

TITLE IMPLICATIONS



Sebastian Emanuel/The Brunswick News

Frederica's Gabe Gabriel talks to his team after its 2-0 win over Bulloch Academy in the second round of the GISA Class 3A playoffs.

No. 3 Lady Knights head to its second home at Mercer University for GISA Class 3A soccer semifinals



Sebastian Emanuel/The Brunswick News

Frederica's Katie Eckert and Josie Brock celebrate Eckert's brace against Bulloch Academy in the second round of GISA 3A playoffs.

By **SEBASTIAN EMANUEL**
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Control That's what Frederica Academy head coach Gabe Gabriel likes when his Lady Knights take the field. Controlling matches and possession of the soccer ball. However, Coach Gabriel couldn't control Mother Nature as she made her way through Bibb County with tornado warnings around the area. That pushed the Lady Knights semifinal matchup with defending champions Augusta Prep Day to 2 p.m. today. "It was a decision that I don't think (Mercer) had thought they would have to make until yesterday," Gabriel said of the inclement weather. "I don't know what the forecast had done because, to be honest, I hadn't looked at them. We haven't had to deal with much weather recently. Apparently, the system pumped up and Mercer University decided yesterday around noon that the field would be unplayable Friday and Saturday. So they had to push us

to the turf field which was unavailable today because of the GHSA state championships, so we had to play on Saturday. It may have enhanced what the decision Mercer had to make in terms of their facilities." With the game being pushed back a day, Gabriel said it's not a terrible situation the four finalists have been dealt with, knowing his team stayed prepared. "I won't complain about having another day to prepare," Gabriel said. "Being able to train and have a full training session Thursday was nice, even though it was a little rushed and not as planned out as I typically like. We got something out of it. We are just preparing for the game being tomorrow and changing travel. It's been a whirlwind." As the team prepared to head up to Mercer University on Thursday night, the change in plans gave coach Gabriel one final training session Friday. "We are going to do a short preparation training right after school and then leave directly after that," Gabriel said. "Already had hotel rooms booked as it was. We will get the girls

up there and make sure they are fully focused and limited distractions and hopefully be ready for kickoff today." Although the Lady Knights are dealing with end-of school studies — AP exams, normal exams and end-of-school plays — Gabriel knows his group put up a strong week of practice. "I think with all of that our girls have been focused," Gabriel said. "With a younger group, the leadership with our three seniors has been key. Just bringing their experience and their mentality and state of mind into training this week has been great for us for that bigger younger core. I'm happy with what we have done so far and I hope we can continue with that in our little hour session today. "It's a grind, I have girls taking AP exams up until four o'clock, rushing to get to practice to get ready to go at 4:30. They don't have very much of a break at all. These days are some of the most important so credit to them or being able to go through all of that to be successful."

Please see **FA, 2B**

20 horses, full house: Kentucky Derby returns with no limits

By **BETH HARRIS**
Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Twenty eager colts breaking from the starting gate, a full house for the first time in three years, and a Kentucky Derby lacking a dominant favorite. Things could get interesting Saturday at Churchill Downs, where the winners in 2019 and 2021 were disqualified. The biggest question for

these 3-year-olds is whether they can handle running 1 1/4 miles while jostling for position in front of the biggest crowd they'll ever see and hear. "Things can get a little dodgy throughout the race, having to go through holes and take dirt and take some bumps along the way," trainer Chad Brown said. "You just never know what's going to happen when you open the gate." Zandon is the early 3-1

favorite and breaks from the No. 10 post, which has produced the second-most winners with nine. The dark bay colt is trained by Brown, seeking his first Derby win after six losses. "It would mean everything," said Brown, who has had his own stable for 15 years. "It's so hard to get these Derby horses, especially the favorite." After two years of COVID-19 restrictions, the Derby returns in all its noisy,

colorful glory. Attendance is back to full capacity, which means about 150,000 people jammed into Churchill Downs, dressed to the nines and fortified by mint juleps served in souvenir glasses. Post time is 6:57 p.m. EDT. "You want to adopt the philosophy that it's just another race, but of course most definitely it's not just another race," said

Please see **DERBY, 2B**



Charlie Riedel/AP

Kentucky Derby entrant Simplification works out at Churchill Downs on Thursday in Louisville, Ky.



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Sports

Formula One star Lewis Hamilton blasts piercings crackdown

By JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. — Seven-time Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton protested the FIA's crackdown on body piercings Friday by showing up at the Miami Grand Prix wearing every piece of jewelry he could fit on his body and suggesting he was willing to sit out races over the issue.

