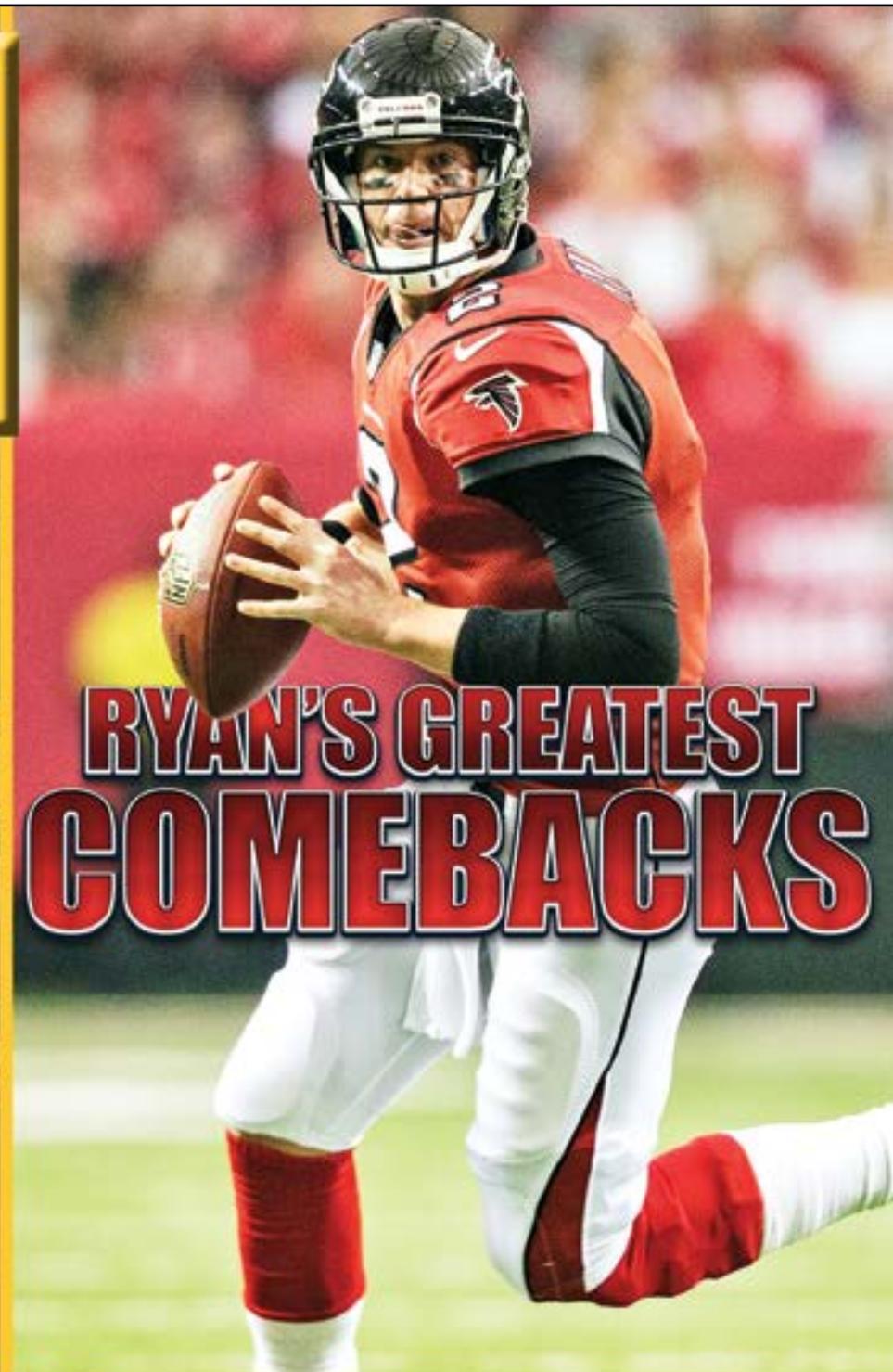


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CAN'T MISS THIS WEEK

- 4** Check out our stories about new Falcons Osi Umenyiora and Steven Jackson, who will play in their first Falcons home game Sunday.
- 5** Sean Conway gives a rundown of Matt Ryan's comebacks in this week's cover story.
- 8** We pay tribute in our prep feature story to former Collins Hill football player Keaston White, who has moved on from serious injury to pursuit of a legal career.
- 12** On our colleges page, catch up on the latest news from Tech, UGA, GSU and KSU.

TEAM SCOOP AND VOICES

*COVER DESIGN BY DJ GALBIATI BLALOCK
 COVER PHOTOS COURTESY OF KEASTON WHITE, ATLANTA HAWKS
 AND JIMMY CRIBB/ATLANTA FALCONS*

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INSIDE AT SCORE

ON THE NO

Score Atlanta is looking for writing interns. Please e-mail Stephen Black at sblack@scoreatl.com or call 404-256-1572 for more information.

SHOT OF THE WEEK...



SURRENDER THE BOOTY: Atlanta running back Josh Bettistea plows through Paulding County's defense in a game last Friday. The Bucs' junior star ran for 178 yards and two TDs in the game. Bettistea will play in Elite Junior Classic on Dec. 28. Photo courtesy of Ron Hughes.



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OSI UMENYIORA



Falcons veteran pass rusher fills important void

By Stephen Black

Osi Umenyiora has lived in the Atlanta area for years. The Falcons, meanwhile, needed a pass rusher after last season. So it only made sense when the former New York Giants sacks leader signed with the Falcons in March.

"I'm excited about having Osi here," said Falcons defensive coordinator Mike Nolan. "One of the things I didn't know about him ... his leadership ability, which has shown up a good bit with our young players, has been outstanding."

SPEED RUSHER ...

A veteran defensive end with one of the most effective speed rushing techniques in the game was exactly what Atlanta needed to replace John Abraham. Quarterbacks are the

engines that drive NFL teams, and disrupting them has to be a major part of every team's game plan. Umenyiora brings that to the Falcons as well as the all-important leadership ability about which Nolan spoke.

