complete games (eight) while posting an 8-4 record and 2.08 ERA.

"A year like that does not happen often," Alabama head coach Jim Wells said. "We have certainly never had a freshman that did what he did."

Coming into this season,

the Lake Charles, La., native knows his success will be judged by fans and the media, not by his own perceptions.

"I'm not worried about that," LeBlanc said. "I'm just going to worry about going out there and trying to win."

The preseason All-American will be the No. 1 starter and the man around whom Wells will build his staff, a staff that was the best in the SEC last year.

"When we sit down and say what player is going to do what it's nice to have a Friday night starter," Wells said. "It's better to build your staff when you know who the No. 1 guy is than when you have eight No. 5 [starters] and hope one of them steps up."

In trying to assemble his

staff, one of Wells' biggest concerns this spring was replacing junior Taylor Tankersley. The versatile Tankersley, a first-round draft selection by the Florida Marlins, appeared in 27 games as a starter and reliever, compiling a 2-5 record and SEC-leading 2.00 ERA.

"There are still some question marks, but I feel like there are some good arms that make up our staff," Wells said. "Certainly LeBlanc is No. 1, but we need to be able to feel good about a No. 2 and No. 3 and a midweek starter and reliever."

The one constant for Wells, though, is the fact that he has a player in LeBlanc who can be counted on to deliver the goods every time he steps on the mound.

"My feeling is if you coach a team for 30 years like we have, then you get only one guy who

is that exceptional," Wells said. "We probably won't ever see another guy like him again. He has good control, command of several pitches and he is, above all, a great competitor."

So let the sophomore scrutiny begin. Just don't expect LeBlanc to buy into the whole jinx thing.

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Newcomers poised to make impact

By MATT SCALICI
Senior Sports Reporter

The 2005 Alabama baseball roster is stocked with experience, but this year it will also feature a healthy dose of young blood as well.

After a relatively disappointing year in 2004, Tide head coach Jim Wells, now entering his 11th season with the Tide, was able to pick up a number of newcomers who have the potential to make an impact early on for Alabama.

In their first four games, which Bama split with Hawaii 2-2, junior transfer Kody Valverde and freshman Cale Iorg started in the infield for the Tide, making a notable mark on the team.

Valverde, who was named All-Conference last year when

he played at the University of New Orleans, won the starting job at catcher for the Tide and has already improved the team at what was once a weak point.

"When I left the University of New Orleans, we were losing a lot," Valverde said. "I really wanted to go somewhere that wins and where I can contribute to helping the team win."

Knoxville, Tenn., native Iorg has had an equally impressive debut with the Tide winning the starting job at shortstop in his freshman season.

The son of major leaguer Garth Iorg, Cale was rated by Baseball America as the No. 2 infield prospect in the country.

"He has a range at shortstop like I've never seen before," said freshman pitcher David Robertson. "I've never seen a player that can move as quick

as he can."

Iorg, a dedicated member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, is planning to serve a two-year mission after the 2005 season. Many analysts have said that Iorg would have likely been picked up by a major league franchise this year were it not for the impending mission trip.

In the meantime, Iorg said he is enjoying his time playing the game he loves.

"The team has been awesome," Iorg said. "It's a group of guys that just really love to have fun, and it makes the game more fun to play."

In just four games, Iorg and Valverde have already become integral parts of the Tide roster, a phenomenon not overlooked by Wells.

"What they bring to the team in the early part of the

season is that they are filling holes at two crucial spots, catcher and shortstop," Wells said. "Not only are these guys coming in and starting as freshman, but they're doing it at key positions."

Two other newcomers have also seen time out on the field, or more specifically the pitcher's mound. Freshmen Josh Copeland and Robertson each made two appearances in Hawaii and are expected to see more time on the mound this season.

"David Robertson has really impressed me," Iorg said. "If you asked him how he's done, he'd be really nonchalant about it; but he got here, and he's done really well."

