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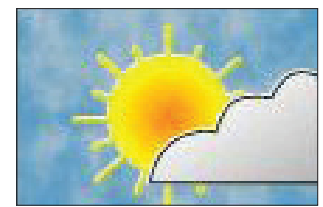
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# HIGH BIG SPRING HERALD

**THURSDAY**

**JANUARY 8, 2009**



VOLUME 104, NUMBER 32

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HERALD file photo

From left, Owen Seidenberger, Jamie Walker and Mason Walker inspect some of the hogs on display at the 71st Annual Glasscock County 4-H Junior Livestock Show in Garden City. The 72nd version begins Friday at the Glasscock County Community Center.

## Tax pact will aid county's finances

By **THOMAS JENKINS**  
 Staff Writer

The financial future of Howard County is a little brighter going into 2009, according to officials, as commissioners look to put the turmoil of the past year in their rear view mirrors.

Embroided in a legal battle with Big Spring Refinery owner Alon USA for much of 2008, a settlement reached in late October between the two entities — totaling more than \$1.9 million in taxes from the past three years — should help revitalize county coffers in 2009.

**"When we receive the payment from Alon, we're planning to put it in a reserve fund"**



—County Judge Mark Barr

However, the money's not quite in the bank yet, said Barr.

"We haven't received a payment from Alon yet," said Barr. "However, that doesn't necessarily surprise me, as the 2008 taxes aren't due until the end of this month. We've been told the taxes will be paid this month, so we're just waiting right now."

"It's not a do-or-die situation right now. We based the tax rate on what we thought we were going to get, so I'm not anticipating any problems. We have the money to operate for the coming year."

Commissioners approved a tax rate of .5362 cents per \$100 valuation, nearly a nickel above the rollback rate of .4912 cents, in anticipation of the Alon tax money being tied up in litigation.

The final bill — which includes \$421,722 for 2006, \$666,438 for 2007 and \$857,675 for 2008 — is expected to be paid in one lump sum, according to Barr.

And while \$1.9 million will certainly be a huge shot in the arm for the

See **COUNTY**, Page 3

## Glasscock County gets ready for 72nd junior livestock show

By **STEVE REAGAN**  
 Staff Writer

GARDEN CITY — The farmers and ranchers of tomorrow will show what they know this weekend when the 72nd annual Glasscock County Junior Livestock Show is held at the County Community Center Friday and Saturday.

More than 50 children will display their sheep, rabbits, steers, swine and goats during the two-day event.

"Considering we only have 200 kids in the school district here, that's a pretty big number," said Charlene Belew, family and consumer science extension agent for Glasscock County.

The show will begin with swine and steer judging at 8 a.m. Friday, while the afternoon will be devoted

**Show schedule**

**FRIDAY**  
 8 a.m., swine and steer judging  
 2 p.m., rabbit judging

**SATURDAY**  
 8 a.m., sheep and goat judging  
 11 a.m., pig scramble  
 1 p.m., premium sale

to rabbit judging. Saturday, sheep and goats will be judged beginning at 8 a.m.

The littlest participants get their time in the ring at 11 a.m. Saturday when the show's annual pig scramble — open to children ages 8 and younger — will be held.

Swine and steers will be judged by Eddie Smallwood of O'Donnell. Sar-

ah Hignight of Lubbock will judge the rabbits and sheep, and goats will be evaluated by Corey Owens of San Angelo.

The Glasscock show concludes with the premium sale at 1 p.m.

Belew said money earned from the sale will be used by the children in a variety of ways.

"The money goes to the kids. The decision on how to use it is made by the family," she said. "It usually goes toward paying off the bills — for feed, medication or the like — the kids accrued while getting their animal ready for the show. Some use the money to purchase an animal for next year's show, while others save the money for their education."

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[www.bigspringherald.com](http://www.bigspringherald.com)

**To reach us:**  
 Please call 263-7331. Office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. If you miss your paper, please call (432) 263-7335 before 7 p.m. weekdays and noon Sunday.

## Retailers report dismal December sales

By **ANNE D'INNOCENZIO**  
 AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Retailers reported dismal sales figures for December on Thursday as even Wal-Mart Stores Inc., one of the bright spots in the industry, finally buckled under the pressures of the deteriorating economy.

As merchants reported their sales figures, confirming fears that the holiday season was the weakest

in four decades, the malaise cut through practically all areas from kitchen gadget stores to jewelry purveyors and teen apparel retailers.

The deep discounts that began well before the official start of the holiday season spurred a number of merchants to cut their earnings outlooks on Thursday, fueling more concerns about the health of the industry.

Among the many retailers that reported steep sales declines were

Sears Holdings Corp., which operates Kmart and Sears stores, luxury retailer Saks Inc., Gap Inc., Abercrombie & Fitch Co. . But the biggest surprise came from Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer, which posted a smaller sales gain than what Wall Street expected and cut its fourth-quarter earnings outlook.

"This suggests that the lower income group is feeling the pinch

See **SALES**, Page 3

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Now able to repair previously thought to be unrepairable items

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## Obituaries

### Carolann Winbush

Carolann Winbush, 72, of Big Spring died Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2009, at Scenic Mountain Medical Center. Funeral services will be held at 7 p.m. Thursday at Myers & Smith Chapel. The family will receive friends from 6 p.m. until 7 p.m. Thursday at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

She was born March 21, 1936, in Big Spring. She married Bert Winbush Jan. 16, 1978. They drove a truck cross-country, and she also drove a bus for Big Spring Independent School District for 15 years. She was a lifetime resident of Big Spring and was a Baptist.

She is survived by her husband, Bert Winbush of Big Spring; one daughter, Gwen Hart and husband Carl of Big Spring; one son, Mickey Emerson and wife Mary of Big Spring; 10 grandchildren; and 10 great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Clara and Aubrey Woolsey; two sons, Ronnie Emerson and Brad Emerson; one daughter, Evette Emerson; one brother, Calvin Miller; and one sister, Clementine Loudry.

Arrangements are by Myers & Smith Funeral Home. Pay your respects online at [www.myersandsmith.com](http://www.myersandsmith.com)

## Take Note

- The mission of CASA of West Texas is to promote and support quality volunteers who speak for the best interest of abused and neglect children in court in an effort to find each child a safe, nurturing and permanent home. CASA currently has 10 active volunteers to serve the 55 plus children of Howard County in foster care. A class is forming in Howard County and 20 volunteers are needed. For more information on becoming a CASA volunteer, please contact Robyn LaForge at (432) 683-1114.

- West Texas Opportunities Inc., through a Job Access Reverse Commute project with the Texas Department of Transportation offers transportation to employment in Midland, on a limited schedule, Monday through Friday each week. This fixed route currently leaves Big Spring at 7 a.m. and makes a stop at the EZ Rider bus connection in downtown Midland. The route leaves Midland for the return to Big Spring at 4:15 p.m. As a promotional introduction, no fare is charged. Beginning April 1, the daily fare will be from \$3 to \$8, round-trip, depending on the number of passengers using the service. For more information, call Victor Enriquez, JARC coordinator, at West Texas Opportunities, (800) 245-9028.

- The Permian Basin Foundation has awarded West Texas Opportunities Inc. \$130,000 through the Texas Resources for Iraq Afghanistan Deployment fund. WTO will assist current and former military personnel serving in Iraq or Afghanistan and their families. Funding will serve Howard, Martin, Andrews, Borden, Dawson, Ector, Fisher, Gaines, Glasscock, Midland, Mitchell, Nolan, Scurry and Upton counties. For more information, contact Diana Martinez or Debbie Wilson at 110 Johnson in Big Spring or call (432) 267-9536.

- Scenic Mountain Medical Center's Relay for Life team is selling cookbooks to raise funds for the American Cancer Society. The cookbooks can be purchased at the PBX operator's booth for \$10 apiece. For more information, contact Beverly Grant at 268-4952.

- HATS (Hope After The Sadness), an American Cancer Society Resource Room is available at First Methodist Church. This center provides information and valuable resources for those affected by cancer. This HATS ministry, established in memory of the late Rev. Dr. Shane Brue, maintains a room with free hats, wigs and head coverings available for check-out by those dealing with hair loss due to cancer treatment. Other services and resources are also available. Contact the "Hat Lady," Marci Lykken at 267-2915.

- Road to Recovery, sponsored by the American Cancer Society, seeks volunteers to drive cancer patients to treatment in Midland. This requires just a few hours commitment each month. To volunteer, or to request a ride for treatment, call (877) 277-1618, the High Plains American Cancer Group Report Center. Anyone wishing to volunteer to drive in this program should call Sherry Hodnett, president of the Big Spring ACS Board, at 264-7599 at her office at Home Hospice.

- Bring joy and kindness to others by becoming a Compass Hospice volunteer. Help those at the end of life's journey. Make a difference in someone's life. Call 263-5999 to begin your journey.

- All Creatures Sanctuary and Rescue has an account set up with Big Spring Salvage at 3608 N. Hwy. 87 for all types of metals and aluminum cans. Please tell them that your donations are for All Creatures Sanctuary and Rescue. All Creatures Sanctuary and Rescue is also still taking weight circles off of all Purina brand dog foods. Send your Purina Weight Circles, to A.C.S. & R. at P.O. 871, Coahoma 79511. All Creatures Sanctuary and Rescue is still accepting old and used cell phones and ink jet cartridges, for drop off locations in Big Spring and Coahoma, Call Melanie at 267-7387.

