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**April 7, 2017**

The Daily Mississippian

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# MISSISSIPPIAN

THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI SERVING OLE MISS AND OXFORD SINCE 1911 Visit theDMonline.com @thedm\_news

## WHAT'S INSIDE...

**Folk musician promotes album at record store show**

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**Receivers, coaches leading the way this season**

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## Meteorologist shares survival tactics, tools



PHOTO BY: CHASE ROBERTS

Thomas Salem, science and operations officer of the National Weather Service in Memphis, Ron Childers, chief meteorologist for WMC-5, and Brittney Bryant, meteorologist at WMC-5, speak at the last stop of the Weather Roadshow at the Overby Center on Thursday.

**LYNDY BERRYHILL  
SLADE RAND**

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Memphis news station WMC Action News 5 brought its Weather Roadshow to the Overby Center Thursday.

The traveling weather-safety fair offered students lectures on how to stay safe during dangerous weather and how to better prepare for incoming

weather by studying satellite images of the skies.

Oxford marked the Roadshow's final stop of its spring tour, after touching down in Arlington, Tennessee, Dyersburg, Tennessee, and in state at Olive Branch.

Ron Childers, chief meteorologist, showed audience members an example of what to pack in an emergency backpack in addition to a first-aid kit.

Childers said some of the most important and life-saving items to have can be as cheap as 99 cents.

Ponchos, thermal blankets, rope, orange spray paint and small flashlights can mean the difference between perishing and surviving.

WMC Action News 5 had its weather command center on display to show students and professors alike just how its system functions. The Ameri-

can Red Cross' Safe Home and Channel 5's Storm Tracker vehicle were parked outside the Overby Center, as well. Visitors toured through the equipment and safety-training home where the station's storm tracking team demonstrated how to use the technology.

Childers pulled out a bag of nonperishable energy bars

SEE **WEATHER** PAGE 3

ASSOCIATED PRESS

## United States fires missiles at Syria

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States fired a barrage of cruise missiles into Syria Thursday night in retaliation for this week's gruesome chemical weapons attack against civilians, U.S. officials said. It was the first direct American assault on the Syrian government and Donald Trump's most dramatic military order since becoming president.

The surprise strike marked a striking reversal for Trump, who warned as a candidate against the U.S. getting pulled into the Syrian civil war, now in its seventh year. But the president appeared moved by the photos of children killed in the chemical attack, calling it a "disgrace to humanity" that crossed "a lot of lines."

About 60 U.S. Tomahawk missiles, fired from warships in the Mediterranean Sea, targeted an air base in retaliation for a chemical weapons attack that American officials believe Syrian government aircraft launched with a nerve agent, possibly sarin.

The president did not announce the attacks in advance, though he and other national security officials ratcheted up their warnings to the Syrian government throughout the day Thursday.

"I think what happened in Syria is one of the truly egregious crimes and shouldn't have happened and it shouldn't be allowed to happen," Trump told reporters traveling on Air Force One to Florida, where he was holding a two-day summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

The strike came as Trump was hosting Xi in meetings focused in part on another pressing U.S. security dilemma: North Korea's nuclear program. Trump's actions in Syria could signal to China that the new president isn't afraid of unilateral military steps even if key nations like China are standing in the way.

## English major finds inspiration at literary festival

**JENNIFER FRONING**

thedmnews@gmail.com

Page Lagarde was awarded first place in the nonfiction category at the Southern Literary Festival in Arkansas this past weekend and now plans to become a published writer.

Lagarde is a junior majoring in French and English at the university. Last semester, she decided to add a creative writing major to her aspira-

tions. She said her teacher encouraged all of the students to submit a story to the festival, Lagarde abided.

Out of all of the submissions, hers was won.

"I was very surprised, and I was excited to have the opportunity to meet other authors, networking, doing the workshops and just meeting other people," Lagarde said.

Lagarde wrote the story "To Thaw," chronicling a freshman year experience she had on an outward-bound dogsledding expedition to Min-

nesota.

The literary festival took place over three days at the University of Arkansas. The festival consisted of workshops for aspiring writers, published authors giving talks and the readings of the first-place winners.

Lagarde said this was the first writing contest she had ever entered and she now plans on entering as many literary festivals as she can. The festival solidified her decision

SEE **LAGARDE** PAGE 3



COURTESY: UM COMMUNICATIONS

THE UNIVERSITY of  
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EST. 1017



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear editor,

Something needs to be done about the Mississippi flag.

