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DOWN GO THE CHAMPS!



Freedom's Kyra Jefferson, who scored 28 points in the win against Bethlehem Catholic

Lady Pates Basketball Pulls Off Wild Upset Over Defending State Champion Becahi. “I feel like we can do anything.” Freedom’s Kyra Jefferson defiantly said after a huge victory.

If you weren’t at the Freedom High School main gym on Friday, January 12, chances are you weren’t having that much fun. The Freedom Patriots girls basketball team welcomed the defending PIAA 4A champion Bethlehem Catholic Golden Hawks, and it was one to be remembered.

In the first quarter, it looked to be all Lady Hawks as they showed why they’re the defending state champions. The Lady Pates couldn’t really mount much of any offense against an aggressive and relentless Bethlehem Catholic defense as it was 13-9 in favor of the Lady Hawks at the end of the first quarter of play.

Then, the tone of the game started to change. For the most part, Bethlehem Catholic was still a dominant force in the second quarter as they held a double-digit lead at one point, led by their standout sophomore 6-foot point

guard Taliyah Medina and senior Hope Brown, but Freedom would outscore Becahi 20-16 in the quarter to tie the game at halftime 29-29.

The big question mark in the second half would be if the Lady Pates could keep applying the pressure to such a dominant foe. In order to beat Bethlehem Catholic, Freedom would need to pull away. The beginning of the third quarter it was all Freedom.

They would take advantage of several Becahi miscues and missed shots to create a lead of their own, leading as much as 11 at one point. The third quarter was a big one for Freedom as they outscored the defending champs 19-11 throughout as they would take a 48-40 lead into the game’s final quarter.

Becahi would start to come alive in the fourth quarter as Taliyah Medina would put the team on her back as she finished with a team-high 21 points. The Lady Hawks would knock on the door of Freedom late as they would pull to within one point of the Pates’ lead with two minutes to go.

Varsity Basketball (Girls)				
Day	Date	Opponent	Place	Time
S	Saturday Dec. 02	@ Dunmore High School (V/JV Scrimmage)	Dunmore High School	12:00PM
S	Tuesday Dec. 05	OPEN DATE (Tri Scrimmage w/ Pennridge/NDGP)	FHS MAIN GYM	6:00PM
	Tuesday Dec. 12 *	@ William	Allen William Allen	7:00PM
	Friday Dec. 15 *	East Stroudsburg South	FHS MAIN GYM	7:00PM
	Saturday Dec. 16	@ Mahanoy Area	Mahanoy Area	2:30PM
	Monday Dec. 18	Stroudsburg	FHS MAIN GYM	7:00PM
	Tuesday Dec. 19 *	@ Louis E Dieruff HS	Louis E Dieruff HS	7:00PM
	Thursday Dec. 21	Wilson High School (Wilson West Lawn)	FHS MAIN GYM	7:00PM
	Friday Dec. 22 *	Liberty Bethlehem	Freedom High School	7:00PM
	Wednesday Jan. 03 *	Easton	FHS MAIN GYM	7:00PM
	Friday Jan. 05	@ Whitehall	Whitehall	7:00PM
	Saturday Jan. 06	Phillipsburg (Yasso Tourn.)	FHS MAIN GYM	5:00PM
	Tuesday Jan. 09 *	Emmaus	FHS MAIN GYM	7:00PM
	Friday Jan. 12 *	Bethlehem Catholic High School	FHS MAIN GYM	7:00PM
	Tuesday Jan. 16 *	William Allen	FHS MAIN GYM	7:00PM
	Friday Jan. 19 *	@ Pocono Mountain West	Pocono Mountain West	7:00PM
	Tuesday Jan. 23	@ Bethlehem Catholic HS	Bethlehem Catholic HS	7:00PM
	Friday Jan. 26 *	Nazareth Area High School	FHS MAIN GYM	7:00PM
	Saturday Jan. 27	@ Wallenpaupack Area HS	Wallenpaupack Area HS	2:00PM
	Tuesday Jan. 30 *	Louis E Dieruff HS	FHS MAIN GYM	7:00PM
	Friday Feb. 02 *	@ Liberty Memorial Gym		5:30PM
	Monday Feb. 05 *	@ Pleasant Valley	Pleasant Valley	7:00PM
	Wednesday Feb. 07 *	@ Easton	Easton	7:00PM

Ultimately though, Freedom would keep scoring and applying pressure as it would turn out to be too much as the Lady Pates would get a shocking and exciting win 66-59.