In his 10 years in the NFL, the Troy University product has 75 sacks in the regular season while also helping guide his former team, the Giants, to two Super Bowl championships. The two-time Pro Bowler led the NFC in sacks in 2005 and currently holds the Giants' single-game sacks record with six. The London, England native also holds the NFL record for most forced fumbles in a season with 10, which he set in 2010.

Rushing the passer is an art in the NFL, and each sack artist has his own style. So what

makes Umenyiora so difficult to handle?

"I think it's just that speed and the change of direction," said Falcons guard Mike Johnson. "Everybody knows he's fast off the ball. It's almost like blocking a receiver with his speed rushes. But you know on his third or fifth step he's able to duck inside and get a rip move on you sometimes and that presents a lot of challenges for us."

VETERAN LEADER ...

Despite Umenyiora's pass-rushing prowess, one of his better attributes is his long tenure in the NFL and his leadership abilities. He has taken a lead in mentoring some of his younger teammates already, despite joining the team just two months prior to OTAs.

"Osi, from the very beginning, has taken some of the young guys underneath his wing, and not just the defensive linemen, but some other positions as well," said Falcons head coach Mike Smith. "He's one of the first guys here in the building, in terms of his workouts, and he's taken some of those young guys with him." Falcons offensive line coach Paul Dunn is glad his line is facing Umenyiora in practice instead of live action.

"His speed level is tremendous," said Dunn. "We've blocked against Osi in our competitions with the Giants over the years. So I

think our tackles ... are realizing that it's a little bit different speed with No. 90 coming off the edge. We're fortunate he's on our side, trust me, and we won't have to deal with him during the regular season."

Fellow defensive lineman Jonathan Babineaux also had some good things to say about what his new teammate brings to the table.

"Osi has fit in very well since day one," said Babineaux. "He's come here to work, and you know he's working every day to make sure that we gain his trust and, likewise, he's got to gain our trust working with us."

It's obvious Umenyiora has been well-received since being signed by Atlanta. Conversely, Umenyiora is happy to be wearing the Red and Black.

"It feels good," said Umenyiora. "My time in New York was outstanding, but it's a new chapter in my life. I'm happy to be home with this franchise. I'm so happy to be here and I'm going to do everything to help this team win."

The Falcons were 28th in sacks last season. With leading pass rusher Abraham no longer with the squad, Umenyiora's role with Atlanta is pretty clear. The Falcons have a ton of promise this season as the offense improved by signing Steven Jackson and Umenyiora's presence on defense helps fill a huge void.

Black can be reached at sblack@scoreatl.com.

STEVEN JACKSON



Powerful runner revitalizes Falcons backfield

By Craig Sager II

During the offseason, Thomas Dimitroff inked running back Steven Jackson in mid-March to a three-year deal to bring the former St. Louis Rams running back to Atlanta.

"I think this is a very big signing for us," Dimitroff told the Associated Press at the time. "It continues to bolster our offensive firepower. It gives us not only strength, power in running ability, but also the versatility to catch out of the back-field, which is a very important part of this offense."

CONSISTENT FORCE ...

Jackson demonstrated his value in the League by essentially doing the impossible during his nine-year career in St. Louis. He remained consistent in the midst of unrelenting

change and, at times, chaos. The former Ram rushed for more than 1,000 yards in each of his last eight seasons and did so while playing under six coaches, three sets of owners and four general managers.

On the field he was constantly confronted with change, playing with 13 different quarterbacks, 20 tight ends and 50 offensive linemen over the nine-year span in St. Louis. His leadership qualities were seen on and off the field and Jackson kept his unwavering positive attitude. As variables kept changing around him, Jackson's focus never did.

"For nearly a decade, Steven Jackson served as an inspiration for his St. Louis Rams teammates and our fans," said Rams owner Stan Kroenke. "Off the field, his generosity and

unselfishness improved the lives of many families in the St. Louis community. We will always be thankful for his contributions to our team and region, and wish him success moving forward."

Upon arrival in Atlanta, his new coaches and teammates immediately sensed his value.

"When he is on the field, he is a businessman," said Falcons running backs coach Gerald Brown. "He will make us a better football team."

NEW DIMENSION ...

The 6-foot-2, 240-pound back is a nightmare to tackle and can wear down defenses. With so much talent around him this year his carries may dip, but his impact will remain elevated. He offers many playcalling possibilities and his versatility will be one of the main engines of this offense.

"The thing I like about Steven is that Steven is not just a running back, he's a receiving back as well, so he gives us a lot of flexibility in our personnel groupings," said Falcons head coach Mike Smith. "Whether or not we are putting out a run or a pass grouping, they [defenses] won't be able to tell."

Having a productive receiving threat out of the backfield is important to the offense.

"It slows down the rush, number one," said Falcons wide receivers coach Terry Robiskie. "When you are connecting on screens,

the defensive line cannot get upfield at your quarterback as quickly and aggressively. (If they do) you will dump it down to the screen and get them out of position."

Robiskie also explained that receiving threats out of the backfield will force defenses from doubling one of the receivers or dropping deep into coverage.

"Linebackers can't drop as deep, so it helps from that standpoint," said Robiskie. "The screen game is a phenomenal weapon to have and we become an explosive offense when we can throw the screen."

The Falcons have been led by a talented core of guys that ranks up with the best in the League. Ryan, Gonzalez, Roddy White, Julio Jones and Jacquizz Rodgers are all coming off career seasons and are poised for more breakout years.

Jackson could be the finishing touch on the organization's championship aspirations. His toughness and attitude on the field is sure to ignite the Dome this season and give the team an added confidence.

"I think he will make the other players better. This guy has already done it all," beamed offensive coordinator Dirk Koetter.

It is safe to say the Falcons are happy to have Jackson aboard.

Sager can be reached at csager@scoreatl.com.





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RYAN'S COMEBACKS



Making it happen in the fourth quarter

By Sean Conway



It may have started with a simple game of tidlywinks, checkers or chess when he was a little kid. He might have been behind in a game of one-on-one basketball in the driveway with a neighbor kid. At some point when he was growing up in Exton, a suburb of Philadelphia, this much became obvious: he never learned to give up, he kept fighting, willing himself — and his teams — to victory. Over the last several years, Atlanta Falcons fans have learned this simple truth: their quarterback, Matt Ryan, is a winner.

