

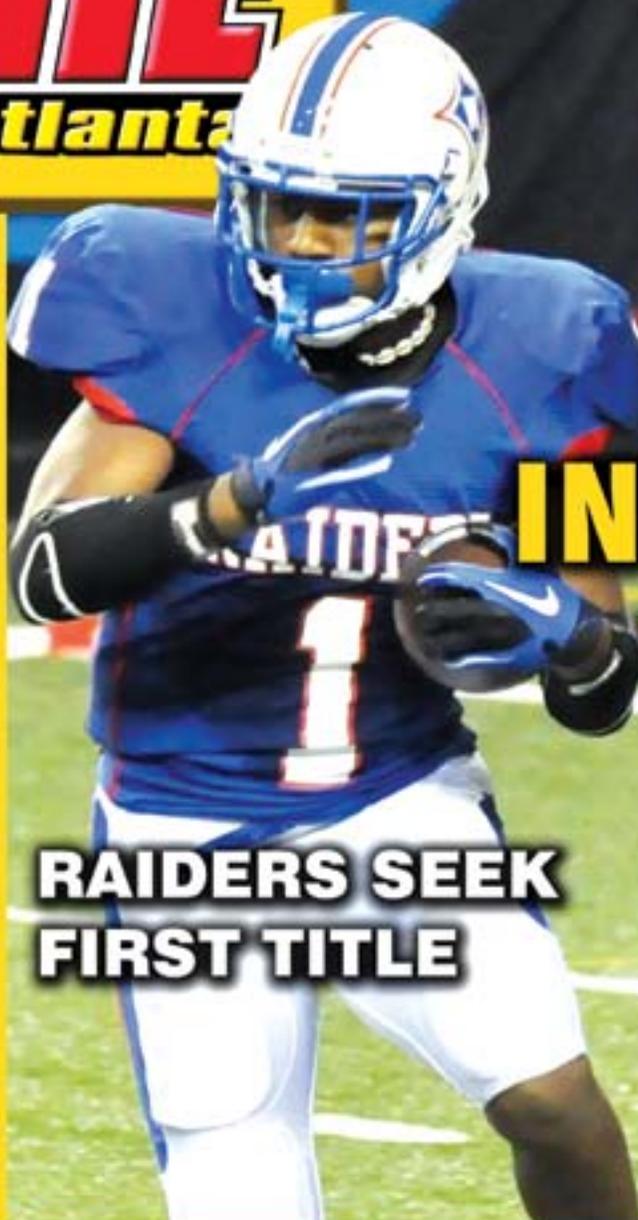
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STAFF WRITERS

Joe McCollum
 Jack Morbitzer

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CAN'T MISS THIS WEEK

- 5** Reporter Scott St. Lifer breaks down the metro Atlanta teams that have a chance to win the state title.
- 7** Fletcher Proctor reviews the state softball and volleyball championships and previews the cross country state meet.
- 10** Our prep beat writers bring you the latest news in metro Atlanta prep sports.
- 12** On the college sports page, our Tech and UGA beat writers look back at each teams' big win Saturday.

**SHOT OF THE WEEK...**

RAMBLIN' REVELRY: Tech fans swarm Grant Field Saturday night after their team's 31-17 win over previously-undefeated Clemson. The No. 6 Tigers saw their national title hopes snuffed by a fired-up group of Jackets who had lost their previous two games. Photo courtesy of Jon Barash.

TEAM SCOOP AND VOICES

COVER DESIGN BY DJ GALBIATI
 COVER PHOTOS COURTESY OF WALTER PINION

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INSIDE AT SCORE

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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL LIVES HERE

THE FLETCH



GPB games enthrall football fans

By Fletcher Proctor



The postseason is nearly here for Georgia high school football, and GPB has been in the key places for region showdowns recently. After being on hand for Grayson returning a late interception to edge Brookwood and win the Region 8-AAAAA crown, GPB TV will be on hand Friday in Suwanee as the Region 7-AAAAA title is settled between North Gwinnett and Peachtree Ridge. Not to be outdone, the GPB webcast saw Alpharetta rally back to beat Centennial and claim the Region 6-AAAAA crown. This week's webcast heads down to Winnersville for Colquitt County battling Valdosta for 1-AAAAA's title. Four loaded games over two weeks on the GPB family of networks.

And if you are into filling out brackets, be sure and catch GPB's bracket reveal this Friday after the North Gwinnett/Peachtree Ridge game on GPB TV and GPB.org/sports.

THE YOUTUBE WAR ...

The Grayson/Brookwood game is always entertaining (this is the second straight year GPB has covered the game), but this year the game was amped up another notch by YouTube. Three Grayson students got together to create a video entitled, "Brookwood, Where You At?" that hit the web and quickly went viral. Naturally, Brookwood responded with its own video just days be-

fore the game that is still circulating the internet. The video war was covered by Score Atlanta, GPB, the AJC, the Gwinnett Daily Post and eventually made its way to the West Coast. American Idol host and Georgia native Ryan Seacrest tweeted to his followers the links to the videos and marveled at how rivalries have changed since he went to Dunwoody High School.

It was interesting to hear how Tony La Russa's World Series victory and immediate retirement will be played out here in Atlanta over the next few months. La Russa's St. Louis Cardinals rallied back to win the World Series over the Texas Rangers in seven games, giving La Russa his second title with the Cardinals and third overall as a manager. La Russa made six World Series appearances, three with Oakland with one win in 1989 and three with the Cardinals. He was a four-time Manager of the Year and finished with 2,728 career wins against 2,365 losses over 33 seasons. La Russa ranks third all-time, just 35 wins behind John McGraw. La Russa also has 224 more wins than Bobby Cox, who retired after last season from Atlanta.

Comparing La Russa and Cox is interesting because both managed in both leagues. Cox is obviously known for his time spent in Atlanta while La Russa achieved World Series victories in both Oakland and St. Louis,

bringing into question his Hall of Fame "hat" decision. La Russa won just 11 division crowns but does have three ultimate crowns to his resume. Cox arguers will say that his winning percentage, is better and he did it in four fewer seasons with just one less trip to the World Series.

