

# Sports

Tuesday, October 22, 2024

MORGANTON.COM

SECTION B

By the  
Numbers:  
Dodgers open  
World Series  
vs. Yankees

PAGE B4



This Week  
in History:  
Toronto wins  
1st World  
Series title

PAGE B5

## H.S. FOOTBALL

# BROTHERLY LOVE



MARQUIESE SUDDUTH, KING QUIESE PRODUCTIONS

Freedom running back Jaiveon Belin looks toward the middle of the field pre-snap during a home football game earlier this season in Morganton.

## Belin brothers combine for over 220 yards, 3 TDs in Freedom's win over S. Caldwell

JUSTIN EPLEY  
Sports editor

Many times, football players will refer to their teammates as their brothers.

In the case of the Freedom football team, its backfield actually is occupied by two blood-related brothers. And they're both pretty darn good ball-carriers.

Senior Jaiden Belin and sophomore Jaiveon Belin were outstanding for the Patriots in Friday's 36-22 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference win over South Caldwell, eclipsing 220 total rushing yards and scoring three total touchdowns on the ground in a Senior Night game played at Morganton's Patton High School. Jaiden Belin looked poised to be FHS' lead

running back in Week 1, but an early injury put that plan on hold for a few weeks. Since making his return a week ago in a 30-20 home loss to Alexander Central at PHS, he has amassed nearly 200 yards on the ground and scored three TDs, with Friday night's performance of 175 yards and two scores on just 10 carries amounting to by far his best varsity performance.

Jaiveon Belin has been the Patriots' speed back option this fall after excelling as the JV quarterback a season ago. He scored a touchdown and racked up 48 yards on just four carries in Friday's victory.

Please see **FREEDOM**, Page B2

## H.S. ROUNDUP

# Players perform well at regionals

### FROM STAFF REPORTS

ELKIN — NCSSM-Morganton senior Manya Nallagangu won the NCHSAA 1A West Regional in individual girls tennis action on Saturday at Elkin Park.

The Lady Dragons' doubles team of Ananya Sriram/Will Levine also performed well enough to join Nallagangu at the individual 1A state championships at Cary Tennis Center this Friday through Saturday.

In the 2A West Regional at Belmont Abbey College in Belmont on Saturday, East Burke senior Braelyn Stilwell placed fourth, falling 6-2, 6-2 in the third round before losing the third-place match 6-3, 6-3. On Friday, Stilwell reached the 2A state championships at Holly Springs' Ting Park this weekend by winning her first-round match 4-6, 6-1, 7-6 (7-2) and her second-round match 6-2, 6-0.

And at the 3A West Regional at Hickory City Park on Friday, Freedom's Emily Kanla lost in the first round, 6-3, 6-2.

### Pair of local teams reach state playoffs

Two Burke County squads advanced to the dual-team state playoffs as the NCHSAA released brackets on Friday.

NCSSM-Morganton (6-0) is the No. 5 West seed and Draughn (6-4) is the No. 13 West seed in the 1A dual-team state postseason.

The Lady Dragons will host No. 12 West seed Elkin at Morganton's Freedom park in the first round on Wednesday. The winner of that match will advance to play either Draughn or No. 4 West seed Polk County in the second round next Monday.

Please see **ROUNDUP**, Page B2

## NASCAR CUP SERIES

# Logano seizes chance, takes spot in finale

JENNA FRYER  
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Apparently knocked out of the playoffs the week before, Joey Logano seized on his reversal of fortune to become the first driver locked into the NASCAR Cup Series' championship finale.

Logano was below the cutline and eliminated from the eight-driver field when he left the Charlotte Motor Speedway road course last Sunday. But when Alex Bowman's car failed post-race inspection, Bowman was disqualified and Logano reinstated to the playoff field.

The only two-time Cup champion in the playoff field, Logano passed Daniel Suarez with five laps remaining Sunday for his fourth career victory at Las Vegas Motor Speedway. It is the second win of the playoffs for Logano and the Team Penske driver makes a Ford the first one locked into the winner-take-all final four at Phoenix Raceway next month.

Please see **NASCAR**, Page B2

## H.S. FOOTBALL

# WHC title chase gains focus

League returns after  
a monthlong hiatus

JUSTIN EPLEY  
Sports editor

VALDESE — Not so long ago, it was uncertain if the Western Highlands 1A/2A Conference would return to action in football this fall.

After all, many of the league's mountain communities were devastated by damage from Hurricane Helene, and playing football was far from the top focus.

But the WHC's schools and squads rallied and finally returned to the field this weekend, with one game played as normal on Friday night before a pair of contests were held on Saturday afternoon as schools in Avery County, Buncombe County, Mitchell County and Yancey County are faced with nighttime travel restrictions.

Madison won the first game back on the schedule, 9-0 at Rosman on Friday night, before Mountain Heritage earned a 44-7 home win over Avery County on



STEVEN COOKE, COOKE PHOTOGRAPHY AND AERIAL VIDEO

The Draughn football team's heart was with Hurricane Helene-afflicted western North Carolina as the Wildcats returned to action versus Mitchell on Saturday in Valdese.

Saturday, shortly before Draughn fell to Mitchell 33-14 at home in Valdese in the Wildcats' homecoming game.

With the Wildcats (3-3, 1-1 WHC), Patriots, Vikings and idle Owen already

sporting one league loss and the Tigers sitting with a pair of WHC defeats, the conference championship chase already

Please see **WHC**, Page B2