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CAN'T MISS THIS WEEK

4 The return of the Dimon Club is here! Ricky discusses an odd twist in the Falcons' schedule.

5 In this week's cover story, Fletcher Proctor honors the career of John Smoltz.

7 We break down the transfer scandal at Shiloh in our prep cover story.

10 We have a Dream! The debut of this year's Atlanta Dream column.



TEAM SCOOP AND VOICES

COVER DESIGN BY DJ GALBIATI
 COVER PHOTOS COURTESY OF BUSINESS OF SPORTS SUMMIT
 AND THE ATLANTA BRAVES ARCHIVES

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INSIDE AT SCORE

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SHOT OF THE WEEK...



DAWG FIGHT: Georgia quarterback Christian LeMay fumbles as he tries to escape the grasp of linebacker Kostas Vavlas in the annual G-Day game Saturday at Sanford Stadium. The Red team defeated the Black team 32-31. Photo by Rob Saye.



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THE FLETCH



Atlanta market attractive for Sun Belt

By Fletcher Proctor

At the recent Business of Sports Summit, Georgia State athletics director Cheryl Levick gave a few details behind Georgia State's decision to leave the CAA for the Sun Belt in 2013. She noted all of the benefits for Georgia State in terms of increased revenue and an easier travel schedule, but also said that Georgia State University was incredibly attractive for the Sun Belt. The conference has members in Denver, Miami and the outer reaches of Dallas (Denton), but the opportunity to move into Atlanta was what brought the Sun Belt to the table. Georgia State's football team will be eligible to move up to FBS for the 2013 season with postseason opportunities in 2014. "When we looked at (moving),

we did consider the city of Atlanta. It was a driving force," said Levick.

Georgia State's football and basketball programs have made big strides over the last calendar year. Ron Hunter took the basketball team to a postseason tournament after Bill Curry finished off a second football campaign. Both coaches took their respective Panthers to appearances on ESPN's family of networks, and with the Sun Belt being one of 11 FBS football conferences, opportunities for major television are sure to increase.

BASEBALL COVERAGE ...

The baseball season is back, and that means more radio wars by the two sports sta-

tions in town. 680 The Fan is the home of Braves baseball, so we will be beaten over the head with everything Braves from now until October. Braves closer Craig Kimbrel will make a weekly appearance on Buck & Kincade while Chuck & Chernoff will host their show from Turner Field each home game. Speaking of Chuck & Chernoff, the last 20-30 minutes of their show will be hijacked by Braves talk leading into the Braves pregame, which starts more than an hour from first pitch.

And in an effort to make you forget about the Braves, 790 The Zone will beat you over the head with football talk, football talk and MORE football talk. 790 The Zone is the home of the Falcons as well as Georgia Tech, but sometimes it would be okay to reference some baseball without the Mike Bell nerd accent. Just so you know, some people that are big football fans also enjoy baseball, too. Wasn't sure if you were aware.

I have enjoyed some of the Braves television broadcasts thus far this season. It was interesting to have Dale Murphy in the booth for a game recently, and it will be a treat to hear more from him as he adjusts to his role

as guest commentator. Tom Glavine is also quickly becoming a fixture in the booths, so much that I'd like for that to become permanent. Glavine has a fine sense of humor that he is starting to share with the listener while not constantly reminding you that he was a 300-game winner and knows the sport better than everyone else. It is so easy to just plug a former athlete into a booth, but it is rare that you find one that takes to it as quickly as Murphy and Glavine have.

IN MEMORANDUM ...

Since our last paper, Ernie Reese passed away 38 years after becoming one of the first African-Americans to cover sports for a major Southern newspaper. According to a story by the AJC's J.E. Geshwiler, Reese worked with the Atlanta Constitution for 29 years, earning 11 state and national awards including the 2004 National Association of Black Journalist' Sports Pioneer of the Year award. Reese covered some of the metro's smaller universities and colleges as well as high schools.

Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.

THE DIMON CLUB



National TV to feature Falcons 4 times

By Ricky Dimon

When you play 16 games in a season, every single one matters. This isn't Major League Baseball, where you go for 162 in a single year. Nor is this the NBA and NHL, where an 82-game slate is par for non-lockout campaigns. This is the NFL, and the importance of each contest is a big reason why the annual schedule release is treated with fanfare not seen by any other professional sport.

I SEE A PATTERN ...

Before we get to whom the Falcons play and when they play 'em, one thing jumps out about Atlanta's 2012 schedule: the Birds alternate road and home games the entire way. That's right; they go away, home, away,

home, away, home, away, home, etc. from start to finish. I'm not sure that has happened before for any team ever. What I do know is that this year—not surprisingly—the Falcons are the only team that will alternate 100 percent of the time. It's basically the exact opposite of Sean Payton's 2012 itinerary, which goes bye, bye, bye, etc. from Week 1 through Week 17.

The nation will get to watch Atlanta four times starting with a Week 2 Monday Night Football showdown in the Georgia Dome against Peyton Manning and the Denver Broncos. The other primetime home game will come against the Payton-less Saints on Thurs., Nov. 29 as the Falcons look to avenge

a pair of tough 2011 losses to their division rivals. Away dates on national television include a Sunday night trip to Dallas on Nov. 4 and the team's second appearance on "Monday" Night Football (a Saturday edition) on Dec. 22 against Detroit. That's an impressive amount of time in the limelight, especially for a team that underachieved last year and made little to no offseason noise.

With Manning and the revamped Broncos coming to town, you can be sure fans have already circled Sept. 17 on their calendars. So, too, has wide receiver Roddy White. "Monday night football week 2 I'm loving it," White posted on Twitter shortly after the schedules were released on Tuesday.

We're all lovin' it. I mean, it's hard to complain about four primetime appearances, enticing home games (including a Dec. 16 date with the Super Bowl champs), a likely clash against Heisman winner RG3 (at Washington on Oct. 7) and another rematch with Michael Vick (this time in Philadelphia on Oct. 28). Now, if we could just get a few more wins than last season....

HOPE FOR HAWKS ...

As usual, the Hawks have flown under the radar all season long. NBA talk focuses on

whether or not Miami will finally get it done, if the Lakers and Spurs still have enough gas left in the tank, if Derek Rose can stay healthy, if the Knicks can win a playoff series (or two, or three, or four) and if the Thunder are the team to beat. That leaves no time to discuss a team as boring as the Hawks.

They may be boring (relative to, say, Lob City), but watch out for these Hawks. Atlanta has quietly compiled a 36-25 record and is in good shape for the No. 5 seed (tied with Orlando as of Wednesday but owns the tiebreaker and has an easier schedule). Sure, that is nothing more than the norm for the Hawks, but it's especially impressive that they have done it almost entirely without Al Horford. Although Horford and Zaza are hurt at the moment, both could be back for the playoffs with Horford having been recently cleared for contact.

Just as importantly, every other Eastern Conference squad has question marks. Rose is constantly injured, the Heat are inconsistent and facing a ton of playoff pressure, Indiana is...Indiana, and Boston is old. Are the Hawks great? Heavens no. But are they good enough to do some serious damage in the East playoffs? Absolutely.

Dimon can be reached at rdimon@scoreatl.com.



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SMOLTZIE HONORED



Braves retire legendary pitcher's No. 29

By Fletcher Proctor



“I always wanted to be clutch,” said John Smoltz in a conference call.

For 20 seasons the Atlanta Braves seemingly could always turn to John Smoltz for a crucial playoff start or to close out an elimination game. Earlier this week Braves president John Schuerholz announced that the team will retire Smoltz's No. 29 in a ceremony on June 8, when he will also be inducted into the team's Hall of Fame.

