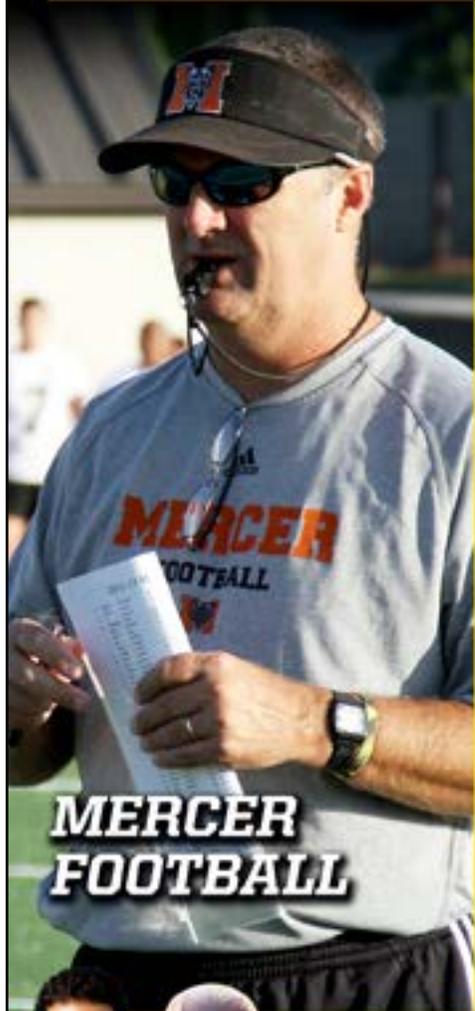


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**CAN'T MISS
THIS WEEK**

- 4** Jay Underwood and Sean Conway gives their opinions on the Atlanta sports scene on our columnists' page.
- 5** The WWE comes to town July 26 for a live event and Brian Jones gives you a preview in this week's cover story.
- 7** Craig Sager II writes about the inaugural season of Mercer University football.
- 9** Chris Nieman previews the BB&T Atlanta Open, an ATP World Tour event.

**TEAM SCOOP
AND VOICES**

*COVER DESIGN BY DJ GALBIATI BLALOCK
 COVER PHOTOS COURTESY OF MERCER FOOTBALL,
 BILL KALLENBERG/BB&T ATLANTA OPEN AND WWE*

- 6** Score List - Numbers
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INSIDE AT SCORE**ON THE
NO**

Score Atlanta is looking for writing interns. Please e-mail Stephen Black at sblack@scoreatl.com or call 404-256-1572 for more information.

**SHOT OF THE
WEEK...**

LOCAL HERO: Tennis star John Isner hits a forehand shot at a recent match. Isner, a Georgia grad, will play at the BB&T Atlanta Open next week at Atlantic Station. Photo courtesy of on Cioffi/BB&T Atlanta Open.



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JAY'S JOURNAL



Ferry's vision getting close to fruition

By Jay Underwood

In his second year as the Hawks' GM, Danny Ferry is finally able to make moves tailored toward his vision for the franchise. He has already brought in his coach Mike Budenholzer, who he had previously worked with during his days with the Spurs' organization. With him, Budenholzer is bringing over a more structured offense that is predicated on the pick-and-roll. This will put pressure on the point guard to make good decisions and facilitate the offense for the team to have success. This is one of the reasons that the Hawks matched Jeff Teague's offer sheet with the Bucks. Ferry also saw it fit to add a young point guard in the draft to begin grooming in hopes of having a franchise leader for years to come.

NEW BLOOD ...

This player is Dennis Schröder, a 19-year-old point guard from Germany. He has drawn comparisons to Rajon Rondo and the way he plays shows that he is the type of player who makes those around him better. In his few games during the Las Vegas Summer League, Schröder has shown a knack for finding the open man and putting his teammates in positions to score.

With his second first-round pick, Ferry took a seven-footer out a Brazil who has garnered more attention for his hair than his play, but Lucas Nogueira is looking to reverse this with his performance in Las Vegas. Dennis and Lucas have already developed a chemistry together and are putting on highlight worthy performances on the offensive end.

In their first game together, Schröder threw a perfectly timed lob for the Nogueira finish, which was the first of two ferocious alley-oops finished by the Brazilian.

Joining these two youngsters in the Las Vegas Summer League are sophomores John Jenkins and Mike Scott and third-year player Shelvin Mack. So far this summer Jenkins and Scott are both showing signs of strength and polish added to their game during the offseason. With a season of working with Kyle Korver learning how to develop into a professional shooter, Jenkins appears to have learned the tricks of the trade creating more space to get off his deadly shot.

Mike Scott has also added new dimensions to his game, including extended range and a variety of posts-moves, allowing him to create mismatches whether guarded by larger power forwards or smaller wing players. Together with Jenkins, Mack, Schröder, and Nogueira these young players form a youthful collective that may never develop into superstars, but will be a solid compliment around whatever pieces Ferry looks to bring in.

This offseason along with Teague, Ferry has brought back Korver to continue knocking down shots from behind the arc creating space for the pick-and-roll to operate. He also went outside of the Hawks' own free agents by signing Paul Millsap to a two year deal. Pairing

Millsap with Horford on the inside will allow two viable options to set screens out of the post and make midrange jumpers that have become an important asset in the NBA.

DAN'S PLAN ...

The past couple weeks have allowed Ferry's vision to come more into focus, there is still some uncertainty about what the final goal is. With there being little communication between the front office and the public has created frustration among fans, especially with the Hawks missing out on free agent prizes Dwight Howard and Chris Paul. Even with the stars signing elsewhere, the Hawks have put together a competitive roster for next season and there are still a few decisions still to be made.

The latest addition was Elton Brand and that leaves one spot for a frontcourt player to make the roster and that could either go to Nogueira or a veteran big allowing Lucas to continue playing overseas and developing. There is also the dilemma of who to start at small forward. With no true small forward on the roster who plays there will depend on whether Budenholzer would like to go with a big or small lineup. It can be assumed that Korver will be the primary starter given his proficiency for the three-ball.

Underwood can be reached at junderwood@scoreatl.com.

THE INSIDER



Playoffs becoming the norm for Falcons

By Sean Conway

We've got it good here in Atlanta. We also tend to take a lot of things for granted. Our state's economy could be worse. Our climate allows us to enjoy four seasons. We're healthy in the diversity department and entertainment options are endless. It's easy to take all this for granted. Sometimes too easy, but that's our style. In the sphere of Atlanta sports, we've also come to take your Atlanta Falcons for granted.

SPOILED SPORTS ...

After the Falcons' run to the Super Bowl following the 1998 season, many Atlantans believed the long-struggling expansion team Rankin Smith brought to Atlanta Fulton County Stadium before the 1966 season had arrived. Of course, the Dirty Birds finished the next three seasons a combined 16 games

under .500. Mediocrity, if you like to use kind words, had returned quickly to downtown.

Fast forward or skip ahead to where the team is in 2013. Many fans believe that the playoffs in January are a certainty. Many others are actually complaining because the Falcons came 10 yards short of last season's Super Bowl. Think about both of those statements for just a second. There both true, and big picture, we should all be thrilled.