COCKTAIL PARTY REACTION ...

Believe it or not, neither LSU nor Alabama appeared in CBS's Saturday afternoon game of the day, as Georgia and Florida competing in the World's Largest Outdoor Cocktail Party took center stage. NOTE: both LSU and Alabama had a bye week to prepare for their epic showdown which was moved to primetime for better ratings. In its first, and likely only appearance on CBS in the Saturday prime slot this year, the Dawgs fell behind early to the Gators, allowing CBS to run through its no-doubt prepared script of how Florida owns Georgia.

Interestingly enough, though, Gary Danielson sounded a bit annoyed by new Gators head coach Will Muschamp after the staff misled CBS on the injury status of several players for the game. I have heard of gamesmanship in terms of not warming up John Brantley with the rest of the team to try and deek out the Georgia defensive coaching staff, but to purposely lie to the CBS announcing crew? That is another example of Will Muschamp perhaps not being ready for the major leagues.

As a person who calls football games on a regular basis and speaks with coaches leading up to the games, I am told all of the time inside information that the coach follows up with "don't let that go until after the game has started." You understand what is on the record that can be discussed leading up to the game or perhaps not at all. Muschamp should have been honest with Danielson about the injury status and just put the embargo on it until after the broadcast had started. This is another example of Muschamp coming off as a crazy person and his leash may be tightening in Gainesville, especially after losing to the Dawgs.

Speaking of the Georgia/Florida coverage, the AJC sent Mark Bradley down to Jacksonville to write about the Dawgs. I wonder if Bradley's pre-written "Georgia Lost; Fire Richt" column went to the same place as those Miami Heat: NBA Champs shirts and hats from this past summer.

Certainly it had to pain Bradley to type, "At this moment, it's almost impossible to imagine Georgia parting ways with this coach anytime soon." Or perhaps that is exactly what Bradley wanted so another one of his favorite bullseyes doesn't leave town. After Paul Hewitt left and Bobby Cox retired, Bradley was running short on column ideas. Good thing Richt might just stick around.

For true college football fans out there bored with the Pam Ward game on ESPNU or another game with Urban Meyer talking about the Big Ten, might I suggest the Southern Conference game of the week every Saturday on GPB TV. Last week No. 1 Georgia Southern's rally against No. 5 Appalachian State fell just short, but the game was exciting and each game has seemingly come down to the wire. The Southern Conference is a part of the FCS, but the football is still at a high quality and fans of Georgia high school football will see plenty of familiar names from the past few years. Give this week's game a chance in commercials of others. You may just become hooked.

Photo courtesy of Rob Saye. Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.

CAN YOU BELIEVE... ...HE SAID THAT?

"They seem to operate better after most have already drop-kicked them into third-tier-bowl oblivion."

That was the AJC's Jeff Schultz talking about the Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets and how, despite the win over Clemson, Paul Johnson's team will likely be home underdogs to Virginia Tech next week. The Jackets crumbled with high expectations and soared when the bar was lowered to the ground. That isn't uncommon for most programs. The best coaches will have the team ready to block out the high expectations and thrive under pressure. We will soon see if Tech is a contender or just a pretender for the ACC crown.



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PREP FOOTBALL



Atlanta area full of championship contenders

By Scott St. Lifer



The time has come again. As we go deeper in the fall, the high school football play-off picture has become clearer. Many teams have already locked up their respective region titles with others still vying for spots. Of the teams who have already clinched postseason spots, only a few truly have stood out above the rest in the metro Atlanta area.

Many of the teams who have a great shot at taking home the hardware come from Cobb County. With teams such as Allatoona, Hillgrove, McEachern and Walton, Cobb could earn its first state title since 1967, when Marietta defeated Columbus 14-7.

THE RAIDERS ...

By defeating Marietta 42-14 on Oct. 28, Walton, ranked fourth in the Score Atlanta poll, clinched its first region title since 2008. A main reason for the Raiders success this season has come from junior running back Tyren Jones and his ability to shred defenses. Through the first nine games of the season, Jones has already racked up 1,530 yards on 217 carries and 22 touchdowns. He also averages 7.1 yards per carry.

"We have always been a run-oriented football team, and he fits well into what we do," stated head coach Rocky Hidalgo, who

has amassed a 22-8 record in two-plus seasons with Walton. "We have not changed what we do to accommodate him. ... He fits really well into what we do offensively and I think he has been a really nice fit there and he has paid huge dividends on Friday nights."

On the defensive side of the ball, the Blaylock brothers – Daron and Zack – have been a nightmare to opposing teams' passing attacks. Zack leads the team with seven interceptions, four of which went for six; both have 50 tackles apiece to lead the team. Come the postseason, this duo could shut down any prolific offense. Both brothers have committed to play for Kentucky next season.

"Their athleticism enable us to some things defensively to take some chances," remarked Hidalgo. "One, they are exceptional tacklers down the open field and with their foot speed. It is hard to make big play on us so I think that is one way we kind of do things defensively that we have not been able to do in the past because of their athleticism."

WAR PARTY ...

McEachern also has a great shot at winning it all by having played a difficult regular season schedule. To open the season, the Indians defeated North Gwinnett 26-17 at the

Georgia Dome in the Corky Kell Classic, followed by winning at Lowndes 20-13 in Week 2. The defeat of perennial powerhouses in the state helped boost McEachern's confidence and experience.

"We intentionally try to schedule some pretty tough opponents early in the season non-region really to help set us up [for postseason play] and we play playoff-caliber teams from around different spots like we will in the playoffs," stated McEachern head coach Kyle Hockman. "[For example], Lowndes and North Gwinnett are both darn good football teams and programs year in and year out. ... I think we know what we are getting into as the playoffs approach. It is going to be exciting."

The one game, however, on the Indians' schedule that truly stands out is the 12-10 loss to Hillgrove. The defeat to the local rivals served as a wakeup call for the Indians. They made a few adjustments that they may not have tweaked had a win occurred.