Those on both sides of the issue are ready to present their arguments and it is time that they be allowed to do so. The Mississippi legislature should either take the issue up next session or there should be a statewide initiative vote.

Personally I believe that this is an issue for the state to decide, meaning I am in favor of a constitutional initiative vote. The legislature will more than likely reject action of any kind on the flag purely for political purposes.

Changing the flag would be good for the states reputation. Remembering and honoring the past is admirable and should be done; but the flag is a living and breathing symbol of Mississippi. It is not a monument.

Monuments should stand tall and proudly remind those of us in the present of the past. Mississippi is my home, and I love my state. I want her to succeed.

Changing the state flag and moving proudly into the future is the move to make. Our state has serious problems to solve and we need serious people to solve them. Education, infrastructure, and health-care should be the priorities of our state leaders. Let's get this flag issue behind us one way or the other and get on with moving Mississippi forward.

*Noel Morgan is a business administration major from Tupelo.*

Dear editor,

I agree with most of Mr. Daniel Payne's points in his Opinion piece, "Coal is Failing," but I thought I'd flesh out a few finer points about coal mining in Appalachia.

The single biggest blow to the coal industry in recent years is the rise of natural gas (which Mr. Trump also claims to support).

Another blow to miners is the creation of new mining techniques, including the environmentally questionable "mountaintop removal" technique, wherein the top of a mountain is blown up to better access the coal.

Look at a Google Earth image of mountains in West Virginia or Tennessee and you can clearly see the effects of the practice.

Coal is a non-renewable resource, and Appalachia has been mining its coal for over a century. Wyoming is catching up to West Virginia in coal production, and will likely surpass it in the coming years.

Many communities in Appalachia have relied on coal companies for everything, from housing to company credit cards to use at company stores, and now the industry is dying.

No longer can someone in Appalachia expect to make good money right out of high school by working in the coal mines. This has caused pressing problems in Appalachia, from poverty to heroin use.

Something must be done to diversify the economies of these coal communities in West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and elsewhere, or these problems will only grow worse.

*Jake Boomer is a history and anthropology major from Nashville, Tennessee.*

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MEMBER NEWSPAPER

The Daily Mississippian is published Monday through Friday during the academic year, on days when classes are scheduled.

Columns do not represent the official opinions of The University of Mississippi or *The Daily Mississippian* unless specifically indicated.

The Daily Mississippian welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should be e-mailed to dmletters@olemiss.edu.

Letters should be typed, double-spaced and no longer than 300 words. Letters may be edited for clarity, space or libel. Third-party letters and those bearing pseudonyms, pen names or "name withheld" will not be published. Publication is limited to one letter per individual per calendar month.

Letters should include phone and email contact information so that editors can verify authenticity. Letters from students should include grade classification and major; letters from faculty and staff should include title and the college, school or department where the person is employed.



PHOTO BY: CHASE ROBERTS

Thomas Salem, science and operations officer of the National Weather Service in Memphis, and Ron Childers, chief meteorologist for WMC-5, show a survival kit during the Weather Roadshow.

**WEATHER**  
*continued from page 1*

that cost around \$1 each.

“These are not the greatest tasting things in the world,” Childers said. “However ... they’ve got 35 grams of sugar, 8 grams of protein and 45 grams of carbohydrates. You have to keep your blood sugar up. You have to eat something.”

Other equipment included a toothbrush, chapstick and a permanent marker in case he has to make a sign because pens are not always reliable.

The last thing Childers pulled out of his emergency backpack was a deck of playing cards.

Childers said he started packing cards after a storm had ripped through Walnut. He saw people just sitting around looking hopeless.

“They had nothing. They were just passing time,” Childers said.

Childers said he looked up and saw two men playing a card game that distracted them from the storm’s damage.

He said part of surviving is physical safety, but it’s also about mental safety and having something to occupy time like a card game can keep morale from bottoming out.

After the outside demonstrations of the weather equipment wrapped up, the National Weather Service gave a presentation on its Skywarn Weather Storm Spotter Class in the Overby Auditorium.

Jenny Smith, the station’s marketing director, said sessions like Thursday’s are necessary because of the threat presented by “Dixie Alley,” the Mississippi region where

**LAGARDE**  
*continued from page 1*

to pursue creative writing as a career. Lagarde said she has always loved to write, but never wrote as strongly as she does now.

