

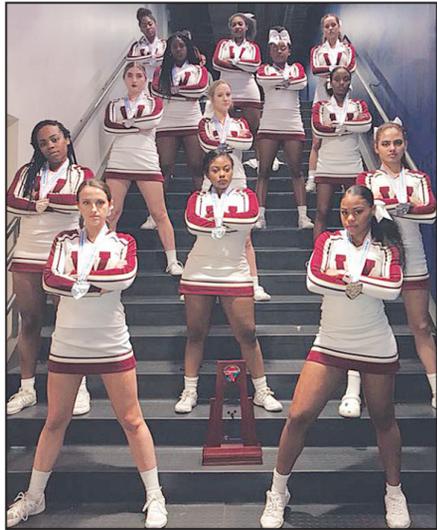
Sports

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See the stories and pictures at the top, middle, and bottom of the page about Apopka Blue Darters and Wekiva Mustangs athletes signing college scholarship papers. Several athletes

from both schools participated in the annual National Signing Day event, although some had already signed during the first-ever signing day for football just prior to Christmas.

State runner-up



Wekiva High School's cheer team received runner-up recognition in the small squad, non-tumbling division in the FHSAA State Cheerleading Competition that took place in Gainesville on Sunday, February 4.

Nine Blue Darters sign scholarships

By John Peery
Apopka Chief Staff

Nine Apopka Blue Darters football players signed college scholarship papers Wednesday, February 7, in a ceremony before several hundred teammates, classmates, family, friends, and media members.

Two of the nine – Mychal Austin and Chance Bush – actually signed on December 20 in the early-signing period, but participated in this week's event with the seven who signed this week.

The players who signed are:

William Barnes, offensive line, North Carolina: Barnes is a four-star prospect who, along with fellow Blue Darter Ed Montilus, decided to sign with the North Carolina Tar



Posing after signing their papers are, (l-r), Shaderrick Bradford, Boris Lewis, Chance Bush, Ed Montilus, Spyncer Chamber, head coach Rick Darlington, Steve Billings-Larson, William Barnes, Drez Barber, and Mychal Austin.

Heels. Barnes and Montilus announced their intention to sign with the ACC team by donning powder blue baseball caps bearing the North Carolina logo. Barnes played in the U.S. Army All-American Game

in early January in San Antonio, Texas. "They've been stalwarts of our offensive line for three years. Two big guys who have worked really hard and I'm really glad to see them get to play at the highest lev-

el," Apopka head coach Rick Darlington said about Barnes and Ed Montilus.

Ed Montilus, offensive line, North Carolina: Like Barnes, Montilus

See APOPKA Page 6C

Two football, four total sign scholarships at Wekiva High

By Neal Fisher
Apopka Chief Staff

The Wekiva Mustangs football team is in an enviable position this offseason. A host of college signings was expected after posting a 12-2 record and advancing to the state semifinal round of the FHSAA postseason tournament. And during national signing day Wednesday, February 7, the expectations coming to fruition continued. Dwight Lawrence decided to sign with Stetson University while Brandon Williams will call Lakeland University in Wisconsin home.

While an accomplished athlete whose role in establishing a new standard for Wekiva was sig-

nificant, the academic side of what Lawrence offers is equally attractive to the Stetson coaches.

Lawrence's academic prowess is at an equal level, earning a grade point average of 4.1 and a score of 1060 on the SAT.

And among the top 15 percent of colleges in the country, Stetson is known for those same high academic standards.

Located in DeLand and Volusia County, Stetson University promotes itself as, "Graduation isn't the end goal. It's just one stop along the way as students pursue something greater for themselves and the world around them. At Stetson University, we dare students to be significant."



Two athletes from other sports joined two football players for signing day on Wednesday, February 7. Shown are, (l-r), Courtney Chisholm, Barry University softball; Brandon Williams, Lakeland University football; Dwight Lawrence, Stetson University football; and Nicole Diaz, Bethany (W.V.) College soccer.

"The vision the coaches and administrators have for the football program as a combination of developing players good enough to

play in the NFL and with a desire to push society progressively forward drew me to Stetson," Lawrence said. "A lot of schools

strive to do the same. However, Stetson has built and solidified a foundation from which the vision can be achieved in only five

seasons. And the growth is ready to take the next step of moving the vision forward, beyond the initial foundation into becoming known on a stage beyond just the state.

"The development of the Stetson program is at a point where the name is starting to open doors and provide the reputation of producing NFL talent. Although a handful right now, a group of the current Stetson players are being seriously looked at by NFL scouts and a couple have already made a mark."

Most notably and well-known is Donald Payne, the starting safety for the Jacksonville Jaguars.

See WEKIVA Page 7C

Darters down two opponents

By John Peery
Apopka Chief Staff

The Apopka Blue Darters boys basketball team assured itself of a winning record with a pair of wins this week.

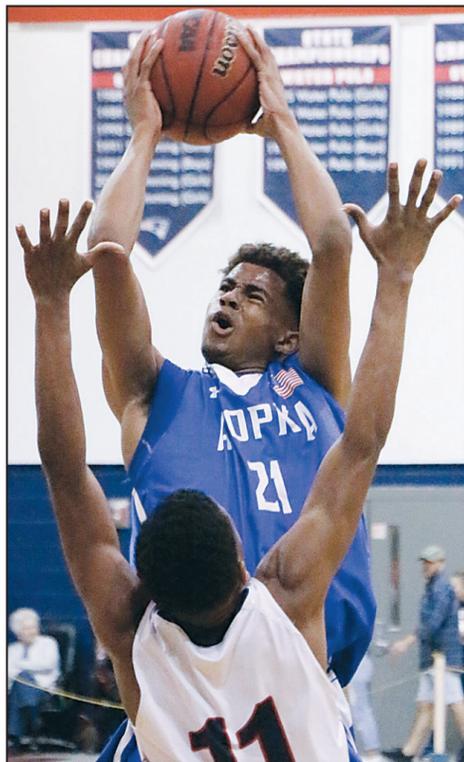
Coach Scott Williams' team notched double-digit victories over Edgewater and Lake Brantley, grabbing an early lead in both games and never looking back in dominant wins.

Apopka's record stood at 13-9 overall as the Blue Darters had won six of seven contests heading into the Senior Night home game against Windermere on Thursday, February 8, past press time.

Apopka 60, Edgewater 44

While Edgewater was without 6-foot-7 senior Robert Allen, the Blue Darters still dominated all aspects of the game from start to finish and began the night by taking a 16-8 first-quarter lead.

Apopka used an 8-0 second-period run to get some separation from the Eagles and led by as many as 14 in the second quarter before settling for a 27-15



Zach Anderson goes up for a shot during Apopka's victory over Lake Brantley.

halftime lead.