The 2013 Atlanta Falcons are not a blip on the radar screen that 1998 squad came to be. The 2013 Atlanta Falcons are quite frankly a sustainable beast in the NFL. Don't take it for granted. Appreciate what we have.

THE FOUNDATION ...

The beginning of what is becoming the Golden Age for pro football began when

Home Depot co-founder Arthur Blank bought the team from the Smith family in 2002.

The team has averaged a winning record ever since. In 2008, Blank brought on a young Thomas Dimitroff from the New England Patriots as a general manager. Dimitroff promptly hired a then career assistant coach in Mike Smith from the Jacksonville Jaguars.

Dimitroff and Smith decided to use the third overall pick in that April's draft on Boston College quarterback Matt Ryan. In the five years since the foundation – and the crescendo – has been building.

Since the beginning of the Dimitroff-Smith era, the Falcons are 56-24 with four trips to the playoffs, including the last three in a row. Over the past five years, the Falcons have the second-best regular-season record among the 32 teams in the League. The duo and their support staff have produced five consecutive winning seasons after never having back-to-back records prior.

For his efforts, Dimitroff has been awarded the Executive of the Year by the Sporting News. It shouldn't shock anyone that Smith has become the winningest coach in franchise history. His winning percentage is the best in franchise history. (Jim Mora, another coach in Blank's tenure has the second best record of Falcons).

SOLID SUPPORT ...

The success on the field has shown up and will continue to show up in the stands.

Since Dimitroff, Smith and Ryan came on board, the Georgia Dome has been sold out for every single game. Every game. In 2017, the Falcons will christen a new stadium with a sleek design and retractable roof that is projected to be state of the art.

As the success mounts momentum, Atlanta is becoming a destination for proven veteran players that want to win big. Dimitroff made huge noise when he lured future Hall of Fame tight end Tony Gonzalez from the Kansas City Chiefs in 2009. Gonzalez continues to be one of the League's best.

Dimitroff continues to enhance the roster with Pro Bowlers like cornerback Asante Samuel last year and defensive end Osi Umenyiora this offseason. Often overlooked is the shrewd addition of placekicker Matt Bryant from the NFC South rival Tampa Bay Buccaneers before the 2009 campaign. Bryant has kicked seven game-winners for the Falcons since including a 49-yarder to secure the playoff win over the Seattle Seahawks 30-28 in January.

Dimitroff may not be done building the 2013 roster, either. He has salary cap room to play with entering preseason camp and a possible restructuring or new long-term contract for Ryan would only increase the allowance.

Yes folks, we've got it good here most definitely when it comes to our pro football and your Atlanta Falcons.

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WWE LIVE



Sandow arrives in time for Atlanta show

By Brian Jones



The last week of July is an important one for Atlanta sports. The Falcons report to training camp to start their quest for a Super Bowl title. Local college football teams prepare for their seasons.

But WWE fans will be in for a treat because the No. 1 professional wrestling organization in the world will make its return to Atlanta on July 26 for a live event. And for the fans, they will have a chance to see some of their favorite WWE Superstars including Randy Orton, Sheamus and Rob Van Dam. But one superstar that fans should really pay close attention to is Damien Sandow, who is one of the hottest Superstars right now. Sandow made a name for himself Sunday in the latest pay-per-view event, Money in the Bank.

MAKING A SPLASH ...

Sandow took part in the Money in the Bank match, which is a ladder match where seven wrestlers compete for either a WWE Championship or a World Heavyweight Championship contract. Sandow was in the match where a World Heavyweight Championship contract was on the line and was able to come away with the victory. Now, depending on how one looks at it, the way Sandow won the match could be looked at as either very intelligent or very unfair because he sat back and let the other six superstars beat each other up and he came out of nowhere to climb the ladder and grab the briefcase. But Sandow thinks his victory is a lot more than just using his intellect.

"Experts are calling my victory the most

gut-wrenching, heartfelt and most inspirational victory in the history of the WWE," Sandow said. "To put it bluntly, I displayed courage the likes of which the WWE has never seen."

Sandow's victory may not be as inspirational as he makes it out to be, but at the end of the day he has won the right to take on the World Heavyweight Champion anytime he wants within the 365 days he won on the contract. And based on the recent history of Money in the Bank contract winners Sandow will be the next World Heavyweight Champion, but he has to cash in the contract in the right place at the right time.

"The plan is at the opportune moment," Sandow said talking about when he will cash in his contract. "A lot of people think that [Dolph] Ziggler held on to the contract and waited for the right moment. I disagree. Sure he won the world title, but it was a short-lived reign. Once I win, I plan on retiring with the title."

ROAD TO WWE ...

If Sandow plans to retire with the World Heavyweight title, it will be a very long reign because Sandow made his television debut last year, and he had a certain goal when he started, which is still alive today.

"I have focused on enlightening the unwashed masses," Sandow said who considers himself as the Intellectual Savior of the Masses. "If the Money in the Bank briefcase enables me to get the world title and further my cause, I will run with it. My crusade goes on."

Before Sandow made his WWE debut, he has wrestled in its developmental territories, Ohio Valley Wrestling and Florida Championship Wrestling. While wrestling at both organizations, Sandow got the opportunity to learn from former WWE Superstars and get better each time he stepped into the ring.

"Every day is a chance to learn from life experience," Sandow said. "What I've learned in various other places has made me the intellectual savior that I am today. That has also made me Sir Money in the Bank."

Another place that made Sandow the Superstar that he is now is at Killer Kowalski's wrestling school where other superstars such as Triple H and Kofi Kingston were students and became top guys in the WWE.

"It was the Harvard of professional wrestling schools," Sandow said. "If you are going to do something, learn from the best. And

that's what I did."

With the help of learning from Kowalski's school, Sandow was able to win various titles at OVW, FCW and other independent organizations, and it was only a matter of time before the WWE gave him his shot.

BEING THE BEST ...

When Sandow was taking part in the Money in the Bank ladder match this past Sunday, one of his opponents was tag-team partner, Cody Rhodes, who is from Marietta and went to Lassiter High School.

Rhodes and Sandow were known as Team Rhodes Scholars and were one of the top tag-teams this past year. However, that all changed when Sandow took down Rhodes to get the briefcase.

But Sandow did not see it that way.

"Do you know how hard it is with a 220-pound man on top of the ladder, reaching and moving about?" Sandow asked. "I was actually trying to help Cody and make sure the ladder didn't fall. He fell off the ladder, the briefcase was there and I grabbed it. That was how that picture should have been painted by the media."

Regardless, Sandow is now focused on the road ahead and when he comes to Atlanta on July 26, he will take on Sheamus and those two always have a battle inside the ring.

"Sheamus and I had our differences in the past," Sandow said. "We are going to iron them out in Atlanta."

Another match fans will see at Philips Arena is Dolph Ziggler vs. CM Punk vs. Alberto Del Rio for the World Heavyweight title. And Sandow did not rule out the possibility of cashing in the contract after that match was over.

