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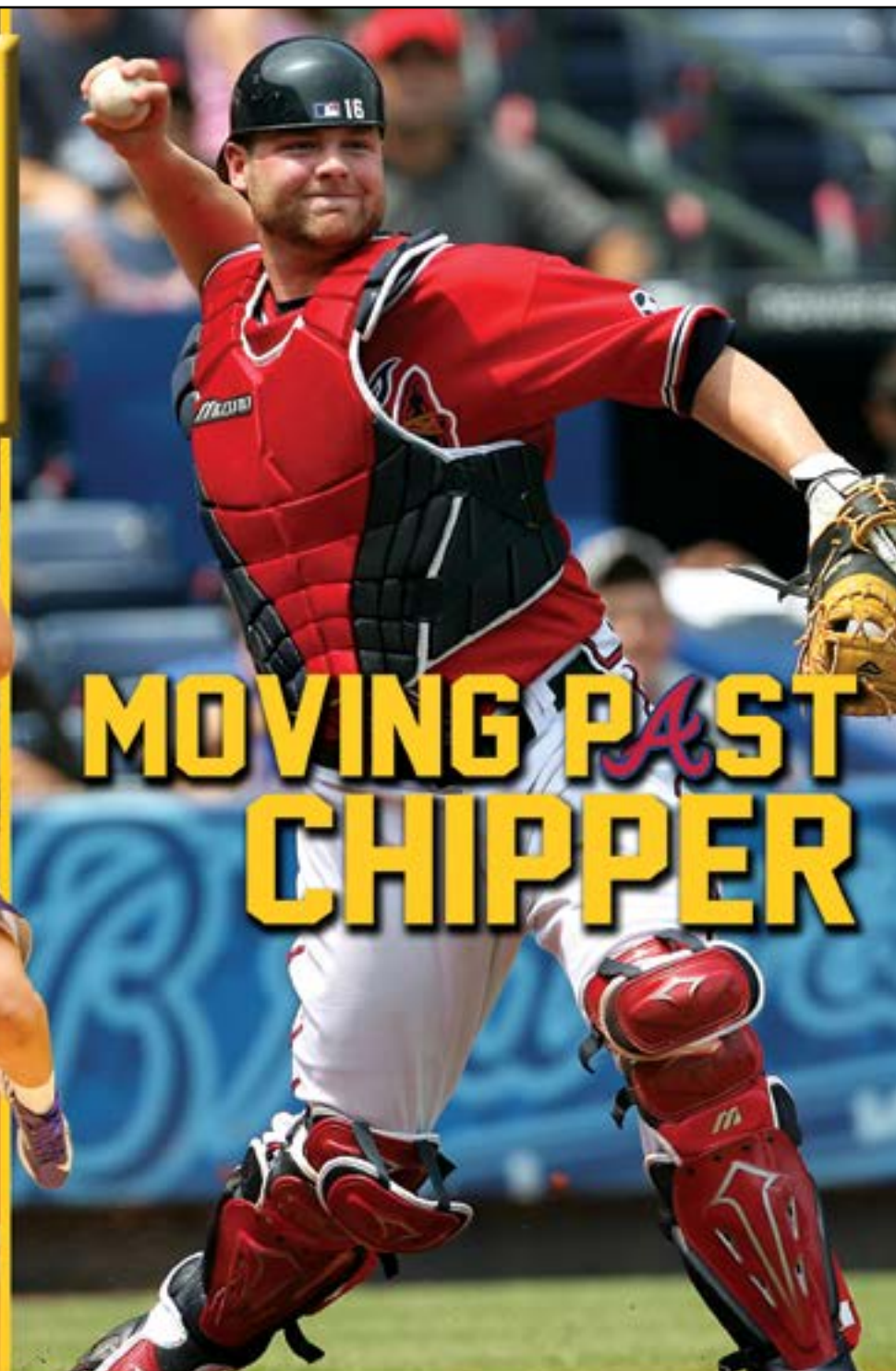
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CAN'T MISS THIS WEEK

- 4** Brian Jones says it's never too early to look ahead to football season in his column, Big B's World.
- 5** Jay Underwood dissects your 2013 Atlanta Braves in this week's cover story.
- 8** We set up the high school hoops finals by reviewing how the teams got here in our semifinals recap.
- 9** The high school hoops finals are this weekend, and Fletcher Proctor previews GPB's coverage of the event.

TEAM SCOOP AND VOICES

COVER DESIGN BY DJ GALBIATI BLALOCK
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SHOT OF THE WEEK...



THROWING DOWN: Hillgrove star forward Kyle Castline dunks on Wheeler during the semifinals at Georgia Tech last weekend. The Hawks pulled off a 56-54 nailbiting win and advanced to the Class AAAAAA finals. Photo courtesy of Sonny Kennedy.

INSIDE AT SCORE
ON THE Score Atlanta is looking for writing interns. Please e-mail Stephen Black at sblack@scoreatl.com for more information. Feel free to call 404-256-1572 for more information.

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THE FLETCH



UGA fans should appreciate hoops team

By Fletcher Proctor

People love winners, there is no question about that. When a team seemingly comes out of nowhere to make a BCS bowl or punch a ticket to the NCAA's Big Dance, you can count on seeing car flags and school sweat-shirts from people who you never knew had an affiliation to the school or program. While I can grin and bear it when the person is an alumnus or alumna of the particular school, I absolutely lose it when a person has chosen to begin rooting for a team simply because it is successful despite no tie to the team/program/school whatsoever. Imagine being a graduate of, say, Middle Tennessee State, but randomly this person begins rooting for Alabama for no known reason other than they have won three titles in four years. Makes no sense, right?

People will do this, though, because

they love winners. The most frustrating thing about people cherry-picking successful programs is often they leave behind the programs that need the support more than these bigger, more successful programs do.

SLEEPING GIANT ...

Georgia Basketball is a perfect example of a fanbase ignoring a sleeping giant to root for another established program. Why? Why in the world would a student/graduate of the University of Georgia not get behind the basketball program?

Oh, they've always been bad. Why should I support them when we have the football team?

Not to burst your bubble, but the basketball team has actually hoisted an SEC

championship more recently than the football program has (the 2008 SEC tournament title). And, for what it is worth, Georgia was a team plenty capable of making serious waves had there been support this year.

Entering the year, Mark Fox said he had been looking forward to coaching this team more than any other team during his tenure in Athens. While the team started slow, it finally found its footing during the SEC conference schedule. The team rattled off a five-game winning streak and had won two of its last three prior to Thursday's clash with Kentucky.

