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CAN'T MISS THIS WEEK

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- 7** The volleyball playoffs are headed down the stretch, and Stephen Black writes about two of Atlanta's best programs.
- 8** In our prep notebook, we break down the latest news from the softball and volleyball playoffs.

TEAM SCOOP AND VOICES

COVER DESIGN BY DJ GALBIATI BLALOCK
COVER PHOTOS COURTESY OF TREY SCHWARTZ AND JIMMY CRIBB/ATLANTA FALCONS

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INSIDE AT SCORE

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...



JUMPING JACKETS: Georgia Tech wide receiver Jeff Greene couldn't hold on to this pass from Vad Lee Saturday at Bobby Dodd Stadium, but Greene's Yellow Jackets were able to rout Boston College 37-17. Tech moves on to face BYU Saturday on the Flats. Photo courtesy of Jon Barash.

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THE FLETCH



Score Atlanta returning to the radio

By Fletcher Proctor

Earlier this week 92.9 The Game made its debut on the FM dial, bringing sports talk to the masses. Score Atlanta has entered a radio deal with 92.9 The Game to bring high school content to the new FM sports talk station throughout the year. Now that the Game has made the switch to an all-sports format, Score will be right there to not only provide the station with daily reports, but also a Friday night high school football scoreboard show and wrap-up show on Saturday morning. Score will also help out with recruiting content and shows. The biggest contribution may come during the playoffs when Score provides the station coverage, including at the Georgia Dome for the championships.

The lineup for the new station is packed

with fresh sports personalities such as Randy Cross, Rick Kamla, Jerome Jurenovich, Jamie Dukes, Kordell Stewart, Ovie Mughelli, Bob Neal and Dennis Scott all set to contribute to the station. The morning show features Cross, the 49ers legend, Kamla of NBA-TV and local radio personality C.J. Simpson. The midday slot is occupied by Jurenovich, a Braves and Hawks analyst, and Dukes, formerly of 680 The Fan and the NFL Network. The afternoon drive show features Stewart, the former Pittsburgh Steeler and Baltimore Raven, along side radio talents Carl Dukes and Rachel Baribeau. Dukes comes to Atlanta from Houston while Baribeau jumps up to Atlanta from Birmingham. Mitch Evans will run the overnight shift.

Score personalities such as Dave Hunter and myself, Fletcher Proctor, will also make appearances on the station.

NO APOLOGIES ...

The Atlanta Falcons are 6-0 for the first time in franchise history, No. 1 in seemingly every single (meaningless) power poll concocted by ESPN, yahoo, CBS and Fox and alone in first place in the NFC South by a wide margin. For some reason, though, many people in Atlanta have yet to fully embrace the Falcons.

Radio shows have taken calls from people trying to shoot down THE BEST START IN FRANCHISE HISTORY, making claims that the schedule has been weak and the Falcons are without a signature win this season. They will claim that none of this matters because it is the regular season. They say the true measure of success will only come in January and February.

While I must agree with the final point, I have to strongly disagree with the first two points. Unlike UGA and Georgia Tech, the Falcons do not choose their schedule, the NFL does. The NFL decides when the Falcons will go on the road and when. The NFL decided to give the Falcons the AFC West in four of the

first six weeks. The NFL decided to alternate the Falcons' schedule so they never received two home games in a row. And just for the record, these professional teams are all playing by the same rules. They have the same cap and salary floor. They must spend a certain amount of money, so to say the Falcons are taking advantage, please. They aren't Georgia Tech facing Middle Tennessee State ... wait, bad example.

As far as the Falcons not having a signature win this season, how about blowing doors off Peyton Manning on Monday Night Football with ESPN begging for the Broncos to win so they could beat the "Peyton is Back" drum. Nope. Matt Ryan wouldn't let it happen. He also wouldn't let the team lose to Carolina or Washington or Oakland.

Embrace this team. This regime has made franchise history with back-to-back winning seasons, going to the playoffs in consecutive years and now with the best start in franchise history. Playoff success is sure to come, so why not embrace this incredible start and live in the moment? We don't often get incredible stories in Atlanta; why not take advantage of one when it comes along?

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KALLAND'S KORNER



Hawks embark on season without Johnson

By Robby Kalland

The Atlanta Hawks made a number of moves this offseason including trading their lone All-Star from 2011-12, Joe Johnson, and former second-overall pick Marvin Williams to acquire mostly expiring deals that will leave them with approximately \$40 million in cap room next season, pending the cap number. Despite the apparent rebuilding phase that the Hawks are in, they still remain a threat to earn a solid playoff seed in the Eastern Conference. For the first time in his three years as head coach, Larry Drew has a roster that fits his motion offense and desire to move the ball.

With Johnson, the Hawks did not move the ball as quickly as they will this year because of Johnson's preference to run slower sets and play on the ball in isolation sets. Johnson's production last year came largely from his growth as a three-point shooter. He

ranked 10th in the league in three-pointers made (125), but was ninth in three-pointers attempted (322). His volume of shooting left him at 38.8 percent from behind the arc, his best season from distance as a Hawk, and three-pointers accounted for 33.2 percent of his points for the season (375 of 1129), the highest percentage in his Hawks career. Williams also shot a career high 38.9 percent from three last year and 30 percent of his points came from behind the arc (174 of 579).

This improvement came from an increased number of corner threes taken by the Hawks, which were often created off of penetration by Jeff Teague. The Hawks' offense will be even more predicated on pick-and-rolls and Teague (or Lou Williams or Devin Harris) facilitating from the paint this season, which should produce a lot of open threes and high-percentage corner-three opportunities.

LONG-DISTANCE SUCCESS ...

The Hawks have replaced Johnson's and Williams' three-point production with a bevy of sharp-shooters who will be able to take advantage of those open looks. Kyle Korver was just seven made three-pointers behind Johnson, putting him 10th in the NBA. Korver did make 118 threes on just 271 attempts for an incredible 43.5 percent shooting from three.

Anthony Morrow was tied for 19th in the NBA (with Ray Allen) in three-pointers made and his 106 makes came on 286 attempts for a shooting percentage of 37.1 percent from distance. Morrow also was on a bad team that was forced to try and shoot their way back into games, so his percentage should go up from getting better attempts.