"We believe that by playing those type of opponents (like North Gwinnett, Lowndes and Hillgrove), you are going to find out what your strengths and weaknesses really," said Hockman. "I think it really forced us to take a good hard look [in the mirror]. When you play those teams like we did early and win, you think well we really do not need to make this adjustment but when you lose a game, it forces you to decide if you need to make adjustments so I think we are much better offensively in our run game and I think our young offensive line really stepped up physically."

The Indians offense has been led by Georgia State commit Trent Thompson at quarterback and wideout Amba Etta-Tawo, a Maryland commit, serves as one of Thompson's offensive weapons. Thompson, a three-year starter, averages around 200 yards passing a game and currently has 18 touchdown passes to four interceptions.

BULLDOGS ARE BACK ...

Gwinnett County has its fair share of teams that could make some noise in the postseason as well. One team in particular is a North Gwinnett squad that has the opportunity to lock up the top seed in Region 7-A with a victory Friday night over rival Peachtree Ridge.

After losing utility player C.J. Uzomah to graduation, the Bulldogs needed to find some offensive pieces to replace him at quarterback and receiver. Quarterback Scotty Hosch has filled in nicely by throwing for 1,900 yards thus far with 15 touchdowns and only three interceptions. At running back, Joe Jones has amassed 801 total yards on the season.

"Scott has had a pretty good year productivity wise at quarterback," said Bulldogs head coach Bob Sphire. "Joe Jones also has played pretty well the past few weeks at running back and our defense has been a collective effort. We have probably been strongest with our defensive front."

Defensive tackle Jordan Washington, who has committed to Mississippi State, leads the team in sacks and tackles for loss. J.D. Dilliard has also stepped up this season by recording 40 total tackles. If anything should be feared come the playoffs, it is the Bulldog defensive front that rotates in around six different players.

FIVE-PEAT? ...

Another team in the metro area that should not be taken lightly in the playoffs playoffs is the Buford Wolves, who seek their fifth consecutive state title and eighth since 2001. On defense, linebacker Dillon Lee, an Alabama commit, leads a defense that allows less than a touchdown a game. In five of the Wolves' games thus far, they have shut out opposing offenses.

Besides Buford, nationally-ranked Grayson also poses a threat come the playoffs. Junior Robert Nkemdiche, who currently has offers from Alabama, Florida, Georgia and plenty of others, anchors the defensive line. Some consider Nkemdiche to be one of the top recruits from the 2013 recruiting class. Nkemdiche leads a defense which allows about a touchdown a game. In last week's game at Brookwood, the Rams did just that by only allowing the Broncos offense to seven points on 185 total yards. The defense helped win the game with Kasey Gaines recording a key pick-six to score the eventual winning touchdown with a minute remaining.

Photo of Buford High School courtesy of Josh Martindale. St. Lifer can be reached at sslifer@scoreatl.com.



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WHOS HOT

THUMBS UP TO
BIG WINS



Georgia's win

The Dawgs exorcised some demons with their comeback victory over Florida Saturday in Jacksonville. The heat is off coach Mark Richt, at least for now. The game was downright ugly at times, but by rallying back from a two-touchdown deficit, these Dawgs showed that they have some fight in them.

Tech's win

Tech's upset over sixth-ranked Clemson was every bit as big a win as Georgia's win. Paul Johnson proved he could right the ship by beating the ACC's best team after two disappointing Yellow Jacket losses. All of a sudden, that Nov. 26 game at Bobby Dodd stadium looks like a lot more fun.

Dumping Derek

General manager Frank Wren decided the Braves would be a better team if they paid Derek Lowe \$10 million to pitch for Cleveland next year. In the process, he admitted that his original signing of Lowe was a mistake. We'll also get to see more of the Braves' promising pitching prospects. Kudos, Frank.

Spending on Sabathia

As the Braves were busy dumping Derek Lowe, the Yankees were busy resigning C.C. Sabathia to a \$122 million deal. They can spend their money how they want, but because baseball's spending system is so imbalanced, it also means that fans of small market teams will continue to suffer through 100-loss seasons.

Georgia Running Backs

Isaiah Crowell, Carlton Thomas and Ken Malcome walk into a bar ... No, there's no joke here, but the top three running backs on the Bulldog depth chart did get themselves suspended simultaneously for "breaking team policies." These guys were irresponsible and selfish at best. Their teammates deserve better.

NBA's lost November

Now, we won't see basketball anytime soon. The player's association and owners acted like they were making real progress in their efforts to resolve the labor impasse. Then, they reverted back to more, "He said-he said." C'mon guys, fans want basketball games, not mind games.



WHOS NOT

THUMBS DOWN TO
SPOILED MILLIONAIRES

SCORE LIST

BY RYAN CAIAFA

- 1** **HAPPY TRAILS:** Braves fans can look forward to a Derek Lowe-free 2012 season after the veteran righty was shipped off to Cleveland on Monday for Class A pitching prospect Chris Jones. Lowe went 9-17 with a 5.05 ERA in a disastrous 2011 campaign for the Braves. It's amazing the Indians agreed to eat even \$5M of Lowe's \$15M contract next season.
- 2** **BACKFIELD IN MOTION:** The bad news is that Georgia will have just a single running back with any extended playing experience on its roster for Saturday's game. The good news is that said game comes against New Mexico State. Isaiah Crowell, Ken Malcome and Carlton Thomas are all suspended due to positive drug tests. Richard Samuel is out with an ankle injury. It won't matter against the Aggies.
- 3** **OIL CHANGE:** A road game against the Colts is not what it used to be. It's not even what it was expected to be when the Falcons' schedule was released earlier this year. Peyton Manning, of course, is out with a neck problem and previously-formidable Indianapolis can't even win at Lucas Oil Stadium. The Colts are dead last in the NFL at 0-8 as Atlanta pays a visit on Sunday afternoon.
- 4** **TECH VS. TECH:** Georgia Tech is off this weekend and will have plenty of time to prepare for another night game on the Flats. The Ramblin' Wreck is back in the thick of the ACC race after pounding highly-ranked Clemson 31-17 last Saturday. On Thursday, the Jackets will go up against Virginia Tech and the winner will have the inside track to capture the Coastal Division crown.
- 5** **PLAYOFFS!?:** To quote Jim Mora, Sr., "We're talkin' about playoffs?" Yes, in high school football, we most definitely are. Georgia Public Broadcasting will be covering the final regular-season action on Friday night, which includes a pair of Class 5A showdowns: Peachtree Ridge vs. North Gwinnett and Colquitt County vs. Valdosta. After the games are over, the brackets will be revealed!

CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS

BY RICKY DIMON

- 3** Mark Richt's wins over Florida (in 11 tries) after last Saturday's 24-20 victory
- 4** Sacks for UGA's Jarvis Jones last Saturday, tied for 2nd most in school history
- 1** UGA running backs active for Saturday's game that have played this season
- 22** Times Georgia Tech has scored 30 points in a game under Paul Johnson (21-1)
- 17** Consecutive seasons Georgia Tech has now finished .500 or better in ACC play
- 6** ACC Coastal Division titles (out of six) combined for by Ga. Tech and Va. Tech
- 131** Point differential through eight games for the Colts, Atlanta's Sunday opponent
- 20** Falcons are 4-0 when Michael Turner rushes more than 20 times, 0-3 when fewer
- 5** Dollars, in millions, the Indians are willing to pay of Derek Lowe's 2011 \$15M contract
- 0** Number of Gold Glove Awards won by the Braves, announced on Tuesday

TRIVIA QUESTION

With its wins over Florida and Tennessee this season, Georgia did something it has not done often. When was the last time the Bulldogs defeated both the Gators and Vols in the same season?

Answer on Page 14

SANITY AT LAST

"Virginia Tech now views us as the team that beat the No. 5 team in the country. So I would say that they certainly see our team as a significant threat to them and will prepare accordingly and therefore, it's important that we do likewise."

- Georgia Tech defensive coordinator Al Groh on the Virginia Tech game.

MY TWO CENTS

How fun is high school football in metro Atlanta? A week after Grayson and Brookwood put out youtube videos to hype their much-anticipated football game, Stephenson has produced one as well. With the No. 3 Jaguars facing arch rival No. 7 M.L. King Friday night, it is safe to say tensions are high in Stone Mountain.

With the Grayson-Brookwood videos getting thousands of hits and high-profile attention (Dunwoody native Ryan Seacrest tweeted about them), I think it is safe to say we'll be seeing a lot more of this in the future. And that is a good thing for high school football as long as these things stay fun and good-natured.



But it isn't just the music that's fun. Last weekend, GPB broadcasted two very exciting metro clashes. The television game was a defensive struggle between the Rams and Broncos as a late Grayson pick-6 won the game. The webcast was also a classic. Alpharetta trailed North Fulton rival Centennial 26-3, but staged a dramatic comeback to win 32-26.

Look forward to more great games and off-the-field hype during playoff season. And remember that GPB will broadcast a game each week of the playoffs on both the web and TV.

Black can be reached at sblack@scoreatl.com.

SCORE

PREP



FIVE-PEAT!



Fall sports season nears the end

By Fletcher Proctor

The football playoffs are nearly here but plenty of other sports are playing out across the state and several titles have already been decided. The cross country region championships recently took place throughout the state and the drama was high in several events.

ON THE TRAILS ...

In the Region 7-5A boys race, Josh Brickell barely edged out Eric Westog and Mitch Flammang of Mill Creek. The Peachtree Ridge standout won with a time of 15:58. Mill Creek took home the title though, beating Norcross by two points. The Peachtree Ridge girls won the 7-5A event by placing four runners in the top 10 overall. Brookwood showed that it will be a program to be reckoned with in the state championships as both the boys and the girls won Region 8-5A. Morgan Malanoski beat teammate

Matthew McClintock to pace the Broncos. The Lady Broncos received a one-two finish from Caroline Kissel and QuanDra Shanks to beat out Parkview. Other programs that won both region championships included North Hall, St. Pius X, Milton, Harrison, Wesleyan and Westminster.

ON THE COURTS ...

Volleyball enthusiasts witnessed some incredible title tilts at Marietta High School last week as Pope, Walton, ELCA and Sandy Creek all won GHSA titles. Eagles Landing Christian won its first title in a thrilling five-set match. Greater Atlanta Christian won the fourth set 27-25 and was up 13-9 in the final frame, but ELCA's Mara Green rallied to score the final six points of the match. Green finished with 29 kills and 13 blocks. Sandy Creek pulled off a 3-0 sweep of St. Pius X in the 3A final.

In the two higher classification championships, Walton and Pope each extended a championship streak as the Raiders won their second in a row while Pope won its third straight. The Raiders needed five games to dispatch Harrison, the first time Walton needed even a fourth set in these playoffs. Katherine Plessy and Jessica Sloan helped Walton build an early lead in the decisive set before Kelly Murphy helped finish off the Hoyas. Murphy finished with 24 kills and will now head off to the University of Michigan to play for the Wolverines.

Pope easily won the first set in its Class 4A title showdown with Whitewater before the Wildcats turned up the pressure on the defending champion Greyhounds. Whitewater took the second set and held a lead in the third but Pope righted the ship to win its second straight 4A crown, third overall title. Katie Bange and Mary Hannah Arrington were nearly unstoppable this season and Hange racked up 24 kills against Whitewater. Both seniors will play volleyball at the next level.

ON THE DIAMOND ...

On the softball diamond in Columbus,

teams with a pedigree seemed to have an advantage. Buford found itself in the loser's bracket Friday night, needing three victories to win its fifth straight title. The Wolves exploded for nine runs against Blessed Trinity before taking down Pike County twice. Buford twice rallied from five runs down to best Pike County 11-10 in game one and won 12-2 in game two. Kallie Case and Lexi Overstreet came up big for Buford throughout the tournament. Case hit four home runs and Overstreet knocked out five.

Collins Hill won its third straight title thanks to a gutty pitching performance from Kayla Floor. The senior won all four of her starts in the state tournament. Gordon Lee also repeated by taking out Wesleyan 6-1 in Class A.