Freedom’s senior point guard Kyra Jefferson had an incredible game as she scored 28 points. Fellow senior Hailey Silfies had an impressive day as well with 15 points. “I didn’t even know I had 28 points,” Jefferson said, still taking in the scope of the win.

“It was a great atmosphere and I was happy to be a part of it,” she added. “She had a really good awareness of when to be aggressive,” Freedom girls basketball coach Dean Reiman said of Jefferson. “Her aggressiveness changed the complexion of the second half.”

Freedom now has wins over the number two and number one ranked teams in the state of Pennsylvania.

For Bethlehem Catholic, Friday’s loss was the first loss in EPC conference play since February 2016. Becahi seemed to lose their aggressiveness as the game went on and mistakes were made in bunches, including trouble at the free throw line.

Taliyah Medina, Becahi’s sure scorer, only went 6/16 from the line. Those 10 misses turned out to be very costly. The team went 18 out of 35 overall from the line.

“If you space the floor and look for opportunities and use over aggressiveness against them... we weren’t successful all the time but the times we were I think were key points to the game,” Reiman said.

On paper this goes down as a pretty big upset for Freedom, but coach Dean Reiman is confident and doesn’t see it as such. “We’re a good team. I’m not shocked that we beat Beca to be honest. It’s a matter of staying calm in those moments when the game is on the line and executing.”

“To beat a team that’s number one in the state you have to have talent, which we do, but we’re establishing the ‘Freedom way.’

That has to do with a lot more than just basketball. It’s how we bounce back from adversity, leadership, communication, all those things. All the things we were talking about as a program were on display tonight,” Reiman added.

The Freedom Patriots Lady Pates now improve to 9-2. The Bethlehem Catholic Lady Hawks fall to 8-2.

By Christian Jackson

WRESTLING ROLLS ON

Freedom Wrestling Looking Great Late with 67-12 Win Over Allen



The Freedom Patriots wrestling season is entering its late season form as there is only four conference meets to go and two tournaments. The 6-4 Patriots wrestling team set its sights on the William Allen Canaries at home on January 11.

Three words managed to stand out in this particular meet. Pins, pins, pins. There were plenty of them against the Canaries, nine of them to be exact as the Patriots would go on to simply manhandle the Canaries by a final team score of 67-12.

It was certainly a feel-good win for the wrestling team, who now improve to 6-4 overall as a team and set their sights on The War at the Shore tournament Martin Luther King Day weekend in Ocean City, Maryland. "Allen is trying to build up their program and I respect that.

I know where this was when I came here eight years ago... a match like tonight where you know you have the upper hand, we just want to go out and try to get our kids out of their comfort zone," wrestling coach Brandon Hall said.

"We had some certain things that some wrestlers weren't allowed to do tonight in which they're very good at. Coming out here in a match in which we feel like we can get the win, we just want them to work on some areas that they're weak in," Hall added. Tightening up will be essential in how this

team handles itself throughout the rest of the season as they have meets with the likes of East Stroudsburg South, Allentown Central Catholic, and Liberty remaining.

"We had a rough stretch in December. We wrestled in a seven day span Easton, Nazareth, and Parkland... hopefully January is a better stretch for us than that couple weeks of December was," coach Hall said.

It didn't really look like there needed to be much tightening up to be had though, as Allen only won two out of the fifteen matches, one by pinfall and one by forfeit.

The Freedom wrestlers who gained a pin were Alex Vargas (1:14) at 106 pounds, Jacob Garcia (2:41) at 126 pounds, Gianni Palaio (1:03) at 132 pounds, Andrew Evans (1:32) at 138 pounds, Andrew Youwakim (0:25) at 145 pounds, Ben Huber (2:21) at 152 pounds, Daryl Shands (0:28) at 170 pounds, Jared Jenkins (1:40) at 182 pounds, and Johnathan Ferrer (1:14) at 220 pounds.