DeShawn Stevenson struggled with the Nets last season, shooting just 28.3 percent from three, but the Hawks expect Stevenson to play more like he did on Dallas in 2010-11 (the Mavs' title season) when he was asked to be a defensive presence and provide offensive spacing, the same role he will play for the Hawks. That year DeShawn shot 37.8 percent from three and an incredible 73.6 percent of his points came from distance.

Those three, plus rookie John Jenkins, will provide more three-point firepower than last year when the Hawks were fifth in the league in three-point percentage.

NEW ROLES ...

Williams was added to the team to pro-

vide a Jamal Crawford-like scoring quality back to the Hawks, who lacked a bench threat last season. Williams, who will play mostly off the bench, has the ability to score in bunches, as evidenced by him leading the Sixers in scoring despite not starting. Williams is one of the best pure scorers in the league and has an incredible ability to create his own shot when plays break down, even more effectively than Johnson. Williams will give the Hawks the ability to rest their starters without having a drastic drop-off in scoring. With Williams along with the other shooters, this year's team should avoid the lulls in offensive output that plagued last year's team when the starters would come out.

This year's squad will have defensive liabilities on the wing, but the Hawks have made adjustments to improve pick-and-roll defense and are utilizing their speed better on defense. Teague and Smith are two of the league's best thieves, and Smith can erase defensive mistakes at the rim with his blocking and ability to alter inside shots. The Hawks' defensive ranking will drop from last year when they ranked sixth in the NBA in points against, but their offense will improve from the 17th-best in the league to be one of the most potent, which in turn will bring their opponents points per game up. This team is not a title contender right now but can absolutely earn a No. 4 or No. 5 seed in the East.

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FALCONS FOOTBALL



Falcons lead NFL at 6-0 despite struggles

By Ricky Dimon



Atlanta sports franchises have been known to be pretty good in the regular season. The 2012 Atlanta Falcons can't be called "great" until they make some serious headway in the playoffs, but they are a lot better than "pretty good." Right now, in fact, they're perfect.

The Falcons reached their bye week unblemished in the loss column. Their 6-0 record is good for an outrageous four-game lead in the NFC South and a less insurmountable one-game advantage over Chicago in the conference.

MATTY ICE ...

Although Mike Smith and company may not have dominated their first six contests, no team ever has to apologize for being undefeated. If these Falcons want to make amends for yet another season of giving their fans heart attacks, well, that would be fair.

But all's well that ends well and the two Matts have once again showcased a flair for the dramatic. Matt Ryan has engineered 18 game-winning drives in the fourth quarter or overtime, most in the league since 2008 and

most by any quarterback in his first five NFL seasons. Three have already come in 2012. Starting from his own one-yard line trailing Carolina by one with 1:09 remaining, Ryan heaved a 59-yard pass to Roddy White that led to a last-second field goal. At Washington, the Falcons scored 17 fourth-quarter points to erase deficits of 10-7 and 17-14. Against Oakland, Ryan led a 43-yard drive in 40 seconds that resulted in a winning field goal on the game's final play.

Responsible for those kicks to cap off the frantic drives is, of course, none other than Matt Bryant. The 37-year-old connected from 40 yards out against the Panthers and from 55 against the Raiders (the second longest of his career) to keep Atlanta undefeated. Bryant is 13 for 14 on field goals this season and 75 for 84 in his career as a Falcon.

"He has been clutch," Ryan said during his press conference after the Oakland game, speaking of his fellow Matt when he could just as easily been referring to himself. "He seems not to let anything affect him. He is really mentally tough. He has been huge for us."

FALCONS FOOTBALL ...

Samuel L. Jackson once asked, "What do Falcons do?" The catchy answer, as we all know, would be to say, "Falcons rise up!" The correct answer, however, is "Falcons play mistake-free football and win turnover battles."

That's what this team has always done under Mike Smith and that is exactly what it's doing again in 2012. Atlanta has committed a shockingly-low (even by its lofty standards) 18 penalties through six games. No other team in the league has been flagged fewer than 31 times. Its 152 penalty yards are also best in the NFL and more than 100 fewer than all other 31 squads.

The Falcons have also forced 17 turnovers (fourth most in the league), including 10 interceptions. Thomas DeCoud is tied for first in the NFL with four picks and he leads it with five total takeaways. Asante Samuel chipped in against the Raiders with a critical pick-six late in the fourth quarter. The Falcons' plus-10 turnover differential is third best in the league behind Chicago and New England. They also finished third in that category with a plus-14 mark in 2010, the year they compiled an NFC-best 13-3 record.

What's different about this year's squad is a more dynamic, pass-happy offense under new offensive coordinator Dirk Koetter. Ryan is averaging the sixth-most passing yards per game (292.7) and his quarterback rating is fourth best in the league (98.8). Tony Gonzalez is leading the NFL among tight ends in receptions (43) and yards per game (71.7) and he is tied for fourth with four touchdowns. White and Julio Jones have compiled average numbers by their standards, but they've once again delivered their share of memorable moments; among others, White with his leaping, twisting grab against Carolina and Jones on his toes in the front corner of the endzone against Washington.

So far, however, the expense of Air Atlanta has been an anemic rushing attack. Traditionally one of the best running teams in the league, Atlanta is 29th in that category at 86.5 yards per game.

"We just have to execute better, and that's all 11 guys on the field," running back Michael Turner told the Atlanta Journal Constitution. "That's mainly what it is. We know that we have the ability to do it. We have to not take things for granted and go out there and still do the things that we've been coached to do."

PLAYOFF PEAK ...

This sure has the same feeling as 2010, when the Falcons won the division and earned home-field advantage throughout the NFC playoffs. Heading into a Week 9 bye that

year, they were 6-2 and tied atop the conference with the New York Giants. Thriller after thriller was won: 27-24 in overtime at New Orleans, 16-14 over San Francisco, 39-32 over Cincinnati, 27-21 over Tampa Bay, 26-21 over Baltimore.... The list goes on.

Ultimately, however, that season ended in painful fashion as Atlanta went down in flames to Green Bay in its playoff opener, 48-21 at the Georgia Dome. The 2008 and 2011 campaigns were not quite as successful but also not entirely different. Solid regular seasons led to playoff berths, but the Falcons lost at Arizona and at New York (the latter by a score of 24-2), respectively.

This year's squad has to have postseason success on its mind, because that is the missing piece of the puzzle in the Ryan-Smith era. Yes, it's hard to believe, but the Falcons have never won a playoff game with Ryan as quarterback and Smith as head coach.

