



See the story in the middle of the page about the Apopka Blue Darters boys bowling team. The preview story takes a look at the team attempting to win its fourth-consecutive

state championship as the season begins next week. The Darters have won the past three state titles and team member Pete Vergos has won two-straight individual state bowling titles.



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Darters start season with rout of Ocoee

By John Peery
Apopka Chief Staff

After a preseason loss to Lake City Columbia, Apopka Blue Darters football coach Rick Darlington was preaching that his team needed to improve its play. Four turnovers, double-digit penalties, and missed assignments on both offense and defense made for a sloppy performance.

In the season opener Friday, August 26, against Ocoee, it wasn't perfect, but the Blue Darters certainly made improvements, committing no turnovers while having only one penalty en route to dominating Ocoee 62-7.

The 1-0 Blue Darters jumped out to a 15-0 first-quarter lead. Then the Blue Darters exploded for 35 points in the second period to take a 50-7 halftime lead. With a running clock for the en-

tire second half, the Blue Darters scored on their first play of the third quarter and the final play of the game.

Good field position kept Apopka's offensive numbers down a bit, but the Darters still managed 310 rushing yards on 37 attempts. Two quarterbacks combined for 139 passing yards.

Nine Apopka runners got at least one carry as quarterback Demetri Burch led the way with 88 yards and two scores on just five carries. He was backed up by sophomore Cornelius Williams, who scampered for 70 yards and two touchdowns on only five rushes.

"We played better," Darlington said. "We didn't fumble or turn it over. I think if we hadn't turned it over against Lake City,

See **APOPKA** Page **4C**



Linebacker David Britzius pulls on the jersey as he brings down Ocoee's Keyshawn Goins.

Youth night set for Sept. 9 at Apopka High football game

The Apopka Blue Darters home football game against the DeLand Bulldogs on Friday, September 9, will be Youth Night. Local youth football teams and cheerleaders are invited to attend.

Adults in charge of the youth football and cheer leagues should contact Apopka High athletic director Fred Priest at 407-905-5506 or fred.priest@ocps.net for more information.

The game is scheduled to kick off at 7 p.m. as the Darters will host the Bulldogs from Volusia County. Tickets are \$6 and will be available at the gate.

Blue Darters aim toward fourth-straight bowling title

By Neal Fisher
Apopka Chief Staff

With the start of the new high school bowling season comes the one thought the sport of bowling has come to revolve around: Can the Apopka Blue Darters boys bowling team be dethroned or will Apopka remain the epicenter of the sport in Florida?

The Darters have won the past three state championships and Pete Vergos has claimed the past two individual state bowling titles.

"Everyone is excited to try to defend another state championship," Apopka coach Todd Hauser said. "We have had to make some changes as every team does. We have some of the same, giving us the belief we are just as capable as any of the other teams in the state or any of our past teams of winning another state championship. There is work to put in and we have to improve in some areas, but the potential from which to start is still there after all these seasons and years.

"This season, we will have our

work cut out for us as far as having the intensity of the bulls-eye on our back. Every season, the intensity to knock us off has grown stronger, but we feel we have what it takes to respond. Like each of the past three seasons, we aren't trying to figure out our make-up and what we do best. We need to figure out how to best apply the make-up of the team and what we do best. Every one of the state championships has been won by applying the make-up of the team and what we do best differently. That trend continues with

this season."

The title list has grown to seemingly never end for the boys team with the first ever national championship (sanctioned by the United States Bowling Congress, held in July), three consecutive state titles (FHSA sanctioned), two individual state crowns (Pete Vergos), two district championships, two perfect records during the regular season and several perfect scores of 300 (both individual and team using Baker Rules). For good measure, three Blue Darters

earned berths in the individual state championship tournament last season.

As gaudy as possible, when the list of accomplishments also reached the point of questioning how the program, as a whole, gets stronger and no answer seemed possible, along came Samantha Johnson.

In only 24 months, Johnson went from never bowling competitively to placing second at both

See **TITLES** Page **3C**

Apopka faces Edgewater in road game

By John Peery
Apopka Chief Staff

With former Florida Gator great Chris Leak now heading up the Edgewater High football program, the Eagles have gotten plenty of attention.

Now that the season has started, perhaps they don't want all that many folks looking at what is going on.

Edgewater was dominated in both the preseason game against Winter Park and in last week's regular-season opener vs. Bishop Moore.

Now, the Eagles (0-1) go directly from the frying pan into the fire as the Apopka Blue Darters (1-0) are next on the schedule. Edgewater hosts the Darters today, Friday, September 2, at Frank Lough Field. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m., and tickets are \$6 and available at the gate.

Last week, after a preseason



Apopka coach Rick Darlington makes his point known last week.

setback against Lake City Columbia, in which the Blue Darters were very sloppy in all phases of the game, Apopka coach Rick Darlington said he wasn't concerned about his team's opponent, but, rather, his own and it making improvement.

Who: Apopka Blue Darters (1-0 overall, 0-0 Dist. 8A-4) at Edgewater Eagles (0-1 overall, 0-0 Dist. 7A-4)
When: Today, Fri., Sept. 2, 7 p.m.
Where: Edgewater High's Frank Lough Field
Why: Metro Conference game
Cost: \$6 at the gate
Radio: WBZW-1520AM; 1520WBZW.com

Even with the Blue Darters recording a 62-7 victory last week over Ocoee, Darlington said his team still has plenty of improving to do.

"We just need to concentrate on

See **DARTERS** Page **6C**



Terrance Moore highsteps his way down the field for the Mustangs against Dr. Phillips.

Mustangs look to bounce back

By Neal Fisher
Apopka Chief Staff

After taking on the Dr. Phillips Panthers, the task at hand for the Wekiva Mustangs doesn't get much easier as far as reputation and the status among the football landscape. But the Boone Braves do present an opponent who is still trying to find an identity and consistent tangible

results.

The contest against the Braves is the second of three consecutive on the road for the Mustangs. Kickoff is scheduled for 7 p.m. today, Friday, September 2.

"Boone is a program which always seems to be relevant when who earns a berth in the playoffs is being

See **WEKIVA** Page **6C**

Who: Wekiva Mustangs (0-1 overall, 0-0 Dist. 8A-4) at Boone Braves (0-1 overall, 0-0, Dist. 8A-3)
When: Today, Fri., Sept. 2, 7 p.m.
Where: Boone High's Norton Baker Field
Why: Metro Conference game
Cost: \$6 at the gate

DP builds early 14-0 lead, downs Wekiva

By Neal Fisher
Apopka Chief Staff

The list is lengthy as to why the Dr. Phillips Panthers football team is at the level of consistently making long runs into the postseason.

But for opponents, including Wekiva Mustangs coach Rich Bedesem, perhaps the reason most often cited as to why is the ability to deliver a sudden hammer-blow by striking at any time from anywhere on the field.

The Panthers opened the 2016 season on Friday, August 26, with a flurry of scoring strikes, needing only

See **MUSTANGS** Page **5C**

Golf will honor firefighter; raise funds

Apopka firefighters are organizing the second annual Armando Borjas Jr. Golf Tournament to honor fallen firefighter Armando Borjas Jr., who died of cancer in 2013.

Proceeds from the golf tournament will benefit a memorial scholarship fund in his name that will help send a local youth to fire and EMT school and carry on Borjas' legacy of public service.

The Armando Borjas Jr. Golf Tournament will be held Saturday, October 15 at Forest Lake Golf Club, 10521 Clarcona-Ocoee Road, Apop-

ka.

Borjas spent 14 years fighting fires and saving lives with the Apopka Fire Department and seven years of active duty in the Marines. However, in 2011, he was diagnosed with Stage IV esophageal cancer that he battled until his death in 2013 at the age of 39.

Registration is 6-7:30 a.m. There will be continental breakfast. Shotgun start begins at 8 a.m.

Participants can enjoy 18 holes of golf including golf cart and a bucket of range balls.

Lunch will be barbecue pulled pork sandwich with two sides and a beverage.

Among the golf tournament's highlights are a raffle for a four-day, three-night Marriott Villa vacation, a silent auction, and a dart golf ball pro launcher.