Smoltz addressed the media after Schuerholz's announcement, taking time to give plenty of credit to his former teammates and managers. “I'm truly honored to be with the likes of some of those numbers on the wall (out in left field).”

Smoltz spent 21 years with Atlanta, going 210-147 over 20 seasons while also racking up 154 saves with the team. The 1996 Cy

Young award winner represented the Braves in eight trips to the All-Star game. He rang up 3,011 strikeouts with Atlanta while posting a 3.26 ERA. After returning from an injury during the latter part of the 2001 season, Smoltz went on to become of the game's most dominant closers, a position he would hold for three more seasons. He recorded a league-high 55 saves in 2002. For his career he twice led the NL in wins (1996, 2006), strikeouts (1992, 1996), innings pitched (1996, 1997) and three times led the league in starts made (1992, 1997, 2006).

“John has contributed so much to Atlanta Braves history. Inducting him into our Hall of Fame and making sure no one else will ever wear his No. 29 are the most meaningful and significant ways we can honor John,” Schuerholz said in a release

of the second-winningest pitcher in post-season history.

HISTORY OF 29 ...

After June 8, no one will ever wear No. 29 again for the Braves, but originally Smoltz wasn't even donning that number himself. When he first came to the Braves, he sported No. 57 under Chuck Tanner. Later it was switched out to the iconic 29. “I was just given No. 29. It wasn't a superstitious thing.” Smoltz admitted that he tried to switch several times, trying to get a number that he could achieve in number of wins. “I had (29) forever, and it stuck.”

Early on in 29's career he struggled some, especially the first half of 1991. “Struggle is not new to me. I used it as a stepping stool to the next level.” After a 2-11 start to the year, Smoltz caught fire, as did the Braves. Smoltz won 12 of his next 14 decisions as Atlanta eventually made the World Series. “The poor start was one of the few times in life where I lost focus on what to do.”

Smoltz credited Bobby Cox for sticking with him in the rotation and leaning on him, just a 24-year old at the time. “Bobby was the reason I made the choice to stay with Atlanta every time.”

The right-hander said that every time his contract came up, he thought about playing for Cox and with the Braves, and he tried to work out a way to stay with the team.

FULL CIRCLE ...

“So many things happened to me and for the best,” said Smoltz when looking back over his career. Smoltz is the only pitcher in Major League history that can boast 200-plus wins and 150-plus saves. He accomplished nearly all of those numbers with Atlanta, many of the wins coming alongside friends Tom Glavine and Greg Maddux.

“I've had some of the greatest teammates and the greatest manager in the game. I can't think of what life would have been like without those guys.”

From 1991-1998 either Glavine, Smoltz or Maddux captured all of the Cy Young awards save for 1997. Those three helped Atlanta to five World Series appearances and the

1995 title. With all of those memories, how will Smoltz approach June 8?

“I won't know if it will be emotional until that day,” said Smoltz. “I never really thought about big games until on the mound. Probably (it will be emotional), but it will be a lot of fun too.”

The ceremony will take place in June as the Braves wanted as many alumni as possible to attend and Smoltz had to find a weekend he could make it when he didn't have a TBS game to call. Since his retirement, Smoltz has become one of the best color commentators and analysts in the business, working with Peachtree TV, TBS and MLB Network. He is also writing a book entitled “Starting and Closing: Perseverance, Faith and One More Year,” which is due out this spring.

Recently Smoltz was inducted into the Georgia Hall of Fame, a real honor he said as he knows he will spend his life in the state of Georgia. Smoltz said that throughout his career he never took time to ponder the Hall of Fame, leaving that for teammates and fans. He will join several of those teammates in Glavine and Maddux on the number wall and in the Braves Hall of Fame. Perhaps another former teammate, Chipper Jones, too, will have his number up there in the near future.

For the time being, Smoltz will be the ninth Brave to have his number retired, joining Glavine (47), Maddux (31), Cox (6), Hank Aaron (44), Eddie Mathews (41), Dale Murphy (3), Phil Niekro (35) and Warren Spahn (21). The team also retired Jackie Robinson (42) as did all of Major League Baseball. Perhaps another party will be in order for Smoltz in 2014. Braves fans are keenly aware that in two years, he will be eligible for Major League Baseball's prestigious Hall of Fame in Cooperstown.

For now, though, Braves fans will have the chance to head out to Turner Field June 8 to honor a man who took the ball anytime it was handed to him, regardless of the situation, and gave it his all. “That is what this is all about,” said Smoltz of the chance for a proper sendoff. “I had such respect for all of (the Braves employees and fans). I have so many friends.”

Photo of John Smoltz courtesy of The Atlanta Braves archives. Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.

WHOS HOT

THUMBS UP TO BUBBA FROM BAGDAD



Bubba Watson

If the PGA is entering the post-Tiger era, then the golf world has got to love the personality and preposterously long drives of Bubba. The UGA graduate is unique, from his pink driver to his refusal to hire a teaching guru to manage his game. Welcome to the big time, Bubba.

Chipper in the lineup

When Chipper Jones is in the Braves' lineup, the Braves are simply better. Jones has already proved clutch when healthy with home runs in two of his first three games. While he won't be playing anywhere near 150 games, pitchers will continue to pitch around him.

NFL Draft

The draft is like another opening day for the NFL. And nowhere are people better suited to enjoy projecting how college players will play at the next level than here in the hub of SEC alumni, Atlanta. Pop the corn and get out the keg-erator.

Janoris Jenkins

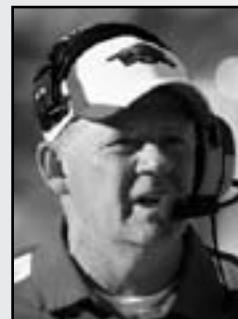
It's never fun to call out a college kid, but SEC fans remember Jenkins as a prized Florida recruit years ago. The highly-touted cornerback got kicked off the Gators' campus for excessive marijuana use, but kept blazing it up at North Alabama. He'll get drafted high in the NFL draft next week, but let's hope his NFL career doesn't go up in smoke.

Chipper out of the lineup

Without Chipper in the Braves' lineup, manager Fredi Gonzalez has a lot less to work with. Having a respected switch hitter in the middle of the order affects the way opposing managers juggle their bullpen. Jones' discipline at the plate is also a great example for younger hitters like Tyler Pastornicky and Jason Heyward.

Bobby Petrino

It's almost too easy to pile on the former Falcons' coach. But the fact of the matter is he is leaving Arkansas like he left Atlanta, in worse shape than when he arrived. The fallout from his indiscretions may or may not be immediate, but it's coming. Bye-bye, Bobby.



WHOS NOT

THUMBS DOWN TO TWO-TIME LOSERS

SCORE LIST

BY BRIAN JONES

1 DRAFT TIME: Now that the combines, Senior Bowls and mock drafts are over, it's time for the NFL Draft to begin and Thursday marks not only the first day of the draft, it also marks the start of the 2012 season. For the Falcons, they won't start picking until Friday because they don't have a first-round pick. Who do you think the Falcons take with their second-round pick? Dwayne Allen? Brandon Boykin? Trade up? Trade down?

2 RELEASE THE SKEDS: Speaking of the 2012 NFL season, the schedules were released on Tuesday and the NFL is showing the Falcons a little national love. The Falcons will have four nationally-televised games including an early Monday night contest with the Denver Broncos on Sept. 17 and a Sunday night battle with the Dallas Cowboys on Nov. 4. But the one thing that caught my eye is the Falcons don't have back-to-back home games or back-to-back away games.

