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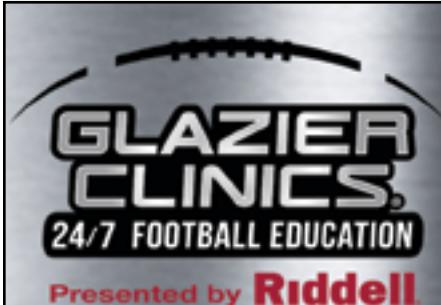
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CAN'T MISS THIS WEEK

- 4** Sager Says and the Call of Caiafa are back, this time on the same page! See what the two columns delve into this issue.
- 5** Fletcher Proctor interviews former Georgia Tech star Joe Anoa'i about his emergence in the WWE.
- 7** Stephen Black, who writes the swimming and wrestling beat for the AJC, brings you the best coverage we have seen of the two sports in the state of Georgia.
- 8** We unveil our latest rankings for basketball, swimming and wrestling. See where your school is ranked!

TEAM SCOOP AND VOICES

COVER DESIGN BY DJ GALBIATI BLALOCK
 COVER PHOTOS COURTESY OF GEORGIA
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INSIDE AT SCORE

ON THE Score Atlanta is looking for writing and graphic design interns. 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 for more information.

SHOT OF THE WEEK...



TAP DANCE: Falcons wide receiver Julio Jones hauled in an incredible 20-yard touchdown grab from Matt Ryan Sunday, but the Falcons fell to the 49ers 28-24 in yet another excruciating Atlanta sports loss. Despite the defeat, Jones's catch was one of the more amazing plays of the Falcons' 2012 season. Photo courtesy of Atlanta Falcons.com.

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SAGER SAYS



The “adapt or die” future of the NFC

By Craig Sager II

The window is not exactly closing for the Falcons, but the road to a championship is also not getting any easier. Perhaps one area of concern for this team over the offseason is supplementing younger talent onto the roster. In 2012, the Falcons were the oldest team in the NFC with an average age right at 27-years old. Age certainly does not decide a season, but acquiring youthful talent should be the primary focus for general manager Thomas Dimitroff.

As for the rest of the NFC, young talent seems to be at every corner, especially at the quarterback position, and it looks like the Falcons will have to deal with it for a long time. These young and athletically-gifted quarterbacks have grabbed all the attention in the

NFL this season, and the Falcons will have to start building now to stop them. How all of these young guns ended up in the NFC is just the way the hand was dealt, so the AFC may be off the hook for now. For the Falcons, it is almost a certainty they will be facing one of these new prototypes under center on their future paths to the Super Bowl.

YOUNG GUNS ...

Robert Griffin III, Cam Newton, Russell Wilson and Colin Kaepernick are all in the NFC and have shown the ability to lead a franchise early in their careers. The Falcons were 3-2 this year against this quartet, but it does not take an NFL expert to notice that these guys were improving with each game

and will be back with a vengeance to continue disrupting the NFL's hierarchy of big-name quarterbacks. When Atlanta played Washington early in the season, RGIII was 10-for-15 passing with the Redskins holding a lead before the Falcons' Sean Weatherspoon sidelined him with a concussion. As for the other four matchups with the young quarterbacks, there was rarely an answer to stop them.

Newton, Wilson and Kaepernick, whether it was on the ground or in the air, found the end zone against Atlanta to the tune of 10 total touchdowns in the four games with just one interception. The sole interception was Wilson's hail mary caught by Julio Jones on the final play of the divisional playoff game. The running ability of the quarterbacks led to 283 rushing yards on only 27 carries (10.48 per carry) and out of those four games, the new quarterbacks posted an average 116.6 passer rating.

Disrupting a young quarterback should not seem impossible, but in the NFC Championship, Kaepernick was not phased and picked apart Atlanta's defense while standing strong in the pocket. When the Falcons blitzed, Kaepernick was 9-for-11 for 129 yards and a touchdown. The defense was forced to play zone to make sure the quarterbacks would not keep the ball and run free,

and without an effective pass rush, it was a game of pitch and catch.

SECRET SOLUTION ...

A good defensive line is the most important group for an NFL defense, and especially important when offenses are running the zone read like these young quarterbacks seemingly have mastered. Falcons defensive end John Abraham had an ankle injury to give him the benefit of the doubt on a quiet postseason, but players such as defensive end Kroy Biermann struggled to establish themselves in the postseason. Biermann finished the postseason with just three tackles in the two games against Wilson and Kaepernick.

Mike Nolan did a great job this season taking his personnel and coordinating a defense that shut out Eli Manning, forced Drew Brees into his first five-interception game and forced Peyton Manning into three interceptions in the first quarter of the Monday Night matchup.

The good news for the Falcons is the roster boasts enough talent elsewhere to be a great team. Atlanta seems to just be missing a pass rusher opposite Abraham as the final piece to the Super Bowl puzzle.

Sager can be reached at csager@scoreatl.com.

CALL OF CAIAFA



Falcons move on after devastating loss

By Ryan Caiafa

Even with the Falcons' crushing loss to the 49ers in the NFC Championship game on Sunday fresh in everyone's minds, the questions surrounding the team's future are unavoidable. Perhaps the biggest question mark is the tight end situation and whether or not Tony Gonzalez will return for another season. All indications from his postgame comments are that Sunday's game was the final time he will put on pads despite coming so close to that elusive Super Bowl berth.

With Gonzalez likely calling it a career, it appears that the Falcons may need to find a replacement in free agency or through the draft. The only tight ends under contract right now are Chase Coffman, Tommy Gallarda

and Adam Nissley, none of whom appear capable of replacing a future Hall of Famer.