Coach Hall says that he will continue to rely on key contributors like Alex Vargas, Andrew Youwakim, and the Huber brothers as the Freedom wrestlers head down the home stretch of the season and into districts.

By Christian Jackson

THE 10 CRAZIEST NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS ON THE INTERNET

New Year's Resolutions have become a little bit typical lately. The whole losing weight, going to the gym, and eating better have become so cliché. Thanks to the power of the Internet, we are now able to find the exact opposite of those boring resolutions.

So here are the craziest New Year's Resolutions that are out there, maybe to inspire your 2018 a bit...

#11: Visit McDonald's every day (via toptens.com)

Well, the polar opposite to what a proper resolution is supposed to be. Perhaps in hopes to have comfort food all year... a comfort zone if you will.

#10: Try to kiss more parked cars (via usatoday.com)

You know how they say that people lick things to claim them as their own? Well this goes (sort of) hand in hand. Maybe by the end of the year you'll have at least 365 cars.

#9: Walk wherever you're walking without looking, staring at, or listening to your phone (via blog.udemy.com)

Pretty sure we could all relate to this. It is a little annoying when someone on their phone is walking in front of you, completely unaware of what's going on. Take the time to look at your surroundings in 2018. It'll prevent any awkward moments, and you'll be able to enjoy the outside world more often.

#8: Start buying lottery tickets at a luckier store (via fanpop.com)

But which one truly is the lucky store? There is only one way to find out of course... choose wisely.

#7: Destroy your video game consoles (via toptens.com)

This one is probably a bit counter-productive. You'll be wasting a lot of money if you go through with this, but hey maybe you, or even your kids, will get outside more often! Worth it.

#6: "Not to shovel snow. Since I'm gonna be in Florida, I feel pretty good about it" -Greg Tamblyn (via supermoney.com)

A textbook example of never trying to set yourself up for failure. Unfortunately for the rest of us here, the only way to achieve this is to not leave your house for about a month.

#5: Knit more sweaters for freezing trees (via usatoday.com)

Not a biologist, but pretty sure that trees are meant to be freezing... well, besides palm trees. They're still standing after all, right? Maybe those sweaters can go to other people/things in 2018.

#4: Try taking a selfie that looks like an actual person (via blog.udemy.com)

There isn't anything more beautiful than natural beauty... especially not the dog filter on Snapchat...

#3: Go back in time and drink the New Coke while telling everyone it's the Old Coke (via myself)

Just think of how many people you'll mess with if you do this! What other way to tell the past that you are indeed from the future.

#2: This year I'm going to be taller! (Tweet from @TheBookOfMatt_)

Perhaps if you work out hard enough at the gym you'll become taller instead of thinner. One can only hope, huh?

#1: Shave your head for every lie to you say (via thetoptens.com)

I have a feeling that if everyone went through with the resolution, wig makers would be Fortune 500 companies within a couple months' time.

By Christian Jackson



25 PLUS YEARS OF BRUNO SCIPIONI

As I step inside the restaurant, a waft of incredible aroma comes over me. The smell of Italian food, especially, homemade, hand crafted, savory European eats is hard to beat. It's taking everything inside me to continue conducting this interview instead of ordering everything on the menu. And I mean everything. For both parts of that sentence.

On a somewhat warmer than usual January afternoon, I step inside Bruno Scipioni's restaurant to ask him some questions about the journey of his restaurant. An incredible feat to say the least, in knowing that each time you drive down that Easton Avenue road, Bruno's is still standing strong.

As I walk in the door, there he is sitting at the register. A cool, composed man with quite a strong achievement under his belt, it's evident that he plays a huge role in the restaurant's daily success. He's not the owner that's on vacation in Maui every other week he's ringing the customers up at the end of their meal, with a humble, inspiring approach. "I started when I was about 13 working for a relative," Bruno

quips about his restaurant history. "[Once I] learned that and worked in the restaurant for 10 years over there, I opened this place.

I was 23." Fast-forward to 2018. Jacket wearing, beanie bearing men and women are scuffling into the restaurant. Rock salt on the bottom of their boots, the look of excitement and pure delight of what they are about to consume is captivating.