"Defensively, we were really good," coach Williams said. "I know we rebounded really well because the few times we didn't, it was glaring. I thought we did a really good job. I thought they had no answer for Zach (Anderson) and Nate (Lou-

is) and we took advantage of that.

"I thought that it was just a really steady, controlled win where our defense and our rebounding kept them from getting a lot of easy stuff. I'm really proud of our guys. This

See DARTERS Page 6C

Wekiva Mustangs split three games

By Neal Fisher
Apopka Chief Staff

With an overall record now standing at 11-13, the Wekiva Mustangs boys basketball team might still avoid the perception of 2017-18 being a lost season as reminders of having the capability to compete for a berth into the FHSAA postseason tournament were present in the form of two victories over the previous week.

The regular season ends on the road today, Friday, February 9, with Ocoee providing the opposition.

Wekiva 63, University 52

Wednesday, January 31

Much-needed and by a 63-52 score, the Wekiva Mustangs were victorious over the University Cougars. Wekiva had lost the previous three contests.

Played at Mustang Arena, Jeremy Johnson was high-scorer with 16 points and added six rebounds. Topping all players in rebounds were the nine pulled down by Tyrone Perry. However, all of the nine players who dressed for Wekiva scored at

See MUSTANGS Page 7C

Soccer, volleyball signees



Taylor Smith (seated, left) and Mimi Jaimes (seated, right) signed college scholarship papers Wednesday, February 7, during a ceremony in the Apopka High School gym. Smith signed with Florida Atlantic University of Boca Raton while Jaimes inked with Webber International of Babson Park. Standing are, (l-r), Doug Matthews, AHS girls soccer coach; Shana Rhodes, AHS assistant girls soccer and girls volleyball coach; and Kaci Miller, AHS assistant girls volleyball coach.

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NASCAR INSIDER

by RICK MINTER / Andrews McMeel Syndication

Clash will provide first competition racing of 2018 season

For NASCAR fans anxious to see some official on-track activity, the long winter of waiting has come to an end.

The 2018 season kicks off this week at Daytona International Speedway with Monster Energy Cup Series practice on Saturday, Feb. 11, followed by the season-opening ARCA race.

Then on Sunday, qualifying for the Daytona 500 at 12:15 p.m. ET will be followed by the 75-lap Advance Auto Parts Clash at 3 p.m.

The starting field for the Clash includes 12 pole winners from 2017, plus two former Daytona 500 pole winners (Austin Dillon and Jimmie Johnson), and three more drivers who earned berths by qualifying for the 2017 Playoffs: Jamie McMurray, Kasey Kahne and Ryan Newman.

Three additional drivers are eligible, but are not expected to participate. They are Dale Earnhardt Jr., who has retired; Matt Kenseth, who has no ride for this season; and Danica Patrick, who plans to enter only the Daytona 500 and the Indianapolis 500 before retiring.

The non-points race will be run in two segments, a 25-lapper followed by a 50-lapper. And for the first time since 2003, it is scheduled for the daytime, a change many drivers say will make for a better race.

The thinking is that the track will be hotter, and therefore slicker, due to daytime heat, and that will make for more side-by-side racing and more passing.

The 2017 Clash was postponed from Saturday night to Sunday afternoon because of rain, and Kyle Busch said afterward that it made for a better race.

"We all kind of planned for a night race and it turns into a day race," Busch said after the 2017 event. "If anybody is listening, I thought the race was awesome. Definitely."

Apparently, the powers that be were listening. The change to a daytime Clash was announced by mid-season.



Joey Logano drives his No. 22 Ford between Martin Truex Jr. (78) and Jamie McMurray (1) en route to a victory in last season's the Clash at Daytona.

Advance Auto Parts **CLASH** AT DAYTONA 2-11-18

Ben Kennedy takes the reins as general manager of the Camping World Truck Series

The news came at the bottom of a NASCAR press release announcing several personnel changes, but at some point down the road, it likely will be considered a significant milestone.

Ben Kennedy, the great-grandson of the late NASCAR founder Bill France Sr. and a competitor in the Camping World Truck Series and Xfinity Series, is hanging up his helmet to take a leadership role in the sport.

Kennedy, the 26-year-old son of NASCAR executive Lesa France Kennedy, is the new general manager of the Camping World Truck Series.

"Ben will draw upon his years of experience across NASCAR's grassroots and national series to bring valuable commercial and competition insights to our NASCAR Camping World Truck Series," NASCAR President Brent Dewar said in the news release. "Ben truly understands from experience that every lap matters, and we are excited about his future leadership in this important national series."

Kennedy, who has a sports management degree from the University of Florida, posted on Twitter that he's looking forward to his first leadership position in the family business.

"It is an incredible time in this industry with so much



After racing in both the Truck and Xfinity Series, Ben Kennedy says he is excited to continue learning about his family's business, which dates back to his late grandfather, NASCAR founder Bill France Sr.

to look forward to, and I'm excited to re-channel my energy and passion into something that could potentially have a greater impact on the sport," he wrote. "I can't wait to get started, and look forward to what's

around the corner."

Despite his relatively young age, many in the sport have been looking at Kennedy as a future leader. Many posted their support on social media following the announcement.

Brad Keselowski, who the week before was critical of Kennedy's uncle, NASCAR chairman Brian France, for not being at the tracks on a regular basis, tweeted his support for Kennedy.

"Big move for sure," Keselowski wrote. "I like Ben a lot. This is good for ya NASCAR fans."

In an interview last year, Kennedy acknowledged that despite his urge to be a competitor, it was likely that one day he'd move to a leadership position in NASCAR.

"It's something that rests on my mind a little bit," said Kennedy, who scored his biggest driving triumph winning the 2016 Camping World Truck Series race at Bristol Motor Speedway. "I've grown up in the sport, so I understand pieces of the business. The challenge is it's such a broad business — everything from NASCAR the sanctioning body to the marketing group to the partners, sponsors — Monster, Xfinity, Camping World — the teams, drivers. ...

"I'm learning a lot. ... Wherever my path takes me, I hope it's in motorsports in some capacity."



Joey Logano will be defending last year's win at the Clash in Daytona.

Joey Logano ready to get back on a winning track in 2018

Joey Logano's midseason struggles was one of the bigger stories of the 2017 NASCAR season. Logano entered 2017 as one of the favorites to win the championship after finishing second in the title hunt the year before and winning 11 races in 2014 and 2015 combined. He finished no worse than sixth in the standings those three years.

He and his No. 22 crew at Team Penske started strong last year, finishing no worse than sixth in eight of the first nine races, but their efforts soon ran off the rails.

Logano took the checkered flag in the first Richmond race, on April 30, but his car failed a post-race technical inspection and his win did not count toward a playoff berth. He was then involved in crashes the next two weeks, at Talladega and Kansas.

