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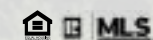
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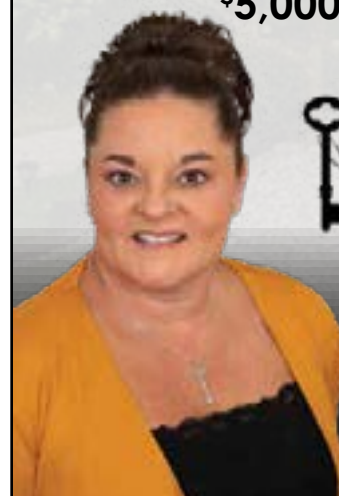
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Meet the Flemings

By Don Coble,
Managing Editor for Clay Today

FLEMING ISLAND – Ever wonder where the name Fleming Island came from? Or how it has ties to golf champions, a governor of Florida and even the Titanic?

The answers to those questions and more can now be found in a carefully researched book titled “The Flemings of Fleming Island...An Historic Florida Family.” The book is written by Scott Ritchie, a retired educator who has a number of degrees under his belt, including a Ph.D from the University of Texas at Austin.

Ritchie also happens to be a member of the Fleming family by marriage. His wife Margot is a third-generation great-granddaughter of George Fleming, the patriarch of the Flemings, and their four children were born and raised in their early years at Hibernia – the name Irishman George Fleming gave to his home and plantation on the shores of the St. Johns River. The family dates back to the late 1700s on Fleming Island, and went through much heart-wrenching work and tragedy through the years, but always pursued their goals even in the worst of it.

“It truly is a remarkable story,” Ritchie, a lover of history, said. Ritchie spent years meticulously researching the family’s history, using family records and archives from throughout Florida and as far away as Ireland. Vishi Garig, the Clay County archivist who works under the auspices of the Clay County Clerk of the Court department, spent years helping Ritchie in his research. Garig is especially glad to see the word get

out to those who have moved to Fleming Island but may not know anything of its background.

“The kids and even their parents now don’t realize the history here. It’s wonderful to see them learn that this was a real family,” she said.

As for that family, it dates back to 1783, when George Fleming arrived in Spanish East Florida. He initially worked for a company based in South Carolina, but became very close to Francis Philip Fatio, a powerful man who owned a 10,000 acre, finely appointed plantation called New Switzerland, located directly across the St. Johns River from Hibernia. Fleming lived with the family off and on and ended up working for Fatio and eventually married his daughter, Sophia. The couple had several children who carried on the struggle to make Hibernia their home, but George



and Sophia split much of their time living in St. Augustine and New Switzerland, and an area he called New Hope – which was somewhere in the vicinity of the landing strip at today Naval Station Mayport. While the name Fatio has virtually ceased to be in this area due to a lack of male descendants, those who drive through Orange Park between Milwaukee Avenue, U.S. 17 and

Holly Point Road West, will find Fatio Lane – a living testament to Sophia and her roots.

While Fleming eventually received (through Spanish land grants) about 27,000 acres of land that reached from as far south as Palatka to as far north as Fernandina and Amelia Island, he and Sophia did not exactly carve out from the wilderness the land around Hibernia to make a home, as history and passed-down family stories would have us to believe. Fleming actually petitioned the governor of East Florida for the existing

plantation there, which the Fleming family eventually called home and worked to make theirs.

It’s an example of just how folklore and oral traditions find their way into real history, and why historical research can be so frustrating – and fulfilling, said Ritchie, who compared it to looking for fossils along a riverbank.

“Most of the time you find nothing,” he said. “Several times you find an interesting little fragment. And occasionally you find a gem!”

Randy Harris, president of the Clay County and Orange Park Historical Society, which have both been extremely interested the book, agrees. “I call it the delusion of history. I see it all the time,” he said, adding that often even recorded documents have different names or spellings of places on them.