"The hallmark of a good team is when you go out there and win games when you haven't played your best," Gonzalez told the team's website after beating Oakland. "We're 6-0 and we got a bye week so we have to clear our minds a little bit because we gotta play better football."

The Falcons need to do it this Sunday at Philadelphia, but they really need to do it next January.

Photos courtesy of Jimmy Cribb/Atlanta Falcons. Dimon can be reached at rdimon@scoreatl.com.



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WHO'S HOT

THUMBS UP TO COCKTAIL PARTIES



Georgia-Florida Showdown

The results of the World's Largest Cocktail Party will define the Bulldogs' season. A win means the Dogs are likely headed back to the Dome for the second year in a row to play in the SEC Championship and can claim to be the best program in the East. A loss means this team is once again solid, but not spectacular.

Falcons-Eagles Showdown

This is a game that NFL fans in Atlanta have been buzzing about for a long time. Last year the Falcons beat the Eagles in the Dome 35-31, taking control after Mike Vick left the game with an injury. But the Falcons have not won in Philly since 1988.

Josh Smith's Ceiling

Hawks' general manager Danny Ferry essentially cleared the floor for the dynamic forward entering the prime of his career. Last year, Smith set career highs in points (18.8 per game) and rebounds (9.6 per game). Without Joe Johnson (but with a healthy Al Horford), it's Smith's time to take his game to the superstar level.

NBA preseason

No offense, literally and figuratively. We complain about the NFL preseason, but ignore the start of the NBA calendar. Why? Because the rosters (if not the rotations on most squads) are virtually set, and fans have football plus the baseball play-offs. We don't normally talk about this, but the NBA preseason needs to be shortened or at least spiced up.

Aaron Murray and big games

The Georgia quarterback is accumulating some serious numbers as the Bulldogs' quarterback, but he needs a win Saturday to cement his legacy. He may blow past Eric Zeier and David Greene in the record books, but he needs his moment on the big stage to reach legendary status.

Philadelphia Fans

While the outcome of the Falcons-Eagles game is yet to be decided, one thing is certain at Lincoln Financial Field on Sunday: the Philly natives will be rude, crude and socially unacceptable. No, they don't still use the jail below the stadium, but it's there. Win or lose, those people will find a way to be a collective disaster.



WHO'S NOT

THUMBS DOWN TO BAD BEHAVIOR

SCORE LIST

BY BRIAN JONES

1 **COCKTAIL PARTY:** It's that time when Georgia fans make their way to Jacksonville for the Georgia-Florida game. The Bulldogs enter as underdogs in a game they must win to claim the SEC East title. Can Georgia pull off the upset? Unfortunately, I don't see the Dawgs winning Saturday.

2 **BACK IN ACTION:** One team I can see winning this weekend is the Falcons. The Falcons are looking to go 7-0 while the Philadelphia Eagles are a team looking to avoid dropping below .500. The Falcons will win thanks to the extra rest from their bye. They'll put a number on Michael Vick and company.

3 **MAKE IT TWO:** After a dominating performance against Boston College, Georgia Tech looks to win its second consecutive game when they host BYU on the Flats. The Cougars are looking to bounce back after a suffering a tough loss to Notre Dame. I don't think that's going to happen.

4 **ESPN DOES COBB:** If you haven't heard, ESPN will be in Marietta on Friday to broadcast the Walton-Milton game. This will be a very interesting game because both teams are fighting for the No. 2 seed in Region 5-A. Milton is looking to finally get over the hump and beat Walton.

5 **FEED ME MORE:** The WWE will make its return to Atlanta on Sunday when the pay-per-view Hell in a Cell invades Philips Arena. The main event is WWE Champion CM Punk defending his title against newcomer Ryback. If you haven't been to a WWE event before, you have to check it out because it's very entertaining.

CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS

BY RICKY DIMON

4 Atlanta's lead in the NFC South, 1.5 games larger than any other division lead

24 Teams out of 52 that have started 6-0 to eventually reach the Super Bowl

50 Mike Smith's win total after his next one, which will give him the franchise record

13 Wins, compared to no losses, for Eagles' coach Andy Reid coming off a bye

13 Turnovers committed by Michael Vick this season, most in NFL

3 Wins for Georgia in its last 14 games vs. Florida, including last season's victory

-19 Rushing yards to which Georgia limited Florida in last year's game

22 Years since Georgia has pulled off back-to-back wins in the Cocktail Party

0-5 Will Muschamp's record in the Cocktail Party (as a UGA player and Florida coach)

\$20MIL Impact the Cocktail Party has on Jacksonville, according to the mayor

TRIVIA QUESTION

While Matt Ryan is second on the Falcons' all-time passing yards list, what quarterback is comfortably in first place with 23,470 yards?

Answer on Page 14

SANITY AT LAST

"All it is is fuel for the fire and basically its given me motivation to go out there and give 100 percent. And that's what I did today. You can ask any of my teammates. I was upset today at practice today any time the ball came my way I tried to knock the [expletive] out of him."

- Georgia linebacker Michal Gilliard on how he responded to Shawn Williams' comments that he shouldn't be playing.

DIARY OF A RECRUIT

A senior at Centennial High School, Chase Rosenberg is in his first year as the team's starting quarterback under a new head coach and new spread offense. He continues his pursuit of playing football for a strong academic institution and is still awaiting his first offer.

When you start off the season 0-5, you wonder if any college coach is going to take interest in you. But with a lot of help from my coach, two big wins including one that has been called perhaps the biggest upset in the state so far this season and a highlight film that I feel very good about, it is getting to be a busy recruiting season for me.

My strategy all along has been to play football at a top academic school and next week, one of the Georgetown coach is flying down to watch my practice.



While the trip to the Ivy League schools during the summer and attending their camps has helped, I have realized I have to be extremely proactive throughout the process.

The schools that I have been in constant contact in addition to Georgetown have been Princeton, Penn, Yale, Dartmouth, Brown, Fordham, Davidson, John Hopkins and Amherst. My coach, Jeff Carlberg, has really stepped up for me and talked to almost all the schools and got some interesting responses. Fordham has already received a commitment from a quarterback so while they are still interested, it is unlikely I will be in the Bronx next year. Yale told my coach they like me a lot but a lot of it would depend on my application, grades and test scores. Princeton told him they continue to follow me and are very interested.



