

Sports

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Fourth and Long



David Friedman

## Patriots should retire

I think the time has come for the Patriots to retire.

People are always discussing the virtues of leaving the game while you are still on top and, whether they win or lose against Philly in the Super Bowl, the New England Patriots are far and away the best organization in football.

Regular readers of this column know I am a Miami Dolphins fan, so the above words are hard to say. But that doesn't make them any less true.

You might be thinking to yourself, "but Dave, they barely got past the Jaguars," and you'd be right. They almost lost but they didn't.

Seems to me that no matter how much they are losing by, New England always comes out on top when it matters.

The reason it seems this way? The last four times the Patriots have been down by double digits in the playoffs, they have come back to win. That includes their last two Super Bowls.

In a league where teams that make the postseason are statistically as likely to miss the playoffs the following year as they are to make it, New England has earned a playoff berth in 14 of the last 15 seasons.

The Patriots don't just show up in the playoffs, they win. They have been to the last seven AFC championship games and, with the exclusion of his rookie year and the year he was injured in the first game of the season, Tom Brady has been to the Super Bowl in half of his 16 years as a starter.

Bill Belichick will coach in his 11th Super Bowl, the most amongst any coach in NFL history.

Tom Brady will play in his eighth Super Bowl, more than any player in NFL history. Needless to say, they are the winningest head coach and quarterback tandem in NFL postseason history.

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# Falcons' skid continues

JIM GREEN

Bertie Ledger-Advance

**WILLIAMSTON** - One streak ended, while another continued Saturday night.

Jadakis Bonds eclipsed 1,000 points for his career and helped facilitate a strong defensive start by the Riverside High School varsity boys basketball team, who eased past Bertie 59-37 in a non-conference game.

A three-game losing skid ended for Riverside (9-7 overall), while Bertie emerged 5-9 overall with its third straight defeat.

Bonds came into Saturday's game with 997 points - needing only three to reach 1,000.

The Knights scored the first six points - four by Ashaun Belcher (one basket on a pass from Bonds) and two free throws by Ben Beach.

It took the Falcons three minutes to produce a bucket, but Riverside kept pushing the tempo and converting transition baskets (Deonte Thomas, Belcher and Beach) to make it 17-6.

Bonds made his first basket at 2:22 to push Riverside's lead to 19-6.

After Alden Cottle's three-pointer cut the deficit to 19-9, the Knights ended the first quarter with baskets from Zyjuan Exum, Belcher (off a Bonds assist) and then Exum again to make it 25-9.

Bonds needed just 32 seconds in the second stanza to make Riverside history.

He stole a pass and went uncovered, finishing with an emphatic



JIM GREEN / Bertie Ledger-Advance

Bertie's Joshua Burden (No. 10) shoots between Riverside's Ben Beach and Deonte Thomas in Saturday's loss to the Knights.

two-handed slam dunk that gave him 1,001 points for his career.

That basket fueled another Knights outburst - this time, 13 points in a row (Bonds, Nakwon Burns, Exum, Belcher, Beach and Belcher again) - to put Riverside ahead 38-9.

Bertie collected 10

of the quarter's last 16 points, which included a basket from Marquis Overton, a triple from Cottle and a basket from Jaquan Baylor, to pull within 25 (44-19) at the break.

While Bertie played better offensively in the second half - outscoring Riverside 19-15 - the

Falcons never could get the deficit under 20 points.

Baylor (two baskets), Tray Riddick (three-pointer) and Burden (basket) produced Bertie's nine points in the third quarter.

Riverside earned its biggest lead of the second half (27 points)

when Bonds scored, Thomas converted off a pass from Exum and Bonds added two free throws to make it 55-28.

Riddick (five points) and Baylor (two) pulled Bertie within 20 (55-35) with 3:06 remaining, but that's as close as the

See **FALCONS**, 9



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Lady Falcon guard Dawaunti Combs (No. 10) drives against Riverside defenders Saturday.

## Tale of 2 halves

Bertie girls lose big lead, suffer five-point defeat

JIM GREEN

Enterprise & Weekly Herald

**WILLIAMSTON** - It was a tale of two halves on Saturday.

Bertie High School's girls basketball team owned the first half against Riverside and took a commanding 20-point advantage (34-14) just 70 seconds into the third quarter.

Riverside's change in defensive strategy resulted in Bertie going cold for a long stretch.

It also helped that the Knights started making shots, many of them in transition.

The result was a 56-51 victory by Riverside

which improved the home team to 12-3 overall, while Bertie dropped to 8-6 overall.

"If we hadn't given up the basket and allowed so many easy shots, we would have won the game," said Bertie head coach Kelvin Hayes.

Playing without one of its offensive leaders in Zaria Brown-Williams, Riverside struggled to make shots in the first half despite holding its on against the Falcons on the boards.

Bertie, on the other hand, didn't have much trouble converting.

Akyia King started

See **BERTIE**, 9

Bertie Ledger-Advance congratulates this week's Athlete of the Week.

**Bertie**  
Ledger-Advance

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Athlete of the week

Bertie High School Basketball  
Dawaunti Combs