## Police

The Big Spring Police Department reported the following activity between 7 a.m. Wednesday and 7 a.m. today:

- DANIEL ESQUIVEL GOVEA, 23, of Midland, was arrested Wednesday on a charge of public intoxication.
- STEVEN TIMOTHY SANFORD, 46, transient, was arrested Wednesday on a charge of public intoxication.
- TILLIS TALLY GREEN, 34, of 509 Goliad, was arrested Wednesday on a charge of Class C assault – family violence.
- STEVEN VALENCIA, 49, of 107 N.E. Eighth St., was arrested Thursday on a charge of failure to maintain financial responsibility.
- JUAN PABLE FERDIN, 49, of Dallas, was arrested Wednesday on charges of public intoxication and possession of a controlled substance.
- ROBERT DONALD GILBERT, 40, of 538 Westover Rd., was arrested Wednesday on a charge of possession of a controlled substance.
- DANIEL VERA FLORES, 40, of 1507 W. Fourth St., was arrested Thursday on charges of assault by threats and public intoxication.
- CLAYTON DOW BIRMELIN, 22, of 1804 Morrison, was arrested Wednesday on charges of theft, failure to appear (two counts), failure to maintain financial responsibility, possession of tobacco by a minor and operating an unregistered motor vehicle.
- RAY BRITO GONZALES, 21, of 1503 Robin, was arrested Wednesday on a charge of no driver's license
- ARSON was reported in the 1000 block of Johnson.
- THEFT was reported in the 300 block of Owens.
- POSSESSION OF A CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE was reported in the 100 block of Third Street.
- CRIMINAL MISCHIEF was reported in the 600 block of Runnels.
- ASSAULT CAUSING BODILY INJURY – FAMILY VIOLENCE was reported in the 800 block of FM 700.
- ASSAULT CLASS C/FAMILY VIOLENCE was reported in the 4100 block of Dixon.

## Sheriff's report

The Howard County Sheriff's Office reported the following activity:

- Note — Officials with the Howard County Jail reported having 60 inmates at the time of this report.
- AUSTIN RAY WATSON, 27, was arrested by DPS Wednesday on charges of possession of marijuana – two ounces or less and public intoxication.
- OLIVIA TALIETHA BALLIN, 29, was transferred to the county jail Wednesday by the BSPD on charges of failure to identify as a fugitive from justice – giving false information and a parole violation for possession of a controlled substance.
- BARRY LYNN MAGILL, 33, was arrested Wednesday by DPS on a charge of public intoxication.
- GARY LEE MOORE, 54, was arrested Wednesday by the HCSO on charges of bail jumping – failure to appear and a Tom Green County warrant for driving while intoxicated.
- MARTA P. MATHEWS, 35, was arrested Wednesday by the HCSO on a charge of forgery of a financial instrument.
- JASON ORTEGA, 27, was transferred to the county jail Wednesday by the BSPD on charges of driving while intoxicated and assault causing bodily injury – family violence.
- DELA PEREZ DEANDA, 40, was arrested Wednesday by the HCSO on charges of bondsman off bond for criminal mischief, bondsman off bond for theft by check and bondsman off bond for criminal mischief.
- JOHNNY VILLA JR., 19, was transferred to the county jail Wednesday by the BSPD on a charge of possession of marijuana – two ounces or less.
- CHRISTOPHER LEE MYRICK, 32, was arrested Wednesday by the HCSO on a charge of violation of parole.

## Fire/EMS

The Big Spring Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services reported the following activity:






- TRAUMA was reported at the Big Spring VAMC. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 1200 block of N. County Road Seven. Service refused.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 2000 block of W. Highway 80. One person was transported to SMMC.
- MEDICAL was reported in the 1500 block of Kiowa. One person was transported to SMMC.

## Support Groups

TUESDAY

- Grief share, sponsored by Home Hospice and the First Presbyterian Church, Seventh and Runnels (north end door), meets at 6 p.m.. Drop-ins are welcome. For more information, contact Sherry Hodne3tt at 264-7599.

## Your Local Weather

Fri 1/9	Sat 1/10	Sun 1/11	Mon 1/12	Tue 1/13
 <b>80/36</b> Sunny. Highs in the low 80s and lows in the mid 30s.	 <b>52/29</b> Windy with a mix of sun and clouds.	 <b>56/33</b> Mix of sun and clouds. Highs in the mid 50s and lows in the low 30s.	 <b>57/32</b> Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 50s and lows in the low 30s.	 <b>62/30</b> Sunshine. Highs in the low 60s and lows in the low 30s.

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## Bulletin Board

If you have items for the Bulletin board, contact the Herald news room at 263-7331 or email [editor@bigspringherald.com](mailto:editor@bigspringherald.com)

TODAY

- League of United Latin American Citizens LULAC Chapter 4791 meets at 5:30 p.m. at the Big Spring Area Chamber of Commerce. The public is invited.
- American Legion Auxiliary meets at 6 p.m. at 3203 W. Highway 80.
- The Prospector's Club meets at 7:30 p.m. at 606 E. Third St. The public is invited to these meetings. For more information contact Lola Lamb at 263-3340.
- Neighbors and Newcomers Club meets. New members are welcome. Call 263-2005 for more information.

FRIDAY

- Signal Mountain Quilting Guild meets from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. at 1019 Nolan St. Call 267-1037 or 267-7281.
- AMBUCS meet at noon in La Posada Restaurant.
- Greater Big Spring Rotary Club meets at noon at the Howard College Cactus Room.
- Dance at the Senior Center, 1901 Simler, from 7:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.

MONDAY

- Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) No. 21 meets at 5 p.m. at the First Christian Church at 10th and Goliad for weigh-in. The meeting begins at 5:30 p.m. Call 213-1342 or 263-6819.
- Big Spring Band Boosters meet at 5:30 p.m. in the Big Spring High School band hall.
- Coahoma Lions Club meets at 6 p.m. in the Coahoma Community Center at 306 North Ave.
- The Concerned Citizens Council meets at 7 p.m. at the Howard County Library. For more information, call 264-6116.
- Archeology Society for Howard and Borden counties meets at 7 p.m. in the Howard County Library Community Room in the basement. Call 270-2615 for more information.
- Prospector's Club work night begins at 7 p.m. at 606 E. Third.
- Big Spring Society of the Order of Beacieants meets at 6:30 p.m. for a meal with meeting that begins at 7:30 p.m. at 221 Main.
- Big Spring Commandry meets at 7:30 p.m. at 221 Main.
- The Christian Motorcyclists Association meets at 7:30 p.m. at the Dragon Restaurant, 1300 S. Gregg. Everyone is welcome. Call 263-3869 for more information.

## Lottery

Results of the Lotto Texas drawing Wednesday night:  
Winning numbers drawn: 27-44-37-24-54-38.  
Number matching six of six: 0.

Results of the Cash 5 drawing Wednesday night:  
Winning numbers drawn: 4-11-20-18-37.

The winning Daily 4 numbers drawn Wednesday afternoon by the Texas Lottery, in order: 9-3-3-8. Sum It Up: 23.

The winning Pick 3 numbers drawn Wednesday night by the Texas Lottery, in order: 5-8-0. Sum It Up: 13.

## BIG SPRING HERALD

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Courtesy photo

**West Texas Centers for MHRM CEO Shelley Smith presents Janie Murley and Irma Garcia of the Two Hot Mama's with the first place award in the Seventh Annual Chili Cook-off held Saturday at the Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie No. 3188 building. Pictured with Murley and Garcia are Murley's children, Sky and Trent Murley. The Eagles Lodge donated \$10,000 to West Texas Centers for their Children In Need Fund which purchases necessary items for children served by West Texas Centers.**

## COUNTY

Continued from Page 1

county, which has struggled with financial woes for the past several years, Barr said there are no immediate plans for the money at this time.

"When we receive the payment from Alon, we're planning to put it in a reserve fund," said Barr. "All of our fund balances and reserves have gotten terribly low over the past several years, and we haven't earmarked any of this money."

Barr said he hopes the payment will allow the commissioners court to do something Howard County residents desperately need.

"It depends on a lot of different things, but the hope among the commissioners and myself is to be able to lower the tax rate this com-

ing year," said Barr. "If we can get our reserve balances up, that will give us a little more wiggle room."

According to County Tax Collector Kathy Sayles, the 2006 taxes include \$421,722 for Howard County, \$1.239 million for Big Spring Independent School District and \$208,496 for Howard College. The 2007 taxes include \$666,438 for the county, \$1.508 million for Big Spring ISD and \$394,892 for Howard College.

The 2008 bill for Alon includes \$857,675 for Howard County, \$1.791 million for Big Spring ISD — plus an additional \$117,000 for taxes that were abated by the county and not the school district — and \$444,628 for Howard College.

The court also saw construction on the new \$11.57 million County Jail begin in 2008, as well several newly elected officials, a fact Barr

said is shaping up nicely for 2009.

"We're very much looking forward to opening the new jail in 2009," said Barr. "A lot of time and effort went into that project last year, and it's really nice to see it all come to fruition. Also, I've never seen a better level of cooperation between the sheriff's office, the county attorney and my own office. It just feels like we're all on the same page now."

Newly elected Sheriff Stan Parker and County Attorney Josh Hamby took office this month. The commissioners are also welcoming a new face to their ranks, as Jimmie Long took over for longtime commissioner Bill Crooker.

Contact Staff Writer Thomas Jenkins at 263-7331 ext. 232 or by e-mail at citydesk@bigspringherald.com

## SALES

Continued from Page 1A

more than we thought and this is clearly reflected in the lower-than-expected numbers at Wal-Mart," said Ken Perkins, president of research company RetailMetrics LLC. "I think it says the economy is in more dire straits than we thought."

Wal-Mart, blaming the weak economy and severe winter conditions, said that same-store sales, or sales at stores opened at least a year, rose 1.2 percent. Excluding the impact of declining gasoline prices at the pump, the gain was 1.7 percent. Analysts surveyed by Thomson Reuters had expected a 2.8 percent increase, excluding fuel.

"The current economy remains challenging for all businesses, and

retailers have already seen customers pull back on discretionary spending," Wal-Mart's Chief Financial Officer Tom Schoewe said in a statement. "Consumers are very focused on value and necessities."

Wal-Mart noted that health and wellness items were the categories that primarily fueled sales. Electronics sales were solid, while the apparel and jewelry business was weak.

Given the disappointing sales and higher-than-anticipated expenses, Wal-Mart said it now expects to earn 91 cents to 94 cents per share in the fourth quarter from continuing operations. That's down from its previous projected range of \$1.03 per share to \$1.07 per share. Analysts surveyed by Thomson Reuters expected \$1.06 per share. Meanwhile, Costco Wholesale Corp. reported a 4 percent decline

in same-store sales, but excluding the impact of lower gas prices and currency fluctuations, it actually posted a 4 percent gain. Lower gas prices are good for consumers, but reduce the sales volume for retailers like Costco.