When the game is on the line or the chips are all in (use whatever cliché you like), Ryan is never beaten. Opponents know better than to count him out. Ryan's history of leading his football team to come-back victories is well documented from his years at Boston College through his first five years as a pro guiding the Falcons to their most successful era in the history of the franchise.

At Boston College they called him "Mat-ty Ice." In the NFL, he has been tabbed the "Comeback Kid" for his dramatics. Ryan is no longer a kid, though. Entering his sixth year in the NFL, he is in the dawn of his prime.

THE BIG SHOW ...

Ryan's exploits were good enough to attract the attention of the Falcons' newly-hired leadership in 2008, general manager Thomas Dimitroff and head coach Mike Smith. The Falcons selected Ryan with the third pick of the 2008 NFL draft. Ryan made Dimitroff and Smith look geniuses on his first play from scrimmage as a pro that September connecting with wide receiver Michael Jenkins on a 62-yard touchdown pass.

Ryan's first game-winning drive came against one of football's proudest dynasties the next month, the Green Bay Packers. Ryan was 16-of-24 for 194 yards passing that afternoon. He leaned on running back Michael Turner to seal the victory with a late touchdown in the fourth quarter.

Ryan wasn't done leading comebacks in his rookie season. Over 16 regular season games, the Falcons relied on four of Ryan's game-winning drives. His second pro comeback was short, sweet and efficient. Just a week after the Packers game, the Chicago Bears led the Falcons 20-19 with only 17 ticks

on the clock. Ryan needed just one pass to set up a Jason Elam field goal on the next play. Falcons win, 22-20.

Less than two months into his rookie season, Ryan had led the Falcons on two game-winning drives in the fourth quarter. Against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in December he led the team to his first overtime victory ... with his feet. Ryan ran the ball three times on the game winning drive for 16 yards and only needed to complete a 14-yard pass to receiver Roddy White on a drive that also ended in a Falcons victory via a field goal, 13-10.

Ryan added his final comeback drive of his rookie season in a win against the St. Louis Rams in Week 17. As was the trend as a rookie, Ryan was managing the game, growing into his role as a leader. Ryan was named NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year for his heroics in 2008.

In 2009, Ryan led the Falcons to victories late in the game against the Chicago Bears, New York Jets and Buccaneers. At the Jets, Ryan connected with tight end Tony Gonzalez on a six-yard strike with 1:42 on the clock. On the drive, Ryan completed six passes to five different receivers for 37 yards, strokes of brilliance.

After leading the team to a late win against the New Orleans Saints in September of 2010, Ryan had one of his most improbable rallies against the San Francisco 49ers. With the Falcons now on their own seven yard-line late in the fourth quarter, Ryan continued the drive unfazed. A Matt Bryant field goal sealed the game with six seconds left, 16-14. Ryan led the Falcons on the 18-play drive by connecting with five different receivers.

A month later, Ryan would lead the Falcons to another dramatic victory against the eventual Super Bowl Champion Packers in the Georgia Dome. With under 50 seconds remaining, Ryan connected on four consecutive passes to three different receivers to set up another game winning kick by Bryant with 13 seconds ticking away. Once again, Ryan just kept coming at opponents.

Ryan "only" had three game winners in 2011, one against the Philadelphia Eagles and two against the Carolina Panthers. The second Carolina victory is one comeback Atlanta fans will never forget. The Falcons trailed Carolina by 16 points

at halftime before Ryan responded with the help of his newest accomplice, rookie receiver Julio Jones. Ryan connected with Jones twice in the fourth quarter, a 17-yarder and a short pass that Jones took 75 yards "to the house" to seal the victory, 31-23. Afterwards, Jones said of his quarterback (who threw four touchdowns that day), "He just kept his poise. He kept it positive on the sideline, encouraged us to 'keep it going, keep it going.' Eventually, we did."

PLAYOFF SUCCESS ...

The "Comeback Kid" became the full-fledged "Comeback Man" for the Falcons in 2012. Ryan guided Atlanta to six game-winning drives, including a playoff win against the Seattle Seahawks. The fun started in September against the Panthers. The offense took over the ball on their own one-yard line with less than a minute left. Ryan immediately split two defenders and connected with White on a 59-yard bomb. Ryan absorbed a heavy pass rush from Carolina when he threaded the needle into White's palms from the Falcons' end zone. Falcons win 30-28.

In November, Ryan led the Falcons back in another see-saw affair. Momentum seemed to be changed for good when Ryan hit Jones for an 80-yard touchdown on the team's first possession of the third quarter, but the Falcons would eventually need Ryan to connect with four different receivers on consecutive plays as part of an eight-play drive to edge out a road win, 24-23.

With his 21 comebacks and/or game winning drives, no other NFL quarterback is as clutch as Ryan. His comebacks are the most of any passer since the beginning of the 2008 season. The most memorable to Falcons fans was his 22nd comeback in the dramatic win over Seattle in January.

Photo courtesy of Jimmy Cribb/Atlanta Falcons. Conway can be reached at sconway@scoreatl.com.

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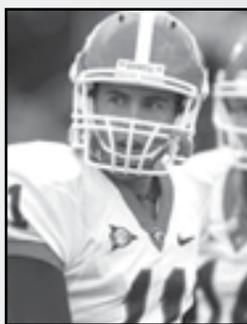
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BY SEAN CONWAY

WHOS HOT

THUMBS UP TO CLUTCH PERFORMANCES



Aaron Murray

When it all said in done this winter, Georgia's quarterback will have compiled more than his share of Bulldog and SEC passing records. It was great to see Murray notch a big win against sixth-ranked South Carolina and ESPN poster-boy Jadeveon Clowney. Against the Gamecocks, Murray threw for four touchdowns and 304 yards with no interceptions.

