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CAN'T MISS THIS WEEK

- 4** Check out The Fletch and The Dimon Club on our columnists page.
- 5** Fletcher Proctor writes about "commitment" as Signing Day approaches.
- 7** In our prep cover story, Stephen Black reports on how much coaches influence the college decisions of their players.
- 15** See the latest Regions Directors Cup leaders here!



SHOT OF THE WEEK...



RAIDERS RULE: The Alpharetta boys swimming and diving team celebrates after capturing its fifth consecutive Fulton County boys championship. Johns Creek won the overall title after dominating the girls meet. Photo courtesy of Alpharetta Swimming and Diving.

TEAM SCOOP AND VOICES

COVER DESIGN BY DJ GALBIATI
COVER PHOTOS COURTESY OF SCOTT CUNNINGHAM
AND ERIN SHEPPARD

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INSIDE AT SCORE

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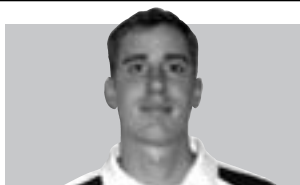
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THE FLETCH



Sports talk radio arguments cause confusion

By Fletcher Proctor

It is a debate that three years ago was laughable. Now it is a debate that we might need to start having, especially if the Giants are able to knock off the Patriots next Sunday: Is Eli Manning better than his older brother Peyton?

DEFENDING RYAN ...

Driving around Atlanta, listening to sports radio callers and hosts spout on and on about how Matt Ryan is overrated because he has never won in the postseason is making me crazy. According to that logic the postseason is the only thing that matters, right Chuck Oliver and Mike Bell?

Okay, if you want to use that argument

and New York does beat New England, be prepared to bow down to Eli in the discussion of the better Manning brother. Eli would be 2-0 in Super Bowls while Peyton sits at .500. Preposterous? Not according to your logic that says the regular season apparently means nothing and the postseason means everything.

I get tired of people on the web, in emails to the Score Atlanta staff and on the radio banging on Matt Ryan. Yes, he is 0-3 in the playoffs, but Ryan is also 43-19 in the regular season. You cannot discount this. That is an average of around 11-4 (he missed two games his second season). You are telling me that is awful? That is garbage?

Tim Tebow won a playoff game this

year but ask any knowledgeable Denver fan who he'd rather have. The answer would be simple: Matt Ryan. He will get his postseason wins in, don't worry. And until then, feel free to indulge yourself in an Eli vs. Peyton debate.

On a side note, I brought this issue up on Facebook before the Giants beat the 49ers, and the opinions were mixed.

PANTHERS COVERAGE ...

Great job by the local newspapers for giving Georgia State some props. Both Score Atlanta and the AJC have been all over the Panthers this year after new coach Ron Hunter kicked off the year with one of the best starts in program history. The AJC has done a nice job of letting Doug Roberson fully immerse himself in Georgia State basketball, and Mark Bradley even stopped by before one of the Panthers games.

Meanwhile, Score Atlanta covered the winning streak with previews and recaps of the games later during the double-digit streak. We were even able to snag a few photos of the orange jerseys that were on display on the www.scoreatl.com front page. With Georgia and Georgia Tech struggling this season, ex-

pect the AJC to pay a little more attention to the Panthers. Score Atlanta will, of course, continue to be on the ball as we've had the Panther Prowl beat for years both online and just a few page turns from this sentence.

And if Georgia State makes the postseason, we might even throw one of our beat writers in a team gym bag to go cover the Big Dance.

HAWKY LOVE ...

Finally, if you ask nationally people's thoughts on the Atlanta Hawks, odds are you'd hear, "Charles Barkley hates them, so they can't be good." Don't look now, though, but the Hawks were 13-5 at press deadline, good enough for the second-best record in the Eastern Conference.

The lone team ahead of Atlanta: Chicago, a team that the Hawks beat once and should have a second time. Atlanta has thumped plenty of teams early. The key will be to survive without Al Horford down low, as he is likely out until playoff time. Hey ESPN, it might be time for a little Hawks love. Just a simple request.

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THE DIMON CLUB



Dawgs, Jackets struggle while Hawks soar

By Ricky Dimon

No Al Horford, no problem? Well, the jury is still out on that question, but so far so good for the Southeast Division-leading Atlanta Hawks.

As of Wednesday afternoon, they are 13-5 overall and 6-1 without Big Al. Joe Johnson has scored no less than 23 points in each of his team's last six victories and Josh Smith is averaging 17.1 points, 11 rebounds and two blocks in the past seven games. Ivan Johnson, Zaza Pachulia and Jannero Pargo all scored in double-figures in a blowout of Cleveland last Saturday and Zaza grabbed 14 boards in a win road win over Milwaukee on Monday.

Right now, it looks like Horford's injury could end up being a blessing in disguise. The team's other stars are stepping up and learning how to lead the team both on and off the court. A deep bench is getting a workout and making essential contributions. And, if rehab goes according to plan, Horford could return just in time for the playoffs, fresh and ready to rumble.

At the same time, though, excitement must be tempered. Atlanta has generally been beating up on cupcakes without Horford. Charlotte, Toronto, Cleveland, Milwaukee... you know the drill. But now it gets serious and the Horford-less Hawks will soon find out what they are all about. The Hawks played at

San Antonio on Wednesday and in the first two weeks of February they will face Memphis, Philadelphia, Indiana, Orlando, Miami and the Lakers. At that point, Larry Drew and company will know what kind of seed they are looking at for the playoffs.

DAWG DAYS ...

We all knew Tech and Georgia were going to be bad in hoops this year, but this bad? Wow. Neither team is above .500 and both are 1-5 in conference play heading into the weekend. That leaves the Jackets dead last in the ACC while the Bulldogs sit second to last in the SEC ahead of only South Carolina.

What's especially frustrating about Tech is that the team has shown reason for optimism. The Yellow Jackets hammered 2011 Final Four participant VCU in November, were within two points of Duke in the final two minutes earlier this month, somehow beat N.C. State on the road for their lone ACC victory, and fell at Clemson by just two points last Saturday.

Which makes the bad news (and there's a lot of it) even more perplexing. The Jackets have taken losses to Tulane, Mercer and

Fordham. They scored 50 points against LSU. They scored 48 points in a 25-point loss to Alabama. They scored 50 points at Maryland. They scored...wait for it...a whopping 38 in a 32-point blowout loss to Virginia. In Atlanta. And they scored 49 points in a 15-point loss to Miami. Again, in Atlanta.