Perhaps one of the biggest reasons the Falcons couldn't hang on and beat the 49ers was the lack of a run game, which gathered only 81 yards against a tough run defense. Michael Turner clearly isn't the player he once was, and while the tandem of Jason Snelling and Jacquizz Rodgers showed some flashes of greatness, neither appears ready to shoulder the bulk of the rushing load. Free agency may be the route the Falcons choose to take, but depending on cap space, they may need to take a cheaper option or draft a project such as Marcus Lattimore, who is coming off massive knee surgery, or Kenjon Barner, who was part of the

explosive Oregon offense and was among the nation's rushing leaders. If Atlanta decides to release Turner, along with other high-priced defensive players such as Dunta Robinson, the team may be able to add a player like Rashard Mendenhall, who spent much of this season sharing carries with Jonathan Dwyer after coming back from a multitude of injuries.

DEFENSIVE UPGRADES ...

While upgrading the offensive end of the ball is certainly imperative, multiple defensive positions must also be addressed and Thomas Dimitroff is sure to do so in April's draft, as well as through free agency. The cap space may soon become minimal, though, after quarterback Matt Ryan's expected lucrative contract is officially signed.

With the Falcons' strong ownership and management, there is no reason to believe the team will regress, even with the seemingly impossible task of replacing Gonzalez. The team does have options for replacements at multiple positions, and, despite the disappointing end to the season, fans must remember that the core group of players, which includes an elite quarterback and possibly the best receiver duo in the NFL, is still young with plenty of good years ahead.

HAWKS STRIKING POSITIVE NOTE ...

With a sub .500 record so far in 2013, many have questioned the Hawks' ability to sustain their strong play from early in the season. The team just recently received crushing news that guard Lou Williams, who had been a key spark off the bench and had inserted himself into the NBA Sixth Man of the Year conversation, tore his ACL in Friday's loss to the Brooklyn Nets. In wake of the injury the Hawks brought back Jannero Pargo, who spent last season with the team. Pargo fueled a Hawks rally in Monday's win over the Timberwolves, scoring 16 points in his Hawks return.

While Pargo may not be the long-term answer, a coaching change isn't the answer either. Larry Drew has these Hawks playing with a team-first mentality, a far cry from the iso-Joe days. Aside from the injuries, which have piled up throughout the team's first 41 games, Drew's biggest headache has been Josh Smith, who is likely playing out his final season as a Hawk. If the team is able to make a meaningful deal for Smith that nets Atlanta solid young talent as opposed to expiring contracts, the Hawks should still have enough pieces to make a playoff run.

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FROM TECH TO WWE



Former Tech star invades WWE

By Fletcher Proctor



The wrestling world was turned upside down last November when rising star Ryback was attempting to claim the WWE championship in a triple-threat match with reigning champion CM Punk and former champion John Cena. Ryback was close to winning the title and completing an amazing rise to the top of the WWE Universe when, suddenly, three black-clad men jumped out of the crowd and powerbombed Ryback through a table. CM Punk retained the title, but the real story was the debut of The Shield. Seth Rollins, Dean Ambrose and Roman Reigns announced to the world the next night their intentions to fight injustice in the WWE and The Shield has been doing that ever since.

"We're hungry and we all have a common bond," said Reigns. "We can change the game. We took the ball and we ran with it."

While Ambrose and Rollins did much of the talking in the promo, Reigns was without question the most intimidating figure among the three and his display of power time and time again against Ryback erased any doubt of his physical ability.

The purpose of the attack on Ryback by The Shield stems from the group seeing Ryback

as a monster who beat up a bunch of locals to earn his spot, unfairly, at the top of the WWE.

"We turned the tables on him," said Reigns. "We showed him it can go both ways."

Just weeks after depriving Ryback of the WWE title at Survivor Series, the Shield headlined the company's TLC pay-per-view and Reigns scored the pinfall to give the Shield its first victory in the faction's first match against Ryback and Team Hell No, Daniel Bryan and Kane.

"It was awesome," admitted Reigns. "It was our debut match and to headline the TLC pay-per-view, it was something I'll never forget. We're trying to do something special and that was a great opportunity."

BEHIND THE MUSCLE ...

Reigns stands 6-foot-3, 265 pounds and is the muscle behind The Shield. But there is more to Reigns than just the man who powerbombed Ryback to right an injustice. Reigns played football for Georgia Tech and was first-team All-ACC his senior season. The defensive tackle went on to appear on the Minnesota Vikings and Jacksonville Jaguars rosters

before taking his talents to Canada to play in the CFL. Then Reigns, whose real name is Leati Joseph "Joe" Anoa'i, decided to take part in the family business. Reigns is the latest member of the famed Samoan-American wrestling dynasty and Reigns' father, brother, uncle and cousins are all wrestlers as well.

"This is something I take very seriously," said Reigns of his family's wrestling legacy. "Everyday I represent something that was happening before I was born. Everyday is a test, a challenge."

Upholding that legacy is what drives Reigns.

"I want to be the face of this company and make the WWE Hall of Fame," said Reigns. "I want my dad and uncle to induct me into the Hall of Fame."

Reigns' father Sika was inducted into the Hall of Fame as a member of the Wild Samoans in 2007. Reigns said that while he likes to live in the moment, he has found an entirely new level of connection with his family.

"I've bonded with my family (since joining the wrestling industry)," said Reigns. "I have a whole new understanding that drives me to succeed."

MAKING THE JUMP ...

When Anoa'i decided to enter into the wrestling industry, he set out to transform into the wrestler Roman Reigns. The first thing Anoa'i did was commit to a new lifestyle.

"It starts with creating good habits," Reigns admitted. "You have to ask yourself, 'are you willing to sacrifice?' You have to be driven to succeed."

Reigns weighed roughly 320 pounds when he left the NFL and ventured to Canada to play defensive line. Now, however, Reigns realizes that, while slimmed down on the scale, he is a better athlete at 265 pounds for what he does now in the ring.

"I was probably more powerful then at 320 pounds, but I am more explosive now," said Reigns. "I am a different type of athlete now that I've added athleticism."

Reigns said he has worked out every day and made the necessary sacrifices to be successful in the business. But simply sacrificing and changing a lifestyle won't guarantee success in the wrestling business. Reigns, like so many other aspiring grapplers, started out in the developmental leagues, traveling around on the FCW circuit where he won tag-team gold before facing Ambrose and Rollins on the NXT circuit. The three would then team up under a common goal to make an impact on the WWE scene.