3 HONORING SMOLTZ: It was announced earlier this week that the Braves will retire John Smoltz's No. 29. He will also be inducted into the Braves Hall of Fame at Turner Field on June 8 before the Braves face the Toronto Blue Jays. Smoltz has spent nearly his entire career with the Braves and is the only pitcher in MLB history with at least 200 wins and 150 saves. If you are a true Braves fan, save the date and make it to the Ted to honor one of the greatest pitchers of all time.

4 PLAYOFF FACTORY: The Hawks have clinched a playoff spot and they now have to focus on winning their final regular season games to gain momentum. If the playoffs do start now, the Hawks would face Boston in the first round. The C's are a tough opponent, but the Hawks always seem to play at high level every time they go up against Paul Pierce and company. If the Hawks do face the Celtics in the first round, it could be a very compelling series because of the history between the two teams.

5 UFC DOES ATLANTA: If you're a UFC fan, then you have to be glad that UFC 145 is coming to Philips Arena on Saturday. You also have to be excited that the main event for UFC 145 is for the Light Heavyweight Championship between Jon Jones and Rashad Evans. This will be the first time since 2008 that the UFC has hosted an event in Atlanta. And oddly enough, the main event for that night was Evans against Chuck Liddell. Should be a fun night!

CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS

BY FLETCHER PROCTOR

- 1** Point, the margin of victory for the Red team over the Black team at Georgia's G-Day
- 2** Home runs by new Brave Juan Francisco despite just 19 at-bats in nine games
- 3** Teams to ever win five straight games after losing four to start the year after the Braves pulled off the feat
- 4** Games on national television for the Falcons this season
- 5** Games against playoff teams from one year ago for the Falcons: Saints (2), Giants, Broncos, Lions
- 6** Appearances for Kris Medlen, the most of any Braves reliever thus far through 12 games
- 7** RBIs for Chipper Jones, tops on the team despite playing in just six games
- 8** National titles for Tennessee under Pat Summitt, who stepped aside Thursday
- 9TH** In points scored this season, Josh Smith. He has tallied 1153 points in 2011-12
- 10** Projected defensive players that have committed to UGA's 2013 recruiting class

TRIVIA QUESTION

How many numbers have the Braves retired and what are they?

Answer on Page 14

SANITY AT LAST

"I'm glad we got that behind us. Now we have got to keep fighting until the end of the season and try to position ourselves to get a good spot in the postseason."

- Hawks guard Joe Johnson on clinching a playoff berth.

COACH'S DIARY

New Centennial football coach Jeffrey Carlberg is quickly putting his fingerprints all over the Knights program, and he has invited Score along for the ride during his first year at the helm. Here are highlights from last week.

Welcome back from Spring Break. We have resumed our daily morning strength workouts as well as our afternoon speed and conditioning routine. The break was nice but it is time to get back to work.

There are only a handful of weeks left in school and several events will take place in a very short time frame. Last week we made arrangements for Centennial's Equipment Distribution Day, which was held last Saturday. We also began installation



plans for spring practice, which begins April 26.

Last week I also met with our Junior Knights Program to go over plans for its equipment distribution in preparation for the Junior Knights' spring practice.

I took part in plenty of meetings last week, ranging from meeting with the football board to discuss budget to meetings about last minute registration as well as a budget meeting with our umbrella club.

This Saturday some members of the team will receive a free high school sports physical at North Fulton Hospital. The hospital is offering the free physicals to schools across Fulton County. For more information, check out our new website www.centennialknightsfootball.com.

SCORE

PREP



**ITS MARIST-PIUS
FOR AREA TITLE**



SHILOH'S SHAME

Shiloh under investigation over transfers

By Fletcher Proctor

Under the GHSA BY-LAW 1.72 (c) "A student-athlete transferring from one member school to another shall be ruled ineligible for one year because of "undue influence" if it is proven that the player who played for a coach at a former GHSA school followed that coach when he/she moved to another GHSA school. (This is not applicable to dependent children of the coach.)" The by-law is included under the Recruiting/Undue Influence section of the Student Certification of Eligibility.

Transfers take place every year in Georgia high school sports, and while many are due to families legitimately moving for jobs or hardships, some cases draw the attention of the GHSA. The slippery slope that is transfer eligibility always seems to have one or two cases a year that perk up people's eyebrows, and recently a situation at Shiloh High School came to the forefront. Coach Brian Montgom-

ery went 2-8 in his first season at Shiloh after coming to the Gwinnett program from North Atlanta. Following the season, Shiloh quarterback Wil Larimore wrote an article for the AJC, in which he admitted that he and several teammates were asked by Montgomery to transfer, a direct violation of By-Law 1.72 (c).

INVESTIGATION ONGOING ...

A GHSA spokesperson revealed that an investigation is ongoing but would not comment on it any further. GHSA executive director Dr. Ralph Swearngin will be handling the investigation according to the governing body, but he is out of town until Monday and unable to comment.

In recent cases involving eligibility/transfer issues wins have been stripped by the player's new team. Once such instance was with the Milton boys basketball program this

past season. Three wins earned by the Eagles were later forfeited, though Milton did win the 2011-12 Class AAAAA state title. Interestingly enough, Mann was ineligible for the championship game following an ejection during the playoffs. Shiloh could be stripped of its two wins from one year ago, though the GHSA would not comment on that possibility.

Montgomery has been moved by the Gwinnett County Public Schools to another position in the school system, and, according to spokeswoman Sloan Roach in a piece by the AJC, the district will be recommending his non-renewal to the Board of Education at its April 19 meeting. A message left for Roach was not returned at press deadline.

PROPER PROTOCOL ...

Not all transfers need investigating, however. In many cases, the transfer is legitimate and a player is eligible immediately. Lassiter head football coach Jep Irwin spoke with Score about how the process is supposed to play out. "A new student's family contacts the school administration to set up enrollment," said Irwin. "You have to be both eligible as a

student as well as an athlete in order to play."

Irwin noted that the administration receives records verifying the student's history and it is also up to the family to ensure that all records are properly transferred and eligibility guidelines are followed. "We (myself and my coaches) don't initiate any contact whatsoever because that would be a violation," said Irwin. The Lassiter coach attends several meetings a year where rules, such as one involving transfers, are explained in detail to coaches.

While Irwin did not want to comment on the Shiloh situation specifically, he did say that he hopes it can serve as a wake up call for all coaches. "You need to be aware of what's going on in your program."

Transfers can certainly be a sticky situation if the by-laws are not followed to the final detail. The GHSA will soon make a ruling on the Shiloh situation, and it will be interesting to see if an example is made of the program in an attempt to scare other programs straight.

Photos courtesy of Deirdre Graf and Jon Barash. Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.

LACROSSE NEWS



Cats lose; Marist-Pius vie for title

By Stephen Black

State girls Class A-AAAA No. 1 Westminster took its first loss of the season in a 17-4 loss to Victor (N.Y.) in Buckhead on Wednesday (rankings courtesy LaxPower.com). Victor is ranked No. 22 nationally by LaxPower.com. The loss ended the Wildcats' 17-game winning streak. However, Westminster (12-1) rebounded to dominate Pope (9-3) Friday 16-3. Eve Knapp led Westminster with six goals, while Caroline Heys tallied five and Ansley Walker scored three. The Wildcats will travel to face No. 8 Kell Tuesday and Class AAAAA No. 2 Lassiter Saturday.

MORE THAN A GAME ...