All you really need to know about Georgia is that it lost to Georgia Tech. At home! By double-digits! But it would not be fair to Tech fans to lay into their team without throwing some much-deserved haymakers at the Dawgs. So here goes.

While the Jackets are all the way down at 274th in the nation in points per game (63.1), the Bulldogs' offense is even worse. Their 61.1 points per contest are good for a ranking of No. 308 in the nation—just ahead of Hartford and just behind the likes of Stephen F. Austin, Radford and Bryant University. The Dawgs are throwing up bricks at an alarming rate. They are 319th in the nation in FG percentage (.396) and 267th in three-point shooting (.317).

The good news for both teams is that there's nowhere to go but up.... At least let's hope.

Dimon can be reached at rdimon@scoreatl.com.



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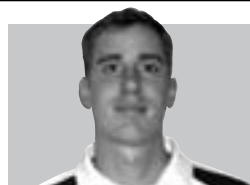
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SIGNING DAY COUNTDOWN



Recruits weigh options as Signing Day nears

By Fletcher Proctor



the game at on Saturday.

Anyone upset with the generalization that some men just cannot commit need look no further than the recruiting drama playing out across the state of Georgia as we near National Signing Day this Wednesday. Desperate teams start flooding the cell phones of waffling recruits, courting them harder than ever in an attempt to get a switched pledge and a letter of intent.

As much as we like to believe what the word “committed” means sadly, when a high school junior or senior commits, it really doesn’t mean anything until that player puts pen to paper and paper to fax machine on National Signing Day. Up until that point, everything is just lip service and non-binding. There have been multiple cases over the years of players pledging to a coach only to pull a switcharoo on National Signing Day.

Two metro-area players, Tucker’s Josh Dawson and Sandy Creek’s JaQuay Williams, have been “committed” to Vanderbilt and Auburn, respectively for months, but Mark Richt and the Georgia Bulldogs managed to snare each last week for visits and both enjoyed their trips according to various recruiting services and tweets.

Williams, a wide receiver is the No. 11 player on the Score Final 50 while Dawson, a defensive end, checks in at No. 25. After Georgia lost Flowery Branch’s C.J. Curry earlier this year, a spot at wide receiver opened up, and Richt charged after the Auburn pledge. Richt and company also waited on Dawson to see what No. 32 Kenderius Whitehead would do, and after the ML King DE/OLB pledged to N.C. State, the Dawgs started charging. It

may seem shady, but these players are not truly “committed” to Vanderbilt and Auburn until after the Letter of Intent gets sent in.

COACHING CHANGES ...

Committed is a funny word too when expecting high schoolers to stick to their word when coaches do not always abide by that rule. Coaches jump ship to better jobs or sometimes get the axe, and in these cases, commitments can change.

Kyle Slotter of Mt. Pisgah recently switched his pledge from Tulane to Southern Miss after the coaching staff at Tulane was fired, and the man that recruited him made his way to Southern Miss. Now Slotter will sign with the Eagles to play for the coach with whom he fostered a recruiting relationship. Slotter’s father told Score Atlanta, “Kyle took a visit to Southern Miss and wants to go where he is wanted more.”

Other players such as Josh Harvey-Clemons of Lowndes (No. 3) and Dalvin Tomlinson (No. 18) of Henry County have yet to declare and likely will on National Signing Day. Sometimes players like to wait until National Signing Day so that they can take all of their official visits to make a well-informed decision. Other times players are merely seeking the limelight and want to have ESPN, Rivals, Scout and 247Sports drool all over them, anticipating their every move. Last year, Jadeveon Clowney waited nearly two weeks after National Signing Day so that he could declare on his birthday in front of a live television audience with no one else stealing his thunder. For two weeks the buildup of “where will he go” prevented any rankings list from being able to run on various websites. Harvey-Clemons and Tomlinson were still making visits up through our press deadline and had not yet committed, though both are believed to be signing on National Signing Day.

BE TRUE ...

Then you have the players who commit early and stick with that pledge through National Signing Day, even acting as ambas-

sadors for their future college. St. Pius X’s Geno Smith comes to mind as one of these players. Smith, who pledged to Nick Saban and Alabama last summer, has been pushing hard along with Hillgrove’s Kenyan Drake and Cedar Grove’s Brandon Greene, trying to get all the recruits they can to come to suit up for the Crimson Tide on Feb. 1. Each participated in national all-star games and both were reportedly pushing undecided players towards Tuscaloosa.

Chris Leak of Charlotte’s Independence High School was well known for being former Florida coach Ron Zook’s first big-time recruit, and he played the Pied Piper, leading plenty of fellow prep stars down to Gainesville. Last season, Damian Swann helped the Dream Team land Ray Drew, Isaiah Crowell, Malcolm Mitchell and Jay Rome after he pledged to be a Bulldog at the US Army All-American game. Swann really got the ball going as Richt and Georgia finished strong in January and February. Recruits that take the drama out early and stick with their pledge are a breath of fresh air in these days of me-first, spotlight-seeking 17-year olds.

So what will Wednesday mean in the grand scheme of things? Wednesday is a day to be celebrated not just because Georgia signed “The Dream Team II,” or because Georgia Tech landed its best defensive prospect yet under Paul Johnson. The day should be celebrated because young men across the state of Georgia have chosen to use football as a vehicle to matriculate to colleges and universities of higher learning across the country. These football players have weathered the drama of recruiting to declare they will seek out college degrees while bashing heads on the gridiron.

Will they all go on to NFL successes? No. But all will be better for continuing their educations. We can perhaps give them a pass for perhaps switching a pledge or two along the way; hopefully it was for a better purpose than just attention-seeking.

Photo courtesy of Walter Pinion. Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.



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WHO'S HOT

THUMBS UP TO
YOUNG PUPS



UGA Recruiting

With college football's National Signing Day coming up Wednesday, head Bulldog Mark Richt is wrapping up another strong class up Highway 316. Running back Keith Marshall is a nationally-ranked player, and ESPN currently has Georgia's class as the nation's fifth best.

