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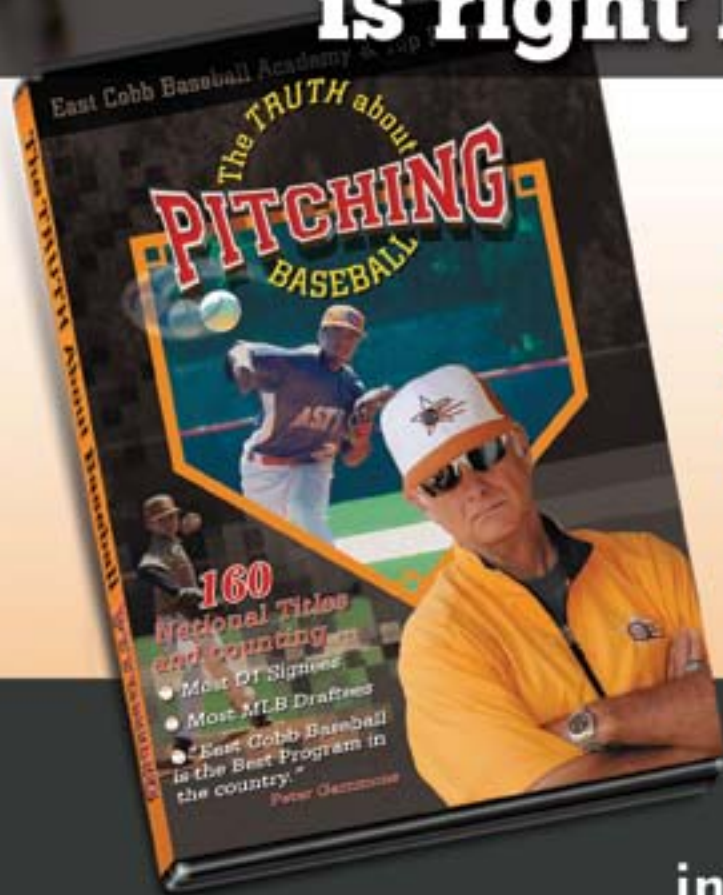
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 Patrick Tighe (Tech)

STAFF WRITERS

Ricky Dimon, Craig Sager II, Fabianna Blanco

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 AND WALTER PINION

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INSIDE AT SCORE

ON THE Score Atlanta is looking for new sales associates as well as writing and graphic design interns. For sales positions, e-mail IJ Rosenberg at ijrosenberg@scoreatl.com. For writing internships, e-mail Stephen Black at sblack@scoreatl.com. For graphic design internships, e-mail DJ Galbiati at djgalbiati@scoreatl.com. Feel free to call 404-256-1572 to speak with someone about any of these positions.

SHOT OF THE WEEK...



COACH CARLOS: At the France All-Star Football Camp, Carlos Rogers thrilled campers by participating as a coach. Rogers was joined by other current and former NFLers, including Lomas Brown, Ronnie Brown, Keyaron Fox and Dexter Jackson. Photo courtesy of Sonny Kennedy.

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MY TWO CENTS



“Spirit”-ed hire; questionable decision

By Stephen Black

You don't hear this very often, but the Hawks' ownership made a fantastic move. By hiring Danny Ferry to be its President of Basketball Operations and General Manager, the Hawks and their enigmatic proprietors showed they are in it for the long haul.

The surprising thing about this hire is that Ferry was working in San Antonio, a franchise known for heady, veteran players, intense coach Greg Popovich and team play. You don't see many iso-anybody's at a Spurs game, just well-executed offense and air-tight defense.

Looking at the hire, you can't expect the Hawks' core of Joe Johnson, Josh Smith, Al Horford, etc. to be staying together much longer. While this was written prior to Thursday's draft, I am eagerly looking forward to

the next couple days to see what Ferry does prior to the Hawks' first pick at No. 23. Let's hope Horford and Teague are retained. They could be the core of the Hawks' franchise for quite some time. But I wouldn't shed a tear about anyone else being moved.

SHOCKING DECISION ...

How about the No. 1 recruit in America choosing Clemson? After Grayson's Robert Nkemdiche pledged to the Tigers last week, I almost fell out of my chair when I heard the news. Nothing against Dabo Swinney's program, but they are not near the top of the heap in any way when it comes to college football.

Why choose to play in a basketball conference at a program that hasn't been relevant

nationally in more than 20 years? Clemson seemed to come out of nowhere. The athletic prodigy had told everyone he was looking at Alabama, LSU, Ole Miss and Georgia before making the surprising decision.

I understand the Tigers offered his teammates and friends David Kamara and Wayne Gallman, but Robert, buddy, you have to move on after high school. You can't bring Grayson to Clemson no matter how hard you try. College is for growing in a variety of ways, not sticking with your high school homeboys.

Let's stay tuned to this decision and see if it sticks until next February.

BYRD MAN ...

I was sad to see local product Marlon Byrd busted by Major League Baseball for using banned substances. I grew up in east Cobb with Byrd and played against his Shaw Park all-star teams when I was at Sandy Plains as a kid. I remember competing against a great athlete who played the game with class and passion while also respecting his opponents.

I've followed his career since then, to when he and his Sprayberry teammates won a state title in 1995, to his college days at Georgia Tech and Georgia Perimeter, and on to his MLB days in Philly, Washington, Texas, Chi-

cago and Boston.

Byrd's suspension was announced Monday for using the substance Tamoxifen. The outfielder said he used the substance to fight the effects of a surgery he had a few years ago.

"I made an inexcusable mistake," Byrd said in a release through the Players' Association. "Although that medication is on the banned list, I absolutely did not use it for performance-enhancement reasons."

I want to believe the guy who I grew up playing against, and hope we see Marlon back out on a Major League field later this season.

EURO MADNESS ...

It was revealed by ESPN Tuesday that EURO 2012 (or the European soccer championships) had an increase of 31 percent viewership on ESPN over the past two tournaments in viewers of the weekend's quarterfinal matches. The Italy-England match garnered the best overnight ratings on ESPN of any Euro game from the past two tournaments.

I personally watched the Italy-England affair at the Brewhouse in Little 5 Points and can tell you that it was as an exciting of an atmosphere there is for a televised event.

Black can be reached at sblack@scoreatl.com.

RYAN'S RANT



Looking back at Blueland's demise

By Ryan Caiafa

It's been one full NHL season since the Atlanta Thrashers took their talents north of the border and transformed into the newly-reincarnated Winnipeg Jets. While many people in Atlanta didn't seem to notice or care that the city lost its second NHL franchise and did little to voice their support to keep the team, the diehard fans are still bitter about how Atlanta was robbed of its hockey.

In my opinion, the blame goes into the inept management and ownership for the demise of the Thrashers, with zero blame going to the fans. Hockey in Atlanta was already a tough sell, but putting a winning team out on the ice would have assuredly put the butts in the seats at Philips Arena.

ONE SHINING MOMENT ...

During the team's one playoff appearance in the 2006-07 season, you would have thought the Thrashers were up there with some of the league's elite in terms of fan support. Despite a playoff sweep at the hands of the New York Rangers, there was hope for the first time in franchise history that the Thrashers would become perennial contenders.