Oconee County was back in the Class 3A title game after missing out the last three seasons and the Lady Warriors made up for lost time, edging West Laurens 2-0 for the crown. Finally Northgate needed extra innings but knocked off Whitewater 4-3 in eight to win the 4A title. Northgate also won the crown four years ago.

Photos courtesy of the GHSA. Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.



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PREP SOFTBALL



Buford, Collins Hill repeat as champions

By Scott St. Lifer

Buford made history in its victories over Pike County by winning its fifth consecutive state championship. The Wolves set a new state record in fastpitch and tied the Pope teams of 1999 to 2003 for most all-time by winning five straight.

BUFORD BULLIES ...

Buford had its fair share of bumps in the road in the tournament. The Wolves first hit adversity in a nail-biting 3-2 loss to Pike County in a shot to reach the championship game unblemished. This did not deter the experienced Wolves, led by seniors Kallie Case and Lexi Overstreet. The very next day Buford stormed back to defeat Blessed Trinity in a 9-1 elimination game, when the Wolves hit six homers to reach the title game against Pike County in a rematch of the previous day.

Again, the Wolves seemed like they would fall at the hands of the Pirates but then the offense started rolling. After trailing by five late in the first game, the Wolves stormed back to top Pike County 11-10. With the momentum gained late in the first game, Buford dominated the second game by winning 12-2 under the mercy rule. In the championship game, Case came through by knocking two homers to lead the Wolves. Overstreet also hit

a homer to give the Wolves 17 for the championship round.

EAGLES SOAR ...

Collins Hill stormed back to defend its Class AAAAA title, despite having a new coach and banged-up squad. The Eagles' former coach, Billy Dooley, left Collins Hill to take the same job at North Oconee resulting in longtime Eagles baseball coach Paul Pierce taking over the softball squad. Also, for most of the season senior pitcher Kayla Floor played through a leg injury and missed approximately a month of time. When it came down to it, Floor, a Georgia State commitment, played through the pain and came through and beat the odds.

In a rematch of the Region 7-AAAAA championship, Floor led the way for the Eagles against Mill Creek. She ended up pitching a complete game in the 6-4 victory over the Hawks. After giving up a two-run homer to Mill Creek's Nikki Sagermann in the first, Floor started to settle in. Brittany Roley helped spark the offense by having an RBI single and run scored while McKenzie Halstead hit a two-run single to provide some insurance.

St. Lifer can be reached at 404-256-1572.

PREP CROSS COUNTRY



Atlanta programs sweep regions

By Ricky Dimon

The Brookwood boys look poised to win their third straight state championship after dominating the Region 8-5A Championships last Saturday. They compiled a near-perfect score of 18 points, taking seven of the top eight individual places. Morgan Malanoski won the race with a time of 16:04, seven seconds ahead of teammate Matthew McClintock.

While Brookwood also prevailed on the girls side, it did so in much different fashion. The Broncos edged Parkview 31 points to 32 and their one-two finish from Caroline Kissel (19:03) and QuanDra Shanks (19:35) was just enough to clinch victory.

In Region 5-3A, St. Pius X accomplished the same feat as Brookwood by sweeping the two competitions. Racing at Mercer University last Saturday, the Golden Lion boys were led by Austin Sprague (first place, 16:46) and Calvin Tirrell (third place, 17:05). The girls got a second-place performance from Devon Dabney (21:37) and a third-place finish from freshman Tessa Schwarze (21:52) to take the title with just 23 points. Woodward, whose Hannah Fleming won the girls race, finished runner-up in both events.

Westminster's boys sent a message last Thursday in the Region 6-2A meet at Buford that they are on a mission for their fifth

straight state title. The Wildcats placed all five of their point-scorers in the top 10 overall to win by more than 40 points over runner-up Lovett. Jordan Flowers of Westminster beat out Decatur's Joey Ronca by 34-hundredths of a second to capture top individual honors.

On the girls side, Westminster appears ready to win its third state championship in a row. The 'Cats lifted the region trophy by putting four runners in the top 10, including first-place finisher Sahara Fletcher with a time of 20:00.

STATE MEET ...

Other metro Atlanta schools heading into the state meet with plenty of momentum after sweeping their region championships include Harrison (Region 4-5A) and Wesleyan (Region 5-A). The Hoya girls scored a mere 18 points while the boys edged Kennesaw Mountain 46 points to 48. The Wolves took both titles with ease and boasted individual champion Bradley Gossett.

All five classifications will hold their respective state championships on Saturday at Carrollton. Action will begin with the boys 2A race at 8:30 a.m. and end with the girls 4A competition at 3 p.m.

Dimon can be reached at rdimon@scoreatl.com.

PREP FOOTBALL



Dalton's winning streak in jeopardy

By Fletcher Proctor

The Dalton Catamounts' streak of 51-straight seasons with a winning record appears to be coming to a close. The GHSA recently ruled that Dalton used an ineligible player in several games earlier this season. Dalton was forced to forfeit four victories, dropping its record from 6-2 to 2-6. The school appealed the decision, but it was unanimously denied after a two-hour deliberation. According to the Dalton Daily Citizen, an administrator from Southeast Whitfield first brought questions to the GHSA over the eligibility of Corey Smith, a former Southeast Whitfield player who transferred to Dalton.

Several programs clinched their first-ever region titles last week and several more have a chance to this week as well. Alpharetta, which made the playoffs for the first time in school history last year, rallied to defeat Centennial 32-26 last Friday to clinch the region crown. Hillgrove also won its first region title with a victory last week. The Walton Raiders won their first region title since 2008 with a thumping of Marietta in Raider Valley last Friday night. The Raiders' Tyren Jones scored four touchdowns in the win.

It may not be a region title, but Archer moved into a position to make the playoffs for the first time in school history after stomping

Parkview 40-16. The Tigers received a huge effort from Ernest Alexander, who ran for 227 yards and four scores.

COFFEE SUBSTITUTE ...