An 8-8 conference record through the team's first 16 games exceeded expectations as many had Georgia picked to finish dead last in conference play, and Georgia managed to sweep the season series with Texas A&M, South Carolina and bubble-team Tennessee. What is amazing to consider is that Georgia was within a Kentavious Caldwell-Pope dribbling error (at Vandy) and a made Donte Williams alley-oop (Ole Miss) from being 10-6 with two additional road victories. The Dawgs have also seen two other leads slip away in the final minute against Alabama and Arkansas.

I know you shouldn't play the shoulda-woulda game, but people should also look at this Georgia team instead of just writing them off based on their record like they always have.

Hey, it is cool to bang on Georgia basketball because they aren't any good.
FALSE.

MOVING FORWARD ...

It will take another miracle run in the SEC Tournament just like in 2008 for this Georgia Bulldogs team to make the NCAA championship field, and the team will need to pick up a few wins to even finish the regular season above .500 to qualify for the NIT or CBI. ESPN ran a documentary on that 2008 SEC tournament run for Georgia and honestly, that team wasn't as talented as this one. Imagine if Georgia can somehow find its way past Thursday night to make it to Friday. With Charles Mann getting more comfortable as an SEC point guard and KCP firing from the outside, an upset could happen considering how the team has come together. You never know what will happen in March when the madness starts.

Perhaps with an SEC tournament title, Georgia basketball could attract some of those bandwagon-jumping fans looking for the latest big thing. When Georgia does start winning, and Fox's team will as early as next season, people will surely come around. Too bad they missed a chance to get in early. Oh well, support is support and Georgia can use it, as well as some in-state recruits please.

Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.

BIG B'S WORLD



Looking ahead to next football season

By Brian Jones

Let's face it, football is king in Atlanta and we are already counting down the days until the 2013 season kicks off for NFL, college and even high school. Fortunately, there is always news surrounding football, and the month of March is a very important month for the NFL as well as the college game.

On Tuesday, the free-agency period for the NFL begins and Falcons fans are anxious to see what moves the Birds make especially with the team releasing Dunta Robinson, John Abraham and Michael Turner.

The reason the Falcons released the three key veterans is they had to free up cap space. Will that mean they pick up a big free-agent name like Rams running back Stephen Jackson, Colts defensive end Dwight Freeney or even Jet cornerback Darrelle Revis?

There is no telling who the Falcons will bring in, but the first thing they have to focus on is keeping their own players in Flowery Branch.

With this season being the final year of Matt Ryan's six-year contract, the negotiation talks for his next deal are starting to heat up. Forecasters say Ryan could be in line for a deal worth around \$100 million.

Some people may argue that Ryan may not be worth that much money, but that's not the point. It's all about the market value and if Ryan is a top quarterback in the league (which he is), he's going to make near top-dollar for his position.

But then there's the other veteran players that are becoming free agents that the Falcons need to keep on their roster. William Moore

and Sam Baker will be available to any team this Tuesday and they were big contributors in the Falcons' success last year. Now by the time this article hits newsstands, one or both of these players could be re-signed by the Falcons. But if they are not, the Falcons have to make sure they get Baker and Moore back into the mix, especially if they want to be a Super Bowl contender.

Then there's Brent Grimes, who missed most of last year with an Achilles injury. And there's also the Tony Gonzalez situation where he is still deciding if he wants to play one more season. The Falcons want to bring all of these players back, but it's all going to come down to how much they pay Ryan. It should be a very interesting free agency period to say the least.

SPRING DAWGS...

The Georgia Bulldogs opened spring practice last week and are looking to build on what they did in 2012 which was win 12 games and come five yards away from reaching the BCS National Championship Game.

The main priority that Mark Richt's team has to accomplish this spring is rebuilding the defense, which lost 12 starters from last year.

Believe it or not, the the Bulldogs defense should be better this upcoming season. A lot of the players coming in will have a chip on their shoulders because they were highly

recruited in high school and have not had to a chance to prove themselves. This will be the season where Ray Drew, Ramik Wilson, Jonathan Taylor, Corey Moore and Devin Bowman show what they are capable of. Fans will have a chance to see the new look defense as well as the rest of the team during the G-Day game on April 6.

KSU FOOTBALL ...

With Kennesaw State starting a football program, it means a new head coach will be hired soon. KSU AD Vaughn Williams has narrowed his list of who he wants to interview for the head coaching position and he wants somebody that is from Georgia or has done good work in the state.

Some of the names that have been mentioned that could be interviewed are former Falcons and Georgia defensive coordinator Brian VanGorder, current Georgia Tech defensive line coach Andy McCollum, current Valdosta State head coach David Dean and former Buffalo Bills defensive line coach Giff Smith.

Whoever takes the position will have some major challenges ahead of them. But the new head coach will also be a part of history and a chance to be part of a very successful program if everything goes according to plan.

Jones can be reached at bjones@scoreatl.com.

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2013 BRAVES



Tomahawkers look for life after Chipper

By Jay Underwood



This is a monumental spring training at Disney's Wide World of Sports for the Atlanta Braves. With Chipper Jones no longer manning the hot corner or providing the veteran leadership in the clubhouse, Fredi Gonzalez is looking for a player or two to replace these two openings, not to mention fill in for his production in the lineup. Frank Wren brought in lots of new pieces to reshape the team from a year ago without taking away from what was already present.

BROTHERS BRAVE ...

Through free agency the Braves added B.J. Upton from the Tampa Bay Rays, making him the highest paid free-agent in Atlanta Braves history with a five-year, \$75.25 million contract. Upton had a down season last year, but the Braves see his potential and look to harness it starting in the preseason. Once he signed with Atlanta, he began politicking for his brother to join him in the Braves' outfield. This dream became a reality when the Braves and Diamondbacks swung a seven-player deal, sending Justin Upton to the National League East. The downside of this trade is sending fan-favorite Martin Prado out

to Arizona after not being able to agree on a long-term extension in the offseason.

With an outfield of B.J. and Justin Upton to go along with Jason Heyward, the Braves feel that they have one of the top outfielders in all of baseball. They are also hoping that this new-look outfield will give the lineup a new dimension to mask the hole left by Jones' retirement. With three players who have the potential to put up 30 home runs and 30 stolen bases, Gonzalez should have more flexibility in his lineup to protect his run producers and get them pitches to hit.

Over at third base, Jones' replacement is a little less determined. As it stands, there is no leader between Juan Francisco and Chris Johnson to take over the reigns. Right now, they are both hitting around .360 and have each driven in four runs. Johnson has two homers to Francisco's one. Defensively, many believe that Francisco holds the advantage, which the spring numbers back up. If neither man asserts himself as the leader going into April, Gonzalez will probably look to go with a platoon, allowing an optimal lineup to be out there each night.