Marist and St. Pius X each put together winning streaks to make their matchup on Wednesday for all the marbles in Area 4-A-AAAA. Both squads were undefeated in the area before the game, putting each more than two games ahead of the next team in line,

Lakeside-Evans.

While the rivalry is a big deal to both schools, neither coach was focused in on just winning the rivalry game when interviewed recently by Score.

"For us, beating St. Pius and winning the area is important, but our goals are the state tournament," said Marist coach Kelly Mandy. "And the area championship gives us the best chance in the tournament. Beating St. Pius is just the icing on the cake."

Mandy's counterpart at St. Pius X agreed to an extent.

"The area title is always important," said Voorhees. "But Marist-Pius is always a great rivalry in every sport."

NEW AND NOTES ...

The Class A-AAAA No. 3 Chattahoochee boys edged No. 9 Blessed Trinity 8-7 in overtime Saturday to win their eighth straight

game. Sophomore Ben Corrigan scored the game-winner in the extra period. Quentin Johnson scored twice for the visiting Cougars (12-2), while Tommy Stanton and Grayson West each had two assists. Chattahoochee is now 5-1 in Area 3, while the Titans fell to 7-3 (4-1). On Tuesday, the host Cougars dominated Wesleyan 17-2. Stanton, a sophomore, scored three goals.

The Class A-AAAA No. 1 Lambert boys dominated McCallie (Tenn.) 14-6 Saturday as Cory Phillips and Brady Wilson each had three goals. Kyle O'Donnell was 21 of 24 on faceoffs, scored a goal and had three assists.

The Class A-AAAA No. 8 Holy Inno-

cents' girls scraped by No. 15 Lovett 15-13 on Thursday. Junior Leslie Espenschied scored a game-high nine goals for Lovett.

Area play will be done by May 4, clearing the way for the state playoffs, which begin May 8. Semifinals will be played on May 16, and the finals will take place May 19.

Milton is hosting its lacrosse summer camps for girls rising into grades 2 through 9 from June 4-7 and June 25-28. Both beginners and experienced players can sign up. For more information, go to www.MiltonGirlsLax.com or contact LadyEaglesLax@yahoo.com.

Black can be reached at sblack@scoreatl.com.

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GYMNASTICS NEWS



Stephens leads Lakeside to county title

By Stephen Black

Lakeside-DeKalb won its 17th DeKalb County championship Monday as sophomore Meg Stephens took the all-around title and four gold medals at Dunwoody. The win by the Vikings ended a three-year run by the Wildcats.

Lakeside tallied a 98.225 as a team while Dunwoody finished with a 93.950. Southwest DeKalb (74.175) made a major improvement from last year, as it finished fourth this season after taking seventh last year. Tucker (84.75) captured third and Arabia Mountain (72.6) finished fifth.

Stephens scored a 34.175 to edge Oksana Carey of Dunwoody, who totaled 33.3 points. Lakeside's Linsey Bergstrom came in third with 31.85. Last year's county champion, Camille Cassar of Arabia Mountain, came in fourth with a 31.450.

Stephens won medals in balance beam, floor exercise and uneven parallel bars. Her 9.025 score on the floor exercise was the best of the meet.

Lakeside has the most county championships in the history of the event, while Tucker has nine and Dunwoody and Redan each have seven.

EAGLES SOAR ...

Milton scored 100.55 in winning a Thursday meet against Westminster, Roswell, Lambert and Pope. The host Wildcats came in second place with 96.7 points, Roswell took third with 93.2 points, Lambert finished fourth with 73.65 and Pope tallied 68.05. The results may be misleading as Pope had just three gymnasts compete, while Lambert brought only five to Milton's 12 and Roswell's nine. The overall individual winner was Paige Drehoff of Lam-

bert, who totaled 36.35 points. Milton's Dani Antunez took second place with 33.5 points.

NEWS AND NOTES ...

Alpharetta won a meet at Westminster on Monday night by scoring a 107.4. The host Wildcats finished second with 95.3 points while Johns Creek took third (91.6) and Northview fourth (76.6).

The gymnastics area qualifiers will be held this weekend at Lovett and will feature three sessions. Session 1 will begin Friday at 5:45 p.m., Session 2 begins Saturday at 9:45

a.m. and the third session will commence shortly after the second finishes. ... One of Roswell's top gymnasts, sophomore Lauren O'Connell, is out for the season with back problems. ... Forsyth Central defeated West Forsyth in a dual meet Saturday 98.2 to 95.7. Forsyth Central gymnast Elena Campfield won the all-around with a combined score of 33.6, while teammate Kristina Kinneer came in second with 33.1 points and West Forsyth's Abby Kabo took third with 32.8 points.

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SOCCER NEWS



Walton takes down No. 1 Lassiter

By Brian Jones

The regular season for soccer is coming to an end and the top teams are making that final push to gain some momentum heading into region tournaments. One team that is riding high is Walton, the defending boys state champs in Class

AAAAA. The Raiders had a rough start to their season, losing three of their first four games and suffering five overall losses, more than they had in all of last year.

But the Raiders are 6-0 in Region 5-AAAAA play and they got biggest win of the season last Saturday when they took down Lassiter 1-0. Grant Crosskey scored early in the second half and the Raiders' defense did the rest by shutting down a Lassiter offense that averages 3.5 goals per game.

"We struggled at the beginning and had some tough losses, and to come out 1-nil against a team like Lassiter is fantastic," Walton coach Bruce Wade told the Marietta Daily Journal. "The boys have done well — have had to battle when we had to battle. It was a fantastic game." The Raiders have clinched the No. 1 seed in the region tournament.

Another boys team that has clinched a top spot in a region tournament is Lambert, the No. 1 team in AAAA. The Longhorns are 9-0 in Region 7-AAAA and, as of this past Wednesday, have only surrendered five goals in 15 games. They are currently ranked No. 16 nationally in the ESPN FAB 50 Rankings.

Head coach Heath Hinton has been impressed so far with his team's performance and expects it to continue its solid play at state. "The players have done a great job with a very tough schedule," Hinton said. "All 10 players have been instrumental in winning key matches that have resulted in an undefeated regular season and a current 21-0 record."

LEAD HORSES ...

The Broncos follow the lead of their No. 1 singles player, Mark Guentert, and their No. 1 doubles pairing of Matt Jones and David Brown. Guentert is a four-year starter for the varsity squad but is in his first season playing in the top spot on the roster. He has stepped up to the challenge and has utilized his experience to help him succeed against the toughest players on each opposing team. Hinton, when talking of Jones and Brown, simply said, "They play very well together." That may be an understatement considering the duo has gone undefeated on the season, taking down every top doubles team on the way.

Going into the state tournament, Brookwood will look to remain undefeated and cap off this incredible season with a state title. While a perfect season is certainly a possibil-

KEEP ON ROLLING ...

The Milton girls team has been virtually dominant all season long. After losing to St. Pius X a month ago, the Lady Eagles have won their last five games by a margin of 27-1. The Lady Eagles had a huge matchup on Thursday when they took on No. 2 Walton. Results were not available at press time.

"Our girls varsity team has had a great start to the season, and as we come down the stretch we definitely have some tough challenges ahead of us," Milton community coach Philip Broome said told the AJC earlier this month. "Coming into the season we wanted to schedule high-level, quality teams to prepare us for our difficult region schedule and tough playoff opponents."

SQUEAKING BY ...

The Mill Creek girls traveled to Roswell Tuesday to face No. 6 Centennial looking to spring the upset. Mill Creek earned the 3-2 upset victory thanks to a 5-4 advantage on penalty kicks. Lauren Tanner posted two goals in regulation for the Lady Hawks.

