



Downtown Dothan Hoops Classic

Stars sharp as Ashford defeats Houston Acad.
Raiders take first loss;
Rebels defeat Dothan

BY JON JOHNSON
jjohnson@dothaneagle.com

In a game pitting arguably the two top players in the Wiregrass, Ashford's LaDarius Knight did his damage early and Houston Academy's Srdjan Petrovic did his late.

It was the hot start by Knight, who scored 25 of his 30 points in the first half, that helped Ashford knock Houston Academy from the ranks of the unbeaten with a 77-63 win on Tuesday in the Downtown Hoops Classic at the Dothan Civic Center.

"The first half, he (Knight) was the only thing that was going for

us offensively," Ashford coach Chase Lewis said. "He was hot. He was making everything."

Petrovic scored a game-high 36 points, but many of those came after Ashford had pretty much wrapped up the victory. The Raider junior was held to 11 in the first two quarters.

Ashford (10-6) led 39-26 at half-time and ultimately it proved too high of a hill for Houston Academy (14-1) to climb.

Knight was 9-of-18 from the field in the opening half, including 3-of-8 in 3-point tries with four

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DOWNTOWN DOTHAN
HOOPS CLASSIC

When: Today through Saturday

Where: Dothan Civic Center

Tickets: \$6 daily — children 5 & under free

Today's schedule

3:30 p.m. — Barbour County vs. Geneva

5 p.m. — Dale County vs. Wicksburg

6:30 p.m. — Northview vs. Eufaula

8 p.m. — Enterprise vs. Providence

Abbeville edges Headland;
Daleville downs G.W. Long

BY JON JOHNSON
jjohnson@dothaneagle.com

"Play smart, play hard, play together" is the motto for the Abbeville basketball team this season.

"We're doing one component of it, and that's the playing hard," Abbeville coach Emanuel Brown said.

It was the key reason Abbeville was able to hold off rival Headland 56-53 on Tuesday during the first round of the Downtown Dothan Hoops Classic at the Dothan Civic Center.

Clinging to a one-point lead over Headland with 37 seconds remaining, Abbeville point guard

Daquon Kinney missed two free throws and a mad scramble ensued in the lane for the loose ball.

Somehow it was Kinney who ended up on top of the basketball and alertly called a timeout.

"That was a key moment in the game," Brown said. "He missed a free throw and he was able to fight for the loose ball, get on the floor and call time out. That was heads-up on his part.

"He's not much of a vocal leader, but he leads by example. He's going to give it all he's got every night. The other guys need to rally around that. We all need to dive on

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AUBURN FOOTBALL

BOUNCING BACK



ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO

Auburn quarterback Jarrett Stidham (8), shown on the sidelines of the SEC championship game on Dec. 2, has impressed teammates and coaches with his ability to rebound from tough circumstances this season.

Tigers will lean on Stidham's poise in Peach Bowl

BY JOSH VITALE
Staff Writer

There is no shortage of numbers you can point to when talking about Jarrett Stidham's success in his first season at Auburn.

The redshirt sophomore quarterback completed 66.7 percent of his passes, which led the SEC. His 2,827 passing yards is the most any Tigers quarterback has thrown for since Cam Newton posted 2,854 yards during his Heisman campaign in 2010. The Baylor transfer threw 17 touchdowns to just four interceptions.

But one of the most impressive things about Stidham, if you ask his offen-

sive coordinator, is not one of the many standout things he's done this season, but rather what he's done after poor plays or performances.

"One good thing about playing the position, and Jarrett has a really good

understanding of, is you can't live and die on every throw, every snap and every game," Chip Lindsey said earlier this month. "He's done a really nice job of rebounding from a bad snap, bad game or whatever it has been."

There have been a number of examples on a game-by-game level. In a Week 2 loss at Clemson, Stidham completed 13 of 24 passes, but totaled just 79 yards through the air and took 11 sacks. The next week, though, Auburn's signal-caller completed a season-best 86.5 percent of his passes (32 of 37) for a season-high 364 yards in a win over Mercer.

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PEACH BOWL
UCF (12-0) VS. AUBURN (10-3)

Atlanta

Time: 11:30 a.m.,
Monday, Jan. 1

TV: ESPN

Alabama
Football



CFP SEMIFINAL
SUGAR BOWL
CLEMSON (12-1)
VS. ALABAMA (11-1)

New Orleans

Time: 7:45 p.m., Monday, Jan. 1
TV: ESPN

Tide eager
to make
most of
2nd chance

BY ALEX BYINGTON
For The Eagle

NEW ORLEANS — After a fourth straight year of making the College Football Playoff, Alabama knows the drill this week.

That said, given how the fourth-seeded Crimson Tide (11-1) had to sweat out the CFP selection process before backing into the four-team field despite not winning the SEC West, Alabama is feeling a newfound sense of appreciation heading into its trip south to New Orleans for next week's Sugar Bowl national semifinal on New Year's Day.

"It don't get old," junior line-backer Anfernee Jennings said last week. "We were one decision from not being here, so we (are) taking advantage of it and we understand what's in front of us and what we have to do."

The Crimson Tide held one final bowl practice Tuesday in Tuscaloosa after returning from a three-day holiday break for Christmas. The team makes its way to the Big Easy early Wednesday morning.

Alabama enters the week as a slight 3-point favorite over top-ranked Clemson (12-1), according to vegasinsider.com, but there's a prevailing "us-against-the-world" underdog mentality within the Alabama locker room, especially given

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Swimming

Ledecky named AP Female Athlete of 2017

The Associated Press

Katie Ledecky got her start in swimming because she just wanted to make friends. Her brother was eager to join a team at a pool near their house and as a 6-year-old, she tagged along.

By summer's end, the Ledecky siblings had made 100 friends ranging in age from 6 to 18. Some of them remain good friends with Katie, who went on to become the world's best swimmer in the post-Michael Phelps era.

She earned five golds and a silver at this year's world cham-

pionships in Budapest, maintaining the upward trajectory she first established as a surprise gold medalist at the 2012 London Olympics.

Her dominant performance in Hungary earned Ledecky Associated Press Female Athlete of the Year honors.

In balloting by U.S. editors and news directors announced Tuesday, Ledecky received 351 points, edging out Serena Williams with 343. Williams won the Australian Open for her Open era-record 23rd Grand Slam tennis title. Olympic track star

Allyson Felix finished third in voting, with 248 points.

Last year, Ledecky was second to gymnast Simone Biles in the balloting.

The AP Male Athlete of the Year will be announced today.

Ledecky is the eighth female swimmer to win and the first since Amy Van Dyken in 1996. Among the others is 1969 winner Debbie Meyer. At last year's Rio de Janeiro Games, Ledecky equaled Meyer's feat of sweeping the 200, 400 and 800 freestyles in

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ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO

United States swimmer Katie Ledecky reacts after winning the gold medal in the women's 1500-meter freestyle final during the the World Aquatics Championships in Budapest, Hungary, on July 25.