Harry Douglas

The Falcons' third wide receiver is sometimes the forgotten man playing with superstar pass-catchers like Tony Gonzalez, Roddy White and Julio Jones. After an off-season spent maximizing his fitness and preparation, Douglas led the Falcons with 94 yards receiving against New Orleans and is another weapon for quarterback Matt Ryan.

Shiloh football

The high school most notable for producing former Bulldog All-American David Pollack is riding high and undefeated in one of Georgia's toughest football regions. Running back Chris Shavers set a single-game school record with five touchdowns in Week 1 and quarterback Wil Latimore responded with six touchdown passes in the second week.

Cramps

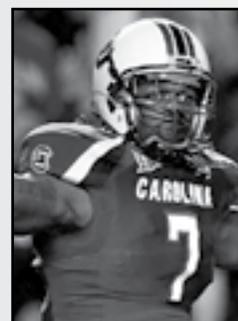
How can athletic trainers, team doctors and coaches not get the cramp thing straight? Every September, the best football players (and athletes) on the planet cramp up during football games. We've tried Gatorade, Powerade and even pickle juice at times. Science geeks unite. Create a cure to the common fall football cramp.

Ndamukong Suh

Suh was a feel-good story when he was a Heisman candidate as a defensive tackle coming out of Nebraska after the 2009 season. As good of an NFL player as he's been, Suh can't control himself and is a cheap-shot threat to every offensive player on the field. Dude, play the game the right way.

Jadeveon Clowney and Co.

For all the hoopla associated with Clowney, he could just not match the hype against UGA. He seemed to spend almost as much time on the Carolina sideline as the Gamecocks' cheerleaders. As Clowney prepares for the NFL, Georgia fans' lasting memory of the defensive end will be watching him jog on and off the field.



WHOS NOT

THUMBS DOWN TO HYPE

SCORE LIST

BY BRIAN JONES

- 1** **DOME OPENER:** The Falcons suffered a tough loss to the Saints last Sunday and they are looking to take out the frustration on the St. Louis Rams their home opener. The Rams have a tough defensive front so the offensive line for the Falcons has to play a lot better than last week. And I think they will, which will lead to a win for the Birds.
- 2** **ACC OPENER:** Georgia Tech will look to get its first ACC win of the year when it travels to Duke on Saturday. The Jackets looked sharp in their 70-0 route against Elon two weeks ago, but they realize that the Blue Devils will be more prepared to stop the triple option. That said, the Jackets' offense will be too much and they should come away with a huge win.
- 3** **REST NEEDED:** After two very emotional games, the Bulldogs have the week off before they face North Texas and LSU. With a tough loss to Clemson and an important win against South Carolina, the Bulldogs have already felt the roller coaster of the 2013 season and it's not even a quarter of the way done. They will look to get some rest and get healthy and then take on North Texas next Saturday.
- 4** **ON TO MORGANTOWN:** Georgia State lost its first two games of the year against two FCS schools. Now the Panthers will make their way to West Virginia to take on the Mountaineers on Saturday. The one thing to look for is who will be the starting quarterback for the Panthers. Ronnie Bell was the starter last week, but Ben McLane finished the game and led GSU to its only points.
- 5** **BATTLE IN NORCROSS:** It will be another exciting night for high school football and the marquee game is between North Gwinnett and Norcross. The Bulldogs are looking to take down the defending state champs, who got a big win against Parkview last week. Make sure to go to ScoreATL.com and AJC.com all night for the latest updates on this game as well as all the games across the state.

CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS

BY CRAIG SAGER II

- | | |
|------|--|
| 921 | Total yards allowed by UGA's defense in its first two games |
| 4 | Aaron Murray touchdown passes to four different receivers in Georgia's 41-30 win over South Carolina |
| 2003 | The last time Duke beat Georgia Tech in football |
| 56 | Points scored by Shiloh in its win over Redan, a school record |
| 4 | Tackles for a loss by Newton junior A.J. Palomino in the Rams 15-14 upset over Lowndes |
| 355 | Rushing yards by Buford in its 38-14 win over Gainesville |
| 4 | Home runs by Evan Gattis in his first 21 at-bats since returning to the Braves' lineup |
| 17 | Consecutive NFL seasons in which Tony Gonzalez has caught a touchdown pass |
| 77 | Yards rushing by Stephen Jackson in his Falcons' debut |
| 145 | Consecutive PAT's made by Matt Bryant after his two successful Week 1 tries |

TRIVIA QUESTION

When was the last time the Falcons started 0-2?

Answer on Page 14

SANITY AT LAST

"I don't know if you get used to it. Every week it's a monster game, every stadium you go into is so loud. It's life in the SEC. It's kind of like dog years, but it's also so satisfying to win."

- Georgia coach Mark Richt on playing in the SEC.

OUR TWO CENTS

Our email newsletter is something we take a lot of pride in at Score. If you aren't familiar with it, it is a high school sports-heavy publication that we produce each day to fill in our readers on the latest happenings in Georgia prep sports. We send it out Monday through Friday throughout the year and Monday through Saturday during the fall.

Not only do we cover popular sports like football, basketball and baseball, we also cover every other varsity sport the GHSA fields. If you like Georgia high school sports at all, sign up for our email newsletter by visiting www.tinyurl.com/scorenewsletter and enter your email address(es) that you'd like added to the distribution list.





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Former Collins Hill player pursues legal career

By Chris Schutter

Keaston White went to school on Sept. 11, 2001 when his life and the lives of his country were changed forever. The terrorist attacks that occurred on that infamous day shook this country to the core and made it hard to make sense of everything that was happening. The one thing that makes sense for many young people, that helps bring stability to their lives, is athletics. Despite the tragedy in New York, the Collins Hill football team went out to practice that afternoon and Keaston wanted to work hard for his team.

He lined up at cornerback for the first time that afternoon, as he primarily played safety. Keaston described the play to me himself.

"We were out on the field and I had not been starting yet because I had a pulled hamstring almost immediately prior, but they wanted someone to play corner that was fast enough and could hit hard enough so I was

nominated," he said. "I laid out a few guys, then one play the other guy was coming around and I went in and my head went down."

THE ROAD BACK ...