When Coffee quarterback Will Gardner went down in the first game of the season with a ruptured ACL, plenty of folks thought the Trojans' playoff chances went out the window. Not many teams can withstand losing the state's top quarterback prospect and still advance to the postseason, however that is exactly what the Trojans have done in Region 1-AAAAA with Santory Long under center. Coffee went 5-5, and 2-2 in region play, including a 22-17 win over Valdosta to punch its ticket to the playoffs.

Perhaps lost in Lovejoy's defensive dominance is the incredible season being compiled by running back Travis Custis. The back rushed for 269 yards and three scores on 31 carries against Creekside. He had four touchdowns several weeks back at the American Football Classic in the Georgia Dome. Meanwhile, Lovejoy's defense has posted four straight shutouts and has seven on the season.

Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.

PREP VOLLEYBALL



Pope seniors win third straight title

By Joe Deighton

The seniors from Pope finished a dominant run with a win over Whitewater to claim a third straight state championship. The success of the team throughout the past four years is due in large part to right hitter Katie Bange and outside hitter Mary Hannah Arrington. Bange led the Greyhounds against Whitewater with 24 kills. Arrington led the team with 473 kills this season.

Both of the outgoing seniors will be playing volleyball in college. Pope's seniors not only were the best players on the team, they were also the leaders. "One of the best things about having seven seniors on this team is the support system the girls have for each other," said head coach Bryan Jones. "They are all supportive and vocal at different times."

To put Pope's four-year run in perspective, the Greyhounds won a staggering 196 out of 205 matches since 2008.

CREEK CRAZY ...

Sandy Creek won each playoff match by winning every set, and the Class 3A state final against St. Pius X was no different. Senior setter Kalya Weller had a team-high 30 assists. Seniors Akeila Lain and Kalah Jones

combined for 18 kills in the 3-0 (25-20, 25-20, 25-1) win. Lain is headed to play for North Florida, while Jones will be playing for Clemson next season. The state championship was Sandy Creek's second in the last four years.

RAIDER ROMP ...

Walton had a relatively easy run to the Class 5A championship match. The Raiders ran through the playoffs without dropping a game until the title match against Harrison. The Hoyas pushed the Raiders to the brink, as each team went back-and-forth through the first four sets. In the fifth set, Walton went on a four-point run to gain a 7-3 lead. Sophomore Jessica Sloan and senior Katherine Plessy combined for three blocks in the set that swung momentum and ultimately gave the Raiders the championship 3-2 (25-19, 20-25, 25-19, 21-25, 15-9). Senior outside hitter Kelly Murphy was spectacular throughout the match, finishing with 24 kills. Murphy will be playing volleyball next season for the University of Michigan. This is the second straight state championship for Walton.

Deighton can be reached at jdeighton@scoreatl.com.

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PANTHER PROWL



Panthers lose in OT in San Antonio

By Dave Cohen

There's nothing else to say other than it was a very disappointing loss in San Antonio to the first-year program at the University of Texas-San Antonio last Saturday. The Panthers had a great opportunity to continue to build momentum following the win over South Alabama but could not hold on losing in overtime to the Roadrun-

ners 17-14 after leading most of the game. Georgia State took a 14-0 lead in the second quarter on a 24-yard touchdown run by Donald Russell followed by a 56-yard touchdown pass play to Albert Wilson. For Russell, it was his ninth touchdown of the season. But UTSA kept chipping away in the fourth quarter and finally scored

a touchdown and converted a 3-point conversion to get to within three at 14-11. Sean Ianno tied the game at 14-14 with a 39-yard field goal with only 24 seconds remaining in regulation. In overtime, after Georgia State missed its field goal attempt, Ianno came out and drilled a 39 yarder to give them the win. "UTSA is a good team, but this is a very disappointing loss because we just kept making mistakes and shooting ourselves in the foot," said Georgia State coach Bill Curry. "We've got to be able to run the ball when we need to, even if the other team knows we're going to run it, and we didn't get that done." It's also disappointing because it ensures that the Panthers can finish no better than 5-6 if they win their final three games. "This one definitely hurts because we had

it in our grasp," said outside linebacker Jake Mue-sau, who finished with a game-high 10 tackles and an interception. "We have to learn from this and move on." Georgia State's next game is November 5th when they face NAIA St. Francis in the Georgia Dome. Kick-off at 2:00 p.m. ET (Listen on WCFO-AM 1160 and WMLB-AM 1690).

Georgia State basketball opens the regular season on November 12 at Washington in the first game of the World Vision Classic in Seattle. The field includes the University of Washington, Florida Atlantic and Portland State. (WRAS-FM, 88.5)

Dave Cohen is in his 28th season as the "Voice of Georgia State Athletics" on WRAS-FM (88.5) and WCFO-AM, Newstalk 1160.



BULLDOG BEAT



Dawgs suspend three after Florida win

By Stephen Black

What is that old proverb about not being able to stand prosperity? Just days after getting the 1,000-pound gorilla named "Florida" off their backs, the Georgia Bulldogs suffered a major blow. Due to violations of team rules, running backs Isaiah Crowell, Carlton Thomas and Ken Malcome will all miss the New Mexico State game Saturday.

"We have certain standards in all that we do and their actions do not reflect the Georgia way," said head coach Mark Richt. "They will serve their suspensions, learn a lesson and I'm sure be better men for it."

It has been reported that the trio failed a UGA-administered drug test.

Running back Richard Samuel IV will also not be available for the New Mexico State game after injuring his ankle in the Florida game. Samuel underwent surgery Tuesday morning and will be out about four weeks. The Cartersville native damaged ligaments in the last play of the game.

This leaves Brandon Harton and walk-ons Wes Van Dyk and Kyle Karempelis to man the running back position for the Bulldogs Saturday. Fullback Zander Ogletree will also get a chance to tote the rock. Also, players from other positions such as Brandon Boykin, Brandon Smith, Damien Swann and Nick Marshall are other possibilities according to offensive coordinator Mike Bobo.

COCKTAIL STARS ...

Everyone knows by now that the Dawgs beat Florida 24-20 Saturday. But there were some overlooked facets of the game that need to be discussed.