Robertson said the biggest difference from high school to

See ARRIVALS, Page 7

PENNINGTON

Continued from Page 5

take during football and that's helped out. Baseball's not as much of a physical game but more mental."

Pennington's health is a key component for the Tide as a few players already may be MIA.

"We've had a couple of guys sick from the trip to Hawaii, so we're trying to get him ready to play first base [for the games this weekend]," Alabama coach Jim Wells said.

Wells also said Pennington could see action in left field and as the designated hitter as well.

"Anytime you can contribute it makes you feel better," Pennington said. "It's going to be a long year, and I'm just going to have to work extra hard."

Starting this year and continuing into next year, Pennington will have plenty

of time to work on his game as he has decided to concentrate solely on baseball, informing Alabama's football coaches he won't return for his senior season.

His decision, albeit tough, is one that Pennington said he firmly stands by and believes in.

"I felt it was finally time for me to dedicate myself to one

sport," he said. "This is the first time I've ever been totally committed to one sport, and I can't wait to see what happens."

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Baseball vs. UNC Asheville 6:30	Basketball vs. South Carolina 2:00	Women's Tennis vs. Rice 11:00
Baseball vs. UNC Asheville 4:00	Baseball vs. UNC Asheville 2:00	

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VANBRAKLE

Continued from Page 8 [the award] and it was kind of ironic." Despite the honor, VanBrakle feels her true accomplishments are measured elsewhere. "I think my big accomplishment has been

that I have lowered the number of walks," VanBrakle said. "I've only given up three or four, and I've pitched five games. "That is a lot better than what it was. Hitting is just having confidence, knowing that I'm going to hit the ball. I just want to keep working hard, finding my spots, hitting hard."

ARRIVALS

Continued from Page 6 college baseball isn't so much on the field but in the stands. "Having the crowds at the

games is a new experience for me," Robertson said. "I'm not used to having that many people watching." One new name that Tide fans may recognize is John Parker Wilson, who will serve as the backup at third base this

season. Wilson was picked up by the Tide as a football prospect after leading Hoover High School to back-to-back state championships as a quarterback. Wilson will split time between baseball and football practice this spring.

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Tide determined to get back to Women's College World Series

By BUDDY HUGHES
Sports Editor

The 2004 softball season did not end the way the Alabama Crimson Tide would have liked it to end.

Instead of finishing the season at the Women's College World Series in Oklahoma City, Okla., the Tide's train was derailed in Los Angeles by eventual World Series champion UCLA.

So far in 2005, no one has been able to stop Alabama. The Tide carries a perfect record (11-0) into this weekend's Crimson Classic.

Junior pitcher Stephanie VanBrakle said the team still has work to do despite having a "0" in the loss column.

"We still have a lot to improve on," VanBrakle said. "Every day in practice we're working on different stuff we need to improve on. If we can just keep going, I think we're going to be fine."

The Tide's perfect start has propelled Alabama from 12th to sixth in the most recent

USA Today/NFCA Division 1 poll.

Though you wouldn't know Alabama was a top-10 team from head coach Patrick Murphy's assessment of his team so far.

Murphy said that while the pitching is ahead of schedule and the defense is about even, the team's hitting has not fulfilled its potential.

Senior catcher Ashley Courtney also said the hitting is not there yet, but she thinks it will be soon.

"Our hitting is not where it needs to be," Courtney said. "We've got 11 games under our belt, and we've yet to get consecutive hits back to back, but it's coming around to where it needs to be."

Alabama is only hitting .257 so far this season, almost 30 points below the Tide's average last season.

While the hot bats have started off cold, the Tide's fireballers on the mound have picked up where they left off last year.

Returning starters VanBrakle and senior Jennifer Wright have been dominant so far this season.

VanBrakle was named SEC Pitcher of the Week this week and Wright struck out a career-high 12 batters against Northwestern State.

"We still have a lot to improve on. Every day in practice we're working on different stuff we need to improve on."

—STEPHANIE VANBRACLE
Alabama pitcher

Rounding out the rotation will be freshman pitcher Chrissy Owens. She is just one of five freshman that will have an impact this season.

