



# THE BULLETIN

FLORENCE EXCHANGE CLUB  
THE OLDEST SERVING SERVICE CLUB IN THE SHOALS BEGINNING JUNE 1921



## UNA Football Moves to Division I

The University of North Alabama announces plans to reclassify to NCAA Division I in athletics. The Lions have accepted an invitation to join the Atlantic Sun Conference in all sports except football. The Big South Conference will be the new home for the UNA football program.

This was the topic of Mark Linder, Director of the University of North Alabama Athletics. "The move to Division I will help sustain enrollment, expand our fan base and bring much-needed visibility for this wonderful institution. We're determined to spread the word about the amazing things we have going on at UNA, so if prospective students learn about us from a sports ticker, great! I've said many times that it's "Our Time to Roar" at the University of North Alabama. Our move into the ASUN and the ranks of Division 1 athletics is a powerful way to underscore that message."

UNA will begin its four-year transitional period into Division I in the Fall of 2018. A charter member of the Gulf South Conference and a member of the NCAA Division II since it was formed in 1972, UNA will remain in the GSC and Division II through the 2017-18 academic year.

Thirteen of North Alabama's athletic teams will compete in the ASUN. The UNA football program will compete in the Big South Conference, which formed a football alliance with the Atlantic Sun earlier this year.

"I think this move will be transformational for our university," Linder said. "We really appreciate Ted Gumbart (Atlantic Sun Conference Commissioner) and Kyle Kallander (Big South Conference Commissioner) working together to make this vision a reality for the University of North Alabama. We understand that both leagues are very strong academically and athletically and we want to be an active, engaged and sustained member. We look forward to building relationships with schools in the Atlantic Sun and the Big South."

**UPCOMING PROGRAMS**

May 16  
Club Picnic  
In McFarland Park

May 23  
Robert Beasley

May 29  
Memorial Day

May 30  
Bert Bretherick

<u>2016-2017</u>	
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**Editor Note: The Annual Picnic will be in McFarland Park located on the Tennessee River bank. We will be in Shelter One beginning around 5:30 PM. Vance is cooking good burgers and DAWGS. Many other items are available. Bring your guest(s). Good times for all!**

The Lions have consistently fielded championship-contending teams at the Gulf South Conference, South Region and NCAA Division II national levels. Since 2007, UNA has produced 10 GSC titles, five regional titles and one national championship, winning the NCAA Division II softball championship in 2016.

The North Alabama men's golf team was also the Division II national runner-up in 2008. Overall, UNA has had teams from 12 different sports qualify for NCAA post-season play.

With more than 350 student-athletes, UNA has posted consistent GPA's and graduation rates above the school average. In the Spring of 2016, the departmental GPA was 3.07, representing its highest mark in program history. Since 2007, UNA has had 144 GSC All-Academic selections and nine Academic All-America picks.



Over the last nine years, North Alabama has completed facilities upgrades at Mike Lane Field (baseball), Cox Creek Park (softball) and the Bill Jones Athletic Complex (women's soccer). UNA has also resurfaced the floor at Flowers Hall (men's and women's basketball, volleyball) and constructed a new strength and conditioning weight facility for all sports.

Since 2008, the UNA football program has also averaged more than 10,000 fans at its 41 regular-season home games at Braly Stadium.

Under Linder, the UNA athletic staff has also expanded. Full-time positions of business manager, athletic development, strength and conditioning coach, corporate relations and video coordinator have been added, along with part-time support staff that includes financial aid and academic advisor.

Linder, a native of Gadsden, Alabama, has served on various NCAA and GSC committees. He has also been on the Board of Directors of Listerhill Credit Union and the Shoals Entrepreneur Center.

It's official. Vance is back on the River cooking for our Annual Picnic. Menu calls for hamburgers, cheeseburgers, hotdogs, baked beans, (unknown now about cold slaw vs potato salad), plenty of fixens and cold bottled water. Many members bring dessert. . . Much will be SUGAR FREE.



**One note. . . The Club will meet on May 30, the day after Memorial Day. Our President Bert will introduce his speaker.**