For more information, contact Jerold Maynard, 407-718-1763 or maynard1662@gmail.com; Andrew Brown, 407-920-9959 or andrew.brown86@gmail.com; or Matt Yoham, 407-601-8474 or myoham@apopka.net.

Correction

In the August 26 edition of *The Apopka Chief*, incorrect information was included with a picture of the Apopka High School bowling team regarding where Pete Vergos finished in a national high school tournament. He

finished 66th in the tournament held in late July.

Other members of the bowling team and their finishes in the tournament include: Keith Horton-10th, Nick Moyer-14th, and Gage Stelling-22nd.

We regret the error.



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SPRINT CUP SERIES
Race: Southern 500
Where: Darlington Raceway
When: Sunday, 6 p.m. (ET)
TV: NBC
2015 Winner: Carl Edwards (right)



XFINITY SERIES
Race: VFW Help a Hero 200
Where: Darlington Raceway
When: Saturday, 3:30 p.m. (ET)
TV: NBC
2015 Winner: Denny Hamlin

CAMPING WORLD TRUCK SERIES
Race: Chevrolet Silverado 250
Where: Canadian Tire Motorsport Park
When: Sunday, 2:30 p.m. (ET)
TV: FS1
2015 Winner: Erik Jones

NASCAR INSIDER

by RICK MINTER / Universal Uclick

Larson nails down first Cup victory; earns Chase berth

On a NASCAR weekend in which new winners were the name of the game, Kyle Larson was the biggest winner of all.

The 24-year-old Larson, winless in his previous 98 Sprint Cup starts, raced past rookie Chase Elliott with 13 laps remaining in Sunday's Pure Michigan 400 at Michigan International Speedway to score his first career Cup victory.

Larson, who has four wins in the Xfinity Series and two more in the Camping World Truck Series, also broke a 99-race win drought for his car owner, Chip Ganassi. And Larson, who is of Japanese descent, becomes the first graduate of the NASCAR Drive for Diversity and NASCAR Next programs to win a Sprint Cup race.

As is usually the case with a first-time winner, Larson was overcome with emotion, especially since he recently lost his sprint-car-racing friend Bryan Clauson, who died from injuries suffered in a crash at Belleville, Kansas.

"I was teared-up that whole last few laps because I could just feel it," Larson said in Victory Lane. "It was finally going to be it. This one is for the Clauson family. We really miss Bryan. We parked it for him, so that's really cool."

Many in the sport expected Larson to have won before now, and before last Sunday he had come close. He had three runner-up finishes in his rookie year of 2014, and was second at Dover International Speedway earlier this year.

Throughout his rise through the short-track ranks, he'd been able win with apparent ease.

He said his first Cup win left him with an entirely different feeling than other firsts in his career.

"This feels different because it's taken me a lot longer than it took me in any of the other stuff to get a win," he said. "It took me a couple months to win my first sprint car race, four days after my 15th birthday. It took me a few months to win when I got into USAC, and took me a few years to win a [World of Outlaws] race."

"This — after the way my rookie season started, coming close a few times, not getting it done — you can visualize the win that early in your career. It's going to happen. It's going to happen. But it just never happened."

"This one's different just 'cause of how long we had to wait and how

much harder I've had to work for it. It's special because all the hard work's paid off."

Larson's win brought with it a berth in the Chase for the Sprint Cup — the first of his three-year career.

For Ganassi, making the Chase is one of the keys to maintaining a healthy race team.

"It's really, really big," he said. "We've been on the cusp for so many years. We got Jamie (McMurray) in there last year and now getting Kyle in, we couldn't be happier. I'm kind of speechless, to tell you the truth."

Ganassi could wind up with both of his drivers in the Chase this year, as McMurray, who finished eighth at Michigan, now holds the 13th spot in the standings with just two races to run before the start of the championship-deciding Chase.

For Elliott, who now has finished second in his two Sprint Cup starts at Michigan, the latest runner-up finish was especially disappointing, as it was almost a replay of the race earlier this year, when he also lost the lead on a late restart.

"I gave it away again," Elliott said. "It's one of those things where you do or you don't, and I didn't."

Brad Keselowski finished third, ahead of Ryan Blaney and Kevin Harvick.



Kyle Larson, in the No. 42 Chevrolet, got his first Sprint Cup win in his 99th start. His victory in the Pure Michigan 400 broke a 99-race win drought for Chip Ganassi Racing.

Keselowski a 'big fan' of lower downforce aero package

Sunday's Pure Michigan 400 was the third and final test this season of a lower-downforce aerodynamics package that could see widespread use next season, either in its current form or with some modifications.

Brad Keselowski said he's a fan of the package, and believes it will be tweaked some before next year.

"It's not perfect, that's for sure," he said. "There's a lot of stuff to still work on. I think it's a small improvement in showcasing driver talent to win races."

He said drivers throughout the field, including race winner Kyle Larson and second-finishing Chase Elliott, had to wrestle their cars throughout the race, while running 200 mph or more into the turns.

"Their cars were sideways, sometimes smoking the tires through the corners," Keselowski said. "I think that's what this racing is built on. I think that's a good direction to go towards."

"So I've been a big fan of this package all along, and hope to see it move forward, along with some other projects that the sport is working on to continue to improve the quality of racing for our fans and the future of our sport."

Buescher still hoping for a Chase berth

Chris Buescher, who gave himself some breathing room in his quest for a Chase berth with a fifth-place finish at Bristol Motor Speedway a week ago, gave back some of the points he gained because of engine issues at Michigan.

Buescher, who put himself in position to join the 16-driver Chase field by winning at Pocono Raceway, still must finish the regular season among the top 30 in the driver standings.

He moved to 30th after Bristol, and left there with a 13-point cushion over 31st-place David Ragan.

But at Michigan, Buescher's No. 34 Ford developed engine problems just after the start. He lost seven laps to the leaders and finished 35th.

Now he heads to Darlington Raceway still in 30th place, but just 7 points ahead of Ragan.

Buescher had praise for his crew for working on his car and getting it repaired as quickly as they did.

"Kudos to my guys for keeping their heads down and working at it and getting it fixed," he said. "It ended up being something a little bit more simple than I guess we originally figured. We got back up and running and made some laps, and made a really terrible day into just an OK day."

"Now we get to go to Darlington, and I am excited for that. I was excited for [Michigan]. Even with the troubles we had, the balance was really good, so it is a shame we didn't really get to participate."

Three slots are still up for grabs in this year's Chase for the Sprint Cup

Kyle Larson's win at Michigan put him in the Chase for the Sprint Cup, which makes 13 race winners this so far season. With each winner getting a Chase berth, that leaves just three Chase slots left, with two races to run.

Any driver inside the top 30 in the standings can make the Chase with a win at either Darlington Raceway this weekend or at Richmond International Raceway on Sept. 10.

The remaining position or positions will go to the winless drivers who are the highest in the driver standings after Richmond.

Currently, the three at the top of the winless group are Chase Elliott, who is 11th in the standings, 27 points ahead of Ryan Newman, who finished 17th at Michigan and is the first driver out of the elite group. Austin Dillon is 12th in the standings, 21 ahead of Newman; while Jamie McMurray holds the final spot, 15 points ahead of Newman, who made the Chase in 2014 despite not win-

ning a race, and went on to finish second in the final standings.

McMurray, who finished eighth at Michigan, said he's watching the points closely.

"I had a really good restart at the end and probably finished better than we should have, and finished ahead of the guys that we needed to," he said, adding that his job the next two weeks is pretty clear. "You just have to get the most points you can and try to win."

Dillon, who finished 16th at Michigan, said he's doing all he can to make his first Chase appearance.

"I wish we had a little bit more [at Michigan], but overall, we're still looking good in the points standings and even stayed out to lead a lap," he said. "Our goal remains the same: to win a race and make it into the Chase for the Sprint Cup. Hopefully, we can do that at Darlington Raceway next weekend."

Xfinity Series and Truck Series race simultaneously; both events produce first-time winners

Two of NASCAR's feel-good stories of the season played out almost simultaneously on Saturday afternoon, with Brett Moffitt and Michael McDowell getting their first major NASCAR victories.