"If the opportunity presents itself, I may strike there," Sandow said. "You can't afford to miss this."

Sandow is on the rise in the WWE and plans to be the absolute best superstar in the world. But he also wants to do a lot more as his career in the WWE continues to grow.

"To simply better humanity," Sandow said. "It's to use the WWE as a platform to get my message out. Once I have affected humanity in a positive way, I have attained the world title and the WWE title, my mission will be complete."

Photos courtesy of WWE. Jones can be reached at bjones@scoreatl.com.

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WHOS HOT

BY LAUREN GOLDSTEIN

THUMBS UP TO CHAMPIONSHIPS



Silverbacks

Atlanta Silverbacks won the 2013 North American Soccer League spring season championship by defeating Minnesota 3-0. Later, a loss by the Carolina Railhawks secured the title for the Atlanta soccer team. The Silverbacks are the first Atlanta professional sports team to win a championship since 1995 (Atlanta Braves).

Home-grown All-Stars

Five former Georgia baseball players were named 2013 All-Stars. The list includes Reds' second baseman Brandon Phillips out of Redan, Dominican Brown Phillies outfielder, also from Redan, Cardinals pitcher Adam Wainwright, from Glynn Academy, Giants catcher Buster Posey out of Lee County, and Braves catcher Brian McCann from Duluth.

UGA Recruiting

The Bulldog Nation has 15 commitments for the 2013 season and could see more. Of these is offensive linemen Isaiah Wynn, Jake Edwards and Dyshon Sims. Also, on the list of commits, are wide receivers Shakenneth Williams and Miami's Gilbert Johnson. Kendall Gant is a safety out of Lakeland, Fla., that has also committed to play for UGA.

Roddy's Twitter

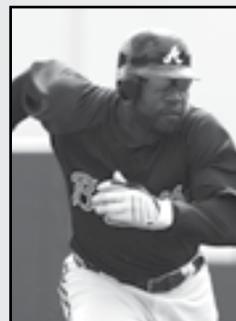
The Falcons receiver apologized on July 14 for an inappropriate tweet he sent out the night before, giving his point of view on the Zimmerman Trial's verdict. While we respect White's right to voice his opinion, his twitter account has gotten him in trouble before. Maybe this latest incident will convince Roddy to tone it down.

Injured Dreamers

Forward Sancho Lyttle underwent surgery on her fractured left foot Monday and will be out six-to-eight weeks. Meanwhile, superstar Angel McCoughtry missed the team's game Sunday in Seattle with a strained achilles. Guard Tiffany Hayes was also out with a knee injury. Let's hope the Dream gets healthy soon!

Braves Outfield

The outfield trio of B.J. Upton, Justin Upton and Jason Heyward were all injured in the same week. As a result, the Braves are not going to be full strength heading into the all-important second half of the season. New outfielders, Jose Constanza, Reed Johnson, and Joey Terdoslavich, are set to replace the hurt trio.



WHOS NOT

THUMBS DOWN TO INJURIES

SCORE LIST

BY BRIAN JONES

1 **FALCONS REPORT:** On Thursday, the Falcons will begin preparing for the 2013 season as training camp starts at their headquarters in Flowery Branch. The Birds looked strong during the OTAs and minicamp, so it's now time for them to take it up a notch because the opener against the New Orleans Saints is right around the corner.

2 **FALL CAMP:** Shortly after the Falcons report to training camp, UGA and Georgia Tech players will start fall camp as both teams gear up for the 2013 season. The Dawgs will open the season against Clemson on Aug. 31 while the Jackets will host Elon on the same day. And let's not forget about Georgia State who face Samford on Aug. 30.

3 **COME TOGETHER:** The roster for the 2013-14 Hawks is taking shape as the front office has made some key signings this week. They signed Jeff Teague to a four-year, \$32 million deal and also signed Elton Brand to add veteran leadership. It's clear the Hawks are rebuilding, but they are getting the right players to help them become contenders sooner than later.

4 **HALL OF BISHER:** The late Furman Bisher, who was a columnist for the AJC, is one of the finalists for the J.G. Taylor Spink Award to be recognized in the Baseball Hall of Fame. If Bisher is elected, he has a chance to join Greg Maddux, Tom Glavine, Bobby Cox and John Schuerholz as all four are eligible to be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame next year.

5 **FOOTBALL PREVIEWS:** We just wrapped up our high school football previews as we took a look at nearly of the top programs in the state. We have some of the previews from AAAAAA in this week's prep section, but you can always go to ScoreATL.com to check out all the previews we have done the last six weeks. The season is nearly a month away. Are you excited?

CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS

BY KRISTA SAGER

7 All-Star appearances by Braves catcher Brian McCann (2006-2011,2013)

3 All-Star appearances by closer Craig Kimbrel (2011, 2012, 2013)

226 Turnovers by both Josh Smith and LeBron James in the 2012-2013 season (14th in the NBA)

189 3-pt field goals made by Kyle Korver last year (fourth most in the league)

757 Rebounds by Hawks center Al Horford in the 2012-2013 season (11th most in the NBA)

579 Assists by Hawk Jeff Teague in the 2012-2013 season (Sixth most in the NBA)

16 Starters returning from the 2012 (15-0) football state champion Norcross Blue Devils

0 Losses in the regular season for Northside-WR coach Kevin Kinsler in his three seasons

50 Passing touchdowns by Gainesville QB Deshaun Watson during his junior 2012 season

72 Percent completion rate for Matt Ryan in away games last season

486 Yards after catch by Julio Jones last season.

TRIVIA QUESTION

What Brave led the team in home runs at the All-Star break?

Answer on Page 14

SANITY AT LAST

"Certainly playing with them for a couple of years now, I've always considered myself very fortunate to have those guys around me. So it feels great, I'm happy we have all those guys and we've picked up some of the new guys. I think Steven fits right in."

- Matt Ryan on the powerful weapons the Falcons possess on offense.

OUR TWO CENTS

Our email newsletter is something we take a lot of pride in at Score. If you aren't familiar with it, it is a high school sports-heavy publication that we produce each day to fill in our readers on the latest happenings in Georgia prep sports. We send it out Monday through Friday throughout the year and Monday through Saturday during the fall.

Not only do we cover popular sports like football, basketball and baseball, we also cover every other varsity sport the GHSA fields. If you like Georgia high school sports at all, sign up for our email newsletter by visiting www.tinyurl.com/scorenewsletter and enter your email address(es) that you'd like added to the distribution list.





Lamb brings Bears football to life

By Craig Sager II

Bobby Lamb, who took the Mercer head football coaching job in 2011, is faced with bringing football tradition to Mercer after a 72-year football hiatus. Lamb was the head coach for the Furman Paladins from 2002-10, but his will be his first coaching job in his home state.