Braves new unis

With a few keystrokes on the ol' computer you can find images of the Braves' new alternate home jerseys. Luckily, for Braves fans, the new threads harken back to their home look in the late 1960s (instead of resembling the alternate red and blue "pajama top/ Little League" jerseys).

Extended flight plan

Last issue, we commended the Hawks for their strong start, thinking they were playing at an unsustainable pace. Now, they're atop the Eastern Conference's Southeast Division and are within a half game of the conference's second spot. The Hawks are ranked among the top quarter of the league in both scoring offense and defense.

NFL Pro Bowl

Maybe we're just cranky because the Falcons got bounced out of the playoffs early. Or maybe we're lovin' the intensity and regularity of the compressed NBA schedule. Who knows? What everyone does know is that the Pro Bowl, with their silly uniforms and watered-down rosters, is not worthy of the NFL brand.

Tech Recruiting

We've heard Tech's Paul Johnson downplay recruiting hype for years now. And while recruiting isn't an exact science and Tech does plays a fairly unique style of offense, do you really want to be rated below ACC teams like N.C. State and Maryland on the grid-iron? No, you don't.

Braves payroll

General manager Frank Wren and the boys have proven they can be competitive on the budget allotted by Braves' ownership, Liberty Media. We appreciate that, but to contend for more than for a wild-card spot every September, somebody's got to loosen up the purse strings and get us another playa.



WHO'S NOT

THUMBS DOWN TO
CHEAP OWNERS

SCORE LIST

BY BRIAN JONES

1 SUPER SUNDAY: After an intense and exciting three weeks of NFL playoff action, two teams have emerged from the smoke. The New England Patriots will square off against the New York Giants in a rematch from Super Bowl 42. Can Tom Brady win his fourth championship ring and cement his legacy, or will Eli Manning win the title on his brother's home field? As a Falcons fan I don't care who wins, but I think the G-Men will take the Lombardi Trophy.

2 NEW COACHES: The Falcons want to be where the Patriots and the Giants are next season, so they are working hard to have a 2012 championship run. They have hired a new offensive coordinator in Dirk Koetter and a new defensive coordinator in Mike Nolan. I think these are great additions to the Falcons' coaching staff and they should help the Birds (hopefully) win some playoff games.

3 SIGNING DAY: Feb. 1 will be a huge day for high school and college sports as National Signing Day will take place all over the country. Here in Georgia, hundreds, if not thousands of athletes will sign their letters of intent and will have their dreams fulfilled. Both Tech and Georgia are expected to have very good classes, especially the Bulldogs who will sign top recruits John Theus and Keith Marshall. It's always an exciting day, and I can't wait to be a part of it.

4 HOT HAWKS: We all knew the Hawks were a good team, but did anyone think they would be playing this well at this point of the season? Since losing Al Horford to a pectoral injury, The Hawks have won six of their last seven games, and as of Wednesday, they have a half-game lead in the Southeast division. They have been playing well because they have gotten great production from Joe Johnson, Josh Smith and Jeff Teague. Hopefully the Hawks can continue to play consistent basketball for the next three months.

5 R.I.P. JOEPA: He may not have coached for Georgia or Georgia Tech, but former Penn State head coach Joe Paterno, who passed away from lung cancer over the weekend, was the most respected coach in all of college football. Paterno has won over 400 games, three conference titles and two national titles. It's a shame that he was fired because of a terrible lapse in judgement, but JoePa should be remembered for all the good he did for Penn State and college football.

CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS

BY THOMAS WATSON

\$370	Price of the cheapest 2012 Atlanta Braves season ticket package
\$5,108	Price for the most expensive 2012 Atlanta Braves season ticket package
12	Braves pitchers on the 40-man roster who will be 25 or younger at the start of the season
63.1	Points per game for the Tech men's basketball team, ranking 268th out of 338 Div. I schools
61.9	Points per game for the UGA men's basketball team, 290th out of 338 Div. I schools
38	Steals for Jeff Teague through 18 games, third most in the NBA
38	Three-pointers made by Joe Johnson through 18 games, third most in the NBA
137	Defensive rebounds for Josh Smith, fourth most in the NBA
4	Years remaining on Dunta Robinson's six-year, \$57 Million contract; Robinson has three picks in two seasons with Falcons
3.5	Sacks by Ray Edwards after earning 16.5 the previous two seasons

TRIVIA QUESTION

Dominique Wilkins will receive the Atlanta Sports Council's 2012 Lifetime Achievement Award. Who received the award last year?

Answer on Page 14

SANITY AT LAST

"Minutes will not be as high as they've been in the past. It's a nice problem to have."

- Hawks coach Larry Drew on adding Kirk Hinrich to a rotation that has been clicking of late.

MY TWO CENTS

National Signing Day is like Christmas morning for college football fans all across the nation. But for the athletes themselves, it can be a time full of uncertainty and confusion.

While it is easy to sit on the periphery of the situation and judge these young men, it is a lot harder to be in their shoes. There are grown men who get paid a lot of money to recruit them and get them to change their minds. Can you blame a teenager for having doubts about something they are "committed" to?

A lot of us have trouble deciding where to eat lunch or what to wear today. Imagine being 18-years old and having to decide between playing for Mark Richt, Nick

Saban, Paul Johnson or Les Miles?

My point is this: take it easy on these kids. Don't criticize or judge them if they change their commitment or waffle on signing day. They are under a lot more pressure than most of us were when we were that age.

So if a player reneges on a commitment to your school or chooses your arch rival over your alma mater, keep the big picture in mind. Let the young men make up their own minds. After all, they are the ones who will have to live with their decision.

Black can be reached at sblack@scoreatl.com.



SCORE

PREP



GUIDANCE AND WISDOM

The role of the head coach in recruiting

By Stephen Black

Recruiting fans and gurus like to hear about whom each recruit is favoring and what trips they will be making. But who has input into those decisions? Obviously the players' families and friends have a huge role in that, but so do others. One person who generally has some input is each recruit's high school head coach.

COACHING ADVICE ...

Quite a few high school players look to their head coach as a father figure. In this role, the coach provides guidance and advice to college recruits. But how much guidance do they provide and what type of advice do they give?

"I leave it up to the kid and the family unless they ask me questions," said Cedar Grove head coach Ray Bonner. "I'll give my professional opinion when asked."

Bonner, who was head coach at Alabama A&M from 1991-1993, has seen recruiting from both sides of the coin. Bonner knows what it is like to recruit players for college and

what it's like to mentor high school recruits.