Keaston doesn't remember that much from that play 12 years ago, but he remembers on the ride to the hospital that he felt like his cleats were still on even though they had been taken off. He felt tightness in his feet that made it seem like they were still on. He had fractured his fifth vertebrae and the diagnosis was an incomplete C5 quadriplegic.

After three months in the hospital he went to Shepherd Center where he did physical therapy and occupational therapy inpatient, and eventually outpatient for a couple weeks. When asked what life was like the months after rehab Keaston explained his struggle.

"It was difficult," he explained. "I had

lost a lot of weight. Growing up I was skinny. I worked really hard in eighth grade in weight training and it was extremely hard to put weight on. By the beginning of ninth grade, I was 195 pounds."

As far as school went, Keaston had to do half of his work over the phone and half in school.

Keaston graduated from Collins Hill in the top 10 percent of his class and went on to study at Emory University. At Emory, he studied psychology and was an active member of their theater program. He continued his education after graduating from Emory in 2008 by attending John Marshall Law School. He managed to graduate from John Marshall in three years, and he is now working towards being an attorney.

POSITIVE OUTLOOK ...

Having a disability can easily turn someone's outlook on life to something of a bleak nature. For the past 12 years, Keaston has been nothing but tenacious in his approach to his life.

"First off, I have a great support system," Keaston said. "My dad has always been a

champion for me. Mother was always there pushing me forward. Second, I get depressed moments. I get anxious, but my default is to not stay there. Letting (depression) be your whole life is counterproductive. I don't have time for it, and I don't have a use for it."

Collins Hill retired Keaston's number shortly after he graduated, but this year they are bringing it back. Head coach Kevin Reach explained that they wanted to honor Keaston and his drive to work hard. "Ari Benoit is wearing Keaston's number in his honor this year," Reach said. "We're going to have the top player coming out of spring practice get the option to wear the No. 6 in honor of Keaston, you know, and it's just kind of a courageous type thing."

He has been a great example for how to react to diversity, and he has done everything he can to not let it get the best of him. Throughout his life he has put himself in situations that he might not belong in order to overcome that discrimination, and with Keaston's determination he has proven his spirit can accomplish anything.

Photos courtesy of Brandon Nguyen Keaston White. Schutter can be reached at cschutter@scoreatl.com.

Football Rankings

Class AAAAA

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Northside-WR | 6. M.L. King |
| 2. Tucker | 7. Gainesville |
| 3. Kell | 8. Warner Robins |
| 4. Stephenson | 9. Allatoona |
| 5. Thomas Co. Central | 10. Creekside |

Class AAAA

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Sandy Creek | 6. Statesboro |
| 2. Burke Co. | 7. Westside-Macon |
| 3. Carrollton | 8. Stockbridge |
| 4. Marist | 9. Monroe Area |
| 5. Griffin | 10. Riverdale |

Class AAA

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Buford | 6. Washington County |
| 2. Carver-Columbus | 7. Jefferson County |
| 3. St. Pius X | 8. Ringgold |
| 4. Cartersville | 9. Peach County |
| 5. North Hall | 10. Pierce County |

Class AA

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Calhoun | 6. Lovett |
| 2. GAC | 7. Brooks County |
| 3. Lamar County | 8. Vidalia |
| 4. Jefferson | 9. Thomasville |
| 5. Washington-Wilkes | 10. Cook |

Class A-Public

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Irwin County | 6. Wilcox County |
| 2. Marion County | 7. Johnson County |
| 3. Lincoln County | 8. Clinch County |
| 4. Seminole County | 9. Charlton County |
| 5. Trion | 10. Wilkinson County |

Class A-Private

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. ELCA | 6. George Walton Aca. |
| 2. Landmark Chr. | 7. Walker |
| 3. Savannah Christian | 8. Mt. Paran |
| 4. Aquinas | 9. Pace Academy |
| 5. Prince Ave. Chr. | 10. Brookstone |

Class AAAAAA

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------|
| 1. North Gwinnett | 6. Norcross |
| 2. McEachern | 7. Mill Creek |
| 3. Colquitt County | 8. Marietta |
| 4. North Cobb | 9. Valdosta |
| 5. Peachtree Ridge | 10. Lovejoy |

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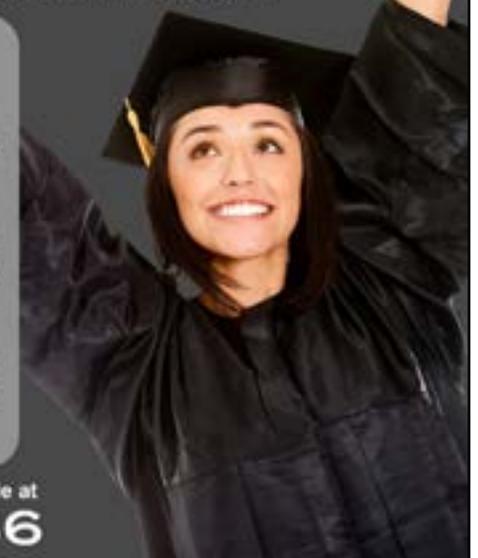
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DREAM BEAT



Dream clinch fifth straight playoff berth

By Joe Deighton

For the fifth straight season, the Atlanta Dream will be in the WNBA playoffs. Atlanta won three of their last four games to clinch a postseason spot. The Dream picked up a huge road win in New York, led by their all-star forward Angel McCoughtry. McCoughtry scored 16 points in the 70-57 win.

Following the victory, McCoughtry spoke to the media and indicated that the win helped the team gain momentum going into this year's playoffs. "It's really important to finish up strong, just to get that momentum for the playoffs and keep the No. 2 spot," McCoughtry told the team website. "We just want to get that confidence going in. We don't want to go in feeling kind of down and losing, so it's really important for that momentum."

UPGRADING ...

In order to clinch the second seed in the WNBA's Eastern Conference, the Dream will have to win one of their last three games. That sounds simple enough, except that all three games will be on the road. This team has been up-and-down all season. Atlanta is up again and just at the right time. Winning one game is important, but winning all three would give the Dream a lot of momentum for a playoff

run. Championship teams win on the road and this is the time to show whether or not the Dream can be a championship team. Atlanta cannot catch Chicago for the top spot, but gaining a home-court advantage is extremely important. In 17 home games this season, the Dream was 13-4. On the road, the record is a dismal 4-10.