"That was our intention," said Reigns of teaming up with the other two members of The Shield. "We were three younger guys trying to do something special. Hopefully we will inspire people as well."

The daily grind of the WWE hasn't been too much of a change for Reigns, who is used to traveling from his football days.

"(The road) is not too bad," said Reigns. "It's a lot of waiting, but I enjoy it. I enjoy seeing new places."

Reigns noted that he traveled with NXT and FCW, but the WWE's road trips are on a much bigger scale.

"You are wrestling in bigger events, which I love," said Reigns. "I get to travel around, train and wrestle at night. It's a dream."

So what does the future hold for Reigns and The Shield? The former Georgia Tech Yellow Jacket will take part in the Royal Rumble pay-per-view before coming to Atlanta for Monday Night Raw on Feb. 4. Reigns said he didn't know who he may face when the WWE comes to Atlanta and that is the beauty of the business. Reigns eventually wants to be the face of the company but right now the Shield is the biggest thing going in the WWE.

Photos courtesy of WWE. Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.



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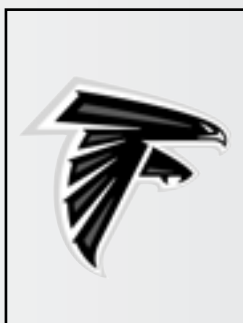
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WHO'S HOT

THUMBS UP
TO NOISE



Falcons Fans

Great job by fans of the Birds this past Sunday at the Dome. While the game didn't end like we wanted it to, the fans showed up in full force - and full throat! Viewers from around the country had to strain to hear the Fox broadcasting team when the Falcons were on defense and, inside the Dome, it was utterly deafening. The Georgia Dome has officially emerged as one of the toughest places to play in football.

Tony Gonzalez

Congrats to our venerable tight end for winning a playoff game at long last in his 16th season in the league. Now, we need to come together as a city and a fanbase to get this guy to stay another year! Most NFL players would be a shadow of their former selves by their mid-30s, but Tony remains one of the best conditioned athletes out there and still one of the game's best players. One more year, Tony, please!

International Soccer

Finally, Atlanta has been given a chance to host a major international soccer tournament. The Gold Cup, which pits together the best teams in Central and North America (also known as CONCACAF), will play at least one game here. After being skipped over by the World Cup, the U.S. men's and women's national team qualifiers, and many other soccer matches since the '96 Olympics, it is about time big-time soccer has returned.

Dome Demolished?

Speaking of the Dome-field advantage the Falcons possess, why would anyone want to get rid of the Georgia Dome at this point? The stadium, in less than 25 years, has hosted the Olympics, the Super Bowl, the Final Four, the SEC football championship game, and, of course, Falcons playoff games. Matt Ryan has one of the best home records ever for a QB. Why get rid of his nest?

College Hoops

Good lord, is college basketball in this state atrocious or what?! We produce so many amazing basketball players in the Peach State, yet Tech, Georgia State and Kennesaw are simply awful at the sport. We don't get it and wish our local college teams would get their acts together. Also, would it be so bad for local products to stay at home for a change? What is so bad about going to college in your native state?

Losing Leads

What was with the Falcons and close games at home this season? While the Birds were able to rescue several games late with miraculous plays, we knew it wouldn't last all year. In the NFL, teams cannot fall behind big and/or give up big leads and expect to win championships. It was a great season with a lot of positives, but please, guys, can we put people away next year? What happened against the Niners can happen in any close game.



WHO'S NOT

THUMBS DOWN
TO COLLAPSING

SCORE LIST

BY BRIAN JONES

1 **DISAPPOINTING END:** The Falcons were just 10 yards away from a trip to the Super Bowl, but could not get the job done as the San Francisco 49ers defeated the Birds to end Atlanta's season. Mike Smith will make sure his team will learn from the loss and expect Atlanta to be a stronger team next season because of it.

2 **RYAN INJURED:** Even if the Falcons won the game, Matt Ryan would not have been 100 percent after suffering a left shoulder sprain on Sunday. He does not need surgery, but it's an injury that likely will take one month to heal. Smith did say Ryan would have been ready to go if the Falcons reached the Super Bowl, but the team would have had Luke McCown ready to play.

3 **HAWAII BOUND:** Ryan (injury) and Tony Gonzalez (retirement) will not play in the Pro Bowl on Sunday, but safeties William Moore and Thomas DeCoud will make their way to Hawaii. Moore and DeCoud combined for 11 takeaways including 10 interceptions and both players will be playing in their first Pro Bowl game. Congrats to both players for great seasons and both deserve some recognition for their play.

4 **NOT SWEET LOU:** The Hawks suffered a major blow last Saturday as Lou Williams tore his ACL and will miss the remainder of the season. Williams averaged 14 points, 3.6 assists and two rebounds per game this year in his sixth-man role. The Hawks are in the process of rebuilding their roster, so losing Williams hurts Atlanta's chance of earning a top-four seed in the Eastern Conference.

5 **GONE FISHIN':** The Falcons made a surprising move to their coaching staff Tuesday as the team released strength coach Jeff Fish. Several players have praised Fish for his work with Matt Ryan and Tony Gonzalez during the offseason. Current assistant strength and conditioning coach A.J. Neibel is slated to replace Fish. Keep an eye on the move to see if the team comes out stronger during training camp.

CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS

BY FLETCHER PROCTOR

16.66 Strikeouts per nine innings for Braves closer Craig Kimbrel in 2012

88 Saves for two-time all-star Kimbrel over the past two seasons, best in the majors

23 Wins for the Atlanta Hawks through the team's first 41 games, sixth best in the East

20 Wins for Atlanta in the team's first 30 games. The Hawks have won just three of 11 since

4 Three-pointers stroked by Jannero Pargo Monday in his first game back with the Hawks

13.6 Points per game for junior Manny Atkins in his first season with Georgia State

3 Times in the last four games Atkins has scored at least 20 points

2 All-time rank in receptions for Falcons tight end Tony Gonzalez with 1,242, behind only Jerry Rice

2 Falcons playoff records (yards, passer rating) set by Matt Ryan in the NFC Championship game

3.5 Yards per carry average for the Falcons in the 28-24 loss to San Francisco

TRIVIA QUESTION

With the win over Seattle and loss to San Francisco, what is the Falcons' all-time home playoff record?