From that point on, Logano ran OK — but not great — and missed the cut for the playoffs. He wound up 17th in the final standings.

"Last year was a trying year," he said during a recent media appearance in Charlotte. "We learned a lot. The biggest thing we learned was to be able to be a little more open-minded about things. We started to be open-minded at the end of the season. We probably waited a little too long."

Logano said he and his team, led by crew chief Todd Gordon, found themselves in the

same position as many winning teams in the past. When setups and strategies are working, it's hard to change them, and that often leads to a team being slow to try new things, and therefore, falling behind the competition.

"It is really hard to just knock over what you built and start all over," Logano said. "It is very challenging to get yourself to think that openly. As a driver, I have had to change. Todd (Gordon) has had to change. The way we set up our cars has had to change."

"But you have to be able to get back up front." Logano said he and Gordon began making changes midway through 2017.

"If you look at the last five or six races, we started running in the top-five more often," he said. "You never know until the season starts, but I have enough confidence, and I am believing the stories my team is telling me, that we are going to be really good this year."

"I honestly do believe that. I think we will go out there and redeem ourselves."

He said he is motivated to show that 2017 was just a minor setback.

"We know we are a championship team," he said. "Nothing has changed from two years ago when we almost won the championship. It is the same group. Nothing has changed. We know we can still do that."

"Let's go. Is Daytona here yet?"

NUMERICALLY SPEAKING

- 6 Advance Auto Parts Clash victories by the late Dale Earnhardt Sr. to top all drivers
- 8 Clash wins by Richard Childress Racing and Joe Gibbs Racing — the most of any NASCAR teams
- 20 Clash wins by Chevrolet to lead all manufacturers
- 3 Clash victories by Denny Hamlin and Kevin Harvick — tops among all active drivers

Las Vegas test session gives drivers first look at new Camaro

Chevrolet drivers showed the most speed in last week's Monster Energy Cup Series test session at Las Vegas Motor Speedway, the first real test of the 2018 cars at a track where downforce is one of the keys to speed.

Kyle Larson, driving the No. 42 Camaro owned by Chip Ganassi, posted the top speed of 191.259 miles per hour, while Ryan Newman, in the No. 31 Richard Childress Racing Chevy, was second-fastest with a best lap of 190.027 mph.

Erik Jones, in the No. 20 Toyota from Joe Gibbs Racing, was third with a top speed of 190.007 mph.

Larson said in a media session at the track that it was good to be back in a NASCAR car after spending much of the offseason driving Midgets and Sprint cars on dirt tracks.

"I've still done a fair bit of racing this offseason, but it's been a couple of months since I've been in a Cup car," Larson said. "It was nice to get some laps [at Vegas] and feel like we've got some pretty good speed and good balance with our new Camaro ZL1."

Larson said the new Camaro body has the potential to be an improvement over the Chevy SS body previously used, but he doesn't think the true test will come until there is a full field of cars on the track in racing conditions.

"It doesn't seem too much different than the other car," he said. "Maybe it will be different once we get in traffic and stuff, but at a test, you don't really get to simulate that."

The test at Las Vegas, which saw 14 teams and drivers participating, took on extra significance this year because the track will host two races this season for the first time, and the second one will be the opener for the 10-race Playoffs.

Las Vegas got that second date from its sister track at New Hampshire Motor Speedway. Both are owned by Speedway Motorsports Inc.

"I guess maybe with an added race and it being in the Playoffs, this test becomes a little more important," Larson said. "Every test is important because you want to come back and have good speed, but you know when you are coming back here for a Playoff race it's just that much more important."

"I don't know if we put any more focus on the test or what, but hopefully we learn a lot to where we are fast both races."

Among the other drivers testing at Las Vegas was William Byron, the 20-year-old driver of the No. 24 Chevrolet at Hendrick Motorsports. He's never raced a Cup car and his only previous Cup experience was in a



Kyle Larson tested his new No. 42 Chevy Camaro ZL1 for Chip Ganassi Racing.



Kyle Larson meets with members of the media at last week's test session at Las Vegas Motor Speedway, which will host a pair of Cup races this season.

simulator, so the laps at Vegas were especially important to him.

"I've never been in a car [before], so it's hard for me to know what it's going to feel like, but I feel like it did help me kind of get started and know what my lift points were and know how to work with the team, especially," Byron said. "I'm looking forward to just racing this year."

"It's going to be a lot of fun and I can't wait to get back here in the spring."

Atlanta Motor Speedway hosts the second race of the Cup series, following the season-opening Daytona 500, and is the first downforce track on the schedule.

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, 32704-0880

In the period from January 30-February 5, the Apopka Police Department received 1,314 calls for assistance, responded to 37

crashes, issued 39 traffic citations and made 17 arrests. Of these arrests, 2 were juvenile arrests. The juveniles were arrested and charged with arson-2nd degree X 2, damage property-criminal mischief-\$1,000 or more X 2, resist officer-obstruct without violence.

The following were arrested and charged:

Lisa K. Amos, 56, 1903 Nicole Lee Cir., #1230, Apopka, failure to appear for misdemeanor offense X 2.

Carmen Monique Clayton, 45, 1138 Villa Ln.,

Apopka, hit and run-fail to stop remain at crash involving death.

Christopher Michael Diluigi, 44, 524 Bison Cir., Apopka, drug equipment-possess and/or use, drugs possession-cocaine.

Yasser Sud Wodolph Edmond, 23, transient, unknown address, larceny-resist arrest-commit theft-resist recovery of property, larceny-retail theft/shoplifting petit 1st offense 2nd degree 1st offense.

Bernardo Guzman Chavez, 31, 340 N. Maine Ave., Apopka, larceny-grand theft from posted construction site, making false report-knowingly give false info to law enforcement of-

ficer alleged crime, trespassing construction site.

Cedric Darrell Himmelback, 60, 352 Medford Ave., Deltona, marijuana-possession not more than 20 grams.

Anthony James Love, 35, transient, Apopka, trespassing property.

Angel Manuel Padro, 32, 1361 Osprey Way, Apopka, out-of-county warrant.

Roberto Reynoso-Jurado, 29, 596 Martin Place Blvd., Apopka, moving traffic violation-operate motor vehicle without valid license.

Lance Cody Robinson, 24, 134 W. Virgil St., Apopka, damage property-

criminal mischief \$1,000 or more, larceny-theft from vending machine petit theft 1st degree property more than \$100 less than \$300, burglary of structure-unarmed without person inside.

Ismael Rodriguez Almanza, 24, confidential address, Apopka, battery-touch or strike (domestic-no bond).

Bayron Juvale Santiago, 24, 621 San Juan Blvd., Orlando, failure to appear for felony offense, failure to appear-felony warrant, probation-violation or community control regard unknown/felony/misdemeanor/juvenile non-criteria, failure to appear for felony

offense X 2.

