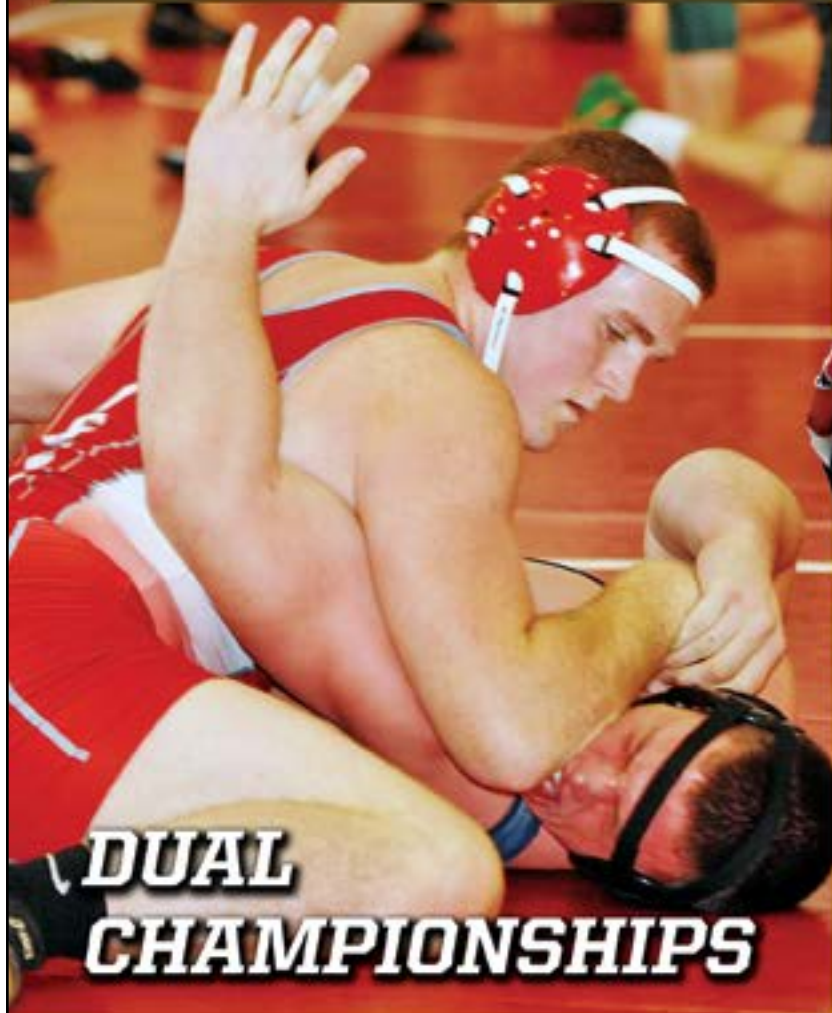


# SCORE

Vol. 9 | Iss. 1 | January 11-24, 2013

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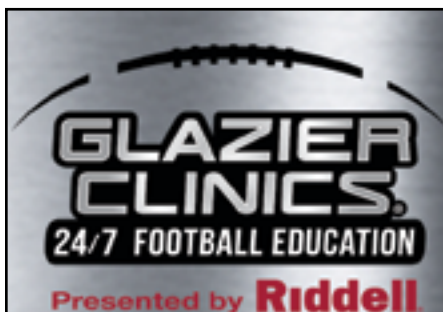
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## CAN'T MISS THIS WEEK

- 4** Jay Underwood debuts his column, Jay's Journal, and with it looks into Georgia State's recent hiring of coach Trent Miles.
- 5** Ricky Dimon previews the Falcons-Seahawks playoff game in this week's cover story.
- 7** Wrestling fan? Here is the page for you, as we preview this weekend's state dual wrestling tournament.
- 8** Fletcher Proctor investigates the recent trend of state football recruits changing their minds.

## TEAM SCOOP AND VOICES

COVER DESIGN BY DJ GALBIATI BLALOCK  
 COVER PHOTOS COURTESY OF SONNY KENNEDY  
 AND JIMMY CRIBB/ATLANTA FALCONS

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## SHOT OF THE WEEK...



**TIGERS ON TOP:** Archer's Ernest Alexander has an opponent in a precarious position during the Area 8-AAAAAA wrestling meet. Alexander and the No. 1 Tigers won the meet and advanced to the state dual tournament this weekend in Macon. Photo courtesy of Sonny Kennedy.

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# THE FLETCH



## Recruiting coverage ramping up

By Fletcher Proctor

As we approach National Signing Day, we are starting to hear more about recruiting on the Atlanta sports radio airwaves with recruiting experts appearing to discuss the top remaining uncommitted prospects, as well as recruits declaring on ESPNU, CSS, FOX Sports, etc. Seemingly each day, folks are opening their Score High School Sports Newsletter to read about the latest recruit to flip his commitment or declare he was re-opening his process after a coaching change.

### PLAYERS MATTER ...

People usually fall into one of two camps: they either love the drama these 18-year-olds create or they turn their heads

and vomit that so much attention is paid to the spotlight-seeking football players. Honestly, I cannot blame either party.

The media outlets that cover recruiting created this rockstar mentality for the players because a portion of the population truly cares about recruiting and with good reason. As much as some radio personalities roll their eyes with disdain over the entire process, Alabama's recent BCS national championship should enforce that recruiting DOES MATTER. Nick Saban has created a recruiting juggernaut in Tuscaloosa that isn't likely to slow down anytime soon. If 790 The Zone's Mike Bell wants to mock recruiting as meaningless, that is fine, but he sounds foolish to

any smart college football fan. The intelligent college football fan understands that recruiting is the lifeblood of the sport and without the proper players, you do not stand a chance. Alabama was bigger, stronger, faster and simply better than Notre Dame, and it wasn't just because Saban was on the sidelines. While he is a tremendous coach, Brian Kelly is as well. Saban had his better players focused and on a razor's edge to play and win the title. The players matter and recruiting matters.

For anyone that is a pro football fan who wants to rip recruiting as meaningless, I ask this: do you fill out mock drafts? Do you watch the NFL combine workouts? Do you follow what Mel Kiper Jr and Todd McShay have to say about the top 18 receivers available leading up to the NFL Draft? To me, it is the same thing. You are trying to project potential at the next level, which is all recruiting folks are doing. They are trying to project how a certain successful high school player will do at the college level in the right system.

### RECRUITING GAMES ...

While I am clearly in the "recruiting matters" camp, I must say that I too grow tired of the games these recruits play every year. For some recruits, even the fan bases that end up

with the player begin to expect the moon after three or four commitment, de-commitments and/or re-commitments. After all that Isaiah Crowell put the recruiting world through before finally pulling a puppy out on ESPNU, Georgia fans were expecting the next Herschel Walker. How did that work out?