“I used to write little stories in my diary when I was a little, little kid,” Lagarde said. “They’re so laughable. So dumb and funny, but I don’t know, I just did them for so long...”

Lagarde said she started taking creative writing courses this year because she wanted to write her senior thesis as a creative writing piece and was told she’d have to take creative writing classes to do so. She said she wants to write either a novel or a collection of short stories for her thesis. Once she took the first class, she fell in love.

“I just took the class, and so much of it you just think it’s going to be inspiration, oh I’ll just write if I have something to write about,” Lagarde said. “But a lot of it is just sitting down and making yourself work. I think that’s just what this class made me do finally.”

Lagarde is currently working on a story about a pilgrimage in the French town of Lourdes, a place she visited while studying abroad in France. She said she is too inexperienced to know whether

she prefers fiction or nonfiction better right now, but she continues to write frequently.

“I think a crowded place is more intimate when you’re writing because if I’m by myself, every little detail is going to distract me,” Lagarde said. “If there is a fly, I will focus in on that, but if I’m in a crowded place with lots of people, I can just focus on it for longer periods of time.”

Lagarde said most of her inspiration comes from her family, most specifically from her dad. He is a frequent character in her stories, she describes him as a storyteller. Lagarde grew up in Mobile, Alabama, surrounded by art and was immersed in choir, musicals and theater all her life.

Lagarde is planning on applying to many graduate schools all over the South, but is focusing in on Virginia and Texas right now. She said she wants to earn an MFA in creative writing and believes she should get her graduate

degree from another school to gain new insights and experiences.

“As a writer, you really need to expand and broaden your horizons,” Lagarde said. “Get to know a different place. It’s really good to just go somewhere different and do something different.”

Lagarde’s goal is to become a published writer, but she said she understands how difficult that is. She originally wanted to be a novelist, but she has found a love for short stories, as well, even though she said she understood it was not as lucrative a business.

Lagarde’s favorite author is Jane Austen because of the way Austen provides insight into human nature, moral dilemmas and what she reveals about the human condition. She wants to eventually write like Austen.

“I would hope that my writing could inspire as much as Jane Austen’s has inspired me,” Lagarde said.

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# Folk musician performs at The End of All Music

JACQUELINE KNIRNSCHILD  
thedmfeatures@gmail.com

Durham-based folk musician and Ole Miss alumnus Jake Xerxes Fussell will return to Oxford this weekend to share tunes off his new album, "What in the Natural World."

Fussell will perform at 4 p.m. Saturday at The End of All Music record store on North Lamar. Then later that night, Fussell will also perform at Proud Larry's.

"What in the Natural World" is Fussell's second album and debuted the end of last month. It contains the same techniques as his 2015 self-titled. Fussell takes traditional blues and folk songs and adds his own personal interpretation and twist to them.

"I'm not really a songwriter or anything," Fussell said. "I take a lot of old traditional songs and play with them, rearrange them and put my own spin on them – so that's my creative outlet."

Fussell's new album includes reworked songs from mostly Southern musicians such as Jimmy Driftwood, a folklorist and musician from Arkansas who was popular in

the 1960s.

Growing up in Columbus, Georgia – right on the Alabama line – Fussell had a strong presence of folklore in his life, especially because his father was involved in the local folklore museum.