Even during some of the early rough stretches when the team dwelled at the bottom of the Eastern Conference standings, the fans, diehard or not, came out to support the team. At one point, two of the league's best young players, Ilya Kovalchuk and Dany Heatley, were on the roster but meddling ownership and an inept general man-

ager, Don Waddell, didn't have a clue how to surround them with the pieces necessary to compete consistently for a playoff berth, much less a Stanley Cup. While Heatley would find himself embattled in personal issues off the ice, the Thrashers were able to flip him for a player of arguably equal ability, Marian Hossa, and reached the playoffs.

Going back to Waddell, if there's one man within the organization's management that blame could be placed on for the Thrashers failing in Atlanta, it would be him. He was responsible for many head-scratching decisions that not only flopped, but set the team back for years. One of his most notorious moves was the late-season acquisition of then-St. Louis Blues forward Keith Tkachuk during the 2007 playoff run. Yes, you can attribute that move to the Thrashers' only playoff berth, but that's exactly what it was, their only playoff berth. Waddell mortgaged the future for him, giving up three draft picks and a promising young center in Glen Metropolit.

After a terrible start to the 2007-08 season, coach Bob Hartley was replaced and Waddell took over as interim head coach, which, judging by his performance as general manager, left few optimistic about his ability to keep the team in contention. As it turns out, he couldn't, and the Thrashers once again returned to the bottom of the standings.

ADIOS, AGAIN ...

Following the year, Rick Dudley was given a crack at the general manager's role but Waddell's damage was beyond repair. Dudley attempted to shake things up, acquiring Dustin Byfuglien and Andrew Ladd from the Blackhawks in two separate offseason deals. After an unsuccessful attempt to find a local buyer, the Atlanta Spirit group sold the team to True North Sports, and Winnipeg got its Jets back.

The question lingers; does Atlanta miss the Thrashers? Atlanta is a tough city to garner big support for any franchise and judging by the quiet reaction of the relocation, the easy answer is no, the city couldn't care less that the team is gone.

I disagree with that notion entirely, as there seemed to be little effort by management and ownership to put a winning team on the ice and the discord amongst the Atlanta Spirit Group generated an apathetic approach to hockey. Unfortunately, that also translated into the NHL and commissioner Gary Bettman taking that same approach to saving the team. Who knows if Atlanta will ever get another NHL franchise, but for now we are left wondering what could have been if the team received the support it deserved.

Caiafa can be reached at rcaiafa@scoreatl.com.



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SUPER CAMP



NFL stars lend a hand at youth camp

By Craig Sager II



Atlanta-based sports agent Todd France held his ninth annual football camp this week at Mt. Vernon Presbyterian School. France is recognized as one of the finest sports agents in the country and heads 5 Star Athlete Management. Through France's extensive and profound list of NFL clientele, he was able to bring 55 of his NFL clients to this year's New Era football camp.

More than 1,000 kids, ages eight through 18, took part in the camp this week. The event was free for kids and they all received a camp T-shirt, many of which were filled with autographs by the end of the camp. The purpose of the week, according to France, is to remind his clients how important it is to give back to the community and provide the kids with a one-of-a-kind opportunity to interact with and learn from NFL players.

Competitive Edge Sports (CES) allows the camp to use its state-of-the-art equipment all week and brought in eight trainers to help coach drills alongside the pros. CES is based out of Atlanta and is one of the country's premier training facilities for the NFL Combine. The same laser

timing equipment used for the combine was set up to clock the campers' 40-yard dash times. Resistance cords, tackling dummies and agility ladders were among the other pieces of equipment being used at the camp.

France and 12 of his NFL clients were present on Tuesday. Much like he does each week during the NFL season, France watched proudly as his clients took to the field. France said he always likes to choose clients who he feels are special as a person first and then as a player. He strives to find guys who will work to continually improve on and off the field.

"It doesn't take me long to see if someone has the type of character I look for," said France. "Today is about the kids, though. The kids are the stars at this camp. What they are getting out of today is more than football knowledge. They are getting a chance to interact with all of these NFL players and see what great guys they are."

After the pros introduced themselves Tuesday morning and the first stations were whistled to begin, the kids sprinted and bull-

dozed their way to the front of the line for a chance to impress their football heroes. With more than 12 stations rotating throughout the day and plenty of lines going at once, each kid got several opportunities at each station.

RONNIE'S RETURN ...

Current San Diego Chargers running back Ronnie Brown took a break from carrying the ball Tuesday to quarterback his drills. It is no surprise that the former No. 2 overall pick from the 2005 draft was able to throw the ball well. While Brown was leading Cartersville High School to a state title during his senior year, he was an impressive enough baseball prospect to be drafted by Seattle Mariners. Brown's calling turned out to be at running back and his former Auburn teammate Carlos Rogers was at camp on Tuesday as well.

Rogers attended Butler High School in Augusta and is currently a starting cornerback for the 49ers. Rogers and Brown were both superstars during their high school days in Georgia and went on to have impressive careers at Auburn together.

The two would enter the 2005 NFL draft together and after Brown went No. 2 overall, Rogers quickly followed as the No. 9 overall pick. The 2005 draft alone contributed to the eruption of recognition that continues to grow around France.

The camp was a long way from Rogers' San Francisco 49ers, but not far from home. "Atlanta is home," Rogers said. "I only had to drive a few minutes to get here this morning." Rogers will report back to San Francisco next month and said he sincerely enjoys coming home to this camp each year.

"I have a great relationship with France, and we both understand how important it is to contribute in the community," said Rogers. "Our relationship goes back to before I was drafted. He really seemed to stand out as someone who cared about his clients and what we do as members of the community."

LEGEND OF LOMAS ...

Lomas Brown, one of the NFL's all-time greatest linemen, was at the camp Tuesday. Brown's last two NFL contracts were negotiated by France, and he has remained a client while working as an analyst for ESPN and the NFL Network.

Brown has attained success at every level and is considered by the Florida High School Athletic Association to be one of the 33 all-time greatest Florida high school football players in the past 100 years. He was first-team All-SEC

and a consensus All-American at the University of Florida. In the NFL, he was a seven-time Pro Bowler and paved the way for possibly the greatest running back of all time, Barry Sanders.

Brown ended his 18-year NFL career by winning his only Super Bowl championship in his final season with the Tampa Bay Bucs in 2002. Always surrounded by personal achievements and success, Brown continuously established himself off the field and is considered one of the more charismatic and positive role models that the NFL has seen.

Brown believed in the importance of giving back to all facets of the community, not just the kids but other athletes as well.

"With all that is going on these days the with former players suing the NFL, and players going broke after leaving football, it is as important as ever it has ever been to start developing the off-the-field right away," said Brown. "Football has and always will be a major part of my life, but I've always tried to make sure I was doing positive things off the field along the way."

The kids got the opportunity of a lifetime when Brown showed them how to properly explode out of the three-point stance, and drive through the bag.

"I have so much fun working with kids," said the 49-year-old. "But I will be getting out of bed a little slower tomorrow after all these drills."

CRAFTY COACH ...

Redskins linebacker Keyaron Fox helped with the 40-yard dash station. Fox was an outstanding player at Georgia Tech and the Atlanta native went to Westlake High School. Fox was on the 2009 Steelers team that won the Super Bowl.

Former Dunwoody High School star and Jets wide out, Dexter Jackson, took a break from Tebowmania in New York to coach the kids through one-on-one route running.