"At Alabama A&M, we would try to find out who the person was to talk to," said Bonner, about the recruiting game. "Sometimes it was the parents, sometimes the coach or even a teacher."

At Cedar Grove, Bonner fulfills the opposite role. Sometimes his role entails getting exposure for players who are not being recruited by the power programs.

"It's easy when the big programs recruit a kid," said Bonner about his role in recruiting. "But the Division II-level kids take more work."

Both Bonner and Stone Mountain head coach Dante Ferguson have assistant coaches help them get the word out about their lesser-known recruits.

"My offensive coordinator helps me with recruiters by sending film, contact information, stats, etc.," said Ferguson. "If they contact me, I'll give them the information. Otherwise, my OC will handle that."

Also like Bonner, Ferguson has been on

both sides of the recruiting process, and has noticed how recruiting has changed since he signed with Vanderbilt in the early 80s.

"When I was being recruited, you didn't commit until a month before signing day," said Ferguson. "Now, you have kids committing 11 months before signing day."

But the former Commodores tight end said that isn't the only change in the process.

"The camps, rankings and websites were not around then," said Ferguson. "And a lot of kids can't afford to go to camps, which hurts them in recruiting. I think the colleges miss out on some really good players due to the rankings."

While the process keeps changing, one thing remains the same: high school coaches have an active role in recruiting.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH ...

From a player's perspective, there are different ways to approach the recruiting process. Some are able to make their own decision with minimal help from others, while some rely on coaches, family members or friends to help them decide.

Stone Mountain's Markuss Eligwe approached things differently than most recruits. He took the recruiting process head on, the same way the senior linebacker takes on

ballcarriers.

"My parents aren't really big into sports, so they just wanted me to get my (college) education," said Eligwe about his recruitment. "So I pretty much handled it myself."

Eligwe, a Florida State commit, did eventually ask for advice from coaches, but for the most part did the research and exploration himself. In a Tuesday interview with Score Atlanta, Eligwe said he didn't come into the recruiting process with a plan or a firm idea of how it would go.

"I basically took it day-by-day," he said. "Towards the end, I asked my coaches for advice, but in the beginning, I started looking at schools by myself."

Eligwe also had a great resource available to him that many other recruits don't possess: coaches who went through the big-time college recruiting process.

"I asked my coaches for advice, like what they went through when they were recruited," Eligwe said with a nod to his head coach, who played in the SEC.

While there is more than one way to skin a cat, coaches generally have at least a little influence on the recruitment of their players.

Photos courtesy of Jon Barash and ADF Photography. Black can be reached at sblack@scoreatl.com.

BASKETBALL NEWS



Top teams converge at Norcross

By Brian Jones

Norcross High School was the place to be over the weekend as it hosted the Hilton Invitational where some of the best teams in the state and the country came together for a final showcase before the playoffs began.

Some of the teams from Georgia included the host school, Wheeler, Harrison and Greater Atlanta Christian. Some of the out-of-state schools that made the trip were Dr. Phillips (Fla.) and Olympic (N.C.).

The Blue Devils played Charlotte Christian (N.C.) Saturday and came away with a 60-57 win. Jason Croom led the Blue Devils with 15 points and nine rebounds while Myles Autry added 13.

Harrison was also a big winner on Saturday as they slipped past Dr. Phillips 81-76. Ryan Blumenthal scored 28 points for the Hoyas while Marshall Guilmette added 18 points and four rebounds.

Other local teams that won were Greater Atlanta Christian and Columbia. GAC beat South Cobb 62-42 and the Eagles got past United Faith (N.C.) 49-47.

REGIONAL RACES ...

There is an intense battle for the top spot in Region 7-5A. Norcross leads North Gwinnett by one game, but the Bulldogs hold the potential tiebreaker because they defeated the Blue Devils 67-54 last Tuesday. The next time these two teams will play will be on Feb. 10, which will be the final regular season game for both teams.

In other 5A news, Shiloh and Berkmar are tied for the top spot in Region 8. The Patriots have won six of their last seven games including a 46-45 win over the Generals on Jan. 13. These two teams have already played twice and would not meet again until the region tournament.

In Class 4A, Miller Grove lost to Chamblee 56-54 which makes it the first time this year a team from Georgia has defeated the Wolverines. The other five Miller Grove losses came against out-of-state teams.

DIAMOND DOWN ...

Since losing to Hoover (Ala.), the Norcross Lady Blue Devils have been on a roll,

winning their last 13 games. But the Lady Devils will have to make some adjustments to their lineup because Diamond DeShields is out with a wrist injury and will not return for three weeks.

The injury occurred last Tuesday when Norcross defeated North Gwinnett. DeShields stayed in the game but only played with one hand.

DeShields is expected to return to the lineup when the Region 7-5A tournament begins.

While one star player is out of the lineup, another one returns as Buford's Andraya Carter made her 2012 debut over the weekend. Carter has missed the entire season because she suffered a knee injury during the AAU season last spring.

She had eight points in the win against

Westminster on Friday and scored 10 points in the win over Lovett on Saturday.

"We are thankful and grateful to have her back in the Kelly and Gold," Buford coach Gene Durden said to Score Atlanta. "She looks and plays just like she always has."

Don't look now, but the Parkview Lady Panthers are on fire, with a 21-0 record. After an early exit in the state tournament last year, head coach Tony Watkins has the girls playing fundamentally sound basketball. In the 55-20 win against Grayson on Tuesday, 13 players got into the scoring column for the Lady Panthers. Watkins is in his first year as head coach for the Lady Panthers, replacing Mike McCoy who won a state title with Parkview in 2003.

Jones can be reached at bjones@scoreatl.com.

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SWIMMING NEWS



Johns Creek wins Fulton championship

By Stephen Black

Johns Creek won the Fulton County Championship meet by winning the girls meet and finishing fourth in the boys meet. Alpharetta won the boys meet for the fifth year in a row with a score of 361.5 and came in second in the girls meet with 319 points. However, Johns Creek's whopping 453 points in the girls meet and 284 in the boys gave the Gladiators the overall championship. Jack Nyquist won the boys diving event with a score of 545.95 while fellow Raider Crawford Berry came in second with 412.30 points.

RIVALRY MEET ...