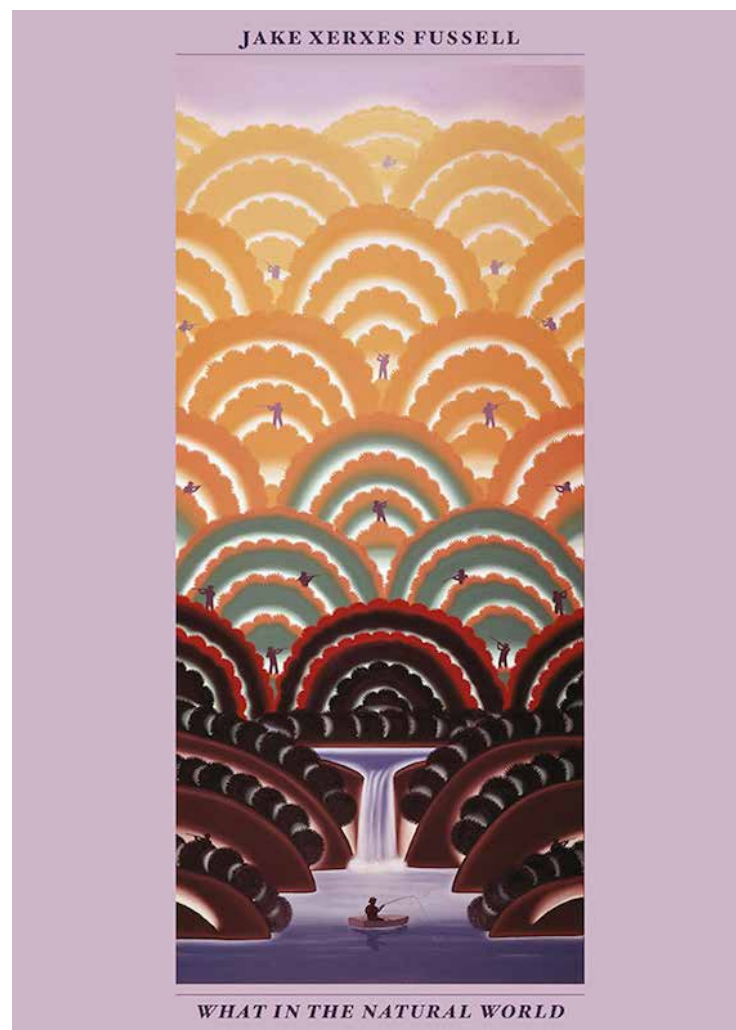
His dad often hired old-time musicians to play at folk festivals, Fussell said, so he grew up surrounded by rural people playing country and folk music.

As a kid, Fussell actually started playing the drums and then moved quickly to the guitar and bass.

Fussell's favorite artists include influential North Carolinian blues guitarist Etta Baker, folk guitarist Joseph Spence, who is from the Bahamas, and the L.A. experimental rock band Los Lobos. Fussell said he also listens to a lot of Mexican music and jazz.

"My influences are kind of all over the place," Fussell said. He said he often finds material to rework at the Old Library of Congress.

Fussell was one of The End of All Music's first employees and is good friends with the owner, David Swider. Swider said Fussell has an encyclopedic knowledge of tradi-



COURTESY: JAKE XERXES FUSSELL

tional American music.

"Pretty much anything blues and folk related, pre-1970, he knows about," Swider said. "He was a real-

ly valuable asset to the store when we first opened, and he still is. I still talk to him all the time and ask him about stuff." Swider said he loves

Fussell's music.

"He's one of those guys – as cheesy as it sounds – that you can give him a guitar at a party and he can play Dwight Yoakam songs and a rare blues song you've never heard of," Swider said. "He's kind of a fun guy like that just because he knows so many songs."

Fussell's first album blew him away. Swider said he had heard Fussell play all of the songs a million times before, but hearing them on a professional level with a band was so different and fantastic. The album was also very popular among The End of All Music's customers.

"We would play it over and over in the shop, and every time we were listening to it, someone would buy it," Swider said. "I think we sold, like, 80 copies of that record on vinyl, which is a lot."

Fussell has not been back to Oxford since his performance at the Grove last summer. He said he has loved living in Durham the past 2 1/2 years but is also excited to see everyone in Oxford.

"It's always good to be back," Fussell said.



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# Mexing it up: Chefs celebrate restaurant workers

EMILY HECTOR  
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John Currence and 12 other chefs will host a “Mexissippi Supper,” an event celebrating Mexican-American men and women who are the key ingredient to the success of the restaurant industry.

In 2015, Currence founded Move On Up, Mississippi – a nonprofit organization aimed at fighting childhood hunger and promoting nutrition in Mississippi. For its second year, the fundraiser will host a ticketed event that will consist of several Latin-inspired recipes from acclaimed Mississippi chefs.

Currence said he came up with the Mexissippi idea based on the current political standings that ostracize workers who make up a significant percent of the restaurant world.

“(The) Latin Americans or Asians or African-Americans, any minorities that are working in our kitchens, they never get the real credit for what they do,” Currence said.

The event was created with the goal of being a place for everyone to unite and celebrate those in the food industry while spreading the “Move On Up, Mississippi” message. In hopes

of hosting a credible event, Currence said he encourages his minority staff members to come out to it.