In high school Bobby played for his father Ray at Commerce High School, and quarterbacked them to the 1981 Class AA state championship. That season Bobby took home the Atlanta Journal-Constitution's AA Back of the Year. Ray is recently retired and his two additional state championships at Warren County persuaded his induction into the Georgia Athletic Coaches Association Hall of Fame. Bobby's brother Hal is Calhoun High School's head coach, and has led the Yellow Jackets to five straight state championship appearances. The Lamb's are rich in football tradition and with Bobby right in the heart of the state, that tradition will continue to grow.

"As a program, we started recruiting inside out," said Lamb. "We want to get all four corners of the state first."

LAMB THE LEADER ...

After high school, Lamb quarterbacked at Furman from 1982-85. While leading the Paladins, he would beat three Division I-A opponents including South Carolina in 1982, Georgia Tech in 1983, and N.C. State twice, in 1984 and 1985. In 1985, Lamb led the Paladins to the Southern Conference Championship and was named Southern Conference Player of the Year. This experience makes the Bobby Lamb Football Camps each year a growing success.

In 1992, Lamb was a freshman at Furman, and worked the Quarterback Receiver and Offensive Line Camp. When he took the Furman head-coaching job in 2002, it adopted the his name to become the Bobby Lamb Football Camp. The 2013 Bobby Lamb

Camps mark the 3rd year that Bobby has been associated with them. Added to the slate are middle school camps, and a series of Elite camps aimed for recruitment.

"The middle school quarterback camp was my idea, and I put that in motion," said Lamb. "Last year was our first year. It is a two-day one night quarterback camp for sixth, seventh and eighth graders where they will just concentrate strictly on the fundamentals of playing quarterback."

Bringing hundreds of campers through campus allows Lamb to show off Mercer's state of the art facilities.

"Our camps are two-fold," explained Lamb. "Those [Middle School] camps are for kids that want to come to an old-fashioned camp hardworking camp where you get individualized instruction and you get maximum reps. I cannot tell you how many reps they get. If their arms are not sore and their legs are not sore then they have not been in our camp, but the other side is the Rising Senior Elite camp, which is pretty much our recruiting camp. We bring kids in and we try them out for one day and we show them our facilities and show them our campus."

This year saw an influx in attendance,

because Mercer is now has the means to offer scholarships. During the 2013 season, Mercer will compete in the Pioneer League, and 2014 will mark the initiation into the Southern Conference and the Bears will be a fully-functioning D-I program.

"I certainly see this year being different with these [elite] camps," said Lamb. "We've got two set up and we may think twice and next year add a third one. I really think it is going to become very popular because now we are giving scholarships. And let's face it these one day camps have become very popular the last five or six years. The bottom line is they are a tryout. You can basically try out on a college campus. So you are investing \$55 in hopes of getting a \$40,000 per year education."

As for the 2013 season, it will be a historic day for Georgia football. According to assistant coach Grant Cain, they have already sold over 3,000 season tickets. The anticipation has been building during the past two years, and the coaches and players have been as patient as possible.

Photos courtesy of Mercer Football. Craig Sager II can be reached at csager@scoreatl.com.

NORTH GWINNETT PREVIEW



Bulldogs look for that special break

By Craig Sager II

Before head coach Bob Sphire took over at North Gwinnett in 2006, the Bulldogs never won more than nine games in a single season. But that changed as soon as Sphire started and the Bulldogs have won 10 or more games the last seven seasons.

Last year, the Bulldogs were 11-2 with their two losses coming against the two teams that played in the Class AAAAAA state championship game (Lovejoy and Norcross).

"We were right there," Sphire said in regards to last season. "But it's 6A ball in Georgia. You have to have a break here or a break there in order to succeed."

With 10 starters returning from last season, the Bulldogs hope more breaks will go their way in 2013. And in order for them to have a better year in 2013, quarterback Hayden Sphire will have play efficient football. However, the signal-caller should be very familiar with the offense, as his father is the team's head coach.

"[Hayden] understands the nuances and the pre-snap reads," Hayden's father, Bob, said.

Another key player to the Bulldogs offense is running back C.J. Leggett, who has gotten offers from Georgia State, UCLA, Vanderbilt and Yale. Leggett is a transfer from Chattahoochee.

On defense, the defensive line for the Bulldogs looks to be strong and Sphire is looking forward to what they can do this season.

"We have a lot of experience on the defensive line," Sphire said. "We can have an impactful defensive front."

Leading the defensive front is defensive end Dante Sawyer who is a four-star recruit according to Rivals. Sawyer has gotten offers from all across the country including Georgia, Alabama and South Carolina.

Linebacker Carter Cross and defensive back Bobby Young are two other players to watch on defense. Young was named to the All-Region 7-AAAAA team last season.

One big challenge for the Bulldogs will be the schedule. They open the season on Aug. 24 against Camden County at the Georgia Dome, will host Grayson the following week and will travel to Norcross to face the defending AAAAAA state champions.

But Sphire feels like his team is ready for the challenge ahead of them.

"They prepare to win a state title continuously," Sphire said talking about his players. "They always execute at a state level."

Sager can be reached at csager@scoreatl.com.

NORCROSS PREVIEW



Norcross aims for rare 6A repeat

By Chris Nieman

Perfection is rarely attained. However, the preseason No. 1 Norcross Blue Devils, with head coach Keith Maloof leading the way, went undefeated and won the program's first state title last season. In doing so, the Blue Devils also set a school record with a 15-game winning streak.

RETURNING PLAYERS ...

The Blue Devils return eight players on offense and seven on defense. Maloof mentioned the team having to find a replacement for quarterback Joseph Wilbur, a player who flashed a superb 29-to-5 touchdown-to-INT ratio and workhorse running back Alvin Kamara, who rushed for 2,264 yards on 303 carries, who each played a pivotal role in the Blue Devils' 2012 success.

Malooof is excited to have four starting offensive linemen back as well as athlete Miles Autry back for one more season. In 2012, the Blue Devils utilized Autry in almost every way possible from running back, where he rushed for 560 yards while averaging 9.1 yards a pop, as well as playing some wide receiver, snagging 45 balls for 632 receiving yards.

Defensively the player who sticks out is defensive end Lorenzo Carter, who stands at a staggering 6-foot-6, 230 pounds. As one of the top players in the country, Carter is being recruited by just about every BCS college in the nation. In 2012, Carter recorded at least one sack in every game and the result of that were 18 sacks, not to mention registering 136 tackles (79 solo) from the defensive end position.

Malooof didn't hesitate to give Carter his due.

"He's one of the top defensive ends in the nation," said Malooof. "He does things that little guys do and does it with having a frame of 6-5, 230. His motor doesn't stop, he's very physical, he can play in space, he can rush the end, he can do a lot of different things."

The Blue Devils possess a surefire middle linebacker in Keith Mouhon, who registered a whopping 152 tackles in 2012.

The 2013 campaign kicks off on Aug. 24 when the Blue Devils take on Booker T. Washington (Fla.) in a game broadcasted by ESPN.