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ity, Hinton is making sure his team remains focused on the task at hand each step of the way through the tournament.

"We hope to win our state tournament matches one point at a time and not look ahead," Hinton said. "The draw will be tough from the beginning and we cannot afford to worry about how far we can go until we get there."

While the goal is to take the title, the Broncos are focused on winning each point in each match, and if they can do that, the title will come to them in the process.

Challengers to the Broncos include No. 2 Walton (12-1), No. 3 Westlake (10-0) and Gwinnett County neighbor Collins Hill (17-2). Alpharetta (13-4), the 2010 champ, is lurking at No. 4.

RAIDERS RULE ...

The Walton girls extended their winning streak to 156 matches with a victory in the Region 5-AAAAA championship. The girls all played great and were very excited to win the region championship," said head coach Christy Page. "With such a young team, it felt great to accomplish that goal."

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APR. 26th
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TENNIS NEWS



Broncos boys searching for repeat

By Robby Kalland

The No. 1 Brookwood boys tennis team has been able to compile a very impressive 21-0 record this season, including a Region 8-AAAAA title (ranking according to Prep Country). The team has met every challenge handed to them on and off the court this season and will be a force in the state tournament.

DREAM NEWS



WNBA drafts, prepares for new season

By Joe Deighton

The Atlanta Dream enter the 2012 WNBA season as one of the favorites to win the league championship. After winning back-to-back Eastern Conference titles, the team hopes for a third shot at a WNBA championship this year. A big part of the success has been the play of forward Angel McCoughtry. In last year's finals, McCoughtry set a championship series record of 38 points in Game 1 against Minnesota. Point guard Lindsey Harding was the best overall player last year. Harding led the team in assists with 5.9 per game in the playoffs, along with a 14.5 scoring average. Harding and McCoughtry will be looked at for offensive production again this season.

NEW ADDITION ...

The WNBA Draft was held on Monday and with the 14th overall pick, Atlanta chose

guard Tiffany Hayes out of the University of Connecticut. Hayes comes from a Connecticut program that has produced some of the greatest womens basketball players in the world. The 22-year-old is looking forward to joining a winning team with championship experience.

"I am very excited to join the Atlanta Dream," Hayes said. "They have reached the WNBA Finals the last two seasons and have a talented roster with a great player in Angel McCoughtry. Hopefully, I can be a complementary player and bring some versatility. I can't wait to come into training camp and do whatever they need me to do to make the team better."

Hayes comes to the Dream with a ton of accolades. She was part of two NCAA championship teams, the Huskies in 2009

and 2010. At Winter Haven High School in Florida, Hayes garnered All-State First-Team honors as well as being named a McDonald's All-American in 2008. In 2011 and 2012, the 5-foot-10 guard was named to the First-Team All-Big East team. Hayes averaged 14.8 points, 5.8 rebounds, 3.3 assists and 2.3 steals per game in her senior year last season. She ranked in the top 10 in the Big East in three-point and free-throw percentage, steals and scoring. Hayes should give Atlanta an extra boost off the bench and may even start depending on how well she plays early on. What is certain is that Atlanta picked up a steal at pick No. 14.

The Dream had a third-round selection as well, and with the 32nd overall pick Atlanta chose 6-foot-4 center Isabelle Yacoubou out of France. The only problem with taking Yacoubou is that she was ineligible to be drafted under WNBA rules. The rule states that an international player must be drafted in the year in which they turn 20. Yacoubou is 26. Yacoubou was not going to play this season anyway due to international commitments to the French national team. She could sign as a free agent next season, but for now, she will not play for the Atlanta Dream.

BALES RETIRES ...

Center Alison Bales has retired after four

seasons in the WNBA. Bales joined Atlanta midway through the inaugural season of 2008 and averaged a little over four points per game in her career. The 6-foot-7 center has decided to attend medical school to pursue her dream of being a physician.

"I want to thank everyone in the Atlanta Dream organization as well as the entire city of Atlanta for giving me some of the best memories of my career," said Bales. "While basketball will always be one of my passions I have decided that it is time to pursue my other goal. I will soon be applying to medical school in order to begin the exciting yet arduous process to become a physician."

SEASON SCHEDULE ...

The Dream will start the 2012 season with an exhibition game against Tulsa on May 5 at Philips Arena. The regular season will get underway two weeks later with an Eastern Conference Finals rematch with the Indiana Fever. The Dream won the series with the Fever 2-1 last year, so look for Indiana to come out with revenge in mind. After the road opener, Atlanta will return home for four games against New York, Chicago, Phoenix and the Fever again. The early group of home games should give the Dream a chance to start fast.

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THE BUSINESS OF SPORTS



Local sports leaders speak at summit

By Fletcher Proctor



Some of the biggest names in professional sports came together Friday as the Atlanta Business Chronicle and the Atlanta Sports Council produced the Second Annual Business of Sports Summit at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Atlanta. Nearly 450 people made their way to the summit to hear from the likes of Greg McGarity, John Schuerholz, Rich McKay and Mark Lazarus.

Atlanta Business Chronicle publisher Ed Baker emceed the festivities and opened up the morning by introducing each panel and keynote speaker. He noted that attendance had increased by 30 percent and by more than 100 guests from last year.

Dan Corso, the executive director of the Atlanta Sports Council, also spoke at the outset of the event. He remarked that the increase

in attendance was "a true expression of the development of sports marketing in the Atlanta area."

University of Georgia president Michael Adams introduced a brand new panel to the summit, the Sports 101 panel that touched on the business of college sports. "The financial impact of the business of sports is staggering," said Adams. "This is an incredibly large business, and its significance is substantial."

Athletics directors from the state's four major universities were on hand. Greg McGarity of UGA was joined by Cheryl Levick of Georgia State, Dan Radakovich of Georgia Tech and Kennesaw State's Vaughn Williams. McGarity touched on conference expansion while Levick was more than happy to give some of the details of Georgia State's recent decision to move to the Sun Belt conference.

Radakovich was quick to speak about how Georgia Tech is always looking for ways to utilize new technology. "Technology is driven by the market. Our patrons demand it."

Levick joined in on the technology discussion, saying that Georgia State also takes that seriously. "We have to be interactive with our fans, especially our students."

Abe Madkour, the Executive Editor of the SportsBusiness Journal, spoke next and he broke down what the SportsBusiness Journal is keeping an eye on in the sports business world. Some of the topics that are the most popular these days for the Journal include baseball, UFC, the sale of the Dodgers, the Olympics and potential ESPN challengers.

The University of Georgia's Dr. Jeff Humphreys spoke on the economic growth in the state of Georgia and how the sports industry has impacted the economy. "There has been a two percent growth in Georgia sports jobs from 2005-2010," said Dr. Humphreys.

This may not seem like much, but Dr. Humphreys reminded the crowd that the overall state of Georgia had a six percent decline, so the number was actually quite impressive.

Fred Kalil moderated the "Franchise Factor" panel featuring representatives from the Braves, Dream, Hawks and Falcons. McKay and Schuerholz were joined by Dream CEO Pete Canalichio, Dream GM Marynell Meadors, Falcons CMO Jim Smith, Braves Executive VP of Sales and Marketing Derek Schiller, Hawks President Bob Williams and Hawks VP of Corporate Partnership and Business Development David Lee. The topics ranged from social media in the clubhouse to Atlanta as a sports city to who the execs look up to in other sports.