“We do our best to screen everyone we hire to make sure they are documented,” he said. “But it doesn’t matter how long someone works for us. These folks are scared right now because of what’s going on in our country.”

Currence is passionate about supporting his employees in every way he possibly can.

“Every little thing we can do to show that there is love here, unlike our leaders lead us to believe,” Currence said.

Olivia Lyberg, communications and foundations director of Currence’s City Grocery Restaurant Group, said Move On Up was made to help the state continue progressing.

“(The goal) is to move Mississippi forward and up on the list, so for this we really wanted to pick known chefs from around the state that John (Currence) likes and respects. We wanted to add a roster of people from different parts of the states with different foods,” Lyberg said.

Chef Michael Greenhill of Walker’s Drive-In of Jackson said he is looking forward to showing people at the event the great food that is coming out of



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Jackson. Although only a few of the restaurant’s employees will be at the event, Greenhill credits the restaurant’s success to its diverse cooking and wait staff.

“It’s all for a good cause,” Greenhill said. “We have a big diverse cooking and wait staff. We all seem to get along and have a good time. We’re family.”

David Crews, a private chef, culinary school teacher and founder of the Delta Supper Club, is a longtime friend of Currence. Crews said he plans to incorporate flavors from the Delta, which have large immigrant influence, in his dishes for the event.

“I’m from the Mississippi Delta, so one of the things I

wanted to do was pay homage to the cuisine in its entirety,” Crews said.

Crews said he sees a need for different cultures in the culinary world.

“Believe it or not, most of the time in an actual restaurant setting, the backbone is the Mexican labor,” he said. “Whether it’s dishwashers, line cooks, the people that are actually producing the foods, (they) are immigrants.”

Bill Chandler, executive director of Mississippi Immigrants Rights Alliance, has been involved with rights of immigrant workers since the 1950s.

Chandler, an expert on immigration policies, credits the common illegal immigrant trafficking issue to the North Amer-

ican Free Trade Agreement of 1994. The trade agreement had a devastating effect on the small farms in Mexico, as well as migrant workers here in the states.

“The sad part about it is that these folks are here basically escaping situations that are life threatening,” he said.

“Events like this are paramount for us to be able to grow as chefs and as a society,” Crews said.

The event will take place at National Guard Armory Pavilion on University Avenue from 7-10 p.m. Friday. Tickets are \$55 for general public and can be purchased at here.

*This article was submitted to The Daily Mississippian from an advanced reporting class.*

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# Receivers front and center for Ole Miss in 2017

**SAM HARRES**  
 thedmsports@gmail.com

Ole Miss football is hardly, if ever, a known quantity. With each new season arrive a slew of injuries, off-field controversies and just enough late-game magic to keep fans coming back for more. With that said, there is one thing fans of Rebels football can count on year after year: pass-heavy offense. This year will be no exception.

New offensive coordinator Phil Longo, the technician previously behind college football's most explosive offense in the nation, Sam Houston State, has remained relatively tight-lipped on the specifics of his system. Longo's players, on the other hand, have certainly dropped a few hints. Expect a fast and furious offense built on simple play-calling and unparalleled chemistry.

"With the new Longo of-

fense, we're trying to move the ball fast," sophomore wide receiver A.J. Brown said. "The speed of the game is going faster now. We're moving a lot faster."

Brown, who caught two touchdowns in 11 games last season, should play a larger role in Longo's offense this season. An Under Armour All-American and the fifth-ranked receiver prospect coming out of Starkville High School, Brown's work ethic and humble attitude have solidified his role as a leader this year.

"I was always told potential doesn't mean anything, but we have a lot of talent in the room," Brown said. "We can make plays and run routes, but we do the small things every day, so this room is really going to take off this year."

Joining Brown in the receiver core, D.K. Metcalf hopes to rekindle some of the excitement he generated as

a freshman. Metcalf, a consensus four-star recruiting prospect like Brown, arrived at Ole Miss to plenty of fanfare. After catching a touchdown during the Rebels' loss to Florida State, the big man from Oxford broke his foot just minutes after catching another touchdown against Wofford. His freshman season ended there, but his drive did not.

"I didn't look at the negative aspect of it (referring to the injury)," Metcalf said. "I looked at it as a time to grow and perfect my mental game."