Dan Uggla has been an enigma since he

came to Atlanta and signed an extension. He has been primarily below average in his production at the plate since his arrival, but he has had hot stretches where he has been as productive as any hitter in baseball. This season could be a make-or-break year for Uggla, and if he doesn't improve, the Braves may look to make a move to upgrade their overall lineup. His double-play partner will also be eyed closely, but mostly to judge his development as an offensive player. Andrelton Simmons is already one of the top defensive shortstops in baseball. Across the diamond at first, Freddie Freeman is looking to take the next step in his offensive game. His batting average took a hit last year, but he led the Braves in RBIs and could do so again this year with all of the table setters in front of him in this lineup.

The leadership role of the Braves following Jones' retirement will fall to Brian McCann. He is now the longest-tenured position player on the Atlanta roster. He will start the season on the disabled list, but should return following surgery in the offseason on his shoulder to repair a partially torn labrum. This surgery will allow for more fluid movement in his shoulder, which should bring back the offensive production expected of the lefty slugger.

MOUND MEN ...

Pitching is also something that will be monitored closely this spring since there will be an open spot in the rotation. During the offseason, Jair Jurrjens was let go and Tommy Hanson was traded to the Angels for hard-throwing reliever Jordan Walden. The rotation right now consists of Kris Medlen, coming off one of the most dominant stretches by a starting pitcher ever, Tim Hudson, Mike Minor and Paul Maholm.

As for the battle for the final spot in the rotation, the Braves are hoping Julio Teheran takes the position and runs with it. So far this spring, he has tossed five innings, giving up one run on the only hit he has surrendered all spring, a homer to Bryce Harper. It appears that he is far and away ahead of the competition at this point. J.R. Graham is also getting a look this spring and has thrown five shutout innings in three appearances.

A name that has not been mentioned yet is Brandon Beachy, who is projected to come back from Tommy John surgery around the All-Star break. He was arguably the best pitcher over the first half of the season last year until he went down with his injury and will likely reclaim his spot in the rotation once he is healthy again. This is not a bad problem to have if you are the Braves, who have had

some key pitchers go down with injuries the past few years.

Arguably the strongest unit on the team is the bullpen. Anchored by Craig Kimbrel, the staff features Jonny Venters, Eric O'Flaherty and Jordan Walden. This will be the third year in a row that the Braves will feature one of the top bullpens in baseball, and this season it is widely regarded as the top unit. Kimbrel was far and away the best closer the past two years in the league. Coming off a truly dominant season, Kimbrel may garner some attention in Cy Young conversations throughout the season.

The Braves made some noise this offseason with their signings and trades while trying to keep up with their new rivals in the nation's capital. This new-look Braves team has the potential to put up strong power numbers, but with that power will come lots of strikeouts. What the newly reconstructed lineup also brings is more balance, a change from the heavy reliance on lefty hitters in years past. This season will feature the future of the Braves and the future looks bright. The excitement surrounding Disney should follow the Braves up north to Atlanta for the season opener April 1.

Photos courtesy of the Atlanta Braves/Pouya Dianat. Underwood can be reached at junderwood@scoreatl.com.



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WHO'S HOT

THUMBS UP TO WINNING TITLES



Going Deep

The Atlanta Braves have shown early through spring training that the offense will be depositing balls into the outfield seats at Turner Field often this season. Jason Heyward had three home runs in his first eight spring games and Justin Upton hit one ball that (hyperbole alert) hasn't landed yet.

High School Hoops

The GHSA basketball season is coming to a close this weekend in Macon as GPB-TV will have 36 hours of live action. Don't miss tuning in to catch every bounce, basket, dribble, dunk and coronation as 15 champions will be crowned over three days at the Macon Coliseum.

The Golf Boys

Former UGA standout and reigning Masters champion Bubba Watson and the rest of the Golf Boys (Hunter Mahan, Ben Crane and Rickie Fowler) have released a follow up Youtube music video to last year's "Oh Oh Oh" video sensation. Finally, a Youtube clip worth watching that isn't a Harlem Shake ripoff.

Injured Hawks

Larry Drew and the Atlanta Hawks will make the NBA post-season but the seeding may not be as high as it could be as the team is constantly missing key players. Lou Williams is out for the year while Jeff Teague, Zaza Pachulia, Kyle Korver and DeShawn Stevenson have missed recent action.

NFL Trade Rumors

In the last few days, rumors have circulated that the Falcons would trade two first-round picks to the Jets for Darrelle Revis and/or trade multiple picks to move up in the upcoming NFL Draft. Both are just rumors, for now. But stay tuned, as the Falcons will certainly make a splash in free agency.

Local Hoops Bashing

Just because none of the local men's teams will likely be competing in the NCAA tournament doesn't mean it was a bad year for Georgia hoops. Tech and UGA each gave three freshmen big minutes and Georgia State wasn't permitted to play in the CAA tournament. Stop being lazy and actually watch the games before you spout off on the decay of Peach State hoops.



WHO'S NOT

THUMBS DOWN TO LAZY JOURNALISTS

SCORE LIST

BY BRIAN JONES

1 **ROAD TO MACON:** It's been a long and exciting season for high school basketball and it all comes to an end this weekend at the Macon Coliseum. Two storylines to watch for: can Miller Grove, Columbia and Norcross pull off title sweeps and can Norcross and Gainesville pull off the football/basketball sweep.

2 **ICE COLD MONEY:** Now that Joe Flacco's deal is done, the Falcons could decide to turn up the heat with regard to Matt Ryan's contract. If the forecasters are right, Ryan could land a deal worth more than \$100 million. Will his lack of playoff success (1-4) hurt his chances of getting a more lucrative contract?

3 **ONE MORE CHANCE:** Of all the storylines taking place at Braves spring training, one of the most interesting has to be Jordan Schafer. Back in 2008, Schafer was the top prospect in the Braves organization, but he has had his struggles since being called up. Schafer was traded to the Astros in 2011 and is now back with Braves, fighting for a job.

4 **COACH IS COMING:** Kennesaw State athletic director Vaughn Williams has come up with his short list of candidates he would like to interview for the football head coaching position by the end of March. Sources say that Brian VanGorder, Andy McCollum, Giff Smith and David Dean could be interviewed in the very near future. It will be interesting who Williams decides to hire.

5 **PRIMETIME OPENER:** It was announced Tuesday that the Georgia-Clemson game will be aired on ABC on Aug. 31 at 8 p.m. Both teams had successful 2012 seasons and there is really no other way to kickoff the 2013 season with two national title contenders fighting it out in primetime. Doesn't this get you fired up for football season to begin?

CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS

BY STEPHEN BLACK

0 Total hoops state championships won by Hillgrove (boys), North Gwinnett (girls), Eagle's Landing (B), Sandy Creek (G), St. Francis (B&G) and Greenforest (B)

0 Schools that have swept boys and girls state basketball titles in consecutive seasons

2 Schools that have a chance to repeat the sweep this weekend (Columbia and Miller Grove)

12 Total consecutive state championships won by the Miller Grove boys, Columbia boys and Wesleyan girls hoops teams.

8 Percentage increase in Braves' revenue last season

\$17 MILLION Revenue increase for the Braves last season

\$225 MILLION Total revenue by the Braves in 2012

\$113.75 MILLION Combined amount of the Upton brothers' contracts with Atlanta

94 Braves' wins in 2012

2004 The last time Atlanta won more than 94 games in a season

TRIVIA QUESTION

Including Friday night's Class AAAAA girls final, how many times did Miller Grove and Southwest DeKalb play this season?

Answer on Page 14

SANITY AT LAST

"I was mad more than anything. I knew it wasn't intentional, but any time you get hit in the head or shoulder, your first instinct is to get angry. But then you shake it off and take your base."

- Dan Uggla, on getting hit in the neck by a pitch during spring training.

STATE FINALS COVERAGE

All games will be shown on GPB TV and PlayOnSports.com:

- 2013 Class AA Girls Basketball Championship FINAL: Laney vs. Wesleyan, March 8, 3:00 p.m.
- 2013 Class AA Boys Basketball Championship FINAL: Bleckley County vs. GACS, March 8, 4:45 p.m.
- 2013 Class AAAAA Girls Basketball Championship FINAL: Miller Grove vs. Southwest DeKalb, March 8, 7:00 p.m.
- 2013 Class AAAAA Boys Basketball Championship FINAL: Gainesville vs. Miller Grove, March 8, 8:45 p.m.
- 2013 Class A-Private Girls Basketball Championship FINAL: SW Atlanta Christian vs. St. Francis, March 9, 11:00 a.m.
- 2013 Class A-Private Boys Basketball Championship FINAL: Greenforest vs. St. Francis, March 9, 12:45 p.m.
- 2013 Class AAA Girls Basketball Championship FINAL: Dawson County vs. St. Pius X, March 9, 3:00 p.m.
- 2013 Class AAA Boys Basketball Championship FINAL: Johnson, Savannah vs. Savannah, March 9, 4:45 p.m.
- 2013 Class AAAAAA Girls Basketball Championship FINAL: Norcross vs. North Gwinnett, March 9, 7:00 p.m.
- 2013 Class AAAAAA Boys Basketball Championship FINAL: Hillgrove vs. Norcross, March 9, 8:45 p.m.



Defending champs return looking for more

By Fletcher Proctor

If several of the teams in this year's GHSA basketball finals look familiar, it is because they are. Five defending champions have made the finals yet again as well as five more than captured the GHSA's top prize in either 2010 or 2011.

The Miller Grove boys and girls are both back trying to repeat as are Columbia's boys and girls teams. The Miller Grove boys program has won four straight titles and now is seeking a AAAAA crown to make it five in a row. The Columbia boys are right behind Miller Grove with three straight and seeking a fourth in Class AAAAA after moving up from AAA.

Norcross pulled off a sweep in 2011 and has both teams ready to play for the Class AAAAA titles. Dating back to 2006, the Norcross boys have captured four titles. Jesse McMillan was at the helm two years ago and has this squad playing incredibly well since the end of football season when reinforcements arrived to help the Blue Devils. The Norcross girls, meanwhile, won back-to-back titles in 2010 and 2011 before falling just short last year.

Greater Atlanta Christian is back in the

GHSA finals after losing to finalist Manchester last year in the quarterfinals. Eddie Martin's Spartans won the Class AA title in 2010 before successfully defending the title in 2011. Despite most of the important players from the last title team no longer roaming the halls of GAC, Martin has plenty of firepower with Collin Swinton and Isaiah Wilkins hoping to help the Spartans' head coach earn his third title in his first five years with the program. Martin also won three titles with Norcross before finding his way to GAC.

Wilkinson County captured the 2011 Class A title on the strength of 11 seniors and a trio of juniors. After graduation gutted Aaron Geter's team, he has managed to rebuild around another talented senior class mixed with sophomore Torrico Simmons.

In 2010, the Southwest DeKalb girls won the program's third straight AAAAA title. After a down year in 2011, Southwest DeKalb reached the finals last year before falling to Miller Grove. Now, the Panthers are back and ready to exact some revenge for the championship game defeat from one year ago.

TALENTED TEAMS ...

The Miller Grove girls aren't anxious to give up the title of champion just yet, especially to Region 6-rival Southwest DeKalb. Kathy Walton's Panthers got the better of Renee Breedlove's Wolverines in the region tournament after falling to Miller Grove three times earlier this season. Many of the players that competed in last year's AAAAA finals will be going at it again this year, including Miller Grove's Tashi Thompson, Katie Hunt and Klarissa Weaver as well as Southwest DeKalb's Deja Clay and Calyn Kelly.

Columbia, coached by Chantay Frost, went 24-5 last year to win the program's second title in three years and, this year, Columbia (26-3) has battled through Pickens County, LaGrange, River Ridge and Jonesboro to reach Macon. Senior Miah Spencer and junior Yaktavia Hickson both tasted a championship last year and will be inspired to try to pull off the repeat bid.

Tahj Shamsid-Deen of the Columbia boys will try to leave the Decatur school with four state titles to his name before suiting up next year for Auburn.

Wesleyan also has a host of players that will be playing women's college basketball next season, but first, a shot at history is at stake for Jan Azar's Wesleyan program. The last girls program to win six straight state titles was Hart County (1989-1994). Wesleyan cap-

tered the 2008 Class AA title before winning the last four Class A crowns. With reclassification shifting schools into different classes, Wesleyan is back in Class AA looking to book-end that 2008 title with a record-tying sixth. If not for a loss to Greater Atlanta Christian in the 2007 state finals, Wesleyan would be chasing its 10th straight crown.

ALL EYES ON WHITE ...

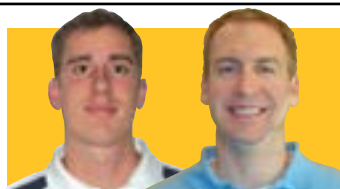
While Wesleyan is trying to match a record Miller Grove is angling for a fifth straight crown, which would break the tie that the Wolverines currently share with Westover (1990-93). Head coach Sharman White has seen some incredible talent during this current run, but had to replace five starters from last year's team. He didn't have a bare cupboard as eight players returned from last year's team and he was the beneficiary of playing in the always-tough Region 6-AAAAA.