People are starting to grow tired of Robert Nkemdiche's drama where his mother wasn't going to influence his decision, as long as it wasn't Clemson and was Ole Miss. Peach County's Demarcus Robinson had also better rewrite the Florida record books after pledging to Clemson, then pledging to Florida then back to Clemson before -finally?- settling on Florida. Even the most strident recruiting defender gets tired of the games. I understand that this is your future we are discussing, but playing games just so reporters will keep calling you and your name keeps popping up on 247sports.com or ESPNU every so often is ridiculous.

I also understand if a coach that recruited you left and you want to look around again, but you can do it in a way that Milton's Carl Lawson and Chamblee's Davin Bellamy have both approached the issue. Kudos to those young men for handling the situation like adults.

*Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.*

# JAY'S JOURNAL



## Coaches changing Panthers' identity

By Jay Underwood

Establishing and building young athletic programs is never easy in a business driven by money, alumni and tradition. Matters become even more difficult when the school in question began predominantly as a commuter school. Without a large following to support the program in its infancy, Georgia State has struggled to maintain attendance at its football games following each of the season openers.

### FIRM FOUNDATION ...

Following the retirement of Bill Curry many people felt the program would fizzle and ultimately fail if the search committee could not produce a big-name hire. What the athletic department returned with was a hire that appeared uninspired on the surface; how-

ever, what athletics director Cheryl Levick understood was that she needed a coach who had experience building a program from the ground up.

The Panthers had previous success using this method when they were transitioning in their men's basketball program. Georgia State was able to attract Ron Hunter to guide the Panthers by way of IUPUI, where he developed a tradition of exceeding expectations. Hunter brought new energy to a program that had grown stale and began to draw fans back to the arena. He refused to settle for the apathy that had infected a student body that has little reason to be unified.

If the new leader of the Panthers' football team, Trent Miles, can follow the lead of

Hunter, Georgia State can use its jump to the Sun Belt Conference as a fresh start to change the culture of a program. In his brief time with the program, Miles has already decided on not only pursuing players who would be settling to play for the Panthers, but also seeking out those who may have their sights set on the big schools. By getting the Panthers' name out, Miles has been able to spread the good word and create a buzz on the recruiting trail by hauling in former South Carolina commit Kight Dallas, a three-star outside linebacker from Stephenson. Kight also had offers from Arkansas and Auburn among others.

By simply changing the culture of a program that admittedly struggled to a 1-9 record last year, Miles is working towards developing a following amongst students who have been removed from their university. This will not be the first building project in Miles' short career as a head coach. He arrived at Georgia State after guiding the Indiana State Sycamores to a 20-36 record over the past five years. At first glance, this record does not instill confidence in those who follow the Panthers closely, but when you look deeper, it is easy to recognize the promise he has shown in a difficult situation.

If his career follows the same path as it did at Indiana State, success may not be im-

mediate, but it will be important to maintain patience to allow the process time to pan out. When success does find itself on the football field for the Panthers, you can be sure that one of the reasons will be the plan Miles has begun to lay out for his program.

### ON THE RISE ...

Georgia State has two young, up-and-coming coaches who are looking to build a culture of success that has not been present on campus since the days of "Lefty" Driesell. With the rapid growth experienced the past few years at GSU, a large base of fans are waiting to throw their support behind an athletic program they can be proud of. This is no longer a small commuter school with little presence in the city of Atlanta. The Panthers of Georgia State are growing in stature and looking to make an impact on the sports landscape in Atlanta. Look for this hire by Levick and her staff to make ripples around the NCAA and other programs to stand up and take notice. Panthers fans have a bright future ahead, so take your seat on the bandwagon now and enjoy the ride. These coaches are here to stay and have set out to leave their imprint on a program, a student body and a University.

*Underwood can be reached at junderwood@scoreatl.com.*



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# FALCONS PLAYOFFS



## Sleepless in Atlanta? Seattle storms into Dome

By Ricky Dimon



A new era of Atlanta Falcons football began in the spring of 2008, with the arrival of head coach Mike Smith and quarterback Matt Ryan. The vast majority of the five ensuing years has been a relative paradise—especially compared to previous franchise standards. Smith is 56-24 as the head coach, Matt Ryan is 56-22 as the starting quarterback, the Falcons have not endured a single losing season, they have captured two NFC South titles and they have soared to the playoffs four times.

Ah, playoffs.... Amidst all the success of the last five seasons, a dark, menacing cloud still festers like a sore over the organization. In three trips to the postseason, not once have Smith, Ryan and the rest of the Falcons come away with a victory. It's not simply that these Falcons are winless in the playoffs; it's the way in which they have been unceremoniously bounced. It has gone from bad (a 30-24 road loss to a vulnerable Arizona team) to worse (a 48-21 home blowout at the hands of Green Bay) to embarrassing (a 24-2 setback at the New York Giants).

Only one thing can erase the demons of the past. A 13-3 regular-season record didn't do it. Another NFC South title didn't do it. A trio of Pro Bowlers didn't do it. All of that is

well and good, and for more woebegone franchises, it would be enough to guarantee a successful season. Not for the Atlanta Falcons. A playoff win—at long last—is the sole option.

### SEATTLE SLEW ...

All that stands between the Falcons and what will go down as one of the team's best-ever seasons is Seattle. Of course, the relatively simple sound of that belies the true height of Sunday's hurdle. Heading into this showdown between formidable birds of prey, Atlanta has ruled the roost as the NFC's No. 1 team from start to finish, but it is the Seahawks that have controlled the skies of late. This is nothing new for Atlanta, which is not a good thing based on past playoff transgressions. Once again, Smith's ballclub is running into one of the hottest teams in football right off the bat. In 2008, Kurt Warner's Cardinals scored at least 30 points in four consecutive games (dating back to Week 17) to reach the Super Bowl before losing to Pittsburgh in an absolute thriller.

The Falcons' next two vanquishers both won it all. In 2010, Green Bay won its last six games—regular season and playoffs combined. Last year, the Giants won two in a row

to clinch a playoff berth, crushed Atlanta and Green Bay, then squeaked past San Francisco and New England for the title.

"It just kind of works out that way," Falcons offensive tackle Tyson Clabo said of the ongoing trend. "But winning streaks don't have anything to do with what is going to happen out there on Sunday. It's all about how we perform on that day, how they perform on that day. The past isn't anything to concern yourself with."

The present Seattle squad—which can be matched only by Denver in the red-hot department—has won six in a row and eight of its last nine. Despite being criticized for folding away from home, the Seahawks' streak includes three road victories—including 24-14 last weekend at Washington. They have not scored fewer than 20 points in a game since Week 7 and they have reached the half-century mark in two contests during the current surge.