Brown and Metcalf have grown close since arriving in Oxford, bonding as brothers both on and off the field.

"He has come a long way. That's my guy right there," Brown said about Metcalf. "I'm glad to see him back at 100 percent, running around. He never gets tired. We just feed off each other."

With rising sophomore Shea Patterson primed to take command of the Rebels' offense full time in 2017, the importance of on-field chemistry cannot be under-



FILE PHOTO

Rising sophomore A.J. Brown runs downfield during a game last season. Brown should be playing a bigger role in Phil Longo's new offense next season.

stated. After senior quarterback Chad Kelly suffered a season-ending injury against Georgia Southern last season, Patterson played in

three games as a true freshman, including a 29-28 win against Texas A&M in College Station.

With several veteran departures this off-season and a new offense to learn, Patterson figures to lean heavily on Brown and Metcalf next fall.

"Shea and I played at the opening together on the same U.S. Army team, and we're every morning before workouts trying to perfect it, trying to get extra work in," Metcalf said.

With hungry receivers and fresh tactics, the Rebels will not have problems putting points on the board next season. And while it remains to be seen whether or not the defense can step up from an abysmal 2017, Rebels fans can rest easy knowing Patterson should have plenty of open targets to throw at next fall.

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- Most deceitful
- Incites Rover
- Get real! (2 wds.)
- Bag
- Bellyache
- Cousins' moms
- "It Walks by Night" author
- Baseball family name
- Alan or Cheryl
- Lift anchor
- Green moth
- Mr. Satie
- Be overfond
- JAMA readers
- Dawn Chong

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14				15					16			
17				18					19			
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48	49	50				51			52	53	54	
55				56	57				58			
59				60					61			
62				63					64			

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		6						9
	2			1	3			
	5						1	
3			4	8			5	
		7					2	
	6			3	2			8
	1						4	
			2	5			3	
7							6	

**HOW TO PLAY**

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 with no repeats.

**DIFFICULTY LEVEL**  
**SUPER TOUGH**

1	2	9	6	4	8	5	3	7
7	3	6	1	5	2	4	8	9
5	4	8	9	7	3	6	1	2
8	7	4	2	3	9	1	6	5
3	6	2	5	9	1	7	4	8
9	5	1	7	8	4	2	6	3
2	1	7	8	6	9	3	5	4
4	9	5	3	7	1	8	2	6
6	8	3	4	2	5	6	1	7

# Rebels kick off annual Grove Bowl Saturday

REED ROLAND  
thedmsports@gmail.com

Ole Miss football is gearing up for the annual Grove Bowl Saturday as it prepares for its upcoming campaign. The intra-squad scrimmage, which is being broadcast on SEC Network, will give the Rebels a chance to showcase changes and improvements the team has implemented this off-season.

It may tempt spectators to focus entirely on the players, but some attention should be spared for the coaching staff. Head coach Hugh Freeze shook up the locker room this off-season, replacing his offensive and defensive coordinators, as well as adding new wide receiver, defensive line and linebacker coaches.

Offensive coordinator Phil Longo, whose history of high-scoring offenses and fast ball movement at Sam Houston State attracted the Ole Miss athletic department, looks to refresh the Rebels' offensive front this year. Sophomore offensive linemen Greg Little, a day one starter, spoke highly of Longo's system.

"Coach Longo is definitely a tempo kind of guy, and we'll look to make explosive plays," Little said.

Wide receiver coach Jacob Peeler, who set a number of school records during his coaching tenure at University of California, will serve as a catalyst for an extremely exciting Rebels receiving core. Connections with AJ Brown and DK Metcalf, a pair of freshman receivers who Peeler almost recruited for Cal, have made the transition near seamless for the Rebels.

Peeler did not take long to leave a positive impression on his new receivers.

"Coach Peeler is really a technician. He knows what he's doing. He's sent six receivers to the NFL in three years," Metcalf said. "His track record speaks for himself. He knows what he's doing, and he knows what he's talking about."

Metcalf, who had his 2016 season cut short after suffering a broken foot against Wofford, demonstrated plenty of promise last season and hopes to pick up where he left off.

"I looked at it as a time to grow and perfect my mental game," Metcalf said.

On the defensive side of the ball, Freeze appointed Wesley McGriff, who spent time at Auburn and in the NFL before arriving in Oxford, as defensive coordinator. Ole Miss will rely on McGriff to shore up defensive woes, especially after a 2016 season that saw the Rebels

ranked 119th against the rush and 108th in total defense in the Football Bowl Subdivision.