Answer on Page 14

SANITY AT LAST

"Never let up. Never give up. That's how you've got to play this game in the National Football League. You have to play it for four quarters."

- Falcons coach Mike Smith on the NFC Championship game loss.

MY TWO CENTS

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Marist swimmers, Archer wrestlers rolling

By Stephen Black

The swimming and wrestling seasons are coming to a head. Both sports will see the state championship meets take place by mid-February, and action has heated up as many of the state's best teams competed in highly-competitive tournaments recently.

IN THE POOL ...

Last Tuesday at Marist, the host No. 3 War Eagles edged top-ranked Westminster by one point in the girls meet while the No. 1 War Eagle boys won by a more convincing margin, 178-136. Westminster freshman Derek Cox, however, won both the 200 freestyle and the 500 freestyle while senior teammate Nicole Stafford won both events in the girls meet. On Saturday, the Wildcats were swept by visiting Baylor (Tenn.) 175-138 in the girls meet and 171-140 in the boys meet. Baylor won five of the six relays, losing in just the girls 400 freestyle.

In other swimming action, Collins Hill and host Wesleyan split a meet Saturday, but the visitors won 352-265 in the combined

scores. Wesleyan won the girls meet 166-148, but lost in the boys 204-99.

Woodward Academy's Kathleen Cook has now qualified for the state meet in every individual event. Cook accomplished this feat Wednesday as the War Eagles bested host Lovett 129-56 in the girls meet. The Woodward boys won 121-59 while losing in just the 400 freestyle relay. The War Eagle girls were winners in all events except the 100 butterfly.

In Saturday's Brookwood-Parkview affair, which the No. 1 Brookwood girls and top-ranked Parkview boys won, Parkview's Dillon Kasson took the 100 and 200 freestyle races, Rory Martin triumphed in the 50 freestyle and 100 backstroke and Evan Parker won the girls 100 butterfly and 100 backstroke. Brookwood was led by freshman Erin Scott, who won the 100 breaststroke and 200 IM, and Rachel Muller, who was victorious in the 100 and 200 freestyle events. Parkview won overall 329.5-289.5.

Kennesaw Mountain won the Mountain

Madness meet Saturday at the Central Aquatic Center as the host Mustangs won the boys meet easily, then finished a strong second in the girls meet. Harrison won the girls meet and came in second overall and was followed by Hillgrove, Marietta and Allatoona. The second-place Hoyas were led by Alec Mau, who had wins in the 200 IM and 100 breaststroke, Connor Oslin, who was the victor in the 100 backstroke and 500 freestyle and Olivia Jacobi, who took the 200 IM and the 500 freestyle.

ON THE MATS ...

Archer won the Sham Slam tournament over the weekend with 273.5 points. Jefferson came in as runner-up with 204 points and was followed by Collins Hill (199.5) and Carrollton (186). Overall wrestlers of the weekend were Ryan Millhof of Collins Hill (lightweight), Taylor Lujan of Carrollton (middleweight) and Chance McClure of Commerce (upperweights). Twenty-six teams competed in the event, which was hosted by Habersham Central.

Also on the mats, Marist came in fifth place while Woodward Academy and host Holy Innocents' tied for sixth and Lovett came in 10th at the Prep Slam tournament Saturday. Jule Peek of Darlington won the 126-pound weight class, Jason Grimes of Holy Innocents'

won the 182-pound class and Kenneth Brinson of Marist won in the 195-pound class, among winners from Georgia. Brinson was named Heavyweight of the Weekend.

Pope won the Cobb County Invitational with 282 points to second-place Hillgrove's 171.5. Kennesaw Mountain came in third with 149, followed by Harrison (148) and Allatoona (134.5). Six Pope wrestlers won their respective weight classes – Tyler Haskin (126), Davis Burson (138), Jake Henson (152), Billy Meek (160), Joey Tabachino (220), and Taylor Howard (285).

Host Brookwood won the North Metro tournament with 170 points and was followed by Locust Grove with 164, Hillcrest (S.C.) with 154.5, Cambridge with 133 and Greater Atlanta Christian with 123. The victorious Broncos were led by wins at 120 pounds by Thanh Nguyen, at 132 by Wyatt Jozowski and at 195 by Caleb Harris. The lightweight wrestler of the weekend was J.R. Salemi of Cambridge and the heavyweight honoree was Ellison Sanders of Hillcrest (S.C.).

Meadowcreek won the Last Man Standing tournament at Eagle's Landing Saturday by narrowly beating the hosts 133.5-130.5.

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

SWIMMING RANKINGS

BOYS

Class AAAAAA

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

Class A-AAAAA

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

GIRLS

Class AAAAAA

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

Class A-AAAAA

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

WRESTLING RANKINGS

Class AAAAAA

1. Archer
2. Camden County
3. Collins Hill
4. Brookwood
5. North Gwinnett
6. Rockdale
7. Wheeler
8. North Forsyth
9. Roswell
10. Meadowcreek

Class AAAA

1. Gilmer
2. Alexander
3. West Laurens
4. Carrollton
5. Marist
6. Locust Grove
7. Chestatee
8. Perry
9. Glenn Hills
10. Lumpkin County

Class AA

1. Jefferson
2. Bremen
3. Lovett
4. Calhoun
5. Social Circle
6. Monticello
7. East Laurens
8. Fitzgerald
9. GAC
10. Bowdon

Class AAAAA

1. Pope
2. Woodland-Cartersville
3. Whitewater
4. Ware County
5. Ola
6. Creekview
7. Loganville
8. Effingham County
9. Flowery Branch
10. Allatoona