For Ritchie, probably one of the most stirring discoveries he made was how Hibernia survived the Civil War. Family history would have us believe that Margaret Fleming, who had met George Fleming’s son Lewis in Fernandina and married him, was visited during the war by her cousin, a West Point graduate who wore a Union uniform. Supposedly anguished by his orders to “Destroy the houses” along the river, he was said to misread them at Hibernia as “Destroy the horses.” That story was tragically untrue for the Flemings because Margaret’s cousin was actually fighting in Virginia at Cold Harbor, where her son was also engaged -- but as a Confederate -- and in fact was killed (his uniform can still be seen at the American Civil War Museum in Richmond).

Margaret and her three daughters – her other sons were also fighting for the Confederacy, with one possibly involved with the sinking of the Maple Leaf – were evicted from their home with virtually nothing and forced to walk miles before eventually ending up in Lake City. When she finally returned after the war’s end, she found her home ransacked, with all her furniture, silver and even family papers gone. The furniture went to Union officers in Jacksonville for their use.

Margaret was said to already be beside herself with grief – she had lost her husband, her son and her home in two years – but she rolled up her sleeves and got back to work. Amazing is the best way to describe her, Ritchie said.

“She helped rebuild the family home at Hibernia after the Seminole War. She had the business savvy to begin a boarding business at Hibernia in the 1850s. She helped rebuild after a terrible fire destroyed their home and business in 1858. Oh! And through all of this, she gave birth to seven children,” he said.

Once the boarding business was started again, it created some new and fascinating history for Hibernia. For instance, a golf course – one of the first in Florida -- was opened on the premises in 1899 and became a favorite spot for part-time Hibernia resident Francis “Pansy” Griscom. She won the USGA’s women’s national championship in 1900.

Griscom’s parents included her father, a wealthy shipping magnate whose company’s holdings eventually included the White Star Line and the Titanic. They continued to visit Hibernia for years.

Remnants of the golf course can still be seen at the Hibernia Links, a nearby neighborhood on Fleming Island.

In addition to the golf course, there was also one of Florida’s first in-ground pools at Hibernia. That pool, fueled by an artisan well, allowed for “midnight skinny dipping” for guests, and is still a part of a private residence and fully operational.

Among the other stories about the Fleming family are Francis Philip Fleming, who was the state’s 15th governor and served during the yellow fever crisis of the time, and St. Margaret’s Episcopal Church. The tiny Carpenter Gothic chapel was a dream of Margaret Fleming. Some of the visitors to Hibernia contributed to the cause, and the church held its first services in 1878. Ironically, the first official service was Margaret’s funeral.

But her funeral did not stop the family. They continued on and made even more history in their lives and the life of Fleming Island. To find out about those stories, visit Amazon.com, where Ritchie’s book can be found.

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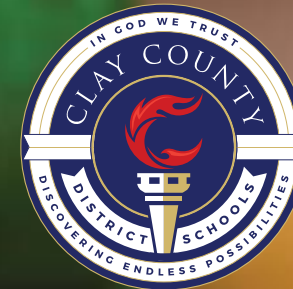
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Whitey's Fish Camp takes you 'down on the bayou'

For 55 years, people who love good food and a good time have used the famous line from Credence Clearwater Revival "Born on the Bayou," when enjoying an exceptional dining experience at Whitey's Fish Camp on Fleming Island. Located at the southern end of Doctors Lake and Swimming Pen Creek along County Road 220, Whitey's is without a doubt a world famous and acclaimed destination for dining, drinking and enjoying entertainment...oh yes, and fishing!

Originally owned by the Berry family and a simply fishing camp, Navy man, William "Whitey" Ham and his wife Ann, bought the fish camp in 1963. It all began with a fishing tackle shop with 9 bar stools, a toaster oven, drinks and sandwiches.

While the summer fishing season provided a modest living for their family, the winter months really slowed down. After running trout lines and realizing they could catch catfish easily, they decided to expand the restaurant side of the business. They sold catfish plates for \$1.75 at that time.