Dating back to 2004 when Mays won the first of two straight, the last nine AAAAA champions came from what is now a loaded Region 6-AAAAA.

While many familiar faces will be in Macon this week, there is still room for new blood and that is what the other teams such as Gainesville, Dawson County, St. Pius X and Randolph-Clay, among others, are hoping for this weekend.

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

SEMIFINALS RECAPS



Cream rises to top after semifinal showdowns

By Fletcher Proctor & Stephen Black

The Norcross Lady Blue Devils thumped Langston Hughes from the opening tip en route to an easy 64-16 victory in the Class AAAAAA semifinals at Georgia Tech. Diamond DeShields had 21 points as Norcross advanced to the program's third finals appearance in the last four years. In the other semifinal showdown, North Gwinnett raced past North Cobb 57-40. North Gwinnett holds a 2-1 edge over Norcross this year with the most recent victory coming in the Region 7-AAAAAA tournament finals.

Defending Class AAAA champion Miller Grove will have a shot at the AAAAA title after a 49-23 win over Effingham County. Southwest DeKalb will await Miller Grove after edging past Forest Park 43-41 at Kennesaw State. Southwest DeKalb had to rally back from 12 points down in the third quarter. The Southwest DeKalb/Miller Grove final will be a rematch from last year and the fifth time these two teams have met this season. The Panthers defeated Miller Grove for the Region 6-AAAAA title two weeks ago.

Defending Class AAA champion Columbia will be seeking a third title in four years after a five-point win over Jonesboro at Fort Valley State. The Eagles will face Sandy Creek for the AAAA crown in Macon.

SENSATIONAL SOPHOMORE ...

Asia Durr was the story for St. Pius X as the Golden Lions slipped past Chapel Hill 59-51. Durr, a 5-foot-9 sophomore, finished with 27 points as Kyle Snipes' team reached the finals for the first time since 2007. St. Pius X will face a Dawson County team looking for the first title in program history.

Wesleyan will play for a sixth straight state title, which would tie a GHSA record set by Hart County (1989-1994) after the Wolves whipped Thomasville 83-34 in the semifinals to earn the right to face undefeated Laney in the AA finals. Wesleyan has lost just once to a Georgia opponent, falling 49-46 to Southwest Atlanta Christian.

Perhaps no team was more impressive over semifinal weekend than Southwest At-

lanta Christian, which shut down Holy Innocents' from the first quarter on in a 78-43 victory. St. Francis fills out the other slot in the Class A-Private bracket after a very impressive 50-27 victory over Calvary Day. This is St. Francis' first trip to the state finals.

CHASING HISTORY ...

Junior Kyle Castlin led Hillgrove with 20 points to help the Hawks beat Wheeler and clinch their first-ever trip to the finals. Facing Hillgrove in the Class AAAAAA finals will be Norcross, which clinched its sixth finals berth in nine years (according to the Georgia High School Basketball Project) with a narrow win over North Cobb. Brandon Goodwin scored 22 points and made eight of 10 free throws down the stretch.

Miller Grove made quick work of Northside-Columbus, leading 30-15 at the half and then dominating the second half. Keith Pinckney had 20 points and seven rebounds for the Wolverines. Gainesville will oppose Miller Grove in the AAAAA finals and will attempt to prevent the Wolverines from winning a GHSA-record fifth straight state title.

In Class AAAA, Columbia returns to the finals looking for its sixth state title in eight seasons and fourth in a row after dominating Statesboro at Fort Valley State in the semifinals. Coach Kerry Sandifer's squad got 32 points from senior point guard Tahj Shamsiddeen, an Auburn signee.

Bleckley County will face GAC for the AA boys title as the Spartans look for another championship after winning state titles in 2010 and 2011. Coach Eddie Martin's Spartans outlasted defending champ Laney in the

semis as junior forward Isaiah Wilkins had 16 points and 14 boards and senior point guard Collin Swinton scored 14.

In the Class A-Private finals, Greenforest Christian will face St. Francis in the finals after hanging on to beat Athens Christian. Senior center Tosin Mehinti nearly had a triple-double with 12 points, 17 rebounds and nine blocks for Greenforest.

Photo of Collin Swinton courtesy of Ty Freeman. Black and Proctor can be reached at 404-256-1572.



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BASKETBALL RANKINGS

BOYS

CLASS AAAAAA

- | | |
|----------------|------------------|
| 1. Tift County | 6. Westlake |
| 2. Shiloh | 7. Alpharetta |
| 3. Norcross | 8. Druid Hills |
| 4. North Cobb | 9. Chattahoochee |
| 5. Wheeler | 10. Hillgrove |

CLASS AAAAA

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Miller Grove | 6. New Manchester |
| 2. Effingham County | 7. Jones County |
| 3. Northside-Columbus | 8. Stephenson |
| 4. Whitewater | 9. Allatoona |
| 5. Gainesville | 10. Tucker |

CLASS AAAA

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

CLASS AAA

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

CLASS AA

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1. GAC | 6. Pelham |
| 2. Vidalia | 7. Jefferson |
| 3. Westside-Augusta | 8. Taylor County |
| 4. Calhoun | 9. Laney |
| 5. Jordan | 10. Bleckley County |

CLASS A-PRIVATE

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

CLASS A-PUBLIC

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

CLASS AAAAAA

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Parkview | 6. Alcovy |
| 2. North Gwinnett | 7. North Cobb |
| 3. Norcross | 8. Langston Hughes |
| 4. Cherokee | 9. Hillgrove |
| 5. Alpharetta | 10. Woodstock |

CLASS AAAAA

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

CLASS AAAA

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. Columbia | 6. South Effingham |
| 2. Redan | 7. Marist |
| 3. Cross Creek | 8. Woodland-Henry |
| 4. Mary Persons | 9. Sandy Creek |
| 5. Jonesboro | 10. Madison County |

CLASS AAA

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

GIRLS

CLASS AA

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

CLASS A-PRIVATE

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

CLASS A-PUBLIC

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

GPB SPORTS



GPB set for comprehensive finals coverage

By Fletcher Proctor

With the 2013 GHSA basketball championships now here, readers may notice several differences from one year ago. For starters, 15 championship games will take place instead of the 11 from last year, as seven boys and seven girls titles plus the team wheelchair basketball championship will be handed out over the next three days. All of the games will also take place in Macon as the GHSA moved all of the title tilts to the Heart of Georgia after years of splitting up the finals between the Macon Coliseum and the Arena at Gwinnett Center.