Columbus native Philip Wheeler played linebacker for Georgia Tech before buckling up with Oakland. Wheeler showed the kids how to shed a block and explode through a tackle. The kids appeared to enjoy tackling the dummy the most out of all the stations. After making a tackle, players would act out the dances, salsas and celebrations they see when they are watching the NFL.

Daryl Smith, Geno Hayes, Joe Burns, Zack Pianalto, Pat Sims and Brandon Burton were other NFL players in attendance on Tuesday.

Photo courtesy of Sonny Kennedy. Sager can be reached at 404-256-1572.

WHO'S HOT

THUMBS UP TO DANNY FERRY



Hawks Hire

The Atlanta Spirit Group nabbed NBA veteran and San Antonio Spurs front office exec Danny Ferry this week. What a great move! This is a positive sign that the Hawks are serious about improving the future of a team that is a perennial playoff fixture, but needs to take the next step forward.

Jason Heyward

Is Heyward coming into his own as an Atlanta Brave? Judging by the month the young right fielder is having, we hope so. His batting average is up 40 points already and he grabbed his first-ever National League Player of the Week award. His broad shoulders are carrying the Braves' offensive payload.

College Football Evolution

No matter what the university decision-makers want to call it, we're finally headed to a four-team playoff in the South's favorite sport, college football. Best of all, there's a path for the SEC to land two teams in the mini-tournament, if they earn it. About time.

NBA Draft Hoopla

Unless your team has a high lottery pick, why should the draft be on your radar? Sure, your team may get a "sleeper," but no one will know for years. What really stinks even more is when your team picks a European "project-player." There's just no buzz for basketball's annual talent grab.

Braves' Pitching

The Braves have a talented pitching staff that should be the envy of about 30 big league clubs. That's the good news. The bad news is that this staff is young, very young. Right now we're watching their growing pains, especially among the starters. Man-up boys. We need you.

The Big 10

We're finally getting our long overdue college football playoff, but let's remember one reason why it has taken so long. Jim Delaney, head of the Big 10 Conference, is scared of SEC domination, and he kept trying to tailor the postseason to his conference's needs. The Midwest needs to build better football teams, not better arguments.

BIG TEN
CONFERENCE

WHO'S NOT

THUMBS DOWN TO LAME CONFERENCES

SCORE LIST

BY BRIAN JONES

1 NEW BEGINNING: Just when you thought the Hawks were not going to be aggressive this offseason, they made a move that could change this franchise for the better. Atlanta Spirit hired Danny Ferry to be the team's president of basketball operations and general manager. Ferry was previously with the San Antonio Spurs and the Cleveland Cavaliers before making his way to Atlanta. I like the move because Ferry will make sure that the right players are here and he will have the ability to build a roster around Joe Johnson and Al Horford.

2 I'M RICH: Liberty Media can say that now after the Braves' ownership put \$950 million in their pockets. The reason for that is a federal jury awarded them with the money after concluding the French entertainment group Vivendi deceived it in a decade-old deal. Since Liberty Media owns the Braves, do you think they will use just a little bit of that money to bring in some big free agents for next year? Probably not, but one can only hope. Right?

3 MAKING THE GRADE: Both Tech and Georgia got passing grades when the NCAA released its annual report card on the academic performance of college sports last week. Georgia scored a 970 in football and 960 in men's basketball. Tech received a 974 in football and 935 in men's basketball. What's even better news is no Georgia school was hit with penalties while last year Georgia Tech and Kennesaw State lost men's basketball scholarships. The same thing happened to Georgia Southern when it was hit with scholarship reductions.

4 COLLEGE PLAYOFF: After years of saying no, university presidents finally decided that college football needs a playoff system. Starting in 2014, there will be a four-team playoff that will determine the national champion. The four teams will be selected by a committee that will use conference champions and strength of schedule as the deciding factors. Honestly, I like the BCS and how they have the No. 1 and No. 2 team right almost every year. But I love the new playoff system because it adds more intrigue to the regular season as well as conference championships.

5 BOUNCE BACK: With three games left, the Force are looking to finish strong and reach the playoffs for the second consecutive year. They will have to start their run on Sunday when the Orlando Predators visit Gwinnett Arena. The last time these two teams faced each other, the Predators came away with a 27-24 win. This time the Force will have to go without starting quarterback R.J. Archer, who is now with the Detroit Lions. Can the Force win their eighth game of the year or will they suffer their third consecutive loss?

CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS

BY FLETCHER PROCTOR

95% How committed Sandy Creek DB Shaq Wiggins is to UGA

2 Atlanta Braves that have been named NL Player of the Week after Jason Heyward won the honor last week

2 Times Braves first baseman Freddie Freeman has been named NL Player of the Week this season

7 Home runs this season for Michael Bourn through Tuesday. His previous career-high was five in 2008

2 Career home runs Michael Bourn has hit off Arizona pitcher Daniel Hudson in 10 at-bats

17 Hits for Atlanta against Arizona in Game 1 of their series, a season-high

3 Vanderbilt Commodores that the Atlanta Hawks brought in for draft workouts

1 Rank in National League All-Star voting for Braves second baseman Dan Uggla

1,750 Career strikeouts for Tim Hudson after striking out seven Diamondbacks on Tuesday

37 Career starts at first base for Martin Prado, who started in place of Freeman last week

TRIVIA QUESTION

In four seasons at Duke, how many Final Fours did Danny Ferry and his Blue Devil teammates make?

Answer on Page 14

SANITY AT LAST

"There were many components that made this the right fit for me but clearly my confidence in the ownership group and their dedication to building a Championship caliber franchise was most important."

- New Hawks GM Danny Ferry in his introductory press conference.

TWO POINT CONVERSION

ESPN The Magazine recently named Columbus baseball head coach Bobby Howard its high school baseball coach of the year. Howard's Blue Devils recently won their third straight Class AAA title, and Howard has led Columbus to 12 titles since taking over the program in 1984. In 2004, he was named USA Today's national coach of the year.

Howard is certainly worthy of the honor, but is he the best current high school coach in the state, regardless of sport? Wesleyan girls basketball coach Jan Azar could claim that crown, as could McEachern's Phyllis Arthur or Norcross' Angie Hembree. On the football field, it is hard to argue against Mickey Conn of Class AAAA defending champion Grayson or Jess Simpson of Buford, who led the Wolves to four-straight



state titles. In boys basketball, Milton's David Boyd, Miller Grove's Sharman White and Columbia's Phil McCrary come to mind. In other sports, Milton's girls lacrosse coach Tim Godby, Woodward Academy's volleyball coach Tad Sahara, Buford softball coach Tony Wolfe, and Marist girls swimming coach Terrance Blish all merit mentioning.

While states such as California, Texas and Florida all have more athletes in terms of numbers, the state of Georgia has a better percentage of athletes per capita and various national signing days can attest to that. And how coaches up and trains these incredible athletes? Some of the nation's best coaches. It is tough to narrow down just who is the best high school coach in the state, regardless of sport and class.

Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.



Centennial's Rosenberg visits Ivies

By Stephen Black

The summer before a high school student's senior year is a very important time, especially when that student is an aspiring college athlete. Centennial starting quarterback Chase Rosenberg is a prime example of a student-athlete who is in the midst of picking a college not only for its academic prowess and social atmosphere, but also for its athletic program.

