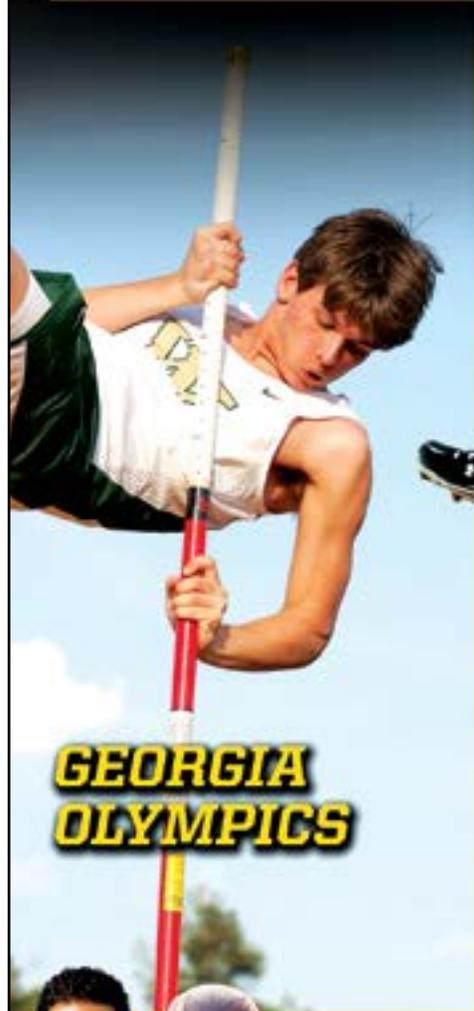


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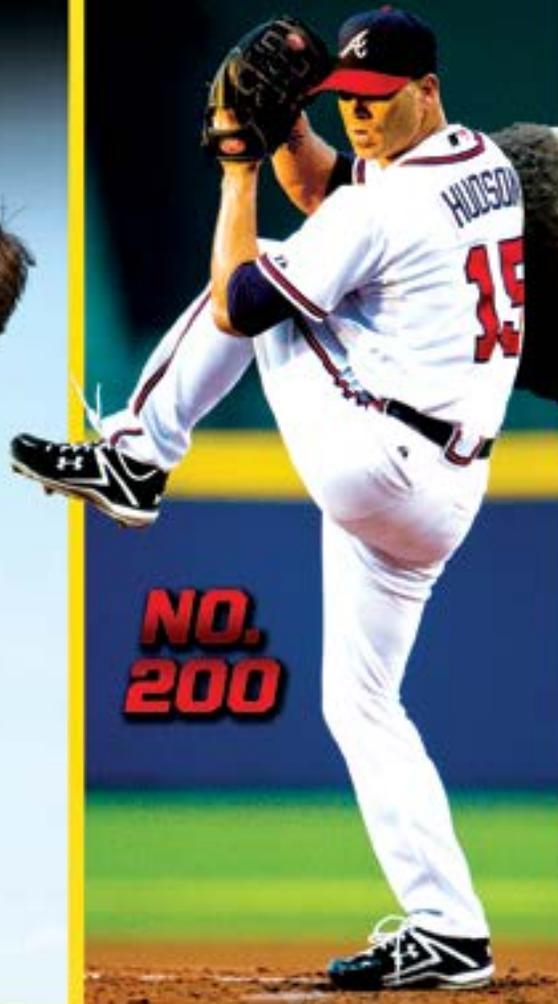
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**CAN'T MISS
THIS WEEK**

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- 5** Ricky Dimon looks at what has worked and what hasn't for the Hawks in their first-round playoff series against Indiana.
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- 8-11** We present the latest rankings for high school baseball, lacrosse and soccer.

**TEAM SCOOP
AND VOICES**

*COVER DESIGN BY DJ GALBIATI BLALOCK
 COVER PHOTOS COURTESY OF JON BARASH,
 POUYA DIANAT/ATLANTA BRAVES AND BRIAN L. MORGAN.*

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**SHOT OF THE
WEEK...**

WHITewater RISING: Freshman Alyssa Skorich and Whitewater are ranked No. 1 in Class AAAAA and are looking to win their first girls soccer state title since 2007. Region 4-rival McIntosh has won two state titles in a row and remains a roadblock for the Wildcats. Photo courtesy of Susan Jordan.

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CUP OF JOE



NFL Draft brings its usual excitement

By Joe Deighton

The NFL Draft has annually become one of the most anticipated and drama-filled events on the sports calendar. It is bigger and more important in my mind than the World Series, NBA Finals and possibly even the Super Bowl. The reason is that teams have a chance to make their mark that could impact the next 10 years.

It is also as big of a night for college football fans as it is for NFL fans. For instance my dad, a graduate of Central Michigan University, celebrated like the Chippewas won the national championship when CMU offensive tackle Eric Fisher was taken first overall by the Kansas City Chiefs. SEC fans bragged about how nearly every other pick was from a player from their conference.

The NFL Draft proved, once again, to

be the ultimate reality show. Every draft is exciting, but 2013 turned out to be one of the most captivating drafts ever. For the first time since 1963, no running backs were chosen in the first round. Instead, the first round was loaded with offensive and defensive linemen. Three offensive tackles were taken within the first four picks and a player who started football only three years ago (Ezekiel Ansah) was taken with the fifth pick. Three straight picks were taken from defending national champion Alabama. Quarterback Geno Smith slid from possibly the second pick all the way to the second round after Jacksonville passed on him.

Trades came fast and furious throughout the entire three days, but especially on the first night. The Falcons made another shrewd move,

as they usually do, and traded up from pick 30 to pick 22 and took cornerback Desmond Trufant from Washington. Trufant has chosen to wear No. 21, just like Deion Sanders did in a Falcons uniform. If he can do half the things that Deion did in his Hall-of-Fame career, the Falcons will have made the right choice.

DOUBLE CENTURY ...

Tim Hudson had one of the greatest all-around games any pitcher has ever had on Tuesday night against the Washington Nationals. Not only did he become the fifth Atlanta Braves pitcher to win 200 games, he also hit a double, a home run and scored two runs in the 8-1 victory. Only one other pitcher in Major League history had ever hit a home run in his 200th win: Bob Lemon of the Cleveland Indians in 1956. Lemon would win just seven more games in his Hall-of-Fame career. Hudson figures to win well beyond seven more games the way he is pitching this year.

Hudson pitched another gem to defeat the Nationals, allowing three hits, one run and striking out six in seven innings. The 37-year old has been one of the most consistent pitchers in this generation and has been under-appreciated in his time in Atlanta. Hudson has struggled through injuries and has not lived up to the likes of Maddux, Smoltz and Glavine in the minds of many Braves fans. Earning his 200th win shows how good the right-hander from Auburn

has been. Earning his first playoff win in an Atlanta Braves uniform has eluded Hudson thus far, but with the way the Braves have been playing to start the season, he may have that opportunity come October.

PLAYOFF DUEL ...

The Atlanta Hawks looked lethargic, uninterested and ready to be swept in the first two games of the NBA Playoffs against the Indiana Pacers. A lack of defense, shooting and boxing out for rebounds cursed Atlanta after dropping the first two games in Indianapolis.