In 1969, an old run-down storage shed was converted into a dining room, yet to be remodeled to allow room for a kitchen, which housed bait tanks. This fish camp was pretty "rustic" and just had that feel people grew to love. Today, after numerous remodels including the famous 2002 "electrical fire" remodel that really brought the restaurant up to speed as a place that people would flock to. The "rustic" look still abounds, but their décor is truly amazing as is the view of the water from nearly every seat in the house.

From its early beginning, the fish camp was someplace special. Early visitors included countless Navy veterans including numerous Navy Ceremonies including Admiral "Pinning"

and rank promotion parties and celebrations. They have had celebrities from all across the world including PGA golfers like Lee Trevino, actor Jim Belushi and band members from Three Dog Night to mention just a few. Over the last 20 years its no big deal to see members from the Southern Rock Bands Molly Hatchet or Lynyrd Skynrd just out for dinner on a Sunday after church.

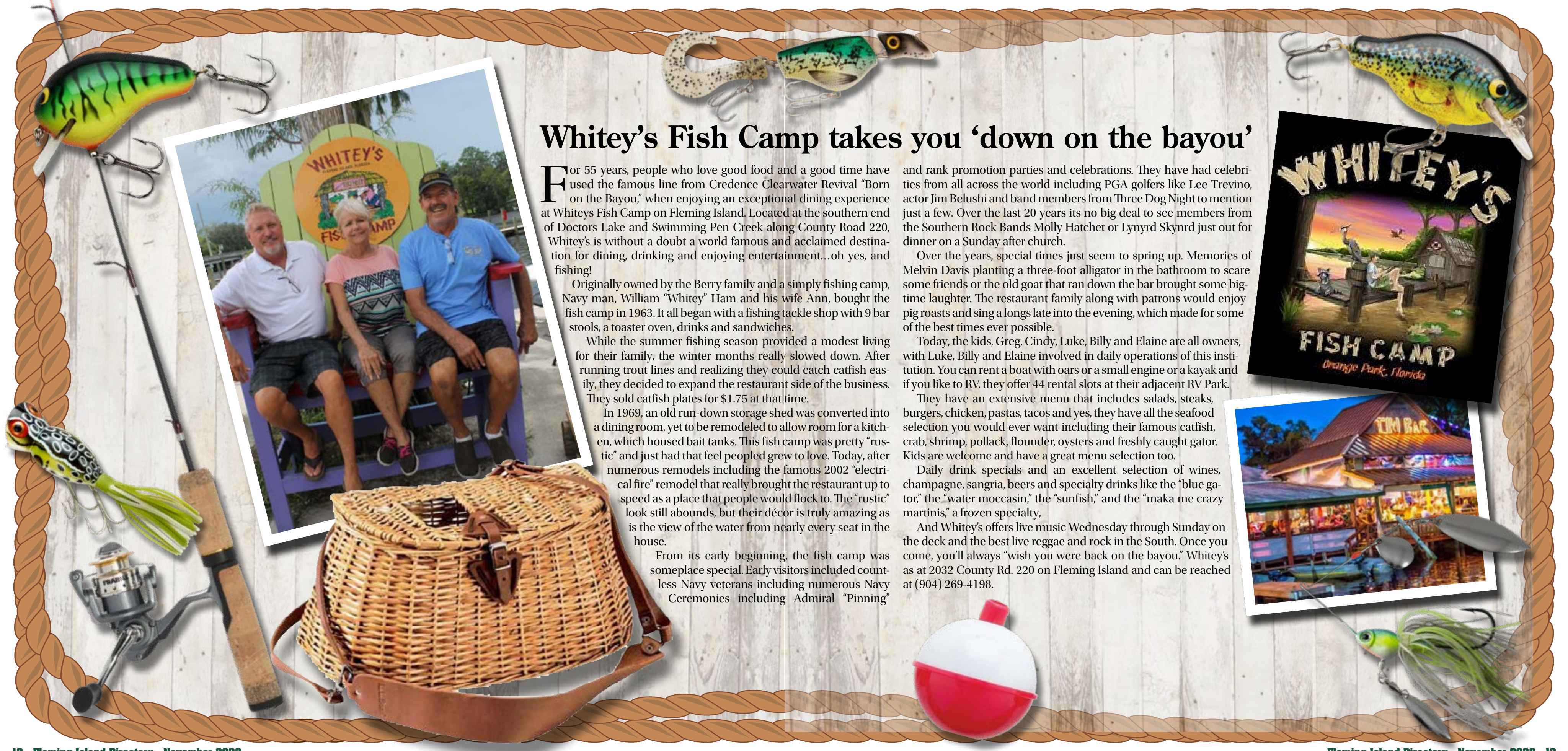
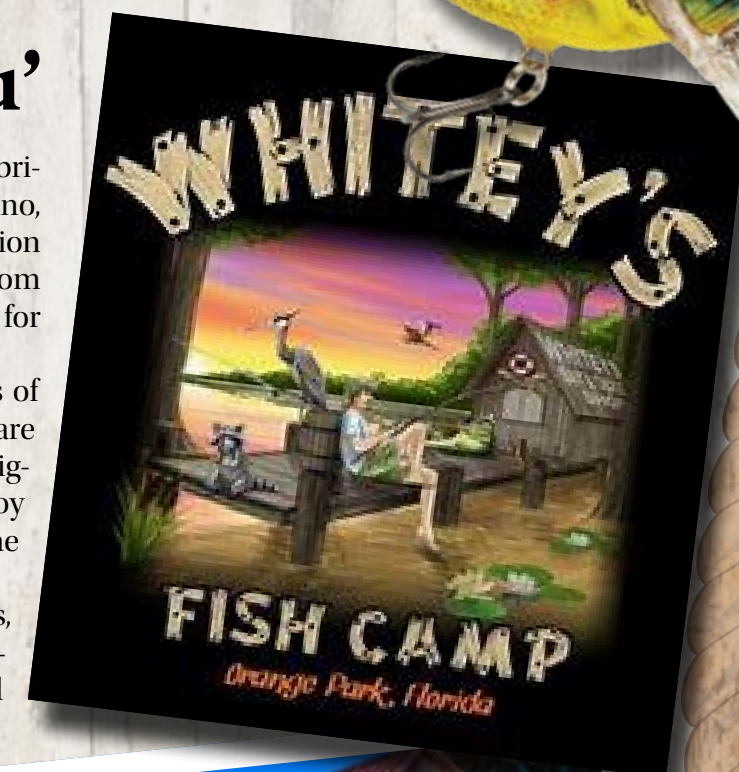
Over the years, special times just seem to spring up. Memories of Melvin Davis planting a three-foot alligator in the bathroom to scare some friends or the old goat that ran down the bar brought some big-time laughter. The restaurant family along with patrons would enjoy pig roasts and sing a long late into the evening, which made for some of the best times ever possible.