Carlton Smith, 19, 538 W. Ella J. Gilmore, Apopka, aggravated assault with a deadly weapon without intent to kill, robbery-carjacking with firearm or weapon, vehicle theft-grand theft of motor vehicle, weapon offense-use display firearm during felony.

Larry Jay Ward, 57, transient, unknown address, trespassing-property not structure or conveyance.

Darrell Williams, 23, 3113 N. Powers Drive, Orlando, traffic offense-DUI alcohol or drugs, probation violation or community control regard unknown/felony/misdemeanor/juvenile non-criteria.

Warmer weather means specks are bitin' in area lakes

Hello Folks,

Well, the weather is warmin' up and we got some rain on Super Bowl Sunday so all is well for catchin' some fish.

Folks are fishin' for specks in most of the major chains in our area, the Butler Chain, the Kissimmee Chain, and the Harris Chain. Most folks are driftin' with jigs tipped with a minner. You will need to cover a lot of water until you locate a school of 'em. As you drift, make sure you have your jigs tipped with minners at different depths.

The specks may be suspended or layin' close to the bottom of the lake. They may be suspended somewhere between the top and bottom of the lake



Jim Keck
Goin' Fishin'

as well. We don't have a full moon until March 1 so it may be a couple of weeks before they start headin' to the spawnin' areas. Lake Griffin and Lake Yale have been two good lakes to catch some specks in as well. Most folks are driftin' open water and doin' pretty well.

The bass fishin' should be pickin' up by the weekend. Folks are catchin'

some bass in the Harris Chain and the Kissimmee Chain. A co-worker fished Big Lake Harris the first of this week. He caught and release five bass up to 3 lbs. each. He caught a couple of bass on swim-baits and slow-sinkin' Senko-type baits.

My fishin' buddy Rick was also on the water this week. He also caught five bass up to 5 lbs. each. Most of his bass were caught on slow-sinkin' Senko-type baits as well. Rick also reports he didn't see any bass on the beds. He saw some areas where the bass were startin' to fan the bottom of the lake. Some nice bass are bein' caught in the Kissimmee Chain on shiners fished along the outside grass beds.

Congratulations to Tim Frederick of Leesburg. He won his first FLW event on Lake Okeechobee. Tim weighed in 20 bass over the course of four days. His total weight for the event was 85 lbs. and 4 oz. His winnin' stringer got him a check for \$102,700. It's great to see local anglers win at this level. Again, congratulations to Tim on his win.

If you want to catch some of the action of the FLW tour they will be hostin' a tournament on the Harris Chain this month. They will be goin' out of Venetian Gardens in Leesburg. The tournament dates will be February 22-25. The weigh-ins on day 1 and 2 are at 3 p.m. On days 3 and 4, they weigh-in at 4

p.m.

Well, I hope you get a chance to do some fishin'. See ya next week.

Tip of the week: go fishin'.

Save a few and good luck!

Golf to aid food pantry

A golf outing to benefit the St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church food pantry will be held Sunday, March 11, at Zellwood Station Golf Club. Check-in is at noon and the shotgun start is set for 1 p.m.

Entry fee for the 18th annual golf fundraiser is \$95 per person and \$65 for Zellwood Station Golf Club members. The fee includes golf, cart, dinner, and prizes. There will also be contests for putting, longest drive, and closest to the hole. There is a hole-in-one contest with a top prize of \$10,000, and a top prize drawing of \$1,000.

For non-golfers, dinner will be \$27.

All proceeds from the event will be used for the church's food pantry that benefits those in need of food.

For more information and registration, contact Jackie Jones at 407-637-6461 or bridge_nut@hotmail.com.

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Apopka Blue Darters girls basketball team honors seniors



(Photo by Alex Olivera)

The Apopka Blue Darters girls basketball team honored its seniors Wednesday, January 31, in the team's 39-29 victory over University High. The seniors are, (l-r), Antaneisha McFarley, Aariana Brown, Cassie Lombardi, and Catrina Taylor.

Apopka falls 7-0 to Lake Mary in regional soccer action



Taylor Smith kicks the ball as she keeps a Lake Mary player away from the ball on Tuesday, February 6.



Goalkeeper Anyka Wilkin jumps as a ball travels over the goal during the Blue Darters' regional quarterfinal contest against the Lake Mary Rams.



Brooke Schulz shields a Lake Mary player from the ball in the regional quarterfinal game.



Madison Tryon has her jersey pulled by a Lake Mary player.



Kristen Khouri's hair blocks her vision for an instant during the game.

Staff photos by Tammy Keaton

Blue Darters lead from start to finish to down Patriots



Travis Henderson holds the ball away from Lake Brantley defenders as he looks for a teammate.



Nate Louis drives the lane in the Blue Darters' 63-51 victory over Lake Brantley on Friday, February 2.



Jai Clark takes a three-point shot for the Blue Darters during the victory over Lake Brantley.

Staff photos by John Peery

Wekiva High School splits two games in one week



Jeremy Johnson drives toward the bucket in the 79-55 loss to Leesburg.



Prior to the Wekiva Mustangs' game against the Haines City Hornets, the team honored seniors, (l-r), kneeling, Kevan Smith, Shayeon Davis, Tyrone Perry, Sam Bostick, Jeremy Johnson, and Domonic Mitchell.



Michael James and two Leesburg players get tangled up near the basket.



Freshman Michael James is fouled as he shoots the ball near the bucket.



Sam Bostick goes up for a shot during the Mustangs' 61-46 victory over Haines City.



Jeremy Johnson ends up on top of a Haines City player during a scramble for the basketball in Wekiva's 61-46 victory over the Hornets.



Head coach Gersino Lubin talks to his team during a timeout on Tuesday, February 6, as the Mustangs topped Haines City on Senior Night.



Domonic Mitchell is hacked by a Haines City defender in Wekiva's victory.

Darters: Apopka held Edgewater Eagles at bay for entire 60-44 victory

Continued from page 1C

was a good program win for us tonight."

In the second half, it was more of the same, as the Blue Darters built the lead to 36-17 when Jai Clark nailed a three-pointer midway through the third quarter.

After leading 38-24 heading into the final period, Apopka built the lead to 44-24 on Zach Anderson's baseline drive and dunk about a minute and a half into the quarter.

The Blue Darters had their biggest lead of the game at 48-27 after Maliek Jackson's bucket.

Edgewater used a half-court trap in the second half and it resulted in some Apopka turnovers, but nothing the Blue Darters couldn't weather.

"Quite honestly, we were good enough with our ballhandling that we didn't allow big runs," Williams said. "We'd have a bad turnover but then we'd settle down. It wasn't the avalanche of four, five, six straight bad plays. I knew that, especially in the second half, they would what I call recklessly trap. It's not reckless; it's just their athleticism. There were stretches where I thought we did a really good job with it and there were stretches when we weren't as good about it."