That all changed with a return trip to the "Highlight Factory." The Hawks looked like a team that could challenge for a title at times in Game 3 and 4. Josh Smith took over in Game 4, scoring 29 points and grabbing 11 rebounds in leading the Hawks to a tied series.

Basketball people say that a series does not start until a road team wins. This series might go seven games without a road team winning the way things have gone in the first round. If the Hawks ever want to get over the hump and play in the Eastern Conference Finals for the first time ever, they have to win on the road. The Hawks need to win this series in order to legitimize their season. If they don't beat the Pacers, it will go down as another mediocre season among many in Atlanta Hawks history.

Deighton can be reached at jdeighton@scoreatl.com.

RYAN'S RANT



Hawks looking to take the next step

By Ryan Caiafa

Regardless of the outcome of the Hawks-Pacers first-round series, the Hawks have already exceeded the expectations of everyone who predicted the team to bow out of the playoffs without a struggle or not even make the postseason at all. Largely constructed of players on the last year of their contracts, including Josh Smith and Kyle Korver, this is the first and last run for this group of outcasts who were acquired by Danny Ferry with the purpose of creating cap space this summer to go after free agents such as Dwight Howard and Chris Paul.

In a perfect world, the Hawks could get one or both of them, but it's widely expected that both of those players will be re-signing with their current teams in Los Angeles. Putting the pipe dream of landing the two highly-

prized free agents aside, Ferry needs to focus on putting the right pieces together around Al Horford, who is having his most productive season as a Hawk. That could mean bringing back Smith and Jeff Teague, who have years of history with Horford, or maybe even looking at guys like Brandon Jennings, who is a restricted free agent, or J.R. Smith, the reigning NBA Sixth Man of the Year. Beyond Howard and Paul, there isn't another superstar in this class, but there are players who can be immediate impact players in Atlanta.

If the Hawks decide to offer Smith his max contract and are unable to add an additional max player, Ferry could utilize the remaining cap space to construct a roster similar to the Denver Nuggets, who have achieved a great deal of success without a

superstar since trading Carmelo Anthony to the Knicks by stockpiling depth at every position. The key for Ferry will be to avoid overpaying for players simply just to attract other players to Atlanta. Guys like Jennings and Andrew Bynum, who didn't even play last season for the Sixers, will try to command max money but have absolutely no business getting it, which is the trap the Hawks absolutely cannot fall into. Another crippling contract by another underachieving player will keep the franchise hamstrung for years to come. With plenty of options for Ferry, it's time for him to prove his worth by creating a perennial contender.

MAKING HISTORY ...

In a world largely devoid of acceptance to such situations, former Atlanta Hawks center Jason Collins is hoping to change that. In an interview with Sports Illustrated, Collins became the first active professional athlete in a major sport to come out as gay, creating headlines outside of the sports world. While it's still unfortunate that society hasn't entirely accepted these instances, Collins should be commended for having the courage to look past those who have yet to accept homosexuality in the sports world and also take a monumental weight off his shoulders. A 12-year veteran of the league, Collins hopes to

prolong his career by making it onto another NBA roster next season.

NATIONALS' DEBT ...

After a tough road trip that ended with a sweep at the hands of the Detroit Tigers, the Braves returned home to take on their N.L. East rivals, the Washington Nationals. After a 3-2 win in the first game of the series, Tim Hudson took the mound on Tuesday once again attempting to win his 200th career game. Despite already receiving ample run support, Hudson further helped his own cause in becoming the second pitcher to hit a home run while also recording his 200th career victory. Hudson has been a model of consistency for the Braves, posting double-digit wins in each of his complete seasons and keeping an ERA below 4.00.

He is also considered a role model not only in the clubhouse, but also off the field. The team has cooled off since its 12-1 start but continues to play well against the N.L. East, particularly the Nationals, who through Tuesday's game had yet to beat the Braves this season. With Brian McCann and Jason Heyward still out, it will sure be interesting to see how the Braves move forward upon their returns.

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NBA PLAYOFFS



Hawks once again locked in first-round battle

By Ricky Dimon



One of the beautiful aspects of playoffs—in any sport—is that anything can happen. Although the 2013 Miami Heat team might win this year's championship 95 times out of 100, the NBA is no exception. This is no longer an 82-game regular season, when the league's best obviously have plenty of time to assert themselves. These are best-of-seven series, in which underdogs have a fighting chance and memorable moments will likely come from places you least expect.

HYPE-LESS ...

Take, for instance, the first-round showdown between the Atlanta Hawks and Indiana Pacers. On paper, it was—outside of the two cities involved—the least interesting of the eight series. Lopsided matchups like Spurs-Lakers and Heat-Bucks at least featured marquee teams and superstar players. Knicks-Celtics involves two historic franchises, Warriors-Nuggets gives us high-paced basketball in some of the league's best atmospheres, Thunder-Rockets has Kevin Durant, Clippers-Grizzlies has Lob City, and Bulls-Nets is a knock-down, drag-out, up-for-grabs fight that just so happened to deliver the best game of the season (Game 4 in Chicago). Hawks-Pacers has none of that. In fact, it was not even supposed to be competi-

tive; not with the way Atlanta stumbled to the finish line of the regular season and certainly not with the way the first two contests progressed.

A matchup between a No. 3 and No. 6 seed may be intriguing when you look at the sheer numbers, but Indiana made a mockery of things in Game 1 and Game 2 at Bankers Life Fieldhouse. The opener on April 21 saw the Pacers lead by eight points after one quarter and by 15 through three en route to a dominant 107-90 win. More of the same continued last Wednesday, when the home team led from the three-minute mark of the first quarter until the final buzzer as the Hawks succumbed 113-98 without much of a fight.

But the one-sidedness did not last long. When the teams headed to Atlanta for Game 3 and Game 4, the intensity of both the Hawks and the series as a whole ratcheted up. Making an emphatic, bounce-back statement last Saturday, Atlanta got on the scoreboard with a 90-69 blowout. Al Horford poured in a playoff career-high 26 points to go along with 16 rebounds and the Hawks used an 18-0 first-half run to all but end any suspense. They went on a 43-17 first-half run to even the series on Monday with a 102-91 victory. Indiana managed to muster a brief second-half comeback in Game 4, but it could not

entirely overcome Josh Smith's 29-point performance.

This was the only Eastern Conference tilt in which the first three games all went in the home team's favor. As it stands now, heading into Wednesday night's action, it is the only series in which no road team has earned a 'W.' Only Clippers vs. Grizzlies joined ATL-IND in lasting more than three games without a road victory and that trend ended on Tuesday when Memphis prevailed in L.A. Don't look now, but when every other series is either done and dusted or at least on the verge of being clinched, Hawks vs. Pacers has seven games written all over it.

A DIFFERENT SERIES ...

