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MAY 6-12, 2009

ATLANTA'S WEEKLY SPORTS TALK NEWSPAPER

VOL 5 NO 9

# SCORE

atlanta

**Q&A WITH  
ARTHUR BLANK**  
PG 9

# BRING ON LEBRON!

**Can Hawks dethrone King James and the Cavs?**



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**MAY**

<b>15</b> FRIDAY 7:30 PM ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS <b>Publix Friday Night Fireworks</b> <small>Spectacular post-game fireworks display</small>	<b>16</b> SATURDAY 7:00 PM ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS <b>Jerseys Off Our Backs</b> <small>Presented by Majestic</small>	<b>17</b> SUNDAY 1:30 PM ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS <b>Latin Day</b> <b>All-Star Sunday</b> <small>Pregame Alumni Meet &amp; Greet and Kids Run the Bases following the game</small>
<b>18</b> MONDAY 7:00 PM COLORADO ROCKIES <b>College, Military &amp; AAA Discounts</b> <small>2-for-1 Upper Box tickets with student, service or AAA ID</small>	<b>19</b> TUESDAY 7:00 PM COLORADO ROCKIES <b>Coca-Cola 2-for-1 Tuesday</b> <small>Buy one get one FREE Upper Reserved tickets</small>	<b>20</b> WEDNESDAY 7:05 PM COLORADO ROCKIES <b>2-for-1 Wednesday Ticket Discount</b> <small>Buy one get one FREE Field/Terrace Pavilion</small>
<b>21</b> THURSDAY 7:00 PM COLORADO ROCKIES <b>70's Braves Cap Giveaway</b> <small>Presented by NAPA to the first 10,000 fans</small>		

MAY	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	GFLA	GFLA	GPHI	GPHI	GPHI	GNYM	GNYM	GNYM		ARZ
	7:00pm	12:00pm	7:00pm	3:30pm	12:30pm	7:00pm	7:00pm	1:00pm		7:30pm
	WED SS	THU SS	FRI PTV	SAT FOX	SUN FSS	MON PTV	TUE SS	WED SS	THU	FRI PTV
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
	ARZ	ARZ	COL	COL	COL	COL	TOR	TOR	TOR	
	7:00pm	1:30pm	7:00pm	7:00pm	7:00pm	7:00pm	7:30pm	7:00pm	1:30pm	
	SAT PTV	SUN FSS	MON PTV	TUE PTV	WED SS	THU SS	FRI PTV	SAT PTV	SUN FSS	

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#10 Bryan Little

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**ART/CREATIVE DIRECTOR** DJ Galbiati  
**VIDEO MANAGER** Scott Janovitz  
**BUSINESS MANAGER** Marvin Botnick  
**SALES MANAGER** Mark Mayo

**BEAT WRITERS** Josh Bagriansky (Falcons), Stephen Black (Kennesaw State), Jason Boral (Thrashers), James Butler (UGA), Dave Cohen (Georgia State), Ricky Dimon (Tech), Alex Ewalt (Preps), Scott Janovitz (Hawks/Recruiting), Fletcher Proctor (Braves)

**STAFF WRITERS** Cranston Collier, Joe Deighton, Rajesh Gupta, Zander Lentz, Andrew McCarron, Corey Mitchell, Jessica Parker, Leighton Savary, Keafer Triplett, Derek Wiley

**CONTRIBUTORS** Tad Arapoglou, Dean Zindler, Kevin Dankosky, Mitch Evans, Matt Judy, Tony Schiavone, Richard Diamond, Joe Haines, Brian Katrek, Chris Dimino, Mike Bell, Matt Stewart, Fred Kalil, Nick Cellini, Phillip Leopold, Dave Marshall, Greg Smith, Steak Shapiro, Mike Cather, Beau Bock, Hal Lamar, Chris Cotter, Roy Hickman, Dave Cohen, John Olah, Jeff Woolverton, Chris Voss, Bob Rathbun, Courtney Capps, Bill Hartman, Chuck Dowdle, Shannon Alderman, Dan Kamal, Dennis Scott, C.C., Hal Lanier, Jeff Batten, Micah Hart, Ben Wright, Alan Vasquez, Andrew Vedlitz, Brian Jones