ANGEL HONORED ...

The Most Valuable Player award is usually given to a player who leads consistently all year long. Angel McCoughtry has certainly been the leader of the Atlanta Dream and is in high contention for the MVP this year after winning the WNBA Eastern Conference Player of the Week award for the fourth time in 2013. McCoughtry led the Dream to a 3-1 record, while averaging 21.8 points, 4.5 assists and 2.5 steals per game for the first week of September. On Sept. 6, the all-star forward scored her 3,000th point in a win at New York. McCoughtry has scored 3,000 points in just 154 games, which is the third fewest in WNBA history. This was the 11th time that McCoughtry has won Player of the Week in her career.

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BULLDOG BEAT



Dawgs enter bye in control of destiny

By Chris Nieman

A week and a win over South Carolina later, the No. 9 Georgia Bulldogs' loss to Clemson seems like an eternity ago. Their victory last Saturday against South Carolina essentially means that the Dawgs are still alive in the race for the National Championship and also have an early lead in the SEC East division.

Most experts assumed Georgia's offense would be formidable in 2013 due to 10 returning starters, and so far this season it has yet to disappoint. In two games, the Bulldogs' offense has amassed a whopping 1,081 yards for an average of 540.5 per game that ranks 20th in the nation and second in the SEC—right behind Kentucky.

INDIVIDUAL ACCOLADES ...

Senior quarterback Aaron Murray had one of the best games in his career against the Gamecocks in passing for 309 yards and four touchdowns. For that performance, he was named the Walter Camp National Offensive Player of the Week and the SEC Offensive Player of the Week. Murray joins Todd Gurley as the second Bulldog in as many weeks to earn the esteemed SEC honor. Murray is now 19 touchdown passes away from breaking Danny Wuerffel's SEC touchdown passing record.

However the Tampa, Fla. native has made it clear that he's not playing to break records, but to win an SEC Championship and/or National Championship for the University of Georgia.

Gurley, a sophomore whom some proclaim to be the best running back in college football, has been a workhorse for the Dawgs and is already off to a dominant start thus far. In two games, Gurley has averaged 143.0 yards on the ground and 6.6 yards per carry. Head coach Mark Richt expressed his sentiment about Gurley in a press conference on Sunday.

"I mean just watching Gurley run was fun. He's just such a powerful back who's got such great balance and speed."

The Dawgs' defense has been suspect in the first two games. Clemson and South Carolina successfully managed to move the ball—particularly on the ground. Georgia ranks near the bottom third in total defense at 98th in the nation and rushing defense at 99th. The lack of a pass rush is a concern and have registered only three sacks in two games. The bye week will allow the team to study film and rest before home games against North Texas on Sept. 21 and against the No. 8 LSU Tigers on Sept. 28.

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TECH BUZZ



Tech opens ACC play in Durham

By Donnell Suggs

Tech returns to action this weekend and visits 2-0 Duke. The Jackets had a bye week following a 70-0 victory over visiting Elon, which marked the first shutout for Tech since a 27-0 win in 2008 over the Blue Devils.

Duke topped North Carolina Central and the University of Memphis by scores of 45-0 and 28-14, respectively. The Blue Devils will have a new play-caller after starting quarterback Anthony Boone left the Memphis game with a separated shoulder. Boone's replacement, redshirt junior Brandon Connette, entered the game in the second quarter with the score tied at 14 and managed to throw two touchdown passes while going 14 of 21 for 198 yards.

ROAD WARRIORS ...

Head coach Paul Johnson is making sure the Jackets are well-prepared.

"Getting ready to go up to play a Duke team that's 2-0, certainly if you look at the stats defensively, they jump off the page at you, they're giving up a little over 200 yards a game," said Johnson at his weekly press conference held at the Edge Center on campus.

Duke's quarterback change has not gone unnoticed by the coach either.

"I know that their starting quarterback

Boone is out with a broken collar bone but Connette has been kind of splitting time, he played against us down here in 2010, so he's been with the program for a long time."

The importance of a strong start to the season in relation to last season's slow start is clear to Johnson.

"We've talked to the team about the importance of the game," said Johnson. "It's the first conference game, it's a division game and a road game. Anytime you can win a division game on the road that's a bigger plus because then you've got the tie breaker over that team, you've got the division record and the whole nine yards."

LEE'S HOMECOMING ...

Wallace Wade Stadium on the campus of Duke University seats 33,941 fans, some of which will be coming into the game wearing Tech colors due to their association with the Institute. Starting quarterback Vad Lee, a Durham native, was heavily recruited by both Duke and North Carolina before ultimately choosing Georgia Tech.

"I'm sure [he's] excited to go back home," said Johnson.

Suggs can be reached at [404-256-1572](tel:404-256-1572).

PANTHER PROWL



Panthers prepare to invade Morgantown

By Chris Schutter

Georgia State travels to play West Virginia for its first road football game of the year. The Panthers have the ability to throw the ball, leading the Sun Belt Conference with 332.0 yards per game. Their wide receiver duo of Albert Wilson and Robert Davis features two of the best in the Sun Belt as far as receiving yards and receptions go. Combined, they have 26 receptions for 365 yards. Georgia State has played two other BCS teams in the past three years and they lost by a combined score of 104-20 in those games.

ON THE PITCH ...

The Georgia State men's soccer team fell 4-2 to UNLV in its last match of the Nike UNLV Invitational. UNLV dominated in shots (26-5) and also edged out the Panthers on corners (8-7). GSU goalie C.J. Cochran made six saves on 26 of the shots he faced. Ultimately, it was not enough as Georgia State could not produce enough offense for the work he had to do in goal.