It was a total team effort, from the head coach down to the reserves, as Atlanta made something out of nothing against Indiana. After two disappointing losses, Larry Drew tinkered with his lineup to perfection mainly to focus on Paul George. Filling in for the injured Danny Granger as the Pacers' team leader, George had run roughshod over the Hawks throughout his two home games. He scored 23 points in the opener and 27 in Game 2 on 11-of-21 shooting. Enter a bigger Atlanta lineup at Philips Arena, with Johan Petro starting at center and Smith playing the three—and guarding George—instead of the four. Power forward Ivan Johnson logged 27 minutes in Game 3 after seeing just 10 minutes of action in Game 2. Fellow power forward Anthony Tolliver played a total of 36 minutes in Atlanta's two home games having gotten just six in the first two Indiana dates. With Smith on George, the Pacers' go-to guy made four of 11 shots for 16 points last Saturday before scoring 21 points on 6-of-16 shooting in Game 4.

"He's a really good player," Smith told the Atlanta Journal Constitution when asked about George. "He's an All-Star. He's an up-and-coming young talent in the league. To be able to take on that challenge is always challenging and I like to be able to guard someone who has a complex game like him. I get up for it.... We've been more successful with that lineup from the beginning. I think what picked it up was our energy, our intensity and our effort."

The Hawks also picked up the pace on offense, producing far more transition baskets in their two home games while also exploiting George's inability to defend Smith in the post. After tallying 14 points and six assists in Game 3, J-Smoove bullied his way to the free-throw line 16 times during his 29-point performance and also grabbed 11 rebounds in

Game 4. He received help from the Creighton connection of Tolliver and Kyle Korver (coming off the bench after starting twice in Indiana). Tolliver went 3-for-3 from downtown while Korver drained five threes and finished with 19 points. Johnson (seven points, seven rebounds, two steals in Game 3) also played key minutes in a reserve role in both home contests, especially on the defensive end.

TWO OUT OF THREE ...

"We've been aware what the big lineup has meant for us and it certainly has had its good moments," Drew told the AJC. "It hasn't always worked out that way. Certainly, in making that adjustment, it's had an effect."

The third-year head man added that he regretted not calling for the bigger lineup earlier in the series. "Yeah, I do wish," Drew admitted. Of course, there is still time for his crucial adjustment to do a lot more than simply tie the series. It can ultimately win what is now a best-of-three clash. A pivotal Game 5 was played on Wednesday in Indiana (results not available at press time) before Game 6 on Friday night at the Highlight Factory. If necessary, Game 7 would be on Sunday back at Bankers Life Fieldhouse.

Photos courtesy of Jon Barash. Dimon can be reached at rdimon@scoreatl.com.



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BY CRAIG SAGER II

WHOS HOT

THUMBS UP TO THE SUN BELT



NFL draftees

California might have led the 2013 draft with its 28 former high school players drafted, but numbers relative to population show that if California produced NFL players at the same rate as South Carolina, Georgia and Louisiana it would have had more than 100. The number of Georgia (19 draftees), South Carolina (13) and Louisiana (11) draftees is remarkable.

The Alpha conference

The SEC has won the last seven national championships and a huge advantage of NFL talent is responsible. Thirty-two players out of the SEC West were drafted. That number surpassed the ACC's total, which was the next highest conference total at 31. With more than twice as much NFL talent as the next best conference, the SEC remains hot.

Tim Hudson

The Braves' veteran moved to 3-1 on the season and notched win No. 200 Tuesday against the Nationals, all while doubling and hitting the third homer of his career. After the 8-1 victory over Washington, Hudson is now batting .429. He is 155-6 in games when he has gotten four or more runs of support, and his bat has helped the cause.

Over-looked prospects

Sprayberry's Brynden Trawick, Walton's Chase Thomas and Lassiter duo Philip Lutzenkirchen and Camden Wentz are Cobb County natives that went undrafted by the NFL. All four free agents were signed, however. Thomas (Saints), Lutzenkirchen (Rams), Wentz (Vikings) and Trawick (Ravens) will look to bounce back from their draft-day letdowns.

Bricks

The foul line has been a problem for the Hawks this postseason as they continue to battle with the Pacers. Atlanta is shooting just 59 percent from the foul line in the first round. Josh Smith is shooting 50 percent from the field this series and stuffing the stat sheet, but through four games Smith is at just 48 percent from the foul line.

High-priced sluggers

As hot as the NL East-leading Braves have been, the bats of Dan Uggla and B.J. Upton remain ice cold. Uggla sits at .169 with four homers and Upton is at .143 with three round-trippers. With Jason Heyward out for a couple more weeks after having an appendectomy, Uggla and Upton need to get on track.



WHOS NOT

THUMBS DOWN TO SLUMPS

SCORE LIST

BY BRIAN JONES

- 1** **NEW FALCONS:** The NFL Draft is over and the Falcons addressed some needs as well as adding depth to the roster. Cornerbacks Desmond Trufant and Robert Alford can see a lot of playing time this season. But the pick I liked was defensive end Malliciah Goodman from Clemson who had a monster of a game against LSU in the Chick-fil-A Bowl.
- 2** **DRAFT DAWGS:** It was also a good weekend for the Bulldogs as eight players were selected in the NFL Draft. Jarvis Jones was taken at No. 17 by the Steelers and Alec Ogletree followed right behind Jones as he was drafted by the Rams at No. 30. But I think Cornelius Washington will surprise people with the Chicago Bears.
- 3** **HIGH SCHOOL PLAYOFFS:** Hold on to your hats, helmets and cleats because the spring high school sports postseason is underway. Soccer is onto Round 2 while baseball will begin Friday. And let's not forget about lacrosse as both boys and girls kick things off next week. Get all the scores and brackets at ScoreATL.com and AJC.com.
- 4** **PLAYOFF FRIDAY:** The Hawks are also taking part in the playoffs and Philips Arena should be rocking Friday as Josh Smith and company will face the Indiana Pacers in the sixth game of the first-round series. The Hawks looked dominant in both of their home games and there is no reason why that trend would stop Friday night.
- 5** **NEW-LOOK STADIUM:** There have been reports this week about what the new Falcons stadium will look like as concept photos of the new stadium have been released this week. Architecture 360 is the lead architect for the project and they produced some interesting designs for the new facility.

CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS

BY CRAIG SAGER II

- 2** Pitchers to hit a home run during their 200th win: Tim Hudson (2013) and Bob Lemon (1956)
- 19** Former 5-star athletes drafted in the 2013 NFL Draft
- 30** Former unstarred recruits drafted in the 2013 NFL Draft
- 2** Series the Hawks have won without home-court advantage since coming to Atlanta in 1968
- 13** Straight games the Pacers have lost in Atlanta, dating back to 2006
- 22** Made field goals and total turnovers in Game 3 by the Pacers
- 3** Consecutive years Falcons' seventh-round pick safety Kamal Ismael led his college team (UCF) in tackles
- 1** Total interceptions by Desmond Trufant during his senior season at Washington
- 8** Georgia Bulldogs taken in the 2013 draft, matching the school record set in 2002
- 0** Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets drafted this year

TRIVIA QUESTION

Dating to last season, how many consecutive times had the Braves defeated Washington through Tuesday, April 30?

Answer on Page 14

SANITY AT LAST

"Energy, effort and if we play together with those three things, we are a pretty good basketball team."

- Hawks forward Josh Smith after the Game 4 win over Indiana that tied the series at 2.

OUR TWO CENTS

Do you follow spring high school sports? Do you enjoy baseball, golf, lacrosse, soccer, tennis or track and field? We've got you covered.