Parkview won a meet with rival Brookwood 334-286 Friday. The Panthers won the boys meet 197-111, but lost the girls meet 175-137. Parkview has a total of 35 state qualifiers and has also qualified its entire team for the county meet. It is the first time an entire squad has qualified for the county meet according to Panthers coach Jack Gayle.

Lassiter won a meet against Hillgrove by sweeping both the boys and girls meets on the Trojans' Senior Night. Lassiter won the boys meet 160-147 and the girls meet 165-142. Both schools will compete in the Cobb County Championships this weekend at the Mountain View Aquatic Center.

Wesleyan won a meet against Dunwoody by sweeping the overall boys and girls standings. The Wolves won the boys 400 free relay, girls 400 free relay, the girls 200 medley relay and the boys 200 medley. Anthony McMurry, Caroline White, Nick Salyers, Camille Roy, Rachel Koch, Timothy Marsh, Lauren Hill, Carrie Ciccotello and Darby Coxhead each won one or more events for Wesleyan. Matt Kiser, Jonny Slimming and Adam Julian won events for Dunwoody. The Wolves won the overall meet 405-223, while taking the boys meet 198-116 and the girls meet 207-107.

MORE RESULTS ...

Woodward Academy won a meet with Lovett Thursday 408-202. The War Eagle girls won their meet 193-120 while the boys won 215-82. Woodward Academy dominated the relays portion of the meet, winning each relay on both the boys and girls side. ... St. Pius X won a meet with Dunwoody 257-111. ... Senior David Barnes of West Forsyth has accomplished the rare feat of qualifying for the state meet in every swimming event, including relays.

Black can be reached at sblack@scoreatl.com.

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1. Milton	1. Miller Grove	1. Columbia	1. Vidalia	1. Whitefield Academy
2. Shiloh	2. Fayette County	2. Thomson	2. GAC	2. North Cobb Christian
3. Mill Creek	3. Chattahoochee	3. Eagles Landing	3. Buford	3. Wilkinson County
4. Westlake	4. Douglas County	4. Washington County	4. Jordan	4. Wilcox County
5. Wheeler	5. Southwest DeKalb	5. Franklin County	5. Morgan County	5. Lanier County
6. Tift County	6. Lovejoy	6. Carrollton	6. Dublin	6. Terrell County
7. North Cobb	7. Jonesboro	7. Walnut Grove	7. Early County	7. Athens Christian
8. Harrison	8. Osborne	8. Gainesville	8. Thomasville	8. Turner County
9. Berkmar	9. Woodland-Bartow	9. Drew	9. South Atlanta	9. Mt. Paran Christian
10. Norcross	10. Effingham County	10. Troup	10. East Hall	10. Landmark Christian

GIRLS

CLASS AAAAA	CLASS AAAA	CLASS AAA	CLASS AA	CLASS A
1. McEachern	1. Chamblee	1. Washington County	1. Morgan County	1. Wesleyan
2. Norcross	2. Statesboro	2. St. Pius X	2. Buford	2. Calvary Day
3. Parkview	3. Alcovy	3. Westover	3. East Hall	3. SW Atlanta Christian
4. North Gwinnett	4. Douglas County	4. Carrollton	4. GAC	4. St. Francis
5. North Cobb	5. Forest Park	5. Columbia	5. Rabun County	5. Darlington
6. Alpharetta	6. Fayette County	6. Allatoona	6. Lovett	6. Holy Innocents'
7. Marietta	7. Miller Grove	7. Americus-Sumter	7. Decatur	7. Taylor County
8. Hillgrove	8. Creekview	8. Cartersville	8. Dade County	8. Pace Academy
9. Lowndes	9. Starr's Mill	9. Cross Creek	9. Laney	9. Pelham
10. Stephenson	10. Northside-WR	10. Westside-Macon	10. Model	10. Gordon Lee

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WRESTLING NEWS



Pope wrestling rolling through Cobb

By Stephen Black and Fletcher Proctor

Class 4A Duals champion Pope won an event for the second straight week, claiming the Cobb County Invitational. The win was the fifth straight Cobb County crown. Pope placed 14 wrestlers and won four individual classes en route to 294.5 points. Cameron Munsey (113), Davis Burson (138), Jake Henson (152) and Brooks Climmons (182) all won county titles. Kell finished runner-up with 164.5 points while Harrison finished third (141.5). Harrison had two county champions, Deuce White (132) and Jake Shumpert (285). Shumpert won the event last year. Lassiter boasted three county champions in Paul Pelletier (120), Caleb Beaver (145) and Scott Marmoll (160). Kennesaw Mountain's Justin Rivera (170) was named the tournament's most outstanding wrestler after winning his class.

GOLDEN BEARS IMPRESS ...

Holy Innocents' hosted the Clinch Gear Prep Slam over the weekend and the host Golden Bears finished 10th in the tournament, the best finish of any Georgia participant. The two-day event saw 44 teams from 12 states travel to Holy Innocents' to take part. Jason Grimes (170) and Lee Davis (182) took second place for the Golden Bears while Robbie Martin of St. Pius X took fourth place in the 138-pound weight class.

Class 2A state duals champion Jefferson won the 36-team Sham Slam at Habersham Central last Saturday. Gwinnett County champion Archer finished second while Class 3A state duals champion Gilmer finished third. North Gwinnett finished fifth at the meet, with Hunter Franklin (113) and Alex Stoehr (285) winning individual titles.

ARCHER WINS AGAIN ...

It was a productive weekend for Archer. In addition to the runner-up finish at the Sham Slam, the Archer freshman team won the Gwinnett County championship with 83 points, besting GAC (55) and third-place Wesleyan (52). Elliot Lee and Trey Rinehart were tournament champions for Archer. This is the third-straight freshman title for Archer.

Meadowcreek won the Last Man Standing tournament at Eagle's Landing Saturday. Rockmart was the runner-up while Forest Park finished third, the hosts finished fourth and Westminster took fifth place. Meadowcreek placed 10 wrestlers including wins by Dante Bennett (120) and Alex Steele (160). O.G. Harden (170) and Ryan Moore (182) each took second place. It was the fourth tournament win of the year for Meadowcreek.

Black and Proctor can be reached at 404-256-1572.