Samuel came off the bench to lead Georgia in the fourth quarter by spearheading a punishing ground attack. After the off-injured Crowell left the game, Samuel rushed 17 times for 58 yards and scored the game-winning touchdown. He also helped clinch the game with a first-down run in the late stages of the contest.

Todd Grantham's defense was spectacular, especially in the second half. Led by Jarvis Jones' four sacks, the Junkyard Dawgs hit Florida quarterback John Brantley six times behind the line. Georgia held the Gators to just 12 yards in the second half after giving up 214 in the first half. It should also be mentioned that the Bulldogs stop troops held Florida to field goal attempts or punts three times in the first half despite the Gators having field position at the Georgia 26 or better.

And don't forget wide receivers Tavarres King and Michael Bennett making sensational fourth down touchdown grabs over Florida defenders.

Black can be reached at sblack@scoreatl.com.

TECH TALK



Yellow Jackets get much-needed bye week

By Thomas Watson

Georgia Tech heads into the bye week preparing for its biggest game of the season. The Yellow Jackets will play a Thursday night game on ESPN for the 19th consecutive season when they welcome Virginia Tech to Bobby Dodd Stadium this coming Thursday. Tech is 5-0 at home and will look to stay unbeaten on home soil for the first time in 12 years with only Georgia left on the schedule.

CONFERENCE OUTLOOK ...

Ranked No. 22 heading into the bye week, the Jackets (7-2, 4-2 in the ACC) will look to draw even with Virginia Tech in the ACC Coastal standings. The Hokies are 4-1 in conference play and a victory could all but clinch a spot in the ACC championship. A Yellow Jacket win would draw them even in the loss column with Georgia Tech holding the tiebreaker.

The Tech players know they have a lot to play for, and Coach Paul Johnson relayed a story that displayed just that, "Our guys are excited about playing. Roddy Jones talked to the team and he goes 'Hey guys, we've still got a chance to win 10 games or 11 games. There's a lot to play for.'"

RECENT RIVALRY ...

When Virginia Tech and Miami joined the ACC, it seemed the two would be destined to battle for a spot in the championship game more often than not. While Virginia Tech has held up its end of the bargain, Miami has yet to make a title game. The Hokies have won the division four of the six years of its existence with Georgia Tech representing the other two years. Barring an improbable run by Virginia, it seems like the two Tech schools will continue their run of dominance, with the victor of this game likely moving on to face Clemson in the ACC championship.

The Hokies will bring their ACC-leading scoring defense to try and stop Tech's running game, ranked No. 2 in the nation. The Tigers attempted to keep the ball in Washington's hands in the option game, and Washington broke a school record for rushing yards by a quarterback. The Hokies, just like the Yellow Jackets, have a bye week prior to the game.

Watson can be reached at twatson@scoreatl.com.

HAWKS HAVEN



Ownership deal hits "significant" snag

By Josh Bagriansky

When Los Angeles-based businessman Alex Meruelo agreed to purchase the Hawks from the Atlanta Spirit Group in August, he referred to the deal as a "definitive" agreement. However, that was assuming the deal garnered approval from the NBA Board of Governors, who must approve all sales of teams before they can become official. Now, nearly three months after Meruelo and ASG came to terms, sources close to the situation claim the deal is by no means a sure thing. In fact, the Atlanta Journal Constitution reported last week that the deal has hit a "significant snag."

Multiple sources, including the AJC and ESPN's Marc Stein, have reported that the Board of Governors, which must vote 75 percent in favor of the deal for it to go through, have recently raised concerns regarding whether Meruelo has the finances to run the team. In fact, Stein reported that the collapse of the deal had been mentioned amongst the board when they met last week in New York City to discuss the current NBA lockout.

Many initially pointed to the ongoing lockout as a reason for the slow movement of the process. But that may not be the case, as the sale of the Philadelphia 76ers was ap-

proved unanimously in October.

Still, Meruelo was full of assurances for Hawks fans and insisted that the deal will be approved.

"I have more than ample resources to purchase and operate the Hawks in a first-class manner," he said in a statement released last week. "I am committed to the purchase of the Atlanta Hawks. While I can't comment on the details of the approval process, I have and will do everything I can to bring the process to a positive conclusion."

HALLOWEEN HOOPLA ...

Despite the current lockout keeping them off the court, the Hawks continued their work off of it in their annual Halloween Hoopla at Philips Arena. The Hawks hosted the event alongside the Children's Restoration Network and HOPE Atlanta. Over 300 kids from the area attended the event, which included 13 different stations featuring games, entertainment and food.

Members of the Hawks organization, including members of the cheerleading team, were also in attendance to join in on the fun.

Bagriansky can be reached at jbagriansky@scoreatl.com.

FALCONS FLIGHT



Win at Detroit brings enthusiasm

By Sean Conway

What a difference a few weeks makes on the outlook for an NFL team. After weeks one, three and five, the Falcons had a losing record. Before a well-earned road win at Detroit, they appeared to be floundering with a 2-3 record. Now, eight weeks into the 2011 season, Falcons fans can finally begin to think about playoff possibilities.

The Falcons have won two straight games, have had a well-needed, almost perfectly timed bye week, and trail the NFC South division-leading New Orleans Saints by just a half game. Atlanta has two games against the Saints remaining and play at the seemingly hapless, Peyton Manning-less Indianapolis Colts on Sunday. Things are looking up.

ON A HIGH NOTE ...

The Falcons went into the bye week on a high note by beating the upstart Lions 23-16, and in the November portion of the schedule, have a chance to put their playoff stake firmly in the ground.

The Falcons seemed to have figured some things out after the consecutive victories over the Carolina Panthers and the Lions. They have found a happy medium between the running game and the passing game, and the defense is has improved as a result of improved pressure on the opposing quarterback. In the three Falcons' losses, running back

Michael Turner never carried the ball more than 16 times. In their four wins, Turner has carried the ball at least 21 times. He rushed for 114 yards or better in three of those games.

On defense, the improved pass rush is hampering opponent's passing game. Free agent defensive end acquisition Ray Edwards and linebacker Sean Weatherspoon each have two sacks in the last three games. Corey Peters had a sack in Detroit and an interception at the line of scrimmage against the Panthers.