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There is no better place to be for GHSA spring sports coverage than AJC.com or ScoreATL.com.



Successful programs add mystique to meet

By Fletcher Proctor

As much as anyone can count on beautiful blooms and increasing temperatures as a sure sign that May has arrived, one can also expect Georgia's top athletes to make their way to Jefferson to take part in the Georgia Olympics. The GHSA Track and Field state championships take place each and every year at Memorial Stadium in Jefferson, and after the decision was made to hold all of the class championships at one site, the event rightfully earned the nickname "Georgia Olympics." Folks in attendance can count on seeing new state records as well as performances worthy of all-american distinction and many of those performances have come from some of the same programs year after year. With so many amazing performers taking part in the Georgia Olympics each year, it is incredible that some programs have managed to rise above and stand out from the rest.

Programs such as Southwest DeKalb,

Landmark Christian, Carrollton and Stephenson have annually taken home both individual and team titles as they are four of the most prestigious programs in the state.

Southwest DeKalb has captured eight GHSA titles since 1987 with the program's heyday lasting throughout most of the 1990s. The Panthers won the Class AAAA title in 1990 before winning back-to-back crowns in 1993 and 1994 and then three straight from 1995 through 1997. Southwest DeKalb's most recent team title came in 2007.

During the incredible run from 1995 through 1997, the Panthers had two of the greatest track and field athletes ever to grace Memorial Stadium in Angelo Taylor and Terrance Trammell. Taylor won the Morris M. Bryan Memorial Trophy as the Georgia Olympics' most outstanding performer in 1995 and Trammell captured the prize in 1997. Taylor earned the award after earning

more points than any other AAAA athlete that year, a feat he repeated in 1996 as he would win the Herman J. Stegeman Award. Trammell outscored the rest of AAAA in 1997 en route to the Morris M. Bryan award. Kelly Carter (1986, 1987), Hason Graham (1990) and Corey Taylor (1999) also earned the prize during Southwest DeKalb's incredible run under Raymond Bonner and Napoleon Cobb. Several of Trammell's individual class records still stand today. The Southwest DeKalb program has also boasted such incredible athletes like Kim Carter, Chris Morris and Malcolm Brock over the years.

LANDMARK ACCOMPLISHMENTS ...

When the Landmark Christian Academy program is discussed, many people immediately think of legendary coach Bill Thorn. An honorary meet director for the 37th Georgia Olympics, Thorn will be forever linked to the Landmark Christian School. He not only helped found the track and cross country programs, but he is one of the founding members of the school. Under Thorn, the boys track and field program won eight titles between 1996 and 2008 with two additional runner-up finish-

es. His streak of seven straight state titles from 1996-2002 is the longest stretch in the modern era. Thorn has had his share of tremendous athletes including Nathan Kosibi and Matt Day, the latter winning the Morris M. Bryan Memorial Trophy in 1996, but Thorn never once had one athlete win the Herman J. Stegeman Award for collecting the most points in the class. Thorn won his titles on the strength of the team, something that helped him capture so many team titles in a highly individualized sport. Kosibi's 3200-meter run in 1999 was one for the ages and Day's 1600-meter run in 4:17.02 was a remarkable feat in 1996, the fastest time in the single-A classification.

Stephenson has plenty of history at the Georgia Olympics. The Jaguars under Don Sellers were major players in the early 2000s, winning the Class AAAAA title in 2002. Stephenson featured Michael Grant, who won the 200-meter dash in 2003 and the 100-meter dash in 2003 and 2004. He also took home the Class AAAAA Herman J. Stegeman Award in 2003. Sellers has also coached Joshua Walker and several relay teams to not just state titles but also Georgia Olympics top performances.

Continued on page 8 ...

Continued from page 7...

UNTOUCHABLE TROJANS ...

Any discussion of the Georgia Olympics and boys track and field in the state of Georgia isn't complete without talking about the Carrollton program. Carrollton has won the last three Class AAA team titles and won three of four from 2002-2005. Unlike many other programs in the state, though, Carrollton has staying power. Carrollton captured its first title in 1955 and won seven total from 1955 through 1963, including six straight at one point. After managing to win just one state crown from 1964 through 1979, the program returned with a resounding fury, snagging seven in the 1980s. During the 1990s, Carrollton won five titles (three AAA and two AA). In recent years, standouts such as Reggie Brown, Robert Kondelin, Montrell McClendon, John Wynn, Alex Shell, Willie Smith, Arthur Boykin, Jerome Winters, Steve Hicks, Justin Jones, O'Darine Bassett and Jonathan Jones have suited up for the Trojans and their storied program. Head coach Craig Musselwhite has led the team to six team titles and was an assistant for three other title squads. Musselwhite knows what it takes to churn out state champions as he has helped more than 50 athletes earn individual titles and he has overseen countless other relay teams.

Two Carrollton athletes have won the Morris M. Bryan Memorial Trophy; Shell (1986) and O'Darine Bassett (2004). Jones didn't win the Bryan Trophy last year but he

was once again the AAA Herman J. Stegeman Award winner.

Southwest DeKalb, Stephenson, Carrollton and Landmark Christian aren't the only legendary programs that have dominated the Georgia high school boys track and field championships. Many other programs have made their mark at the Georgia Olympics. Under the direction of Jamie Glover, Sandy Creek won back-to-back Class AAA state titles in 2007 and 2008. Christian Taylor certainly helped the Patriots' cause with a pair of individual titles in the triple jump for both of those teams. His championship leap in 2008 of 52' 6.5" still stands as the the best mark not just in AAA history but also in Georgia Olympics history. Athens Christian has captured three Class A titles since 2007, including the last two while Cedar Shoals won three from 2002-2005. Fitzgerald captured four straight titles from 1987 through 1990 and Griffin won six titles between 1976 and 1985.

DeKalb and Carroll aren't the only dominant counties at the Georgia Olympics in Jefferson. Gwinnett County has proven that it is great over the last four years in the state's largest classification. Brookwood has won two titles in the last three years while Parkview and Peachtree Ridge each have a title during the current successful Gwinnett run. Since the late 1990s, Cobb County has been a major player with McEachern earning at least a share of three titles and Marietta earning at least a share of four titles in Class AAAAA while Wheeler earned the top team

prize in 2003. Last year, Kell brought the Class AAAAA boys title back to Cobb County.

With reclassification, many old rivalries were ended while new rivalries were created. It will be interesting this year to follow along as many of the DeKalb County powers compete against one another for not just county bragging rights, but also state bragging rights. In years past M.L. King and Stephenson runners wouldn't see Tucker or Southwest DeKalb standouts at the Georgia Olympics, but each of those former team champions can meet for the AAAAA title along with 2001 champion Mays and 2009 champion Miller Grove. Elbert County, the 2011 AA champion, will now compete in a suddenly-wide open Class AAA after Carrollton moved to AA. Only Chapel

Hill (2004), St. Pius X (2006) and Swainsboro (2007) have won titles since 2000.