Class AAA

1. Banks County
2. Woodward Acad.
3. Oconee County
4. Morgan County
5. Sonoraville
6. Pierce County
7. McNair
8. Rockmart
9. Buford
10. Blessed Trinity

Class A

1. Gordon Lee
2. Holy Innocents'
3. Commerce
4. Mount Zion-Carroll
5. Turner County
6. ELCA
7. Strong Rock Chr.
8. Irwin Couty
9. Athens Christian
10. Darlington



BASKETBALL RANKINGS

BOYS

CLASS AAAAAA

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

CLASS AAAAA

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Miller Grove | 6. Northside-WR |
| 2. Allatoona | 7. Evans |
| 3. Sequoyah | 8. Mays |
| 4. Effingham County | 9. McIntosh |
| 5. Lithia Springs | 10. South Paulding |

CLASS AAAA

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. Columbia | 6. Jonesboro |
| 2. Eagle's Landing | 7. Statesboro |
| 3. Glenn Hills | 8. Grady |
| 4. Monroe | 9. South Atlanta |
| 5. Marist | 10. Westover |

CLASS AAA

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

CLASS AA

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. GAC | 6. Dade County |
| 2. Manchester | 7. Dublin |
| 3. Vidalia | 8. Calhoun |
| 4. Laney | 9. Westside-Augusta |
| 5. Bleckley County | 10. Taylor County |

CLASS A-PRIVATE

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

CLASS A-PUBLIC

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

CLASS AAAAAA

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. North Gwinnett | 6. Cherokee |
| 2. Parkview | 7. Alcovy |
| 3. Alpharetta | 8. Tift County |
| 4. North Forsyth | 9. McEachern |
| 5. Norcross | 10. Langston Hughes |

CLASS AAAAA

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

CLASS AAAA

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

CLASS AAA

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Buford | 6. Central-Carroll |
| 2. Washington Co. | 7. Pike County |
| 3. St. Pius X | 8. Beach |
| 4. Decatur | 9. North Oconee |
| 5. Sonoraville | 10. Chapel Hill |

GIRLS

CLASS AA

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Wesleyan | 6. Calhoun |
| 2. Laney | 7. Dublin |
| 3. Kendrick | 8. Westside-Augusta |
| 4. GAC | 9. McIntosh Co. Acad. |
| 5. Thomasville | 10. Northeast Macon |

CLASS A-PRIVATE

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. SW Atlanta Chr. | 6. Paideia |
| 2. Holy Innocents' | 7. Calvary Day |
| 3. Darlington | 8. Strong Rock |
| 4. Atlanta Intl. | 9. Mount Paran |
| 5. St. Francis | 10. George Walton Acad. |

CLASS A-PUBLIC

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

PREP NOTEBOOK



Norcross set to host nation's top teams

By Fletcher Proctor

Norcross will host the 2013 Hilton Invitational this Saturday and several in-state powers will take part in the basketball showcase. North Cobb, ranked No. 2 in the latest Score boys AAAAAA poll, will face Alabama power Carver. Four-time defending state champion Miller Grove faces Memphis East while Greater Atlanta Christian, Wheeler and Eagle's Landing will face North Carolina powerhouses. Host Norcross is set to face Dematha (Md.).

Greater Atlanta Christian will be taking part in the Hilton Invitational without Georgia Southern-signee Delano Spencer. The shooting guard is no longer with the GAC program after enrolling at Oldsmar Christian (Tampa, Fla.). The No. 1 Spartans still have Score 44 standout Collin Swinton and sophomore Cam Boyd in the backcourt to team with junior forward Isaiah Wilkins. Spencer is the second college signee to leave the program over the past few seasons as current Buford standout A.J. Davis left the Spartans' program before the 2012 season after helping GAC win a pair of titles in 2010 and 2011.

TOUGH REGION ...

How tough is Region 8-AAAAAA? Berkmar needed 16 points from C.J. Foster and 13 points, seven rebounds and two blocks from

Tim Rowe to pull out a 59-55 victory over South Gwinnett in order to hold onto a tie for fourth place in the region. Archer currently sits in first place with a 10-2 mark as of Wednesday with Shiloh just one-half game back and Brookwood in third at 8-4. Brookwood recently topped Shiloh thanks to R.J. Smith's six 3-pointers and Deion Dedeaux's 17 points. The Broncos are playing more up-tempo this season, averaging 63 points per game after averaging just 52 points per contest last season.

TEAM DISCIPLINE ...

One of the state's top junior girls players Nasheema Oliver was removed from the Crisp County team earlier this week. Oliver earned all-region honors last season as a sophomore, but Crisp County coach Barrett Wilkes removed her from the team following an in-game incident over the weekend.

"It's a team matter and she's no longer with us," Wilkes told the Albany Herald. "We're a team and we've got to play together and stick together."

Crisp County fell to Dougherty 49-38 in the team's first game without Oliver, who was averaging 18 points and 12 rebounds per game.

Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.

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GLAZIER CLINICS



Glazier Clinics helping coaches improve

By Fletcher Proctor

While so much attention is paid to high school football players attending camps during the offseason to improve their route-running, kicking or tackling, why is so little attention paid to the men who coach the players during the season? Many coaches also use the offseason to get better with their schemes, formations and coaching techniques by attending coaching clinics.

One of the top companies that offers the best clinics across the country is Glazier Clinics. Founded by Frank Glazier in 1976, the Glazier Clinics are all about football, focusing on the X's and O's and the concepts of coaching. Glazier is a former coach who invented the clinics in order help other coaches better hone their craft. He invited some of the best coaches to share their particular area of expertise on a topic, and Glazier Clinics is still doing that to this day.

Allen Means of Glazier Clinics admits that no other company can offer the same amount of content that a Glazier Clinic coaching clinic weekend can offer.

"Not many companies can match our sessions," said Means. "We offer 100-150 topics at each clinic and the sessions range from basic to advanced."