BT, Harrison search for state gold

By Stephen Black

For volleyball squads throughout the state of Georgia, this is the most important time of the year: the state playoffs. Through the state finals on Nov. 5, Georgia's best will square off to determine the champions in the state's six classifications.

Class AAA No. 1 Blessed Trinity is a program with high hopes of winning the state title. Coach Paul Stevens' Titans have two state championships in their history, 2006 (AAA) and 2010 (A-AA). But Stevens' squad will face a gauntlet in the playoffs should it advance to the finals.

Blessed Trinity happens to be in the same classification as state powerhouse Woodward Academy, which has won eight state championships since 2001, including three since

2008. However, the Titans defeated the War Eagles on Oct. 2 in convincing fashion (25-12, 25-17).

"We don't know who we're going to see again," said Stevens. "We've gotta take it one match at a time. I'll be honest, I don't really root for or against any other teams, we take it one match at a time and just try to prepare for that opponent as best as we can and go forward from there."

Taking it one game at a time is a challenge for programs like Blessed Trinity. The Titans are 52-2 and have lost just one match to a team from the state of Georgia, a 2-1 loss on Oct. 6 to Class AAAAA No. 4 McIntosh. Stevens has the task of keeping his team focused on each and every match, and not look-

ing ahead to whom they may face deeper in the playoffs should they advance that far.

"We set lofty goals for ourselves at the beginning of the year and now in the home stretch, it's really just a matter of keeping those same goals in the forefront of their minds," said Stevens before heading into the playoffs. "The captains have done a great job setting that tone for the team."

Class AAAAAA No. 1 Harrison has a similar outlook as the Titans. Coach Clay Taylor's program dominated Class AAAAA last season before being upset by Walton in the state finals in five sets. The Hoyas had lost just one match all season to a team from their classification last year before the upset loss in the finals. This year, Taylor's squad (47-6) is motivated by unfinished business.

"Our team is very focused and business-like," said Taylor on the eve of the playoffs. "Our practices have been productive, but also light-hearted and fun. The players feel as if they have

some unfinished business from last season."

The Hoyas' lone loss to a Class AAAAAA squad came in mid-August against Walton. Since, they have been dominant in the state's largest classification. Despite their near-perfect play, however, Taylor thinks his team can still improve in certain aspects of the game.

"Our team is working on being more aggressive in every phase of the game," said Taylor. "Passing and controlling the pace of the game as well as finishing plays. Minimizing unforced errors is a focus in our workouts. We do not look past our current opponent and the brackets make it difficult to do anyway since you don't really know how teams will perform and who will advance."

Taylor's team plays Rockdale in the second round while Blessed Trinity will take on Cartersville.

Photos courtesy of Blessed Trinity and Harrison HS. Black can be reached at sblack@scoreatl.com.

GPB TV

SANDY CREEK VS. CARROLLTON

Class AAAA power programs collide

By Stephen Black

Some rivalries were meant to be. It took a while, but Carrollton and Sandy Creek seem headed down that road. Despite being two of the top programs in Class AAA in recent years, the Trojans (5-2) and Patriots (7-0) have only faced each other three times in history. One of them was a hotly-contested state final in 2010 that Sandy Creek won 14-7.

Both programs have rich tradition and both have been regularly appeared deep in the playoffs. Chip Walker's program has won at least 11 games every year since 2008 while making the playoffs each year since 2001. Further west in Carrollton, Rayvan Teague's squad has won 10 or more games all but once in the past eight seasons while making the playoffs an astounding 24 times in a row.

As far as state titles, neither program is needy. Carrollton has won seven, the last coming in 1998. Sandy Creek captured state titles in 2009 and 2010. It is safe to say that these two programs will have something to say about who wins state gold in AAAA this season as well.

TROJAN TRACKS ...

Under Teague, Carrollton has run the ball and run it well. The Trojans are averaging 265.9 yards per game through seven contests this sea-

son. Meanwhile, opponents have only been able to run for an average of 109.9 yards per game. Carrollton outscored its opponents 42-16.7.

However, Carrollton does shy away from tossing the pigskin around the ballpark. Trojans quarterback Will Hesterlee has thrown just 39 passes this season, completing 16 of them for 276 yards and four scores. Meanwhile, Carrollton boasts five rushers with more than 100 yards on the ground this year. Leading the way is Trey Chivers with 641 yards and eight touchdowns.

POWERFUL PATRIOTS ...

Sandy Creek has a few players highly sought after by SEC programs. Junior wide receiver Demarre Kitt was a Georgia commitment until recently while senior defensive back Shaquille Wiggins is still with the Dawgs. Senior offensive lineman Alan Knott is committed to South Carolina.

Like Carrollton, Walker's club prefers to run the ball, but quarterback Cole Garvin will try to hook up with Kitt in the passing game. In a 42-6 shellacking of Alexander on Oct. 19, Garvin completed six passes to Kitt, including one for a touchdown. Rushers Eric Swinney and Delvin Weems each ran for touchdowns in the rout.

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GPB.ORG

ST. PIUS X VS. BLESSED TRINITY

Pius battles Titans for playoff position

By Fletcher Proctor

Blessed Trinity and St. Pius X are two programs that boast respected head coaches capable of inspiring their teams in big games. Blessed Trinity's Tim McFarlin's Titans have played under the lights of GPB.org, WSB, Comcast and now once again in the GPB.org webcast of the week. In his second year with the program, the man who led Roswell to a share of the 2006 state title has Blessed Trinity in a strong position to host a playoff game. Blessed Trinity had won five straight games entering last night's game against McNair - the result was not available at press deadline.

Senior quarterback Spencer McManes can make all of the throws and uses his big frame to bull the ball into the endzone on any short-yardage situation. Earlier this season against Decatur, McManes plunged into the endzone twice, both from short distances as the opposing defense could not stop him. The diminutive Tim Mertz is outstanding at find holes and slithering through, and the defenses can rarely get a clean shot at the sneaky back. Finally, Milton Shelton may just be a freshman, but he already has "the look" of a great running back and could really blossom under McFarlin.

HEAR THEM ROAR ...

St. Pius X coach Paul Standard has been with the Golden Lions since 2001 and recorded win No. 100 against Towers in September. The Golden Lions have dropped just one game this year, a seven-point loss to Thomson on Sept. 14. Fullback Ryan Braswell has paced the attack this season, recording three touchdowns against North Oconee and a school rushing record 283 yards against Cedar Grove. Braswell has been joined in the offensive backfield by junior running back Brandon Mitchell and quarterback Jack Spear. Spear is a threat with his legs as well as his arm. Nick Ruffin and Michael Sikorski are threats at receiver. Ruffin excelled at running back one year ago but has played some at receiver after standing out at various 7-on-7 camps over the summer.