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PANTHER PROWL



Panthers remain undefeated at home

By Robby Kalland

The Georgia State men's basketball team stumbled a bit this past week after a promising start to conference play. Two back-to-back road losses to Northeastern and Delaware looked to derail the Panthers' tournament chances.

Defense was a major issue on the road trip, as State struggled to close out on shoot-

ers and rotate to the ball. Against Northeastern, the Panthers gave up 11 threes and allowed the Huskies to shoot 52.4 percent from downtown. Their performance against Delaware was just as poor, as the Blue Hens torched the Panthers, making 12 threes and shooting 42.9 percent behind the arc. The struggle defending the three-point shot was

the difference in both games as both losses came by three points.

HOME COOKIN' ...

Despite these two losses, Georgia State was able to rebound in a big way against James Madison. The Panthers made vast improvements at home on both sides of the ball in defeating the Dukes 74-58. Their defense held James Madison to just 30.8 percent shooting from three-point range, and they also got 14 steals and 11 blocks against the Dukes. The win kept the Panthers undefeated at the Sports Arena, making them 10-0 at home this season. Coach Ron Hunter has done a phenomenal job turning the Panther program around in just his first year at the helm. They appear to play with more confi-

dence and swagger that Panthers teams in the past have not had.

LOOKING AHEAD ...

On Saturday, the Panthers will host the VCU Rams at the Sports Arena at 4 p.m. The Rams are ahead of State in the CAA standings, which makes the game important for Georgia State's hopes for a conference title, as well as seeding for the CAA tournament in March. After the VCU contest, the Panthers will hit the road again for games at UNC-Wilmington and Hofstra. With only eight conference games remaining, the Panthers will look to return to the form that saw them win 11 in a row and leading the conference rankings.

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BULLDOG BEAT



Hoop Hounds drop two straight

By Stephen Black

Georgia tried its best, but it wasn't good enough Tuesday night as No. 1 Kentucky (20-1, 6-0) strolled into Athens, took its time and eventually overwhelmed the feisty Bulldogs in a 57-44 affair at Stegeman Coliseum.

"I thought we opened the game well aside from some easy baskets we gave up," said Georgia coach Mark Fox. "Kentucky is a terrific team, their defense is so good."

Kentucky's depth and athleticism showed, as the Cats held Georgia (10-10, 1-5) to 34.5 percent shooting and outscored the Bulldogs 25-1 in bench points. In fact, the Cats' leading scorer was Darius Miller, who came off the bench to score 19 points on 7-of-8 shooting. Kentucky's size also showed, with the Cats blocking 10 Georgia shots.

"Rebounding is an issue for our team," said Fox. "We start a smaller lineup, so everyone is ratcheted down one position."

Problems for the Bulldogs were familiar, as they again got outrebounded and outshot decisively. Georgia lost the battle on the glass 41-26 and was outshot 43.8 percent to 34.5 percent.

Next up for Georgia is a road date at Auburn next Wednesday. The Bulldogs have the weekend off and will likely work on rebounding and getting better shots.

OLE DISS ...

The Hoop Hounds fell to 10-9 overall and 1-4 in the SEC after a 66-63 loss to Ole Miss Saturday in Athens. Georgia fell behind early and trailed by 11 at the half.

"That was a disappointing loss," said Fox. "I was disappointed in how we played, but you have to give credit to Ole Miss."

Freshman Kentavious Caldwell-Pope dropped 25 points for the Dawgs while guard Gerald Robinson had 19.

Georgia trailed most of the game, including an 11-point deficit at the half and a game-high of 15 with 6:31 remaining. But Georgia kept fighting. Trailing by 10 points with 47 seconds left, the Dawgs cut it to two with 12 seconds left after two three-pointers by KCP and four points from Robinson. It was too little, too late, however, as Ole Miss held onto its once-large lead.

The loss dampened the Bulldogs' enthusiasm after an inspiring victory over Tennessee. With traditionally mediocre Ole Miss coming into town, it looked as if the Dawgs might put together a little SEC winning streak. But the Rebels owned the glass 43-32 while Georgia struggled with foul trouble and shooting.

Black can be reached at sblack@scoreatl.com.

TECH TALK



Tech looks to Tomlinson to fill void

By Thomas Watson

Defensive lineman Dalvin Tomlinson of Henry County would fill a major hole in a depleted front line for the Tech defense, and coaches have increased their efforts to stay ahead of competing schools like Alabama and Georgia. After withdrawing a scholarship offer to defensive end Junior Gnonkonde because of low test scores, head coach Paul Johnson and his staff will need all the help they can get replacing Jason Peters and Logan Walls.

ON THE RISE ...

The Georgia Tech women's basketball team cracked the top 25 after a dominant 79-55 victory over Florida State on the road. The No. 24 Yellow Jackets improved to 4-3 in the ACC (14-6 overall) behind Tyaunna Marshall's 22 points on 11-for-13 shooting. The sophomore topped 20 points for the fifth time this season and 11th time in her career.

Florida State turned the ball over 24 times in the game, which Tech converted into 32 points off turnovers. Head coach MaChelle Joseph applauded her team's defense saying, "They got more free throws than us, they out-rebounded us, but they didn't score more points off of turnovers. That's one of the things we did a really good job of. We got back to

being more aggressive, going for steals out of our traps and we were in better position. I was pleased with the way we defended."

TENNIS UNDERWAY ...

Georgia Tech women's tennis team, ranked 13th to open the season, lost 4-3 to No. 7 Georgia at the Bill Moore Tennis Center. However, Tech managed to record two victories over highly-ranked opponents. Senior Caroline Lilley edged No. 22 Maho Kowase 6-2, 4-6, 6-2, while Jillian O'Neill and Alex Anghelescu brought down the No. 2 doubles team in the country, Chelsey Gullickson and Nadja Gilchrist.

The Jackets rebounded by beating Memphis 6-1, sweeping all five singles matches in the process. The team of O'Neill and Anghelescu again defeated a ranked opponent, this time knocking off the 41st-ranked pair of Alyssa Hibbard and Tiffany Welcher.

"Coming off of a tough loss to Georgia, we talked in the locker room about character and dealing with adversity, and I think these girls showed a lot of character to go out there and compete and win against a good team in Memphis," said assistant coach Alison Silverio.