"We did talk after the game (about the district tournament). If Evans and then Wekiva or West

Orange come after us for 32 minutes, are we going to hold up? Are we going to be able to do it? Hopefully, we'll keep working it and keep getting better with it."

Edgewater is a top contender in Class 8A when big guy Allen returns from a sprained ankle.

"Obviously, Edgewater is a vastly different team without Robert (Allen). I hope he gets healthy soon and they make another run. I just respect (coach) Jason (Atherton) and the job they do," Williams said.

Apopka 63, Lake Brantley 51

The Blue Darters never trailed Friday, February 2, winning their fifth out of the last six games with a solid victory over the Patriots.

When Lake Brantley point guard John Moreno tied the game at 2-2 early in the first quarter, it was the only time of the contest that Apopka didn't lead. After Moreno's bucket, Apopka scored seven straight to take control of the game.

Only six Blue Darters scored, but four of them were in double figures as sophomore post man Zach Anderson led the way with 17 points. Senior Rodney Lubin was right behind with 16 points. The two of them combined for 16 of Apopka's 18 first-quarter points. Lubin added three of Apopka's 10 assists.

Travis Henderson, another senior, had 13 points, while ju-

nior forward Nate Louis pumped in 12 points and pulled down nine rebounds. Rounding out Apopka's scoring were Jai Clark with 3 points and Maliek Jackson with 2 points.

"With Moreno back for them, they're a much better basketball team because he opens up the game for so many of them," Apopka coach Scott Williams said.

"I just thought we controlled the game from start to finish. We had some lapses I'm still trying to challenge us on, but for 32 minutes, we were in control of the game on the road. I'm really, really pleased."

Apopka built on its 18-10 first-quarter lead with the first eight points of the second period. Lake Brantley trimmed it to 28-20, but the Blue Darters built it back up to 36-25 by halftime.

A 9-0 run by the Darters in the third quarter gave Apopka its largest lead of the game at 51-34 with just 20 seconds left in the period.

Henderson scored 10 of his 13 points over the middle two quarters.

"Travis continues to be aggressive and that makes a big difference for us," Williams said.

Lake Brantley pressed Apopka for much of the game and were aggressive in their traps, but the Blue Darters handled the pressure most of the game.

"I thought we handled their

Blue Darters will host District 9A-3 tournament

Apopka High School will host the District 9A-3 boys basketball tournament Wednesday, February 14, and Friday, February 16, as two of the four teams in the district will move on to the regional playoffs and the other two will see their seasons end.

In the first semifinal on February 14, top-seeded West Orange will face fourth-seeded Wekiva at 5:30 p.m. Second seed and host Apopka will play third-seeded Evans at 7:30 p.m.

The semifinal winners will meet February 16 at 7 p.m. for

the district championship. Both of those teams will move on to the regional playoffs that begin Thursday, February 22, with the 9A-3 champ hosting the District 9A-4 runner-up and vice versa.

By virtue of a coin flip after the team each ended with 4-2 district records, West Orange claimed the top seed in the district tournament, while the Blue Darters landed the second seed.

Evans and Wekiva were knotted with 2-4 district records each, but Evans claimed the No. 3 seed by virtue of its season sweep of the Mustangs.

traps really well. I thought we were controlled in what we wanted and got some things out of it. Zach and Nate inside were a force," Williams said.

In the fourth quarter, Apopka led 57-41 before the Patriots hit back-to-back three-pointers, but the Darters remained in control to grab the non-conference victory.

Apopka outrebounded Lake Brantley 37-24, including 13 off the offensive glass.

"I thought we did a good job of not settling and realizing we had an advantage and then there were times when we went and got it on the glass. That's encouraging. Those kind of extra-effort

plays are going to be important in playoff time," Williams said.

What's ahead

In the final home game of the season played Thursday, February 8, past press time, the Blue Darters faced first-year Windermere for Senior Night. The Wolverines are led by former head coach and assistant coach Mark Griseck.

On Saturday, February 10, Apopka will play its final regular-season game as the Blue Darters will participate in the Mosaic Shootout at Bartow High School. The Blue Darters will take on Lakeland Kathleen at 3:30 p.m.

Apopka High School Special Olympics teams participate in state event



The Apopka High School Special Olympics basketball program played in the 2018 Special Olympics Florida State Basketball tournament Friday, February 2, and Saturday, February 3, in Tavares. The Apopka High School Special Olympics 5-on-5



basketball team won the silver medal and the Apopka individual skills players received gold and silver medals. Steve Schwarze is the Special Olympics coach at Apopka High School.

Apopka: Signees run the gamut of all levels of college football teams

Continued from page 1C

was an anchor of Apopka's offensive line. The three-star prospect and Barnes have always wanted to go to the same school and were able to accomplish that with their signing the North Carolina scholarship papers. North Carolina plays in the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) and the Tar Heels will host the UCF Knights on September 15. North Carolina was 3-9 last year. Larry Fedora is the head coach.

Steve Billings-Larson, linebacker, Miami: Billings-Larson sports a 4.47 grade point average and signed academic scholarship papers and will be a preferred walk-on for the Miami Hurricanes. Billings-Larson played linebacker for the Blue Darters this past season, but also saw time at running back throughout his playing career at Apopka High School. Billings-Larson also became a top-flight kick blocker this past season, rushing from the end to block several kicks. Mark Richt is the head coach at Miami. "He's a preferred walk-on. That's where he wants to go. That's a great story of a dude with a 4.47 GPA. He's done everything he can, going to every summer workshop there to get scholarships to go there. What a great story. He's using his academics and his initiative to make

it all happen. He didn't sit back and wait for Miami to say, 'Here you go.' He made it all happen," Darlington said.

Mychal Austin, defensive line, Tennessee-Chattanooga: Austin, who signed in December, played defensive end for the Blue Darters, but is expected to move inside to defensive tackle for the Tennessee-Chattanooga Mocs. A three-star prospect, Austin helped the Apopka defensive line with 17 sacks and 26 solo tackles. He also had two interceptions and forced four fumbles. Tennessee-Chattanooga is a member of the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) Southern Conference, finishing 3-8 in 2017. The Mocs will end next season by playing at SEC member South Carolina on November 17. Tom Arth is the head football coach. "It's a great fit for him at UT-Chattanooga. They're going to move him inside to play defensive tackle, which is good. It's a good I-AA school. I think a couple of years ago they gave Alabama a run. He loves it up there. They love him," Darlington said.