Among department stores, Sears Holdings said its December same-store sales dropped 7.3 percent, weighed down by a 12.8 percent drop at domestic Sears stores. The company, whose brands include Kenmore and Craftsman, said Kmart same-store sales fell 1.1 percent.

Macy's Inc. reported that same-store sales fell 4 percent in December, less than the 5.3 percent decline that analysts had expected. For the combined November-December period, same-store sales were down 7.5 percent. But the department store chain cut its fourth-quarter and full-year

earnings outlook due to heavy markdowns and announced plans to close 11 underperforming stores. The chain operates more than 840 Macy's stores.

Luxury retailer Saks Inc., which operates Saks Fifth Avenue, fared far worse, as affluent shoppers were spooked by the financial meltdown that resulted in massive layoffs on Wall Street and shrinking investment portfolios. Same-store sales dropped 19.8 percent for the month, worse than the 10 percent drop that Wall Street expected.

Limited Brands Inc. posted a 10 percent drop in same-store sales, larger than the 7.8 percent decline analysts predicted. The company also lowered its fourth-quarter earnings outlook.

Gap Inc. suffered a 14 percent drop in same-store sales, worse than the 9.3 percent decline

## Melting snow threatens record flooding in parts of Washington state

SNOQUALMIE, Wash. (AP) — Rain and high winds lashed Washington state Wednesday, causing widespread avalanches, mudslides, flooding and road closures as the heavy snowfall that has buried parts of the state began to rapidly melt.

More than 30,000 people were told to leave their homes in flood-endangered areas across western Washington as authorities warned of heavy flooding. Rising waters prompted state highway crews to close a 20-mile stretch of Interstate 5 around Chehalis on Wednesday evening.

"This is going to be a memorable flood event," said Andy Hanger, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Seattle.

Fire trucks rolled through Orting, about 10 miles southeast of Tacoma, with loudspeakers advising everyone to leave the town and surrounding valley, home to about 26,000 people. Sandbags were placed around many downtown homes and businesses as the Puyallup River neared record levels. It was forecast to crest Thursday.

"They expect the town of Orting to go under water," Pierce County sheriff's Detective Ed Troyer said, adding that the flooding could be the worst in more than a decade.

### Report: Obama should refocus Afghanistan war, rebuilding effort

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States and its partners have shortchanged Afghanistan by focusing on short-term goals pursued without a cohesive strategy or a clear understanding of the way the poor, decentralized country works, an independent study concludes.

The incoming Obama administration should refocus the U.S. war and rebuilding effort in Afghanistan and think of the project as the work of at least a decade, according to the report compiled by the United States Institute of Peace.

The assessment was set for release Thursday at a conference to be attended by Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Adm. Mike Mullen and Army Gen. David Petraeus, who is in charge of the Afghan and Iraq wars.

Petraeus' own review of U.S. strategy in Afghanistan is expected to be presented to Obama the week after he takes office Jan. 20. The plan would shift the focus from the waning fight in Iraq to the escalating Afghan battle.

### Emphasis on health moves Tom Daschle to the front of the line for Senate hearing

WASHINGTON (AP) — Showing the emphasis that some lawmakers are putting on health care issues this year, former Sen. Tom Daschle will be the first of President-elect Barack Obama's Cabinet choices to undergo a hearing.

Daschle, Obama's pick as the next health and human services secretary, was to appear Thursday before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. The committee's chairman is Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass.

## SHOW

Continued from Page 1

With so many Glasscock county families involved in agriculture, it would follow that the livestock show entrants will take their roles very seriously, Belew said.

"It's a time for them to socialize with their friends, but the big thing they get out of it is a sense of responsibility," she said. "They're responsible

for the care and feeding ... of another living creature."

With so many livestock shows on the schedule in the next several weeks, the youngsters may find themselves in for a busy month or two.

"Animals that are shown here can also be shown at major stock shows across the state," she said.

Contact Staff Writer Steve Reagan at 263-7331 ext. 234 or by e-mail at reporter@big-springherald.com

quarter profit will likely come in at the low end of expectations.

### MYERS & SMITH FUNERAL HOME & CHAPEL

24th & Johnson 267-8288

Carolann Winbush, 72, died Tuesday. Funeral Services will be at 7 p.m. Thursday at Myers & Smith Chapel. The family will receive friends from 6 p.m. until 7 p.m. Thursday at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Dragon China Buffet  
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### AN ENCOURAGING WORD



By Eddy Pitchford

I do not believe in sports. I cannot explain all the details of the Bowl Championship System so it must not exist. I realize some people believe in sports but I am tired of their efforts to proselytize me through television and radio. I resent the fact that folks wear shirts proclaiming their team is number one - how judgemental!

People, called referees, are actually paid to see that rules are followed - I prefer a more open-minded approach! Fans are blatantly hypocritical inasmuch as they wear baseball caps while cheering for basketball teams. Some fans are polite in private but act rude at ball games - they just want folks to think they're rude all the time!

Consider the audacity of the coach! He stands up and tells the players what to do. They pretend to listen but they trip and fumble anyway. To top it off, some games go into overtime - how inconsiderate!

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Sunday Worship.....10:20 AM  
Sunday Worship.....5:00 PM  
Wednesday Class.....7:00 PM

# EDITORIAL

*"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."*

-FIRST AMENDMENT

Opinions expressed on this page are those of the Editorial Board of the Big Spring Herald unless otherwise indicated.

**Ron Midkiff**  
Publisher

**Bill McClellan**  
News Editor

**John A. Moseley**  
Managing Editor

## OUR VIEW

# Legislature must revisit its school finance reforms

It's good to know that our school districts in Howard County aren't in the same difficult financial shape some others across the state find themselves these days, but it's certainly not a confidence builder with the prospect of another Republican controlled legislature about to begin another session.

Unlike some other school districts, Big Spring, Coahoma and Forsan are not expecting tough financial times in the coming months. But we're talking about 2009. What happens after then is anyone's guess.

School districts across the state will be closely watching as the Texas Legislature begins its biennial session next week. In particular, educators will be looking to see what, if anything, representatives do to tweak the formula for providing financial aid to districts.

A worsening economy, coupled with a de facto cap on state spending, has forced some school districts in the state to adopt emergency measures — including borrowing money or dipping into reserve funds in some cases — to help pay the bills.

That should not come as any real surprise though. After all, when legislators came home after the last session and said they'd both cut property taxes and raised teacher salaries, we should have known we were being sold a bill of goods.

Even some state lawmakers admitted such at the time, one in particular telling us it was a case of a "smoke and mirrors."

Now we're paying the price. Or at least our children will.

Texas education officials have announced that state aid to schools will be capped at 2005, 2006 school year levels. As an additional kicker, if local revenues increases, state aid to the districts decreases, meaning that local districts are locked into three-year-old financing formulas, regardless of how much revenue comes in.

Some Texas school districts have decided to dip into reserve funds to pay salaries and other expenses while they wait for state aid to arrive. And while local educators hope the legislature will tweak its funding formula, no one is holding their breath, either.

"I don't see anything stirring in that area," BSISD Business Manager Sandra Waggoner said. "I think they'll probably hold off until another session."

In the meantime, area districts will do their best to pay 2009 bills with 2006 dollars at a time when the federal government is making sure the auto and banking industries get bail out funds.

We can only wish our legislators thought the education of Texas' children was as important.

## HOW TO CONTACT US

The Herald is always interested in our readers' opinions.

In order that we might better serve your needs, we offer several ways in which you may contact us:

- In person at 710 Scurry St.
- By telephone at 263-7331
- By fax at 264-7205
- By e-mail Managing Editor John A. Moseley at editor@bigspringherald.com or News Editor Bill McClellan at newsdesk@bigspringherald.com.
- By mail at P.O. Box 1431, Big Spring, 79721

## A SMALL PRAYER

by K. Rae Anderson

When we read Your word, Lord, we take a ride on the information highway.

Amen

# Clockwork for the new year

The old clock was leaning a little, dispirited at the very least. As the new year approached, chiming was low on her priority list. Her thoughts, whirlwinds of anxieties carried over from a pock-marked 2008, included the possibility of allowing 2009 to tiptoe in without bell-ringing accompaniment. Muddled of mind, she even wondered if her pendulum might be on its last "pendul."

Beads of sweat broke out on her face. She winced at the thought of "tick" (or maybe "tock") fever. Worse than that, she was afraid that something could be seriously wrong with her ticker. Horrors were magnified by memories of too many mice running up and down for too many years. Fearing the worst, she went to see the clock doctor....

She was an emotional mess, near unto "unsprung" status. The clock confessed that the thought of ticking every single second in the new year seemed daunting. "It's tough duty, doctor," she blubbered. "Last year, I ticked 60 times every minute, 3,600 times every hour and 86,400 times every 24 hours." She grew animated as her computations continued. "That's 584,800 ticks a week, 2,592,000 ticks a month and 31,114,000 ticks for the year."

He asked her how she had managed in previous years. Her simple answer: "One tick at a time."

Smiling, the clock doctor's response made her feel all better. "It's a good approach for 2009 as well, just one tick at a time." It would likely have been best if he had stopped with that solid advice. But the physician was on a roll....

The doctor, also a clock col-

lector, asked her if others sometimes call her "a grandfather's clock."

"All the time," she answered.

He explained that at 5'10", she is two inches shy of minimum height for a grandfather's clock. Further, if she were a foot shorter, she'd be a granddaughter's clock....

The clock was ready to throw up her hands, rattled at the prospect of a gender identity crisis. She felt deluged by information overload. Learning that she technically is a grandmother's clock really "ticked" her off.

"Actually, these timepieces date back to 1670," the doctor said. "At the time, they were called 'longcase clocks.' Free-standing and weight-driven, they ranged from two to eight feet in height."

He said that the well-known song written in 1876, My Grandfather's Clock, is responsible for all these floor model timepieces being tagged with the "grandfather" moniker....

He burst into song, and the "patient" felt as if her last nerve were about to be stepped on. The doctor "favored" her with all four verses, with the chorus 'tween each.

When he finished, he mentioned that the late Allan Sherman made the world giggle with his parody of the song. She wasn't surprised that he belted out Sherman's lyrics for the old tune.