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HAWKS HAVEN



Hawks still on top without Horford

By Ricky Dimon

Despite playing their last seven games without injured center Al Horford, the Atlanta Hawks still find themselves atop the Southeast Division as of Wednesday. The Hawks have won six of their last seven and nine of their last 11 games to put themselves just clear of Orlando and Miami with a 13-5 record.

A four-game winning streak—all within the friendly confines of Philips Arena—came to end with an ugly 90-76 loss last Friday at Atlantic-leading Philadelphia. Head coach Larry Drew called out his team with the “quit” word following the setback, and the Hawks responded in style. They bounced back 24 hours later at home to hammer Cleveland 121-94, then pulled out a 97-92 road win at Milwaukee on Monday.

INFIRMARY REPORT ...

Horford suffered a torn pectoral muscle in a Jan. 11 loss at Indiana. He will likely miss at least three more months—possibly the remainder of the regular season.

To say fellow stars Joe Johnson and Joe Smith have stepped up in the big man’s absence, though, would be an understatement. In seven games without Horford, Johnson is

averaging 22.8 points. He has scored at least 23 points in six of his last seven outings and in the six victories during that span he is averaging 25.3 points. Smith, in the last seven games, is doing it all with 17.1 points, 11 rebounds and two blocks per contest.

On a more positive note in terms of the injury report, point guard Kirk Hinrich is close to returning. The veteran has been out for the entire season following offseason shoulder surgery. Hinrich was expected to practice on Wednesday in San Antonio and would suit up for the Spurs game if all went well. Whenever Hinrich returns, Drew will use him as backup to Jeff Teague—at least for the time being.

“At this point, I am going to stay with what I have,” Drew told the Atlanta Journal Constitution. “Jeff has shown that he deserves it. He has done a really good job for us. As of right now, I am just going to keep it as is.”

The Hawks will visit Detroit on Friday and New Orleans on Sunday as they continue a five-game road trip. A four-game homestand will begin on Thursday against Memphis.

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FALCONS FLIGHT



Change is good in Flowery Branch

By Sean Conway

An old saying goes, “The more things change, the more things stay the same.” Up in Flowery Branch, it seems as though the braintrust triumvirate of owner Arthur Blank, general manager Thomas Dimitroff and head coach Mike Smith believes in that adage.

The Atlanta Falcons are on an unprecedented run of success, having reached the playoffs three times in the last four seasons, but they’ve also lost all three playoff games in the Smith/Dimitroff era.

In response to the playoff failures, the Falcons have announced four moves on the coaching staff in the last two weeks. Dirk Koetter replaces Mike Mularkey as offensive coordinator, Mike Nolan replaces Brian Van-Gorder on the defensive side of the ball. Also, moving on to pursue other opportunities are offensive line coach Paul Boudreau and defensive backs coach Alvin Reynolds.

NEW FACES ...

Nolan was actually Smith’s boss for a season when he was a coordinator for the Baltimore Ravens (and Smith was the linebackers coach), before taking the San Francisco head job. Under Nolan in 2011, the Miami Dolphins had the league’s third-best run defense. Smith will instruct Nolan to tweak a decent defense that admittedly struggled to

stop opponents on third down.

In a conference call with the media recently, Nolan said he expects the team to continue the 4-3 scheme but sees changes in the secondary’s scheme. “Everyone talks about having four starting DBs, but I think the future really looks like it’s going to be five starting DBs if these quarterbacks keep doing what they’re doing.”

Koetter was most recently the coordinator for the Jacksonville Jaguars, where he was lucky enough to have All-Pro running back Maurice Jones-Drew, but also laden with the task of tutoring rookie quarterback Blaine Gabbert.

After the hiring, Smith said, “[Koetter] understands the intricacies of the vertical passing game, but he also wants to be able to run the football.” One of Koetter’s biggest jobs will be building an offensive line that can be effective providing push in short-yardage running situations.

Nolan and Koetter may make other moves on their coaching staff with assistants in their Rolodex, or may choose to keep other guys in place. As far as personnel goes, Dimitroff now begins tailoring the talent to the new coordinators’ styles. The annual NFL combine begins Feb. 22 in Indianapolis.

Conway can be reached at scomway@scoreatl.com.

CHOP SHOP



The band is back together in 2012

By Fletcher Proctor

The Atlanta Braves made several moves last week, locking in all of their arbitration-eligible players for another crack at the playoffs. After agreeing to terms with Martin Prado and Jack Wilson on one-year deals, the team inked Eric O’Flaherty, Jair Jurrjens and Michael Bourn. The team also signed reliever Peter Moylan to a one-year, incentive-laden deal to avoid arbitration. Bourn, who will likely command big dollars following the 2012 season, was signed to a reported \$6.845M deal.

The Braves acquired Bourn before the 2011 trading deadline for a handful of minor league pitchers and Jordan Schafer. He will hit leadoff and could provide Atlanta with speed on the base paths as well as a strong outfield glove. Bourn stole 22 bases in 29 chances with Atlanta last year and finished with 61, tops in the National League.

Jurrjens, meanwhile, will make \$5.5M this year with another \$150,000 available in incentives. Jurrjens began last year 12-3, but finished just 13-6 while missing most of August and September.

THE BULLPEN ...

O’Flaherty and Moylan will both be back, which should help bridge the gap between the starters and closer Craig Kimbrel. O’Flaherty received a healthy raise to \$2.49

million this year, and the Braves control him for one more arbitration-eligible season in 2013. Moylan, meanwhile, was not tendered a contract immediately following the season but instead signed to a minor league deal. Moylan is recovering from arthroscopic surgery in September and hopes to be ready by spring training. His deal is worth \$1M on a prorated basis for time in the majors, plus incentives.

THE BENCH ...

Wilson, meanwhile, appeared in just 17 games with Atlanta, contributing just nine hits in 41 at-bats. He was acquired from Seattle, whom he had played for since 2009. Wilson hit .243 while making 61 starts one year ago. Former Brave Mark DeRosa agreed to a one-year deal with the Washington Nationals several weeks ago, eliminating a potential return for the once-popular Braves utility man. Also, the Baltimore Orioles signed Wilson Betemit to a two-year/\$3.25M deal, though that contract was signed after Wilson re-upped with Atlanta. Betemit hit .285 with eight home runs and 46 RBIs in 97 games between Kansas City and Detroit last year. He is a career .269 hitter.