Will a new program rise to the forefront and lay the groundwork for a future dynasty at these Georgia Olympics? In 40 years will we look back and say this is when a particular program started its incredible run? Will a familiar program add another thrilling chapter to its glorious legacy? While it can be comforting to see familiar programs do well, it is a treat for any track and field enthusiast to sit in Memorial Stadium and watch these athletes compete for the ultimate prize: a spot in the fabled lore of the Georgia High School Association's Georgia Olympics.

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



Matt Day, a 1996 Georgia Olympics Outstanding Performer Award Winner & three-time Best Performance Award Winner, shown here running for Landmark Christian and Belmont University.

BOYS

SOCCER RANKINGS

CLASS AAAAAA

- | | |
|----------------|----------------------|
| 1. Lassiter | 6. South Forsyth |
| 2. Centennial | 7. Brookwood |
| 3. East Coweta | 8. Berkmar |
| 4. Lambert | 9. Collins Hill |
| 5. Harrison | 10. Central Gwinnett |

CLASS AAAAA

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. McIntosh | 6. Gainesville |
| 2. Glynn Academy | 7. Heritage-Conyers |
| 3. Houston County | 8. Starr's Mill |
| 4. Allatoona | 9. Hardaway |
| 5. Clarke Central | 10. Pope |

CLASS AAAA

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Dalton | 6. Spalding |
| 2. Carrollton | 7. Alexander |
| 3. Johnson-Gainesville | 8. Grady |
| 4. Chestatee | 9. Southeast Whitfield |
| 5. Northwest Whitfield | 10. Marist |

CLASS AAA

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. St. Pius X | 6. North Murray |
| 2. West Hall | 7. Jackson |
| 3. Cartersville | 8. East Hall |
| 4. Blessed Trinity | 9. Dawson County |
| 5. Woodward Acad. | 10. North Hall |

CLASS AA

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 1. GAC | 6. Thomasville |
| 2. Westminster | 7. Lovett |
| 3. Westside-Augusta | 8. Calhoun |
| 4. Benedictine | 9. Coosa |
| 5. Murray County | 10. Wesleyan |

CLASS A

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Paideia | 6. First Presbyterian |
| 2. Atlanta Intl. | 7. Savannah Christian |
| 3. Hebron Christian | 8. Fellowship Chr. |
| 4. Pacelli | 9. Pinecrest Academy |
| 5. Holy Innocents' | 10. Pace Academy |

HAWKS VS PACERS



RANKINGS SUMMARY

SCORE
ATLANTA

Pre-playoff rankings released

By Score Atlanta

In boys soccer, Paideia grabbed the top ranking in Class A with a 6-1 win over former No. 1 Atlanta International School. Pace Academy inserted itself back into the rankings, by winning five of its last seven games, falling only to Paideia and AIS. Pope made the Class AAAAA rankings after racking six straight wins and is joined by a 14-2 Hardaway team. Marist was on the brink of class AAAA, however a Region 6-AAAA title proved enough to sneak Marist in at 7-9-2 due to the difficulty of schedule. GAC remains No. 1 in Class AA after falling to No. 2 Westminster, which handed the Spartans their lone loss of the season.

GIRLS SOCCER ...

Class AAAAA No. 1 Harrison hopes to hold court against a field of ranked opponents. In Class AAAAA, Whitewater remains the favorite but could be pinned against defending AAA-champion Allatoona in the quarterfinals. Class AAAA could bring a No. 1 vs. No. 3 matchup in the Elite Eight between Marist and Locust Grove, while No. 2 Heritage-Catoosa, No. 4 Cairo, No. 6 Columbus and No. 7 Grady all fight for a quarter of the bracket.

LACROSSE ...

The Mill Creek boys slid to No. 6 after losing to Alpharetta and Lassiter climbed to No. 1 after a win over No. 9 Roswell. In Class A-AAAAA, No. 1 Northview survived Cambridge and No. 5 Blessed Trinity last week to remain on top.

In girls Class AAAAA, No. 1 Milton beat No. 10 Etowah and No. 3 Walton handed No. 8 Lassiter a 14-5 defeat. In Class A-AAAA, No. 2 Northview topped No. 3 Cambridge 12-5, giving Cambridge its first loss of the season. No. 4 Kell knocked Blessed Trinity from the rankings.

BASEBALL ...

McEachern grabbed No. 1 in Class AAAAA after posting just one loss since March 13. Parkview is also rolling, and six straight wins following a spring break trip to Florida ascended the Panthers to No. 2. In Class AAAAA, Starr's Mill enters the top five in the midst of six straight wins. In Class AAAA, Marist jumped to No. 2 after Columbus and Alexander both took losses. Wesleyan fell out of the Class AA rankings after a slew of losses and George Walton Academy took over No. 1 in Class A-Private after a win over Eagle's Landing Christian on Monday.

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GIRLS

SOCCER RANKINGS

CLASS AAAAA

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. Harrison | 6. Brookwood |
| 2. Parkview | 7. Grayson |
| 3. Mill Creek | 8. Lassiter |
| 4. Walton | 9. Collins Hill |
| 5. Lambert | 10. Lowndes |

CLASS AAAAA

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Whitewater | 6. Starr's Mill |
| 2. Lakeside-DeKalb | 7. Northview |
| 3. Glynn Academy | 8. Flowery Branch |
| 4. North Paulding | 9. Greenbrier |
| 5. McIntosh | 10. Northgate |

CLASS AAAA

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------|
| 1. Marist | 6. Columbus |
| 2. Heritage-Catoosa | 7. Grady |
| 3. Locust Grove | 8. Chestatee |
| 4. Cairo | 9. Alexander |
| 5. Veterans | 10. Upson-Lee |

CLASS AAA

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. St. Pius X | 6. Dawson County |
| 2. Buford | 7. Lakeview-Ft. Ogl. |
| 3. Chapel Hill | 8. Ringgold |
| 4. Blessed Trinity | 9. Pike County |
| 5. Jackson County | 10. Washington County |

CLASS AA

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| 1. GAC | 6. Putnam County |
| 2. Westminster | 7. Vidalia |
| 3. Calhoun | 8. Bremen |
| 4. Oglethorpe County | 9. Dublin |
| 5. St. Vincent's Acad. | 10. Thomasville |

CLASS A

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. First Presb. Day | 6. Paideia |
| 2. Hebron Christian | 7. Calvary Day |
| 3. Mount Paran | 8. Providence Chr. |
| 4. Strong Rock Chr. | 9. Fellowship Chr. |
| 5. Holy Innocents' | 10. Eagle's Landing Chr. |

PLAYOFFS

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GEORGIA OLYMPICS



State meet requires invaluable volunteers

By Stephen Black

The people that work behind the scenes in any event are often unsung. They are always, however, vital to the execution of the event, no matter what type of event it may be.

The Georgia Olympics, or the GHSA boys track and field state championships, are no different, as several volunteers congregate every year at Jefferson High School to make sure the event runs as smoothly as Herschel Walker used to glide down the Dragons' track. Men and women with varying backgrounds and fields of expertise have donated their time to be there and many of these meet officials have been coming since the inception of the Georgia Olympics in 1972.

Some of the meet officials oversee specific events, such as the pole vault, while others have more of a general role in monitoring conduct and handing out awards.