"Lots of regulars," Bruno informs me. I decide to ask him if he notices any 'fan favorite' meals. I wasn't surprised to realize there were more than just a few.

"We specialize in all different kinds of gourmet pizzas. [For dinner], we have a linguine with shrimp, scallops and clams with a marinara sauce over it," Bruno says as my mind and stomach start to drift to the savory taste of the noodles and sea fare hitting my tongue, almost in slow motion. I snap back to the current moment as he continues. "Pasta [and] chicken marsala [are] very popular. And all our homemade desserts."

The food has, obviously, proved to be a hot commodity for many years. When owning a business of this nature, sometimes milestones or big achievements come about.

Sometimes those achievements or milestones are merely the fact that they have been able to stay open more than 5 years. "I guess just staying in business for 25 and a half years is a milestone in of itself," Bruno adds, as I nod my head in agreement.

"The first couple years it was all farmland around me. Then they just built the city around me and everything filled in."

By the time we're wrapping up the interview, I'm preparing to snap some photos, but have to ask him one final question. A non-chain restaurant staying in business more than 25 years must have a secret.

So, what is it that keeps this place going, I wonder. Without hesitation, and with a relaxed tone in his voice, Bruno gives me the answer that brings it all together. So simple, yet so effective. "Dedication, making sure you're



delivering quality product, and being nice to customers." And there you have it. Bravo, Bruno! Come on down to Bruno Scipioni's restaurant and enjoy some delicious Italian food! Bruno Scipioni's restaurant is open 11am-11pm 6 days a week (Monday-Saturday).

Their Sunday hours are 11am-9pm. The restaurant serves lunch and dinner and provides both nonalcoholic and alcoholic beverages. Located at 4034 Easton Avenue, Bethlehem, PA 18020.

By Shane Cunningham

Bruno Scipioni's ITALIAN RISTORANTE



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THE NEW TAX CUTS AND JOBS ACT

On December 22, 2017 President Trump signed into law the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA). This is the largest tax bill since 1986. Mind you, in 1986 it took lawmakers 14 months to revamp the law, the TCJA took 6 weeks.

Early indications show a win for corporations as the tax rate was reduced from 35% to 21%. The focus of this article is to summarize some of the individual changes. Most of the changes apply to 2018 returns which are filed in 2019.

So, without further ado enjoy reading to see what you have to look forward to and if there are any questions we would be happy to attempt to clarify.

Lower tax rates across the board, we still have 7 tax brackets, but the rates were dropped a couple of points in each bracket. New rates are as follows 10%, 12%, 22%, 24%, 32%, 35%, 37%. Lower rates should mean more in the form of take home pay during the year.

Standard Deduction increased to \$12,000 (single filers), \$18,000 (head of household) and \$24,000 (married taxpayers).

Personal Exemptions suspended, and most wage earners will see a reduction in federal tax withholding once clarification from lawmakers as to how to translate W-4 withholdings based on exemptions now removed. As of now, the IRS has requested that employers continue to withhold at the 2017 rates.

Child Tax Credit doubled to \$2,000 and refundable up to \$1,400 for lower income taxpayers. The income phaseout increased substantially, \$400,000 for married taxpayers and \$200,000 for all others.

Pass through business income, do you own a business, operate as an LLC, S-corporation or sole proprietorship? If yes, you could end up reducing the income from that operation by 20%. The provisions for this are clear as mud and require their own article in an upcoming edition.

Mortgage Interest remains but with one small caveat. Homes purchased after 12.15.17 are now subject to a reduced mortgage value of \$750,000. Homes purchased prior to that are capped at \$1,000,000. The law also bans home equity interest from being deducted.

State, local and property tax deductions took a major hit. This deduction is now capped at \$10,000, meaning you can deduct any combination of these taxes to the tune of \$10,000. Pennsylvania is the 39th highest state when it comes to property taxes, New Jersey is the highest at 50. For those of you involved in real estate rental investment(s) you can continue to deduct 100% of the mortgage interest and real estate taxes incurred.

Medical expenses are still allowed and subject to 7.5% of your adjusted gross income instead of 10%. Beginning in 2020, the threshold goes back to 10%.