McDowell won the Xfinity Series race at Road America, while Moffitt won the Camping World Truck Series race at Michigan International Speedway — a race that ended up running at the same time as the Xfinity race, after starting late due to a rainstorm at Michigan.

At Road America, McDowell, a Sprint Cup regular, was making a rare start in the No. 2 Chevrolet for Richard Childress Racing. McDowell, who drives for an underdog Leavine Family Racing team in the Cup Series, is known as much for his faith as for his driving. Some remember

him more for a spectacular crash at Texas Motor Speedway in his rookie season of 2008 than for anything he's accomplished in a race car.

The 31-year-old father of four doesn't usually have the equipment to showcase his skills in the Cup Series, but his road-racing abilities have gotten him some top-notch rides in the Xfinity Series. Those skills at turning left and right on a race track paid off Saturday, as he led 24 of the race's 48 laps, including the final 20, to get his first NASCAR victory in 297 starts across the sanctioning body's top three series.

But it wasn't easy, as McDowell had to overcome an early run-in with Alex Tagliani and then hold off his Richard Childress Racing teammate Brennan Gaughan, who was running second and riding on fresher tires, during an overtime shootout for the victory.

"I am so very thankful for the opportunity," McDowell posted on his Facebook page. "So many people made it possible over the span of my career, I can't thank them all enough."

At Michigan, Moffitt — who was Sprint Cup's Rookie of the Year last year, but could only watch as his Michael Waltrip Racing team shut down, leaving him with no prospects for 2016 — was driving the No. 11 Toyota for Red Horse Racing.

He got that ride in early July after the team's regular driver, Matt Tift, had to step out of the truck to have surgery to remove a brain tumor.

Moffitt started on the outside pole at Kentucky in his first start in the truck, but the engine blew, leaving him with a 31st-place finish. He did not race at Eldora Speedway, but finished third at Pocono, then second at Bristol.



Brett Moffitt, in the No. 11 Toyota, beat No. 17 Timothy Peters to the Careers for Veterans 200 finish line by .098 seconds.

Last Saturday, he continued his progression, surging ahead of his teammate Timothy Peters on the final lap to get the victory by a scant .098 seconds.

It was the first lap he'd led all season, and only the third the 23-year-old driver had ever led in his NASCAR career.

"I needed this," Moffitt said in his winner's interview. "I had no races on my schedule this year, and to get picked up by [team owner] Tom DeLoach and everyone at Red Horse Racing is amazing."

"Our partners at Toyota have been really good at backing us and giving us the technology we need. This is everything I needed to have happen. This is amazing."

Peters finished second, ahead of Daniel Hemric, William Byron and Cameron Hayley.

At Road America, Gaughan, the 2014 winner of that race, was the runner-up, over Brennan Poole, Daniel Suarez and Ryan Reed.



Michael McDowell, in the No. 2 Chevrolet, got his first Xfinity Series victory last Saturday in the Road America 180.

NOTEBOOK

Journalist Al Pearce wins Pocono Spirit Award

Veteran motorsports journalist Al Pearce won the quarterly Pocono Spirit Award given by the National Motorsports Press Association. Pearce won for his efforts in getting a helmet autographed by all 20 living Formula 1 champions, as well as Phil Hill and Jack Brabham, who died after signing the helmet, which was auctioned earlier this year with the \$13,000 proceeds donated to charity.

Although Pearce was disappointed that the helmet project, which he worked on for four years, did not bring in more money, he is already at work on his next charity project: getting the 18 NHRA Top Fuel champions to autograph a helmet.

NUMERICALLY SPEAKING

7 Sprint Cup victories at Darlington Raceway by Jeff Gordon — tops among all active drivers. Jimmie Johnson is next, with three.

13 Darlington victories by Rick Hendrick — the most of any Sprint Cup car owner.

96 Darlington races won by a driver who started in the top 10 — in 112 races.

3 Consecutive Xfinity Series wins by Richard Childress Racing at Road America — Michael McDowell this year, Paul Menard in 2015 and Brendan Gaughan in 2014.

SPRINT CUP STANDINGS

1. Kevin Harvick, 799
2. Brad Keselowski, 774
3. Carl Edwards, 724
4. Kurt Busch, 721
5. Joey Logano, 716
6. Kyle Busch, 696
7. Denny Hamlin, 691
8. Martin Truex Jr., 652
9. Jimmie Johnson, 648
10. Matt Kenseth, 633

Police Beat

If a law enforcement agency charges you with a crime and this paper reports that information, please notify us within 90 days if the charge is later dropped or if you are found not guilty by the court. After verifying the information, we will be happy to publish it. Please send notification to *The Apopka Chief*, P.O. Box 880, Apopka 32704, or call the newsroom at 407-886-2777.

In the period from August 23-29, the Apopka Police Department received 1,240 calls for assistance, responded to 20 crashes, issued 59 traffic citations and made 17 arrests. Of these arrests, one was a juvenile arrest. The juvenile was arrested and charged with bur-

glary of conveyance unarmed without person inside X 2 and probation violation.

The following were arrested and charged:

Eliza Flores Colon, 37, 2525 Spring Harbor Cir., Mount Dora, battery on officer or firefighter etc., public order crime use of 911 or E911 false alarm or information.

Tiffany Sanasie, 25, confidential address, Apopka, battery-touch or strike domestic.

Malcolm Keyan Tyler, 20, 20 E. 17th St., Apopka, battery-touch or strike-bond \$500.

Patricia Annette Henry, 56, 262 W. Crown Point Rd., Winter Garden, traffic offense-DUI alcohol or drugs.

Olha Ivchenko Bennett, 49, confidential address, Apopka, battery-touch or strike.

Robert Joseph Dormendo, 48, 3215 Dalhi St., Cocoa, burglary of structure-unarmed without person inside, damage property-criminal mischief over \$200 but less than \$1,000, larceny-\$20,000 but less than \$100,000, vehicle theft-grand theft of motor vehicle.

Steven Kinchens Velasquez, 34, 228 N. Bradshaw Rd., Apopka, burglary of structure, unarmed without person inside-bond \$150, fraud-false ownership information for pawned item less than \$300, larceny-grand theft over \$300 but less than \$5,000-bond \$150, stolen property-dealing in-bond \$2,500.

Edward Jesus Rivera, 25, 7813 N. Matanzas Ave., Tampa, marijuana pos-

session-not more than 20 grams, traffic offense-DUI alcohol or drugs.

Edward Ramon Rivera, 45, 718 N. Wekiwa Springs Rd., Apopka, marijuana possession-not more than 20 grams, traffic offense-DUI alcohol or drugs.

Heraldo Isau Gutierrez-Gonzalez, 21, 649 O'Shea Ct., Apopka, moving traffic violation-operate motor vehicle without valid license with knowledge (\$500 bond).

Kristopher Todd Bivens, 41, 117 W. Seaflower St., Apopka, drugs-possess controlled substance heroin.

Uber Ulbaldino Lopez-Gonzalez, 32, 293 Bonnie Glen Ln., Apopka, moving traffic violation-operate motor vehicle without valid license with knowledge (\$500 bond).

Michelle Ines Barrera, 22, 1151 Post Lake Pl., #201, Apopka, battery-

touch or strike, damage property-criminal mischief \$1,000 or more.

Matthew Warner Smith, 26, 2715 Annandale Ave., Orlando, damage property-criminal mischief \$1,000 or more, robbery-no firearm or weapon.

Elvin Roberto Callopez, 29, 586 Mainline

Blvd., Apopka, lewd lascivious behavior-molest victim less than 12 years of age offender 18 years of age or older.

Ashley Michelle Hunter, 28, 896 S. Nova Rd., Daytona Beach, drug equipment-possess and/or use, marijuana possession not more than 20 grams.

Titles: Johnson rises to top

Continued from page 1C

the national (July 2016) and state (November 2015) levels. After reaching the final of the girls individual tournament at the state championship meet as the lone undefeated entry, perhaps only an injury to Johnson's throwing hand was all that prevented Apopka from claiming three of the four state championships (team and individual for both genders).