As a top-notch student in the classroom and a star on the football field, Rosenberg was invited to visit five premier northeastern institutions as a potential student-athlete.

Along with his father, I.J., Rosenberg visited Columbia, Fordham, Penn, Princeton and Yale over the weekend. He toured the five schools and met with coaching staffs, student guides and academic counselors to learn about each school while also participating in football camps at Columbia, Princeton and Yale.

EARLY FAVORITE ...

While many recruits like to keep their college favorites hush-hush, Rosenberg was very open about what school he preferred.

"I liked Princeton the best," said Rosenberg. "The campus and facilities were more modern and renovated than the other schools. They said they are the number one school in America for undergrads and graduate 98 percent of their students."

Rosenberg also enjoyed the area around the school.

"It was really well kept," said Rosenberg of Princeton, the town. "Downtown Princeton was really nice. Columbia and Yale weren't really nice communities."

As far as the coaching staffs, Rosenberg preferred the coaches at Fordham and Princeton.

"I talked with the recruiting coordinator

at Princeton for a while and had a really good conversation with the recruiting coordinator at Fordham," he said.

Fordham is by far the most unique school of the group, as it is not in the Ivy League. But at Fordham, Rosenberg could receive an athletic scholarship while the Ivies do not endow free rides. What they do help with is by giving recruits a spot on the team and admission to the school.

HIS TURN ...

One challenge Rosenberg has had to overcome is not starting regularly the past couple seasons. Many schools are waiting on his first few starts this year for the Knights before they tender an offer or spot on the team.

And Rosenberg is enthralled to finally be "the guy" at Centennial under center.

"I'm extremely excited," said the 6-foot, 190-pounder. "I'm ready for it to be my turn."

In the latest reclassification, the Knights were placed in Region 6A-AAAAAA alongside north Fulton neighbors Alpharetta, Chattahoochee and Johns Creek. While the Knights won't be in the same region as traditional rivals

Milton and Roswell any longer, they will get to battle two other local rivals for first place.

"We're looking forward to bringing back the old Chattahoochee rivalry," he said. "And Johns Creek too. We don't really like them."

The Knights ran the triple option last season under former coach Jeff Measor, but will run the spread this season under new head coach Jeffrey Carlberg. The new offense benefits Rosenberg, who is seen as a dual-threat quarterback. Also, all of the schools Rosenberg just visited run the spread.

Before the season starts, however, Rosenberg will visit even more schools later in the summer as he and his dad have two more trips planned. The father and son duo will trip to Brown and Dartmouth on one venture and then Georgetown, William and Mary and Furman. And while Princeton and Fordham lead the pack now, Rosenberg mentioned he is considering the five schools he'll see on his next trip as well. The Knights' signal-caller has also visited southeastern programs like Tech, Georgia and Vanderbilt in his college search.

Black can be reached at sblack@scoreatl.com.

RECRUITING NEWS



Quarterbacks pull trigger on commitments

By Fletcher Proctor

Collins Hill head coach Kevin Reach helped Taylor Heinicke earn a scholarship to Old Dominion University two years ago. Now, Reach has helped Heinicke's successor Brett Sheehan reach the next level as it was reported that Sheehan has committed to Florida International University. In seven games as a junior last year, Sheehan threw for 1,157 yards, 11 touchdowns and just three interceptions as the Eagles advanced to the playoffs out of Region 7-A. Collins Hill's Nick England signed with FIU last February.

"He is a great kid with a very bright future," said Reach.

Sheehan won't be the only player with an offer according to Reach. Wide receiver/linebacker Justin Wyatt has picked up some interest, and junior offensive lineman Christian Harris has been receiving some interest from

coaches because of his 6-foot-6, 270-pound frame. Julian Williams could also quickly catch scouts eyes after an offseason transformation. Williams has been working on his hands but also his body, something Reach believes will help the offense in a big way.

"It's amazing what a year can do to a kid," said Reach. "He's probably had the biggest change of anybody in my 23 years as a coach."

NORTHWEST HAPPENINGS ...

Two quarterbacks from the northwest corner of the state were in the news as Darlington's Brad Butler received his first offer and Calhoun's Taylor Lamb committed over the weekend. Butler was extended an offer by Presbyterian according to 247sports.com, though Wake Forest, Wofford and N.C. State are also showing strong interest. Meanwhile, Lamb, who led Calhoun to

the Class AA title last year, committed to South Alabama. Lamb had also received offers from UT-Chattanooga, Georgia State, Memphis and Liberty according to PrepCentralOnline.com.

2014 UPDATES ...

While the Class of 2013 Georgia wide receivers may be the deepest crop at the position in years, one receiver in the Class of 2014 is already drawing attention near the Florida border. Lee County Trojan Josh Cabrera received his first major FBS offer last week when Duke offered the 6-foot-3, 175-pound junior. Cabrera runs a 4.59 in the 40 and was honorable mention all-state as a sophomore in 2011. Last year, Cabrera hauled in 70 catches for 960 yards and 13 touchdowns. He also pulled in 500 receiving yards as a freshman.

"Josh has been working hard this summer attending football workouts and passing regularly, as well as playing on his high school and AAU summer basketball teams," said Lee County head coach Dean Fabrizio.

Lee County faces a favorable schedule and boasts a quarterback that should be able to find Cabrera plenty in a spread offense, so look for Cabrera's numbers, and offers, to continue to climb in 2012.

Photo of Taylor Lamb courtesy of Taylor Lamb. Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.



ETOWAH PREVIEW



Eagles welcome Svehla to Woodstock

By Craig Sager II

Dave Svehla is entering his first season as the Etowah Eagles' head coach. Svehla has never coached in the state of Georgia before and arrives from his most recent coaching job in El Paso, Ill. The Svehla era begins as he takes command of an Eagles team that finished 6-5 in 2011.

Etowah has been on the cusp of becoming an elite team but despite years of winning seasons, their last playoff victory came in 2006 against Parkview.

There will be lot of pressure placed on Svehla in his first season, but he considers it part of the job.

"Any head coach who's worth anything is going to feel internal pressure," said Svehla. "I put a lot of pressure on myself and I have my own expectations."

Etowah has always played a disciplined

and high-effort brand of football, but the trademark criticism surrounding the team in the past has been an overall shortage of athleticism.

"Athletically, we do have some work to do," joked Svehla. "But we can always develop and work to improve our change of direction, and we always work to become a more explosive team."

NEW OFFENSE ...

The Eagles abandoned their previous veer formation offense when Svehla arrived and will move into the I-formation in 2012. In stark contrast with the triple-option veer style, the I-formation will require the Eagles to line up and run square at the defense.

Quarterbacking for the Eagles in 2012 is still an open debate. Reeves Johnson was established to be the starter for 2011, but was

sidelined for the season with an injury. John Oliver won the starting job last year after Johnson's injury. With both quarterbacks healthy and a new playbook to manage in 2012, the battle between the two has been intense.

"I cannot say we have two different styles of quarterbacks battling for the job, because we don't," said Svehla. "Both guys bring a lot of the same skills to the position. Reeves showed he was good enough to start last year when he won the job in the preseason, and Oliver showed he could be a starter when he filled in for Reeves."

SCHEDULING PROBLEMS ...