Chance Bush, defensive back, Southern Illinois: Bush played just one season at Apopka High, but was a starter at cornerback for the Blue Darters. He signed in December with the Salukis of Carbondale, Illinois. Bush is one of five Floridians

who signed with the FCS Salukis. Southern Illinois plays in the Missouri Valley Conference. The Salukis were 4-7 in 2017 and will play at Ole Miss of the SEC on September 8. Nick Hill is Southern Illinois' head coach. "He only played one year here, but did a good job for us. He was a leader, very vocal and enthusiastic. He is always positive. He added a lot to our program in the one year he was here," Darlington said.

Shaderrick Bradford, offensive line, Ferris State: Although Bradford played offensive line, blocking back, and tight end for the Blue Darters, he'll be playing defensive line at Division II power Ferris State, which is located in Big Rapids, Mich. At Ferris State, Bradford will be teammates with former Blue Darter Robert Thomas, a running back for the Bulldogs. In 2017, Ferris State finished 11-2, falling in the third round of the NCAA Division II playoffs. The Bulldogs play in the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. Tony Anness is the Bulldogs' head coach. "They've got two of our really good players over the years. It's a great story about him. We appealed (an age rule) to get him another year. He probably was our best player this year. He played numerous positions. They're going to try him at defensive line. I'm excited for

him," Darlington said.

Boris Lewis, defensive line, Mars Hill: Located about 20 miles north of Asheville, North Carolina, The Mars Hill Lions are an NCAA Division II program in the South Atlantic Conference. The Lions were 3-7 in 2017 and are coached by Tim Clifton, who will be entering his 26th season as Mars Hill coach when the 2018 season begins. Several other players from Central Florida are on the Lions' squad, including those from Lake Brantley, Olympia, Timber Creek, and Edgewater. "He's maybe the most improved academic guy we've had in the last couple of years. He was never even eligible for spring football until last year. He's up to 2.57 GPA now and going to Mars Hill. When I watch our films from this year, that guy can play. He was a very active 300-pound dude. He ran really good to the ball," Darlington said.

Drez Barber, defensive back, Mercyhurst: Like Bush, Barber played just one year for the Blue Darters. He transferred from a high school in Georgia and played defensive back for Apopka. Mercyhurst is a Catholic university located in Erie, Penn., and plays in NCAA Division II. The Lakers are a member of the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference. Mercyhurst was 5-6 in 2017. Marty Schaeztle is

the head coach and will enter his 17th season leading the Lakers in the fall. "He's another one-year guy. He transferred in from Georgia. The good thing about Drez is that scholarship is a lot driven by academics. He's got a really high grade point average. It's good to see a guy come in with really good grades," Darlington said.

Spyncer Chambers, linebacker, Coffeyville Community College: At Coffeyville, Chambers will join former teammate and Blue Darter running back DeShawn Massey. Although he played linebacker for the Blue Darters, Chambers is expected to move to strong safety for the Red Ravens. Coffeyville, which is in Coffeyville, Kansas, finished the 2017 season with a 6-5 record. Aaron Flores is the head coach for the Red Ravens. Coffeyville plays in the Kansas Jayhawk Community College Conference. "He's going to go to Coffeyville where DeShawn (Massey) is and do really well I hope. After two years, he'll get recruited to go play somewhere else (four-year institution). He's a great hard worker who didn't play until he was a junior. He's an all-around good dude. I'm really happy he's going to get to continue his football career and education," Darlington said. Former Blue Darter Ruben Lewis just signed with Kansas out of Coffeyville.

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Wekiva: Mustangs' quarterback will play in university in Wisconsin

Continued from page 1C

This recently concluded season saw Jacksonville advance to the American Football Conference championship.

"In general, to be wanted by a program at such a point in development is very exciting when reflecting on all the process entails, from the long and constant practices to the mental dedication," Lawrence said. "However, being a part of moving the vision forward and becoming reality is most specifically intriguing to me. In life, the opportunities to be a part of and have a hand in turning such an up-and-coming vision into reality are few and far between."

The element of versatility also made recruiting much easier for college coaches as Lawrence played every skilled position on both offense and defense while a member of Wekiva's program. However, at least for now, Lawrence will play free safety at Stetson.

"Experience playing in a wide range of defenses is at the top of the why-the-coaches-felt-I-am-a-good-fit list," Lawrence said. "Academically, the high standards match what I accomplished during high school. I am specifically

interested in pursuing a degree in computer science. And the degree requires excelling in math. A minor in math might also be pursued. Stetson doesn't just want students who understand the subject and can do enough to show competency. Stetson wants students who excel and are progressive thinkers. So, the decision was even more specific as to what Stetson offers when considering the academics."

Stetson University is a private institution founded in 1883 by Henry A. DeLand. The original name was the DeLand Academy. In 1889, the institution was renamed Stetson University to honor John B. Stetson. Perhaps the most well-known hat manufacturer of the time, Stetson was the university's benefactor and a founding trustee. A native New Yorker, DeLand had founded the city of DeLand seven years before opening the then-academy.

Also in honor of Stetson, the athletic teams are nicknamed the Hatters.

Football is one of 18 teams fielded by Stetson and coached by Roger Hughes. Stetson is a member of the NCAA's Division I Football Championship Subdivision and the Pioneer Football League. (The other teams are a

member of the Atlantic Sun or Metro Atlantic Athletic Conferences.)

Quarterbacking the Wekiva Mustangs to the state semifinals for the first time was how Brandon Williams' story as a high school athlete ended.

However, the story started with Williams being ineligible to participate and looking for a new school. In between, Wekiva not only moved Williams to the quarterback position but time was shared.

About a third of the way through this past season, Williams was finally named the regular starter for Wekiva and to use an old cliché, the rest is history.

"I will be playing at the college level because of (head) coach (Rich) Bedesem," Williams said. "When struggling to make the grades, he could have given up on me. Instead, he went out of his way to push me. Because of that willingness, I am a better person today. There was so much I learned from the experience of overcoming those struggles, especially about persevering and having the dedication to persevere. The importance of taking care of education and perseverance went hand in hand for me.

"However, there is no doubt God was responsible for coach being a part of my life over the last couple of seasons. And I am so grateful for that decision."

Lakeland University is located in Plymouth, Wisconsin, about five miles northwest of Sheboygan and Lake Michigan. After settling in the Sheboygan area, a group of German immigrants founded what was then known as Lakeland College during 1847. Two years ago, the current name of Lakeland University was adopted.

Today, nearly 3,500 students (850 traditional undergraduate students and 2,600 evening, weekend and online students) from 24 countries attend classes. Related to the United Church of Christ, Lakeland University offers 33 bachelor's and three master's degrees.

Nicknamed the Muskies and a member of the NCAA's Division III, football is one of 19 teams fielded by Lakeland University and coached by Colin Bruton. Williams will be under the tutelage of offensive coordinator Eric Treske.