Glazier Clinics achieves its success through the content gathered. Means noted that the company picks the best coaches in a particular area of the country and then asks them to share what they excel at on the sidelines.

"We study pretty hard to find the right coaches and big influencers," said Means. "The biggest thing is that they are successful."

Glazier Clinics has chosen top high school coaches, smaller college coaches and assistant coaches from bigger schools. They will then gather all of the content these coaches have to offer by collecting notes from the speakers in order to make that available through webinars and online clinics.

Perhaps the best part of Glazier Clinics is that the company wants to help as many coaches as possible. A head coach can sign up for a season pass which gives him and his entire staff, including feeder programs, unlimited online access to coaching clinics and webinars as well as a pass to all of the coaching clinics across the country for only \$349. There is also a program through Riddell, which allows youth coaches to attend the coaching clinics for free.

Glazier Clinics has added two more clinics to the schedule this year, which will give

them 32 clinics held across 22 states. Atlanta will host a clinic on Feb. 8-10 then the Atlanta 150 Clinic on Mar. 8-10. The 150 Clinic will include 150 session events with topics covering 12 different subject areas with unprecedented depth, including schemes and fundamentals. The 150 clinic will be stronger with content as high school coaches and small college coaches will speak. The February clinic will have more big name speakers.

It is also hard to argue with the results of the Glazier Clinics. Five of the 2012 GHSA state champions featured coaches who attended Glazier Clinics.

In 1976, Frank Glazier decided he wanted to share his passion for football with coaches from all across the country. Today, his passion lives on and the Glazier way is helping programs across the country coach young men the right way.

For more information, please go to www.glazierclinics.com. Photo courtesy of Sonny Kennedy. Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.



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BULLDOG BEAT



Weekend looms large for recruiting

By Chris Lionetti

With National Signing Day less than two weeks away, the Georgia Bulldogs are doing all they can to put the finishing touches on their 2013 recruiting class. The Dawgs currently have 29 commitments, 13 of which have already enrolled at the University and can count towards the 2012 class. Georgia has the ability to take on six more prospects in this year's class and have multiple marquee players in the mix.

Last weekend, Georgia hosted consensus five-star offensive tackle Laremy Tunsil. While on his visit, Tunsil was treated to a Gym Dogs meet alongside Georgia's coaching staff. He also played paintball with a handful of players. The Bulldogs have been in a tight battle with the Alabama Crimson Tide for the nation's top offensive lineman. However, it is believed that Georgia is the "team to beat" in this recruiting battle.

This weekend will also be big for Georgia's 2013 recruiting class. The Dawgs will host running back Alvin Kamara, defensive tackle Montravius Adams, defensive end Davin Bellamy and inside linebacker Reuben Foster for their official visits in hopes of gaining their commitments. Bellamy is the only recruit of the bunch who is com-

mitted to a school, but his pledge to Florida State is known to be shaky.

BATTLE WITH BAMA ...

Georgia is in another battle with Alabama for Kamara and is playing catch up with Clemson for Adams after losing defensive line coach Rodney Garner to Auburn. While all of the recruits visiting this weekend are top talents, Foster may be one of the Dawgs' bigger needs as well as the most unpredictable in regards to his recruitment. Foster was once committed to Alabama, then switched to Auburn before de-committing from the Tigers after the school fired its coach. Georgia is believed to be in good shape for the linebacker and is perhaps his best shot at early playing time.

FAMILIAR FACES ...

The first day of classes welcomed Georgia fans and players with a few surprises. Old friends had returned to Athens as former Bulldogs Orson Charles, Aron White and Ben Jones have all enrolled in classes to finish their degrees. Charles and Jones arrived to Athens after their respective NFL teams were ousted from the playoffs.

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TECH BUZZ



Tech still searching for first ACC win

By Ryan Caiafa

Wins have not come easy for the Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets as they continue to search for a winning formula in ACC play. After starting the season 10-2, the Jackets have found themselves skidding to a winless start in conference play. They did play an inspired first half on the road against No. 3 Duke recently, taking a one-point lead into halftime; however, the Jackets couldn't overcome Seth Curry, who scored 24 points, and Mason Plumlee, who had 16 points and 13 rebounds. The Jackets did get an encouraging performance from freshman Chris Bolden, who had 20 points and has become one of the team's most reliable scorers.

While inconsistencies have plagued Tech during its recent slide, coach Brian Gregory has received strong contributions from several players that are expected to shoulder much of the load for the remainder of this season and going forward. Along with Bolden, two other freshmen, Marcus Georges-Hunt, who is averaging a team-high 10.7 points-per game, and Robert Carter, who has averaged just shy of 10 points per game and six rebounds per game, have both shown that the team's future is bright despite recent struggles.

After a road date against North Carolina, the schedule does lighten up for the Jackets,

as they face a handful of teams in the middle of the ACC pack, including Wake Forest, Clemson and Virginia Tech. As they look to get back on track, Gregory will continue to rely heavily on his freshmen core, as well as his veterans in Mfon Udofia and Daniel Miller. Tech doesn't play anymore teams currently ranked in the top 25 until March, so the Jackets must take advantage of opportunities to get back into ACC relevancy.

FOOTBALL FOES REVEALED ...

With Pittsburgh and Syracuse set to join the ACC in 2013, the Jackets will welcome both conference newcomers to Bobby Dodd Stadium next season, along with other home contests against North Carolina and Virginia Tech. Road games against Duke, Miami, Virginia and Clemson round out the conference schedule. The Jackets will also host Georgia and travel to BYU to highlight the non-conference schedule. On paper, the 2013 schedule seemingly looks favorable compared to the 2012 slate, which saw the Jackets travel to Virginia Tech, Clemson, North Carolina and Georgia en route to a 7-7 record.

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PANTHER PROWL



Men's hoops finding road success

By Brian Jones

Since the heartbreaking loss to Delaware on Jan. 12, the men's basketball team has made a key adjustment to produce three straight victories. Two of the victories have come on the road as the Panthers defeated Old Dominion last Saturday 69-54 before taking out Towson this past Monday, 71-69.