Unreimbursed employee expenses have been eliminated. Pilots, truck drivers, salesmen and flight attendants use to receive significant tax deductions for per diem and out of pocket travel expenses. TCJA also eliminates the deduction for investment advisor fees and tax preparation fees.

Alimony will no longer be taxable to the recipient or deductible to the payor for divorce agreements executed after 12.31.18.

The new law eliminated a popular deduction for **moving expenses**. Taxpayers whether they took the standard or itemized method could deduct the cost of a job-related move. Now only military members can claim the deduction.

529 plans can now be used for children in grades K-12 that attend a religious or private school. Under the old law 529 plans could only be used for college costs.

The Affordable Care Act mandate to have health insurance has been eliminated beginning in 2019. For 2018, the mandate remains, and you could end up paying a fine.

By Kristofer M DePaolo, CPA

Kris is the CEO of Werner & Company CPAs, PC a premiere tax and accounting firm in the Lehigh Valley. With two locations Bethlehem and Allentown to serve you. Werner & Company focuses on helping businesses and individuals with tax planning and preparation, they take a proactive approach in servicing their clients. www.wernerpcpa.net

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HOW TO WIN WITH LOVE

By Ron Ball

U.S. Army Lieutenant Kurt Klein had just turned 25 the day before his unit liberated more than 100 starving women from Nazi imprisonment at a small village on the German-Czech border. The Lieutenant and his fellow soldiers found the women locked inside a small building at an abandoned bicycle factory. There were 116 women out of an original group of 1,350. The soldiers were shocked when they realized that the skeletal, white haired women were actually young girls who had barely survived their terrible ordeal. They had been locked inside the shed and left to die when the Nazi soldiers realized that U.S. Army troops were close.

Lieutenant Klein, who spoke German, approached one of the young women, and gently said, "Don't cry child. It is all over now." That girl, named Gerda, was only 20 years old but looked much older. When Klein asked to see the other "ladies" she could not believe that someone would refer to them with such a polite and gracious term. She felt a moment of despair, thinking the young officer had misunderstood who they were. Very quietly she said, "We are Jews." Lieutenant Klein replied, "So am I." Overcome with relief and joy Gerda agreed to guide the soldiers to the other women. She later said she had trouble believing that these bright, polite young men had left their homes in America and fought their way across a continent for her freedom.

Gerda and the others were taken to a hospital and helped to recover from their ordeal. While she was there Lieutenant Klein came to visit and told her that his parents had sent him and his older brother and sister to the United States to escape Hitler but were trapped in Germany where they were murdered by the Nazis. He thought it was his duty to return and help win the war. As part of her rehabilitation Gerda was asked to use her hands to make jewelry as therapy. The first thing she made was a piece for Klein. She sent it to him as a gift with a message that said it was "a tiny star meant for you."

The young Lieutenant continued to visit and one day left a single red rose in Gerda's room. The visits became more frequent until on one special visit, Kurt kissed Gerda. Eventually Kurt asked Gerda to marry him. She agreed. They married, moved to Buffalo, New York, had children and were very happy together. Gerda became such an inspiration to many people because of her story and her courage that, in 2011, she was awarded the highest civilian award possible in the United States, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Ultimately the story of Gerda and Kurt is a story of love. It is an account of the power of love to overcome terrible evil and to restore and enrich a person's life.

The Bible says in I John 4:8, "Whoever does not love, does not know God, because God is love." As you begin a new year, make a commitment to be an ambassador of love. Become famous for your caring and compassion. Don't think so much about yourself. Spread God's love. Everywhere you look are people who need to know they are loved. Do all you can to deliver that message. This year is your opportunity to do something important. It is your opportunity to express God's love.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