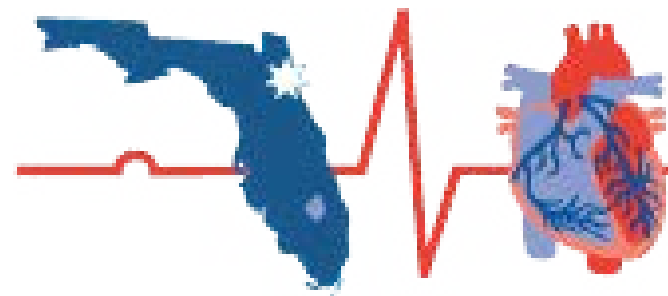
Today, the kids, Greg, Cindy, Luke, Billy and Elaine are all owners, with Luke, Billy and Elaine involved in daily operations of this institution. You can rent a boat with oars or a small engine or a kayak and if you like to RV, they offer 44 rental slots at their adjacent RV Park.

They have an extensive menu that includes salads, steaks, burgers, chicken, pastas, tacos and yes, they have all the seafood selection you would ever want including their famous catfish, crab, shrimp, pollack, flounder, oysters and freshly caught gator. Kids are welcome and have a great menu selection too.

Daily drink specials and an excellent selection of wines, champagne, sangria, beers and specialty drinks like the "blue gator," the "water moccasin," the "sunfish," and the "maka me crazy martinis," a frozen specialty.

And Whitey's offers live music Wednesday through Sunday on the deck and the best live reggae and rock in the South. Once you come, you'll always "wish you were back on the bayou." Whitey's is at 2032 County Rd. 220 on Fleming Island and can be reached at (904) 269-4198.





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Dr. Dhanjal is an advocate of preventive cardiology and believes that many lives can be saved through awareness and education in the community against heart disease. She served as a board member in Northwest Arkansas American Heart Association to fulfill this mission.

Another aspect of cardiology that is close to her heart is heart disease in women. As a wife and mother of two young girls, Dr. Dhanjal knows personally how hard it can be to balance home life while also taking care of yourself. For the last 8 years, she has been actively involved in the "Go Red for Women" campaign in collaboration with American Heart Association to raise awareness around heart disease in women. She also served as the cardiologist for the razorbacks In Northwest Arkansas.



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McDade highlights strong Fleming Island sports scene

Wrestling to roar (pages 16-18)

By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor for Clay Today

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One of the top grads for the GoFLEMING ISLAND - In a topsy-turvy return to full sports in Clay County, the Fleming Island High sports teams excelled in many areas in the post-COVID 2021-22 season topped with a micro-second state swim title earned by Maryn McDade in November.

On the flip side of her Class 2A championship meet visit, after her 50 free gold was in hand, McDade was on the silver medal end of another excruciatingly close race; the 100 free, with the top three finishers; McDade tied for second, separated by less than half a second.

For 2022, McDade has been under the radar but effectively building up to a successful defense of her short title and another chase of the longer title.

Two other young athletes in the Golden Eagle camp; diver Andrea Brinkman and golfer Alyzabeth Morgan, both showed some veteran temerity by attacking their sports with the vigor of season veterans; both were freshmen who exploded not surprisingly on the scene with just-miss opportunities to advance and garner state medals.

Fleming Island wrestling had yet another defining finish in a new Class, 2A, and will be returning 10 of 11 state wrestlers; two runnerups, into the P.J. Cobbert fold that annually pumps out the toughest wrestlers in Florida.

McDade, just a sophomore, had a clear rival throughout the fall swim seasons and had to hone in her craft; the freestyle sprints, to garner her first state title by less than a second.



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Brinkman, an AAU nationally ranked diver out of the high school scene prior to arriving at Fleming Island, blasted her district diving championship scoring with a record-setting 500-plus point total; also the region top seed, while Morgan, chased a region golf title after a district win only to fall short at regions in one of the toughest fields in Florida. For Brinkman, her 505 point total at districts was an eye opening finish, but a tragic, season-ending injury put her off the charts for a state title chase. Brinkman's total far surpassed the 478 points that won the Class 3A title.

On the football turf, it was another freshman athlete, quarterback Cibastian Broughton, who rose above the fray of senior-strong gridderes in the tough world of Class 7A big school football to guide the Golden Eagles to a dramatic team finish that earned one of just eight coveted region playoff spots before the team succumbed to eventual state Final Four finisher and top seed Buchholz in the first round.

Broughton has returned with a vengeance to move the Golden Eagles further into the playoffs, but the sled ride is steeper in a new stacked district that features Buchholz, Bartram Trail, and even Oakleaf.

On the team, senior running back Sam Singleton has earned

a full ride scholarship to Florida State University and also an All-American nod nationwide.

In cross country, the Fleming Island boys and girls teams, thus far in 2022, have exacted some state-ranked finishes with a veteran return crew led by John Keester IV and Danny Sakowski and have new face Graham Myers as a team front runner. Myers adds his running prowess up front as a Golden Eagles after an 11th place finish in Class 1A last year for St. Johns Country Day School.

In 2022, Myers presence up front has landed the Golden Eagles boys teams that one guy to crack the top 10 in major invitationals while the pack running of coach Chris Otero's returners has created quality team finishes.

