

Opinions

Time to vent

Yes, the Atlanta Braves have become the cigarette butt of jokes in Major League Baseball these last few weeks.

They've changed upper management, ousted a president of baseball operations, and now, well, I don't think they know what in the heck they are doing.

They're trying to get 13 prospects back after losing 13 prospects and \$17 million in bonus money for violating baseball rules.

I hope I'm wrong, but, I'm hearing they might release first baseman Matt Adams, and trade outfielder Nick Markakis. Of course, they want to trade outfielder Matt Kemp, but there are no takers.

They've made it abundantly clear that they want to put rookie phenom Ronald Acuna in right field to get his bat in the line up.

There is one problem to all of this - everyone knows what the Braves upper management wants to do, therefore, they'll just wait the Braves out and wait until it's time to release these players.

That gives the new team a discount advantage in acquiring these Braves that right now, it appears no team wants.

I'm a life-long Braves fan, but, management is making it harder and harder to continue to root for the Braves.

New Braves general manager Alex Anthopoulos continues to try to trade Adams, who could receive \$4.6 million in arbitration. But it appears a number of other teams also are hesitant about paying that amount for a defensive liability of a left-handed slugger who could be best served as a first baseman and designated hitter.

Oh, there are teams interested in Adams, who hit .274 with 20 homers and an .841 OPS last season. But instead of trading for him now and having to go through the arbitration process, those interested teams will likely wait to see if he can be gained for a lower cost as a non-tendered free agent.

Thus, I return to the argument of tipping one's hand. Always, I mean always, keep your cards close to your vest.

If the Braves are smart, they don't trade Adams, they should take the risk of tendering him a contract with the hope of trading him later this winter or during Spring Training.

The word on the street is that the Braves are not necessarily

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Anti-Drug Coalition

Trouble Ahead

A third of teens in a new survey think it's legal to drive under the influence of marijuana in states where recreational use by adults is legal. What could go wrong? Plenty.

Although it's a small study, it poses a big concern that misconceptions among teens about the dangers of driving under the influence of marijuana could put their lives and the lives of everyone else on the road in jeopardy. And it isn't just teens who were wrong about this; 27% of parents surveyed think so, too.

The study, which surveyed 2,800 teens from high schools across the country and 1,000 parents of licensed teenage drivers, was commissioned by Liberty Mutual Insurance and SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions).

Apparently, we spend so much time in our

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Letters to the Editor

Agree to disagree

Dear Editor,

Thank you Thomas Wallace for bringing the "Slowpoke" law to our attention.

I agree that this law should be enforced; but also should the laws against "speeding" and "red light runners."

I can't agree with your opinion that "there is no traffic violation more dangerous than this one." I doubt that the fatalities at the Walmart entrance were caused by "slowpokes."

The cars and (big rigs) that "blow" the red lights in town are terrifying, especially when they're doing 45 or 55 or 65 mph. Talk about lack of enforcement; red light cameras just at the intersection of 76/129 plus at CVS/Ingles and the post office could probably pay for a huge chunk of the City of Blairsville's annual budget. But, that won't happen; not until there are enough traffic fatalities to make the problem "real."

Jerry Driskell

The Gift at Christmas

Dear Editor,

I left home for college at the age of 17. I could hardly wait to be on my own, or so I thought. Just before Christmas one year, I found myself broke and without bus money to make the trip home.

Too embarrassed to ask my parents for help, I tried to hawk my record collection. No takers! I was upset and saddened at the prospect of spending Christmas alone.

Fortunately, I found a last minute ride.

It was also while I was away at college that I learned about the true meaning of Christmas. As a skeptic, I had a hard time believing in God. I had heard at various times that Jesus had died on the Cross to take away the sins of the world and He rose again. But I did not know what that meant and I really did not care. Being at a university, however, I was open to listening to other ideas about God.

So it was somewhat new of an idea to me when I heard that salvation from hell, forgiveness of sin, and spending eternity with God in Heaven – all is a free gift from God for those who make a U-turn from self and look to Jesus and put their trust in Him for salvation. (Romans 6:23 and Ephesians 2:8-9) It almost sounded too good to be true.