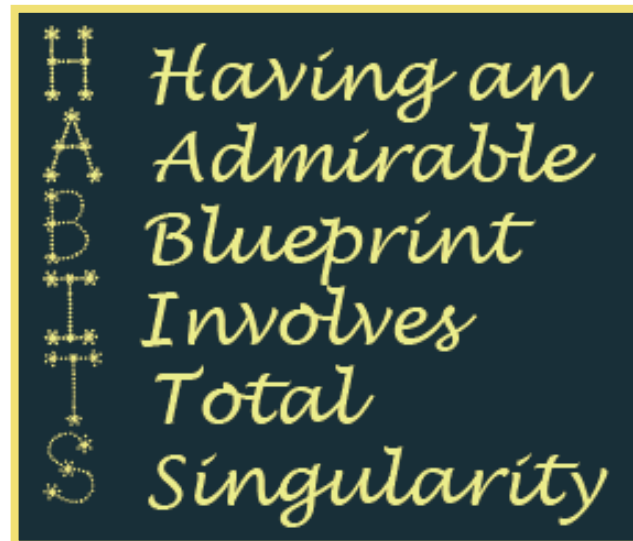
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If you missed any shows, you can watch them on our YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9hhhg3gJWYP8auB02aoerA>

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RESOLUTIONS ARE IMPORTANT BUT HABITS ARE ESSENTIAL

Everybody loves resolutions. They're exciting, they're full of possibilities, they're motivating! But the fact is motivation fails and then those resolutions are nothing more than words written in a journal or business plan UNLESS, you tie some tremendous habits to them. That takes discipline. My father used to tell me, "Tracey, motivation is what gets you going; discipline is what keeps you going." And I would have to say at this stage in my life I wholeheartedly concur.



I've reached a lot of goals in my life, most of them in my 50's because I finally got better at letting the habits take root in my life so they became second nature. In his book, Leading Change, author John Kotter states that we often declare victory on change far too early. He maintains it takes three to ten years to change an organization's culture from the inside out.

In addition to disciplined habits, you must also have focus. Without focus, you'll get distracted by the myriad of things that enter your mind and pathway and begin to drift away from your mission. This is really where the root of the resolution comes into play because it provides a clear destination point for where you want to land. Before you take off into flight, you need to know the final destination.

To help you remember how important tremendous habits are in your life I've come up with an acronym. You dial it in and work the flight plan out from there. Your discipline will ensure that no matter how much turbulence, emergency landings, or diverted legs you have to take, you'll always end up exactly where you intended to be. And that, my tremendous friends, is why goals and resolutions, paired with disciplined habits, are so essential in our lives.

By Tracey C. Jones

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EAGLES FOUND A WAY AGAINST THE FALCONS



Photos are courtesy of www.philadelphiaeagles.com

It was an instant classic for the Eagles. The Birds 15-10 NFC Divisional Round playoff win over the Atlanta Falcons was a battle that came down to the game's last seconds. Eagles second-year cornerback Jalen Mills battled Falcons All-Pro wide receiver Julio Jones in the end zone and the fourth down pass by quarterback Matt Ryan fell incomplete.

The crowd at Lincoln Financial Field roared and celebrated when the ball fell to the ground and the entire Delaware Valley continued the celebration. The Birds are now preparing to host the Minnesota Vikings in the NFC Championship game.

You have to give head coach Doug Pederson and this Eagles squad all the credit in the world. They've overcome the loss of two future Hall of Famers in left tackle Jason Peters and halfback/punt returner Darren Sproles. They lost their best special teams player Chris Maragos and their young talented middle linebacker, Jordan Hicks. Those injuries were damaging, but none was as serious as the loss of their most important player and NFL MVP candidate, quarterback Carson Wentz.

Despite all of the losses this tough-minded group has continued to find ways to win. Usually if you lose the turnover battle in the playoffs, you also lose the game, but on Saturday, the Eagles overcame a Jay Ajayi fumble on his first carry and a muffed punt return against the Atlanta squad, which represented the NFC in the Super Bowl last season.

Current starting quarterback Nick Foles played well with the game and season on the line. He completed 23 of 30 passes for 246 yards with no interceptions and a 101 quarterback rating. This was a huge improvement over the way he had played in the previous two games. It all seemed to turn around when Foles connected with wide receiver Alshon Jeffery on a key 15-yard completion at the end of the first half. The play set up a very important 53-yard field goal by Eagles kicker Jake Elliott.

The Eagles running game wasn't dominant, but it proved to be a factor in the game because it kept the Falcons defense honest and helped the offensive line protect Foles. The Birds ran for 96 on 32 carries, which amounts to about three yards a carry. Ajayi gained 54 yards on 15 carries and LeGarrette Blount rushed for only 19 yards on 10 carries, but he scored on a fourth down sweep, which was a huge play in the game.