For the girls cross country, the pack running has brought success with senior Katelyn Thompson and last year's top runner, Allie Knotts, combining with freshman Reese Scott to put Fleming Island's top three within seconds of each to boost top team places.

Boys golf has senior state veteran and Jacksonville junior golf top-ranked Colton Swartz corraling the young golf expertise of two freshmen, Tyler Mawhinney and Ryan Houck, as the Golden Eagles have battled the state's best with a look to returning the state tournament that escaped them last



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year after a fifth place Class 3A finish two years ago.

Basketball and soccer saw good return success after a tremendous debut Final Four finish by girls coach Joy Rosano two years ago got followed with a tears-laden reversal of a district semifinal loss to Fletcher seemingly ending the shot at two Final Four finishes. But, Rosano's rugged regular season schedule awarded the Golden Eagles with a region playoff spot on playoff points and the tears disappeared for two games; wins over East Ridge and Ponte Vedra, before Fletcher turned the trick again, a 2-1 region final loss.

Rosano got plenty of mileage stats wise from her senior strong team; Lily Graham and Madi Male both double digit goal scorers and Catalina Broadbridge and Mollhy Mossor at nine goals and eight, but returns junior goal leader Kaitlyn Scherer and super goalie Mackenzie "Captain" Kirk to the pitch with Scherer excelling for cross country presently and expected to be a major force in November.

In boys soccer, coach Mike Green had a dramatic finish but was ejected early in but returns a bucket load of young talent.

Girls basketball loses long time

coach Joey Williams to his huge grandkids worth of family as the Lady Golden Eagles look to get back on track with new head coach Michael Hayward, who guided Middleburg High to deep playoff runs and has been an assistant boys coach with Traavis Chandler.

For Chandler and his boys basketball, Final Four finishes are part of the preparation at all times and the Golden Eagles always battle the best opponents to that end.

Chandler weathered personnel issues last year that lost some victories, but responded well with a trench mentality of next man to get the Golden Eagles again deep in the playoffs; region finals loss to state runnerup Ponte Vedra, behind senior guard Colton Zapp and middle man Ahman Greenidge.

For weightlifting, coach Damenyum Springs and Sean Coultis, with a state title two years ago, know the firepower it takes to get there and will have a large contingency of returners from last years novices.

In the spring, flag football ruled the headline with coach Clinton Lyons putting the flaggers up against top opponents all season and seeing

plenty of blowouts as well as the tough, grinder wins. Fleming Island got to its first Final Four behind power quarterback Mikayla Maddox and defensive specialist Gabi Musa, who both return, but fell to eventual state champion Western High in the state semifinal Class 2A. Fleming Island's only two losses of the season came at the hands of then-unbeaten Middleburg High and Western. Senior speedster Rose Martin will by Lyons biggest replacement worry with a handful of top tier athletes returning.

For baseball, after a dismal encore Final Four season, Fleming Island introduces a new coach, Gil Morales, to the field with Morales a supremely successful coach at the high school level; state titles at Eagles View and Trinity Christian and at the summer club level.

Track and field will showcase the same veteran distance runners from cross country adding Myers, a Class 1A 3200 runnerup to St. Johns teammate at the time Matthew Stratton, now at the University of Florida. Keester was a 9:32 finisher in the Class 3A 3200 for ninth place with Myers at 9:26.84 behind Stratton's 9:15.62 in Class 1A.

Fleming Island Golf Club brings in Hi-Tech golf (pages 19-21)

Play Pebble Beach? Absolutely

By Randy Lefko
Sports Editor

FLEMING ISLAND - Charles Raulerson, an area PGA Tour golfer and local golf teacher, played at the highest levels of golf through high school, college and as a pro.

"Fleming Island Golf Club has gone through a transformation the last few years turning the 19th hole (clubhouse restaurant) into an Irish Pub," said Raulerson, 58, now the owner of the Fleming Island Golf Club after investing in the Orange Park Country Club, then selling it years ago. "When I got here, I invested in the Power Tee driving range; an automated teeing system, and Top Tracer, a data collection program that analyzes golf ball flight, which is operational and the Bourbon Bar. The last part of the business plan was to install a golf teaching academy. That's about to happen."