The biggest challenge in 2012 for Svehla and the Eagles may come in the final two weeks of their schedule when they play two of the state's best teams. The Eagles will travel to Raider Valley to face the Walton Raiders before hosting the Lassiter Trojans at home in the following and final week of their season.

"I have definitely heard how great they are, and I am aware of the talent on these two teams," said Svehla. "But I have given little thought to Weeks 9 and 10 so far, and it's all about Lambert Week 1."

Photo courtesy of Walter Pinion. Sager can be reached at 404-256-1572.



CHATTahoochee PREVIEW



Cougars embrace new region

By David Hurst

The Chattahoochee Cougars have been reclassified twice in the past three years. The Cougars were in Class AAAAA before 2010 moved them down to AAAA. In 2012 they will be slated in the newly developed AAAAAA.

Chattahoochee experienced success while playing in AAAA with a 25-2 record over the last two seasons and winning a state championship. They've proved themselves as a reputable football program the past few years, but the question surrounding the team is can the Cougars continue their success after moving up two classifications? Head coach Terry Crowder not only believes they can, but he is enthusiastic about the transition.

"We're really excited," said Crowder. "There's been some apprehension in the community about moving up to AAAAAA, but we're a lot better as a program right now than we were previously in AAAAA. There's going to be some revivals of some old rivalries and

we're excited about it because we're a better program than we were a few years ago."

NEW FACES ...

Some of these rivalries include Alpharetta and Centennial, schools that Chattahoochee played frequently when the Cougars were in AAAAA but did not face while they were in AAAA. Crowder said he's glad to be in a region with Fulton and Forsyth schools, rather than with the larger Gwinnett schools they faced in AAAAA.

"It was tough playing these Gwinnett schools that are 2,000 kids bigger than us," Crowder said. "We're looking forward to getting back and continuing to play in the Fulton and Forsyth district."

SPRING FALLOUT ...

After a successful spring and a few weeks of summer workouts, Crowder said he is opti-

mistic about the upcoming season. "We had a great spring," said Crowder. "This is probably the most depth we've had in a couple years."

The offense will be lead by dual-threat quarterback Travis Marshall, who started all 12 games for the Chattahoochee offense last season. Crowder said the 6-foot-4, 200-pound senior put on weight in the offseason and had a tremendous spring.

"I've been overwhelmed with how he's improved," said Crowder. "His work ethic and leadership ability really impressed us in the spring and he's going to play a big role in our offense."

Junior running backs Chase Nelson and C.J. Leggett will also contribute to the Cougars' high-powered offense. Both backs played an instrumental role in the offense last season and will look to improve upon their impressive sophomore campaigns.

Despite the fact that they are losing eight starters on defense, Crowder believes they have great depth on that side of the ball. The leader of the defense is 6-foot-2, 200-pound senior linebacker Brian Sykes. Sykes is one of three returning starters on the defensive side of the ball, and Crowder has high expectations for him.

"He has several offers right now and played great for us last year," said Crowder. "We look to him to lead the defense."

Photo courtesy of Brian Phillips. Hurst can be reached at 404-256-1572.



McEachern PREVIEW



Indians open 2012 with tough opponents

By Patrick Tighe

The McEachern Indians chopped their way through Class AAAAA competition last fall. Victories over juggernauts like North Gwinnett and Lowndes propelled the Indians to a 10-2 overall record. McEachern's two defeats were by a combined five points. In the second round of the GHSA playoffs, the Indians ran out of time in a 20-17 loss to semifinalist Lassiter.

Since Kyle Hockman's arrival following the 2007 season, the head coach has led the Indians to 35 victories. In 2009 the Indians finished with a 10-1 record and a 90.9 winning percentage, the program's best since 1999.

"I think everybody is the sum total of their experiences," Hockman said. "God has blessed me to bring me to McEachern. As the game evolves, we try to keep working and keep everything in perspective. McEachern is a great place with great tradition; we are

excited about the future."

YOUTH MOVEMENT ...

"We're going to be extremely young," Hockman said. "The only experience coming back is four offensive linemen. We are going to rely on them early in the season for production and leadership."

JaJuan Dulaney, a recent Maryland pledge, should lead the line but Hockman said he will have plenty of help in the trenches.

"Sherrod Pittman, our starting center, is a fireplug that we are relying on," said Hockman.

After going with Trent Thompson as the lone quarterback last year, McEachern will go back to rotating quarterbacks, something that Hockman did his first two years in Powder Springs.

"We are going to use two or three quarterbacks," admitted Hockman. "Ty Clem-

ons and Ty Griffin will split some time at quarterback."

Hockman noted that the Indians' defense is brand new and that the only returning starter is defensive back Kell Parham. Hockman believes if the defense plays a solid bend-don't-break style of ball, they could do some special things come December.

AUGUST HEAT ...

McEachern has an 8-12 record when playing in the Georgia Dome and will face defending Class AAAAA champion Grayson in the August season opener. Recent McEachern victories in the Dome include North Gwinnett last season and Brookwood in 2009.

Right after the pads pop during two-a-days, two huge exams will be awaiting the Indians. The Indians get back in session against the Rams at the Corky Kell Classic, then Class AAAAA runner-up Walton six days later.

"We are just working hard, doing our normal summer routine with 7-on-7's, we try not to get too heavy into opponents stuff later on in the August time frame," Hockman said. "We try to play the best teams possible the first couple of games. We talk about all the time, if you're not ready, you're going get embarrassed. We use that as motivation, and our kids are excited about it."

Photo courtesy of Walter Pinion. Tighe can be reached at ptighe@scoreatl.com.



DREAM NEWS



McCoughtry leads comeback win

By Joe Deighton

There have been times this season when the Dream have played like the two-time defending Eastern Conference champions, and there have been times when they have looked very average. Atlanta is 6-7 through 13 games and trail first-place Connecticut by 3.5 games in the Eastern Conference standings. Inconsistency has been the theme of the 2012 season, but this week has provided Dream fans with the reminder that this is still a championship squad.

BIG WIN ...

On Tuesday, the Dream picked up a huge 70-58 victory against Indiana. The first quarter looked like the "very average" Atlanta Dream, as they trailed 18-12. The team then responded with its best quarter of the season and ended the first half on a 25-8 run.

Despite playing with a sore left knee, for-

ward Angel McCoughtry was able to lead Atlanta with 22 points in 29 minutes. McCoughtry told the AP that her knee is painful, but it is healing.

"It takes a little time to recover, but it's getting there," she said. "I just want to get my explosiveness back and things like that so I can get up and down the floor. I look like grandma out there a little bit."

The Dream beat Indiana for the first time in three meetings this season. Atlanta's defense stifled last year's league MVP Tamika Catchings and held her to just 2-for-9 shooting and eight points.

"We basically know what she (Catchings) wants to do with the ball when she catches it," Atlanta rookie center Aneika Henry told the AP. "She wants to penetrate and go hard to the basket, so we just doubled down on her and helped out with Sancho on

her and stuff like that."

None of the Fever's players scored in double figures as the Dream held Indiana to just 30 percent shooting on the day. Point guard Lindsey Harding did not start this game, but came off the bench to contribute five assists and two blocks. Forward Cathrine Kraayefeld led the team with 10 rebounds and three blocks, as Atlanta caused 19 Indiana turnovers.