Salvation is a gift from God, and not based on my works or moral goodness? I just wasn't sure. So after a few months of careful thought, study and consideration, I came to the conclusion that the claims of Jesus were true. And I received the Lord Jesus as my Savior. It has been more than 37 years since I made that decision.

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Everybody has one...

The Gift

The story you are about to read is true. It's about a gift easy to dismiss. It would be delightful to receive, if you understand the gift.

One cold December day, a busy mother placated her bored young son by offering him one of the craft kits she received monthly by mail. He chose the one for a small, wooden planter box with delicate brass trim forming a faux clock face. He cut, nailed, stained, and glued. The finished product couldn't have been better. Mom was pleased with her idea and his craftsmanship.

His grade school class had their Christmas party, and they swapped gifts with their beloved teacher. A substitute teacher took charge the last few days before the holiday break. Our young pupil realized that the sub wouldn't receive a gift from anyone in the class. Then it came to him. He would give her his prized box!

With mom's concurrence, he carefully wrapped the gift and took it on the school bus. Stepping quickly to the classroom, he delivered it to the teacher's desk. As the class watched, the busy teacher opened it. "That's nice," she said. He explained proudly, "I made it." "No, you didn't," she said as she set it aside.

The teacher wasn't looking for a handcrafted gift from a tenderhearted child. To her, the personal and loving gift was a childish lie. Before we judge the respectable teacher too harshly, do you consider the most precious and costly gift ever given - that Babe in the manger, the Christ of the cross - with a dismissive glance?

Why is that easy to do? You cannot find what you do not seek. Blaise Pascal said God is "willing to appear openly to those who seek Him with all their heart, and to be hidden from those who flee from Him." God could have provided the Gift to the world with glorious fanfare and worldwide recognition. Instead, the Advent was humble, yet seekers found Him. "You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13).

Who is this Gift to humanity? Jesus is your Sabbath rest from your work to earn favor with God (Heb. 4:9). Jesus pre-

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Commissioner's Questions

At the point when you are reading these questions, the City of Blairsville Boil Water Advisory will have been lifted, but these questions were directed to our office throughout the event. The answers to these questions could help in the future when and if there is another Boil Water Advisory issued. Since the county government (Commissioner's Office) DOES NOT deal with public drinking water, the information I am providing below is obviously from people that know a lot more than me about public drinking water issues.

Q. Why was everyone not notified of the water boil advisory ahead of time for City of Blairsville Water customers?

A. In the City's defense, this was the first time in years that they had attempted to clean most of their water storage tanks at one time. A firm from out west was contracted to clean the tanks and should have given the city a minimum of three weeks to prepare the public for the event. Some states apparently do not require a boil water advisory with a tank cleaning, but Georgia does. Some of the employees were also not aware that this cleaning process required a water boil advisory. One key employee was out of town and once the cleaning started and word got out that a boil advisory would be required, it was just simply too late to notify everyone. With what they had to work with, they did the best they could.

Q. It sounds like you are making excuses for the City of Blairsville. Are you?

A. I guess when it involves government, I try to look at intent. Our job is to basically to try not to make any mistakes, but sometimes it happens. I know all the people involved and none of them meant to do anything that could potentially harm the public. That does not mean this is an excuse, but it does mean that it was a real learning experience that will help them all in the future and also be a lesson for other water systems.

Q. Has the City of Blairsville learned a lesson from this?

A. They certainly have. They all have felt terrible about the concern by the public and the confusion. I feel that we all can be assured that in the future this will not come up again and they are