Raulerson, a scholarship golfer at Clemson for two years and LSU for three years, had a successful foray into the professional golf world and noted that the technology now being used for golf was never even a thought back then.

"I grew up in Hyde Park (N. Jax) and absolutely not did we have any technology," said Raulerson. "I had two great coaches; Chris Blocker and Harold Bishop, as a young golfer and they taught me



the fundamentals with no technology. I did not see a video of my swing until I was 18 years old. This new technology helps to really hone in on small pieces of the golf swing and golf game."

At about 40 years old, after an on and off career that include some wins, some losses, some PGA Tour cards, some Nationwide, Nike and European tour cards, Raulerson wanted to do something different.

Different, but including golf.

"I wanted to teach golf, but I wanted more than just me and a student on the course," said Raulerson, who played at Clemson (11th in NCAA as freshman) and LSU in his college days. "That's where Bryan Kipnis, a top kids teaching pro (2019 Youth Teacher of the year, 2020 North Florida Golf teacher of year) and the Back Tee Academy came into the picture. The Back Tee Academy facility is in construction right now and looks to be ready around January 1 to be conservative."

Raulerson, who went pro in 1987 and played Australia (top 50 on money list) before getting a PGA Tour card in 1994, got to see the worldwide Top Golf operations (\$20 million golf facilities all over the world) and made some connects to see if Fleming Island could be one of their next stops.

"I literally did not know what the Top Tracer thing was, found out it was Top Golf, made some phone calls and we talked," said



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destination for potentially great golfers.”

Raulerson compared Kipnis to a great elementary school teacher that just has a knack of connecting dots to teach complex ideas, as golf can become.

“The technology of the Top Tracer system, plus the incoming Back Tee Academy is a solid investment in the young golfers in Clay County that traditionally have had to battle weather elements, find a coach to watch and teach and find time to just practice, practice,” said Kipnis. “Many of these golfers have similiar video devices in their home that can give them hitting time in their own living room. Here, we can have practice no matter the weather. We can really focus in on the fine points of hitting a golf point.”

Raulerson detailed some of the Back Tee Academy gadgetry that will be arriving soon noting it will be a three-bay system, artificial turf, a putting lab, two types of turf (ball striking and putting), V1 technology (On Form, a new fitting video system that can better match golfers with golf club sizes) and FlightScope (a ball data collection system).

“The next logical step is an elite program with Bryan honing in on the youth golfers,” said Raulerson. “The tools we will have will be state of the art for upcoming golf players.”

Both Kipnis and Raulerson concurred that with the immense technology about to become available, the tools for analyzing and tweaking a younger golfers game will have an impact on the high school and collegiate careers of a rising wave of young players about to hit the high school scenes.