One thing that hasn't changed, however, is Georgia Public Broadcasting's incredible live coverage of the basketball championships. Georgia Public Broadcasting will be live for more than 36 hours over the next three days, bringing every basket, bounce and squeak to your television or computer.

GPB Sports Director Mark Harmon will host the action along with Kat Carney and Claire Simms, setting up the countless storylines and prepping you for what could be the best collection of announcers GPB has ever put together to broadcast the basketball championships. Legends such as Gil Tyree,

Tommy Palmer, Herb White, Bob Houghton and Jon Nelson will be joined by fresh voices including UGA legends Shaun Golden and D.J. Shockley.

"We've got some great people lined up to call the games," said Harmon. "It will be 36 hours of television and we are looking forward to it."

GPB President and Executive Director Teya Ryan noted that GPB's coverage will highlight not just the basketball action, but the communities that support the teams involved.

"That is part of our mission as public broadcasting, that we support the whole community," said Ryan. "Our coverage should show GPB's commitment to high school sports. We fully support as many high school sports as possible, and we're about to see some of the best basketball in the state."

MACON CHANGES ...

The GPB staff has been in Macon since Wednesday, preparing the Macon Coliseum for the three-day spectacle and steeling themselves for the continuous live coverage. Georgia Public Broadcasting will stay on the air

straight through from before the first games at 3 p.m. on Thursday and Friday, and 11 a.m. on Saturday, through the final games of each night. Harmon, Carney and Simms will be busy in between each game and during half-time of each of the games.

Harmon promised the return of the "Tailgate Parties" first made popular during GPB's fantastic Football Fridays in Georgia broadcasts. The popular segments interviewed principals, parents, athletic directors and other special guests each Friday night during the football season, and GPB Sports is bring the Tailgate Party inside the Macon Coliseum. In addition to the normal fare, Harmon has promised a few special guests including the GM/head coach of the Atlanta Dream Fred Williams as well as Miller Barger and Larry "Gator" Rivers, a pair of filmmakers that have taken on a documentary project about the 1967 Beach High School team that won

the GHSA's first integrated state tournament at Georgia Tech. Rivers was a member of that team before going on to fame with the Harlem Globetrotters.

"We'll also preview the 2013 Corky Kell Classic and Georgia Traveler and Georgia Outdoors," said Harmon.

The Tailgate Party will also include exciting features such as a tour of the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame, located in Macon, and a look at The Big House, aka the Allman Brothers Band Museum.

With so much happening in and around Macon over the next few days, the GPB Sports crew is sure to be busy; however, you can bet that the all of the intense action and amazing storylines will be covered unlike ever before.

Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.



TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

Thursday, March 7

Time	Class	Visiting Team/Home Team
3 PM	A - Public Girls	Randolph-Clay vs. Gordon Lee
4:45 PM	A - Public Boys	Wilkinson Co. vs. Wilcox Co.
7 PM	AAAA Girls	Sandy Creek vs. Columbia
8:45 PM	AAAA Boys	Columbia vs. Eagle's Landing

Friday, March 8

Time	Class	Visiting Team/Home Team
Noon	AAASP Wheelchair	West Georgia vs. Houston Co.
3 PM	AA Girls	Laney vs. Wesleyan
4:45 PM	AA Boys	Bleckley County vs. GAC
7 PM	AAAAA Girls	Miller Grove vs. Southwest DeKalb
8:45 PM	AAAAA Boys	Gainesville vs. Miller Grove

Saturday, March 9

Time	Class	Visiting Team/Home Team
11 AM	A - Private Girls	SW Atlanta Chr. vs. St. Francis
12:45 PM	A - Private Boys	Greenforest Chr. vs. St. Francis
3 PM	AAA Girls	Dawson County vs. St. Pius X
4:45 PM	AAA Boys	Johnson, Savannah vs. Savannah
7 PM	AAAAAA Girls	Norcross vs. North Gwinnett
8:45 PM	AAAAAA Boys	Hillgrove vs. Norcross

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BULLDOG BEAT



Baseball sweeps UAB, falls to WCU

By Chris Nieman

After a tumultuous start to the 2013 season, the Diamond Dawgs shrugged off the early season jitters with an extraordinary hitting performance in the team's three-game series against the UAB Blazers last weekend. Not only did Georgia whip out the broomsticks for the sweep, the Dawgs put together the longest winning streak of the season, averaging a whopping 11 runs per game during that span. The Bulldogs also accumulated a total of 43 hits, including a season-high 21 hits on March 1. The Dawgs are certainly playing with more confidence, which has led to the team's recent success.

"It's good to win a series," said Georgia coach David Perno. "Our team has great confidence and the players are feeding off of each other. We're in a good place right now."

Georgia's three-game winning streak was snapped by Western Carolina on Tuesday with a 12-7 loss. Pitching was clearly the achilles heel in the Dawgs' defeat, a game in which the team didn't have a single pitcher surpass three innings. With 10 out of the next 13 games at Foley Field, the Diamond Dawgs must make it a priority to capitalize on the homestretch.

SPRINGING FORWARD ...

It is that time of year again for Georgia football spring practice. After a couple months of rest and relaxation, head coach Mark Richt and the Bulldogs began spring practice at the Woodruff Practice fields on March 2 in less than ideal weather conditions.

"We actually got a little snow, so that was interesting for spring ball," said Richt.

Regardless of the inclement weather, the Bulldogs practiced hard and showed high energy, especially for the inaugural practice.

"Overall, the tempo was great," said Richt. "The attitude was good. Everyone was coaching hard, everybody was playing hard."

This 2013 squad has its work cut out for them, especially on the defensive side of the ball.

The Bulldogs lost 12 defensive starters to the NFL draft and/or graduation, including two-time, All-American outside linebacker Jarvis Jones, who led the nation in sacks with 14.5.

The Georgia football team held its second practice of the spring at the Woodruff Practice fields on Tuesday for two hours. The Bulldogs have 13 more practices to gel before the annual G-day scrimmage on April 1.

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TECH BUZZ



Jackets fall to Pack on senior night

By Ryan Caiafa

Even with emotions running high as a motivated Mfon Udofia played in his final home game as a member of the Yellow Jackets, Tech couldn't continue its strong first half play, fading in the second half en route to a 70-57 loss to the North Carolina State Wolfpack at McCamish Pavilion. Udofia's nine points led a lackluster offensive effort that did not have a single Jacket post in double figures. The team shot just 34 percent from the field. They did, however, split the final two home games of the inaugural season at McCamish Pavilion, with a 10-point win over Maryland on Feb 27.