With plenty of inexperience across the line, McGriff figures to rely heavily on veteran leadership next season. Senior defensive end Marquis Haynes, who will enter next season ranked third and fourth in school history for sacks and tackles for loss, respectively, will play a big part in that.

"All of our defensive ends are athletic," Little said. "We have a mixture of guys, and we're not one dimensional."

The defense, however, will only succeed if the Ole Miss secondary, which finished 45th in the FBS and seventh in the SEC, improves, as well. Metcalf, who matches up against the best cornerbacks in Oxford on a daily basis, seems optimistic.

"All the corners out there are working," Metcalf said. "I think coach McGriff and coach Jones are a big part of that."

Saturday marks an opportunity for Freeze, Longo, McGriff and Peeler to test their players in a game setting, in front of a limited home crowd. And while the matchup is nothing more than a scrimmage, the players will not be taking it lightly. Kickoff is scheduled for 11 a.m. Saturday morning at Vaught-Hemingway Stadium.



PHOTO BY: CAMERON BROOKS

Greg Little

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Week of April 02, 2017



# Baseball ready for tough battle against Alabama

**ETHAN WRIGHT**  
 thedmports@gmail.com

After dropping three straight in their series with main rival Mississippi State last weekend, head coach Mike Bianco and his Rebels found an unexpected surge of offensive playmaking in their wild 12-inning victory over No. 17 Southern Miss Tuesday night. The sudden display of solid hitting could prove monumental as the Rebs move into their weekend series against Alabama.

The Crimson Tide currently sits in last place in the SEC West yet is just one game back from Ole Miss in the standings. If the Rebels can replicate the offensive success they were able to find in their victory over the Golden Eagles, they could very likely

sweep the weekend series and finally secure a solid footing in the SEC West race. A sweep would not only raise Ole Miss' conference record to .500, but it could also move it past Texas A&M to at least fifth in the West.

While the Tide certainly isn't the same level of competition as some of the teams Ole Miss has faced this season, defeating any team three games in a row is a tall order, and the Rebels won't expect to find repeated success if they can't turn at-bats into base hits and base hits into runs. This process of building solid offensive playmaking begins with the veterans.

Captains Tate Blackman and Colby Bortles have certainly had their ups and downs this season, but one thing remains constant: When the veterans are batting



PHOTO BY: CAMERON BROOKS

Freshman first baseman Cole Zabowski swings at a pitch during Ole Miss' win over University of North Carolina Wilmington earlier this season. Zabowski, after starting the year off hot, is now hitting .258 on the season.

in top form, the Rebs will be in a position to win. This fact remained true as ever Tuesday night as Blackman, Bortles and junior Will Golsan each drove in RBI hits, with Blackman adding in a run of his own. The star of the game, however, was sophomore Ryan Olenek – not a veteran in years, but certainly one in big-game playmaking – who added three hits and a run on the night.

If Ole Miss' veterans can maintain offensive consistency throughout each game, then Alabama could prove an inconsequential obstacle. However, to really guarantee a return to that early-season offensive form and mark a turning point in the season, the Rebels must see more production from the younger guys on the team. The veter-

ans have proven they can do what they need to win games, but with almost half of the roster comprised of first-year players, Bianco is going to need a push from his freshman class in order to defeat Alabama and prove the season isn't lost.

The beginning of the season saw the incredible potential that underlies this talented class, with first-years Thomas Dillard, Cole Zabowski and Grae Kessinger contributing early and often at the plate. Lately, however, the three freshman starters have seen their stats dip. In fact, the four freshmen in the batting order are all in the bottom five of batting average. It has been clear the hits have been few and far between for the younger guys since conference play opened up, and

when a player would register a hit, he would often be left stranded on base.

While the Rebs' last game saw a slight improvement with three of the core freshmen registering hits, it is vastly important that the first-years improve even more. Solid pitching and veteran play-making may be enough to take one, maybe two, against Alabama, but it will take a full team effort to conduct a sweep and begin the process of turning this season around. If Bianco can get things going at the plate early in the series, we might get to see the Rebels we were promised early in the season. However, a failure to establish scoring will surely lead to a continuation of mediocrity and a defeat at the hands of the SEC West's bottom squad.

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