The Eagles defense kept pressure on Ryan throughout the contest and was led by All-Pro defensive tackle Fletcher Cox, who had seven tackles, a sack and two tackles for losses. Eagles Pro Bowl safety Malcolm Jenkins also played very well with eight tackles and one tackle for a loss.

Birds Pro Bowl offensive tackle Lane Johnson and veteran defensive end Chris Long put dog masks after the game to point out the fact that this Eagles team was the first number-one seeded NFL playoff team to be an underdog to the sixth seed. I imagine we're going to see thousands of those dog masks at the NFC Championship game because the Eagles are an underdog to the Vikings. I think this football loves to be the underdog because it keeps that big chip on their shoulder, which helps motivate them to prove all of their doubters wrong.



By **Garry Cobb**
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EAGLES EMBRACE UNDERDOG STATUS



Since the beginning of the 2017 NFL season hardly anyone has given the Philadelphia Eagles a whole lot of credit. The team began to improve week-to-week and started to put together a handful of wins. This was all going on despite losing several key players to injuries seemingly one after another. In fact at about the halfway point of the season the Birds had lost their future hall of fame starting left tackle (Jason Peters), their play caller on defense (Jordan Hicks), their special teams captain (Chris Maragos) and their x-factor offensive weapon (Darren Sproles). Yet the team endured.

Not only did they endure the loss of those key players, they endured the constant criticism from the national media that they didn't have what it took to win. They said head coach Doug Pederson would fail them. They said that rising second year quarterback Carson Wentz would soon stumble. They said the defense had too many holes and wouldn't be able to stop the better teams in the league. And yet, they endured. By the time December rolled around the Eagles had the best record in the league and were playing like true champions. And

then the unthinkable happened. Their MVP caliber quarterback hurt his knee and would miss the rest of the season.

They said that was it. They said there was now absolutely no way the Eagles would survive that kind of loss. They obviously weren't watching the same team that we all were watching. You see, this team wasn't built around just one player. This team didn't rest its laurels on the shoulders of just one man. This was truly a team. And as they say, together everyone achieves more. So yet again they endured. The next man up was Nick Foles, and after a good showing against the Giants he looked anything but comfortable in the last two games of the year.

The Eagles finished the season 13-3 and earned the number one seed in the playoffs, and along with the seeding they earned home field advantage and a first round bye. When the number six seeded Atlanta Falcons beat the Rams of Los Angeles, earning a date with the Eagles, they said the Falcons would win. The odds makers believed there was no chance the Birds could pull it out. The Eagles were officially listed as a home underdog. The first

time in the history of the NFL that a number one seed was listed that way. And yet they endured. At times it wasn't pretty. At times it was hard to watch. The temperature and wind combined for a bitter cold evening and yet the fans endured. And together, the Philly faithful cheered on their underdog beloved birds.

And they endured. The Eagles stood their ground and beat the Falcons. Next up is a home game on January 21st against either the Saints of New Orleans or the Minnesota Vikings for the NFC Championship. The winner will head to the Super Bowl. Regardless of who the opponent is, you can bet that the Eagles will once again be listed as a home underdog. And after all that this team has endured, you can bet that they wouldn't want it any other way. After their come from behind win Saturday, All-Pro right tackle Lane Johnson pulled out a German Sheppard dog mask and wore it during the post-game interviews.

This team has embraced the underdog mentality and embraced each other. Even

head coach Doug Pederson brought up the notion after the teams win Saturday. "Since Carson went down, no one has given us a chance," he said. "But every week our guys are hearing the same thing – that we are all of the sudden not good enough. But for me it doesn't matter what I hear. I'll go to bat for every one of them and I'll go to war with them." And really why not? Philadelphia has long been the home of the underdog. One of its most famous icons is Rocky Balboa, truly the epitome of the underdog story.

This town, this team and its fans have no problem fighting as an underdog. If anything it just makes them want to endure just that much more. For this team, that has become second nature. No one can predict the future, but you have to believe that no matter what happens, the Eagles will endure.

Ryan Chadwick
Sports Reporter



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DO WE HAVE HOPE IN FAITH, OR FAITH IN HOPE?