Chick-fil-A, UPS, Coca-Cola and Kia Motors all sent representatives for the Major League Marketing panel, and the summit was wrapped up by Madkour sitting down with Lazarus, the Chairman of NBC Sports. Lazarus touched on whether the NBC Sports channel can be a viable challenger to ESPN and what sports leagues NBC might be eyeing for future television contracts. He also spent a great deal of time discussing the 2012 Olympics in London, which will be the first Games that Lazarus has overseen as chairman. "The Olympics are one of the last communal events that takes place anymore," said Lazarus of the Olympics on NBC.

For those interested in the business side of sports, the summit was an invaluable resource. Those in the sports business were treated to alternate ideas of how to market their products and how some of the biggest names in the Georgia sports games approach their day-to-day business strategies.

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PANTHER PROWL



Panthers officially join Sun Belt

By Ryan Caiafa

Another monumental moment in Georgia State athletics history occurred on April 9 as the school officially became part of the Sun Belt Conference. The school will be leaving the Colonial Athletic Conference to join the Sun Belt beginning in 2013, which allows it to compete at the FBS level in football, meaning opportunities to play in postseason bowl games and nationally-televised games.

GSU's Sun Belt debut will coincide with the school's 100-year anniversary, which is only fitting for one of the crowning moment's in the athletic program's history. The Sun Belt Conference is one of 11 conferences to play in the FBS, along with the Bowl Championship Series. Georgia State returns to a conference that it helped start in 1976 as one of six chartering members. After leaving the conference in 1981, GSU joined the Trans America Athletic Conference, which is now known as the Atlantic Sun Conference, and in 2005, the school moved to the CAA.

Another key aspect of the deal to move to the Sun Belt is the financial side, which, by being in an FBS conference, guarantees games and generates additional revenue with nationally-televised games. The change also alleviates the travel burden on the athletes,

coaches and fans as much of the Sun Belt is spread throughout the Southeast and Central regions of the country, with the furthest distance being in Denver, Colo. Georgia State football is coming off its second season under coach Bill Curry and will start a Sun Belt schedule in 2013 and be eligible for the post-season in 2014. The 2012 schedule includes a marquee matchup with the Tennessee Volunteers in Knoxville, which could be a precursor to more BCS conference schools adding Georgia State to their schedules with the FBS move now official.

PITCHER HONORED ...

Georgia State pitcher Ben Marshall was named Pitcher of the Week in the CAA for his strong performance against William & Mary this past Saturday. Marshall pitched a complete game one-hit shutout while striking out six batters. He currently leads the team with a 4-3 record and a 2.83 ERA. With just under 20 games remaining, the Panthers are in the middle of the pack of the conference standings at 7-8 and are looking to make a late push into the CAA Tournament.

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OWL OUTLOOK



Baseball squad strong at home

By Chris Lionetti

The KSU baseball team (23-16) is in the midst of a nine-game homestand and has fared quite well. The Owls are 4-1 and are averaging almost 10 runs per game during the homestand. In the most recent game against Jacksonville State, KSU had to overcome a two-run deficit to get the victory. Senior Andy Chriscaden blasted a two-run homer to tie the game for the Owls in the eighth. Fellow senior Ethan Herron gave the Owls the lead with a RBI single and KSU scored two more runs that inning to beat JSU, 5-2. This weekend, the Owls play a pivotal series against conference rival Belmont. The Bears currently hold a one-game lead in the conference ahead of the Owls. KSU will look to play its best ball this weekend and climb to the top of the Atlantic Sun Conference standings.

DOUBLEHEADERS AHEAD ...

The Lady Owl softball team (25-20) recently finished up a four-game road trip with a sweep of two games against conference rival Stetson. In the first game of the doubleheader, junior Sharon Swanson hit her Atlantic Sun-leading 13th home run of the season

to give KSU the lead over Stetson. Carly Van Auken carried the team in the second game with three RBIs. The Owls went 3-1 on the road trip and are tied for first in the Atlantic Sun standings with Florida Gulf Coast. This weekend, the Lady Owls play four games in the form of doubleheaders against conference rivals Belmont and Lipscomb. Kennesaw State leads the Atlantic Sun with 35 home runs on the season and will rely on its powerful bats this weekend.

OTHER NOTES ...

The men's golf team finds itself in second place in the Atlantic Sun Conference Championship. The team heads into the final round 10 strokes behind North Florida. The women's tennis program closed out its season with a 6-1 victory over the Jacksonville Dolphins. Senior Vera Shkundina, who holds most of the Owls' tennis records, earned two of the wins in the matchup. The Owls head to East Tennessee State University this weekend for the conference championship.

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BULLDOG BEAT



Gymnastics, golf teams face major tests

By Stephen Black

Georgia will make its 28th appearance in the NCAA gymnastics championships this weekend at Gwinnett Arena. The Gym Dogs will make their semifinals appearance Friday night at 6 p.m. against top-seeded Florida, No. 4 Alabama, No. 8 Arkansas, No. 9 Oregon State and No. 12 Ohio State. The top three in the semifinals will advance to the Super Six Saturday, while the individual finals will be held Sunday.

The Gym Dogs are seeded fifth this year, a departure from past seasons when they were accustomed to being seeded higher.

Georgia leads the nation with 10 national titles after winning five straight from 2005-2009, and have finished third or higher in 21 of the last 24 years.

HAACK'S HACKERS ...

The No. 25 men's golf team will take part in the SEC Championships this weekend at Sea Island Golf Club on St. Simons Island. The Bulldogs have won a conference-best 28 titles, including five of the past 11. Under coach Chris Haack, Georgia has won seven SEC titles.

This year's team, however, is one of the youngest in Haack's tenure. Georgia has just one golfer who has played in an SEC championship, junior T.J. Mitchell, and will start three

sophomores and a freshman this weekend. Last year's other starters, Harris English, Russell Henley, Brynden McPherson and Hudson Swoford are all playing professionally now.

"We know the guys we have now are extremely talented. The only thing that's really missing is experience," Haack said. "But unlike football or basketball where you go head-to-head against someone else, our sport is you against the golf course. If our guys can take care of the mental part of the game, then we'll be fine."

REBELS ROUTED ...

The Diamond Dawgs turned back No. 18 Ole Miss over the weekend, taking two of three from the Rebels. A six-run eighth inning and a complete game by Michael Palazzone helped Georgia to an 8-4 win Thursday night in the opener before a 6-3 win Friday clinched the series. Ole Miss salvaged Game 3 Saturday to escape Athens without being swept.

David Perno's troops then played an odd Monday game, defeating Liberty 5-3. On Tuesday, however, a five-run fourth inning by Furman undid the Bulldogs in a 5-4 loss. Palazzone, a former Lassiter star, got the loss after giving up the five runs, dropping him to 1-5 on the season.

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TECH TALK



Goodlett drafted No. 11 by Indiana

By Thomas Watson

Sasha Goodlett became the seventh player in the history of Georgia Tech women's basketball to be selected in the WNBA draft, and the fifth in head coach MaChelle Joseph's tenure. The senior from Bolton, Miss., was taken 11th overall by the Indiana Fever. She is only the second player from Tech taken in the first round, following former teammate Alex Montgomery, who was taken with the 10th pick in last year's draft by the New York Liberty.

Starting 32 out of 35 games at center last year, Goodlett earned second-team All-ACC honors and was a standout in the ACC tournament, earning first-team honors on the All-Tournament team. Goodlett had an outstanding career for the Lady Yellow Jackets, finishing in the top 10 all-time in points scored (1,364), rebounds (760), and blocks (127) which puts her at 10th, ninth, and seventh, respectively, in those categories.