Freshman R.J. Hunter led the Panthers Monday as he hit a three-pointer with one minute left in the second half and blocked a shot with two seconds remaining.

"I am so glad for these guys because we have struggled in close games lately," head coach Ron Hunter told georgiastatesports.com as his team is now 4-4 in games decided by one possession or less. "I told them at one point all the hard work was going to pay off. We kept grinding and tonight we came out on top."

Hunter finished with a career-high 27 points while Devonta White added 14 points, six assists and five rebounds. Rashad Richardson added 11 in the win. The Panthers played UNC-Wilmington this past Wednesday and will travel to Philadelphia to face Drexel Saturday at noon.

NOT SO LUCKY ...

The women's basketball team is not producing the same results as the men's team, having lost five of its last six games.

On Sunday, the Lady Panthers suffered a 65-49 loss to James Madison at the GSU Sports Arena.

Both defenses played well as the Lady Panthers shot 20-for-57 while the Lady Dukes shot just 20-for-58. The Lady Dukes made 20 of 21 from the free throw line while the Lady Panthers made just seven of 13.

"We did some good things today and played a solid game, but they made plays down the stretch and we didn't. That was the difference in the game," GSU head coach Sharon Baldwin-Tener told georgiastatesports.com.

The Lady Panthers were back in action on Thursday as they took on Old Dominion. They will travel to face George Mason on Sunday.

NEW COACH ...

Former UGA running back Thomas Brown has agreed to join Georgia State coaching staff. Brown will be the running backs coach for the Panthers, a role he held last season as a coach at UT-Chattanooga.

Brown later returned to UGA as an assistant strength and conditioning coach during the 2011 season.

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OWL OUTLOOK



Basketball teams struggling to find wins

By Brian Jones

With the win against Mercer on Jan. 5, the men's basketball team looked poised to make a run leading up to the Atlantic Sun Tournament.

That has not been the case as the Owls have not won since that day, with the two most recent losses coming at the hands of USC Upstate last Thursday and East Tennessee State this past Saturday.

In the East Tennessee State contest, the Owls trailed by as many as 17 points. They were able to cut the lead to single digits at various times in the second half, but ETSU guard Lester Wilson could not be stopped as he led all scorers with 19 points.

The highlight for the Owls was the play of Aaron Anderson, who scored a team-high 13 points and collected a season-high 14 rebounds.

"I could not be more proud of Aaron Anderson tonight," head coach Lewis Preston told ksuowls.com. "I hate the fact that he's a senior. I hate the fact that I'm not going to have a chance to coach him after these next 12 or 13 games."

With the 14 rebounds, Anderson moved to fifth place on KSU's all-time rebounding list with 620.

Anderson and the rest of the Owls were back in action on Thursday when they faced

Lipscomb. They will then travel to Highland Heights, Ky., to face Northern Kentucky this Saturday.

FINISH THE DRILL ...

The women's basketball team is struggling to find the winning formula as the program has not earned a victory since Dec. 13. On Monday, the Lady Owls hosted USC Upstate, only to fall 61-52. The Lady Owls kept the game close and actually led by three late in the second half before USC Upstate regained the lead and pulled away.

"We played well in spurts," Kennesaw State head coach Nitra Perry told ksuowls.com. "And that's really been the story of our last two or three games. We're getting closer, but we're just not over the hump yet. We're missing some layups and easy buckets and that hurts, especially when we're down. It really takes the energy out of us."

Three Lady Owls managed to net double-digit points against USC Upstate. Kristina Wells led the KSU with 14 points while Chelsea Mason added 12 and Ashley Holiday scored 10.

The Lady Owls will travel to Northern Kentucky Saturday, searching for the program's first win in more than one month.

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HAWKS HAVEN



Losing Williams adds insult to injury

By Ricky Dimon

Just when you thought the month of January could not get any worse for the Atlanta Hawks, it did exactly that last weekend. Heading into last Friday night's road game at Brooklyn, the Hawks were already saddled with a 3-6 record to begin the 2013 part of their schedule and Josh Smith had just been suspended one game for conduct detrimental to the team. Then came the Nets game, when super sixth man Lou Williams suffered a torn ACL in his right knee during a 94-89 loss.

"You hate to see it happen," head coach Larry Drew told the Atlanta Journal Constitution on Saturday after an MRI confirmed his worst fears. "You wish for a fast and speedy recovery, but we have to conduct business as usual and we have to move on. We have to get somebody in that locker room that is going to have to step up. Any time one of your soldiers is down somebody else has to pick it up. I have confidence that that will happen."

"I just pray for him," point guard Jeff Teague added to the AJC. "Hopefully it's a speedy recovery. It is tough losing a guy like that coming off the bench and getting points in bunches. He's just a good guy all around, a good player, a good friend, someone I enjoy playing with."

In response to Williams' season-ending injury, the Hawks signed familiar face Jannero

Pargo to a 10-day contract. Pargo, who played for Atlanta last year, promptly poured in 14 fourth-quarter points on four three-pointers to lead the Hawks past visiting Minnesota, 104-96, on Monday afternoon. Rookie shooting guard John Jenkins is also expected to see an increased role to fill the void left by Williams.

DOWN BUT NOT OUT ...

It was a much-needed win for the home team, which had lost two in a row and four of its last five. Even with the victory, Atlanta is still a disappointing 4-8 in January (by comparison, Drew's crew compiled a 10-5 record in December). Of course, it could be even worse for the Hawks. They are getting plenty of help from the Eastern Conference, in which nobody is pulling away. No team has more than 26 wins (Miami is 26-12), whereas in the Western Conference, three teams have at least 32 victories. Atlanta is sixth in the East, only 4.5 games out of first and six games inside the playoff cut line.

The Hawks paid a visit to Charlotte on Wednesday, but results were not available at press time. After hosting Boston on Friday, they travel for a tough road game at the Knicks on Sunday.