My grandfather's clock was the best ever made,  
By the Timex Company.

Just like the clock John Cam'ron Swayze displayed  
Last night on the old TV.  
Oh it works underwater so perfectly

And it still has a ticking sound,  
Which my grandfather tried  
only this afternoon,

And that's how the old man  
drowned!...

He rambled on about the story that inspired My Grandfather's Clock. It seems that two broth-

ers in England operated a hotel renowned for its handsome longcase clock--the lobby's centerpiece. As the story goes, when one of the brothers died, the clock went haywire. It slowed with each winding, never again to show the correct time. When the other brother died years later--at age 90, the song claims--the clock stopped on the same day, never to go again.

So much for background.

"In my opinion, the probability that the clock was bought on the same morn the guy was born and ticked its final tock on the same day he checked out is so much poppycock," the doctor said. "And spare me the grief about it being too tall for the shelf. Floor model clocks aren't supposed to sit on the shelf..."

The "patient," her patience ended, burst out of the office, fibbing that she needed to feed her parking meter. She yelled back at him that she'd try hard to face the new year one tick at a time.

This epistle is about done, but there's a final yarn involving timepieces to usher in the new year. It seems that two neighbors decided to buy dogs. One was a spendthrift, the other, frugal. Mr. Moneybags bought an expensive, registered animal with an impressive pedigree. He makes frequent trips to the vet and feeds the pet expensive food. The other got his mutt at the pound. It's never sick, and eats table scraps.

Their names? The one with \$\$\$\$ invested is called "Rolex;" the other, "Timex."

Happy New Year. In 2009, may your "dog days" be minimal, devoid of jokes about canines named for timepieces.

*Dr. Don Newbury is a speaker and author living in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. He welcomes inquiries and comments. E-mail him at newbury@speakerdoc.com. Or by phone at 817-447-3872. His Web site is www.speakerdoc.com.*

## ADDRESSES

### FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

#### • GEORGE W. BUSH

President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

#### • KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON

U.S. Senator  
703 Hart Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
Phone: 202-224-5922

#### • JOHN CORNYN

U.S. Senator

517 Hart Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
Phone: 202-224-2934

#### • RANDY NEUGEBAUER

U.S. Representative  
19th Cong. District  
1510 Scurry  
Big Spring

Phone: (432) 264-0722

### STATE GOVERNMENT

#### • RICK PERRY

Governor  
State Capitol, Room 2S.1  
P.O. Box 12428  
Austin, 78711

# Are they all Democrats now?

Barack Obama, itching to implement his gigantic stimulus package as soon as possible, is dangling the idea of combining his spending package with a tax cut in hopes of securing another

kind of stimulus: Republican support for his package. Republicans should remember that when you polish manure, you still have manure.

Obama went to Capitol Hill Monday to promote his stimulus plan of between \$675 billion and \$775 billion. An estimated 40 percent of the package (between \$270 billion and \$310 billion) would consist of tax cuts.

Obama strategists say the proposed tax cuts are based on historical and empirical evidence of what works, not ideology. But despite his denials, Obama's intention to target the cuts to the "middle class" and exclude higher-income earners, whose stimulated activity has been shown to have the greatest economic impact, betrays his crippling bondage to ideology.

The lion's share of the relief would involve \$500 tax cuts per individual or \$1,000 per family for income earners and an equal amount in credits for those who qualify for the "earned-income" credit. But he would phase out those cuts and credits for households with incomes of \$200,000 or more, which is inexplicable apart from ideology and class-warfare populism.

Also demonstrating his ideological motivations, Obama's plan envisions short-term relief via one-time tax credits or refunds rather than long-term changes to the tax code. As others have noted, long-term changes are far more effective at stimulating growth because

producers and consumers look to the long term in making their investment, hiring and spending decisions.

Cash infusions from rebates or credits, especially with today's sluggish economy and people's uncertainty, could be ineffective because recipients might choose to save the money rather than spend it. That is what happened with the 2008 stimulus bill, as documented in a Heritage Foundation paper by Rea S. Hederman Jr., Stephen Keen and Brian M. Riedl. Only a small part of the rebate checks was spent, with large portions likely saved or used to pay down debt.

The John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush tax cuts, by contrast, all involved reductions in the marginal income tax rates and all empirically stimulated economic growth by incentivizing producers. If Mr. Obama could remove his ideological blinders or shed his class-warfare mentality and truly be guided by "what works" (as he promises), he wouldn't even be thinking about targeted or short-term cuts.

But the other half of Obama's stimulus plan is even more troublesome and probative of Obama's allegiance to ideology rather than empirical and historical evidence.

Contrary to most history and economics textbooks, Keynesian pump-priming stimulus packages do not lead to economic growth.

No central planning-type guru is as smart at allocating scarce resources as a free market pricing mechanism. As the Heritage analysts point out, when government spends \$1 billion on highways, for example, hiring road builders and purchasing road materials, "It must first tax or borrow \$1 billion from other sectors of the economy — which would then lose a similar number of jobs. In other words, highway spending merely transfers

jobs and income from one part of the economy to another."

Though liberals, such as Obama and the vast majority of history textbook authors, have a romantic attachment to FDR, the best evidence is that his New Deal did not end the Great Depression, but exacerbated it.

No one has done a better job in refuting liberal history revisionists and FDR apologists than Burton W. Folsom Jr. in "New Deal or Raw Deal? How FDR's Economic Legacy Has Damaged America."

Almost at the end of FDR's second term, the economy was getting worse, with unemployment at more than 20 percent. Folsom cites the words of FDR's treasury secretary and one-time confidant, Henry Morgenthau Jr. These words should serve as a chilling reminder to all politicians even considering jumping on Obama's FDR big-spending bandwagon:

"We have tried spending money. We are spending more than we have ever spent before and it does not work. And I have just one interest, and if I am wrong ... somebody else can have my job. I want to see this country prosperous. I want to see people get a job. I want to see people get enough to eat. We have never made good on our promises. ... I say after eight years of this Administration we have just as much unemployment as when we started. ... And an enormous debt to boot."

So when I read that Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell has suggested that Obama's economic stimulus plan could receive "significant support" from Republicans if Democrats would just include Republicans in crafting the legislation, I have to ask, "Are they all Democrats now?"

*David Limbaugh is a writer, author and attorney.*

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## News in brief

### Report: Energy firms saw '08 tax break under Texas business tax

AUSTIN (AP) — Under Texas' current state business tax, oil and gas producers got a \$78 million tax break last year — when the industry was awash in record profits — compared to 2007 figures, according to a preliminary report from a state advisory committee.

Energy firms paid out \$411 million in 2008, down from nearly \$489 million in 2007. The industry also separately pays state levies including severance taxes, which skyrocketed with 2008's higher oil prices, according to the Business Tax Advisory Committee's report. A draft of the committee's report to the Legislature is scheduled to be released soon.

The Legislature passed the restructured business tax in 2006 to replace the previous loophole-ridden franchise tax.

While the energy industry got a break, other industries did not. In fact, most other industries shelled out more last year than in 2007, according to the preliminary report.

But spokesmen for the state's leading oil and gas industry trade group disputed the notion that the industry had gotten a tax break, saying that other taxes paid last year increased due to record-high gasoline prices.

### Former McCamey teacher out of jail on bond

McCAMEY (AP) — A former West Texas teacher facing a felony charge alleging she had an improper relationship with a high school student has been released from the Upton County Jail on a \$5,000 bond, officials said.

Vanessa Zuniga, 34, was released Wednesday, according to Upton County Sheriff Dan Brown. She is accused of having an improper relationship with an 18-year-old high school student. If convicted, the former McCamey High School teacher could face up to 20 years in prison and up to a \$10,000 fine.

Zuniga submitted a resignation letter Dec. 30 which became effective Friday. She turned herself in Tuesday, said school district Superintendent Donny Wiley.

Wiley said Wednesday that he hadn't heard of any possible wrongdoing by Zuniga when she resigned. It wasn't until after she left that he began hearing the rumors, the Odessa American reported Wednesday in its online edition.

McCamey is about 50 miles south of Odessa.

### San Marcos man convicted of 13 felony child abuse charges sentenced to 40 years

SAN MARCOS (AP) — A man convicted of 13 felony child abuse charges late last year by a Hays County jury was sentenced to 40 years in prison, according to a newspaper report.

Gregory Anthony Rodriguez, 31, was accused of abusing two children. Charges against him included aggravated sexual assault of a child, a first-degree felony, and indecency with a child, a second-degree felony.

The jury gave punishments ranging from 10 to 30 years, and state District Judge Jack Robison ruled that some of the sentences should run consecutively, the Austin American-Statesman reported Thursday in its online edition.

### Rocket barrage from Lebanon strikes northern Israel, threatening to open a second front in war

JERUSALEM (AP) — Lebanese militants fired rockets into northern Israel early Thursday, threatening to open a new front for the Jewish state as it pushed forward with its offensive in the Gaza Strip.

Two people were lightly injured, and the rockets on Israel's north raised the specter of renewed hostilities with Hezbollah, just 2½ years after Israel battled the guerrilla group to a 34-day stalemate. Hezbollah started the 2006 war as Israel was battling Palestinian militants in Gaza.

Lebanon's government, wary of conflict, quickly condemned the rocket fire and said it was trying to determine who was behind the attack. Israel fired mortar shells into southern Lebanon in response.

In new Gaza fighting, Israel killed at five people, including four militants, raising the death toll from its 13-day offensive to nearly 700, according to Palestinian medical officials. With roughly half the dead believed to be civilians, international efforts to broker a cease-fire have been gaining steam.

Later Thursday, Israel said it would halt military action for three hours to allow Gaza residents to stock up on supplies. The lull would enable humanitarian groups to do their work, and Israel would send aid and fuel into the territory, said Israeli military official Peter Lerner.

### Obama warns of lingering recession, double-digit unemployment without stimulus

WASHINGTON (AP) — President-elect Barack Obama said Thursday that the nation's recession could "linger for years" unless Congress acts to pump unprecedented sums from Washington into the U.S. economy, making his highest-profile case yet on an issue certain to define his early presidency.