"We are so proud of Sasha and all she has meant to Georgia Tech and our women's basketball program," said Joseph. "To cap off her great career at Georgia Tech being selected as the No. 11 overall pick in the WNBA Draft is an amazing accomplishment for Sasha. We are very proud of the fact that we have had back-to-back first-round WNBA Draft picks in Alex

Montgomery and Sasha Goodlett. Our program continues to reach new heights."

Goodlett's class was the most decorated in the program's history with 95 career wins, .704 career winning percentage and 37 career ACC wins. With all of her collegiate accolades, Goodlett is ready to move on to the next level. "I am just really excited," said Goodlett. "I am really looking forward to going in there and learning from veteran players like Tamika Catchings and actually coming into the system and learning and being part of the culture."

RELOADING...

Despite the loss of Goodlett, Joseph is tearing up the recruiting trail with a top five recruiting class, which was rated as high as fourth by Collegiate Girls Basketball Report. Je Zhe Newton was the highest-ranked high school player who had yet to sign and was the recruit that put this class over the top. Joining Kym Ellison, Brittany Jackson, Breana McDonald and Aaliyah Whiteside in this year's class, Newton scored over 1,000 points and grabbed more than 700 rebounds in three seasons.

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HAWKS HAVEN



Fifth consecutive playoff berth clinched

By Robby Kalland

The Atlanta Hawks (36-25) clinched their fifth consecutive playoff appearance Monday night in Toronto as they exacted revenge on the Raptors 109-87. The Raptors had embarrassed the Hawks in Atlanta 102-86 on Sunday.

The Hawks' streak of five straight playoff berths is the longest current streak in Atlanta professional sports. Despite clinching the playoffs, the Hawks remain in a battle for seeding with the Pacers, Celtics and Magic. The Pacers hold down the three seed and their magic number to clinch that seed is down to two as of press deadline. The Celtics (36-26) are one-half game back of the Hawks in the race for homecourt in a first-round series between the two teams should they get the four and five seeds. The Magic and Hawks are tied in the standings, with Atlanta holding the tiebreaker in head-to-head record.

DOWN THE STRETCH ...

The Hawks will finish their season with five straight home games, a stretch that started with Detroit on April 18. They will play every other night and the last four games are big matchups with the Celtics tonight, the Knicks Sunday, the Clippers Tuesday and concluding with the Mavericks April 26. These games

will provide the Hawks with a solid gauge of where they are heading into the playoffs since their last four are against playoff teams. The Celtics game is probably the most important game as it will be huge for seeding and home-court purposes, but each game will give the Hawks a chance to prove they belong in the discussion of teams that could make a prolonged playoff run.

GETTING HEALTHY ...

Hawks fans should be excited about playoff possibilities, especially as it appears the Hawks are getting healthy at the right time. The only concerns for the playoffs are Al Horford and Zaza Pachulia. Pachulia suffered a sprained left foot against the Magic last Friday and he will sit out the rest of the regular season in an effort to get back in the lineup for the playoffs. The most encouraging news is from Horford, who has been recently cleared for contact in practice and he has been working in the gym for the last two-plus weeks in non-contact drills. If the Hawks can have Horford and Pachulia in the playoff rotation, they will definitely be a team to reckon with and will have a good chance to make a run.

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FALCONS FLIGHT



Fans await second-round selection

By Sean Conway

Next Friday night, Atlanta Falcons fans will get their first look at the centerpiece of the Falcons' 2012 NFL draft class. The draft actually starts on Thursday night with the first round, but Falcons fans will have to hold their collective breath until the 55th overall pick (the 22nd pick of the second round).

There are several possibilities for the Falcons to supplement their roster for 2012 and beyond. It becomes quickly clear what general manager Thomas Dimitroff is looking to get out of the first pick by studying the methods of the Flowery Branch brain trust and looking at recent history of where NFL teams have found value in the mid-to-late second round.

First, owner Arthur Blank, Dimitroff and head coach Mike Smith made it clear that they are focused on improving immediately and advancing in the playoffs this winter.

Second, these leaders decided the most effective way to improve would be by overhauling the coaching staff, more so than the field roster. See the addition of former NFL head coach Mike Nolan as defensive coordinator, the addition of a new offensive coordinator Dirk Koetter. Also, don't overlook the hiring of new offensive line coach Pat Hill, who has NFL coaching experience and won 112 games at Fresno State.

That said, the Falcons would like to go with an offensive lineman in the draft. Not a dominant left tackle because those will be gone by the 55th pick, but you can expect Dimitroff to call the name of a right tackle that – using the verbiage of draft “gurus” – projects to left tackle in the future, or a dominant guard that can push the pile in short-yardage situations.

Recent draft history backs up this logic. According to profootballreference.com, eight offensive linemen have been drafted in the 10 spots at and around the 22nd pick in the second round over the last five years. Combined, those players could have possibly played in 432 regular season games. The group has actually started in 320 and played in 382 of those games. That's production.

PREDICTION ...

The Falcons will select an impact lineman. Our guess is, if available, they'll choose 6-foot-5, 330-guard/tackle out of Iowa State Kelechi Osemele. Osemele is big enough to play both positions and played left tackle in college. He's also described as a smart player. Osemele is a guy that fits the Falcons' needs now, and hopefully, for the long term.

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CHOP SHOP

PRESENTED BY



Braves leaving slow start behind

By Fletcher Proctor

A four-game losing streak to open the season had many Braves fans on the ledge, but Atlanta quickly rebounded by feasting on NL Central opponents during a five-game winning streak. The Braves took two from the Astros in Houston before sweeping a three-game set from the Brewers to open up Turner Field for 2012. The five-game winning streak following a season-opening four-game losing streak was an accomplishment pulled off by just two other teams over the last 70 years.

The Mets were in town just a little more than a week after taking three straight off Atlanta in Citi Field to open up the season. Tommy Hanson, a hard-luck loser on Opening Day, was again given little run support in a 6-1 loss. The Braves had opportunities early on but would see a 1-1 game in the sixth quickly turn into a runaway.

Tuesday's action saw the Braves jump out to a 6-0 lead to stake Randall Delgado to a margin he would not lose. Juan Francisco hit his first home run as a Brave as Atlanta prevailed 9-3. Tyler Pastornicky and Freddie Freeman each drove in a pair of runs.

TIRED BULLPEN ...

For the first seven games of the season, the Braves' bullpen was getting plenty of

work. Starters could not make it past the fifth inning, and no starter recorded an out in the sixth inning against the Mets or Astros to open the year. The Braves finally received a pair of quality starts from Brandon Beachy and Mike Minor against the Brewers in a pair of wins. Minor went 7.1 innings against the Brewers, followed by Beachy's seven innings.

After the bullpen wore down towards the end of the season last year, manager Fredi Gonzalez realizes the importance of having starters go longer into games. “It's easier for me (to save the bullpen) when we have a four or five-run lead and we can run (the starter) back out there,” said Gonzalez Monday. “It's nice for starters to go deep into ballgames.”

DRAFT ORDER DECIDED ...

Major League Baseball decided the order for the upcoming June Amateur draft. The Braves will select at No. 21 in the first round then again at No. 85 overall (second round) then again at No. 116 (third round). The Braves were not awarded any compensatory draft picks due to losses in free agency. The MLB draft will consist of 40 rounds. Atlanta will draft at No. 21 in rounds 4-40.