INJURY REPORT ...

Wide receiver Julio Jones will likely play at Indianapolis Sunday. His hamstring seems to be healed, and his presence should continue to impact the way the Colts' gameplan defensively. Fullback Ovie Mughelli was placed on the injured reserve over the break and is out for the season. He will be replaced by former Georgia Tech fullback Mike Cox. Cox is the older brother of Lucas, who impressed Falcons coaches in preseason camp.

Left tackle Sam Baker is struggling with a lower back issue. The Falcons have added veteran Kirk Chambers to provide depth at tackle. Will Svitek will start in his place for the second consecutive game.

Conway can be reached at sconway@scoreatl.com.

CHOP SHOP



Braves deal Lowe, drop McLouth

By Fletcher Proctor

The Atlanta Braves will have a different look in 2012 after dealing Derek Lowe and opting not to resign outfielder Nate McLouth. Braves GM Frank Wren shipped Lowe to Cleveland for minor league pitcher Chris Jones. The Braves will also send the Indians \$10M to help cover Lowe's \$15M salary for 2012. The team also opted not to pick up McLouth's \$10.65M option, but did pick up the option of Eric Hinske.

KIMBREL LOVE ...

All-star closer Craig Kimbrel picked up a few nice accolades from The Sporting News last week as the right hander was honored as the NL rookie of the year. Kimbrel set a new rookie saves record with 46 while closing out a league-high 64 games. The all-star posted a 2.10 ERA and struck out 127 batters in 97.2 innings of work. The year was highlighted by a stretch of 38 straight games of scoreless work. It was the second straight year a Brave has won the award after Jason Heyward claimed the honor one year ago.

The next day Kimbrel and catcher Brian McCann were both named to TSN's NL All-Star roster. The Braves were one of three National League teams with two players on the list.

HITTING COACHES ...

The Braves announced the hiring of not one, but two new coaches to help out with the team's hitters. Greg Walker was introduced as the hitting coach after spending the last eight-plus seasons with the Chicago White Sox. Walker said in his introductory interview that he was "thrilled to be a part of the Atlanta Braves family." The new hitting coach is a Georgia native who grew up a Braves fan. "It's a lifelong dream to be a part of the Braves organization."

Wren noted that the team's list of replacements for Larry Parrish started at over 20 names before Wren whittled it down to five with three candidates receiving interviews. Walker was interviewed second. Wren also alluded to a new philosophy for Atlanta. "We will change the model with our approach to hitting," said Wren during the interview.

The change is bringing on Scott Fletcher as Walker's assistant. He will also serve as an in-house advance scout, a trend that manager Fredi Gonzalez said is happening right now across all of baseball.

Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.

GWINNETT GLADIATORS



Scoring early benefits Gladiators

By Joe Deighton

The Gladiators are now 5-2-1 after a win over the Florida Everblades 3-2 on Tuesday night. Forward Joey Haddad put Gwinnett ahead for good with a late third-period goal. Rookie Tyler Helfrich scored the first goal of the game. The young forward has two goals and five assists in six games this season. Goalie Jeff Jakatis picked up his third win and stopped 27 out of 29 shots. The first-year Gladiator ranks third in the ECHL with a 1.76 GAA. Gwinnett might want to score first in every game, as the Gladiators are 4-0-0 when scoring the initial goal this season.

CLACKSON MOVED ...

Forward Chris Clackson has been on the road a lot this year. He was added to the Gwinnett roster back on Sept. 27 after playing last season with Greenville and Cincinnati. On Oct. 21, the 24-year old was loaned to the Rochester Americans of the AHL. After just one game with Rochester, in which he recorded one shot-on-goal, he was called back to Gwinnett on Oct. 26. Clackson has played six games for the Gladiators, posting one goal, two assists and 20 shots-on-goal.

WEATHER ISSUES ...

The Gladiators were supposed to play in Reading, Pa. against the Royals last Saturday afternoon, but the game was postponed due to the massive snow storm that hit the northeast and knocked power out for the better part of the Reading area. Gwinnett was able to make the game up on Sunday and they took advantage of the extra day of preparation by picking up a 2-0 win. It was the first shutout of the season for Jeff Jakatis, who has 10 total clean sheets in his professional career. Andy Brandt scored the second goal for Gwinnett, it was the 49th goal in his career as a Gladiator.

THIS WEEK ...

The Gladiators lead the ECHL's South Division, as well as the Eastern Conference with 11 points, one point ahead of division-rival South Carolina. Gwinnett will entertain Reading and Toledo this weekend. This will be the first of three meetings in the next two weeks against the Toledo Walleye, who have just four points this year. Gwinnett can build on the division lead with three wins against a Toledo team they should beat.

Deighton can be reached at jdeighton@scoreatl.com.

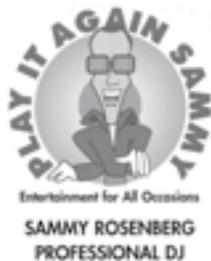
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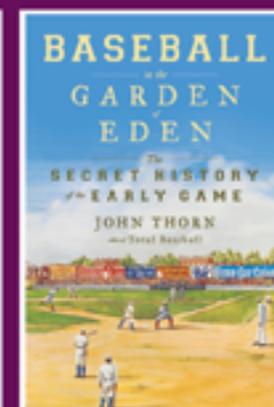
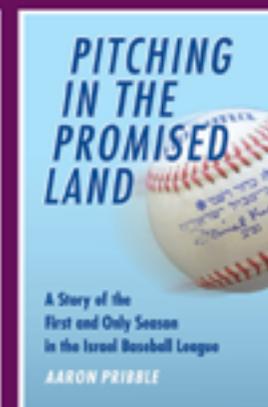
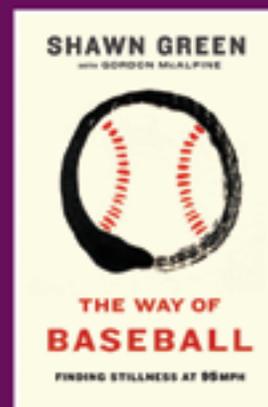
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