The women's soccer team suffered a heartbreaking loss Sunday after Jacksonville's Kaitlyn Bassett shot the game-winning goal in the 83rd minute. In addition to this tough loss, the Panthers have lost three matches in a row by one goal, including a setback last Friday on a goal in the 86th minute. Like the men's

game last Saturday, the Panthers on Sunday were edged in shots (16-11) and corners (7-5). Brie Haynes was able to make six saves on 16 of the shots faced, but Bassett's goal was the difference-maker and enough for Jacksonville to down the Panthers.

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK ...

Hannah Stefanoff was this week's GSU Student-Athlete of the week after helping GSU win the JSU/Struts Invitational Saturday. Her 4K on Saturday was also her personal best, posting a time of 14:48:25. There were three Panthers in the top six. Next up is a 6K race at Furman, where Georgia State faces off against the likes of Georgia, Georgia Tech, Clemson and Duke.

Georgia State and the University of Georgia will compete in their annual blood drive "In The Red Zone." It will take place on Sept. 24 at the GSU Sports Arena from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. as well as in the University Commons from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Panther and Bulldog fans alike will take part in this friendly competition ultimately for the greater good of helping the community. They can also donate blood on Sept. 19 from 2-6 p.m. at Simpsonwood United Methodist Church in Norcross.

Schutter can be reached at [404-256-1572](tel:404-256-1572).

OWL OUTLOOK



Football program will play in Big South

By Brian Jones

The football program is starting to take shape as a big announcement was made last week in terms of its future direction and the opponents it will play. Starting in 2015, the Owls will be an associate member of the Big South Conference.

"We are extremely pleased to join the Big South Conference as an associate member for football and look forward to participating in the conference when we play our first football games in 2015," Kennesaw State University President Daniel Papp said in the press conference last Wednesday. "We also look forward to continuing to be an active member of our current conference, the Atlantic Sun, in all other sports in which we participate."

The associate membership will last for four years. The Owls will join six other schools that sponsor football, including Charleston Southern, Coastal Carolina, Gardner-Webb, Liberty, Presbyterian College and Monmouth, which will join the conference next year.

With football joining the Big South Conference, the other 17 varsity teams at Kennesaw State will still compete in the Atlantic Sun Conference, where they've been a member since 2005.

"Kennesaw State is very fortunate to be associated with two great conferences in the

Atlantic Sun Conference and now the Big South Conference," athletic director Vaughn Williams said. "We look forward to our football program building great traditions and rivalries in the Big South, just as our other athletic teams are doing in the Atlantic Sun Conference."

NEW HEAD GEAR ...

Joining the Big South Conference is not the only big news for the football team. On Friday during the soccer game vs. Ole Miss, the athletic department will reveal what the new helmet will look like.

In late August, fans had an opportunity to vote on three different helmet designs. Two of the helmets were black with the primary and secondary logo, while the other was gold with the secondary logo on the side. Fans got a chance to see all three helmets at a kickoff event last month.

It will be big day for the football team, but the soccer team will be looking to get a big win on Friday against the Rebels. The Owls will go into the game with some momentum as they blanked Georgia State 1-0 last Friday. Nicole Calder scored the game-winning goal with five minutes left.

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HAWKS HAVEN



Budenholzer arrested; Ivan leaves for China

By Rick Dimon

Mike Budenholzer's tenure with the Atlanta Hawks is off to an inauspicious start, as the new head coach was arrested on DUI charges late last month. Budenholzer was pulled over on 10th Street at Crescent Avenue in Midtown on the night of Aug. 29 because he was reportedly driving without his tail lights on. The former San Antonio Spurs' assistant was placed under arrest after being issued a field sobriety test and refusing a breath test. Reports indicate that he was released from Atlanta City Jail on \$1,524 bond at 3:45 a.m. on Aug. 30 and immediately went to Piedmont Hospital, where his blood-alcohol concentration was .01.

Budenholzer, who pleaded not guilty to both the DUI and the tail-light violation, issued a statement—obtained by the Atlanta Journal Constitution—one day after the incident: "I take my role as a leader very seriously and hold myself to a high standard. I apologize to the fans and to the Hawks organization for any negative attention this incident has brought upon my family and the organization while the legal process evolves and I contest these misdemeanor charges."

His court date is set for Oct. 15. The Hawks are only scheduled to practice on that date, which falls in between Oct. 13 and Oct. 17

preseason games. The regular-season opener is set for Oct. 30 at Dallas.

ODDS AND ENDS ...

Ivan Johnson recently signed a deal to play for Zhejiang China next season. Former NBA center Eddy Curry played for that same Chinese squad in 2012-13. Johnson was a member of the Hawks for the past two seasons, starting as an enforcer on defense while averaging 6.5 points and 3.9 rebounds in 15.8 minutes over a total of 125 games. As for aspiring Hawks, David Lighty and Eric Dawson have been announced as non-roster training-camp invitees. Lighty, a former Ohio State standout, has played professionally in France. Dawson, a Midwestern State alum, appeared with the Spurs in 2012 on a pair of 10-day contracts.

SportSouth will televise 75 of Atlanta's 82 regular-season games in 2013-14. Four contests are scheduled to be shown on ESPN, including a Nov. 13 home game against the Knicks. Four games will not be televised—two at Philips Arena in November and two more at the Highlight Factory in December.

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FALCONS BEAT



St. Louis presents interesting challenge

By Craig Sager II

The Rams' offense will present unique challenges this week as speed and prolific passing highlight their attack, but the Atlanta defense carries momentum into its first home game after a solid Week 1 effort. Akeem Dent posted 11 tackles and two tackles for loss, and the unit combined for seven total tackles for loss. Rookie Robert Alford hauled in his first career interception and Desmond Trufant and Robert McClain performed at a high level as veteran cornerback Asante Samuel nursed an injury on the sideline.

Rams tight end Jared Cook has 4.49 wide-receiver speed and posted seven catches for 141 yards and two touchdowns in his team's 27-24 Week 1 win over Arizona. Quarterback Sam Bradford completed 27 of 38 passes for 299 yards and two touchdowns and has already built a connection with first-round pick Tavon Austin. Bradford completed six of seven targets to the explosive Austin.

The Saints sacked Atlanta three times and the Rams boast a much deeper and talented defensive front. The unit posted 52 sacks last season and is already on that pace after sacking Carson Palmer four times last week.