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GWINNETT BRAVES



G-Braves riding hot start to season

By Ryan Caiafa

With the offense firing on all cylinders and Gwinnett Braves have found themselves sitting atop the South Division of the International League. The team has already proven to be battle-tested after a 12-inning come-from-behind victory against the aforementioned Norfolk Tides, the team's fourth extra inning game of the season.

MVPS ...

Although it is indeed still early, the team has received strong performances from several key players, including newcomers Joey Terdoslavich, who is playing his first year with Gwinnett after spending the 2011 season at Class A Lynchburg in the Carolina League, and Ernesto Mejia, who was in Double A Mississippi last season. Both players have been forces at the plate, with Terdoslavich among the early team leaders in home runs and RBIs and Mejia hitting over .300 through the first two weeks of the season.

The veterans have also been productive with the bat as J.C. Boscan has also been an RBI-machine, while Jose Constanza has returned to Gwinnett from Atlanta and has already picked up where he left off last season, driving in seven runs through six games with Gwinnett. Constanza will provide his usual

speed at the top of the order to go along with his productive bat.

SOLID STARTERS ...

Julio Teheran is once again expected to lead the pitching rotation, coming off a 2011 season that saw him win 15 games for Gwinnett, with a 2.55 ERA. After spending the last few weeks of last season in Atlanta, Teheran returns to Gwinnett to continue his development as a top prospect. Along with Teheran, Todd Redmond and Yohan Flande have been solid on the mound for the Braves early on in the 2012 campaign and are also expected to be key contributors throughout the season in a rotation that is rebuilding now that Mike Minor and Randall Delgado are in Atlanta.

After the eight-game homestand concludes, the early divisional play continues with two home-and-home series against the Charlotte Knights before hitting the road for eight games against International League West foes, the Columbus Clippers and Toledo Mud Hens. With several new faces and veterans sparking the offense early and the rotation looking sharp, the Gwinnett Braves will no doubt be looking to maintain their early-season momentum with several tough upcoming road tests.

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John Smoltz (29), Greg Maddux (31),
Phil Niekro (35), Eddie Mathews (41),
Hank Aaron (44), Jackie Robinson (42)

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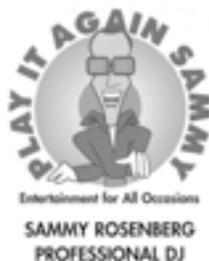


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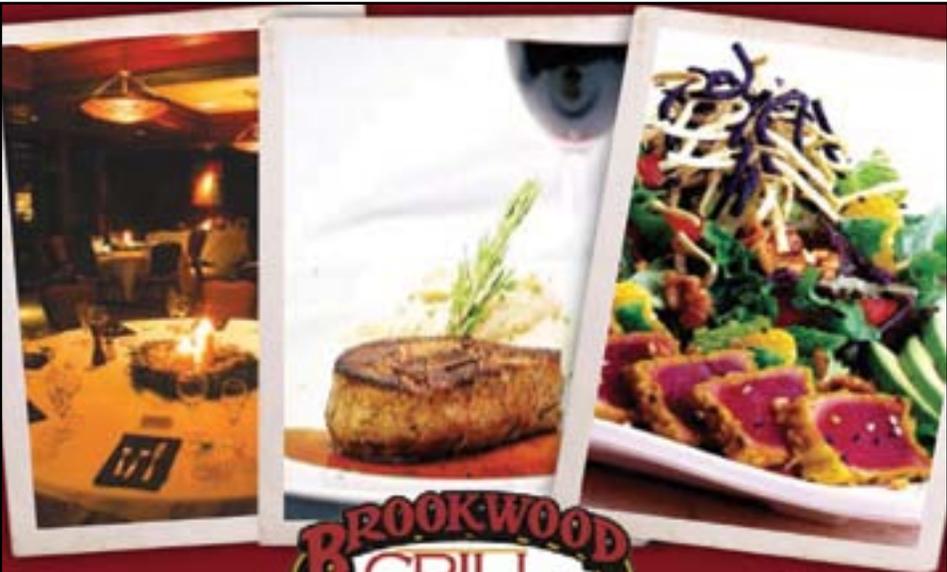
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APRIL

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	@DUR	@DUR	@DUR
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
@DUR	@NOR	@NOR	@NOR	DUR 7:05	DUR 7:05	DUR 7:05
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
DUR 2:05	NOR 7:05	NOR 7:05	NOR 7:05	NOR 12:05	@CHA	@CHA
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
@CHA	OFF	CHA 7:05	CHA 7:05	CHA 7:05	@TOL	@TOL
26	27	28	29	30	31	
@TOL	@TOL					

MAY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		@COL	@COL	@COL	@COL	CHA 7:05
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
CHA 2:05	BUF 7:05	BUF 7:05	BUF 7:05	BUF 10:35	TOL 7:05	TOL 7:05
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
TOL 2:05	TOL 7:05	@BUF	@BUF	@BUF	@BUF	@ROC
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
@ROC	@ROC	@ROC	OFF	ROC 7:05	ROC 7:05	ROC 7:05
27	28	29	30	31		
ROC 2:05	LHV 7:05	LHV 7:05	LHV 7:05	LHV 7:05		

JUNE

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
					CHA 7:05	CHA 7:05
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
@CHA	@CHA	@LHV	@LHV	@LHV	@LHV	@PAW
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
@PAW	@PAW	@PAW	OFF	COL 7:05	COL 7:05	COL 7:05
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
COL 2:05	IND 7:05	IND 7:05	IND 7:05	IND 12:05	@SYR	@SYR
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
@SYR	@SYR	@SWB	@SWB	@SWB	@SWB	CHA 7:05

JULY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
CHA 5:05	CHA 7:05	CHA 7:05	@CHA	@CHA	DUR 7:05	DUR 7:05
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
DUR 5:05	ALL	STAR	BREAK	@LOU	@LOU	@LOU
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
@LOU	@IND	@IND	@IND	@IND	SWB 7:05	SWB 7:05
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
SWB 5:05	SWB 7:05	DUR 7:05	DUR 7:05	DUR 7:05	DUR 7:05	@CHA
29	30	31				
@CHA	@CHA	@CHA				

AUGUST

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
			OFF	@DUR	@DUR	@DUR
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
@DUR	NOR 7:05	NOR 7:05	NOR 7:05	NOR 7:05	LOU 7:05	LOU 7:05
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
LOU 5:05	LOU 7:05	@NOR	@NOR	@NOR	@NOR	@DUR
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
@DUR	NOR 7:05	NOR 10:35	OFF	SYR 7:05	SYR 7:05	SYR 7:05
26	27	28	29	30	31	
SYR 5:05	PAW 7:05	PAW 7:05	PAW 7:05	PAW 7:05	@NOR	

SEPTEMBER

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						@NOR
2	3		5			
@NOR	@NOR		PLAY OFFS			
<p>HOME AWAY INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE</p> <p>SOUTH DIVISION</p> <p>GWINNETT BRAVES - GWN DURHAM BULLS - DUR NORFOLK TIDES - NOR CHARLOTTE KNIGHTS - CHA</p> <p>WEST DIVISION</p> <p>COLUMBUS CLIPPERS - COL INDIANAPOLIS INDIANS - IND TOLEDO RED WINGS - ROC LOUISVILLE BATS - LOU</p> <p>NORTH DIVISION</p> <p>BUFFALO BISON - BUF LEHIGH VALLEY IRON PIGS - LHV</p> <p>PANUCKET RED SOX - PAW ROCHESTER RED WINGS - ROC SCRANTON YANKEES - SWB SYRACUSE CHIEFS - SYR</p>						