Road games against Miami and Boston College round out the team's regular season schedule before the team begins its ACC Tournament run, with a likely first-round matchup against Clemson or Boston College awaiting the Jackets. While a 15-13 overall record and a 5-11 conference record is surely disappointing, the young Jackets certainly can take plenty of positives out of this season with the emergence of several freshmen, including Marcus Georges-Hunt, who currently leads the team in scoring; Robert Carter Jr., who is tied for the

lead in rebounding; and Chris Bolden, who has also become a mainstay in the starting lineup.

HOT AND FRESH ...

The Georgia Tech baseball team continued its torrid start with sweeps of Georgia Southern and Rutgers to improve to 11-1 on the season through March 3. Junior Zane Evans has been amongst the catalysts for the team's impressive start, hitting .579 with four homers and nine RBIs in the team's five-game stretch against Southern and Rutgers, earning ACC Player of the Week honors for that time period. While Evans has been hot recently, another junior, Daniel Palka, has been the most consistent since the start of the season, leading the team in batting average, RBIs, hits and runs scored.

The pitching has also been there for Tech as well, with Cole Pitts and Buck Farmer both seemingly unhittable thus far. The Jackets, who are now ranked as high as No. 14 in the nation, begin ACC play with a trip to Blacksburg to take on the Virginia Tech Hokies, who have also started off strong and have cracked the national rankings as well.

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PANTHER PROWL



Hoops season ends; baseball wins big

By Jay Underwood

Georgia State's basketball season has drawn to a close following a 90-84 overtime loss to league-leading Northeastern last Wednesday. Due to their departure for the Sun Belt following this season, the Colonial Athletic Association decided to bar the Panthers' basketball team from postseason play, eliminating any chance coach Ron Hunter's team had of reaching the NCAA tournament. The Panthers finished the season one game under .500 at 15-16, but with a winning record of 10-8 in the conference.

FALSE START ...

After starting the season 6-11, the Panthers rallied late in the year to get back to .500 during conference play. The early season struggles occurred during a very tough stretch of games and were aided by the inexperience of a young team. A leader emerged mid-way through the year in R.J. Hunter. He developed into one of the most dynamic scorers not only in the conference, but in the entire country and began to receive praise for his scoring prowess.

With the move up in competition next season, the conference stretch will be more difficult and demanding, but the growth the Panthers experienced throughout this season will have them better prepared. Only

one player will be lost to graduation, James Vincent, so the chemistry should only grow from here.

DIAMOND CATS ...

On the diamond, the Panthers have improved their record to 8-5 and have lost just one three-game series all year. They also claim a big win over the University of Georgia. The Panthers came out on top 10-7 when the Bulldogs visited Panthersville last Tuesday. Georgia State trailed 7-4 going into the fifth inning before rallying with a two-run homer by Chris Triplett to finally take the lead. Two insurance runs were added on a Greg Bowder pinch-hit single.

Following the win over Georgia, the Panthers won a three-game series over ACC foe Boston College. By showing that they can beat the big-name universities, Georgia State is proving that it will be able to hold its own in the Sun Belt next season.

Conference play kicks off March 8 when George Mason comes to town for a three game set. The Patriots took the season series last year 2-1 and the Panthers will look to defend their home field and come out victorious this weekend.

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OWL OUTLOOK



Owls soaring early on baseball diamond

By Brian Jones

Spring sports have officially kicked off for Kennesaw State and the baseball team is off to a solid start. The Owls won their first four games of the year, including a 2-1 victory over Georgia, before losing three straight to Radford.

The Owls then took down Auburn and Alabama State before losing three consecutive games to Middle Tennessee State this past weekend.

In Friday's game, the Owls were overwhelmed by the Raiders in an 11-1 loss. The Owls were led by Peyton Hart, who went 3-for-4 at the plate.

On Sunday, the Owls played MTSU in a doubleheader and once again could not muster any offense, losing 5-2 in Game 1 and 6-1 in Game 2.

"We just don't have a whole lot of offense right now," head coach Mike Sansing told ksuowls.com. "We haven't been able to string together back-to-back hits and create scoring opportunities and it has cost us."

Bo Way was the Owls' leading hitter in Game 1, going 2-for-4 and scoring a run. Clint Wynn led the way in Game 2, going 1-for-3 while driving in the Owls' only run.

The Owls will look to get the offense back on track this weekend as they face Evansville in a three-game series.

SOFTBALL SOARING ...

The softball team has started the year hot, winning its first seven games and has only lost three games in the early stages of the season.

This past weekend, the Lady Owls traveled to Georgia Southern to take part in the Eagle Classic. They played in five games, winning four and capping the weekend with a 5-0 victory over Alabama State on Sunday. Following the Eagle Classic, the Lady Owls improved to 14-3 on the year.

FOOTBALL NEWS ...

KSU athletic director Vaughn Williams has gathered a short list of head coaching candidates he would like to interview and he hopes to have a head coach hired by the end of March.

The Marietta Daily Journal came up with its short list of candidates earlier this week. Some of the names they have guessed include current Georgia Tech defensive line coach Andy McCollum, current Valdosta State head coach David Dean and Giff Smith, who served as the defensive line coach for the Buffalo Bills the last three years.

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HAWKS HAVEN



Hawks keep Smith, remain inconsistent

By Ricky Dimon

For all its pomp and circumstance, the NBA trade deadline came and went with Josh Smith still in Atlanta. Long rumored to be making what would have been the biggest midseason deal of the year, the Hawks instead kept their mercurial, do-it-all forward right at home.

For a while—at least in terms of this team's immediate prospects—the decision paid off handsomely. The Hawks won three in a row after the trade deadline, including three straight to open a recently-concluded, six-game road trip. They edged Milwaukee 103-102, took care of Detroit 114-103 and held off Utah last Wednesday, 102-91. Just as brilliantly as the trek began, however, it ended with a thud. Atlanta lost to Phoenix 92-87, suffered a 99-98 heartbreaker against the Lakers and got trounced by Denver 104-88 on Monday.

Smith's 15 points against the Nuggets allowed him to become the 24th player in the history of the NBA to compile 10,000 points, 5,000 rebounds, 2,000 assists and 1,000 blocks.

"It's a blessing to get that mark," Smith told the Atlanta Journal Constitution. "Hopefully I can accomplish more things in this league. I just have to stay healthy and stay positive."

HOT HORFORD ...