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GWINNETT GLADIATORS



Glads earn 50th point, tie for lead

By Joe Deighton

The Greenville Road Warriors have been a thorn in the side of the Gladiators this season. Gwinnett has won just three of the nine matchups with Greenville. The Glads dropped two more games to their division rival on the road over the weekend, 4-2 on Friday and 5-4 in overtime on Saturday. The trip to the Palmetto State looked like a total loss early in the third when Greenville took a 4-2 lead, but the Gladiators stormed back to tie the game.

Just 18 seconds after falling behind by two goals, Gwinnett got a huge goal from forward Bryan Brutlag, his 10th of the season. Joey Haddad fed a skating and falling Brutlag for the assist, making the score 4-3. Then, with just 37 seconds remaining in regulation, Justin Milo controlled a bouncing puck and put it in the back of the net to force overtime. Gwinnett lost the game in the extra session but still earned its 50th point. The Gladiators are tied for the ECHL South Division lead with South Carolina.

REVOLVING DOOR ...

The amount of players coming and going is a dizzying total, but that is the reality of minor league hockey. Haddad rejoined

the squad after a stint in the AHL with the Bridgeport Sound Tigers. In eight games with Bridgeport, Haddad did not record a point. When the 23-year old left Gwinnett, he was leading the team in points with 22. Since re-joining the Glads on Jan. 20, Haddad has three goals and two assists in three games to push his season total to 26 points, good enough for second on the team. Goalie Nick Eno was re-assigned to the team last Friday after playing 14 games with SPHL Mississippi. Eno has yet to see action with Gwinnett this year.

BREAKING THE TREND ...

Since Nov. 25, the Glads have played 23 straight games against division foes Florida, Greenville and South Carolina. This week’s schedule will offer a break from those rivals when the Elmira Jackals and Trenton Titans come to the Arena at Gwinnett Center. The Jackals come in as the leading team in the Eastern Conference with 53 points. The Titans are the worst team in the conference with 34 points. Gwinnett will face Elmira Saturday before entertaining Trenton on Sunday.

Deighton can be reached at jdeighton@scoreatl.com.

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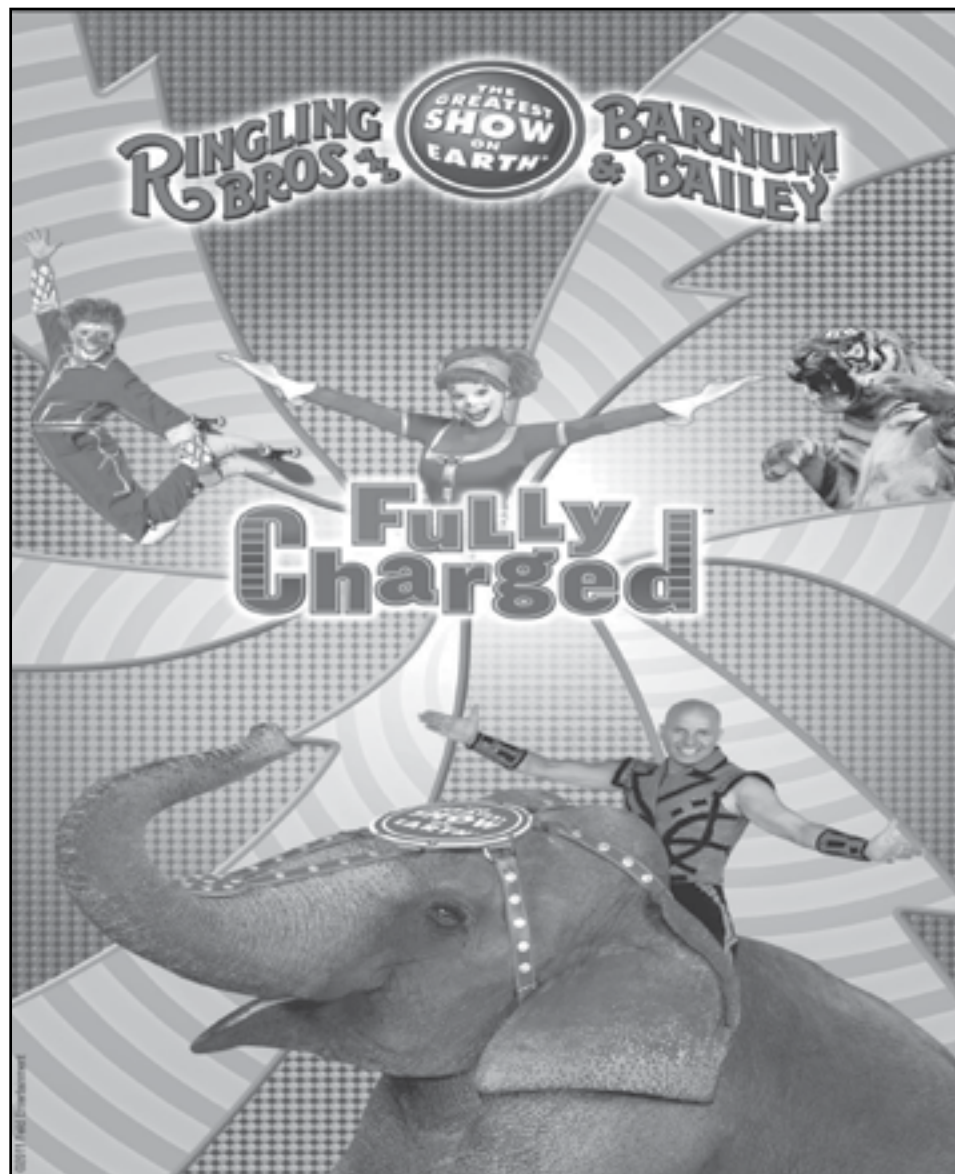
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Region 3: Camden County
Region 4: Harrison
Region 5: Walton
Region 6: Milton
Region 7: Mill Creek
Region 8: Brookwood

CLASS AAAA

Region 1: Lee County
Region 2: Lakeside-Evans
Region 3: Northgate
Region 4: Lovejoy
Region 5: Pope
Region 6: Marist
Region 7: Johns Creek
Region 8: Flowery Branch

CLASS AAA

Region 1: Cairo
Region 2: Veterans
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Region 4: Sandy Creek
Region 5: St. Pius X
Region 6: Columbus
Region 7: Allatoona
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CLASS AA

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Main Event 7:00 PM

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