

HOMEWOOD
Chamber of Commerce
BUILDING A STRONGER COMMUNITY

Red Mountain Park
One of the nation's largest urban parks proposed only minutes from the City of Homewood.
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First Friday Arts Festival
Summer ArtFest tour of antique and design galleries.
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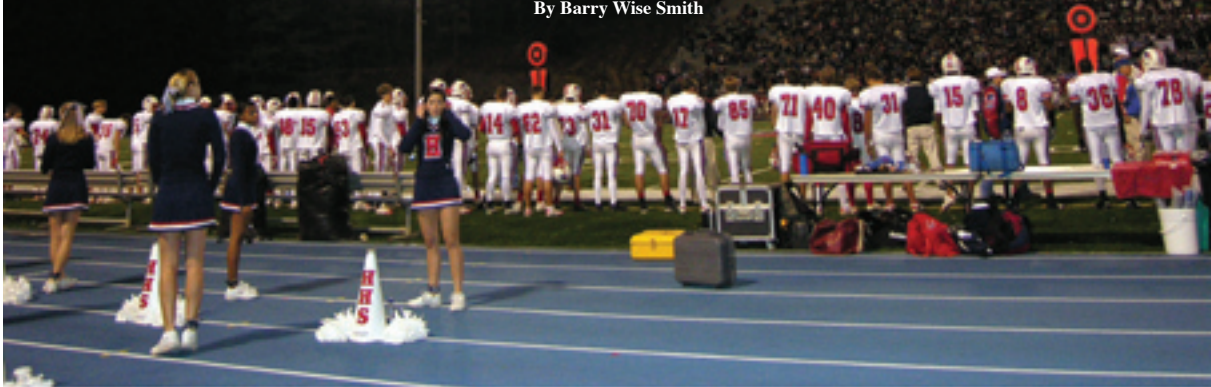
Wi-Fi
Area locations offering highspeed wireless internet access.
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HOMEWOOD TIMES

ON THE GRIDIRON

THE HOMEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL PATRIOTS MOVE TO CLASS 6A IN 2006

By Barry Wise Smith



Photograph by: Sayte McComb

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In the movie *Friday Night Lights*, almost the entire population of a small Texas town turns out each week to cheer the local high school football team. The movie could just have easily been filmed in Homewood. Each Friday night in the fall hundreds of Homewood residents turn out to root for the home team. "The football team is just one of the things Homewood has that brings the community together," says Mayor Barry McCulley, a longtime Patriots fan whose two children graduated from Homewood High School.

For the past five seasons, the Homewood High School Football Patriots have dominated their Class 5A competition, appearing in the Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) playoffs every year since 2000 and winning state championships in 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2005. "We've enjoyed a lot of success," says Patriot Head Coach Bob Newton, who's been at Homewood High School for 30 years, the last 11 as head coach.

But big changes are on the horizon for the Patriots' 2006 season. For the first time since 1999, Homewood High

School will play in Class 6A in the "toughest region in the state," according to Newton. The seven other teams in Homewood's region include Carver, Hoover, Minor, Mountain Brook, Oak Mountain, Spain Park, and Vestavia Hills.

Every two years the AHSAA reclassifies state teams with class being determined by student population in the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades of each school. With Homewood's growing population, the high school's numbers have increased as well. "You're always glad to be in the upper tier of any classification," Newton says.

"To be the best, you have to beat the best."
MAYOR BARRY McCULLEY

"This season is going to be a challenge," he continues. "Each week is going to be a tough game. We're going to have to step up and play our best. Our players are going to have to work hard to meet the challenge."

The players realize the challenge they face playing in Class 6A. "It's one of those steps you don't know if you're ready for until you take it," says rising senior

On the Gridiron Continued on Page 2.