This season will be the 84th Lakeland University has been playing football. The Northern

Athletics Collegiate Conference has been the conference home of Lakeland University since 2008. Only twice has Lakeland failed to place first or second in the conference standings and a record of 41-18 has been posted during the nine seasons as a member. The overall record is 49-44.

During a 7-4 campaign, the most recent conference championship and subsequent playoff berth was earned.

"In general, what I was looking for is being offered by the university," Williams said. "At the top of the list was the opportunity to pursue a degree in business management and the stadium has (artificial) turf. However, this feeling of belonging among the players and connecting with the coaches pushed me over the fence.

"The why is the same concept and a similar offense as Wekiva is used by Lakeland University. Athleticism can be utilized when a play is designed to flow into open space. The open space is outside the tackles and the intention of running RPO plays and the right fit for my skill-set."

Williams will be the second generation to earn a business degree, following his mother.

Mustangs: Wekiva topples University Cougars, but falls to Leesburg

Continued from page 1C

least four points.

"The importance of this contest was showing we belong among the top tier," Mustangs coach Gersino Lubin said. "Most people consider University among that upper tier as far the local area. How good the Cougars are can be seen by watching them play. However, a record of 17-5 is very tangible proof. More specifically and from a competitive level, we didn't just play with a top tier team, but we defeated them."

Being called upon for reinforcement, Domonic Mitchell delivered with eight points and six rebounds while on the floor for only nine minutes. Most importantly, several plays sustaining the run that put Wekiva ahead for good were executed by Mitchell.

"A tone of consistency was set from the tip-off and continued throughout every possession, starting with Domonic," Lubin said. "The proverbial sacrificing the body and giving the team a lift emotionally was needed tonight. And in the tangible areas where we needed a third option, he provided. Although not getting a lot of time, Domonic answered the call. He was ready and remained prepared for the call.

"Of course, the end result of the consistency was we created open and high-percentage looks from behind the arc on each of the first three possessions. Executing the design of the offense was the reason we were in the position of scoring. Obviously, an opponent isn't going to win against the Cougars during the first few minutes. University is too good to never recover from falling behind. However, rotating the ball to the other side because the players continued to move into the open area was executed well on the first three possessions and ultimately put the Cougars in the most uncomfortable position of trying to cut into the lead as soon as possible."

And University did answer, taking an 18-15 lead after the first possession of the second quarter. The next eight points were scored by the Mustangs though and the lead was never relinquished. After receiving guiding, over-the-top passes from Mitchell on the left side, Michael James found the bottom of the net on the next two possessions to start the run. James spun, leaned and with a soft touch adeptly used the backboard to score from six feet in the middle of the paint to cut the lead to 18-17. Then taking the lead was by means of using a fade-away from eight feet.

Long rebounds resulting from missed field goal attempts allowed Wekiva to get into transition on the three possessions after

the lead was cut to 18-17. Mitchell grabbed all three of the rebounds on the defensive end and followed with passes which not only provided quick transitions into offense, but set up attacking, inside play.

Neither of the initial drives to the basket during the two possessions after taking the lead resulted in points. However, offensive rebounds were grabbed. Deciding to immediately drive through the lane after securing the offensive rebound eight feet in front of the basket, Shayeon Davis drew a foul while lowering the shoulder and sank both free throws. Mitchell tipped in the other offensive rebound.

Momentum and playing from ahead was clearly in the Mustangs' favor as the first half came to a close. Six consecutive points were tallied by Wekiva during the last 1:20. The points were scored on a reverse lay-up by James, two free throws by Mitchell, and Kevan Smith tipping in an offensive rebound. Then the Cougars' field goal attempt as the clock expired was blocked to preserve the 32-24 lead.

Another run during the last 1:20 of the third quarter bolstered the lead to the 11 points. Johnson, Davis, and Johnson once again scored to account for the seven consecutive points. At 47-36, a lead that was too much for University to come from behind had already been established by the end of the third quarter.

The Mustangs' field goal percentage was 46.6 as 21-of-45 attempts were converted. Only 20 of the 58 field goals attempted by University were converted for a percentage of 34.5. Free throws were also in the Mustangs' favor, but much more, 16-of-26 compared to 4-of-10.

"Of course, there are several factors that caused the losing streak," Lubin said. "However and unfortunately, one is beyond our control – the flu. Wekiva and the season have been impacted by the flu. The losing streak and several players missing time due to the flu occurred at the same time. During each loss, the presence of the sickness' effect was obvious. We were a step behind throughout each. However, during the third quarter when facing Evans we were tired to that degree of reaching the final straw, nothing was left. When the run that won the contest was made, we were physically out of energy and exhausted. Tonight, our physical demeanor was completely different, rested, and energetic with some recovery."

**Leesburg 79, Wekiva 55
Friday, February 2**

Some recovery didn't mean the Wekiva Mustangs were at full

strength when the Leesburg Yellow Jackets lined up on the other side of the court two days later though. Senior point guard Tyrone Perry sat out the 79-55 loss.

The defending Class 6A champion also came into the contest with a 20-1 record and an up-tempo, full-court pace that can make a racing fan blush.

"Leesburg definitely beat us at our own game," Lubin said. "As fast as we like the pace, the Yellow Jackets are even more so. Add to how fast and strong Leesburg is Tyrone having to sit out and the perfect storm occurred. Every loss we suffered before was because of self-inflicted wounds or at least the door was left open. This time, though, we were beaten. Specifically, the Yellow Jackets are one of a handful of teams across the state capable of playing the style better than us."

Also played at home, Johnson was once again the high-scorer, this time with 21 points. No one else scored more than eight. On the other hand, Leesburg countered with four players totaling double digits. Members of the premier all-area team, Leesburg's Cordrayius Graham, Lance Erving, and Keon Ellis combined for 51 points. Adding to the total was Deshawn Benton's 11 points.

A very respectable percentage of 42.5 was shot by the Mustangs from two-point range as 14-of-33 attempts were converted. The problem was Leesburg was successful in executing both intentions of why the pace is used, to create a large advantage in attempts taken and within close range. The Jackets made 28-of-45 attempts for a lights-out 62.2 percent. Then at a rate of about three out of every four attempts were from inside the paint.

Tipping in an offensive rebound, Erving put the Yellow Jackets ahead for good at 4-2.

The other key stretch of time during the contest was at the beginning of the second half. Six consecutive points at the end of the first half kept the deficit close enough to come from behind. However, Leesburg produced a 15-1 run during the last four minutes of the third quarter. The score changed from 43-32 midway through the third to 58-33 at the end of the quarter.

Scores were 21-8 and 38-26 at the end of the other two quarters, respectively.

"However, the loss is also a good opportunity to learn some lessons," Lubin said. "Perhaps this was a case of being a victim of our own success. We knew trying to play the style against the Yellow Jackets is a losing proposition. All we know and the success we have had has come playing the style. After playing the style all season, changing to an-

other is not easy or immediate.