If Atlanta can play a total game like the one against the Fever on Tuesday afternoon, the team will be on its way to another play-off run. However, the Dream have yet to put together a three-game win streak so far this season. They will have a chance to do that in the next game on Friday at Tulsa.

ANGEL'S HOT ...

This has been a special season so far for the 25-year-old McCoughtry. The third-year star is leading the WNBA in points per game with 22.6. McCoughtry should stay in the running for league MVP as long as the Dream win games and she stays healthy. The 6-foot-1 forward missed two games with a sprained knee, but returned to lead the Dream to two important wins this week. The knee is still giving her trouble, but it has not slowed her down.

"I'm just getting old," she jokingly told

the AP. "I'm not 18, 19 like I used to be, so things at 25 are a little different now."

The Atlanta Dream star will finish the summer by competing in the Olympics in London.

ON THE DOCKET ...

Atlanta will vie for its first three-game winning streak of the season when they go on the road against the Tulsa Shock. The Shock have the worst record in the league at 2-11 and should provide Atlanta with a great shot to add to its winning streak.

This will be the first regular-season matchup with the Shock. The Dream took a 91-89 win over Tulsa in the preseason. On Sunday, the Dream will travel to Chicago for the second game against the Sky this season. Chicago took the first contest at Philips Arena 94-92 in overtime. A last-second three-point heave by Chicago's Epiphanny Price sent the game into overtime and Atlanta never recovered.

The Dream must keep center Sylvia Fowles in check if they want to win in Chicago. Fowles put up 20 points and 19 rebounds in the first matchup. She averages 19 points and 13 rebounds per game. The two games this weekend are the first two on a season-long eight-game road trip.

Deighton can be reached at jdeighton@scoreatl.com.

CHASING A CHAMPIONSHIP



Youth teams battling for national titles

By Craig Sager II

The quest for the Travelball Select National Championship continued under the hot summer sun on Tuesday. The national tournament is being held at East Cobb Baseball Complex with teams from all around the country competing for the championships. The 9-Under classification has 16 teams and the 10-Under has 20 teams all playing for national titles.

There was excellent baseball being played in the 10-Under and the 9-Under age groups on Tuesday. The 9-Under Atlanta Angels were one of the only teams to win both of their games. The Angels posted an 8-5 victory over the Memphis Tigers, and an 11-1 thumping of the Banditos. The Memphis Tigers rebounded in the following game, scoring the most runs by any team with a 17-1 mercy rule victory over the East Cobb Astros.

DRAMATIC FINISHES ...

There was plenty of heartbreak as well in Tuesday's action. The RBI Rangers were handed their second one-run loss of the day when the East Cobb Braves shut the door on the Rangers' hopes for another comeback attempt in the sixth inning of a 6-5 victory.

One of the more memorable moments Tuesday was the 10-Under East Cobb Astros' late comeback over Buzz Baseball. The East Cobb Astros tightened Buzz Baseball's 7-2 lead by scoring four runs in the bottom of the fifth inning. The Astros would complete their comeback by scoring two more runs in the sixth inning for an electrifying 8-7 victory.

CHAMPIONSHIPS ON TV ...

This is going to be an extremely competitive tournament and the teams are fighting hard to become nationally recognized. Camera crews were already on site Tuesday getting ready to broadcast these young stars during the championships later this week. XFINITY On Demand-Sports will televise all championships and the last two games prior to the championship. PlayOn! Sports and TravelballSelect.com will be webcasting these same games live. CSS (Comcast Sports Southeast) will be televising all championship game live.

Sager can be reached at csagerII@scoreatl.com.

BREAKOUT PLAYER



Smith could be next Raiders star at WR

By Fletcher Proctor

The Walton Raiders ran off 14 straight wins one year ago, reaching the Georgia Dome for the Class AAAAA championship game before falling to Grayson. The Raiders' offense was paced by the running of Tyren Jones and star quarterback Parker McLeod, but it was senior Zack Blaylock that stood out above the others for his ability to jump over to the offense from his spot at safety and excel as a wide receiver. Blaylock caught a simple pass play near his own goal line and rumbled 95 yards for a clinching score in the Class AAAAA quarterfinals to help the Raiders defeat Dacula. He then iced the game with a late interception, his 11th of the year. Blaylock managed 383 yards on his interceptions, including five returned for scores.

OFFENSIVE PRODUCTION ...

Still, it was his offense that raised his profile last season. He hauled in 24 receptions in 12 games at receiver while pacing the Raiders in touchdown receptions. He forced opponents to empty out the box so that Jones could gash defenses on the inside.

With Blaylock now at Kentucky, who will step in for Walton coach Rocky Hidalgo?

Perhaps another member of the secondary.

THE NEXT COMING ...

Rising junior D.J. Smith started out the 2011 season as a running back on the Walton JV team, serving as the heir apparent to Jones in the backfield. Smith would regularly rush for more than 150 yards on the JV squad before a promotion during the year to the varsity's defensive secondary. He excelled to the point of starting by the end of the season, and recruiters have taken notice as well. Nebraska offered Smith on May 3 and South Carolina quickly offered the same day. Georgia, Florida, Michigan State and Vanderbilt have since extended offers to the player who cannot sign until February 2014.

This summer, Smith has shown some offensive skills, both at the Atlanta Quarterback and Wide Receiver camp at Walton as well as at the St. Pius X passing camp. If Smith keeps up his strong effort and continues to grow, McLeod and Hidalgo may have found their next breakout wide receiver from the Raiders' defensive secondary, just like last year.

Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.

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PANTHER PROWL



Panthers banned from CAA tournies

By Brian Jones

It's been a really good summer for Georgia State athletics. Not only did the spring sports end their seasons on high notes, but with the recent announcement that the Panthers will be part of the Sun Belt Conference, the program is headed in the right direction.

That said, there has to be some bad news with the good.

Last week, the Colonial Athletic Association announced the Panthers will not be allowed to participate in any postseason tournaments next year. The vote was taken by the conference's presidents during a meeting two weeks ago. This is not a surprise to anyone because this reinforces a CAA bylaw. The sports that will be affected by this are basketball, baseball, field hockey, golf, lacrosse, rowing, softball, tennis, soccer and volleyball.

Because the Panthers are banned from conference tournaments, they can't get automatic bids to NCAA tournaments. However, they can reach as an at-large bid which has happened before to five CAA teams in basketball. The other option, and probably the easiest, is the Panthers join the Sun Belt con-

ference for this season for every sport except football, which will automatically put them in postseason play.

"When I meet with the players tonight I have to explain this to them," men's basketball coach Ron Hunter told the AJC shortly after the ruling came down. "The older guys will understand. The younger guys, they are going to ask 'What did we do wrong?' They didn't do anything wrong."

MAKING THE GRADE ...

The CAA will not only miss a great athletic program in Georgia State, they will also miss a great academic program as well. The men's basketball team got an APR score of 971 which is 25 points up from last year. Georgia State did not get a score for football because it did not field a team in all four seasons covered by the report that was released last week.

The APR, which stands for Academic Progress Rate, is released every year and if a team scores 925 or lower, scholarships can be taken away.

Jones can be reached at bjones@scoreatl.com

OWL OUTLOOK



NCAA honors Kennesaw catcher

By Fabianna Blanco

The 2012 ABCA/Rawlings NCAA Division I All-American committee named former Kennesaw State catcher Ronnie Freeman an All-South Region honoree.