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PRESEASON FOOTBALL RANKINGS

Class AAAAAA	Class AAAAA	Class AAAA	Class AAA	Class AA	Class A - Private	Class A - Public
1. Norcross	1. Gainesville	1. Sandy Creek	1. Buford	1. Calhoun	1. ELCA	1. Lincoln County
2. Colquitt County	2. Northside-WR	2. Burke County	2. Peach County	2. Brooks County	2. George Walton Acad.	2. Wilcox County
3. North Gwinnett	3. Thomas Co. Central	3. Carrollton	3. Thomson	3. GAC	3. Prince Ave. Chr.	3. Irwin County
4. McEachern	4. Stephenson	4. Cairo	4. Carver-Columbus	4. Fitzgerald	4. Savannah Chr.	4. Wilkinson County
5. Lowndes	5. Flowery Branch	5. Marist	5. St. Pius X	5. Lamar County	5. Landmark Chr.	5. Seminole County
6. North Cobb	6. Tucker	6. Griffin	6. Cartersville	6. Jefferson	6. Brookstone	6. ECI
7. Mill Creek	7. Kell	7. Statesboro	7. North Hall	7. Cook	7. First Presbyterian	7. Marion County
8. Walton	8. M.L. King	8. Westside-Macon	8. Washington Co.	8. Washington-Wilkes	8. Darlington	8. Miller County
9. Lovejoy	9. Whitewater	9. Stockbridge	9. Blessed Trinity	9. Lovett	9. Athens Academy	9. Charlton County
10. Peachtree Ridge	10. Ware County	10. Monroe Area	10. North Oconee	10. Vidalia	10. Holy Innocents'	10. Dooly County

BB&T OPEN



Big-time pro tennis returns to Atlanta

By Chris Nieman

Over the course of nine days (July 20-July 28) the competitive sport of tennis will be inundating the streets of Atlanta with the 2013 BB&T Atlanta Open located at Atlantic Station. The BB&T Atlanta Open is an ATP 250 World Tour event that has been played at Atlantic Station for the past two years and is currently in its third year of a five-year deal. The tournament will also be broadcasted live by ESPN2 and Tennis Channel in front of at least 30,000 avid tennis fans. The prize money is a nice chunk of change sitting at a grand total of \$546,930. Each tournament winner(s) is allocated a decent percentage of the prize money. In this tournament, the singles winner will be awarded \$98,700 and the doubles winners will split \$30,000.

BACKGROUND INFO ...

The BB&T Atlanta Open, which will be played on hard court, consists of a singles main draw, doubles main draw and qualifiers draw. The singles main draw possesses a total of 28 players with four players coming from qualifying. In doubles there will be a 16-team main draw. Last, but not least, is qualifying, which consists of a 32-player singles draw.

The BB&T Atlanta Open has been nothing short of a hit within the tennis community

in Atlanta as well as the city of Atlanta itself. People from all over the area have flocked over to Atlantic Station to watch incredible tennis matches right before their eyes, and 2013 should be another special time for the tennis faithful.

This event plays a lucrative role in ushering in the almighty dollar to the city, host, sponsor, charities, etc.

"I think certainly we've had some convention and visitors bureau reports that were done last year that showed well over a \$10 million economic impact to the city, so certainly that's important," said Bob Bryant, tennis tournament director.

"We're just doing a ton in terms of clinics for kids, in terms of engaging a lot of things the community wouldn't otherwise be exposed to in an event like this and even on the fundraising side," said Bryant.

The Mayor of Atlanta, Kasim Reed has acknowledged the fact that this tournament has benefited the city and also understands how vibrant and strong the tennis community is in Atlanta.

Having an event like this with a very competitive field creates a solid opportunity for exposure.

"This is also tremendous exposure for

the city given that it's a national broadcast for ESPN2 and Tennis Channel," said Bryant. "Also, 18-20 countries that we do broadcast arrangements with as well are really showing the center of the city as this vibrant environment in the tournament.

The location of the BB&T Atlanta Open is in a superb setting at Atlantic Station. The players and fans are impressed with the facility and its amenities which comprise of a multiplex movie theatre and a vast amount of shops and restaurants. Atlantic Station also has magnificent view of Atlanta's skyline. The tournament has two years left on its current agreement with Atlantic Station and thoughts about renewal have been brought up.

"It's been beneficial to both parties and we all intend to keep it going as long as we can," said Bryant.

TALENTED FIELD ...

The 2013 BB&T Atlanta Open is full of talent and will be a spectacle for all who attend the event. In regards to the doubles draw, Bryant is thrilled about the lineup that will be competing.

"I'm extremely excited; this is the best doubles lineup that we've ever had," said Bryant.

The Bryan Brothers will likely be the favorites to win the doubles. After making history at Wimbledon, the Bryan's became the first men's doubles team in the history of Open-era tennis to hold all four major titles at the same time. The combination of Bob and Mark Bryan create the best duo in tennis history and it will take fierce competition to derail their momentum.

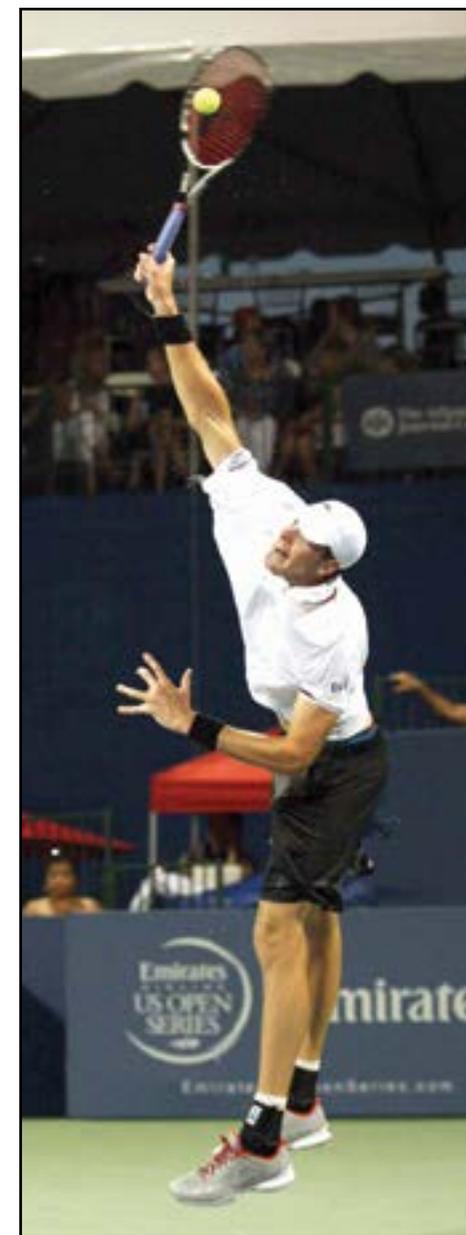
"Getting the Bryan brothers here was great," said Bryant. "But actually if you look at the lineup, we've got several top 20 world doubles teams that are playing and these unique matchups of an Australian Davis Cup team in Lleyton Hewitt and Chris Guccione to James Blake and Jack Sock--two Americans who have actually played very well together and won a tournament before as a doubles team earlier this year."

Having all of these phenomenal doubles teams competing in this tournament is beneficial for the tennis community of Atlanta considering the city has more people playing in doubles leagues and doubles tournaments than anywhere in the country.