"I don't believe it's too late to change course, but it will be if we don't take dramatic action as soon as possible," Obama said in a speech set to be delivered at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va., outside Washington. Excerpts from his prepared

text were released in advance by his transition team.

"A bad situation could become dramatically worse," he added, painting a dire picture — including double-digit unemployment and \$1 trillion in lost economic activity — that recalled the days of the Great Depression in the 1930s.

### Illinois lawmakers plan to grill Burris about accepting Senate appointment from Blagojevich

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP) — Illinois Republicans are promising tough questions Thursday for Senate appointee Roland Burris on why he accepted a position offered by disgraced Gov. Rod Blagojevich and whether he promised the governor anything in return.

Burris on Wednesday returned from an encouraging two-day visit to Washington, D.C., yet without being able to take the oath of office with the newest members of the 111th Congress. He next faces an impatient impeachment committee.

"I would like to specifically ask, under oath, if there was any quid pro quo for the appointment," said Rep. Mike Bost, a Republican member of the Illinois House committee considering Blagojevich's impeachment.

Lawmakers also plan to ask Burris about contributions to the governor's campaign, how Blagojevich's wife got a job with a group affiliated

with Burris' business partner and why the governor's criminal lawyer approached Burris about the Senate instead of a staff member.

The panel is awaiting a federal court ruling Thursday on whether it will get to hear some of the secretly recorded conversations federal prosecutors made of Blagojevich allegedly scheming to trade government action for campaign contributions.

### Pink slip pile higher as companies slash costs to cope with recession

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pink slips are piling higher as companies scramble to cut costs even deeper to survive the country's economic and financial storms.

Just days into the new year, managed care provider Cigna Corp., aluminum producer Alcoa Inc., data-storage company EMC Corp. and computer products maker Logitech International were among those announcing layoffs to cope with a recession that has just entered its second year. The flurry of job cuts suggest the employment picture will remain grim this year.

A barometer on layoffs is expected to show Thursday that the number of newly laid off people signing up for state unemployment insurance last week rose to 540,000, up from 492,000 in the previous week, according to economists' projections.

The number of people continuing to draw jobless benefits is projected to stay near 4.5 million.

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INSIDE THE BIG SPRING MALL

# Forsan names Phillips head football coach

By JONATHAN HULL

Sports Editor

It's double-duty time for Forsan's Jason Phillips.

Forsan Independent School District ended its search for a new head coach for the football program Wednesday, naming Phillips to the position. He is also the current skipper of the Buffaloes baseball team and will remain at the helm.

"Jason is a good fit for our head football position," said Forsan

Athletic Director Terry McDonald.

"He has a great football background, is a student of the game and he understands the hard work involved with this job."

Phillips has been employed by Forsan ISD as an assistant varsity football coach and head



Phillips

baseball coach since 2005. He's a Big Spring High and Texas Tech graduate, and coached at Big Spring for 11 years, during which he headed up the Steers baseball program.

Phillips said leading a football staff is something he's always wanted a shot at.

"I don't lean towards baseball or football. I like both sports equally," he said. "I've always wanted to be a head football coach. I thought this was a great opportunity. I really like

it in Forsan. The staff is great. The kids are great."

It was important to him to be able to stay in control of the baseball program as well, though.

"That was one of the first questions I asked. I wanted to make sure I could still be the head coach of the baseball team," Phillips said. "There is less than three months time separating the two seasons during the school

See PHILLIPS, Page 2B

# Campaign '09: Vote for Utah

## Sooners? No. Gators? No. Utes deserve BCS title

Who only thought the election was over.

However, with the Bowl Championship Series in charge, every season is an election year in college football.

Coaches of deserving programs are once again hitting the campaign trails, preaching why their team

deserves a national championship. Of course, only two teams get to play for the BCS Championship tonight and that's Oklahoma and Florida. But for yet another season, there is a dispute as to who deserves a shot at playing for the national title.

Experts at ESPN do not believe, USC is not the most deserving team not playing in the championship game.

The Trojans slaughtered Penn State and might have just as much talent on both sides of the ball as anyone in the country. There's a blemish on their record, though.

Texas has a better complaint. It's hard to find a squad that played a tougher stretch this season, than when the Longhorns took on four consecutive squads ranked in the Top 15.

That run ended with a heartbreaking 39-33 loss to Texas Tech, though, and safety Blake Gideon, who dropped an interception that would have sealed a victory, is still ducking for cover on the UT campus.

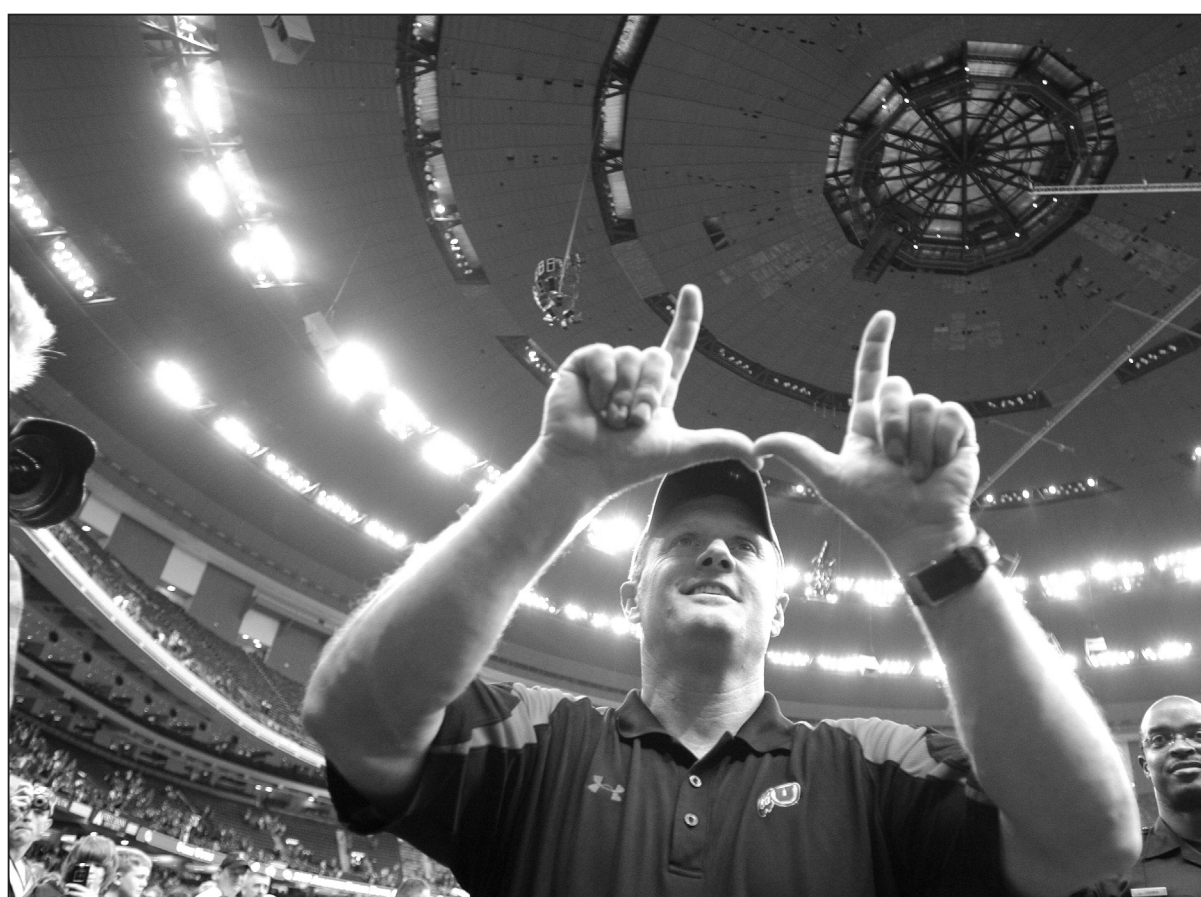
Still, Texas does not have the best complaint.

No one has a stronger case than the undefeated Utah Utes. Yet most people won't even begin to buy it and only because they play in the Mountain West Conference and not the Pac-10.

The fact the Utes have defeated four teams — Oregon State, TCU, BYU and Alabama — that will finish the season ranked in the Top



JONATHAN HULL



AP photo/Alex Brandon

Utah coach Kyle Wittingham salutes the fans after defeating Alabama 31-17 in the Sugar Bowl Jan. 2 in New Orleans. Football season hasn't quite ended in Utah, where there is a desperate push to get the unbeaten Utes the No. 1 ranking in the final AP college football poll. Fans have been swamping AP poll voters with e-mails, hoping Utah can make an unlikely leap to the top.

25 will be ignored. Comparatively, Oklahoma and Florida — not counting the BCS Championship — have each defeated five.

Why Utah over USC? The Trojans lost to Oregon State. Utah didn't. The Utes topped the Beavers, 31-28.

Why Utah over Texas? Look at the loss column. And is it really that impressive the Longhorns beat Ohio

State by 3 in the Fiesta Bowl? While the game itself was one of the more entertaining of the bowl season, it doesn't change the fact the Big Ten finished 1-6 in bowl games.

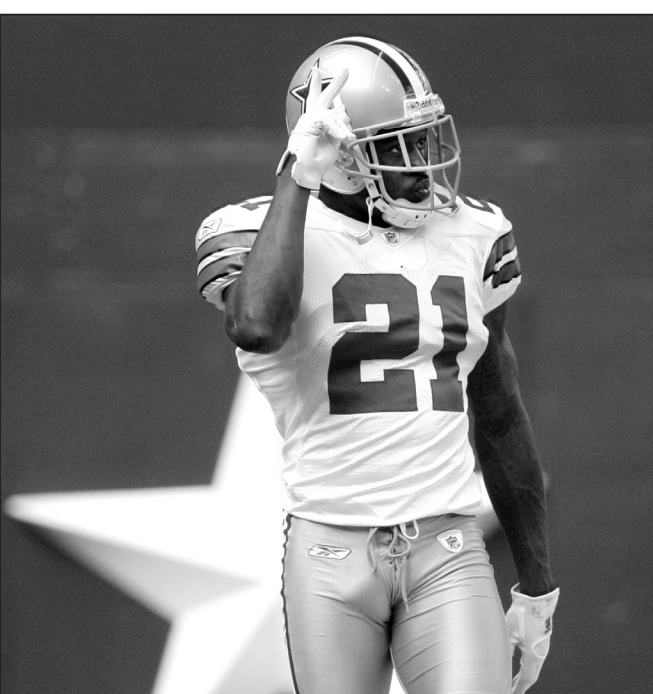
Utah didn't just hang on and edge an Alabama team with a defense more highly regarded than Ohio State's. They pounded the Tide into submission.