"They're playing very good football right now," Smith said of the Seahawks in his Monday press conference. "Over the past seven or eight weeks, they're playing as well as any team in the league. Offensively, I think it starts with what (Russell Wilson) is doing. He does a very good job running their offense. They're not turning the ball over. They're taking it away. Defensively, they've got—arguably—the best corner duo in the league."

### KEY MATCHUPS ...

Seattle's two cornerbacks, Brandon Browner and Richard Sherman, present a much different matchup than the one Washington would have offered. The Redskins had a porous secondary that ranked 30th in the NFL against the pass (281.9 yards per game) during the regular season. With Atlanta led by Ryan, Roddy White, Julio Jones, Tony Gonzalez and the rest of its air attack, that was an enticing option. The Seahawks, on the other hand, ranked sixth against the pass (203.1 ypg) and fourth in total defense (306.2 ypg). Gonzalez, who is still in search of his first career playoff win in his 16th season, could be a huge factor in the middle of the field with Browner and Sherman accounting for White and Jones on the outside.

As always, the Falcons' offensive line will be crucial in their efforts to move the football. When it comes to the absence of defensive end Chris Clemons, Seattle's loss is Atlanta's gain. Clemons, who delivered a career-high 11.5 sacks this season, suffered a torn ACL against Washington and is out for the rest of the playoffs. First-round draft pick Bruce Irvin will fill in at the "Leo" position as a hybrid linebacker/defensive end.

On the other side of the ball, Atlanta's

opponent presents a stern challenge in the running department. Wilson is a dual threat under center and Marshawn Lynch has been in "beast mode" for the entire season. Lynch finished third in the NFL in rushing with 1,590 yards and he torched the Redskins for 132 yards and a touchdown on just 20 carries.

"We've grown and become more together and more in tune with our QB and what he can do and all that," head coach Pete Carroll told the Seattle Times. "We're a pretty hard team to beat right now."

In their efforts to beat Seattle and slow down a sufficiently heated-up offense, the Falcons will hope to have defensive end John Abraham and safety William Moore at 100 percent. Abraham sustained an ankle injury in a Week 17 loss to Tampa Bay and Moore missed the last four regular-season games with a hamstring problem. Look for Atlanta to stack Sean Weatherspoon and its other linebackers near the line of scrimmage in an attempt to force Wilson to do his damage through the air.

For a fleeting moment last Sunday night, when Washington led Seattle 14-0 in the first quarter, it looked like the Falcons would try to get over the playoff hump against a Redskins team with a hobbled Robert Griffin III or without RGIII altogether. Instead, the Falcons will have to do it the hard way. Again.

*Photos courtesy of Jimmy Cribb/Atlanta Falcons. Dimon can be reached at [rdimon@scoreatl.com](mailto:rdimon@scoreatl.com).*



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# WHO'S HOT

## THUMBS UP TO NFL PLAYOFFS



### Our Atlanta Falcons

Atlanta citizens, it's time to put away the polite golf clap and get behind our Falcons. This team is a fantastic group that head coach Mike Smith has built into a perennial winner. Get off the couch and get behind an Atlanta playoff run beginning with a win over Seattle in the Dome.

### Nick Saban

You've got to give credit where credit is due. The Sabanator may be tough on the media, but the dude wins championships and his players generally stay off the police blotter. He's won the BCS championship four of the last eight years he's been in the college ranks (including one year of rebuilding the Alabama program's foundation). Well played.

### Aaron Murray

The Georgia quarterback tweeted last weekend that he'll be returning to Athens for his fourth season and to likely rewrite the SEC record books this fall on campuses all around the South. Murray's return gives Georgia its most legitimate shot at a national title since you-know-who roamed Stanford Stadium.

### Lane Kiffin

Why do we bang on Lane Kiffin? Because we can, especially since Tech just beat the pre-season FBS darling in the Sun Bowl. Things were supposed to be less rockier at USC than at Tennessee, but the former Vol coach is now the second-best college coach in his own city. That's right, Jim Mora (of all people) has lapped Kiffin in LA.

### College Football Hangover

With college football in the rear-view mirror and just seven NFL playoff games left, sports fans now can focus on the Falcons' postseason and charging the batteries for some serious college basketball action. We know it's tough, but the Falcons can get us through this month.

### SEC critics

SEC haters got their just desserts, when Alabama whipped Notre Dame in the BCS championship. News flash: we play the best football in the South. The haters from around the country should take a break from dissing the Falcons, too. There's something special in the water or in the culture or whatever down here. Haters need to recognize.



# WHO'S NOT

## THUMBS DOWN TO HATERS

# SCORE LIST

BY BRIAN JONES

**1** **TIME IS NOW:** The Falcons have worked hard all season to get to this point as they face the Seattle Seahawks in the Divisional round of the NFL playoffs. Many experts have picked the Seahawks to take down the Falcons because they are the hottest team in the NFC. I give the edge to the Falcons in what should be a really tight game.

**2** **ONE MORE YEAR:** The Bulldog Nation got some great news this week as Aaron Murray announced he will return for his senior season. Murray is the first quarterback in SEC history to throw for at least 3,000 yards in three consecutive seasons and earned the nation's highest passer rating this year. Having Murray back makes the Bulldogs a legitimate contender for the national title.

**3** **BACK TO THE FLATS:** Another star player will make his return to the college game as Georgia Tech linebacker Jeremiah Attaochu will play his final year of eligibility. Attaochu led the Jackets in sacks and tackles for loss with 10 and 12, respectively. With Attaochu back, the Jackets will have 16 starters returning in 2013. Could that mean an ACC title is near?

**4** **NATIONAL TITLE HOPES:** With the FBS moving to a playoff system in 2014, the powers-that-be are deciding on the location for the championship game. The Georgia Dome has been listed as one of the finalists for the first national championship game and Atlanta is also in the running for one of the semifinal sites which will rotate with other cities.

**5** **PUT ON HOLD:** Kennesaw State's quest for football will have to wait until February as the Board of Regents deferred its plan for a team. The board was set to meet with KSU officials last Tuesday, but decided the plan needed further study. It's not uncommon for plans to be reviewed further, but this is frustrating for KSU fans, alumni and students. A decision will be made sooner than you think.

# CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS

BY FLETCHER PROCTOR

**2** Times the Seattle Seahawks have scored at least 50 points since the start of December

**3** Straight 3,000-yard passing seasons for UGA's Aaron Murray, the first person to accomplish the feat in the SEC

**4** Straight wins over Seattle by the Falcons if they win Sunday

**5** All-time victories over Seattle for the Falcons entering Sunday's game. Seattle holds the 8-5 edge

**6** Times Matt Ryan has lost at home as the Falcons starting QB. He owns a 33-6 record at the Georgia Dome

**7** Straight BCS National Championships won by the SEC after the Alabama win Monday

**8** Capital One Bowl defensive starters for Georgia that could depart if Kwame Geathers declares for NFL draft

**9** Rushes for at least 20 yards for Seattle's Marshawn Lynch. He finished third in the NFL with 1,590 yards

**10** Starters returning to the UGA offense next year. The team loses wide receiver Tavarres King to graduation

**13** The turnover take-away and give-away difference during the regular season for both Atlanta and Seattle

# TRIVIA QUESTION

**Why was Hawks GM Danny Ferry fined \$15,000 after the team's game against Boston?**

**Answer on Page 14**

# SANITY AT LAST

*"I pretty much knew all along deep down inside that I wanted to come back. Obviously I didn't want to base my decision on emotion. I wanted that SEC game to go by a little bit before I made my decision. After that game, I was like, 'I'm coming back. I'm coming back.'"*

- Georgia quarterback Aaron Murray on his decision to return for his senior season.

# MY TWO CENTS

For most people, wrestling conjures up mental images of Hulk Hogan and an elevated ring with ropes around it. The actual sport of wrestling, however, is one of the world's oldest forms of combat and demands more of its competitors than possibly any other sport. For a true fan of athletics, the state dual tournament in Macon this weekend should be on the radar. Dozens of the best grapplers in the state will converge on the middle Georgia town for a weekend of pins, takedowns and falls which will determine the state team champions. While the more individually-oriented traditional-style state tournament will be held in February, the duals are more of a true form



of team competition.

Wrestling is one of the most popular high school sports out there, and while other forms of athletics focus on natural ability and limited movements, wrestling is nearly no-holds barred and requires year-round focus and intense discipline. The individuals brave and dedicated enough to take on this form of hand-to-hand combat deserve respect and acclaim for what they have been preparing for all year.

The event begins at the Macon Centreplex Thursday and will conclude Saturday evening. Anyone looking for an exciting weekend of sports should consider heading down to Macon for this event.

Black can be reached at [sblack@scoreatl.com](mailto:sblack@scoreatl.com).



# SCORE

## PREP



## WAR IN MACON

### Archer, Pope headline wrestling duals

By Stephen Black

The team dual wrestling state tournament will take place this weekend at the Macon Centreplex. Classes AAAAAA-AAAAAA will each take 16 teams to the event, while Classes A-AAA will bring eight squads each.

All six classes will stage quarterfinals and semifinals Friday. The finals for each class will be held at 3 p.m. Saturday with the awards ceremony taking place immediately after.

Over this past weekend, area championships were held throughout the state to determine the teams that will compete in Macon. Archer (AAAAAA), Pope (AAAAA), Gilmer (AAAA), Woodward Academy (AAA), Jefferson (AA) and Holy Innocents' (A) each earned top seeds for this weekend's tournament.

Defending champions in the dual tournament are Camden County (AAAAA), Pope (AAAA), Gilmer (AAA), Jefferson (AA), Holy Innocents' and Gordon Lee, which shared the Class A title last year. Camden County's win

last season broke a four-year run by Collins Hill. This season, however, Archer appears to be the odds-on favorite. Pope and Jefferson each swept the traditional and dual tournaments last year and are favorites again this year. In Class A, a nasty debate over the state championship ended with a GHSA vote to split the titles. Any way you look at it, however, Bremen's run of three straight duals titles was ended.

#### MORE WRESTLING ...

Class AAAAAA No. 1 Archer grappled in two tournaments over the holidays before sweeping the Area 8-AAAAAA Duals. On Dec. 21, the Tigers traveled to Chattanooga and won the McCallie Invitational as Ernest Alexander, Thomas Bullard and Chris Bass each won their respective weight classes. Archer then competed in the Granite City Invitational in Illinois where the Tigers took third place on Dec. 29. Despite the team's loss, Alexander and Bullard again

won their weight classes. While qualifying for the state dual tournament, Archer won the area meet by dispatching Berkmar 75-6, Dacula 73-0 and Brookwood 69-6.

In the Area 7-AAAAAA meet, No. 2 Collins Hill retained the title for the eighth consecutive season with a 43-18 win over No. 4 North Gwinnett. As a result of their area championship, the Eagles were given the No. 2 seed in Class AAAAAA for this weekend's state championships.

Roswell won the Area 5-AAAAAA duals 52-15 over Wheeler as both squads advanced to Macon. Wheeler's berth is especially notable as the Wildcats qualified for the state meet for the first time in program history.

In Area 4-AAAAAA, No. 3 Kennesaw Mountain rolled to an area title with a 49-18 win over sixth-seeded Marietta. Also in Cobb, Class AAAAA No. 1 Pope won its six straight area title after blasting Sequoyah 82-0, Forsyth Central 70-3 and Creekview 52-12.

Class AAA's top-ranked program, Woodward Academy, hosted and won the Area 5-AAA championship last weekend by winning all seven of its matches. Woodward's Chad Pyke won the 300th match of his career Saturday at

the Area 5-AAA duals hosted by the War Eagles. A North Carolina State commitment, Pyke's career record is 302-18 going into the state dual tournament this weekend. Pyke's brother Chris, a junior at Woodward, has already surpassed the 200-win mark.

Another Woodward Academy War Eagle reached a milestone recently, as wrestling coach Pete Fritts, Sr. guided his team to its 400th victory on Dec. 22 in the War Eagle Classic.

Holy Innocents' won its second consecutive Area 5-A championship after posting dominant wins over Mt. Vernon Presbyterian (81-0), Mt. Pisgah (72-6) and Commerce (48-12). Rod Davis and Liam Quigley each had pins in the finals against Commerce, while Grant Chastain, Grant Gosden, Jason Grimes, Will Morton and Owen Penn each won matches.

Finally, Lassiter coach Steve Day announced his retirement from the Cobb County school after the Trojans failed to advance to the state championship meet. Day has coached for 31 years and has tallied five region titles and more than 350 duals wins in his tenure.

*Photos courtesy of Sonny Kennedy and Rob Saye. Black can be reached at sblack@scoreatl.com.*



# PREP NOTEBOOK



## Prospects flipping all across the state

By Fletcher Proctor

As the calendar flipped to 2013, several in-state recruits decided to flip their college commitment as well. The biggest surprise came from Alpharetta's Naim Mustafaa, a former Score 44 member. After committing to Georgia back in June, Mustafaa surprised the recruiting world by de-committing over the weekend and flipping to Oklahoma State. Mustafaa played strong-side defensive end for the Raiders this season, but at 6-foot-4, 235 pounds could have dropped back to play some linebacker with the Bulldogs.