In the singles-draw, the talent pool continues. Mardy Fish, the 2011 and 2012 champion, returns to attempt to win three out of four tournaments. It would be his first BB&T Atlanta Open.

Veteran Lleyton Hewitt continues to maintain a competitive nature throughout the course of his career and he looks to add some flavor the field of competitors in the singles draw.

John Isner, a University of Georgia graduate, is a fan favorite who finished runner-up in 2010-2011. Isner certainly has the game and imposing attributes that make him a scary opponent. The former UGA star realizes how



close he has come and has his eyes set on 2013.

"He really wants Atlanta," said Bryant.

Nathan Pasha, a current UGA student-athlete, is competing in the qualifying draw for singles and is a legitimate threat to make the cut. At UGA in the 2012-13 tennis season, Pasha led the Bulldogs in singles victories and was named first team All-SEC and SEC Championships All-Tournament team. The sophomore has been highly impressive in his college career and looks the make a name for himself in Atlanta.

With the overall talent pool and the location of the event being picture perfect, the 2013 BB&T Atlanta Open has all the ingredients for a special tournament.

Photo of stadium courtesy of Matthew Stockman/Getty Images and photo of John Isner courtesy of Bill Kallenberg/BB&T Atlanta Open. Nieman can be reached at cnieman@scoreatl.com.





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DREAM BEAT



Injury bug hits hard on road trip

By Joe Deighton

Every trip to the west coast is difficult. The time change is difficult, the length of travel can be tiresome and not having Angel McCoughtry in the starting lineup can be downright exasperating. The Atlanta Dream not only missed their star player, but also shooting guard Tiffany Hayes and forward Sancho Lyttle. McCoughtry was out due to an Achilles strain, but should be back by next week. The short-handed lineup could not keep up with the Seattle Storm and the Dream was defeated for the second straight time, 73-65.

Head coach Fred Williams had only eight players available in Seattle, but felt that his team put forth an energetic effort nonetheless.

"I thought for the personnel we have on the floor right now, we really generated a lot of energy," Williams told the AP. "But in the fourth quarter, we ran out of gas. We had

some open shots but didn't put those down."

Despite not having a full lineup, Atlanta took a 37-32 lead into halftime. Forward Erika de Souza scored 12 of her team-high 16 points in the first half to lead the Dream. Rookie guard Alex Bentley put up a career-high 16 points, five assists and four steals. Atlanta was led in rebounding by de Souza's 14 boards.

The loss to Seattle snapped a five-game winning streak against the Storm, including a 68-59 win at Philips earlier this season.

ALL-STAR ANGEL ...

It is a certainty that forward Angel McCoughtry will be playing in the 2013 WNBA All-Star Game on July 27 in Connecticut. This will be the third straight trip to the All-Star game for McCoughtry. The only thing left to be determined is whether she will start or not. Starters are voted on by the fans and

the latest update shows McCoughtry trailing Elena Delle Donne and Tamika Catchings by a considerable margin in votes.

McCoughtry should start because she has had a remarkable season. The fifth-year forward is leading the team in points, assists and steals. McCoughtry is leading the league in steals with an average of 3.5 thefts per game.

For the third time in her career, McCoughtry was named player of the month for the month of June after leading Atlanta to a league-best 10-1 mark.

In addition, Angel McCoughtry was nominated for an ESPY award for the second straight season. McCoughtry is up for Best WNBA Player, along with four other of her peers.

FIRST AID ...

Both Sancho Lyttle and Tiffany Hayes underwent successful surgeries last week. Lyttle's surgery was to repair a fractured left foot. The forward sustained the injury in her first game back following a six-game absence while playing in Spain.

Lyttle led Spain to the gold medal in the EuroBasket Women 2013 tournament. She averaged 14.3 points, 8.5 rebounds and 2.5 assists en route to earning the tournament MVP award. The fractured left foot will take 6-8 weeks to heal, which means Lyttle is out until the WNBA playoffs.

Shooting guard Tiffany Hayes underwent surgery to repair a torn meniscus in her left knee. Hayes is in her second season and averages 10.2 points per game. The knee injury will keep her out for the next 3-4 weeks. A full recovery is expected.

McCoughtry strained her Achilles, but a week of rest will help and she should return for Atlanta's next game.

ON THE DOCKET ...

The Dream will continue on the road against Western Conference foes this week with games against the Los Angeles Sparks and the Tulsa Shock. Atlanta defeated Tulsa in the first preseason game at home this year, but has yet to play L.A.

Tulsa has the worst record in the WNBA at 3-13 and will come into Sunday's game as losers of six straight contests. Despite the bad record and long losing streak, Tulsa does have some talented players.

Forward Glory Johnson leads the team with a double-double average of 16.1 points and 10.2 rebounds per game. Johnson has a great low-post game that Atlanta will have to stop in order to come out with a win.

The game against Tulsa will conclude a season-high four game road trip. The Dream returns to Philips Arena on July 24 against Connecticut.

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BULLDOG BEAT



Schmitt selected as SEC's top female athlete

By Chris Nieman

University of Georgia star swimmer Allison Schmitt was selected as 2012-2013 Roy F. Kramer Southeastern Conference Female Athlete of the Year via a vote by the entire SEC's directors of athletics on July 2.

Schmitt has unquestionably made a name for herself with her heroics in the water. In the 2012 London Olympics, Schmitt achieved three gold medals, one silver and one bronze. Not only did Schmitt win multiple Olympic medals, the UGA star also led the Lady Bulldogs swimming team to an SEC title and National Championship in her senior year.

"There are so many exceptional athletes in our conference, so to win this award is really humbling," Schmitt said. "I think the SEC is the greatest conference in the country. Just from a swimming standpoint, you have Olympians and NCAA champions all over the place. And then with the other sports, what those women have accomplished is so impressive. This is truly an honor, and it's one that I share with my family and friends who have supported me throughout my career, my teammates, my coaches and all the people who love the University of Georgia."

WATCH LISTS ...

There are multitudes of Bulldogs who

have been named to award watch lists at their particular positions. Quarterback Aaron Murray and running back Todd Gurley are a pair of Bulldogs on the Maxwell Award watch list, given to the collegiate player of the year. Wide receiver Malcolm Mitchell has been named to the Paul Hornung Watch List, given to the most versatile player in college. Tight end Arthur Lynch has been named to the Mackey Award watch list, given to the nation's top tight end.

Defensive back Damian Swann has been named to two watch lists, the Jim Thorpe award, given to the nation's best defensive back and the Bronko Nagurski award, given to the national defensive player of the year. Offensive lineman Chris Burnette has been named to two watch lists, the Outland Trophy, given to the nation's best interior lineman and also the Rotary Lombardi watch list. Linebacker Jordan Jenkins has been named to the Butkus Award watch list, given to the nation's best linebacker.

After watching a handful of its stars depart for the NFL and/or graduate last season, Georgia looks like it has a few guys who can step up and take new leadership roles.