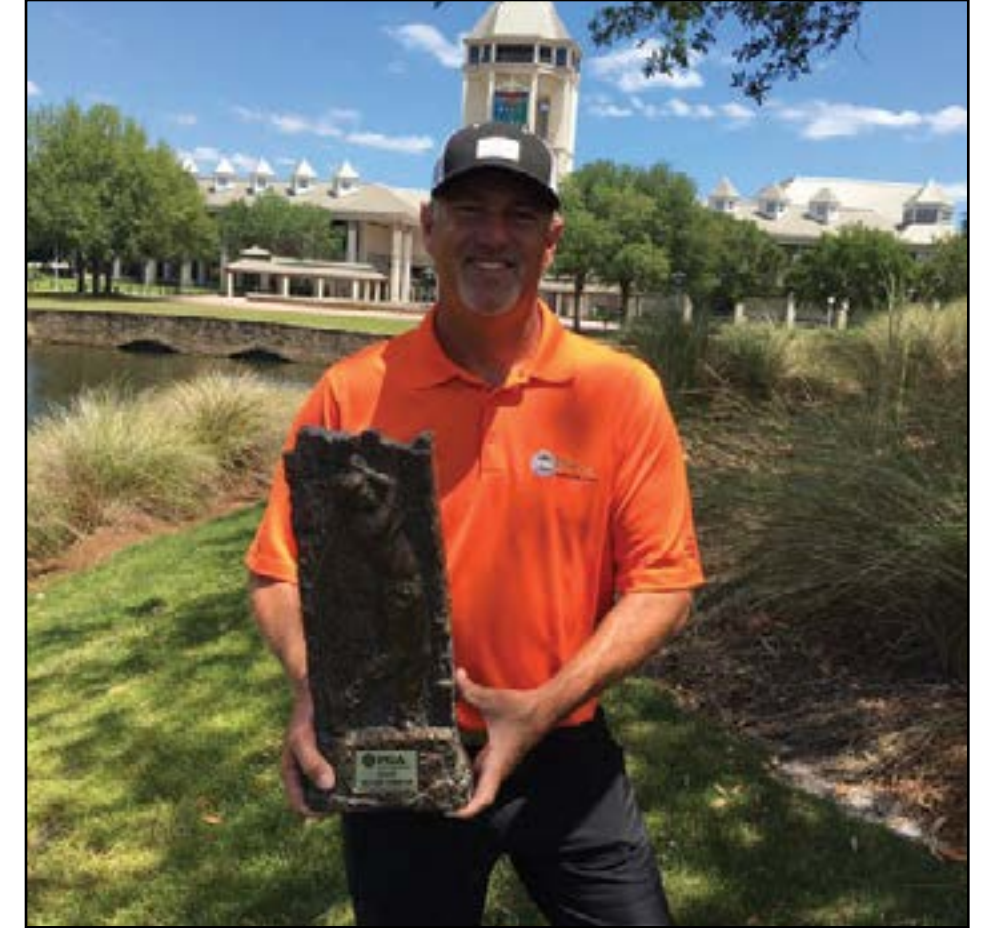
“Right now, the Fleming Island High School golf teams; boys and girls, have a lot of firepower from young golfers; freshmen and sophomores that have had golf coaching since age seven or less,” said Kipnis. “The Top Tee program lets a golfer play 18 holes of simulation golf on Pebble Beach with the program able to diagnose a golfer swing into the exact parameters of the world famous course in California right here. That’s very cool and makes practice more fun. The kids love it.”

Raulerson contemplated the use of the technology and the old “just plain hard work and practice” credo as the next two elements of rising golf stars.

“As a former PGA Tour pro, there are a lot of good swings, great talents and great equipment, but what it ultimately comes down to is what goes on between your ears,” said Raulerson. “Can you accept failure? and if you can, you got a good chance of excelling as a golf player. Coach Blocker and Billy Maxwell, a Ryder Cup player, both had tricks to overcome those inner nerves.”

Raulerson admitted that technology cannot replace the nerves, the excitement and the need for preparation.

“Mentally, the guys that win; I’ve played with Tiger Woods and other superstars, have the inner peace to simply hit one shot after another,” said Raulerson, a player at four US Opens and The Player Championships. “In the end, you are going to be nervous, but you have to have that inner peace to stay competitive with missed putts and bad drives. It’s your day at the office and your preparation is key. We want to be part of that inner peace.”



Raulerson. “Never hurts to have a PGA Tour career on the resume.”

Top Golf liked Fleming Island Golf Club, approved of the investment, installed their Top Tracer driving range systems. Raulerson, who bought Fleming Island in 2013, went one more step.

“The Clubhouse is 92 yards from the driving range,” said Raulerson. “Made no sense to not have a beverage and food facility near the driving range so families could come, hit golf balls and have a nice outdoor dinner.”

For Kipnis, in Fleming Island as a golf teacher for 11 years, six at Eagle Harbor Golf Course, the move was to be part of the next level of golf teaching.

“He told me his plan, made some commitments on the equipment and technology and how it would all fit into the youth program,” said Kipnis. “Charles’ vision is to make Fleming Island golf a



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