Hamilton arrived in the paddock wearing an all-denim outfit with several open buttons on his long-sleeved shirt that showed at least four stacked necklaces. Hamilton was later seen wearing at least three watches and with four rings on each hand. He also has earrings and a nose ring.

"I couldn't get any more jewelry on today," he said.

The FIA on Thursday tightened its ban on non-regulatory underwear and body piercings when new race director Niels Wittich issued a bulletin that makes the rule part of official scrutineering, meaning such choices are subject to review by race officials.

Four-time champion Sebastian Vettel said he thought FIA was being petty and wondered if the rule was aimed at Hamilton, the 37-year-old Mercedes driver from Britain.



Wilfredo Lee/AP

Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton of Britain arrives for the first practice session for the Formula One Miami Grand Prix auto race wearing various items of jewelry at the Miami International Autodrome, Friday, May 6, 2022, in Miami Gardens, Fla.

Vettel also appeared to take exception to the underwear policing and walked through the paddock with a pair of briefs on over his fire-suit.

"I think it is a bit unnecessary to blow this topic up

and probably at this stage is more of a personal thing, I feel a particular way targeted to Lewis," Vettel said. "In a way, there's a concern for safety, obviously if you have stuff and the car does catch fire. To some degrees, there

is personal freedom and we are old enough to make our own choices."

Hamilton said when he is in the car "I only have my earrings and my nose ring, which I can't remove."

Hamilton said he sent new

FIA President Mohammed Ben Sulayem a message before arriving at the track noting the jewelry fight seemed silly and that "I don't want to fight with you guys, ever." But also sounded prepared to hold his ground.

"If they stop me, then so be it," Hamilton said. "We've got spare drivers ready and prepped for weekends. There's lots of things going on in the city, anyway, so I'll be good either way."

Not long after that, Hamilton was seen in Mercedes' hospitality area wearing only one watch and one ring on his arm. By the time he took to the track for first practice, Mercedes had submitted the required document to FIA that declared Hamilton had removed all the jewelry he could. He's been given a temporary exemption on his piercings.

The governing body for Formula One said the primary issue is safety. It said drivers may be subjected to checks before competition because "the wearing of jewelry underneath the required flameproof clothing can reduce the protection afforded by this equipment."

"Metallic objects, such as jewelry in contact with the skin can reduce heat transmission protection and thus may increase the risk of burn injuries in the event of

a fire," the FIA wrote. "The wearing of jewelry during the competition can hinder both medical interventions as well as subsequent diagnosis and treatment should it be required following an accident."

The FIA said jewelry can snag during emergency removal from a car, and can also complicate or delay medical imaging.

"In the worst case, the presence of jewelry during imaging may cause further injury," the FIA wrote. "Jewelry in and/or around the airway can pose specific additional risks should it become dislodged during an accident and either ingested or inhaled."

Hamilton has been pushing back since the FIA first announced a potential clampdown and said Friday he would sign a waiver assuming all responsibility. He said he has worn his bling while competing for 16 years in F1 without an issue, and also undergone numerous medical imaging sessions also while wearing his jewelry.

"It's platinum that I have, so it's not magnetic. It's never been a safety issue in the past," Hamilton said. "In 16 years, I've had so many MRI scans and not had to take out the platinum because it's not been an easy."

Derby

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Barbados-born trainer Saffie Joseph Jr., who saddles White Abbario.

In 2019, winner Maximum Security was disqualified for interference and Country House wore the garland of red roses.

In 2020, an eerie silence enveloped the track when no fans were allowed because of the pandemic and the race was pushed back to September. Last year, the Derby returned to its usual

spot on the first Saturday in May with attendance limited to about 52,000.

Steve Asmussen has won more races in North America than any other trainer, but he's never won the Derby in 23 tries. He'll saddle Epicenter, the early 7-2 second choice that earned his first career victory at Churchill Downs last fall.

"You have no control over how 20 3-year-olds will handle this volume of crowd for the first time," Asmussen said. "None of them obviously has been in a race that's had that many runners in it."

The 148th Derby is

missing horse racing's household name: Bob Baffert. The Hall of Fame trainer with a record-tying six victories was banned by Churchill Downs this year and next after last year's winner, Medina Spirit, flunked a post-race drug test.

Baffert's shadow still looms large over the Twin Spires. Two colts previously trained by him will be in the starting gate: Messier, the early 8-1 third choice named for hockey Hall of Famer Mark Messier, and 12-1 shot Taiba.

Taiba, the least experienced colt in the field, has the most experienced jockey on his back in 56-year-old Mike Smith. He could break Bill

Shoemaker's record as the oldest winning jockey.