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TECH BUZZ



"The Process" gives look at football program

By Sean Conway

As college football fast approaches, the buzz is beginning to swarm down on The Flats. The sports information department and marketing teams have been busy promoting the 2013 season. One effort to get fans foaming for football is of the traditional variety, the other effort is a little more avant-garde.

Tech recently revealed that their annual Fan Day activities will be held beginning at 3:00 p.m. on Callaway Plaza just outside Grant Field at Bobby Dodd Stadium on Aug. 3. The party begins with games, inflatable playsets for kids, cheerleaders, the Rambling Wreck and Buzz.

All the players and head coach Paul Johnson will be available for pictures and autographs beginning at 4:00 inside the stadium. Attendance is free and all fans receive a free poster.

In less traditional fashion, the athletic department is promoting "The Process." The Process is a series of webisodes over nine weeks that chronicles the Yellow Jackets preparations for the 2013 season. It can be accessed through www.rambinwreck.com.

The Process is a sort of documentary-meets-reality show-meets-online marketing opportunity. Viewers get a behind the scenes look at the football program from every angle including the coaches, players and facilities.

While it definitely casts the team in a favorable light, it also proves very informative for non-college football insiders.

JACKETS TO WATCH ...

Every mid-July, the college football postseason awards begin releasing their "watch lists" of candidates, and the Yellow Jackets are well represented this summer.

Defensive end Jeremiah Attaochu is drawing more than his share of attention. The senior, who has 19 career sacks, will be studied closely for the Bednarik Award (top defensive player), Nagurski Trophy (top defensive player), Rotary Lombardi Award (top lineman/linebacker) and Butkus Award (top linebacker). Senior cornerback Jemea Thomas is also in consideration for the Bednarik Award, and senior Brandon Watts is in consideration for the Butkus Award. Thomas grabbed seven interceptions in 2012 while Watts registered two sacks and 8.5 tackles for negative yardage.

Senior center Jay Finch is in consideration for the Rimington Trophy, awarded to college football's premier center. Junior Jamal Golden is in the running for the Paul Hornung Award, which recognizes the game's most versatile player.

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PANTHER PROWL



Miles gets first taste of new conference

By Jay Underwood

With the conclusion of the Sun Belt Conference's media days in New Orleans, we have entered the home stretch until the return of college football. Representing Georgia State at the Superdome were head coach Trent Miles and senior offensive tackle Ulrick John. Miles talked about how measuring success with wins doesn't tell the whole story, especially in a program's infancy. What he is expecting out of his team this upcoming season is to compete at a high level.

COMING TOGETHER ...

John spent his time with the media talking about how the older players on the team have been stepping up this offseason and taking on a leadership role that had been neglected in years past. John along with other seniors have been organizing team building outings throughout the summer such as trips to Six Flags and an upcoming Braves game. Just building the bonds between players should help the team when the going gets tough through the long upcoming season.

The coach that has surprised John the most has been his new offensive coordinator. Jeff Jagodzinski has an illustrious coaching career with its pinnacle during his two seasons as Boston College's head coach where he amassed a 20-8

record and captured two ACC Atlantic Division titles. Now he is here, in the city where his crown jewel, Matt Ryan, completes passes on Sundays. Ulrick says that he is blown away by how much Jagodzinski knows about football. He says that he has already learned so much and looks forward to using it on the field to make himself a more complete player.

HARROW CLEARED ...

Ryan Harrow was formally cleared to participate and compete with the Georgia State Panthers this upcoming season. The former Kentucky guard transferred to Georgia State this year and under normal NCAA protocol would have had to sit out this upcoming season, but the NCAA deemed the cause for transfer sufficient.

Harrow is transferring closer to home so that he can be around family while his father is recovering from his medical conditions. Now that he is here, the four-man rotation of RJ Hunter, Devonta White, Manny Atkins, and now Harrow should make the Panthers the favorite in the Sun Belt. The basketball season can't get here soon enough for Coach Hunter and the Panthers.

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OWL OUTLOOK



Football season ticket info released

By Brian Jones

KSU rising junior Jimmy Beck proved that he is one of the best amateur golfers in the state this past weekend as he won the Georgia State Amateur.

The event took place at the Pinetree Country Club in Kennesaw and Beck was able to win by shooting a 2-under par 69 in the final round on Sunday. In the four rounds Beck played in, he shot 73, 70, 73 and 69 to tally and overall score of 1-over par 285, which is two shots better than Travis Williamson.

"I had a fun week and I'm truly blessed to have the support of my parents, team, and Pinetree members," Beck told ksuowls.com after the event. "This is a humbling experience and I am still trying to soak it all in. I am so honored to have my name associated with great champions such as Bobby Jones."

Beck was one of six current or former Owls that took part in the tournament. Jonathan Klotz and assistant coach Chad Wilson each tied for 11th, shooting 8-over par.

BOY OF SUMMER ...

Max Pentecost had a strong year for the baseball team this past season, and he shows no signs of slowing down.

Pentecost is currently playing in the Cape Cod League which is a collegiate base-

ball summer league, and was recently named Player of the Week. On July 10, Pentecost broke a league record by reaching base safely seven times. In the following game, Pentecost hit two homers and ended the week at 8-for-11 with six RBIs and two walks.

As of Wednesday, Pentecost is tied for the league lead with five homers and is also second in the league in batting average (.370).

OTHER NEWS ...

KSU released its football ticket information last week and season tickets will cost \$99 for the first three seasons. In order to be eligible, a \$20 deposit is required along with a completed letter of intent that will make that fan a part of the Priority Seat Program. Seats will be selected in the spring of 2015 which is also year the Owls will play their first game.

In basketball news, the 2013-14 schedule was released this week and the non-conference part of the schedule is nothing to laugh at.

The Owls will play Georgia Tech, Indiana, Kent State, Cincinnati, Mississippi State and Florida International this season. They will receive \$80,000 when they take on Cincinnati as well as Mississippi State.

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HAWKS HAVEN



Hawks busy constructing roster

By Ricky Dimon

To the surprise of almost nobody, Atlanta's Chris Paul and Dwight Howard idea went by the wayside. Paul re-signed with the Clippers and Howard bolted Los Angeles for Houston. As a result, the Hawks turned their attention elsewhere.

General manager Danny Ferry started rebuilding through the draft with centers Lucas Nogueira—perhaps already known to fans as “afro man”—and Mike Muscala along with German point guard Dennis Schroeder, who signed a contract last week. On Monday, the Hawks inked 34-year-old Elton Brand to a one-year deal.

Ferry's biggest move of the offseason so far was landing Paul Millsap, another power forward, formerly of the Utah Jazz. Millsap has averaged at least 14 points and seven rebounds in each of his last three seasons. He scored a career-high 17.3 points in 2010-11 and grabbed a career-best 8.8 boards in 2011-12. Last year, with slightly reduced minutes on an improved Jazz team that just barely missed the playoffs, Millsap posted averages of 14.6 points and 7.1 rebounds.