Defensively, Nick Glass is not just one of the St. Pius X playmakers, he is also one of the nation's top juniors. Glass has committed to UGA and has helped the Golden Lions hold four opponents to six points or fewer this season and to four straight wins entering the Woodward Academy game. Sikorski is also a force on the defense, picking off two passes against North Oconee.

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PREP

NOTEBOOK



Playoffs soldier on in volleyball, softball

By Stephen Black & Fletcher Proctor



It was a tough night Tuesday for defending champions on the volleyball court as two programs saw their hopes of repeats dashed. Three-time defending champion Pope fell in four sets to McIntosh at Pope's Hound Pound. McIntosh's Breana Jones had three solo blocks, 16 kills and nine assisted blocks to pace McIntosh. Pope received 14 kills from Rachel Reynolds and 16 from Sydney Darden. After dropping the first two sets 25-21, 25-17, Pope took the third set 25-21, only to drop the final set 25-20. This is the first time since 2005 the Greyhounds have failed to make the state quarterfinals. Pope was ranked No. 2 while McIntosh was ranked No. 4.

The other defending champion to fall was Class A No. 7 ELCA. No. 4 Savannah Christian took out the Chargers 25-22, 25-19, 15-25, 25-16 to advance to the third round. Sydney Harper led the Raiders with 14 kills while Chandler Ewaldsen had 11 kills.

In other action from Tuesday, River Ridge took out Cross Creek to move on in the Class AAAA state playoffs. The quarterfinals appearance is a first for River Ridge. Calhoun fell in the Class AA playoffs as Lovett swept the Yellow Jackets out in three sets at Calhoun. Finally, Sonoraville won its 17th straight match in a sweep of Beach. Sonoraville has not lost to a team from the state of Georgia this year.

ELITE EIGHT ...

The state softball quarterfinals commenced Thursday in Columbus between the top eight teams in the state from six different classifications, including two brackets for Class A (public and private). The teams matched up will play best-of-three series to determine what teams go to the semifinals, which take place Friday.

One of the juicier quarterfinals matchups takes place between No. 2 East Coweta and No. 3 Lassiter. The Trojans (30-5-1) dispatched Brookwood in the first round and Peachtree Ridge in the second. Meanwhile, the Indians (31-3-1) have not lost since Aug. 21 and are 25-0-1 since.

Defending Class AAAAAA champion Collins Hill will be challenged by No. 8 Harrison, which comes out of a tough Region 4-AAAAAA that sent three teams to the quarterfinals. The fifth-ranked Rams (23-8) have won the last three state championships in the state's largest classification. The Hoyas (22-11) have swept Tift County and Rockdale in the state playoffs, while the Rams have eliminated West Forsyth and Milton.

In Class AAAAA, defending state champion Northgate will play No. 8 Loganville in another interesting quarterfinal matchup. The Vikings (29-8) are ranked No. 4 and are coming off wins over Harris County and Effingham County. Northgate fell in the Region 4-AAAAA tournament to No. 1 Union Grove.

Speaking of Class AAAAA's top-ranked team, the Wolverines will take on No. 7 South Paulding. Union Grove (27-6-2) is in search of its first softball state championship and has lost just four games since August. Meanwhile, the Spartans (26-10-1) enter the quarterfinals on a bit of a tear, having won seven of eight postseason games, including state playoff sweeps over Salem and Forsyth Central.

Five-time defending AA champion Buford is now in Class AAA and has not seemed to have skipped a beat. The No. 1 Wolves (28-3) dropped a game in the second round to Franklin County, but rallied to win the last two games and the series. Coach Tony Wolfe's squad takes on No. 3 Jackson (26-8) in the quarterfinals.

No. 1 Wesleyan (27-9) is the only metro school still playing in Class AA, and will face No. 6 Vidalia in the quarterfinals.

The Class A private school bracket includes Pace Academy, Eagle's Landing Christian and Mount Pisgah. The latter two squads face each other in the quarterfinals.

Photo courtesy of Collins Hill HS. Black & Proctor can be reached at 404-256-1572.

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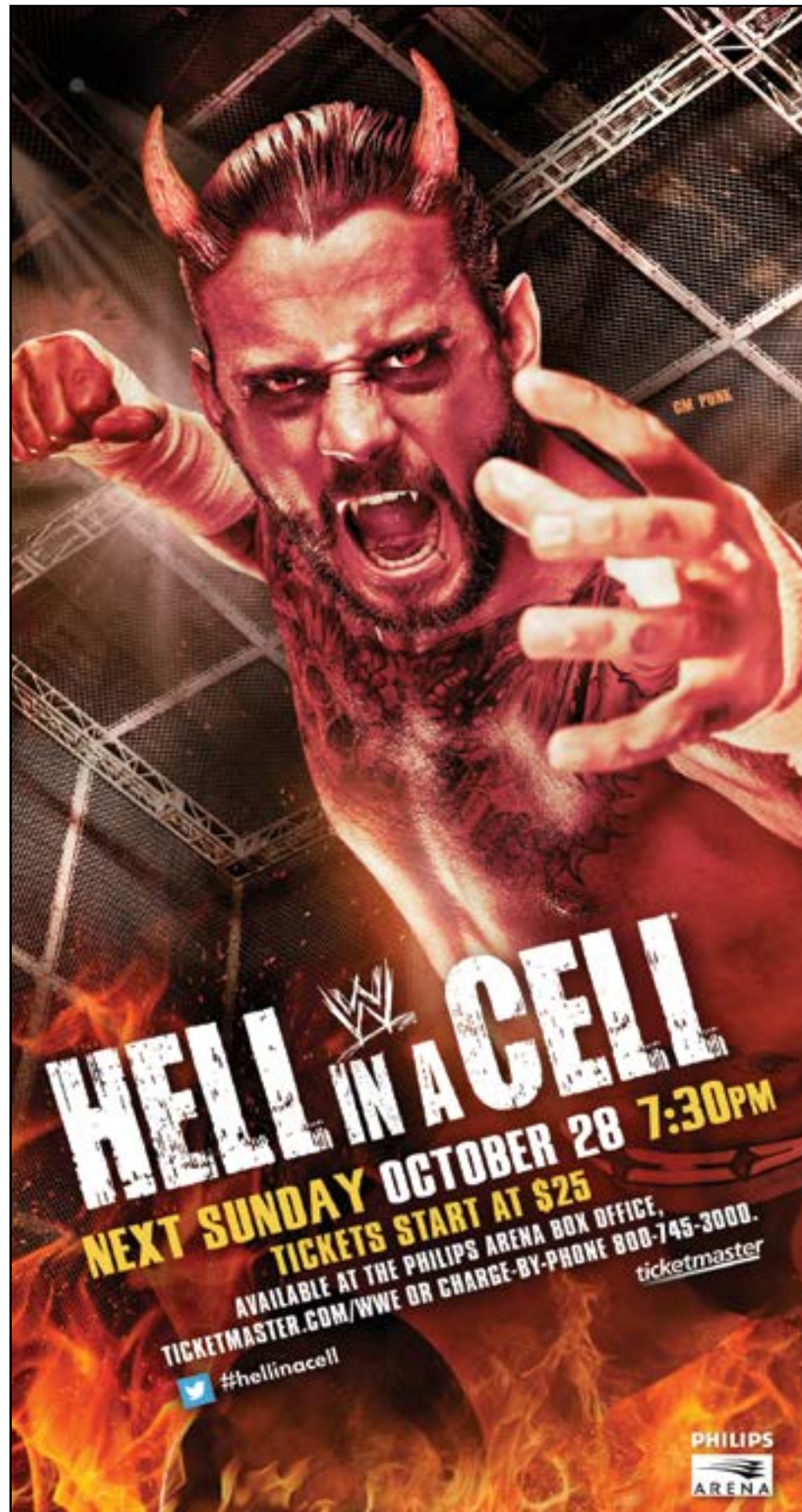
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BULLDOG BEAT