One thing most of the meet officials have in common is they have been asked back by the Georgia Olympics for multiple renditions of the annual affair. One of those gentlemen is Scott Tolbert, a Jefferson attorney who has been volunteering at the Olympics since high school.

"I was a pole vaulter at Jefferson," said Tolbert. "I started officiating in 1984. Coach (Jack) Keen asked me to assist at the pole vault event and I did. After a few years of college and law school, that got me a little more comfortable in my abilities to be an official but, Coach Keen elevated me to head pole vault official so that's basically what I have been doing for 30 years."

Other officials, such as Bolling DuBose, Gary Glenn, Raymond Hobby, Dennis Horne, William Howington, Richard Patterson, Scott Tolbert, Mike Van Winkle and Jeff Whitfield have been working the Olympics as long or longer than Tolbert. All share one common reason for coming back: the enjoyment they get from officiating one of the most unique high school athletics events in the nation.

SERIOUS BUSINESS ...

While witnessing the games as well as famous guests, officials still have a job to do. And at the Georgia Olympics, they do theirs very well. Many track and field meets take place across the state throughout the school

year, but the state meet is by far the most important and credible, as state records can only be made and broken at the Georgia Olympics. "We know we've got good officials," said Glenn. "We know weather conditions are going to be monitored and we know things are going to be done right. We have people with vast experience running these things. One of the main things is seeing all the people of Jefferson coming together to do this, and they've been doing it since 1972."

Each official has his own role to play. While the meet official at the pole vault has a set of rules to enforce, another at the track has an entirely different set of things to look for.

"What you look for mostly is the tape on the pole, the weight on the pole," said Tolbert of his role as pole vault official. "A competitor is not supposed to have a pole that is lighter than his competition. That is something we look for. The ability for the competitors not to get hurt is something else to see as well."

Howington, meanwhile, has a different job at the triple jump pit.

"In the triple jump, you have to watch and make sure they don't take off in front of the toe board, and they have to land on the foot they took off from, and they have to step and then jump into the pit and they can't come out of the pit backwards," he explained.

Glenn is at the shot put, a short, but intense field event that sometimes causes competitors to lose control of their emotions.

"I remember one time we had to disqualify a kid for uttering an expletive very loudly twice, and the head meet official happened to be standing right by me when he did that," Glenn remembered. "It wasn't muttered under his breath, so the ruling was we had to

disqualify him."

Meet officials, regardless of their individual functions, have an important role in the Georgia Olympics each year. Without their honest eyes and judicious hearts, the Olympics would not mean as much to the people of Georgia. As it stands, however, the job the officials carry out each year remains one of the main reasons why the Georgia Olympics are one of the most respected meets in all of high school sports.

Photo courtesy of the Georgia Olympics. Black can be reached at sblack@scoreatl.com.



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BASEBALL RANKINGS

RELEASED ON APRIL 23

Class AAAAAA

1. McEachern
2. Parkview
3. Johns Creek
4. Milton
5. Walton
6. Marietta
7. Mill Creek
8. East Coweta
9. Grayson
10. South Gwinnett

Class AAAAA

1. Gainesville
2. Greenbrier
3. Loganville
4. Whitewater
5. Starr's Mill
6. Dunwoody
7. East Paulding
8. Winder-Barrow
9. McIntosh
10. Houston County

Class AAAA

1. Crisp County
2. Marist
3. Columbus
4. Eastside
5. Redan
6. Veterans
7. Stephens County
8. Alexander
9. Lanier
10. Griffin

Class AAA

1. Blessed Trinity
2. North Hall
3. Cartersville
4. Buford
5. Pierce County
6. St. Pius X
7. Woodward Acad.
8. Chapel Hill
9. North Oconee
10. Appling County

Class AA

1. Jefferson
2. Lovett
3. Westminster
4. Pepperell
5. Bremen
6. Benedictine
7. Berrien
8. Lamar County
9. Cook
10. Calhoun

Class A- Private

1. George Walton Aca.
2. ELCA
3. First Presbyterian
4. Mount Paran
5. Holy Innocents'

Class A- Public

1. Gordon Lee
2. ECI
3. Charlton County
4. Baconton Charter
5. Johnson County

LACROSSE RANKINGS

BOYS

GIRLS

RELEASED ON APRIL 28

Class AAAAAA

1. Lassiter
2. Milton
3. Centennial
4. North Gwinnett
5. Chattahoochee
6. Mill Creek
7. Lambert
8. Johns Creek
9. Roswell
10. Walton

Class A-AAAAA

1. Northview
2. Decatur
3. Allatoona
4. Westminster
5. Blessed Trinity
6. Holy Innocents'
7. Lovett
8. Whitefield Academy
9. McIntosh
10. Marist

Class AAAAAA

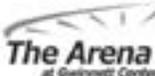
1. Milton
2. Centennial
3. Walton
4. Mill Creek
5. West Forsyth
6. Chattahoochee
7. Kennesaw Mountain
8. Lassiter
9. Peachtree Ridge
10. Etowah

Class A-AAAAA

1. Westminster
2. Northview
3. Cambridge
4. Kell
5. McIntosh
6. Starr's Mill
7. Woodward Academy
8. St. Pius X
9. Columbus
10. Marist



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BULLDOG BEAT



Record-tying eight Bulldogs drafted

By Chris Nieman

The Georgia Bulldogs did not disappoint in the 2013 NFL Draft. Head coach Mark Richt should be pleased as the Dawgs had eight players drafted, which tied a school record that stood since 2002. Two of the eight players were taken in the first round of the draft. All-American outside linebacker Jarvis Jones was selected by the Pittsburgh Steelers with the No. 17 overall pick. Jones brings an explosive, get-after-the-QB mentality that will fit like a glove in the Steel City. Inside linebacker Alec Ogletree was selected No. 30 overall by the St. Louis Rams. Ogletree is a versatile athlete who can make all the plays. Both players should make an immediate impact on the defensive side of the ball from the moment they step on the field.

DAY TWO ...

When day two began, many were surprised to see stalwart defensive lineman John Jenkins still on the board. After much deliberation, the 340-pound native of Meriden, Conn., was selected by the New Orleans Saints with the No. 82 overall pick in the third round. Jenkins will certainly provide the Saints with a rare combination of size, strength and athleticism to help bolster a defensive unit that allowed a league worst 147.6 rushing yards-per game in 2012. The Saints will need Jenkins to serve as an anchor on the defensive line just as

he did in Athens.

Two picks later, the Cincinnati Bengals selected safety Sean Williams with the No. 84 overall pick. Williams can make the big hit, a trait NFL teams salivate over.

FINAL DAY ...

On the final day of the draft, which consisted of rounds five, six and seven, four more Bulldogs were drafted. Cornerback Sanders Commings was selected in the fifth round by the Kansas City Chiefs with the No. 134 overall pick and wide receiver Tavarres King was drafted by the Denver Broncos at No. 161 overall.

In the sixth round, linebacker Cornelius Washington was taken by the Chicago Bears at No. 188 overall and safety Baccari Rambo was selected three picks later by the Washington Redskins at 191 to round out the Georgia Bulldogs that were drafted.

UNDRAFTED FREE AGENTS ...