Perhaps most impres-

sive about the unprecedented success is every season has opened with the rest of the state believing there are holes. Those holes can be exploited just enough to create the mismatches which win contests and ultimately dethrone the Blue Darters.

During the run, those areas of Apopka's game suffering a drop in quality or at least becoming concerns were due to graduation of team mem-

See **TITLES** Page **8C**



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The Crossword Puzzle is found on page 3B of this newspaper.

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Darters score 35 points in second quarter against Ocoee



Receiver Damaris August goes airborne with the ball during the Blue Darters' 62-7 victory Friday, August 26, over the Ocoee Knights.



Apopka High School students cheer on the football team as the Blue Darters down the Ocoee Knights.



Giving running back Jordan Thompson an escort are, DeShawn Massey (2), Paul Fitzgerald (44), and Julian Miller (54).



Quarterback Demetri Burch throws the ball early in the Apopka victory.



Defensive coordinator Jeff Rolson talks to his players during a timeout in the Blue Darters' 62-7 victory over Ocoee.

Apopka: Darters dominated Knights

Continued from page 1C

we would have won that game.

"Defensively, I'm sure we played better, but we've still got a long way to go."

Apopka got a break right off the bat when Ocoee's kicker, who was also quarterback Jake Novello, barely got his foot on the ball. The kickoff rolled sideways before settling three yards from where Novello kicked it.

Buoyed by that great field position, Apopka's offense took advantage, scoring in just two plays when Burch ran 37 yards for the touchdown. A two-point conversion run by DeShawn Massey gave the Darters an 8-0 lead just 43 seconds into the game.

A 70-yard drive later in the first produced the Blue Darters' second score when Burch hit Jackson Darlington, freshman son of the head coach, for a 13-yard scoring strike. When Logan Minniear added the first of his six point-after-touchdown kicks, the Darters led 15-0 with 2:31 remaining in the first period.

In the second period, the Blue Darters put the game away for good with five touchdowns over 9 minutes, 19 seconds with Burch (38-run), Massey (1-yard run), Williams (15-

yard run, 25-yard run), and Damaris August (9-yard pass from Burch) all getting in the scoring column.

Apopka took advantage of a fumble recovery and an interception by Cayvian Holmes to set up two of the scores on short fields.

A nice punt return by Holmes and a facemask penalty set up one Apopka score from the Ocoee 15-yard line.

With nine rushers, two quarterbacks, and four receivers handling the ball at some point during the game, Darlington said he was glad the game allowed for so many players to see some action.

"A lot of guys got to touch the ball," he said. "We spread it around both running and passing. That's good. I always like it that way rather than having one main dude."

With backups playing in the second half and the running clock, the Darters struck on their first play of the third period. Sean Robles found Birtel Bridges all alone on a wheel route out of the backfield for a 50-yard scoring strike with 7:30 left in the third period.

On what would be the final play of the game, Jay Wright snuck into the end zone for a 10-yard Apopka rushing touchdown and the final margin.

"It's definitely good to play better and not lose. No one likes to lose," Darlington said.

	Ocoee	APK
First downs	6	20
Rushes-yds	24-22	37-310
Passing yds	116	139
Com-Att-Int	10-17-1	5-8-0
Fumbles-lost	2-1	0-0
Penalties-yds	5-53	1-15

Ocoee	0	7	0	0	-	7
Apopka	15	35	6	6	-	62

Ap-Burch 37 run (Massey run), 11:17 1st; A-Darlington 13 pass from Burch (Minniear kick), 2:31 1st; A-Burch 38 run (Minniear kick), 10:22 2nd; O-Goins 10 pass from Novello (Novello kick), 8:39 2nd; A-Massey 1 run (Minniear kick), 7:07 2nd; A-Co. Williams 15 run (Minniear kick), 5:20 2nd; A-Co. Williams 25 run (Minniear kick), 2:42 2nd; A-August 9 pass from Burch (Minniear kick), 1:03 2nd; A-Bridges 50 pass from Robles (kick failed), 7:30 3rd; Wright 10 run (no PAT try), :33 4th.
Individual statistics
Rushing: Ocoee-Span 5-13; Brown 12-11; Team 1-(-1); Novello 6-(-1). Apopka-Burch 5-88, 2TD; Co. Williams 4-79, 2TD; Bridges 6-40; Thompson 6-40; Massey 7-23, 1TD; August 3-17; Robles 2-12; Wright 3-8, 1TD; Davin Wright 1-3.
Passing: Ocoee-Novello 10-17-1, 116, 1TD. Apopka-Robles 2-2-0, 77, 1TD; Burch 3-6-0, 62, 2TD.
Receiving: Ocoee-Young 1-65; Smith 3-17; Goins 2-14, 1TD; Bohler 1-8; Jones 1-7; 2-5. Apopka-Darlington 2-53, 1TD; Bridges 1-50, 1TD; Prince 1-27; August 1-9, 1TD. A-2,300



Apopka defensive back Dimitri King upends Ocoee running back Konrie Brown as linebacker Kamron Williams helps out.



Two Apopka High alumni were among those present at the game. Martez Ivey (l) is a starting offensive lineman for the Florida Gators, while Austin Hittel is the video manager for the Atlanta Falcons of the National Football League.



Placekicker Logan Minniear boots an extra point for the Blue Darters.



Jackson Darlington (3) and Terrence Walthour celebrate Darlington's touchdown.

Wekiva Mustangs fall to very tough Dr. Phillips squad



Jaylen Fair moves to his left as he tries to avoid Dr. Phillips defensive back Henry Caldwell. Fair rushed for 108 yards and one touchdown.



Teammates Dante Johnson (78) and Henry Coleman bring down Dr. Phillips running back D.J. Charles



As Jaylon Fair prepares to block, quarterback Trey McGee fires a pass.



Levinski Bryant keeps the ball secure as he is hit by Marcus Tillman.



Drake Dickens tries to get out of the grasp of Henry Caldwell.



Head coach Rich Bedesem talks to players as they move toward the field.



Quarterback Trey McGee listens as offensive coordinator Buddy Hurd calls a play.

Photos by Alex Olivera

Mustangs: Dr. Phillips’ defense kept Wekiva out of end zone until late

Continued from page 1C

four plays and 1:36 to score two early touchdowns and take the lead for good. Falling by a 28-7 score, the Mustangs failed to heed Bedesem’s warning about Dr. Phillips’ strength of striking from any place at any time.

Nonetheless and even though the damage was done during the first four plays as far as a victory was concerned, Bedesem was far from declaring there was no value in playing the road contest.

“The bad start and the Panthers once again getting that big play set the tone and was the difference,” Bedesem said. “The concern all week was allowing the Panthers to get those quick points on the big plays which were the result of our committing mistakes. They are so good at striking suddenly on their own, let alone when the opponent commits mistakes. But despite falling behind and losing by the final score, the coaches felt that the play wasn’t as far apart as the score indicated. Especially on defense, the Mustangs played well for the most part and made the

Panthers earn a victory.

“We gave up only 14 points after the mistakes at the beginning and that was with Dr. Phillips keeping the starters in the contest until the final five minutes.”

In fact, the Mustangs gave up a combined total of 21 yards on 14 of the 24 plays the Panthers ran during the first half. And the final yardage totals were only 177-172 in favor the Panthers.

But as far as the victory was concerned, the Panthers’ Marvin Washington’s usual steady and efficient getting-the-most-out-of-each-play performance – followed the flurry at the beginning – was the proverbial blow to the gut for the Mustangs. Washington completed 8-of-11 passes for 104 yards and a touchdown during the first half.

And Dr. Phillips gained a total of 132 yards on 10 other plays run during the first half. At least nine yards were gained on each of those plays and were a part of the drives ending with one of the final two touchdowns. Six third downs of at least eight yards were converted during those two drives as well.

“We knew that was the kind of challenge we would get from the Panthers, the possibility of big gains on every play,” Bedesem said. “Holding the Panthers to only two big scoring plays and 28 points with the starters playing almost the entire contest is the goal of most teams.

