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Clarion Ledger

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2026 | CLARIONLEDGER.COM

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DOUBLE DOUBLE

Booneville head coach Michael Smith tries to calm the Blue Devils in the MHSAA Class 3A State Boys Basketball Championship on March 6, 2021, at the Mississippi Coliseum in Jackson. Smith, who also coaches a girls team for Booneville, is looking to pull off a rare double this season as both programs will be among the favorites to win their respective 3A titles in the MHSAA championships that begin March 5. PROVIDED BY CHRIS TODD

Booneville coach gunning for two titles at once

Michael Chavez
 Mississippi Clarion Ledger
 USA TODAY NETWORK

In a matter of seconds, Michael Smith found his calling.

Smith was a guard on the Northeast Mississippi College basketball team, and the program held a youth basketball camp. He and others spent hours help-

ing kids with drills and fundamentals. But one moment stood out to Smith.

After completing exercises and instructions, Smith began teaching and talking with a camper, Mark Simmons. Smith helped Simmons with a few basketball tricks and tips. It was in that moment when he saw Simmons' face light up with excitement. Smith knew what he wanted to do in life.

"In college, I did not know what I wanted to do and was scared, like, every other kid," Smith said. "There was a kid that I helped at that camp do something, and the kids lit up when you showed them something. You made him believe that he could do it."

Smith, who coaches both boys and girls basketball at Booneville is looking to pull off a rare double as both programs will be among the favorites to

See SMITH, Page 3A

MS data center craze continues

\$750M development announced in Clinton

Ross Reilly
 Mississippi Clarion Ledger
 USA TODAY NETWORK

The data center invasion of Mississippi continues.

The latest announcement suggests a \$750 million investment in a data center will happen in Clinton.

The Board of Aldermen in Clinton have approved an agreement to enter into a Fee-in-Lieu of Taxes (FILOT) deal with an unnamed company at 1001 Industrial Park Drive, where the data center would be located.

Clinton Mayor Will Purdie told the Clarion Ledger that he will issue a separate statement about the issue.

Robert Chapman, Alderman-at-Large for Clinton, in his regular newsletter said, "Clinton Board of Aldermen held a special called meeting to approve the request for a conditional use and dimensional variance for a property in the Clinton Industrial Park as well as to approve a Fee In Lieu of Tax with a company wanting to invest in the Industrial Park area."

The 730,000-square-foot facility, which was built in 1972, was recently renovated, according to Loopnet.com.

This will be just the latest data center for Mississippi as the state gets deeper and deeper into a data center economy that is going to require copious amounts of energy over the next decade.

Just recently, xAI, the American artificial intelligence company founded by Elon Musk, announced a corporate investment exceeding \$20 billion that

See DATA CENTER, Page 3A

War in Iran causes surge in oil prices

Jessica Guynn, Andrea Riquier and Bonnie Bolden

Mississippi Clarion Ledger
 USA TODAY NETWORK

Will war in Iran affect your gas prices in Mississippi? Yes. It already has. But how much and for how long depend on how the conflict plays out.

Last week, oil prices climbed based on fear of war in the Persian Gulf. Benchmark Brent crude oil prices closed at a seven-month high on Feb. 27.

Now, U.S. and Israeli military strikes on Iran could disrupt oil exports from the Middle East. Gas prices jumped early this week.

A disruption to the global supply

could cause prices to keep climbing. Crude oil is about \$76.20 per barrel as of 7:44 a.m. Tuesday, March, 3.

Energy analysts at Barclays have predicted crude oil prices will hit \$100 a barrel "as the market grapples with the threat of a potential supply

See OIL PRICES, Page 2A



Energy analysts at Barclays have predicted crude oil prices will hit \$100 a barrel "as the market grapples with the threat of a potential supply disruption amid a spiraling security situation in the Middle East."

MARK HENLE/THE REPUBLIC

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Volume 178 | No. 4
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