

Athlete of the Month

By Tristan Jackson

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Four sectional titles, four regional titles, and two trips to the state finals.

The recent success of the boys tennis team in the last four years is hard to miss, and there has been one constant: senior leader Bradley Cross.

One can't talk about the tennis program without mentioning Cross, especially after the perseverance he showed this season. He managed to hold down the No. 1 singles spot all season despite suffering a sprained MCL late in the season.

"Knowing that there are always kids that are better than me, and that I will have to improve to beat, pushes me to be better," Cross said.

The poise and leadership Cross showed this season can't be understated. He will have a lasting impact on the tennis program, paving the way for the next generation of stars here at Jeff.

"He's helped the whole team get better by pushing us everyday," said freshman tennis player Gavin Lone "that makes it fun to play for Jeff."

Cross doesn't just get it done on the courts, but in the classroom too. He earned Academic All-State both his junior and senior years. Even after all the success playing, according to Cross Academic All-State is still one of the accomplishments he is most proud of.

Unfortunately, Cross' career at Jeff came to an end after a 4-1 loss to Reitz Memorial High School in the first round of semi-state this year. However, this came after his team's two amazing comeback wins during Regionals, pulling out wins against rivals Floyd Central and New Albany.

In the Regional semifinal, though, is where Cross did his best orchestration.

Cross, still noticeably hobbled by a knee injury suffered earlier in the year, had a deciding third set against Floyd Central's No. 1 player, Chris Boone.

With the overall match knotted at 2-2, Cross and Boone were the last two players on the court. Cross had to win for his team to advance in the state tournament.

After a hard fought match on both sides, Cross came out on top and won the match for his team, beating Boone 6-4 in the deciding third set. This win is a perfect example of the mental toughness he showed throughout his career at Jeff.

"He brings to the table what all coaches want to have; he knows there is no 'I' in team," former coach Mark Reilly said.

Cross is determined to be the best tennis player he can be, and he will continue to prove it next year. He will be making the transition from high school to college tennis this coming summer, where his talents have landed him a spot on the tennis team at Indiana University Southeast.

While Cross is looking ahead, his time playing at JHS will always be remembered. However he, along with many others, look back at a tough loss against North Central in the semifinal round of the state finals in 2015 as a moment he wishes he could relive.

Bradley Cross has been a staple of the tennis program at Jeff High over the last four years. His talent and work ethic are matched by few, and his presence will be irreplaceable.

Bradley Cross' senior season has ended, but his legacy on Jeff tennis will linger



Photos by Jay Williams



Commentary: College Football Playoff Expansion

Only a handful of talented teams make the Playoffs per year, Adrian Blair shares his thoughts on why other top teams should be included

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The College Football Playoff debuted shortly following the 2014 regular season, and has only grown since. From Larry Culpepper, the Dr. Pepper guy, to the weekly release of the new College Football Playoff rankings, college football owns November and December.

However, there is one area where improvement is needed. We, as college football fans, want an expanded playoff bracket, preferably to eight teams.

With eight teams, it is likely that no Power Five conference champion is left out, like in years past (sorry 2014 Baylor and TCU). Eight teams also gives an opportunity for two teams in the same conference to be in the playoff, via Michigan and Ohio State from the Big Ten.

Sports and money go hand in hand, and it honestly confuses me why they haven't expanded already. Behind its "big brother" in the National Football league, college football is the No. 2 viewed sport in the American television market. TV equals money, so why not? Giving the fans what they want and making even more money doing it sounds pretty great to me.

Another area worth looking at is the media exposure. Last season, the final College Football Playoff rankings were released on Dec. 6, 2015, with the National Championship on Jan. 11, 2016.

During that 37-day span, media outlets across the country absolutely devour the College Football Playoff. Media coverage equals money. If it wasn't already brought to your attention, money is the main root of why the College Football Playoff is even in existence.

Having great players in great games is really what fans watch for. Players such as Clemson's Deshaun Watson, Ohio State's J.T. Barrett, and Michigan's Jabrill Peppers all have their respective teams in the Playoff mix. The two most recent Heisman trophy winners have participated in the College Football Playoff, and have failed to disappoint.

With more teams, there is more dynamic and electric players on the field, making for a more exciting viewing experience.

While the newly created College Football Playoff doesn't show any signs of expanding following this year, it is a strong possibility in the years to come.



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