So far, the hard-throwing right-hander has been on her game, allowing only three earned runs in almost 27 innings of work.

Wright said Owens catches the opposition off-guard with how fast she throws.

"I think Chrissy's come in and done well," Wright said. "She definitely throws hard. She comes in, and I don't think the batters are ready for how hard she throws. She hasn't been pitching that long. I think she's learned a lot since she's been here."

Another influential freshman is first baseman Dani Woods. Woods has the unenviable task of replacing All-American Jackie McClain, who graduated last year.

Courtney said Woods has matured into her spot on the team.

"I saw Dani in the fall, and

she's grown so much since then," Courtney said. "She's like any freshman coming in — a little lost and a little confused on what her role is — but from the minute I saw her hit, I knew she was going to fill that void for us."

The freshmen that play will be able to benefit from Alabama's seven returning seniors to help guide them on the field.

Alabama returns three starters in the infield — third baseman Staci Ramsey, shortstop Dominique Accetturo and second baseman Leah White — along with Courtney behind the plate.

The outfield returns two starters in senior outfielders Jackie Wilkins and Capper Reed.

The other outfield slot will be manned by a platoon of senior Emily Currie, sophomore Mandy Burford and freshman Jordan Praytor.

Alabama will play its first game in the Crimson Classic at 1:30 p.m.



CW/ Jessica Maxwell

Alabama third baseman Staci Ramsey will occupy the hot corner for the Alabama women's softball team this year. Ramsey is hitting .306 in 11 games for the Tide so far.

VanBrakle powering Tide pitching staff

Junior named SEC Pitcher of the Week

By JESSIE PATTERSON
Sports Reporter

Stephanie VanBrakle made a decision to work harder on her skills last summer, and now it is paying huge dividends for the Crimson Tide softball team.

The right-handed junior pitcher spent the summer playing for the Brakettes, a women's softball team out of Connecticut.

"I worked a lot harder over the summer by playing with a women's team," VanBrakle said. "I worked on mental stuff, and there is a definite improvement with the mental aspect [of the game]. I learned a new riseball grip. My pitching has come around a lot from last year because I've been focused on it. I've tried to improve everything."

And improve she did. Head coach Patrick Murphy noticed a difference when she returned to campus.

"I could tell she was in better shape," Murphy said. "When we got home from UCLA from the Regionals, I

didn't see her again until August since I was with [the Canadian Olympic softball team]. I didn't know what [Stephanie] was doing. She committed herself to the team and to get in better shape, and I think you can really tell a difference performance-wise," Murphy said.

Even with VanBrakle and her teammates off to an 11-0 start this season, everyone admits there is still room for improvement.

"We all need to keep working hard," VanBrakle said. "That includes me, too. I think everyone is willing to work hard. I think my role is just as important as everyone else's."

On a team with seven seniors and three juniors, VanBrakle is one of a group of leaders on the softball team. Murphy describes the group as his 10 additional assistant coaches.

Even on a team of leaders, VanBrakle stands out.

"In that Oklahoma game, that one inning when [Oklahoma] had a mini rally going, Stephanie put the fire out, came in and got everyone excited," Murphy said. "That was the inning she got the home run in. If you talk the talk, you've got to walk the walk, and she came through."

Her accomplishments have been noticed throughout the SEC. On Monday, she was named SEC Pitcher of the Week for her performances against Oklahoma and Houston in the Houston Hilton Invitational.

"It was real nice," VanBrakle said. "One of our hitters is usually Player of the Week. It was a great honor because there are so many good pitchers."

VanBrakle and assistant coach Vann Stuedeman had a laugh about the award. The two had been discussing how she usually won the Player of the Week award for her hitting abilities.

"[Stephanie] always seems to get Player of the Week instead of Pitcher of the Week because she out-hits every-

body," Stuedeman said. "But this year, although she is hitting well, she is pitching well. We had been talking about

See VANBRACLE, Page 7



Stephanie VanBrakle

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