Do the Sooners and Gators

play in tougher conferences? Yes. The Big 12 and SEC respectively dish out tougher competition than the MWC.

That's not Utah's fault, though, and it's not like the Utes haven't been challenged in their conference. Turns out TCU fields one of the most competitive defensive units in the country and

See UTES, Page 12



AP file photo/Matt Slocum

Dallas Cowboys cornerback Adam Jones gestures to the crowd before an NFL preseason game against the Minnesota Vikings Aug. 28, 2008 in Irving. The troubled cornerback was released by the Dallas Cowboys Wednesday following a season in which he had no interceptions and was suspended six games for an off-field fight.

# Cowboys say goodbye to Pacman

By JEFF CARLTON

Associated Press Writer

IRVING — Adam "Pacman" Jones' attorney doesn't think the troubled cornerback will be unemployed for long.

The Dallas Cowboys said Wednesday they are done with Jones, releasing him after a 2008 season marred by disappointing play and a six-game suspension for an off-field scuffle.

But Jones likely will be back with another NFL team next season, said Worrick Robinson, Jones' Nashville-based attorney.

"He is young. He has a lot of ability and he is eager to get back on the field," Robinson said.

Jones was expected to give the Cowboys a shut-down cornerback on defense and a touchdown threat on special teams. Instead, he had no interceptions and averaged just 4.5 yards per punt return.

His release will become official

Feb. 9, the first day NFL teams can make waiver requests.

"He was surprised, and I think he was obviously somewhat hurt," Robinson said. "At the same time, he understands the business behind what is happening here. He doesn't have anything negative to say about Dallas or the team or the fans."

Cowboys spokesman Rich Dalrymple declined to comment on the team's decision and said owner Jerry Jones was unavailable. Coach Wade Phillips did not return a message left by The Associated Press.

Before coming to Dallas, Jones was arrested six times and involved in 12 instances requiring police intervention after Tennessee drafted him in the first round in 2005.

The Cowboys traded for him anyway, despite the cornerback's suspension for the 2007 season for violating the league's personal conduct policy. Jones was

given another chance and cleared to play in 2008 by commissioner Roger Goodell.

But on Oct. 7, Jones got into a scuffle with a bodyguard who was part of a team-employed security detail. Goodell suspended the cornerback for six weeks. Jones missed a seventh game later in the season with an injury.

The 25-year-old Jones spent part of his time away from football taking part in an alcohol rehabilitation program.

"He was a young man who needed the opportunity to be in treatment, and he got the treatment he needed," Robinson said. "He came out of there a better person and a healthier person because of that."

Robinson said he did not think Jones' suspension was a factor in the Cowboys' decision to release the cornerback.

See PACMAN, Page 7

# Sports in brief

## Big Spring basketball boosters meeting Monday

The Big Spring Steers Basketball Booster Club is meeting at 7 p.m. Monday in the Athletic Training Center.

All parents of Steers' basketball players from the junior high to the varsity level are encouraged to attend and discuss ways to support the Big Spring basketball teams.

For questions, call Sam Segundo at 268-3025.

## Lady Steers Booster Club meeting Monday at ATC

The Big Spring Lady Steers Booster Club is holding a meeting at 5:30 p.m. Monday in the ATC.

All parents of Lady Steers' athletes ranging from junior high to high school are encouraged to attend.

## YMCA basketballers being introduced at Hawks' halftime

All Big Spring YMCA Youth Basketball League

teams will be introduced at halftime of the Hawks' games Monday.

Girls and coed squads will take the court at the intermission for the women's game, which is scheduled for a 5:30 p.m. start, while boys teams will be introduced at halftime of the men's game, which starts at 7 p.m.

Howard will be hosting Western Junior College Athletic Conference foe Western Texas College that night.

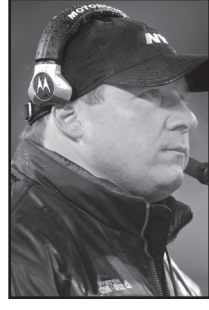
All players, coaches and their families will be admitted free into the game.

# Browns introduce Mangini as coach

By TOM WITHERS

AP Sports Writer

BEREA, Ohio — Eric Mangini is starting over where he started out. Mangini, who began his NFL career as a ballboy for the Browns, was introduced as Cleveland's 12th full-time coach on Thursday, less than two weeks after he was fired by the New York Jets.



Mangini

The 37-year-old Mangini signed a four-year deal with the Browns, who are rebuilding once again following a 4-12 season that ended with the firings of coach Romeo Crennel and general manager Phil Savage.

Browns owner Randy Lerner hasn't decided on a GM yet, but the frontrunner is George Kokinis, Baltimore's director of player personnel and a longtime friend of Mangini's.

Mangini began shagging balls with the Browns in 1994 under then-coach Bill Belichick, who liked the kid's work ethic and quickly promoted him to a public relations assistant before adding him to the scouting department. Now Mangini's taking over the job from Crennel, one of his best

friends in the game.

"It is really special to be back here, where I got my first opportunity," Mangini said.

Mangini had a tumultuous three years in New York. When he arrived, Mangini inherited a 4-12 team and led them to 10 wins in his first season, prompting New York's tabloids to dub him "Mangeni." By the end of his run in the NFL's largest market, he was being called moody, dour and controlling.

He went 23-25 with one playoff loss in three seasons with the Jets, who started 8-3 this season but lost four of their last five games and missed the playoffs.

Mangini took the fall after the Jets finished a disastrous stretch where they lost to Denver, San Francisco and Seattle — three non-playoff teams — in the final month behind 39-year-old quarterback Brett Favre's injured arm and questionable play calling by his coach.

Mangini and Crennel both lost their jobs on Dec. 29, although Lerner was not aware of Mangini's dismissal when he met with the media to discuss Crennel's firing.

Rejected a few days earlier by his first choice, former Steelers coach Bill Cowher, Lerner's eyes lit up when he learned Mangini was available.

He wasted no time in going after

him and interviewed Mangini the following night in the New York area. Lerner tabbed Mangini as his leading candidate from the outset.

"It was a long week," Mangini said. "I was very proud of the things we did in New York."

Despite the Jets' meltdown, Lerner is enamored with Mangini's potential and believes he will bring discipline to the underachieving Browns, whose disastrous season was marked by injuries, ugly losses and a 1-7 home record.

Lerner believes Mangini, who will be 38 on Jan. 19, learned from his mistakes in New York.

Jets running back Leon Washington said in an e-mail to The Associated Press that he was pleased to see Mangini land another head coaching job.

"I am really happy for Coach Mangini," Washington said in the e-mail. "I learned so much from him while he had his tenure with the Jets. His hardworking, selfless and competitive approach really helped me. ... The Browns got themselves a really good coach."

Jets kicker Mike Nugent, who played at Ohio State, thinks Mangini is a perfect fit with Cleveland.

"I wish him luck for the rest of his career in football," Nugent said in an e-mail. "He will do a great job in Cleveland. Ohio has great fans who

will give him nothing but their best support."

Mangini was one of four candidates interviewed by Lerner, but the only one with NFL head coaching experience — a prerequisite for the Browns owner, who also spoke with New York Giants defensive coordinator Steve Spagnuolo, New England offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels and Browns defensive coordinator Mel Tucker.

Lerner fired Savage after a 31-0 loss at Pittsburgh in the season finale. He then interviewed Scott Pioli, New England's highly regarded director of player personnel, and had hoped to pair him with Mangini in Cleveland. The two began their pro careers together with the Browns, but their relationship may have been strained when Mangini reported the Patriots to the NFL for videotaping New York's defensive signals during a game.

During his interview, Mangini mentioned Kokinis as his preference as GM.

Kokinis is expected to interview with Lerner on Sunday. The Browns also intend to interview Philadelphia GM Tom Heckert.

AP Sports Writer Dennis Waszak Jr. in New York contributed to this report.

# LT confirms torn tendon in groin

By BERNIE WILSON

AP Sports Writer

SAN DIEGO — LaDainian Tomlinson confirmed Wednesday that he has a torn tendon in his groin and listed himself as doubtful for the San Diego Chargers' playoff game at Pittsburgh on Sunday.

"It's definitely torn," Tomlinson said after sitting out Wednesday's practice. "I can't really elaborate on it because I don't want to give too much information away."

Tomlinson was hurt in a 52-21 rout against Denver in the regular-season finale on Dec. 28 that clinched the AFC West title. The team has listed him as having a strained groin.

"If it was a strain I'd be able to play with it, trust me," Tomlinson said. "A lot of guys have strains."

Reports surfaced prior to Saturday's wild-card win against the Indianapolis Colts that Tomlinson has a detached tendon that connects one of his groin

muscles to his pubic bone.

Tomlinson started against the Colts but came out after scoring on a 3-yard run early in the second quarter. With Darren Sproles filling in, the Chargers won 23-17 in overtime.

Tomlinson said this injury has been tougher than any he's had during his brilliant eight-year career.

"It feels like something is tearing away from my leg. That's how I know that it's messed up because before, when I've had groin injuries, I haven't felt that," said Tomlinson, the NFL MVP in 2006 who set league records that year with 31 touchdowns and 186 points. "Whenever you feel a popping or like it's tearing, that's usually not good."

NFL teams don't give an injured player's status until Friday. But Tomlinson said his status is doubtful, meaning there's a 75 percent chance he won't play.

"That's pretty much what I feel like I'm at," said Tomlinson, the franchise's most brutally honest

employee.

Has he been ruled out of the game?

"No. Not yet," he added.

If the Chargers keep winning, there might be a chance Tomlinson could return.

"I think it's possible," he said. "I'm never going to rule it out. I'll have to start to feel much better, though."