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FALCONS BEAT



Falcons already eyeing 2013 season

By Craig Sager II

During Atlanta's first-ever home NFC Championship game, the Falcons looked to be on their way to New Orleans before stalling and eventually landing just 10 yards short of the Super Bowl. The 49ers managed to erase a 17-point lead, the largest margin overcome in NFC Championship history and the third largest in playoff history in San Francisco's 28-24 win.

Defensively San Francisco was held to minus-2 yards of offense in the first quarter, but a few big throws to Vernon Davis opened up the offense, which would gain 375 yards over the next three quarters.

After opening up the game on fire, Matt Ryan and the offense committed two turnovers and could not score a single point in the second half, just as the defense was unable to get off the field during several key San Francisco drives.

"It's time to turn the page," said Smith in his first press conference. "I'll be heading down to Mobile [Alabama] to watch the Senior Bowl and will be evaluating the talent for this upcoming season."

MOVING ON ...

While the franchise is focusing on turning the page to next year, the team is hoping Tony Gonzalez will return to write one final chapter. The scene in the locker room was

highly emotional, with most of the attention heading towards the future Hall of Fame tight end. Gonzalez, however, looked to be walking off the football field for the last time.

"You cannot keep chasing Super Bowls," said Gonzalez. "But don't feel sorry for me, I have had an incredible career and wouldn't change anything."

Gonzalez was one of five Falcons to make the Pro Bowl this season. The game is scheduled for this Sunday, but Gonzalez will not participate. Ryan will also not play after suffering an injury late in Sunday's loss.

Wide receiver Julio Jones will head west as will safeties Thomas DeCoud and William Moore, who were added earlier this week.

"Our first offseason meeting is April 24 and this whole process starts again," said Smith.

DRAFT DAY ...

The Falcons have the No. 30 pick of the first round in the upcoming NFL Draft. The search for a pass rusher and some young legs at the running back position looks to be what the organization is searching for. Both coordinators will return with a chance to bring in players that fit their systems to help try to take the final step and play in the Super Bowl.

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CHOP SHOP



Braves re-sign Heyward, four others

By Fletcher Proctor

The Atlanta Braves signed five of the team's six unsigned, arbitration-eligible players last week, ensuring that a strong part of the team's young core would return for the 2013 season. Right fielder Jason Heyward inked a one-year, \$3.65M deal that will bring back the team's first 20-20 player since Andruw Jones in 2000, as he hit 27 home runs and stole 21 bases. He also managed to capture a Gold Glove in 2012. The team also brought back pitchers Eric O'Flaherty, Kris Medlen, Jonny Venters and Cristhian Martinez.

Medlen will make \$2.6M next season as he is expected to help anchor the starting rotation. He was 9-1 after being inserted into the rotation midway through the season. The lone loss came in the one-game postseason Wild Card round.

O'Flaherty (\$4.32M), Martinez (approximately \$700,000) and Venters (\$1.625M) will all be key pieces of the Braves' bullpen. O'Flaherty was 3-0 in 2012 with a 1.73 ERA in 64 appearances. He allowed just 11 earned runs in 57.1 innings of work. Venters rebounded after a tough start to the 2012 season, giving up just five earned runs after July 4. He finished the year with a 3.22 ERA after whittling it down from the 4.50 mark on June 12.

The team may go to arbitration with out-

fielder/third baseman Martin Prado as the two sides could not reach a financial agreement as of Wednesday.

CLASSIC BRAVES ...

As expected, Craig Kimbrel and Medlen were both named to the US roster for the World Baseball Classic. Medlen will be part of the starting rotation while Kimbrel should anchor the bullpen. First baseman Freddie Freeman did not make Team Canada, but Prado (Venezuela), Andrelton Simmons (Netherlands) and Ramiro Pena (Mexico) will take part in the event. The players will leave Braves camp around Feb. 22 to begin practicing with their nation's teams. The US team will play in Pool D along with Mexico, Italy and Canada.

SO LONG ...

The team officially parted ways with relief pitcher Peter Moylan as the Los Angeles Dodgers signed Moylan to a minor league deal. The right-handed Australian native had pitched for Atlanta since 2006. He appeared in just eight games last year and had played in just 13.1 innings over 21 games since 2010.

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GWINNETT GLADIATORS



Losing streak drops Glads to second

By Joe Deighton

First place had been theirs all season until last week when the Gwinnett Gladiators lost three straight games for just the second time this year. The Glads picked up a much-needed win against Greenville in a shootout 4-3 last Saturday. It was the first win for Gwinnett in more than a week and kept the Glads within striking distance of the Road Warriors, who have 56 points, for first place.

Winning the division would be a potential key to playoff success. The three division winners gain the top three seeds. Right now, Gwinnett is in fourth place in the Eastern Conference. It should be a fight to the finish in this second half of the season.

NEW GUYS ...

With the recent end to the NHL lockout, many players are on the move throughout the NHL, AHL and ECHL. The transaction line should read something like the stock market for the remaining portion of this year with all the injuries that should occur in the NHL's shortened season.

Gwinnett received a defenseman from the AHL's Worcester Sharks last week. Sacha Guimond was added to the Gladiator roster and made an immediate impact in his first


game with the team. Guimond had three assists to lead the team to a 4-3 shootout win over Greenville. His three assists were a season high for the Glads and provided a big boost to a blue-line unit that has struggled to help offensively.

Gwinnett acquired Justin Bowers from the San Francisco Bulls last Monday. Bowers tallied an assist in a 5-1 loss to Greenville. The young forward can provide scoring. Bowers totaled 30 points (eight goals, 22 assists) with San Francisco this year.

THIS WEEK ...

Gwinnett will entertain the Orlando Solar Bears and the Idaho Steelheads this week at Gwinnett Arena. The Solar Bears come in on a two-game winning streak, but have lacked success against the Gladiators so far this year. The Gladiators have won all five meetings with Orlando this season. Idaho travels to face the Glads for their only two matchups in 2012-13. The Steelheads are in third place in the ECHL's Western Conference with 55 points. Idaho is in second place behind Alaska in the Mountain Division.

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