Trey Johnson, a Score Final 50 linebacker, made his intentions known at the 2013 Under Armour All-American game, announcing that he was headed to Ohio State. Johnson had previously pledged to Auburn but re-opened his process once Auburn changed the coaching staff. Johnson was a force during his career at Central Gwinnett, piling up 456 career tackles according to the Gwinnett Daily Post.

Clemson was bitten by a pair of flips, both at receiver. Lassiter's Ryan Jenkins elected not to join his brother at Clemson and instead attend the school where his father

played, Tennessee. Jenkins played at Milton before transferring to Lassiter for his senior season. Clemson also lost Demarcus Robinson for the second time as the Peach County receiver pledged to Florida for a second time. Robinson initially committed to Clemson on July 20 only to de-commit on Dec. 12 and pledge to the Florida Gators. Just five days later, Robinson went back on his word and re-committed to Clemson, though that commitment would last just 20 days as he tweeted out Monday that he was re-committing to Florida. Will Muschamp will probably feel like he truly has the four-star prospect when the letter of intent comes across the fax on National Signing Day.

Finally, Columbia's Mackendy Cheridor pledged to Georgia State Sunday and could play either tight end or defensive end for new head coach Trent Miles. Georgia State has been hot of late, landing Newton County's Kingsley Ejike, East Paulding's Kyler Neal and ML King's Trenton Hill.

*Proctor can be reached at [fproctor@scoreatl.com](mailto:fproctor@scoreatl.com).*

## WRESTLING RANKINGS

### Class AAAAAA

1. Archer
2. Collins Hill
3. Kennesaw Mtn.
4. North Gwinnett
5. Brookwood
6. Camden County
7. Lowndes
8. Meadowcreek
9. Parkview
10. Roswell

### Class AAAA

1. Gilmer
2. Marist
3. Alexander
4. Carrollton
5. Heritage-Catoosa
6. Locust Grove
7. Chestatee
8. Eastside
9. Dalton
10. West Laurens

### Class AA

1. Jefferson
2. Bremen
3. GAC
4. Lovett
5. Calhoun
6. East Laurens
7. Toombs County
8. Dublin
9. Washington-Wilkes
10. Bowdon

### Class AAAAA

1. Pope
2. Loganville
3. Whitewater
4. Clarke Central
5. Kell
6. Flowery Branch
7. Union Grove
8. Paulding County
9. Harris County
10. Winder-Barrow

### Class AAA

1. Woodward Acad.
2. Blessed Trinity
3. Banks County
4. Elbert County
5. Oconee County
6. Jackson County
7. McNair
8. Buford
9. North Hall
10. Adairsville

### Class A

1. Gordon Lee
2. Holy Innocents'
3. Commerce
4. Mount Zion-Carroll
5. First Presbyterian Day
6. Darlington
7. George Walton Acad.
8. St. Francis
9. Athens Christian
10. Charlton County

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## BASKETBALL RANKINGS

### BOYS

#### CLASS AAAAAA

1. Tift County
2. North Cobb
3. Archer
4. North Gwinnett
5. Shiloh
6. Norcross
7. Hillgrove
8. Wheeler
9. Westlake
10. Valdosta

#### CLASS AAAAA

1. Miller Grove
2. Effingham Co.
3. Tucker
4. Allatoona
5. Sequoyah
6. Pope
7. Lithia Springs
8. Northside-WR
9. Clarke Central
10. Mays

#### CLASS AAAA

1. Columbia
2. Eagle's Landing
3. Monroe
4. Marist
5. Glenn Hills
6. Jonesboro
7. Westside-Macon
8. Wayne County
9. Statesboro
10. South Atlanta

#### CLASS AAA

1. Cartersville
2. Dawson County
3. Savannah
4. Morgan County
5. North Hall
6. North Murray
7. Buford
8. Johnson-Savannah
9. Washington Co.
10. Woodward Acad.

#### CLASS AA

1. GAC
2. Manchester
3. Vidalia
4. Laney
5. Bleckley County
6. Dade County
7. Dublin
8. Calhoun
9. Harlem
10. Jordan

#### CLASS A-PRIVATE

1. North Cobb Chr.
2. Athens Christian
3. Greenforest Chr.
4. Landmark Chr.
5. Mt. Paran
6. Excel Christian
7. Aquinas
8. W.D. Mohammed
9. Holy Innocents'
10. Mt. Pisgah

#### CLASS A-PUBLIC

1. Mitchell County
2. Wilcox County
3. Wilkinson County
4. Lanier County
5. Turner County
6. Seminole County
7. Hancock Central
8. Portal
9. Stewart County
10. Treutlen

#### CLASS AAAAAA

1. Norcross
2. North Gwinnett
3. North Cobb
4. Alpharetta
5. North Forsyth
6. Parkview
7. Douglas County
8. Hillgrove
9. Cherokee
10. Alcovy

#### CLASS AAAAA

1. Tucker
2. Stephenson
3. Miller Grove
4. Flowery Branch
5. Osborne
6. Cedar Shoals
7. Kell
8. Forest Park
9. SW DeKalb
10. McIntosh

#### CLASS AAAA

1. Columbia
2. Redan
3. Cross Creek
4. South Effingham
5. Woodland-Henry
6. Chamblee
7. West Laurens
8. Statesboro
9. LaGrange
10. Chestatee

#### CLASS AAA

1. Buford
2. Washington Co.
3. St. Pius X
4. Decatur
5. Sonoraville
6. Chapel Hill
7. Woodward Acad.
8. Pike County
9. Beach
10. Banks County

### GIRLS

#### CLASS AA

1. Wesleyan
2. GAC
3. Laney
4. Kendrick
5. Lovett
6. Thomasville
7. Calhoun
8. Dublin
9. Bleckley County
10. Westside-Augusta

#### CLASS A-PRIVATE

1. SW Atlanta Chr.
2. Darlington
3. Holy Innocents'
4. Atl. International
5. St. Francis
6. Paideia
7. George Walton Acad.
8. Calvary Day
9. Strong Rock Chr.
10. Walker

#### CLASS A-PUBLIC

1. Randolph Clay
2. Wilkinson County
3. Treutlen
4. Gordon Lee
5. Turner County
6. Irwin County
7. Towns County
8. Claxton
9. Jenkins County
10. Calhoun County



# SPORTS AND INJURIES



## Children's teaches kids how to prevent ACL injuries

The knee is arguably the most important joint in young athletes. From basketball players to cross country runners, just about every athlete needs a healthy knee to be able to compete.