Tomlinson said there's a chance he could make the injury worse if he continued to play "and do some of the things I have to do. Who knows how much? Once again, I don't even know if it's going to require surgery."

Tomlinson had a 13-yard gain on the first play from scrimmage Saturday night but said his leg was dragging.

"That's why I said earlier that that game was just all pure determination of trying to just push it and trying to do as much as I could and go. But it was clear from the first carry that I couldn't pick my leg up and explode and it did feel like it was dragging."

# PACMAN

Continued from Page 6

"We don't have any reason to believe at this point that that off-the-field incident had anything to do with the team's decision today," Robinson said. "I know there was certainly a lot of bad that came out of that situation, but there was some good that came out of that situation as

well."

Jones had 31 tackles, a forced fumble and a fumble recovery. On special teams, he averaged 22.1 yards on seven kick returns. The yearlong ban in 2007 and six-week suspension in 2008 contributed to Jones playing below expectations, Robinson said.

"Being off a year is certainly going to affect most every athlete," Robinson said. "I think he made good strides through training camp and through the first few games, and then I think his

six-game suspension did knock him back a little bit."

Tennessee received a fourth-round draft pick in the April trade. The Titans were also supposed to get a sixth-rounder next year, but because Jones was suspended again, Dallas will instead receive a fifth-round pick in 2009.

AP Sports Writer Stephen Hawkins contributed to this report.

# PHILLIPS

Continued from Page 6

year, so I think I would have plenty of time to prepare for baseball. As soon as baseball season is over, I have the summer to focus on football. I don't think it will conflict."

As far as any scheme changes on the football field, Phillips isn't quite sure yet what direction he'll take the Buffs in 2009.

"I haven't really decided exactly what we'll do," he said. "I have some ideas as far as Xs and Os, but as I haven't set anything yet. We'll still use the spread on offense some. We don't have the size to line up and pound people, but we will run some out of the I-formation as well. We'll have fewer plays and we'll just make sure

we get good at those plays. We'll probably run the ball more than we did this past season, too.

"Defensively, I like to use a multiple look," Phillips continued.

"Again, we don't have many big guys, but we'll have some quickness. I want us to always be on the attack on defense."

For now, Phillips' focus is on baseball as the 2009 season starts in

a little more than a month.

Contact Sports Editor Jonathan Hull by calling 263-7331, ext. 237, or by e-mailing sports@bigspringherald.com.

To submit a sports brief or item, call 263-7331, ext. 237.

# sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 through 9 with no repeats. That means no number is repeated in any row, column or box.

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

# Contract Bridge

By Steve Becker

## Elegant Defensive Play

West dealer.

East-West vulnerable.

**NORTH**

♠ A 7 5

♥ J 2

♦ Q 6 3

♣ A Q J 8 3

**WEST**

♠ Q J 9

♥ A K 10 7 4

♦ A J 9

♣ 9 5

**EAST**

♠ 4

♥ Q 9 8 6 5 3

♦ K 8 4 2

♣ 7 2

**SOUTH**

♠ K 10 8 6 3 2

♥ —

♦ 10 7 5

♣ K 10 6 4

The bidding:

West North East South

1♥ West Dble 4♥ 4♠

Opening lead — king of hearts.

The attitude of a defender should always be that a lie of the cards exists which allows the contract to be defeated. This often entails crediting partner with the possession of a particular card or distribution, and then acting on that assumption.

Consider this deal where South wound up in four spades on the bidding shown. West led the king of hearts and saw his prospects take an immediate nose dive when South ruffed.

Declarer played the A-K of spades and, upon discovering that he

had a trump loser, began to run his clubs. West waited until the fourth round to ruff in, temporarily cutting declarer off from dummy's fifth club. The critical moment was now at hand.

Since the seven of spades was an entry to dummy's last club, it was clear to West that unless his side could cash three diamond tricks immediately, South would make his game, scoring six spades and four clubs in all. West therefore had to assume that his partner had the king of diamonds, because if declarer had that card, the contract could not be defeated.

Simply presuming that East had the king, however, was not enough, for there was the collateral question of who had the ten. If East had that card, it did not matter what West did next. But if South had the ten, West could not cash the ace of diamonds or lead the nine without handing declarer a diamond trick. On the lead of the nine, for example, South could simply play low from dummy to force East's king, promoting dummy's queen into a third-round trick.

West therefore returned the jack of diamonds, and declarer was helpless. No matter what he did, he had to lose three diamond tricks and go down one.

Tomorrow: Bidding quiz.

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# CORRECTION NOTICE

The Ad that ran for Pollard Chevrolet on Sunday, January 4th incorrectly showed Stk.# 8166ET Chevrolet Avalanche 2WD LS as Sale Price of \$21,945 - the correct Sale Price is **\$29,145.**

We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

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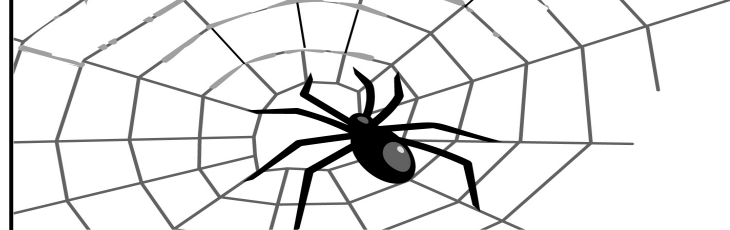
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Joan Schaffner holds a kitten on a leash during a Kittengarten class at the Washington Humane Society Behavior and Learning Center Saturday, Nov. 8, 2008, in Washington. Kittengarten is just like what it sounds, a class for kittens and their owners

## Kittengarten class is for felines and their humans

By LINDA LOMBARDI  
The Associated Press

For the kittens dashing and tumbling around the room, the Washington Humane Society's first Kittengarten class is all about the playtime.

But for the humans and the shelter there's a bigger goal: making sure that cats are healthy and happy in their adoptive homes — and that they stay there.

Kittengarten is just like what it sounds, a class for kittens and their owners. Along with kitten socialization and grooming, the four-week class covers basic health and behavior facts, including nutrition. While dog owners have long taken their charges for training, cat owners don't always know that they and their pets could use some guidance too, organizers say.

Even those knowledgeable about cats can really benefit from some hands-on practice, as when trainer Hanna Lentz demonstrates the most important grooming basic for a pet with needle-sharp claws: the nail trim.

Lentz crouches on the ground, holding a kitten with its back to her, and touches its shoulders. "A cat's natural instinct when you touch them up here is to back up," she explains, "so they have nowhere else to go." Next, she clips a nail. "Do that: one nail, treat, relax in between," she says. "Taking it slow can really make a huge difference."

The students, sitting at the table with piles of treats in front of them, attempt to follow her example on the squirming, reluctant little felines.

"They're not born liking to get their nails trimmed," Lentz observes. "It's so important to start when they're kittens."

While kitten kindergarden is new in Washington, the idea has

been around for a while. Elise Gouge of the Houston SPCA, where they've been offering a course since early 2007, says she wishes she could get everyone to take it.

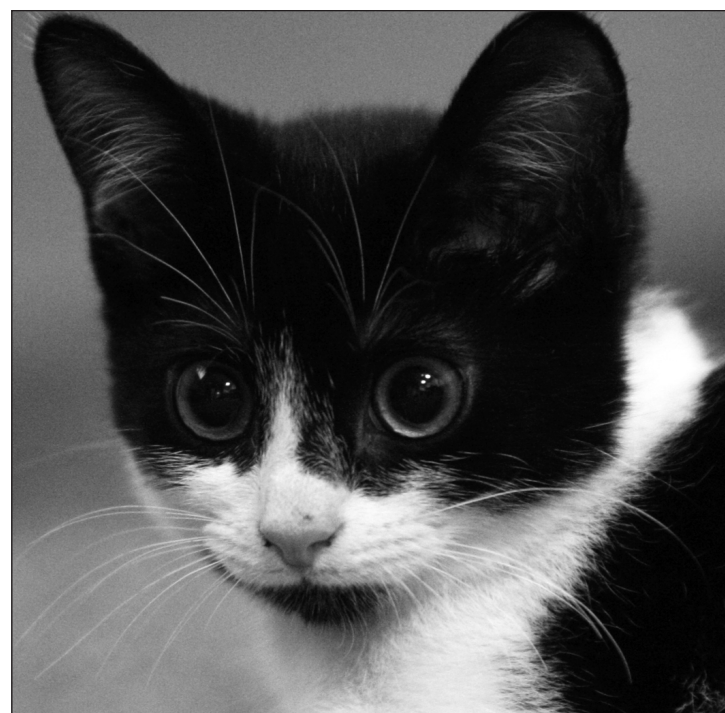
"Cats don't raise themselves," she says. "They don't instantly love people, they don't know not to scratch the furniture."

The first kitten kindergarden is generally acknowledged to have been the idea of Kersti Seksel, a veterinary

understand them."

Rodan is enthusiastic about the idea of holding these classes in shelters. Often, those adopting cats don't think that cats need regular preventative health care, she says. The class is a place to make that connection.

For the shelters, these classes are a way to keep cats in homes, by helping people to understand they can often deal with behavioral issues rather than returning a cat to the shelter.



behaviorist in Australia. Cat behavior consultant and veterinarian Ilona Rodan brought the idea to this country in 2004 and held classes at her cat practice in Madison, Wisc., for a while; she's now working on a CD that presents the information for cat owners who don't have the opportunity to take a class.

Beyond the basics of cat care and behavior, people also need to know how to play with their pets and provide a mentally enriching environment.

"As a feline specialist I see people who are crazy about their cats. This cat means everything to them, but do they do the right thing for them?" says Rodan. "They don't, because they don't

"People underestimate how willing a cat will be to work with you," says Gouge. "They're not motivated by just our love. You'll have to do a little better than that — maybe a little cheese or a little piece of shrimp."

Gouge says that training and education can help people keep their cats by solving specific problems, but there's more to it than that: working with their pets creates a bond that results in more of a commitment.

"We'll teach them how to sit and how to give paw," she says. "I've had cases with people who were thinking of surrendering their cat. We taught them some of that stuff and it's saved the relationship."