“I am not saying we would have won or lost, but even with the all-or-nothing nature of each play Dr. Phillips ran, we were competitive. We found out we can play well enough to still have an opportunity to win when we don’t make the mistakes we did at the beginning. If we don’t commit the mistakes, we most likely go into the final quarter trailing by only 14-0, which is the opportunity to still win I am speaking of.”

As good as the Panthers were in getting the most out of a selected few plays offensively, the defense was possibly even more of the reason for a 28-0 lead being taken into halftime. Putting on a clinic of how to use speed and agility to stop an offense, the Panthers held a 153-59 advantage in total yards at halftime.

Tanner Ingle made short work of Wekiva’s hopes of setting a tone, returning the opening kickoff 86 yards for the first touchdown and a 7-0 lead with the point after touchdown attempt successful. Taking advantage of a couple of lanes not being filled, the blockers created an open field all the way down the left hashmark for Ingle.

Taking over possession of the ball, an offside penalty was bad enough for the Mustangs, but when linebacker Nick Smith stepped in front of a Trey McGee pass at the right hashmark, the situation took another step in the wrong direction. The Panthers took possession of the ball at the Mustangs’ 14. Two plays later, Washington found Caleb Walls at the six-yard line on a crossing pattern toward the middle of the field. Already two steps ahead of the defensive back, Walls turned up the field and ran into the end zone untouched.

At 6:58 of the second quarter, the lead was upped to 21-0 on an 11-yard rushing touchdown by Devodney Alford. Wekiva turned the ball over on downs as the offensive line failed to

produce any kind of a push on fourth-and-two. Jaylon Fair gained nothing on the rush. The exchange of possession took place at Dr. Phillips’ 41-yard line.

After receiving a punt and running seven plays, a five-yard rushing touchdown by D.J. Charles closed out the scoring for the Panthers. The drive covered 65 yards.

Despite being on the receiving end of physical contact during what seemed to be every play in which he carried the ball, Fair gained 108 yards. Fair scored the lone points for Wekiva, a four-yard rushing touchdown.

“The team was challenged at halftime by the coaches to keep up the effort and to show what we are capable of,” Bedesem said. “The team’s response was to keep playing with the same effort and focus. In particular, we need to reduce the mistakes and the kind giving opponents an opening for the big play which have the effect of being kicked in the gut and we have more work to do in general. But again, we played well enough to have an opportunity to win without the mistakes, regardless

of the final score. We didn’t answer the challenge completely or fully, but we did give ourselves something to move forward with. We know where we need to get to.”

	Wekiva	DP
First downs	10	11
Rushes-yds	38-122	23-39
Passing yds	50	138
Com-Att-Int	6-17-1	13-18-0
Fumbles-lost	3-2	2-1
Penalties-yds	3-20	6-50

Wekiva	0	0	0	7	-	7
DP	14	14	0	0	-	28

DP-Ingle 86 kickoff return (Stockwell kick), 11:45 1st; DP Walls 12 pass from Washington (Stockwell kick), 9:29 1st; DP-Alford 11 run (Stockwell kick), 6:58 2nd; DP-Charles 5 run (Stockwell kick), 2:25 2nd; W-Fair 4 run (Salazar kick), :45 4th.

Individual statistics

Rushing: Wekiva-Fair 23-108, 1TD; McGee 12-16; Ben Williams 1-2; Brandon Williams 1-0; Team 1-(-4). DP-Alford 4-35, 1TD; Washington 6-14; Hogan 2-212; Charles 2-9, 1TD; Team 1-(-1); Palmer 5-(-6); Bargnare 3-(-24).

Passing: Wekiva-McGee 6-16-1, 50; Williams 0-1-0, 0. DP-Washington 13-18-0, 138, 1TD.

Receiving: Wekiva-Dickens 2-25; Touze 1-9; Bryant 1-7; Brandon Williams 1-5; Moore 1-4. DP-Walls 5-69, 1TD; Hogan 3-11; Alford 2-25; Burton 1-18; Evans 1-10; Palmer 1-5.

For fans of Blue Darters, win over Ocoee is more like it

Apopka High football fans are, no doubt, breathing a sigh of relief after the Blue Darters handled Ocoee, 62-7. That, of course, followed the really strange preseason game against Lake City Columbia in which Apopka looked anything but like the experienced team it is, especially on offense.

Things weren't perfect against Ocoee, but the improvement, in my eyes, was dramatic.

The Blue Darters went from committing four turnovers and 11 penalties in the preseason game to no turnovers and one penalty against Ocoee. It's amazing what happens when you don't make a lot of mistakes like that.

Continued improvement is the name of the game for any team, but for this Apopka team, improvement won't necessarily be seen in the final score, as the Darters won't face a team this season with more overall talent. That doesn't mean Apopka will finish the regular season 10-0, but unless there are injuries, I don't see the Blue Darters facing a team with more talent.

One more note: Last



John Peery
Peery's Extra Points

week, I inadvertently referred to Lake City Columbia as the Lions. Columbia's nickname, of course, is Tigers. I'm not real sure where I got Lions instead of Tigers other than both of them being large cats, but it was a major *faux pas* and shouldn't have happened.

Wekiva, meanwhile, ran into one of the top programs around when the Mustangs traveled to Dr. Phillips. The Panthers scored two early touchdowns, including returning the opening kickoff for a score, and the Dr. Phillips defense did its job in keeping the Mustangs out of the end zone until late in the game.

There is no shame in losing to Dr. Phillips, but Wekiva must get better at facing the top opponents if the Mustangs want to break into the playoffs in Class 8A.

...

College football

It's a great thing when football season gets into full gear, including college football.

This Labor Day weekend is chock full of great games, not the least of which is the Florida State-Ole Miss game in Orlando.

For my money, college football far outshines pro ball. The NFL is fine and I know there are many people who like it better than college football because the top players are in the league. I just prefer college football.

We'll see how the season shakes out, but I'm hoping that my Tennessee Volunteers live up to the hype. If we do, we'll be fine. Of course, the Vols played Appalachian State Thursday night past press time, so my bubble may already be burst by the time you read this.

I'm just happy that high school and college football are here. Now if we can just get an early cold front, all will be right with the world.

...

Wekiva at Boone

On paper, this looks like a good matchup for

the Mustangs.

Wekiva loves to run the ball and wants to establish a strong running game, and the Braves gave up 45 points last week to Lake Brantley, which traditionally runs the ball very well.

That doesn't mean the Mustangs will go in and run all over Boone, but after facing Dr. Phillips' strong defense, I'm sure Wekiva will find the run game a little easier to manage against the Braves.

Like many teams, Wekiva wants to establish the running game and supplement it with a good passing attack.

Offensive coordinator Buddy Hurd is known for having great running games combined with a vertical passing attack that can come at the time you least expect it. So far, he's continued that in his first season as offensive coordinator at Wekiva.

Like a lot of teams, Boone has been up and down over the years and this may not be one of their better teams. That or Lake Brantley has a team that will have a deep run into the playoffs.

The Braves aren't likely to do anything un-

usual, but they are also very likely going to be fundamentally sound. Traditionally, Boone is one of those teams that you can beat, but they aren't very likely to beat themselves with tons of mistakes.

Wekiva must shore up its own game and cut down on mistakes, and if the Mustangs do that, I think it will be a good time for those wearing garnet, gold, and navy.

I expect the Mustangs to bounce back from their loss to Dr. Phillips to even their record at 1-1.

Wekiva needs this win to bolster its confidence and I expect Jaylon Fair to have a strong game running the ball.

Look for the Mustangs to have a happy bus ride home.

Wekiva by 14.

...

Apopka at Edgewater

To put it bluntly, this game shouldn't be close.

Edgewater, under first-year coach Chris Leak is struggling. At least the Eagles did in their preseason game and first regular-season outing, and I can't imagine that seeing Apopka on the schedule gives

Edgewater any glimmer of hope for a better outcome.

The Eagles are running a really strange looking one-back and no-back offense that is spread nearly across the entire field. The offensive linemen have huge splits, making for the opposite of Apopka's single-wing offense that creates a running attack built on having a numerical advantage at the point of attack.