Freeman is considered one of the best offensive players in the history of the Kennesaw State baseball program after three exceptional seasons with the Owls. Over his career, he recorded 242 hits (ninth all-time in KSU history), 152 RBI (eighth), 25 home runs and 41 doubles (10th).

In 2012, the catcher had another outstanding season, recording a .352 batting average, fifth best in the Atlantic Sun conference. He also posted a .500 slugging percentage (13th) and .426 on-base percentage (seventh) while notching 74 hits (sixth) and 52 RBIs (second).

Freeman was selected in the fifth round by the Arizona Diamondbacks in the recent MLB Draft, becoming the highest-drafted KSU player since 2009 when Chad Jenkins and Kyle Heckathorn were taken in the first round.

After coming to terms on a deal with the Diamondbacks, the former Owl is now hitting a .235 through his first five games professional

games. Freeman is currently suiting up for the Yakima Bears, a Class A short-season affiliate for the Diamondbacks based out of Yakima, Wash.

SCHEDULE'S RELEASED

Several teams have released schedules for the upcoming athletic season. The men's golf team will open the year at the Carpet Capital Collegiate.

"We have scheduled some great events this season that will allow us to play against some tough competition, as well as play close to home so that our fans can come out and support us," said head coach Jay Moseley in a team release.

The cross country teams will be competing in a five-meet regular season beginning with the Belmont Invitational on Aug. 31. The teams will travel to Tallahassee for the first time ever to compete in the Florida State Invitational.

"Our schedule was chosen to give our athletes the best chance to give strong showings and prepare for the A-Sun Championship and beyond," head coach Ryan Wagner said on the school's website.

Blanco can be reached at 404-256-1572.

BULLDOG BEAT



Dawgs lose two commitments, add one

By Stephen Black

Swainsboro's Rico Johnson committed to Georgia on June 16. The wide receiver came out of nowhere at UGA's Mark Richt minicamp to clock a 4.28 in the 40-yard dash. His time raised eyebrows and drew an almost immediate offer from the Bulldogs. Johnson accepted the offer right away and became the 19th commitment in the 2013 recruiting class.

Richt's program had 20 commits at one point, but two decommitments set the Bulldogs back to 18 prior to Johnson's pledge. Johnson missed last season entirely, and slipped under the radar of most college programs. But according to a recent Score interview with Swainsboro assistant Ashley Hooks, interest in Johnson has exploded since his UGA commitment.

RECRUITING TIDBITS ...

Running back Derrick Henry and wide receiver Kyrin Priester decommitted within three days of each other on June 13 and 15. Priester withdrew his pledge to look around at other schools as Georgia's class continued to fill with receivers. Meanwhile, Henry withdrew his promise after a trip to Alabama. Henry had been committed for nearly a year, but wanted to look at other programs.

In other recruiting news, defensive back

Shaq Wiggins told the AJC that he is still committed to Georgia, but is looking around. Wiggins intimated he was just enjoying the recruiting process, but is still pledged to Richt's program.

OLYMPIC VET ...

Senior swimmer Allison Schmitt qualified for the Olympics for the second straight time after winning the 400-meter freestyle at the U.S. Olympic Trials Tuesday in Omaha. Schmitt finished with a time of 4:02:08, the world's third-fastest of the year.

"I definitely heard the crowd, and it was so exciting," said the native of Canton, Mich. "I heard them after the first 100 and thought 'Wow, something must be going on.' I was just hoping that wall would come fast, and it did."

Schmitt also competed in the 2008 Olympics when she captured the bronze in the 800-meter relay.

JOHN AND ANDY ...

Former Georgia tennis star John Isner was named to the U.S. Olympic team Tuesday. Isner will play both singles and doubles on the team.

Black can be reached at sblack@scoreatl.com.

TECH BUZZ



Impressive marks for Jackets athletes

By Patrick Tighe

This past academic year only emphasized the view that Tech is a prestigious academic institution with students and student-athletes who excel in the classroom. Several Tech athletes were honored individually for their academic success after Tech's Academic Progress scores were released to the public.

On the baseball diamond, three Yellow Jackets were included on the 21-man 2012 ACC baseball All-Academic team. To qualify for the team, an athlete must have made at least a 3.0 GPA during the fall semester of 2011 and have averaged a 3.0 GPA during that academic year. Luke Bard, Zane Evans and Brandon Thomas made the list after all appearing on the list in years past.

The women's softball team managed to double up Danny Hall's baseball team, as six ladies earned a spot on the 2012 All-Academic team. Alysha Rudnik, Haley Downs, Karly Fullum, Kate Kuzma, Kelsi Wesemen and Shannon Bear achieved the honor for the Lady Yellow Jackets. Only Virginia had as many players earn a spot in this prestigious group.

Another honor was bestowed on Tech baseball players, as Jake Davies, Brandon Thomas and Buck Farmer were named second-team all-atlantic region by ABCA/Rawlings.

PASSED THE APR ...

The dreaded Academic Progress Reports were released last week. Teams have to maintain a score of at least 925 to avoid penalties and are graded based on the average scores of all four classes of students. Overall, Tech teams averaged a 930 APR.

"We are pleased to once again see strong scores and improvements in our Academic Progress Rates," said athletic director Dan Radakovich in a story on the school's athletic site. "It is a testament to the quality and efforts of our student-athletes, our academic support staff and coaches. Over half of all our teams had a perfect APR year in 2010-11, and all teams exceeded the NCAA benchmark of 930. These scores represent strong progress to the ultimate goal of graduation and earning a Georgia Tech degree. I am proud to work with such a great group of young men and women."

A perfect APR score is 1000 and the golf team, women's cross country team and men's swimming team all nailed that mark. Paul Johnson's football squad had its highest score ever with a 974.

Tighe can be reached at 404-256-1572.

HAWKS HAVEN



Hawks hire Danny Ferry as new GM

By Robby Kalland

The Hawks finalized a multi-year deal to bring former Cavaliers GM and Spurs VP of Basketball Operations Danny Ferry in as the new GM and President of Basketball Operations. Ferry began his front office career in San Antonio in 2003 before getting the job in Cleveland as GM in 2005. He returned to the Spurs in 2010, where he has been for the past two seasons. The Hawks are hoping that Ferry will bring the winning culture from San Antonio and instill it throughout the entire Hawks organization.

Ferry will have the task of rebuilding the Hawks, who are in a period of transition marked by the hiring of a new GM. The biggest issue facing Ferry initially is the salary cap situation and Josh Smith. Smith has made it clear that he will not return to the Hawks after his contract runs out, so it is up to Ferry to find the best deal for Smith. It would not be surprising to see Smith get moved on NBA draft night as the Hawks look to rebuild and get younger.

DRAFT PREP ...

Over the past two weeks the Hawks have brought in a number of different prospects for pre-draft workouts in preparation for the NBA Draft, which was held yesterday. As of press deadline, Atlanta owned the 23rd and

46th overall picks.

The Hawks have needs at every position, being that there are only six players under contract come July 1, and the draft offered the Hawks an opportunity for the first time in a few years to add two players that can be on the NBA roster come the start of the season.

"At the position we're drafting, we'll be taking the best available player," said head coach Larry Drew.