More kids are competing in sports than ever before, and the number of knee injuries in young athletes has steadily been on the rise. This is especially true for injuries involving the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), which is located in the middle of the knee and stabilizes the joint. Most ACL tears, either full or partial, occur without contact.

Because more and more athletes are participating in sports at all levels, the focus for many physical therapists has shifted from the treatment to the prevention of ACL injuries.

The Children's Healthcare of Atlanta ACL Injury Prevention Program is designed

to reduce knee injuries in young athletes while also improving their sports performance.

Statistically speaking, male athletes experience more sports-related injuries than females, but ACL injuries occur five to six times more often in females. One out of every 100 high school females suffers an ACL injury each year.

This is often attributed to their different skeletal anatomy, including a wider pelvis and bones that are not perfectly aligned. Differences in how males and females train also contribute to the high rate of ACL injuries in young female athletes.

Each of these differences can be addressed and improved upon with an organized training program designed by knowledgeable physicians, therapists and certified

athletic trainers.

The Sports Medicine team at Children's features an experienced, multidisciplinary team that includes orthopaedic surgeons, sports medicine physicians, certified athletic trainers and physical therapists. In 2011, they managed more than 30,000 sports physical therapy patient visits.

Created by the Sports Medicine team, the ACL Injury Prevention Program provides a collection of tips, exercises and stretches to both male and female athletes. It aims to improve young athletes' speed, strength and agility while teaching proper mechanics for sports-related activities.

The team's goal is not just to get young athletes back on the field, but to get them back on the field and playing better than ever.

Visit [choa.org/ACL](http://choa.org/ACL) for more information about the Children's ACL Injury Prevention Program.

This is general information and not specific medical advice. Always consult with a doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns about the health of a child.

*Some physicians and affiliated health-care professionals on the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta team are independent providers and are not our employees.*



## SWIMMING RANKINGS

### BOYS

#### Class AAAAAA

1. Parkview
2. Lassiter
3. Alpharetta
4. Brookwood
5. Walton
6. Milton
7. North Gwinnett
8. Mill Creek
9. Johns Creek
10. Dacula

#### Class A-AAAAA

1. Marist
2. Wesleyan
3. St. Pius X
4. Dalton
5. Sequoyah
6. Westminster
7. Woodward Academy
8. Oconee County
9. Pope
10. Rome

### GIRLS

#### Class AAAAAA

1. Brookwood
2. Kennesaw Mountain
3. Parkview
4. Walton
5. Lassiter
6. Peachtree Ridge
7. North Gwinnett
8. Mill Creek
9. Etowah
10. Archer

#### Class A-AAAAA

1. Marist
2. Westminster
3. Woodward Academy
4. St. Pius X
5. North Paulding
6. Wesleyan
7. Pope
8. Calvary Day
9. Rome
10. Greenbrier

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A black and white photograph of an Atlanta Falcons player, number 56, in his uniform and helmet. He is looking upwards with a determined expression. The background is dark and textured, with a bright light source behind him, creating a silhouette effect and highlighting the contours of his uniform and helmet. The word "FALCONS" is visible on the front of his jersey.

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## BULLDOG BEAT



### Dawgs keep Murray, lose three others

By Chris Lionetti

After much deliberating over whether to prolong college careers or seek fame in the NFL, three of Georgia's four prominent juniors have made their decisions. Georgia will lose at least two of its defensive stars to the NFL Draft in linebacker Alec Ogletree and two-time All-American linebacker Jarvis Jones. Defensive tackle Kwame Geathers could also declare for the draft. However, the Bulldogs will retain their primary offensive star in quarterback Aaron Murray.

"I'm certainly pleased that, after weighing his options, Aaron (Murray) has decided to remain at Georgia for his senior year," said Georgia head coach Mark Richt. "His leadership and productivity have been tremendous during what has been an outstanding career. This is great for Aaron and great for Georgia."

Unlike Jones and Ogletree, Murray had no idea where he would be drafted. The quarterback filed paperwork to the NFL in order to get an idea of where he could expect to be drafted, yielding a prediction of a second- or third-round selection. Murray also sought out the advice of former NFL coach Tony Dungy and former quarterback Archie Manning.

While Murray conducted a great deal of research on what would be best for his future,

he revealed in a Monday press conference that it really was not that hard of a decision at all.

"As soon as that clock hit zero at the Georgia Dome (at the SEC Championship) I had pretty much decided, but I knew I had to settle down and not let emotions take over," Murray said. "I just had to go through the process, talk it over with my parents, relax and think it over, but at that moment I pretty much knew."

Murray will be one of many pieces that will return from the 2012 offense, the most explosive in school history. The quarterback owns nearly every passing record at the university except for David Greene's career passing yards mark of 11,528. Murray is 1,438 yards away from that mark.

#### MASON JARRED ...

While many Georgia fans, coaches and players alike are elated that Murray is returning, there is one player that may not be as excited: backup quarterback Hutson Mason.

Mason sat out the season as a redshirt year in order to create a gap year between himself and Murray. Mason has said he is not interested in transferring from Georgia.

Lionetti can be reached at [clionetti@scoreatl.com](mailto:clionetti@scoreatl.com).

## TECH BUZZ



### Bowl losing streak ends in Sun Bowl

By Ryan Caiafa

The Yellow Jackets' 21-7 win over the USC Trojans in the Hyundai Sun Bowl capped off a 2012 season that can only be described as a roller coaster ride. Surprisingly, what was considered the Jackets' biggest weakness, defense, turned out to be the difference as they had their most impressive performance of the season. Tech stalled the Trojans for much of the game and picked off Max Wittek, who was starting in place of the injured Matt Barkley, three times.

Even without Barkley, the preseason top-ranked Trojans were still favored to handle Tech, but coach Lane Kiffin's squad simply couldn't stop the triple-option attack, as the Jackets rolled to 294 yards on the ground. With the victory, Tech snapped its seven-game bowl losing streak, with its last win coming in the 2004 Champs Sports Bowl over Syracuse.

The biggest question entering the off-season is who the Jackets will name as their defensive coordinator. Charles Kelly, who was the interim defensive coordinator after Al Groh was relieved of his duties, left to coach the linebackers at Florida State, eliminating one of the Jackets' prime candidates to take the job permanently. The team's defense did get good news, however, as outside

linebacker Jeremiah Attaochu announced that he would return for his senior season, citing unfinished business as his primary motive for coming back. Attaochu is among 16 starters returning for the 2013 season.

#### HURRICANE REMNANTS ...

A tall task awaited the Jackets as they began conference play against the Miami Hurricanes. Unfortunately, that task became too tall in a 62-49 loss at McCamish Pavilion. Tech seemed overmatched in the post as the Jackets were not only outrebounded 40-29, but also outscored in the paint 26-19.