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Holly Jolly Christmas

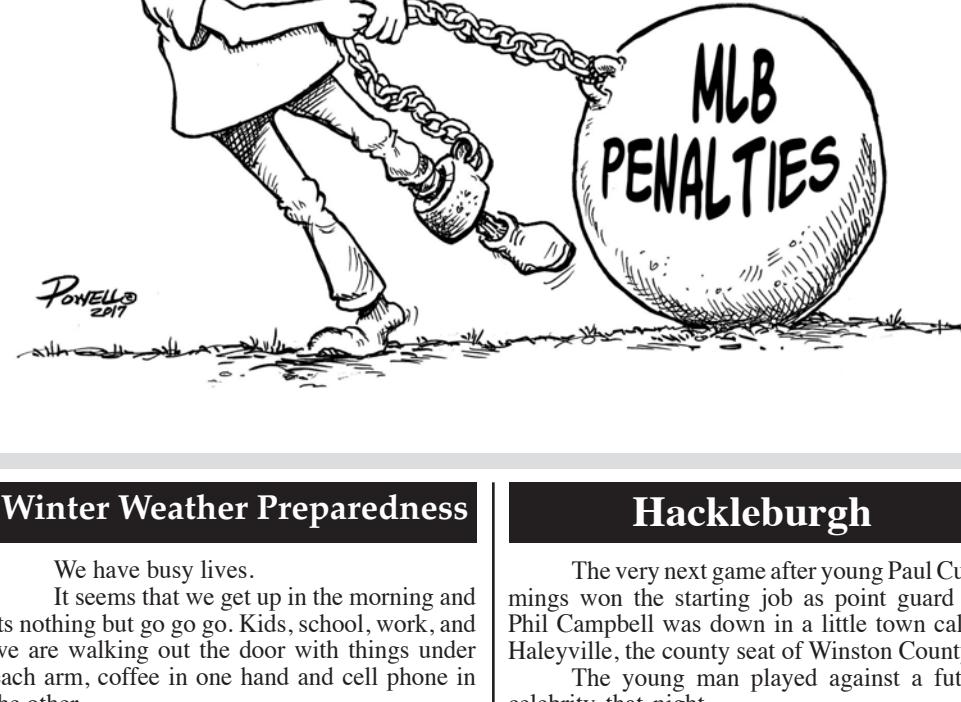
It's time for the Chamber's annual holiday events, which are free to the community - The Tour of Trees and Holly Jolly Christmas! We would like to thank our event sponsors, Union General Hospital, Inc. and Union General Wellness Center. Be sure to visit the Union County Community Center through the end of December to see the gorgeous display of large trees, table top trees and wreaths. Be sure to grab a ballot and vote for your favorite one! We would like to thank all the members who participated in this year's Tour of Trees.

Be sure to stop by the Union County Community Center this Saturday, Dec. 9th from 2 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. for Holly Jolly Christmas! Come ready to enjoy a great family day including arts and crafts, face painting, storytelling, pictures with Santa, and more! Be sure to have your children come aboard and ride the Mayor's Train!

Thank you Barry Kives, Andy Kives and

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber
Regina Allison



Winter Weather Preparedness

We have busy lives.

It seems that we get up in the morning and its nothing but go go go. Kids, school, work, and we are walking out the door with things under each arm, coffee in one hand and cell phone in the other.

With a pace like that, it is difficult to find time to think about emergencies, disasters, or winter weather events.

But winter will soon be upon us. The temperatures are going to drop and we must be prepared for the eventual ice and snow. Union County EMA challenges you to take a small amount of time to plan and prepare for winter weather events that may affect you.

The biggest step is to get started. Sit down as a family one afternoon and ask, "What would we do during a major winter storm? How would we get in contact with my family if communications are down? What will we eat, drink?"

What would we do without power or heat for a long period of time?" All of these are good questions that should be answered. Involving the entire family keeps everyone aware of what to do.

Everyone must stay informed. Television, radio, internet and social media can help us stay informed of any potential weather event. Union County Fire/Rescue & EMA Facebook page posts the latest weather information from the National Weather Service. There is also the Union Alert Notification System that can send weather alerts to a cell phone. If you would like to receive these alerts, please call (706) 439-6056.

Ready kits are a must. It is recommended that everyone have a ready kit that will sustain the family at home for at least three days. A Ready kit includes nonperishable food, water, flashlights, batteries, weather radio, first aid kit and many other things essential for survival. Other things that you may want to consider are medications, pet food, cash money, and games for the kids. Ready kits are also a good idea for your vehicle. Drivers should create a Ready kit with essential supplies that may be needed for emergencies or if they happen to be stranded in a winter weather event.

For some great information on what you may need and how to get started, the Department of Homeland Security's Ready.gov provides a great deal of information to help people get prepared for winter weather or any other disasters that may strike our area. The site provides information on how to be aware, stay informed, build a plan, and create emergency kits. Stay safe.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Hackleburgh

The very next game after young Paul Cummings won the starting job as point guard for Phil Campbell was down in a little town called Haleyville, the county seat of Winston County.