Gators await Dawgs in Jacksonville

By Chris Lionetti

After leaving Lexington with a victory, the 12th-ranked Georgia Bulldogs will head to Jacksonville this weekend to face the third-ranked Florida Gators. Possibly the biggest game of head coach Mark Richt's career, a Georgia win would put the team in the driver's seat for the SEC East crown. However, a loss would eliminate the Dawgs from further contending for the division title.

"It's a game that is going to be a tremendous challenge for us, we know that," said Richt at his Tuesday press conference. "They are an outstanding football team and very talented. They have a lot of momentum and confidence right now, and those are tough teams to beat. We have our work cut out for us."

CHARMIN SOFT ...

Florida has been propelled by a stout defense and a physical run game. In short, the Gators play smash-mouth football and the Bulldogs will need to hang tough to pull off the upset in Jacksonville.

A year after being one of the elite defenses in the nation, the Bulldogs' defense has been much-maligned and incapable of stopping the run. Despite being one of the SEC's worst units, Kentucky racked up 206 rushing against the Dawgs. The defensive line will need to play at

an elite level to ensure that the Gators do not have success running the ball and dominate the line of scrimmage.

While the defense has been inconsistent all season, there have been no explanations for the team's play seven games into the season. That was until a captain of the defense made his thoughts public.

"We're playing too soft as a defense," said Shawn Williams Monday night. "That goes for the D-line, linebackers, corners, safeties, everybody. We're just not playing with the same attitude we were last year. I don't know what it is."

Williams' comments echoed through the locker room on Tuesday afternoon and generated different emotions among teammates. Richt addressed the situation in his press conference and believed that it could provide a "spark" this week. He called Williams a "passionate player" but wished the comments were not made in a public setting.

JONES RETURNS ...

Linebacker Jarvis Jones missed last week's game due to an ankle sprain but pronounced himself as "fine" to reporters. He also said that he has not been fully healthy since the Missouri game.

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TECH BUZZ



Jackets beat Eagles to get back on track

By Ryan Caiafa

After losing their past three games, the Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets jumped out to a big lead on Boston College early and never looked back en route to a 37-17 win last Saturday at Bobby Dodd Stadium. The Jackets' offense was once again dominant, gaining 563 total yards, with 391 of those coming from the dynamic rushing attack.

While Tevin Washington added two more rushing touchdowns to his total, giving him 15 on the season, it was Vad Lee who emerged as one of the brightest spots for the offense. Lee threw for a touchdown and rushed for another score. He also added 89 passing yards and 62 yards on the ground in some of his most extensive action of the season.

Perhaps even more impressive than the outstanding offensive numbers Tech posted was the Jackets' inspired defensive performance. Georgia Tech played its first game with Charles Kelly as interim defensive coordinator and the team responded by holding the Eagles to just 32 rushing yards and 1-for-9 on third-down conversions.

Paul Johnson's team finally proved it could get it done against a team the Jackets were expected to beat, unlike in previous games such as the loss to Middle Tennessee. As the season progresses with the Jackets still in bowl contention,

this newly-inspired defensive unit, led by Kelly, will need to continue the trend against a tough stretch of opponents.

The remaining schedule includes North Carolina, a surging Duke team and, of course, the finale in Athens against the Bulldogs. Up next, however, is another good opportunity for the Jackets to continue to build defensive cohesion with Brigham Young University serving as the homecoming opponent at Bobby Dodd Stadium.

McCAMISH PAVILION OPENS ...

With the men's basketball home opener against Tulane just over a week away, both the men's and women's basketball teams hosted Jacket Jam this past Saturday, giving the fans their first opportunity to see the new McCamish Pavilion.

The women's team has planned several special events for its home opener, which takes place on Nov. 11 against Tennessee. The team will recognize legendary former Tennessee coach Pat Summitt and Lin Dunn, who coached the WNBA's Indiana Fever to the WNBA title this past weekend. The team will also celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Jackets' 1982 Women's NIT Championship.

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PANTHER PROWL



Panthers fall to Villanova, lose Russell

By Brian Jones

After getting a big win against Rhode Island two weeks ago, the Panthers looked to make it two straight when Villanova visited the Georgia Dome. The Panthers were unable to slow down Villanova's attack as the Wildcats prevailed 49-24.

The Panthers had a good day on offense in running 70 plays, two more than the Wildcats' 68. Georgia State also gained 309 total yards. Albert Wilson led the Panthers with six catches for 104 yards and five kick returns for 174 yards.