The Hawks could have gone in a number of different directions with their first round selection. Big men like Vanderbilt C Festus Ezeli and Syracuse C Fab Melo were possibilities that could have added defensive help in the paint.

Outside of the big men, the Hawks worked out a number of guards and wing players that they felt could contribute immediately. Vanderbilt F Jeffery Taylor, Michigan State F Draymond Green, Washington G Tony Wroten, Jr., Kentucky G Doron Lamb and Iona G Scott Machado all garnered praise from the club during workouts. The Hawks are looking to rebuild, and with Ferry taking over as GM, this draft marked the first step in the new direction of the Hawks.

Kalland can be reached at rkalland@scoreatl.com.

FALCONS BEAT



Practices done until training camp

By Sean Conway

You can call it the final calm before the storm, a little tranquility and downtime before the tempest that will be the 2012 NFL season. Last Thursday, the Falcons wrapped up their off-season activities at their headquarters in Flowery Branch. Off for now, the team will get together again on July 26 for the start of the 2012 Russell Athletic Atlanta Falcons Training Camp.

The camp is already mapped out to the precise specifications of ultra-detailed head coach, Mike Smith. On most days, the Falcons will go through a walkthrough in the morning that will be closed to the public. In the afternoons, the team will have an open practice beginning at 3:30 and lasting until around 6:00.

Falcons fans in northwest Georgia will get a treat on Monday, Aug. 6, when the squad meets the Tennessee Titans at Coahulla Creek High School in Dalton for a combined practice from 4:30-7:15. The Baltimore Ravens come to the Georgia Dome four days later for the first preseason game. After Aug. 12, all practices will be closed to the public. Camp breaks Aug. 19. Most importantly, the regular

season begins Sept. 9 at 1:00 at the Kansas City Chiefs.

STATE OF THE TEAM ...

As the minicamp wrapped up last week, Smith gave the media a state of the union interview. He was most passionate about two areas: the competition for playing time on both sides of the line of scrimmage and the more passive practice guidelines established in last year's collective bargaining agreement.

"The two areas that I think are going to have the most competition and the biggest battles are the offensive and defensive line," Smith said. With the addition of Asante Samuel and wide receiver Julio Jones moving into his second pro season, improved line play looks to be a major key to a playoff run this winter.

Then the field boss showed his frustration and also his anticipation.

"We've got somewhat of an evaluation process through the OTAs and minicamps, but when we compete in pads, it's going to be a completely different animal."

Conway can be reached at sconway@scoreatl.com.

CHOP SHOP

PRESENTED BY



Braves struggle in Interleague play

By Fletcher Proctor

Interleague play has ended for 2012 and the Braves will now try and get back into the rhythm of National League play in an attempt to qualify for the postseason. The Braves ended interleague play 8-10, with all games coming against the AL East. Atlanta seemingly had some momentum last week, taking two of three from the Yankees in New York and beating the Red Sox in Game 1 in Boston, only to drop two straight last weekend. The Braves faced Arizona earlier this week and now face the Nationals and Cubs as part of a 10-game home stand.

HUDSON SHARP ...

The Arizona Diamondbacks helped Atlanta open up the long stay at Turner Field with a three-game series that started Tuesday. In Game 1, Tim Hudson picked up his sixth win of the year in an 8-1 Braves win. Hudson went eight innings, allowing just one run while striking out seven. Michael Bourn hit a home run while Chipper Jones went 3-for-4 and Freddie Freeman went 3-for-5 with two RBIs and two runs.

JURRJENS RETURN ...

The Braves' starting rotation took yet another blow as Brandon Beachy was shelved for 12-18 months after requiring Tommy John surgery last week. The MLB ERA leader was pitching well enough for an All-Star spot, but the Braves went to a former All-Star to replace his spot in the rotation for now, recalling Jair Jurrjens from Class AAA-Gwinnett. Jurrjens was nearly perfect through the first seven innings in Boston against the Red Sox. Jurrjens picked up the win in a 4-1 decision after allowing just one hit and one walk through the first seven frames. In the eighth, he recorded two outs but was pulled after allowing a pair of doubles. Chad Durbin and Craig Kimbrel notched the final four outs to preserve the victory for Jurrjens, his first since Aug. 22, 2011 against the Cubs.

Finally, Jason Heyward was honored as the National League player of the week. Heyward went 12-for-23 (.522) with three home runs, three doubles and one triple. He has been outstanding throughout the month of June, posting a .393 average with 14 of his 29 hits going for extra bases.

Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.

GWINNETT BRAVES



Mejia flourishes while G-Braves struggle

By Ryan Caiafa

June continues to be a rough month for the Gwinnett Braves as the team's offense has sputtered and the pitching has not been nearly as consistent as it was early on in the season. As a result of the dry spell, the G-Braves' stronghold on the International League South Division has vanished as they now look up at the Charlotte Knights, who have been red-hot in June and have opened up a comfortable division lead.

Not all has gone sour for Gwinnett though, as Ernesto Mejia continues to drive the offense, leading the team in all major categories, including an average over .300 to go along with his team-leading home run and RBI totals. Mejia hopes that his stellar play will translate into a spot in the Triple-A All-Star Game, set for July 11.

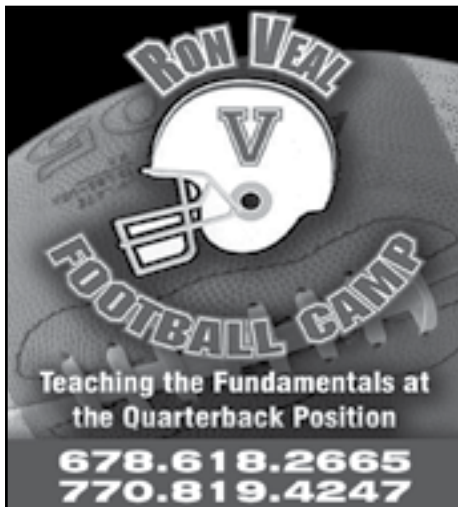
Meanwhile, Gwinnett still holds out hope that, even though the lineup seems to be changing weekly, the team's mindset will return to what it was at the start of the season when the bats were scorching and contributions were coming from top to bottom. The return of Tyler Pastornicky and Jose Constanza have helped some but without consistency outside of Mejia, the team's struggles have lingered.

The starting rotation has also taken a hit, as Jair Jurrjens has returned to Atlanta after Brandon Beachy was lost for the season. Kris Medlen was expected to remain in Gwinnett in order to develop back into a starting pitcher, but he has also found himself back on the Atlanta squad, to bolster the bullpen. Down the stretch, the team will rely heavily on Julio Teheran and Todd Redmond to produce strong starts as the rotation shuffling continues.

GARTRELL HONORED ...

Gwinnett outfielder Stefan Gartrell was named the May Topps Player of the Month by the International League on June 22. Gartrell's scorching hot month consisted of him batting .333, with a league-high 10 home runs and 23 RBIs in 30 games played in May for Gwinnett. It was Gartrell's second honor of the month, as he was named the IL's Batter of the Week for the week ending May 6. He continues to remain one of the team's most reliable power-hitters in his second season in Gwinnett and is also among the International League's top home run hitters.

Caiafa can be reached at rcaiafa@scoreatl.com.



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TRIVIA ANSWER

At Duke, Ferry played in three Final Fours. However, he did not play on a national championship team.

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