“I know they are not going to have a lot of the same team they had last year with a new coach and new players,” Millsap explained to the Atlanta Journal Constitution. “The direc-

tion they are headed in is the direction that I'm headed in and that's growth, continue to get better and strive for that ultimate goal.”

TEAGUE COMING BACK ...

A few familiar faces previously not guaranteed to be back will, in fact, be returning to Atlanta. One is point guard Jeff Teague, who had been rumored to be headed to Milwaukee—following the footsteps of Larry Drew and Zaza Pachulia—either via free agency or through a sign-and-trade deal that likely would have brought Brandon Jennings to the Hawks. Instead, Ferry decided to match the Bucks' four-year, \$32-million offer sheet.

“I was a restricted free agent and I knew that all along,” Teague told the AJC. “I'm glad to be back in Atlanta. It's been home for four years. It's time to get back to work. I know they are building a winning culture and I'm excited to be a part of it. I've got a good four years to be here and help this team get to a place we haven't been.”

Also returning is sharpshooter Kyle Korver, who signed a four-year, \$24-million deal last week.

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FALCONS BEAT



Falcons approach training camp

By Craig Sager II

Training camp begins next week and it will be the last chance for guys to win position battles, and in some cases make the final roster. One of the players that will be approaching training camp with an all-business mentality is linebacker Brian Banks. Thought once to be a long-shot roster slot, Banks will have training camp and the preseason to earn a spot on the final roster.

TIME TO SHINE ...

In the secondary, the unit appears deep. Robert McClain, Dominique Franks and rookies Desmond Trufant and Robert Alford are all still battling for the starting job opposite of Asante Samuel. Trufant has the NFL family lineage and raw athleticism to likely name him the starter, but Alford and Franks have looked capable.

“Just coming from Southeastern (Louisiana) to the NFL, there's a lot that I need to learn,” said Alford. “Going against Julio and [Roddy] everyday is getting me better. Both of them are Pro Bowl-caliber receivers. I'm going against the best and that's the only thing I can do to help me get bet better as a player.”

Training camp will feature full pads and

the competition is expected to crank up and “Friday Night Light's will be the first time we do live tackling in game speed,” according to Mike Smith.

Second-year defensive end Jonathan Massaquoi, used his rookie season to gain the trust of his coaches, and is ready to contend for a major role in this year's defense. Massaquoi did not miss an OTA this offseason, and during that time and mini-camp was putting in the extra work. One-on-one instruction from the defensive coaches for up to an hour followed the majority of the sessions. With Osi Umenyiora looking to rejuvenate his All-Pro career as the Falcons primary rusher, there could be two former Troy pass rushers anchoring the defensive front.

The offensive line competition is settling down, with Peter Konz taking over the center position, and the rest of the starting offense seems to be set in stone. Mike Smith will not run Steven Jackson a lot in the preseason, so as expected, the backup quarterbacks and receivers will get a chance to prove themselves.

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CHOP SHOP



Team effort leads Braves to first place

By Sean Conway

As the second half of the 2013 Major League Baseball season begins, it's clear the Atlanta Braves are a sum greater than their individual parts. The entire roster contributes. While no players are having an MVP or Cy Young caliber season, the Braves have a comfortable lead in the National League East with less than 60 games remaining.

KEY COGS ...

Closer Craig Kimbrel was justly selected for his second All-Star Game in a row, and he's been great with 26 saves and a 1.53 ERA and 54 strikeouts through 35.1 innings. However, his numbers don't project to match last season's 1.01 ERA with 116 strikeouts over 62.2 innings.

Freddie Freeman is becoming a top tier first baseman, but as good as he's been, his numbers (9 HRs, 61 RBIs, .308 BA, and .854 on-base plus slugging percentage) don't overshadow Arizona Diamondbacks' Paul Goldschmidt (21 HRs, 77 RBIs, .313 BA, .953 OPS) or Cincinnati Reds' Joey Votto (15 HRs, 42, RBIs, .318 BA, .939 OPS).

After missing the first six weeks recovering from off-season shoulder surgery, catcher Brian McCann has rebounded to his perennial All-Star form, but he's not quite dominant

with a .291 average and 12 HRs and 32 RBIs.

The Braves are above their NL East rivals thanks to consistency of their non-All-Stars. Consider these contributions. Rookie catcher Evan Gattis has surpassed expectations with 14 homers in 167 at bats including some clutch bombs as a pinch hitter. His defense has also been more than adequate catching, at first base and in left field.

Second baseman Dan Uggla has been much maligned for his .200 average, but his 18 home runs are six more than All-Star starter Brandon Phillips, and his OPS is also slightly better.

Over at third base, Chris Johnson is proving that he is more than an afterthought in the trade that netted Justin Upton from Arizona. Johnson's .330 batting average trumps All-Star wonderboy David Wright by 24 points, and Johnson is second only to Wright in third basemen with over 150 at bats in OPS.

Then, there is the pitching. No starter has missed their spot in the rotation and all have logged at least 113 innings. In the bullpen, lefthander Luis Avilan deserves major props. He leads the team in ERA at 1.40 and in walks plus hits per inning at .930.

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SILVERBACKS BEAT



Haynes' squad wins league championship

By Donnell Suggs

The Silverbacks won the 2013 North American Soccer League spring season championship on the Fourth of July by defeating Minnesota United FC 3-0 in Blaine, Minn. That win coupled with a 2-0 loss a half hour or so later by the Carolina Railhawks in San Antonio secured the title for Atlanta. Atlanta has the right to host the Soccer Bowl championship game this November against the team that wins the Fall Season championship.

Minnesota tested Silverbacks goalie Joe Nasco early with a few shots on goal, but failed to score before the Atlanta back line solidified. On offense, the Silverbacks only managed one first-half goal by forward Brad Stisser on a momentum-shifting header off a free kick from midfielder Pablo Cruz that was earned by defender Mike Randolph, but had plenty of chances due to great runs by forwards like Pedro Mendes.

Two more goals in the second half, first by midfielder Bobby Reiss in the 73rd minute to put the 'Backs up 2-0 followed by a score by the team's leading goal scorer Ruben Luna, who was a substitute on the evening, in the 83rd minute. The goal was Luna's fifth on the season, tying him for third overall in the league scoring chart. The Silverbacks return for the fall season with a home opener against Carolina.

MAKING HISTORY ...

“It feels great to be a part of any kind of Atlanta sports history,” said Haynes. “My assistant coach (Franklin McIntosh) and I played together in Atlanta and failed to win a championship, but we were just saying how much better it feels to win one as coaches. It's like we have come full circle.”

The Atlanta Silverbacks organization presented the 2013 Spring Season Championship trophy to an assemblage of media at Silverbacks Park. The gleaming silver plate was hoisted around the tent by a number of players and coaches while television cameras and cell phone cameras alike flashed, capturing the moment for all posterity.

Head coach Brian Haynes and his family were on hand for the ceremony, having played professional soccer in this city. Haynes knows of Atlanta's championship struggles, but feels like this is only the start of a new era.

“It's [winning] a contagious thing,” said Haynes. “If we take it for granted we can go backwards. The coaches and players here will not allow that to happen.”

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