We begin another year, at least by the Julian calendar, so where are you at with the world condition? I am not talking about your job status, political preferences or your financial status, but the world's condition that of course effects all of us at every turn, whether we ignore it or not!

Of course, my perspective is a spiritual one, yet the truth remains that whether one has a Faith in the Lord or not, we are impacted by world events.

How can we overcome the stresses of the world, our nation, our community or even our own families? We have been offered numerous ways to deal, or not deal with life. Drugs, alcohol, meditation, isolation, deflection, the list goes on.

In my personal life I have tried some of these and others, but the only true path I have found and tapped into is God. Specifically, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, God of the bible and the creator of all.

So What Hope do you hold, or What Faith do you have? Do you have some, none? Being a believer that the bible is truth, and the Lord's Words given to us for a blessed life. It is the place to go for understanding and comfort, and to define Hope and Faith.

So, what comes first Hope or Faith, the Chicken or the egg? Romans 5:2 "through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God."

And Colossians 1:23 "if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister." (NASB) The answer to what comes first is both, we need a big dose of both!

We need to be solid in our faith, and that starts with the Messiah Yeshua/Jesus in whom we find the guarantee for all Hope and Faith! The Torah (the bible) says our hope and our strength comes from the Lord, our king.

When we put our faith in the Savior, then we can have Hope for all things that have yet to be. 1 Corinthians 15:54, 57 "When what decays puts on imperishability and what is mortal puts on immortality, then this passage in the Tanakh (*Hebrew scriptures*) will be fulfilled: "Death is swallowed up in victory. 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Yeshua (*Jesus*) the Messiah!" (CJB)

Faith and Hope are linked together, they cannot be separated, then cannot stand on their own, why? If you say you have Faith in the Lord, but no Hope for your future, then you have no Faith.

If you say you have Hope but not Faith in the Messiah, then you have no Hope in who He is and the promises He has made to the faithful! Hope without Faith in the Anointed One is hollow, it would better describe luck, chance or karma.

We have entered a new year of unknown, whether we like it or not. How can this year be different than the prior ones? Faith in our Creator and Hope in His Kingdom promises! Psalm 20:5-6 "Then we will shout for joy at your victory and fly our flags in the name of our God. May Adonai fulfill all your requests.

6 Now I know that Adonai (*Lord*) gives victory to his anointed one -he will answer him from his holy heaven with mighty victories by his right hand." (CJB)

If you need some encouragement for Hope, Faith or any other questions let me know. We are in the neighborhood.

By Rabbi Mark Shulman

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www.bethelgibor.org

Chaplain Captain USAF Auxiliary - CAP
But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:10-11

DO NOT BE AFRAID

We can but imagine the fear and trembling of the shepherds that night when the angel of the Lord appeared to them. They were privileged to receive the announcement of the arrival of the Savior of the world. What an awesome experience.

So peaceful and clear this night
No thought of sudden fright
A night like others would be
Till then, we sought to flee

As angels shown from above
Our hearts in fear did shove
This peace from tranquil rest
True courage, now our test

Do not be afraid, they said
We're here to tell instead
Good news for all to hear
In Bethlehem, so near

For on this day is born
A Promise from days of yore
The prophets then did tell
Of One Who would save from hell

This babe is Jesus by name
God's Son from heaven the same
He comes to redeem mankind
And open eyes of the blind

His life is given for you
To carry the sin you knew
Atonement is now His plan
Through death in the form of man

No fear should you possess
With hope and joy express
Rejoice for the Lord has come
Now join with Him as one

Prayer: "Father, we can't imagine the fear the shepherds experienced that night as Your angel announced the coming of the Messiah. But as the angel calmed their fears and gave them the good news, their hearts rejoiced. Thank You, Father, for the birth of Jesus. Amen."

By Tom Murphy

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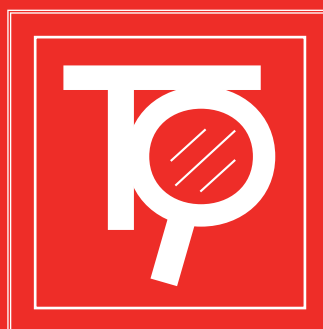
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