## Tomorrow's Horoscope

Are you suddenly curious about things you didn't even notice yesterday?

Do you feel like confiding in perfect strangers just to see what they might have to say? The Gemini moon is a chatty influence that extols the virtues of small talk.

What you learn in passing might be the key you've been waiting for to unlock a beautiful future.

**ARIES** (March 21-April 19). If you do not want to carry water for people who are less alert than yourself, finish (or take) the course you are considering. The investment puts you in a better bargaining position.

**TAURUS** (April 20-May 20). Keep that sparkling optimism. Today you may be solitary, but because you are a diamond, being solitary is okay. Feeling perfectly happy without just cause is fine! It could even attract a band of gold.

**GEMINI** (May 21-June 21). Reflect on your long ago created wish list. Your resourcefulness has enabled you to accomplish much. But it is time to update your list. Scrap outmoded ideas and create new dreams that fit the newly evolved you.

**CANCER** (June 22-July 22). Passive-aggressive behavior is difficult to spot at first, but you've become a pro. Back away from those who have consistently shown they approach life from a somewhat negative standpoint. Wish them well, but move on.

**LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22). Good health is just one benefit of your good-natured temperament. Give those around you a chance to follow your lead. By taking time to teach through example, they learn how to better care for themselves.

**VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept.

22). You could willingly agree to return to a situation you were once uncomfortable in, which is a testament to your character. You get to see how much you've grown, and you also get a chance to have a new experience.

**LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Someone has a large presence in your life but doesn't understand this. When this person is unhappy, it impacts you. And the things he or she says also matter a great deal to you. It's about time you told this person how you feel.

**SCORPIO** (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Your sweet demeanor is not an act; although, it's not the only side of you. Someone gets a taste of your saltier edge this afternoon and as a result your wishes will be quickly respected.

**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). There's finally the chance to confront that domestic issue that's been irritating you. Express yourself and the problem is solved. The memory of it will mysteriously disappear like socks in the dryer.

**CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Oh, sweet inspiration! It's one of those ideas that you'll lose if you talk about. Not because someone will steal it, but because there is a certain romance there that will get spoiled when it hits the air. Write it out in a journal.

**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You have special charisma that turns on when you're around certain people. They need you in person. Instead of sitting down to make a call or send an e-mail, stand up and go to the world.

**PISCES** (Feb. 19-March 20). Small exchanges matter a great deal. You understand this and that gives you an edge. Casual meetings have value. The pleasantries you generously dole, even to strangers, make a difference.

**ASTROLOGICAL QUESTIONS:** "I'm interested in a person born on Dec. 1, 1955. Do you think he'll be a suitable match for me? I

was born Aug. 1, 1960. I have several choices I could possibly date, but no one seems very interesting to me but he. And I'm not sure if he would be good for the long term or not."

I get from your natal chart that you are the kind of Leo woman who is so hard to dissuade when it comes to dating that it doesn't matter what another person says about your love life, you just have to find out for yourself.

Anyway, it's not like you to speculate this much. I sense that you think something is off with this match, but you simply have to find out what it is before you can really move on. So action is the cure for your lovesick heart. Figure out fast what is drawing you into this Sagittarian's world — beside the fact that he is provocative, charismatic and has, at least on paper, a lot of what you're looking for in a mate. If there is a missing link to this puzzle, the information will be revealed before the vernal equinox on March 20.

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# Hold that pose: Florida, OU play for No. 1



AP photo/Gary W. Green/Orlando Sentinel

Oklahoma quarterback Sam Bradford, left, and Florida quarterback Tim Tebow are photographed at the Home Depot Awards for college football at Walt Disney World Dec. 10, 2008 in Lake Buena Vista, Fla. The two Heisman Trophy winners will meet on the playing field for the first time when No. 1 Florida and No. 2 Oklahoma meet in the BCS Championship at 7 p.m. tonight in Miami.

By BEN WALKER

AP National Writer

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Standing next to the crystal football, Bob Stoops was the picture of Mr. Agreeable.

Any pose the photographers wanted, the Oklahoma coach gave them. Looking to the right, gazing to the left, smiling straight ahead.

That is, until a shutterbug told Stoops to hold up one finger — a “we’re No. 1” shot. No chance, pal.

“Too soon,” Stoops said.

On Thursday night, his hurry-up Sooners and speedy Florida meet for the BCS championship and the right to hoist that glistening prize. It’s a matchup that includes a pair of Heisman Trophy winners, an SEC vs. Big 12 debate and more than its share of trash talk.

Besides, there was no need for Stoops to stake his claim Wednesday inside a hotel ballroom. Enough teams already have done that.

Southern California, Utah and Texas were vocal in the past week, hoping their bowl wins impressed enough voters in The Associated Press poll, which will be released in the wee hours Friday.

Heck, how about New Hampshire? The Wildcats beat Army, which beat Louisiana Tech, which beat Mississippi State, which beat Vanderbilt, which beat Mississippi, which handed the No. 1 Gators their only loss.

No wonder college fans from President-elect Barack Obama on down want to see a playoff system.

As to whether it should be a tournament for four, eight or 16 teams, that’s someone else’s department.

“It’s not my job to figure that out,” Meyer said. “I think it would be hard. I don’t know how you do it.”

Echoed Stoops: “That’s not for me to

do.”

There’s plenty of time to think about it. The BCS’ latest TV deal with ESPN ensures there won’t be a playoff until at least 2014.

Meanwhile, there’s a pretty attractive game brewing at Dolphin Stadium between 12-1 teams.

The winner takes home the crystal, and that could come in handy for the Gators — they won the trophy two years ago, but a recruit accidentally bumped into it in April, shattering the \$30,000 football. Fortunately for them, it was insured.

Tim Tebow was a freshman backing up Chris Leak when Florida stomped Ohio State for the title. Tebow won the Heisman last season and now will try to add a second title.

The Rambo-style quarterback will soon explore his NFL options, deciding whether to enter the draft or return for his senior season. Tebow is not exactly elegant with his left-handed tosses, and some scouts project he’ll wind up as a tight end in the pros.

Tebow drew the most first-place votes in the Heisman balloting last month, but finished third overall. Oklahoma quarterback Sam Bradford took home the trophy.

Bradford, a sophomore, also has submitted paperwork to the NFL’s advisory board to see how highly he could get picked in the draft. Tebow and Bradford expect to make their decisions a few days after the big game.

While Florida boasts great speed, the second-ranked Sooners operate at a blink-of-the-eye pace. They set a modern record for points this season, averaging 54 a game.

With their linemen, receivers and backs rushing downfield, their no-huddle offense often leaves opponents gasping and disorganized. Teams are allowed 40 seconds to run a play; Oklahoma tries to snap the ball in half that time.

## UTES

Continued from Page 6

BYU was an early favorite to be this season’s BCS Buster.

Instead, Utah stole that title from BYU and then blasted Alabama, 31-17, in the Sugar Bowl.

Very few people out-

side of Utah gave the Utes a prayer against the highly touted Crimson Tide.

Admittedly, I was one of the doubters. My selections were published in this paper several times, and while I did correctly pick more games than the rest of the prognosticators, there is a little line through my selection of

Alabama, indicating I was wrong.

My apologies to Utah. I shouldn’t have been a hater. I should’ve known better.

Hopefully, the voters in the Associated Press poll will also be enlightened by the Utes’ performance Jan. 2.

It was a dominant showing. Utah scored on its first three possessions and had the Tide down 21-0 before they knew what hit them.

This is the same Alabama squad that spent more time at the top of the polls than any other team in the country this season.

It’s the same Alabama team BCS title hopeful Florida couldn’t get a

lead on until the fourth quarter in the SEC Championship.

Former Dallas Cowboys coach Jimmy Johnson said before the Sugar Bowl “Utah does not have a single player Alabama would have offered a scholarship coming out of high school.”

Think Nick Saban is looking to make some recruiting connections on the western half of the U.S. now?

I have been one of the biggest supporters of the BCS. I don’t hate the BCS like many do. It’s progress.

Before the BCS, we would have never seen the matchups we have in the past few years.

The greatest game in college football history, when Texas upset USC for a national title, would have never occurred.

Instead, Texas would have played an SEC opponent in the Cotton Bowl, while USC played a Big Ten foe in the Rose Bowl and the pollsters would have decided the national champion. By the way, Texas fans, you can absolutely bet they would have selected USC.

The BCS is no longer progress, though. It’s now stagnant. It’s time for advancement to continue.

While a long drawn-out playoff is still a bad idea, inserting the top 4-8 teams into a bracket is brilliant and would make a ton of money for the greed-based NCAA.

Unfortunately, a playoff scenario doesn’t look like it will come out of the organization naturally, though.

However, the stars are aligning against the NCAA. Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff

launched an investigation into the BCS Tuesday for a possible violation of federal antitrust laws.

Shurtleff contends the BCS unfairly puts schools like Utah as a member of the MWC, which doesn’t get an automatic bid to a BCS bowl, at a competitive and financial disadvantage.

At first when I heard of this filing, I didn’t really think much of it. After looking more into it, I think Shurtleff has got a case and NCAA commissioner Miles Brand should be wary of it.

It might be in Brand’s best interest to push forth a playoff before the investigation uncovers something that could cost one of the country’s greediest organizations millions.

Brand also better watch out for new President Barack Obama. Obama has already publicly said he wants to see a playoff at the highest level of college football. While I wouldn’t call myself an Obama supporter — I’m actually a bit indifferent to the world of politics — he would definitely sway me to his side if he could somehow pull this off.

What would Brand tell Obama if he forced his hand federally? No? I think not.

As for the Utes, let’s hope the AP voters do the right thing. They pulled out of the BCS rankings two seasons ago because they didn’t like the system. Technically, it made the AP vote a bit meaningless.

That could change early Friday morning. With one massive vote, the AP could have one of the biggest impacts in the history of sports. It’s time to join in on the campaign trail. Someone get me a pick-et sign.

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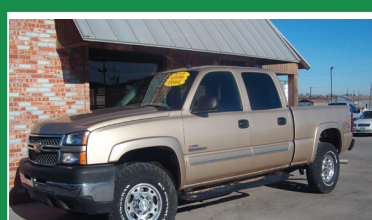
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