**Wekiva 61, Haines City 46
Tuesday, February 6**

Senior night and the last home contest during the regular season was a success for the Wekiva Mustangs after completing a 61-46 victory over the Haines City Hornets on Tuesday, February 6.

The victory was not apparent until the second half, though. At halftime, Haines City was holding a 25-19 lead. Then with the pomp and circumstance of senior night finally no longer being felt, the Mustangs mounted a 10-1 run at the beginning of the second half.

"There was so much emotion because of senior night, we were missing high percentage field goals," Lubin said. "The touch when shooting wasn't there because the adrenaline was so high. From start to finish, the message was to be aware of the emotions and adrenaline overwhelming the focus. Perhaps not to the extent of overwhelming, but nonetheless, the adrenaline was affecting the focus. Even Tyrone and Jeremy were missing bunnies because there was no arc or air under the ball. Every shot was with way too much force.

"During the second half, the focus could be seen in where the physical attention was. The techniques were fundamentally sound and the positive plays were turned into points."

Wekiva surged in front by a 29-26 score on the strength of converting three of four field goal attempts while Haines City was limited to only two unsuccessful attempts. Three of three free throws were also converted by the

Mustangs. The two other possessions in which the lone point was not scored by Haines City during the run ended with turnovers.

Perry began the run by converting two free throws. Then a trey by Issac Laster, a lay-up plus-one (free throw) by Johnson and a 12-foot jump shot by Sam Bostick were scored to account for the other eight points.

The lead was extended to 42-33 at the end of the third quarter. On only one occasion after the run the Hornets scored three consecutive points.

Seven consecutive points as the first half came to an end propelled Haines City into the 25-19 lead. An 11-10 lead was also held by the Hornets after the first quarter.

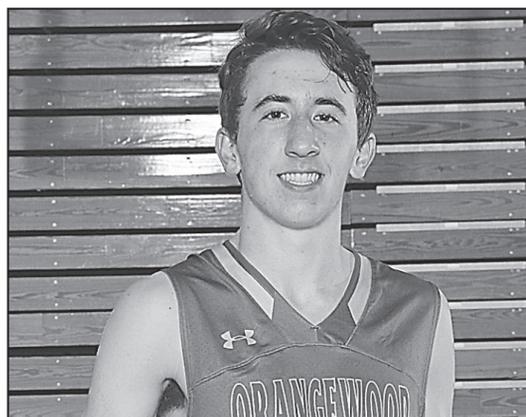
Field goal percentages were nearly equal, 39.6 for Wekiva compared to 40 for Haines City. However, the Mustangs attempted 13 more. Totals were 23-of-58 for Wekiva and 18-of-45 for Haines City.

Also, transition opportunities created through turnovers were limited by the Mustangs. Only six were committed by Wekiva while Haines City's total was 12. The Mustangs scored 17 points off the turnovers.

"Strategically, full-court defense was applied during the second half, because Haines City was unable to handle the quicker, more rushed pace," Lubin said. "The turnovers doubled and again the positive plays were turned into points because the proper technique for shooting the ball was being executed."

style all season, trying to become comfortable pursuing another is not easy or immediate."

1,000-point scorer



Christian St. Germain of Apopka, a basketball player at Orangewood Christian School of Maitland, hit the 1,000 mark for his career on Saturday, February 3, in a 48-44 win vs. Poinciana High at The First Academy Shootout. St. Germain has played on the varsity team at Orangewood for the past three seasons. He is a 6-foot-4 shooting guard who holds offers from Wheaton College, Marietta College, Covenant College, and Oglethorpe University.



The Wekiva Mustangs girls basketball team honored its seniors on Thursday, February 1. Shown with family, coaches, and school administrators are seniors, (l-r), Lyanna Johnson, Rowan Perodin, and E'toni Holloway.

Mustangs down Blue Darters in district tourney game

By Neal Fisher
Apopka Chief Staff

The Wekiva Mustangs girls basketball team spent the past 11 months waiting to take care of unfinished business. That journey to not only return to the state final four but to claim a second state championship officially began Wednesday, February 7, with the semifinal round of the District 9A-3 championship tournament. And there was not the slightest of expectations failing to be met or disappointment as the Apopka Blue Darters were dispatched by a 69-22 score.

Reaching double-digits in the scoring column and combining for 55 points were Myanna Garrett, Sedayijah Payne, Brierra Williams, and Rowan Perodin.

With the smaller amount of

four teams in the district, the tournament consists of only the semifinal and final rounds. The final will take place today, Friday, February 9, at Mustang Arena with West Orange providing the opposition. West Orange defeated Evans by a 56-45 score in the other semifinal.

The teams also met to determine the district championship last season and the two previous meetings during the 2017-18 regular season were split. However, the Mustangs have won all five postseason meetings during the last four seasons.

While both finalists from each of the 16 districts across the state advance to the FHSAA postseason tournament, all of the champions play at home during the first round.

"Clearly, we are the better

team right now," Wekiva assistant coach Latoya Russ said. "However, from start to finish, we were ready and played our best. We weren't looking ahead. The focus was on this contest. In every area of the game, the tone in our favor was set right away."

Every statistic was dominated by the Mustangs as the score indicates. The tangible culmination was the first 19 points being scored by Wekiva.

However, turnovers fostered a blitzkrieg-like start to the contest. Each of the first four Blue Darter possessions ended with turnovers. As quickly as possible, Wekiva then moved the ball into the other half of the court while in transition to seize the commanding lead. In order, those transition opportunities initially created by the first four turnovers were

turned into points when Payne, Williams, Williams, Payne and Emmy James converted field goals inside the paint. Turnovers continued as the statistic that stood out the most. A total of 16 were committed during the first half by the Blue Darters.

The rest of the run was furthered when Perodin and Garrett combined to drain three more field goals as well as free throws by Garrett.

Apopka did not produce a point until about 1:30 was left in the first quarter.

Scores were 32-6, 44-10, and 62-17 at the end of each quarter.

About two-thirds of the 53 attempts taken by the Mustangs were from inside the paint. The overall percentage from the field was 58.4 as 31 attempts were converted. Inside two-point range

was eye-popping though, 29-of-41 for a percentage of 70.7.

"Playing against West Orange for the district championship is always special," Russ said. "Of course, the intensity of the rivalry has increased over the last few seasons because the contests have so much weight towards the postseason."

"Looking ahead to facing West Orange for the district championship was a concern which never came to fruition. A lot of maturity and preparedness was shown. The business at hand of winning the first contest was taken care of and the reward is now we can start thinking about West Orange."

Shortly before tip-off, Mustangs head coach Tommie Butts left the arena to tend to a family emergency.

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