Six more Georgia Bulldogs went undrafted, but were signed by NFL teams:

Marlon Brown (Houston), Kwame Geathers (San Diego), Mike Gilliard (St. Louis), Atry Jones (Jacksonville), Christian Robinson (St. Louis), Branden Smith (Tampa Bay).

Nieman can be reached at cnieman@scoreatl.com.

TECH BUZZ



Struggles continue on diamond for Jackets

By Ryan Caiafa

The Jackets traveled to Clemson this past weekend for another critical conference series against the Tigers. Tech was trying to turn things around after a tough stretch of games that saw them get swept at home by N.C. State and blown out at Turner Field by rival Georgia.

Unfortunately for coach Danny Hall's bunch, the misfortunes continued. The threat of rain caused the first two games of the series to be played in a doubleheader on Friday, with Jackets' ace Buck Farmer taking the mound in the afternoon contest. After getting off to a strong start, Farmer was unable to withstand the Tigers' offensive onslaught, giving up eight runs on nine hits as Clemson won 11-3. The night game started out much better for the Jackets, as they took a 2-0 advantage early, with Dusty Isaacs taking a no-hitter into the sixth inning. The Jackets took a 3-1 lead into the bottom of the ninth but after an RBI triple and fielder's choice double play allowed a run to score, the Tigers sent the game into extra innings.

Tech had a golden opportunity to score the go-ahead run in the 10th but Kyle Wren got caught in a run-down between third base and

home plate before being tagged out. Clemson loaded the bases in the 11th and walked off as winners after an RBI single with two outs. In the third game of the series, the Jackets received a record-tying performance from Zane Evans, who went 6-for-6, with two home runs and four RBIs as the Jackets used a 10-run fifth inning to take the final game 14-9, which ended their losing streak. Tech returns home next weekend for a series against non-conference foe Coastal Carolina.

NFL INVITES ...

While no Jackets were taken in the NFL Draft over the weekend, there will be five players who will get the opportunity to make a roster next season. T.J. Barnes, Izaan Cross, and Rod Sweeting signed free-agent deals with Barnes going to Jacksonville, Cross signing with Buffalo and Sweeting signing with New Orleans. Two other Jackets were invited to try out as free agents, with Tyler Morgan heading to Carolina and Orwin Smith going to Tampa Bay's camp.

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PANTHER PROWL



Panthers improving on lines of scrimmage

By Jay Underwood

With the Blue and White game in the rearview mirror, the Panthers have concluded spring practice and will rest until the summer. The transition to the FBS level is ongoing and cannot be completed in a season, but the Panthers look to be improving and making strides in the right direction.

LINE ITEM ...

While a lot of the players in the trenches sat out portions of the spring, coach Trent Miles sees depth developing behind the front lines. In order for the Panthers to compete with the teams at the next level they must improve along the line and that's what has happened this spring. Ulrick John has emerged as a leader and mentor to the younger offensive linemen and even while he has been sidelined with a shoulder injury, has helped the development of his unit.

The offensive line still does not know whom it will be protecting when fall arrives. All of the quarterbacks received snaps in the spring game, but the abbreviated offense didn't allow any of the competitors to separate themselves from the pack. Gerald Howse showed why coaches believe he can replace the production lost with Donald Russell's graduation. He is a hard-nosed running back who fights for

extra yards and runs tough between the tackles. This should allow whomever is under center this season to control a balanced attack, keeping the defense honest and preventing the offense from getting predictable.

NFL-BOUND ...

No Panthers heard their names called this past weekend for the NFL Draft, but that does not mean they will not be in camp this week with NFL teams. Two Panthers received calls after the draft inviting them to rookie mini-camp. Running back Donald Russell will attend camp with the hometown team, the Atlanta Falcons, and is looking to carve out a role as the third running back and a contributor on special teams. The Washington Redskins gave Emmanuel Ogbuehi, the Panthers tight end, a call and invited him to compete for a roster spot as the third tight end.

Former Panther Jake Muasau was re-signed by the New York Giants and will attempt to do this season what he was unable to last year: make the roster out of camp. He will be competing for the back-up middle linebacker position and looks to strengthen his case by becoming a solid special teams producer.

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OWL OUTLOOK



Owls search for tournament success

By Brian Jones

The baseball season is coming to an end and the Owls are looking to make a late-season push for a winning record as well as a high seed in the Atlantic Sun Tournament.

Last weekend, the Owls traveled to Johnson City, Tenn. to take on East Tennessee State in a three-game set. The Owls won the first game 4-1 thanks in large part to pitcher Stephen Janas, who went the distance and gave up one earned one while striking out three and allowing zero walks. The second game was not as sweet for the Owls as they fell 9-7. ETSU scored six of its nine runs in the first four innings.

In Game 3, the Buccaneers defeated the Owls once again 8-2. ETSU roughed up Owls pitching late in the game as they scored six runs in innings four through six. The lone bright spot for the Owls was starting pitcher Kevin Kyle, who had five strikeouts while giving up two earned runs in five innings of work.

The Owls have the weekend off before facing Georgia State at Panthersville Wednesday.

ALL HAIL CAITLIN ...

The softball team has ended their season on a hot streak as they have won four of their

last five games. The reason for the end-of-season success is the play of freshman Caitlin Fowler who was named Atlantic Sun Player of the Week.

Fowler posted a .429 batting average while totaling seven RBIs and three runs. Fowler started off the week with her first career home run in a 6-1 win against UAB April 25. She followed that up with a five-RBI performance against East Tennessee State as the Owls won 8-1 on Saturday.

"We are very happy for Caitlin," co-head coach Wes Holly Jr. told ksuowls.com. "She hit the ball very well this week. It is a great honor for her as a freshman and we look for her to receive many more as she grows and develops to the collegiate level of play."

Fowler will look to continue the hot streak when the Owls take part in the A-Sun Tournament starting Thursday.

BAKER SIGNED ...

The women's basketball team has added Ty'Nita Baker, a junior college transfer from Itawamba Community College. She averaged 17 points, six rebounds and three assists last year.

Jones can be reached at bjones@scoreatl.com.

HAWKS HAVEN



Hawks, Pacers tied through four games

By Ricky Dimon

Every other Eastern Conference playoff series saw a road team win one of the first three games. Through four contests in the Hawks-Pacers showdown, however, it is dead even without one proverbial break of serve. After Indiana rolled to a pair of victories to kick off the proceedings, Atlanta bounced back in convincing fashion at the Highlight Factory.

In Game 3 last Saturday, the Hawks used a 42-10 first-half run en route to a 90-69 rout. An impressive team effort on both ends of the floor allowed the home team to make this a series instead of falling into what would have been a borderline insurmountable 3-0 deficit. Al Horford scored a playoff career-high of 26 points and he also grabbed 16 rebounds. Josh Smith added 14 points, six rebounds, six assists and three steals while Jeff Teague chipped in 13 points, six rebounds, five assists and two thefts.

Monday's Game 4 at Philips Arena got off to a similar start. Atlanta, which had trailed 8-1 early in Game 3, fell behind 21-14 before going on another incredible run. Larry Drew's squad outscored its opponents 43-17 from the two-minute mark of the first quarter until the final minute of the second. This

time, however, the visitors fought back in the third and fourth. The Pacers found themselves within seven to begin the final frame of play and the gap was as close as five with more than four minutes remaining in the contest. Timely shooting by Smith (29 points, four assists, three steals) and Kyle Korver (19 points on five three-pointers) helped the Hawks hold on for a 102-91 victory.