Edgewater's offensive philosophy is to get athletes in space and let them make their own moves.

That can work, but you've got to have the athletes to do it and Edgewater is just not able to pull it off. Frankly, I think it would be a tough offense for most high school teams to run.

Defensively, Edgewater doesn't seem to be quite as lost, but we'll see how it turns out against Apopka's run-heavy offense.

I see little chance of this game going into the second half without a running clock, making it another shorter night for the Blue Darters and fans.

I expect it to get out of hand early and my prediction might not be enough.

Apopka by 42.

Wekiva: Like the Mustangs, Boone wants to run the ball ... a lot

Continued from page 1C

determined," coach Rich Bedesem said. "Boone doesn't do anything out of the ordinary and perhaps most importantly, plays fundamentally sound football. Opponents can't rely on or expect to catch breaks by way of Boone committing mistakes.

"If we are going to win, we have to improve on reducing the mistakes we are making. We know what to do and how to do it. We just simply aren't executing the 'what' and 'how' because of the mistakes. We have been on both sides of the spectrum as far as how we start a contest and the lead. We were down by 14 against Dr. Phillips as soon as possible and took the same kind of a lead against Oviedo. So we have gotten a first-hand experience of the importance of how we start having an effect on the outcome. Avoiding falling behind early and a poor start will be stressed this week."

Coached by Andy Johnson, Boone opened 2016 with a 14-0 preseason victory over Oak Ridge (only three quarters were played by the varsity squads). Then a 45-21 loss to Lake Brantley occurred in the regular-season opener. A failed fourth down conversion attempt was the impetus for the 24 consecutive and final points.

"It appears the Braves know what they want to do," Bedesem said. "But after the outcome of the contests and how they have unfolded, Boone is still trying to establish that identity. It looks like the Braves want to rush the ball between the tackles and use the outside as a change of pace as well as the pass. However, where the Braves are right now after the first regular season contest isn't unusual either. For us, though, we might be able to force them into lacking some consistency and take a step toward what we need to work on."

That general identity of rushing the ball between the tackles is the same as the Mustangs'. Both teams won their preseason games but fell in the season opener. However, the difference is the na-

ture of the Braves' attempt to establish the identity has been much more up and down between the win and loss than the Mustangs'. Self-inflicted wounds or mistakes of their own doing have been the Mustangs' weightiest shortcomings.

The other difference and much more tangible is Boone uses the spread, but primarily relies on the pro-set offense to move the ball. Wekiva uses the spread exclusively. A tight end, fullback, and running back are the centerpieces of the pro-set offense.

Not only does Boone feature the running back, but has two who are rotated, Brandon Bush and Zak Thomas.

About 65 percent of the plays run by the Braves so far this season have been rushes. And the rushes designed for the ball to be carried between the tackles to the other locations is about the same ratio. Man-to-man and zone-blocking schemes are rotated by the offensive line.

Tall (6-foot-1), able to throw the ball downfield and scramble when called for, Thomas Verzi is under center for the Braves. With those physical attributes, the mid-range pass is rarely used. Instead, when going to the pass, Verzi looks downfield (long) and at bubble screens (short). Four receivers are often employed when passing the ball. However, unlike most teams today, a slot receiver is a main component of the passing attack. Most teams use four wideouts. When passing to a slot receiver, the pass is thrown to a certain location at the line of scrimmage and next to the offensive line. When passing to wideouts, the ball is thrown to the receiver as he is running to the location.

A gap (between tackles) pressure is the name of the game for the defense, facilitated by a big and strong front seven. Lining up in a 4-3 formation, Boone's average player in the front seven is 6-foot-4 and 250 pounds. Receivers usually face a cover-two secondary, although a man-to-man defense is also an option.

For Wekiva, establishing an

identity has not proven to be lacking. But all the planning as well as preparation of executing the philosophy and script Bedesem's staff pursues is secondary priority to the other fundamental element which has proven time after time to have the same result - mistakes or the lack of mistakes.

When the mistakes are few and far between, the Mustangs put themselves in a position to win as the impact is limited.

When a lot of mistakes are committed and frequent, the Mustangs give up a lot of yards and scores as the impact is of the utmost weight.

"Against Dr. Phillips, we gave up only two first downs and only two touchdowns were scored after driving the ball of any length," Bedesem said. "And Dr. Phillips played their starters for almost the entire second half. But we were already down by 14 points, which is why I have stressed the poor start due to mistakes so much. Facing a 14-0 deficit after only a few plays is a big hole to climb out of against any opponent, let alone teams who are at the level of expectations being long runs into the postseason."

"We have had our moments of playing well by executing our rushing game and defense the way they are designed to, but we have not been consistent because of the mistakes. If we develop a consistency, we get better and reach that level we need to compete with the kind of opponents we have. We must correct the mistakes because that process follows."

Like the majority of teams, the script the Mustangs want to follow is very common.

Wekiva uses the spread offense and relies on moving the ball through the rush. However, with the philosophy Bedesem's staff pursues and Jaylon Fair in the backfield, the sets are designed for the offense to rely on a power rushing game as the meal ticket. Counting the preseason game, Fair has gained 335 yards on 41 carries.

Against Oviedo, complementing Fair's outstanding ef-

forts was the right mix of a couple of explosive pass completions that kept the defense honest. Wekiva quarterback Trey McGee completed 6 of 12 pass attempts for 186 yards without an interception and touchdown passes of 69 and 80 yards to Wesley Touze.

Late in the third quarter, the Mustangs built a 28-7 lead against The Lions. A host of mistakes were committed by Wekiva over the next seven or so minutes and the lead was cut to 28-27. The Lions moved the ball only 35 yards to score two of those three touchdowns that cut the lead.

On the other drive that ended with a touchdown, two penalties committed by Wekiva on third down allowed the drive to continue.

The story of the contest against the Panthers was a quick start, fostered by the mistakes.

Dr. Phillips scored two touchdowns on the first four plays of the contest, gaining only 14 yards from scrimmage in the process. The contest began with Wekiva giving up a touchdown on the opening kickoff, which covered 86 yards and then an interception.

Fair did rush for 108 yards against the Panthers. But it took 23 carries and the yards gained didn't have nearly the impact when facing Oviedo as Fair sustained hard physical contact on what seemed to be every play he touched the ball. The going was much tougher for McGee as well, who completed only 6-of-16 for 50 yards against the Panthers.

"At this point, I don't think there is a lot to say as far as analyzing the two contests so far," Bedesem said. "Basically, we have to eliminate the mistakes, which is not new to the game. We moved the ball decently for the most part against Dr. Phillips and for a good portion of the contest against Oviedo. But when we made mistakes such as missed assignments and blocks or even the obvious of turnovers, we didn't execute our offense and defense with any impact and ultimately give ourselves the opportunity to win."

In such a philosophical approach, power zones are the favored plays and the quarterback is required to make the reads, including rushing the ball himself. In order to utilize those zone and power reads effectively, the tight end and one of the backs are often moved around. However, lining up the backs and tight end in the traditional location will also be mixed into the offense.

The offense will use three- or four-wide receiver sets. With four wide receivers, no tight end or fullback will be used. The receivers set in a combination of 2-2 (on each side) or 3-1. When used, the fullback will line up between the guard and tackle with the three wide receivers. When only the running back is used, he is offset behind the quarterback. Also used by the Mustangs, but mostly in short-yardage situations is what is called the heavy set or the traditional Power-I formation.

But in order for a power rushing game to be the meal ticket of the offense's philosophical design, the offense has to be able to pass the ball as well. A passing game seen as a threat to gain yards based on experience at the very least keeps defenses honest, forcing the stacking the line-of-scrimmage approach to be scrapped. To that extent, Wekiva's coaching staff's philosophical approach when attacking with the pass is to rely on bubble screens and deep patterns in an effort to stretch the defenses as the principal mode.

Again, the Mustangs got those few explosive pass plays against the Lions, culminating with two long touchdowns scored by Touze. But the longest of only six completed passes was seven yards against the Panthers.