"Albert plays his heart out on every play, he's just a great player. It was too little, too late and that's too much of a repetitive story," said Panthers coach Bill Curry after the game. "We're just better than this and that's the part that is so painful."

The Wildcats jumped on the Panthers early and often, holding a 35-10 advantage at halftime. The Wildcats rushed for 353 yards, including 132 yards from Kevin Monangai and 87 yards from John Robertson. Robertson also completed eight of 11 passes for 96 yards, two touchdowns and one interception.

"Obviously, we didn't learn what we should have over the last couple of weeks, culminating last weekend with a reasonable performance," Curry added. "Today, a good Villanova team pushed us around all day. There really aren't words for it. I

don't have an explanation. I don't have an excuse."

The Panthers will travel to Harrisonburg, Va., on Saturday to face James Madison at 3:30 p.m.

RUSSELL OUT ...

The bad news turned worse Saturday after the Panthers fell to the Wildcats. The team suffered another blow when players and coaches found out that running back Donald Russell will be out the rest of the year with an MCL sprain in his left knee. An injury like that usually takes 4-6 weeks to heal, but the Panthers have just three more games remaining on their schedule.

Russell's injury figures to hurt the offense moving forward. He rushed for 665 yards this season and was the leading rusher in the conference entering the Villanova game. Curry said immediately after the game that if Russell's injury was serious, they would use a trio of running backs the rest of the way. With Russell out, Travis Evans will likely see the bulk of the carries. He rushed nine times for 16 yards and one touchdown in the Villanova game. The Panthers will also use Rosevelt Watson and Parris Lee, who have rushed for a combined 112 yards this season.

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OWL OUTLOOK



Owls ready to make noise in A-Sun tournament

By Brian Jones

The soccer team concluded its regular season last weekend with games against Florida Gulf Coast and Stetson. The Owls fell to FGC 1-0 before bouncing back with a 3-0 win over Stetson.

The Owls finished the regular season with a 10-7-1 record and a 6-2-1 mark in the Atlantic Sun Conference. That record was good enough to earn the No. 3 seed in the conference tournament. They will face North Florida Saturday at KSU Stadium.

The last time KSU faced North Florida, the Owls won 4-2 two weeks ago in the teams' only regular-season meeting. Katrina Frost scored two goals while Danielle Gray and Nicole Calder each had a goal in the win.

Tickets will be \$6 for general admission, but students, faculty and staff will be able to watch the game for free.

GOLF UPDATE ...

The women's golf team took part in the Las Vegas Collegiate Showdown and finished 13th out of 18 teams. The Owls finished the 54-hole event with a 60-over par 924, 30 shots behind champion Indiana, which carded a 30-over par 894. Kaew Preamchuen led the Owls with a nine-over 225, good enough to finish in 20th place. Ines Lescudier and Ket Preamchuen recorded final round scores of two-over

par to finish 33rd and 38th, respectively.

The men's golf team won the Pinetree Intercollegiate title at the Pinetree Country Club on Tuesday afternoon. Jimmy Beck won his first career title with a seven-under 209. He is the fifth Owl to earn medal individual honors.

"I am very proud of what the team and I was able to accomplish this week," Beck told ksuowls.com. "Finishing under par as a whole this week was a feat in itself, and it shows that this team is capable of accomplishing anything we set our minds to do."

SPECIAL GUEST ...

The volleyball team will be in for a treat this Saturday when ESPN broadcaster Phil Bush will be a guest announcer for the Owls' season finale.

Bush has worked more than 17 seasons at FOX SportsNet South, CSS and Sun Sports. He has hosted ESPN Sportscenter and has covered ACC and Conference USA basketball tournaments.

"The athletes tell the story with their play," Bush told ksuowls.com. "The goal of any good broadcaster is to simply help the viewer to maximize their experience."

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HAWKS HAVEN



Hawks struggle in early preseason

By Robby Kalland

The Hawks started the preseason with a win over the defending NBA champion Miami Heat but have since dropped three straight games on the road to the Spurs, Grizzlies and Pacers. The losses came by a combined 14 points, but Atlanta gave up over 100 points in each. The defense was the concern coming into camp, and Larry Drew has been focused on improving the defense throughout camp. The Hawks struggled through the first half of their fifth preseason game against the Hornets but made some adjustments on the defensive end that carried over from the second half of that game into their next game against the Mavericks. Atlanta became more aggressive against the ball handler on pick-and-rolls and used their speed to their advantage by not switching, but pressuring then recovering back to their man. The chemistry has improved which has helped as they learn each other's tendencies and are getting better at working as a defensive unit and playing total team defense, something they will have to do being a smaller team without a shutdown defender on the perimeter.

OFFENSIVE POWER ...

While the defense has struggled, the offense has been as advertised. The Hawks continuously pressure opposing defenses by pushing the pace and attacking the basket while

spacing the floor with multiple shooters. Lou Williams has proven himself to be more than capable of filling the scoring void left behind by Joe Johnson (who averaged 18.8 points per game last year). While Williams may not score as many points due to more scoring options on the team, he ought to have more PRFs (points responsible for) because he will operate as both a facilitator and scorer.

Damion James has also been surprisingly effective at the small forward spot and looks to have earned himself not just a roster spot, but also some quality playing time. James has played nearly 20 minutes a game in the preseason and leads the team with 6.7 rebounds per game. James, at 6-foot-7, would be the only true small forward on the roster. He plays a brand of basketball that endears him to the coaches, who reward players that crash the boards, make hustle plays and play physical defense. James will not start most games, as Drew will likely rotate DeShawn Stevenson, Kyle Korver, Anthony Morrow and Josh Smith at the starting spot depending on matchups, but he, along with veteran Anthony Tolliver, will see the floor with the second unit to provide a defensive presence with so many shooters and smaller guards.

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FALCONS BEAT



Falcons rested, ready for Eagles

By Craig Sager II

Following the dome-rocking, fourth-quarter interception and touchdown by Asante Samuel and Matt Bryant's 55-yard game-winning field goal in Week 6, it was finally time for the NFL's hottest team to enjoy a much-needed week off before preparing for its next list of challenges. At 6-0, Atlanta remains the NFL's only undefeated team and is off to the best start in franchise history.

"I am very happy with our guys and what we did as a team these first six games," said Mike Smith. "We made a lot of mistakes offensive, defensive, special teams and coaching, but we were able to overcome all of that."