Tech's six-game winning streak ended and they also fell to 10-3 on the season, with the upcoming schedule becoming increasingly difficult with ACC play underway. Games against N.C. State, Duke and North Carolina are on the slate for the Jackets, which should give a clear indication on the team's postseason chances. In a very team-oriented offensive attack, Robert Carter Jr., the highly-touted freshman, has not disappointed as a key contributor, averaging just shy of 10 points and six rebounds per game in his first season.

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## PANTHER PROWL



### Men's basketball team struggles early

By Brian Jones

After a very successful 2011-12 season for the Amen's basketball team, the 2012-13 campaign has not started out the way the Panthers wanted. As the team opened conference play last Wednesday against Drexel, the Panthers sat at 5-8. They would drop to 5-9 when the day was done as the Panthers fell to Drexel 77-60.

Georgia State was only down by four going into halftime, but Drexel shot 65 percent from the floor in the second half and pre-season CAA Player of the Year Frantz Massenat scored 17 of his career-high 25 points in the final 20 minutes. For the Panthers, R.J. Hunter led the team with 23 points while Cameron Solomon added 12.

The Panthers bounced back in a big way on Saturday, blowing past James Madison 68-52. Hunter scored 19 points and Manny Atkins added 15. James Vincent was also a big contributor, scoring 10 points and blocking eight shots. Vincent raised his career total to 104 blocked shots to move into fifth place in school history.

Vincent and the team could not carry that momentum into the Panthers' next game, though, a 52-50 loss to Hofstra. Vincent tallied just one block and two points. The Panthers overcame a 12-point deficit after halftime, but Hofstra's Stevie Mejia scored on a

lay-up with six seconds remaining to give the Panthers their 10th loss of the year.

"I am obviously disappointed with the loss," coach Ron Hunter told [georgiastatesports.com](http://georgiastatesports.com) after the game. "I thought we came out strong, but then we allowed Hofstra to take control of the game."

The Panthers will look to seize a winning record in CAA play when Delaware visits the GSU Sports Arena Saturday at 12 p.m.

#### SLIPPED AWAY ...

After taking the week off, the women's basketball team was back in action, hosting Old Dominion last Sunday. Despite being up by 20 points early in the second half, Old Dominion came away with a 72-66 win.

"We did a lot of good things for 30 minutes, then made lots of bad decisions in the final 10 minutes," coach Sharon Baldwin-Tenner told [georgiastatesports.com](http://georgiastatesports.com). "We missed lay-up after lay-up, missed free throws, made bad decisions and bad passes and helped them get back in the game."

Cody Paulk led the Lady Panthers with 11 points, 15 rebounds and three blocked shots while Kendra Long added 15 points in the loss.

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## OWL OUTLOOK



### Board places football plans on hold

By Brian Jones

It has been a very rocky season for the men's basketball team and the team could certainly use a winning streak for some much-needed momentum. The Owls faced Mercer last Saturday looking for the team's first win since beating South Carolina State on Nov. 12, the team's only win of the year to that point. The Owls would get win No. 2 as they defeated their arch rival 83-75.

Delbert Love scored a career-high 31 points while Markeith Cummings added 21 and five assists. The Owls started the game making their first five shots, all three-pointers, and they never trailed.

"When you put 40 minutes together and you play with great energy and great effort and you hustle, you can impose your will," Owls head coach Lewis Preston told [ksuowls.com](http://ksuowls.com). "Don't get me wrong, some of the (three-pointers) that we knocked down early kind of helped set the tone for us."

The Owls continued conference play on Thursday when they faced Jacksonville, but the result was not available at press deadline. They will stay in Florida over the weekend as they take on North Florida Saturday.

#### SKID CONTINUES ...

After the men's team took down Mercer, it was the women's turn to do the same thing. However, the Lady Owls could not handle the

Lady Bears, losing 71-46 and have now lost five consecutive games.

Sametria Gideon did have a double-double for the Lady Owls as she pulled down a game-high 14 rebounds and 11 points. The Lady Bears started off fast and never trailed throughout the game.

"The maturity of our team is something that we're working on," KSU head coach Nitra Perry told [ksuowls.com](http://ksuowls.com). "When you're an immature team, the consistency isn't there. You have some games where everybody shows up and some where nobody shows up and that's something we'll continue to improve upon."

The Lady Owls will be back in action on Saturday when they travel to Jacksonville.

#### WAIT A MINUTE ...

It looks like the decision on football will have to come a little later as the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia has indicated that KSU's requests for a decision on the proposed plan for football as well as the Title IX women's programs have been put on hold.

The Board of Regents could make a decision on the plan next month at the board's next meeting.

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# HAWKS HAVEN



## Hawks dealing with mid-season crisis

By Ricky Dimon

Things haven't exactly reached Los Angeles Lakers levels quite yet, but the Hawks are in dire straits at the moment. They have lost three in a row—all in woefully unimpressive fashion—and four of their last five. Atlanta suddenly finds itself with a solid but unspectacular 20-13 record, leaving it three games back of Miami in the Southeast Division.

A four-game winning streak in late December propelled the Hawks to 19-9, but the slide started with a 123-104 blowout loss at Houston on New Year's Eve. The three-game stretch of losses began with a one-point setback at lowly Detroit last Friday, continued with an 89-81 home loss to Boston on Saturday and on Tuesday the Hawks fell at Minnesota, 108-103. The performance against Boston may have been the season's low point for Atlanta. After leading by as many as 17 points in the second quarter, the Hawks were outscored by a ridiculous 33-9 margin in the third and never came close to recovering the fourth.

### THE SOFT CARD ...

The Hawks were supposed to have a day off last Sunday, but that idea changed in the wake of

Saturday's disaster. Instead, they watched film and held an extensive team meeting.

"We just watched film today," head coach Larry Drew told the Atlanta Journal Constitution following the session. "As painful as it was to watch, it was very, very productive. After we watched, we had some very good dialog amongst the group. I mean really good. It was unfortunate that we had to take an 'L' to bring us together like that. But things happen for a reason and maybe that was the reason."

Or maybe not. Maybe it was not quite as good as Drew thought. Atlanta came back out against the Timberwolves and promptly fell behind by as many as 12 points in the first quarter and 17 in the second. A late fourth-quarter charge brought the Hawks to within one point, but it was ultimately too little, too late. Afterward, Drew tossed around some disturbing words, including "soft" and "changes."

"We waited way too late to start playing," he told the AJC. "In the first half we were soft. Soft. I thought physically (the Timberwolves) did just about anything that they wanted to."