"The team not giving up and continuing to put in the effort required to win during the second half against Dr. Phillips should also pay dividends down the road," Bedesem said. "Despite the shortcomings of this team, the coaches are proud of the team not giving up when there was reason to and see positive growth at this point of the season compared to where we were."

Darters: Edgewater will use no-back, one-back offensive formations

Continued from page 1C

improving each week. It's not about the opponent; it's really about the Blue Darters," he said.

Apopka will, of course, use its strong running game. But the Darters are also trying to re-

fine the passing game that will be needed against tougher teams ahead on the schedule. In the victory over Ocoee, Apopka rushed for 310 yards and passed for 139. But there is always room for improvement, especially with the skill talent and offensive line tal-

ent that line up for the Darters.

Edgewater, meanwhile, is trying to get used to Leak's no-back and one-back offense that nearly spreads itself from sideline to sideline. As one might expect, both from Leak and from that formation, the Eagles want to throw

the ball a goodly amount of time. But the offense, as shown by the lone touchdown scored last week in the 42-6 loss to Bishop Moore, is struggling.

Defensively, Edgewater runs an odd-man front, but against Apopka's single-wing formation,

opponents generally abandon their usual formations and stack the box.

As far as Apopka's defense goes, Darlington said there will likely be some personnel changes with players moving to different positions.

Wekiva High boys bowling team looking strong in 2016

By Neal Fisher
Apopka Chief Staff

Sometimes moving forward means reaching into the past.

For every team, the start of every season brings at least the theoretical opportunity of making a push deep into the postseason. For the Wekiva High boys bowling team though, the start of the 2016 season brings the chance of returning to what used to be a common occurrence for the Mustangs – a spot in the state championship tournament.

Although Wekiva has had a two-year absence from the state event, the previous five state championship meet fields included the Mustangs.

And returning the program to the status of being near the top of the sport has been tasked to Lenin Vazquez, who took over last season.

“The specific improvement with this team is in the depth and getting another full year of competition in relation to the depth,” Vazquez said. “Last season, there was a gap between the third and fourth bowlers, so we lost pins at the bottom of the line-up. Having

that depth allows us to compensate for the loss of two bowlers. We can make up what we lost with the bowlers graduating at the bottom of the line-up.

“Then our anchor and best bowler is Nick Teague. He is a senior and returner. Of course, no one athlete alone wins or loses a match, but with Nick we have that anchor a team wants and needs to be able to develop an identity around. He was one of our two best bowlers last season. This season, he is clearly the anchor and will carry the load of being the sole number one bowler. So far, Nick has adapted to the role very well.”

During the practices and so far the Mustangs have posted a team average of 165 pins, which provides the point from which to move forward.

However, the team’s fortunes for 2016 start with last season’s ending and the bad taste it left.

Compiling a regular season record of 11-4 made Wekiva a contender to advance to the final of the District 7 championship meet and land the berth into the state championship meet that comes with placing first or second

in the district tournament. However, the translation never took place as Wekiva placed fifth. Bishop Moore beat out Wekiva for fourth place and the last transfer position into the semifinal/final round. The four teams with the highest score after each bowl four games of 10-pin advance to the semifinal/final round.

“I think our anchor had trouble carrying the load with the pressure which comes at the district championship meet last season,” Vazquez said. “There weren’t any problems during the regular season, but the pressure of the district championship meet is much different. Unfortunately, he had to carry the load because we had a big separation between our top three bowlers and the rest of the team. This season, we don’t have that separation within the line-up. Carrying the load is much more equal among all the bowlers. We have the clear number one bowler in Nick, but we don’t have to rely on him as the anchor to be the difference between winning and losing to the extent we did last season.”

Teague has been competing during the off-season in the

Brunswick-Wekiva Bowling Lanes youth league. After several years of youth league competition, he finally qualified for the United States Bowling Congress (the sanctioning body of the sport) Gold Junior Championships (held in Indianapolis, Indiana, in July).

The rest of Wekiva’s line-up will consist of Thomas Nguyen, Mason Mills, Robert Pizarro and Sam Locario. The order is yet to be determined.

Nguyen and Millis are seniors. There is experience competing in youth leagues among all the bowlers.

“We had several areas in which we didn’t execute last season,” Vazquez said. “But the biggest area as far as costing us the pins we needed to win or even advance to the semifinal/final round of the district championship meet was not being as consistent as we needed to be in picking up spares. Again, it is only a couple of weeks of practice, but so far, we have improved the deficiency. The rate of picking up spares has about doubled. There is also a confidence that wasn’t there last year, another result of getting this past year of competition under our belt.

“Of course, practice and matches which count are two different animals. There are a lot of and all kinds of variables that can change between the practices and matches. And we still have to continue to improve. However, we have done everything we can and need to make for a run to the district championship and return to where we were in the past. We have created the right point from which to move forward with all of that as the season begins.”

Last season’s surprise semifinalist at the District 7 championship meet, West Orange was the first opponent of the season for Wekiva (Aug. 30, past press time). The rest of the matches are against Cypress Creek (Sept. 7), Evans (Sept. 13), Apopka (Sept. 15), Edgewater (Sept. 22), Ocoee (Sept. 29), Circle Christian/Winter Park/Apopka (Oct. 4), Dr. Phillips (Oct. 5), East River/University/Timber Creek/East River (Oct. 21), Olympia (Oct. 13) and Bishop Moore (Oct. 18).

On October 25, the District 7 championship meet will be held, followed by the FHSAA state championship meet on November 2 and 3 in Orlando.

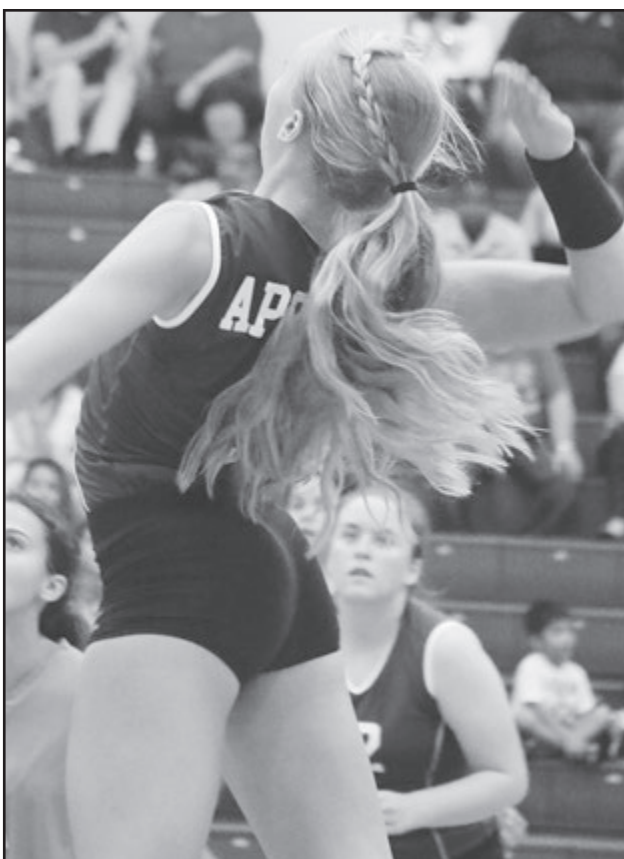
Apopka girls volleyball team downs Freedom in 3 games



Tiana DiMarco returns a shot for the Blue Darters on Monday, August 29.