The young man played against a future celebrity that night. Sonny James went on to become a Country Music singing sensation. He was known, as the Country Gentleman in Nashville and one of his big hits was a song entitled "Young Love."

But, according to Dad, Sonny James was no gentleman. He had sharp elbows and knew how to use them. Also, he was a very good guard on the Haleyville Varsity Basketball team. The Bobcats from Phil Campbell won that matchup.

The next game was against a little town called Hackleburgh. In those days that little town had an amazing basketball team. One young man on the team was a preseason All-State and would go on to play college level ball. He was known as a power forward and was a scoring machine. As the players were going through their warm-ups, Paul and Price McMicken were told they would not play that evening. Coach Newman told them he was sorry they were sick!

Understand that Price was the starting center and Dad was the starting point guard. Both players thought they were in trouble and Hackleburgh won the game easily without these two starters. Coach Newman told them they would understand later. This was the only game that Phil Campbell would lose during the region play. The two teams were first and second until the last game of the season.

You guessed it! Hackleburgh was undefeated going into that last game which happened to be against the Bobcats. And that game was played at their home! I would imagine the hometown boys were too confident that evening. After all they had won the previous game by 35 and they were playing at their home. Nobody gave Phil Campbell a chance. The Bobcats came out quickly and scored the first 10 times they possessed the ball. But, Hackleburgh had their All-State power forward and he scored even when double-teamed. Nobody could guard the 6-foot, 4-inch Hovater Boy. He had 10 points in the first few minutes of the game. So, Coach Newman called a time out.

Coach asked, "Paul, can you guard Hovater?" Dad liked a challenge, so, he said, "Yes."

The Coach also told him, "If you play dirty do not let me catch you." The teams walked back on the floor and some in the audience laughed when the 5-foot, 10-inch point guard began defending against the massive forward from

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Poinsettia Care

The most popular flowering plant sold in the United States every year is the poinsettia. Though we mostly see these beautiful red, white or pink flowers around the holidays, they can actually make great houseplants year round!

Poinsettias were first introduced in the United States in 1828. Native to Mexico, the original wild poinsettia was much different from the large bush-like decorations we see today. The brightly colored foliage that are often considered flowers are actually brightly colored leaves called bracts. These bracts have evolved their bright coloration to attract pollinators to the true flowers, which are the small yellow bulbs in the center of the stalk. Poinsettias do not have any true petals.

Plants are available in a wide range of colors such as pink, marbled, speckled, yellow and even peach. The most popular, of course, are the red varieties, such as Prestige. If you want to try to keep your poinsettia as a house plant after the holidays, it is important to select a healthy one.

Look for plants with fully matured and brightly colored bracts and rich green foliage all the way down the stems. Make sure the plant is balanced with each stalk growing uniformly. Finally, choose poinsettias whose yellow flowers in the center have not quite opened. This will ensure the bright foliage to last through the holidays.

After the holidays, poinsettias can still add beauty to your home. Place your plant in an area that has about six to eight hours of indirect sunlight each day. These plants do not do well in the sun and too much direct sunlight can bleach out their beautiful foliage. Poinsettias are extremely temperature sensitive and should not be placed near drafts or doorways that open outside. Try to avoid placing them near heating vents as well. Poinsettias hate extreme heat just as much as they hate extreme cold. They should never be exposed to temperatures below 50 degrees or above 70 degrees. Make sure the soil is consistently moist. Never let the potting mixture completely dry out, but do not let it sit in standing water either. Never fertilize a poinsettia that is in bloom.

When the bracts fade in March or April, cut the plant back to about eight inches. Keep it near a window with plenty of sunlight and water regularly. Only take the plant outdoors once nighttime temperatures are consistently above 50 degrees. Fertilize the plant about every two or three weeks during spring, summer and fall. A well balanced 10-10-10 mix provides plenty of nutrition. In June, transplant the poinsettia into a pot about two to four inches larger than its

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UGA extension
UNION COUNTY
From the
Ground Up
Melissa Mattee