HOUSE OF HORRORS ...

Matt Ryan's attempt at a 23rd-career fourth-quarter comeback came up short in Week 1 as the visiting Falcons fell 23-17 to the Saints. Ryan moved to 1-5 in games played at the Super Dome, although the sixth-year pro managed to put together a solid passing game—completing 25 of 38 passes for two touchdowns. Ryan drove the offense 77 yards on 10 plays in the final 3:12 of the game, but his fourth-down pass was tipped off the hands of Tony Gonzalez and intercepted in the endzone.

The offensive line struggled against a Saints defense that allowed the most yards in NFL history last season, and Ryan was under pressure for more than half of Atlanta's 42 passing plays.

LIVING LEGENDS ...

The Falcons are the first team to have the NFL's leading active rusher and leading active receiver take the field together since the Green Bay Packers in 1941. Gonzalez leads all active receivers with 14,304 yards, while Steven Jackson leads all active rushers with 10,215 yards. In addition to rushing, Jackson also leads all active running backs with 3,324 receiving yards.

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CHOP SHOP



Division title within reach; Gattis returns

By Sean Conway

The Braves continue on a direct path to October playoff baseball. The National League East division title is taken for granted at this time by any fan, reporter, player or coach that know the difference between home plate and first base. The strength of the team, the pitching staff, is seeing a reduced workload as reinforcements from the minor league system eat up innings.

EL OSO BLANCO ...

While the offense was inconsistent late August and early September, the outlook is improving. Catcher, left fielder, sometimes first baseman and super-rookie Evan Gattis spent some time with the Gwinnett Braves to get needed at-bats. All-Star Brian McCann is having his best season as a power hitter and has been parked behind the plate five times a week on manager Fredi Gonzalez's line-up card.

Since returning to the big-boy Braves last week, Gattis has been fantastic. In Gattis' first 21 at bats since returning from Gwinnett, he slugged three home runs and two doubles. Over that span "El Oso Blanco" hit for a .333 average and a 1.221 OPS. Over the weekend in Philadelphia, he hit the longest home run in the history of Citizens Bank Park at 486 feet.

Gattis isn't the only cure for the Braves'

offense. Injured right fielder Jason Heyward has been cleared for batting practice and will be ready for a postseason run. Heyward, who broke his jaw when he was hit by Mets pitcher Jonathon Niese on Aug. 21, had his braces and rubber bands removed earlier this week and has resumed batting practice.

Before the injury Heyward was the Braves' hottest hitter. As he assumed the leadoff role for Gonzalez, he raised his average 20 points and slugged four home runs in 18 August games. There's no definitive timetable for his return, but Heyward is an essential part of the Braves' postseason plans.

The Braves haven't been overly inclined as some teams to populate their bench since major league rosters were allowed to expand to up 40 players in September. After calling up veteran pitcher Freddy Garcia and reliever Kameron Lee last week, they added highly-touted catcher Christian Bethancourt.

Reliever David Hale, a native of Marietta and Walker School graduate, was also snatched from Gwinnett's roster and can spare some wear and tear on the bullpen arms, possibly even earning a spot start this month.

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G-BRAVES BEAT



Ready's first season comes to close

By Sean Conway

The first season in the tenure of Gwinnett Braves manager Randy Ready came to a close last week. While the G-Braves finished 60-84 and 27 games behind the International League South winning Durham Bulls, the AAA affiliate's season was not without highlights.

Like all of the high-level minor league affiliates, the G-Braves work hard on winning, but there's no secret the overall focus is often on evaluating and developing talent for the big club 38 miles south down I-85. Gwinnett also provides the Atlanta Braves with major league caliber rehab facilities and training staff captained by athletic trainer Mike Graus.

Among Braves regular position players, All-Stars Freddie Freeman and Brian McCann took rehab trips to Gwinnett at some point during the season as well as B.J. Upton, Dan Uggla, Jason Heyward and Rookie of the Year candidate Evan Gattis.

STAR POWER ...

Many stellar individual performances highlighted the 2013 season, most notably that of Joey Terdoslavich before he was promoted. In 321 at bats, "Terdo" led the AAA club in slugging percentage and on-base plus slugging percentage among hitters with more than 250 official plate appearances. Terdoslavich

also finished second on the team in home runs, doubles, total bases and RBIs despite debuting and sticking in Atlanta since July 4.

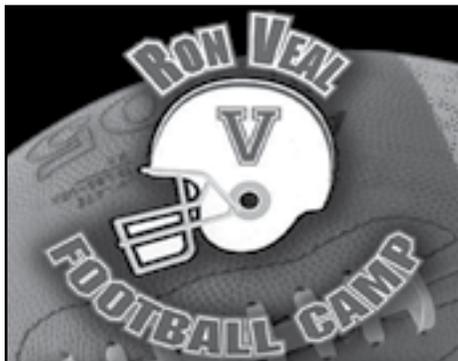
If Terdoslavich's stats were challenged by any player offensively, it was by slugging first baseman Ernesto Mejia. The 6-foot-5, 245-pound Venezuelan belted a team-high 28 home runs, 83 RBIs and 35 doubles. Mejia repeated his 2012 International League rookie of the year campaign with another great season.

On the mound, the workhorse for the G-Braves was another big Venezuelan, righty Omar Poveda. Poveda led the team in innings pitched (164) and strikeouts (133) while posting a respectable ERA of 3.62. Lefthander Yohan Flande led the G-Braves with a 9-7 record and pitched one of the team's only two complete games all season.

ON DECK ...

On Sept. 21, the G-Braves will host a showing of the classic kids baseball movie, "The Sandlot." There will be inflatables and concessions available after the gates open at 6:30, and movie time is 7:30. One-third of the ticket sales will go to the "Sandlot Baseball Field Program," benefiting the renovation of recreational fields across the country.

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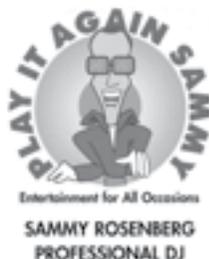
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