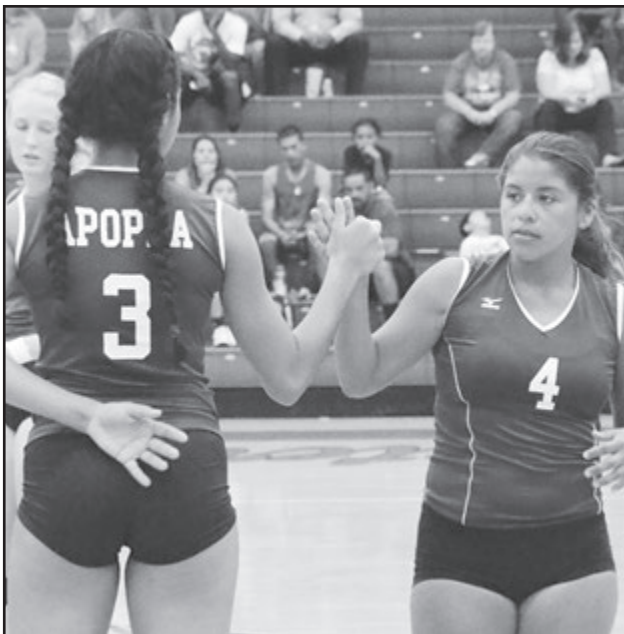
Alexa Barral hits a ball back to help lead the Blue Darters to a 3-0 victory over the Freedom Patriots.



Kayla Tapscott prepares to spike a ball Monday, August 29, during the Darters’ victory over Freedom.



First-year coach Nuni Dominguez talks to the players sitting on the bench during a timeout as their teammates listen.



Alexa Barral (3) substitutes for Diana Villanueva on Monday, August 29.



Abby Weaver gives Tiana DiMarco room to return a Freedom shot.



Emily Weaver pops the ball in the air to set up a teammate for a spike shot.



Alley Herbert returns a shot for Apopka in the Blue Darters’ Metro Conference victory over Freedom.

Titles: Three returning bowlers will lead team as they defend state crowns

Continued from page 3C

bers. Due to graduations, every program in every sport has to deal with holes, from the general of how competition is approached to the most specific details of strategy. But very few have been able to replace and re-tool the entire program as adeptly as Apopka has.

In the past, that adeptness was ignored or at the very least, taken at face value by the rest of the state. Based on the previous results of still claiming state and national championships after losing bowlers to graduation, opponents would be wise to not proceed with the simple assumption of the Darters having to replace them is good news.

With Nick Moyer already having enough bowling experience and acumen to move into the line-up as a freshman four seasons ago, the final piece of the championship puzzle was put in place.

Then three seasons ago, Pete Vergos was the well-developed bowler joining the team as a freshman.

Two seasons ago, Keith Horton and Gage Stelling were accomplished bowlers joining the team as freshmen.

However, time does continue to always move forward and they are no longer the next generation of players who will take over. Now, Horton, Stelling and Vergos have taken over as the faces of Apopka bowling, both in the tangible and intangible. Last season ended with the threesome posting a combined average of 223.33.

“It was important for Pete, Keith and Gage to work with the new bowlers this

fall,” Hauser said. They have been a mentor to the new bowlers, both the tangible of developing skills and the intangible of handling carrying the mantle of being a Blue Darter. That is one of the differences I was referring to. To take it upon themselves to work with the new bowlers says a lot about how this program has changed, but still has what it takes to win another championship. Pete, Keith and Gage approached change is inevitable and have gone out of their way to compensate accordingly.”

All three competed at the USBC Jr. Gold Championships in July. Out of almost 1000 bowlers, Vergos advanced to the final round of 16, which is also a double-elimination tournament.

Horton and Stelling placed inside the top-22 as individuals at the national high school championship.

“The difference between maintaining the bar or quite frankly, winning another championship is as simple as it gets this season,” Hauser said. “We need to increase the number of pins we are scoring from the two new bowlers in the line-up during Baker Rules matches. With Pete, Gage and Keith, we will get over 600 pins and the core of what we need or what we need to be in a position to consistently win during Baker Rules matches. During 10-pin matches (which the preliminary round of the district and state championship meets use), the three can score almost enough on their own for us to advance. Throughout the run, we have always had those three bowlers who can score over 600 pins combined.

“The obvious attributes or skills of the sport have always been present with our core bowlers, but we have also been left with holes to fill each season due to graduation. Every season we have had someone step up and take on that role of turning those holes into tangible results and pins. Changing what is perceived as those holes into tangible results starts and ends with what the other two bowlers are contributing. While the specifics of what holes have been created by the graduations, the general is still the same. We need the two bowlers new to the line-up to give us those pins which take us from being in a position to win to realizing the win during the Baker Rules matches.”

When last season started, the fifth bowler in the line-up was still to be determined. Up stepped Keyfer Koppe and Alex Highfield, who at one time or another, started for Apopka. Both spent the entire offseason competing as much as possible, day after day, week after week, and month after month. The coaches told both in no uncertain terms if Apopka was to maintain being the beast of the sport, they needed to up their performances. There was a hole that needed to be filled with graduations from the previous season. Above average wasn’t good enough for Apopka. They had to be even better than above average.

“To use a saying, ‘winning breeds winning,’” Hauser said. “Keyfer and Alex are examples of the line of succession this program has. Programs which have maintained the standard we have,

have one athlete take over a position and role time and time again. When the seniors graduate, there is someone ready to continue what they have been doing. Keyfer and Alex knew they weren’t as good as the seniors who graduated and the difference was going to prevent us from winning another state championship. So they made it the priority and nothing short of being ready to move into the line-up was going to be good enough for them.

“Our two new bowlers to the starting line-up have worked just as hard, putting in the extra hours and showing the same kind of hunger, yet humility.”

This season, Jamari Jefferson and Andrew Gayetsky are tasked with the responsibility of scoring those additional pins that are the difference between having the potential to win and realizing the win.

“To also put it simply as far as what we need from the new bowlers, we have the potential to develop the level of talent required to win another championship,” Hauser said. “The potential hasn’t changed because of graduation. The question is if the potential is realized among the new bowlers. If the potential is realized we will be in position to win again.”

After engrossing himself into the Blue Darter way of bowling for the last three seasons as a member of the junior varsity team, Jefferson gets his opportunity to put his fingerprints on the era. As the season starts Jefferson has improved his average to around 185.

A transfer from Weki-va, Gayetsky comes into the

season with some varsity experience, but still needs to improve on his average of around 165 pins.

As a freshman two seasons ago and a lefty, Stelling was the sixth man, coming off the bench to pick up difficult spares. Being left-handed provides the advantage of dropping the ball where the spinning back toward the middle of the lane begins, instead of having to cross the right arm over the body during the delivery. Having a sixth man to come off the bench during competition was an advantage for the Blue Darters. Most teams don’t have the inherent make-up to rely on a sixth man in general and specifically for a sixth man to pick up spares.

Although averaging 150 pins, left-handed Brian Rosa has shown an ability to fill that unusual, yet prospective valuable role.

“At this point, the averages are where they should be, solid enough to move forward from,” Hauser said. “However, as the season progresses, the averages will have to improve if we are going to sustain the bar which has been set. Both are bowling averages good enough to be a major contributor for other teams. But at Apopka, showing up for the season bowling a ‘B’ game isn’t good enough. Nor will a ‘B’ game contribute. Again, ‘B’ games put teams in a position to win and contend. The bar at Apopka is winning matches and championships or bowling ‘A’ games. Last season, the starting line-up averaged at least 200 pins.

“The focus has been picking up the spare and Baker Rules matches as a whole

and as a team. But as the individuals contributing to the team by adding those supplemental pins that take us from the potential to win to realizing the win, we need Jamari and Andrew to excel in and contribute by picking up the spares more than anything else. We will have to win this season by out-fundamentaling the opponent far more than we did the last two. We won the first state championship by being more fundamentally sound than the opponent match after match. Picking up the spare is the most fundamental area or component of the game. And the ability to pick up the spare goes from important to even more so when playing Baker Rules matches.”

Then again, when the 2013 season for the sport of bowling started, then head coach John Hauser (Todd’s father) was not shy, nor the slightest bit willing to compromise about what needed to change as far as he was concerned, Baker Rules matches. Hauser’s focus as well as energy was on improving but one and only one part of Darters’ game, Baker Rules matches. Yet, that all-consuming intensity was not his alone. The team as a whole matched Hauser in his belief. And success when competing in Baker Rules matches is directly tied to consistently picking up spares.

So as the season starts perhaps the more appropriate thought is the more the landscape changes for the sport of bowling, the more the epicenter remains the same.

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115. ELDERLY CARE

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116. MISC. SERVICES

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131. VACANT LAND

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131. VACANT LAND

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