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# FALCONS BEAT



## Ryan, Falcons seek elusive playoff victory

By Craig Sager II

Seattle scored 24 unanswered points in its Swild-card road victory in Washington and have now won six straight heading into Atlanta. Quarterback Russell Wilson is still just a rookie, but he has done what the Atlanta Falcons have been determined to do all season: win a playoff game. A win in the postseason is something that future Hall of Fame tight end Tony Gonzalez is still searching for as his career winds down.

### FRESH FACES ...

With injuries to cornerback Dunta Robinson, defensive end John Abraham and safety William Moore towards the end of the season, the Falcons benefitted from a bye week during the first round of the postseason. All three players were held out of practice before carefully being acclimated back up to speed. Moore was leading the team in tackles before injuring his hamstring against the Saints in Week 13, a game in which he had 11 tackles and two interceptions before sustaining the injury. Without Moore on the field, Atlanta went 2-2.

### KEYS TO VICTORY ...

The Seahawks are 9-1 when Wilson does not throw an interception and 3-4 when he has at least one. The Atlanta secondary has accounted

for 20 interceptions this season and will look slow down the Seahawks' attack by getting their hands on any Wilson pass possible.

Seattle suffered a key injury last week when top pass rusher Chris Clemons tore his ACL and meniscus. Filling in for Clemons will be Bruce Irvin, who set the franchise rookie sack record with eight this season and is more than a viable replacement. Irvin lacks the run stopping ability that Clemons offers, so expect Atlanta, who ranked No. 29 in rushing offense this season at 87.3 yards per game, to try to capitalize on the weakness.

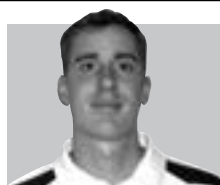
Protecting Matt Ryan will be a concern for the Falcons. Ryan completed a league-best 68.6 percent of his passes this season, and will be facing a Seattle defense that ranks in the top 10 in both run and pass defense. Atlanta's one-two punch outside, Roddy White and Julio Jones, will be matched up with the intimidating duo of Richard Sherman and Brandon Browner. Sherman (6-foot-3) and Browner (6-foot-4) are physical with tremendous size.

This is the only divisional game out of the four matchups that is not a rematch from a regular season contest.

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# CHOP SHOP

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## Three Braves could play in WBC

By Fletcher Proctor

A trio of Braves could take part in the 2013 World Baseball Classic this March in Phoenix and Miami. Team USA manager Joe Torre has reportedly reached out to starter Kris Medlen and closer Craig Kimbrel after both compiled incredible 2012 seasons. While the rosters will be announced later this month, it is a strong bet that both could be wearing the red, white and blue of Team USA. Freddie Freeman could also see action in the World Baseball Classic as part of Team Canada as both of Freeman's parents were born in Canada. According to the Braves' team website, Jason Heyward declined an invitation from Team USA.

Should Medlen and Kimbrel make the final roster, the team opens up practice in Phoenix March 4 before first-round play takes place March 7-10. Second-round play takes place in Miami March 12-16. The semifinals and finals would take place March 17-19 in San Francisco.

The timing would allow Medlen and Kimbrel to be with the Braves for the team's first nine spring training games in Florida before heading out to Phoenix.

Medlen and Kimbrel would see a few famous Braves alumni in Phoenix as Dale Murphy will serve as the first base coach for Team USA and former Cy Young award winner Greg Maddux will be the team's pitching coach.

### BOURN AGAIN ...

During a recent interview with SiriusXM radio, Braves GM Frank Wren acknowledged that the team could still bring back free agent Michael Bourn, who turned down a one-year qualifying offer of \$13.3M earlier in the offseason to seek out a multi-year deal. Bourn has quickly seen his options dwindle and could return to the Braves on a short deal. Bourn, 30, hit .274 last year with the Braves. Atlanta moved quickly after Bourn turned down the deal, signing 28-year-old B.J. Upton to a five-year deal to play center field. If Bourn re-signs with Atlanta, the team would have to decide who would move to left field as Martin Prado would be moved to third base. Should the team bring Bourn back, it would lose the MLB compensation round pick as Bourn was a qualifying free agent.

### ON THE ROAD ...

The Braves Country Caravan hits the road Jan. 22 across Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee and Alabama before wrapping up Feb. 2. The tour schedule can be found at [atlantabraves.com](http://atlantabraves.com).

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# GWINNETT GLADIATORS



## Gladiators opening up division lead

By Joe Deighton

After 113 days, the NHL lockout has finally come to an end. This is good news and bad news. The good news is that many players will be headed back to work and will compete in a whirlwind season hoping for a chance at the Stanley Cup. The bad news for local hockey fans is that many Gwinnett Gladiators players will be on the move. Some players will move to the AHL and others could have a slim chance at the NHL depending on the health status of the players through the 48-game schedule.

### STILL TOPS ...

The Gladiators remain in first place in the ECHL's South Division with 49 points. Gwinnett leads Greenville by a tentative four points. As the all-star break approaches, the Glads are in good shape to make the playoffs and win a division title.

Defenseman Russ Sinkewich scored the game-winning goal in overtime to give Gwinnett a 4-3 win over Florida last Saturday night. The blue-liner's tally was the second straight game-winner. Sinkewich scored the go-ahead goal against South Carolina to give the Glads a 3-2 win. The defenseman has made the most of his recent opportunities, scoring two of his three goals on the season in the last two games.

The Glads have won three of their last four games and gained six points in the stand-

ings to take back control of the South Division. The most important points have come against division opponents, which could make the difference down the stretch.

### ALL STARS ...

Glads forward Casey Pierro-Zabotel was named as a starter for the ECHL All-Star Game. Pierro-Zabotel ranks ninth in the league with 39 points. The dynamic forward has scored 10 goals and added 29 assists in the first half of the season.

Goalie Mike Lee was also named to the ECHL All-Star team after posting a 2.06 goals against average to go along with a .906 save percentage. Lee has picked up 10 wins for Gwinnett in his rookie season. The Phoenix Coyotes drafted Lee in the third round of the 2009 NHL Draft.

The ECHL All-Star Game will be in Loveland, Colo., on Jan. 22 and will feature the ECHL All-Stars against the Colorado Eagles. The Eagles are currently in third place in the Mountain Division of the Western Conference. This game is a special one for the ECHL, as the league celebrates its 25th anniversary. The 25-year league is the third longest-tenured league in professional hockey behind the NHL and AHL.

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## TRIVIA ANSWER

Ferry was fined by the NBA for “inappropriate interaction” with an NBA official after the game. The Hawks GM reportedly gave the official a game tape.

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**4 \$10 HUDSON GRILL GIFT CARDS**