"If I can knock out a good clean trip for him then inexperience won't get in the way so much," Smith said.

Taiba will try to become the first horse to win the Derby in just his third start since Leonatus in 1883, and the first horse to win in his third start after not racing as a 2-year-old. Both Messier and Taiba are trained by Tim Yakteen, Baffert's one-time assistant.

"We're going to need some luck, like every horse in the Derby does," Yakteen said.

Baffert told The Associated Press he plans to watch the race

remotely with family and friends.

United Arab Emirates Derby winner Crown Pride could make history as the first horse from Japan to win the Derby. The dark bay colt has won three of four career starts for trainer Koichi Shintani.

"I want to see the same race start to finish that we saw in the UAE Derby," Shintani said, "including the being first across the wire part."

Todd Pletcher, a two-time Derby winner, saddles three starters: Mo Donegal, Charge It and Pioneer of Medina.

Louisville-born Brad Cox won his first Derby belatedly when Mandal-

oun was elevated to first place after Medina Spirit's disqualification in February. Cox has three shots to make the winner's circle in person this year: Cyberknife, Tawny Port and Zozos.

"I don't think it's going to be a blazing, blazing hot pace," Cox said.

Two-time Derby winner Doug O'Neill saddles 30-1 shot Happy Jack.

"Touch wood we're going to shock the world," he said.

Saturday's forecast calls for a 30% chance of morning showers and then mostly cloudy skies and a high of 64 degrees (17 Celsius).

FA

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When the Lady Knights and the Lady Cavaliers take the field with title implications on the line, Gabriel sees a similar style of play between the two teams.

"We like to possess the ball and keep control of the game," Gabriel said of his style of play. "Try to play forward with the ball as much as you can. Make sure we use the whole width of the field, and really just control. We are about control, and I want my teams to control matches and control the ball as much as we can. In terms of Augusta Prep, they are not too dissimilar from us, I think they may be a little bit more direct in their tactics, but not as much as we see from our typical region and state opponents.

"They like to play soccer more and the games that we

have had against them have been games to watch because of that. It's always fun to play against them and I think it's a great matchup. We have a shot for sure. We had a shot last year but just couldn't make it happen in the end, but I'm pretty confident about this year and this team."

Having won nine straight games since their 2-1 region defeat to Trinity Christian, the Lady Knights are clicking as one.

"I think it's maturity," Gabriel said in the change of his team. "We have been on a kind of steady growth pattern throughout the season. Maturing the younger group, bringing them along, and a lot of them learning the way that I expect them to play. Half of that group are transfers or move-ins, so they don't really have an idea of me or the way that I like to play and then half of them do. It's kind of matching that up and getting them all together and on the same

page. I think we have been on a good trend, nine games in a row. To be honest the Trinity game was probably good for us to lose, to open our eyes a little bit. To know we got to come ready to go every single match because you can lose on any given day no matter who you are."

As the GISA heads and athletic directors of the four remaining schools (Trinity Christian, Holy Spirit Prep, Augusta Prep, and Frederica Academy) discussed several scenarios, they decided a date and time for the championship game will be set for any day between Monday through Thursday.

"It's a little crazy," Gabriel said of waiting out a possible title game. "But give the GISA credit, they are doing probably the best with what they can do, with what they have been given. Hopefully, we can figure out a solution that works for all parties and have a good final."

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Golf Brief

Toms, Duke share lead after opening round on Champions Tour in Duluth

David Toms ran off three straight birdies after a rain delay and closed with a short birdie when he judged the wind right, giving him a 7-under 65 and a share of the lead with Ken Duke after one round of the Mitsubishi Electric Classic.

Duke was first off at No. 1 on the TPC Sugarloaf and dropped only one shot. Equally important was finishing with pars in a strong wind after the rain stoppage.

Steve Flesch had a 67. Steve Stricker, in his second PGA Tour Champions tournament after being out six months recovering from an illness that caused him to lose 25 pounds,

was in the group at 68. Stricker is coming off a runner-up finish last week.

Toms chose to take a cart, allowable on the 50-and-older circuit though rare for him, mainly because the other two players in his group were in carts and he feared a long walk back to the clubhouse knowing a rain delay was inevitable.

He realized they were in for a long slog — Sugarloaf, which formerly hosted a PGA Tour event, is more than a nine-mile walk from the first tee to the 18th green — when it got so wet that carts were no longer allowed in the fairway.

He made three straight birdies after the delay and felt solid the rest of the way, picking up three more birdies on the front nine before the wind got stronger.

— Associated Press

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