Smith may be the biggest name on the Hawks' roster and he certainly stole all of the headlines in Atlanta last month, but it's Al Horford who continues to quietly go about his business as the team's best player. Prior to Monday's setback at Denver (in which Horford still managed an impressive double-double of 18 points and 13 rebounds), the former University of Florida star scored at least 20 points in nine consecutive games dating back to Feb. 11. Interestingly, the streak was preceded by four straight contests in which Horford did not reach 20 points. Horford boasts six double-doubles in his last 10 outings and the stretch includes a 34-point, 15-rebound eruption in the victory at Utah.

"He's open, a lot and he's getting his shots in rhythm," head coach Larry Drew told the AJC. "I've always said he's one of the better pick-and-pop guys in our league and he's showing that now."

Horford, Smith and company hoped to get back on track at the Highlight Factor on Wednesday vs. Philadelphia, but results were not available at press time.

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FALCONS BEAT



Falcons to revamp their talented core

By Craig Sager II

The Falcons' dismissal of three veteran starters last week shows that the organization's top priority continues to be building its roster through the draft above all else. General manager Thomas Dimitroff and head coach Mike Smith have shared this mantra of drafting the core of the team and developing the "in-house talent" into capable starters for bargain contracts. Fifteen of the Falcons' 22 consistent starters last year were draft picks and 10 of the 15 came to Atlanta after Dimitroff took control in 2008. The releases of Michael Turner, Dunta Robinson and John Abraham frees up three starting jobs, three roster spots and, more importantly, the combined savings will give \$15.9 million plus an additional \$2.4 million after the NFL raised the salary cap to \$123 million.

"I think there are some solid core guys in the middle rounds this year," said Dimitroff.

NEW DEALS ...

With some breathing room under the salary cap, the Falcons can now look to reach deals and keep their top free agents. Sam Baker, Brent Grimes and William Moore are priorities right now and should benefit from the extra spending money. It looks like the Falcons

will re-sign Baker, but Moore is going to have a much stronger market when free agency opens. Moore was Atlanta's second-round pick in the 2009 draft and is coming off a Pro Bowl season. Grimes was out with an Achilles injury for all of the 2012-13 campaign and has had two injury-plagued seasons in a row that enable him to be re-signed at a lower price.

The greatest consideration will be on building the defensive side before the season starts. Replacing John Abraham, who holds the franchise record for most career sacks with 68.5, is just one of the necessary steps. The Falcons only had five linebackers on their active roster last season and Mike Peterson is likely going to either sign with a new team or retire. If the draft does not offer a capable linebacker or a free-agent stud like Oakland's 28-year-old Philip Wheeler could be on the Falcons' shopping list. Wheeler played at Georgia Tech and played at Shaw High School in Columbus.

The Falcons have had internal discussions about defensive end Osi Umenyiora who is expected to be dealt a contract in the ballpark of four years, \$20 million.

Sager can be reached at csager@scoreatl.com.

CHOP SHOP



Braves display power early in spring

By Fletcher Proctor

Any questions regarding whether the new-est Braves would be able to showcase their home run abilities this year were quickly answered in the team's first few spring training games as the team has been raking early and often. Through the team's first 11 spring training games, the team has crushed 16 home runs with right fielder Jason Heyward depositing three over the fence. Among the new faces going deep, Justin Upton blasted a pair of long balls to mark his debut while brother, B.J., has joined the "going deep" club. To the surprise of many, new third baseman Chris Johnson has also gone deep twice in his first 19 at bats in eight games. Tyler Pastornicky, Freddie Freeman, Juan Francisco, Dan Uggla, Joe Terdoslavich, Evan Gattis and Jordan Parraz have also homered.

With the home runs of power hitters come the misses, and Uggla leads the team with 11 strikeouts in his first 21 at bats over eight games. B.J. Upton has six while Jordan Schafer has struck out five times. Several other players have at least four strikeouts, but according to GM Frank Wren, the strikeouts shouldn't be a concern.

"We know we're going to strike out," said Wren in a radio interview earlier this

week. "But you look at some of the studies, and our guys have seen them, and there's not a direct correlation with strikeouts and offense."

ROSTER BATTLES ...

While the starting lineup is pretty much locked in for 2013, there is still plenty of battling going on for the final few roster spots. Terdoslavich had 11 hits in his first 17 at bats of the spring with an OPS of 1.514 through 11 games. While first base and left field are blocked with young talent, Terdoslavich is making a case for the fifth outfield spot as Schafer is losing his grip on the slot thanks to high strikeout numbers and sub-par stolen base numbers. Gattis is also making a strong case to be the third catcher for the team should the team decide to carry a third catcher. He could also be sent down then recalled for use as a DH when the team goes to interleague play. Pastornicky has made a case for the infield supersub with his bat over Ramiro Pena, who many outsiders believed had the inside track coming into spring thanks to his glove. Blake DeWitt appears to be out of the race.

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GWINNETT GLADIATORS



Glads win two, stay atop South Division

By Joe Deighton

The Gwinnett Gladiators remained the top team in the ECHL's South Division this week, earning four points with wins over South Carolina and Florida. With 73 points, the Glads have a three-point advantage over second-place Greenville. The downside to the division lead is that Greenville has two games in hand over Gwinnett. The division title could still come down to the last game against the second-place Road Warriors at The Arena at Gwinnett Center on March 30.

OT WINNER ...

An unlikely hero helped the Gladiators to an important 2-1 road win in overtime over South Carolina. Rookie forward Yuri Bouharevich scored just 2:38 into the extra period to give Gwinnett the victory. It was Bouharevich's second goal of the year and his first game-winner. The unsung forward has played 21 games in 2012-13, tallying five points, while taking 28 shots on goal.

Evan Bloodoff tied the game in the second period on a goal that snapped South Carolina's shutout streak. The Stingrays had not given up a goal in the past three games before Bloodoff's equalizer.

It was the fifth overtime win for Gwin-

nett this season. Their OT record this year stands at 5-3, with one shootout loss.

UP AND DOWN ...

Bloodoff was called up to the AHL's Portland Pirates for one game and was promptly sent back to Gwinnett the next day. Bloodoff did not score a point in the Pirates' 7-1 loss to Providence, but did manage to finish with a plus-1 rating.

It turned out to be a good transaction for Gwinnett, because Bloodoff did not miss any games for the Gladiators. The forward has been one of the hottest players of late, scoring a goal in five consecutive games and putting up seven points in the last six games. The 22-year-old has 35 points (18 goals, 17 assists) in 42 games with the Gladiators this year.

THIS WEEK ...

The Glads hit the road this week for three games out West. After playing in Utah, Gwinnett will travel to Idaho to play two games against the playoff-bound Steelheads. Idaho and Gwinnett split a two-game set back in late January. With a tentative three-point division lead, these will be two important games for the Gladiators.

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TRIVIA ANSWER

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