SHIFTING MOMENTUM ...

The crowd has no doubt been a factor in all four games, but there was more to the tide-turning than a raucous Philips Arena atmosphere. Drew went with bigger lineups on Friday and Monday, starting Johan Petro—who welcomed his first child in between the two home games—and allowing Smith to play the three and match up with Indiana's Paul George. The shift worked to near perfection, especially on the defensive end of the floor, so more of the same can be expected in Game 5 (Wednesday's result was not available at press time) and Game 6.

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FALCONS BEAT



Birds complete draft, sign free agents

By Craig Sager II

The 2013 NFL Draft added playmakers that could possibly find starting roles this season, but the restocking of young talent continued Monday with the signing of 24 college free agents. These players will battle for roster spots as they provide competitiveness to the defending NFC South champs' offseason.

DRAFT DAY FIREWORKS ...

The eventful offseason that started with the release of three veterans on March 1 continued its intensity on draft day, as the Falcons desperately searched for defensive help. Dimitroff had Falcons' faithful on the edge of their seats as he parted with a third- and sixth-round pick in order to start the draft eight spots earlier at No. 22. Cornerback Desmond Trufant was the first-round prize, and after the potential starting cornerback was acquired, management continued adding talent.

Cornerbacks Trufant and second-round pick Robert Alford filled the depth missing in Mike Nolan's nickel defense. Safeties Kemal Ishmael and Zeke Motta and defensive ends Malliciah Goodman and Stansly Maponga rounded up the six defensive selections. Two cornerbacks, two safeties and two defensive ends is a unique way to bring in these rookies. Coming in paired with someone going through the same journey should breed a healthy competition in this draft class and the maturation

process could benefit.

The two offensive draft picks will be learning from some of the best as they look to make an impact. Former Duke quarterback Sean Renfree was taken in the seventh round and will get a chance to take snaps with Matt Ryan as he looks to compete with Ryan's old Boston college teammate Dominique Davis for a backup role. Fourth-round pick Levine Toilolo out of Stanford will be learning from perhaps the greatest of all time his rookie year, as the tight end prepares to shadow Tony Gonzalez. The 13-time Pro Bowler will not be participating in OTA's or mini camps, but the 6-foot-8, 260 pound Toilolo will get plenty of experience as he begins his campaign for the starting job after Gonzalez retires in the Falcons' potent offense.

Free-Agent Signees: K Casey Barth, LB Joplo Bartu, FB Devonte Campbell, LB Nick Clancy, QB Seth Doerge, WR Rashad Evans, FB Deon Goggins, OG Theo Goins, DE Cam Henderson, DT Neal Huynh, WR Darius Johnson, OT Terren Jones, WR Martel Moore, DT Adam Replogle, RB Donald Russell, S Troy Sanders, OT Alec Savoie, OT Ryan Schraeder, P Sean Sellwood, C Matt Smith, CB Momo Thomas, DE Brandon Thurmond, RB Ronnie Wingo, LB Paul Worrlow.

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CHOP SHOP



Hudson homers, earns milestone win

By Stephen Black

Braves pitcher Tim Hudson won his 200th game Tuesday night in an 8-1 domination of the Nationals. Hudson homered in the three-run fifth, doubled and threw seven innings of three-hit ball in improving to 3-1 this year. The win was the Braves' fifth straight this season against Washington.

In the series opener Monday, Andrelton Simmons hit a fly ball to right field, Gerald Laird tagged up at third base and scored, and the Braves ended a season-long four-game winning streak 3-2 Monday night against Washington.

The win over Washington ended a slump that started April 24 in Colorado when the Rockies avoided a sweep by beating the Braves 6-5 in 12 innings. Atlanta led 5-3 after six, but closer Craig Kimbrel gave up two earned runs in the ninth for his first blown save of the season.

Manager Fredi Gonzalez's club then traveled to Detroit for an interleague series that did not go as planned for Atlanta. The Braves were humbled 10-0 Friday night as Tigers pitchers struck out 18 Atlanta batters. Starter Anibal Sanchez, who saw the Braves often as a Florida Marlin from 2006-2012, set a Detroit franchise record

with 17 strikeouts.

The next two games in Detroit also ended up in the loss column as Atlanta was outscored 15-7 on Saturday and Sunday. The Braves will host the Mets over the weekend before heading to Cincinnati Monday.

RED CROSS REPORT ...

Veteran catcher Brian McCann is getting closer to his first action in Atlanta this season. McCann, who had surgery to repair his right shoulder, is currently in Gwinnett rehabbing the injury which occurred late in spring training.

McCann took batting practice at Turner Field with teammates prior to Tuesday's game with the Nationals proving he is close to being back.

"He looks good," Gonzalez said. "Now, it's just a matter of getting some at-bats and getting him some games to see where he's at."

The goal is to get McCann back in the lineup by next week's series in Cincinnati. The Athens native is a career .333 hitter with 10 homers in 84 at-bats in Cincinnati.

Black can be reached at sblack@scoreatl.com.

GWINNETT GLADIATORS



Season ends after losing home ice

By Joe Deighton

The chance to hoist the Kelly Cup came to an end for the Gwinnett Gladiators Tuesday night after they lost to Cincinnati 5-3 in Game 6 of the best-of-seven second-round series. The ECHL and the Gladiators had a scheduling conflict with the Arena at Gwinnett Center, which gave the home-ice advantage to Cincinnati for Game 6. It is an odd turn of events when something like that happens, and the Cyclones took full advantage of their good fortune by taking the series at home.

The lead changed hands three times, as the Gladiators took a 3-2 advantage midway through the second period. Defenseman Sasha Guimond scored on a slap shot to put Gwinnett ahead, but the Cyclones scored two more goals before the second period was over. Gwinnett would not score again. Goalie Louis Domingue made 20 saves in the loss and carried the Glads throughout the series. It was a valiant run for the Gladiators, but the breaks went Cincinnati's way and the Glads simply could not recover.

SEASON REVIEW ...

The season was a successful one for the

Gwinnett Gladiators. The team earned a No. 3 seed in the Eastern Conference playoffs after winning 43 games and posting 89 points. The NHL lockout changed the lineup from opening day, but the team was resilient in winning the South Division for the second straight season. Forward Casey Pierro-Zabotel led the team in scoring with 75 points (22 goals, 53 assists) despite being called up to the AHL and playing in 69 games for Gwinnett.

Rookie forward Evan Bloodoff scored 20 goals during the regular season and led the team with five goals in 10 playoff games. Domingue was spectacular throughout the regular and postseason in earning 23 wins on the year and posting five total shutouts, including two in the playoffs.

The Glads swept division-rival South Carolina in the opening round of the Kelly Cup Playoffs and took a 2-1 series lead on Cincinnati, but could not complete the series victory. If the Arena at Gwinnett Center had been more cooperative, Glads fans would have seen Game 6 at home, but that's not the way things turned out.

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TRIVIA ANSWER

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