R AND R ...

Before the players iron out those mistakes, the focus last week was to take the week off to get recharged both mentally and physically before getting back to the weekly groundwork.

"It's a good thing that we have some time off because we have a long list of guys who are banged up right now," said Smith.

The bye week gave the entire organization time to reflect and enjoy all the clutch and ex-

citing moments that filled these first six weeks.

"We will enjoy the bye week, but we will also enjoy getting back to football after a week off," said Samuel.

The players are now looking to continue moving forward when they travel to Lincoln Financial Field to take on the Philadelphia Eagles on Sunday. Both of Samuel's Super Bowl rings were with the Patriots, but he will have a homecoming this Sunday in Philadelphia, where he spent four seasons.

The Eagles are 3-3 this season and like the Falcons are coming off a bye week. It's always been a struggle for Atlanta to get a win in Philadelphia, and with this .500 Eagles squad, it's hard to know what kind of team will show up. The Falcons have a four-game lead in the division right now, and a win this week will not only keep them on their best-ever start, but will also push more space between them and the rest of the NFC South. The goal in the regular season is to win the division and seal a first round bye. This week the Falcons can inch closer to these goals.

Sager II can be reached at csager@scoreatl.com.

CHOP SHOP

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Beachy begins long road back

By Fletcher Proctor

Injured starting pitcher Brandon Beachy has begun throwing again as he tries to return from Tommy John surgery. Beachy had posted one of the National League's lowest ERAs at 2.00 through his first 13 starts when he went down with the right elbow injury that required reconstructive surgery. Typical recovery time is 12-to-18 months, which could see Beachy return just after the All-Star break.

REWARDING WREN ...

The Atlanta Braves made the 2012 National League playoffs, winning one of two wild card spots before falling to the St. Louis Cardinals, who would advance to the NLCS. The trip to the MLB postseason was the second in three years, and the team rewarded executive vice president and general manager Frank Wren by extending his contract through the end of the 2014 season. Two key members of Wren's staff, Bruce Manno and John Coppolella, also received title bumps.

Braves right fielder Jason Heyward was nominated as Atlanta's candidate for the National League Hank Aaron Award, which recognizes each league's best all-around offensive performer. Heyward finished 14th in the NL with 27 home runs and 10th with 93 runs. He

also posted 21 stolen bases (No. 21), six triples (No. 15), a .479 slugging percentage (No. 22) and 158 hits (No. 21). The winners will be announced during the World Series. Andruw Jones won the award in 2005 with the Braves.

FRESH BLOOD ...

While he will likely not see any time with Atlanta this upcoming season, the Braves' No. 10 prospect according to MLB.com, Nick Ahmed, has been sparkling thus far in the Arizona Fall League. The 22-year-old shortstop prospect has gone 5-for-9 as of Monday afternoon after a 3-for-3 day for the Phoenix Desert Dogs. Ahmed drove in four runs in the game, a 13-3 win over the Peoria Javelinas. He also managed 40 stolen bases and 84 runs as Lynchburg won the Carolina League's Mills Cup.

Julio Teheran is the No. 1 prospect in the Braves' system, followed by catcher Christian Bethancourt, 2012 first-round pick Lucas Sims, Sean Gilmartin, J.R. Graham, Zeke Spruill, Joe Terdoslavich, Alex Wood and Edward Salcedo. Teheran is the Braves' highest-ranked prospect in the top 100, checking in at No. 24. Bethancourt is No. 53.

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GWINNETT GLADIATORS



Glads begin season with "snarl"

By Joe Deighton

It has been a bit of a strange beginning to the season for the Gwinnett Gladiators. The Glads have posted a 1-2-1 record and sit in last place in the ECHL's South Division just one week into the 2012-13 campaign. Gwinnett leads the league in penalty minutes with 112, which may be an early indication of what kind of a squad this will be. Last year's team was high-scoring and quick to the puck, while this year's team looks to have a snarl in its game.

FROM BEHIND ...

The Gladiators showed more than just a snarl on Sunday against Greenville. The team showed grit and determination after coming back from down 3-0 to win 4-3, earning its first win of the year. Forward Joey Haddad started the rally with his first goal of the season at the 13:45 mark of the second period.

Two goals in just 35 seconds by Casey Pierro-Zabotel and Chris Clackson gave Gwinnett the go-ahead lead at the 16:07 mark of the third period. Clackson scored the winning goal, but he also spurred his teammates on by winning a vicious fight in the middle of the third period. The 6-foot-6 forward finished the game by tallying the "Gordie Howe Hat-Trick," which is a goal, assist and fight.

The win earned the Glads a much-needed two points. Greenville is ahead of Gwinnett by one point in the division standings. While it is early in the season, division games are always important and this was a big early win for the Gladiators.

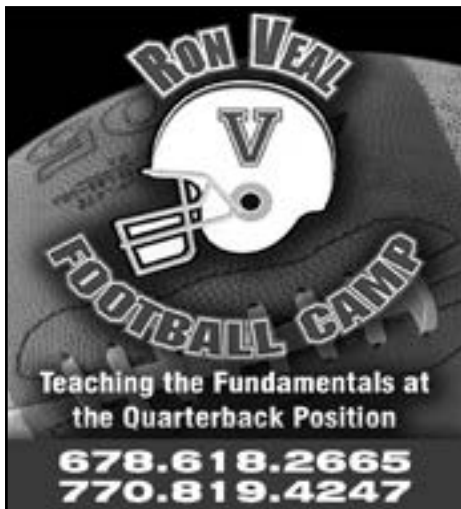
BLOODOFF ARRIVES ...

There has not been as much movement in the AHL and ECHL during the early portion of this season because of the ongoing lockout of the NHL. However, Gwinnett did receive a nice addition to the team when forward Evan Bloodoff was assigned to the Gladiators from the AHL's Portland Pirates.

Bloodoff played the past five seasons in the Western Hockey League with the Kelowna Rockets. Last year was his best season, scoring 22 goals and adding 22 assists in 72 games. Bloodoff posted 103 points (56 goals, 47 assists) in 280 games during his junior career.

The 5-foot-11 forward was originally drafted in the sixth round of the 2009 NHL Draft by the Phoenix Coyotes. It remains to be seen how long he will remain in Gwinnett. Much of that decision will depend on whether the NHL gets back to work in the near future.

Deighton can be reached at jdeighton@scoreatl.com.



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