**SPECIAL CONTRIBUTORS** Mitch Albom, Dave Kindred, Barry Bloom

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**IN YOUR FACE...**

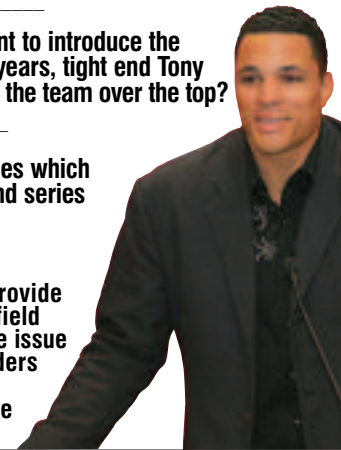


**REELING IT IN:** Rookie Jordan Schafer and the rest of the Braves will be looking to catch up with divisional foes Florida and Philadelphia this week, meeting the Marlins twice and the Phillies once—all on the road. And even though the team held a one-game lead over the New York Mets at press time, an ensuing three-game trip to brand-new Citi Field could change things. Photo courtesy of Pouya Dianat/Atlanta Braves.

**WHAT'S ON THE INSIDE**

[WWW.SCOREATL.COM](http://WWW.SCOREATL.COM)

- 5** The Hawks took care of business in the first round against the Heat and now will look to shock LeBron and the Cavs. But with the way this team is playing, I.J. Rosenberg writes, that's not as farfetched as it seems.
- 11** Score had the chance to talk with Falcons Owner & CEO Arthur Blank recently, and Birds' top man talks about the team's breakout '08 and what fans can expect for next season.
- 12** Falcons beat writer Josh Bagriansky takes a moment to introduce the fans to the team's biggest offseason acquisition in years, tight end Tony Gonzalez (pictured). Can the future Hall of Famer put the team over the top?
- 17** Scott Janovitz, our man on the Hawks beat, discusses which players stepped up during the hard-fought first-round series win over the Miami Heat.



**A SCORE UPDATE:** For the second year in a row, Score Atlanta will provide the official program for the GHSA girls track and field state championships in Albany from May 14-16. The issue will include a full meet schedule, past record-holders and a word from GHSA executive director Ralph Sweargin. Pick one up at the event or download the special edition from Scoreatl.com!

**TEAM PAGES | COLUMNS**

COVER DESIGN BY MELISSA LEONARD. COVER PHOTO COURTESY OF DON JACKSON/PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS.

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# Cavs may have King James but don't count the Hawks out of this series

The fact that the Atlanta Hawks made it to the second round of the playoffs is no surprise here. This is a franchise slowly becoming one of the best in the NBA. The biggest positive coming out of the Miami series was that the Hawks finally learned how to win a meaningful game on the road. Remember, sometimes you have to take baby steps.

What does surprise me is the fact that no one gives the Hawks any chance to beat LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers. Former Georgia Tech star Jon Barry, now working for ESPN, has been very critical of the Hawks and their chances against the Cavs, for the most part saying that Cleveland will win easily in four. Of course, Barry is known for being wrong more than right.

Look, the Hawks go into the series, which started Tuesday night (This edition of Score went to print earlier Tuesday), as sizeable underdogs to a team seeded No. 1 overall in the NBA, one that finished the season 66-16 with an amazing 39-2 record at home. But, remember, the Hawks were given no chance to beat Boston last year in the playoffs; all the experts cried for a sweep yet Atlanta took what are now the defending world champions to seven games. Anything, in other words, can happen.

Also, for me, the Hawks are playing with house money, taking an incredible step forward this season by winning 47 games in the regular season and taking out the Heat in the opening round, earning the team's first trip to the conference semifinals since 1999.

The Hawks, much like in the Boston one last year, have nothing to lose in this series, while all the pressure in the world is on the Cavs. The Hawks can play loose while head coach Mike Woodson has the luxury of trying some different things to see if there is any way the team can contain the mighty LeBron James. Interestingly, the Hawks faced the Cavs four times during the regular season and, while they lost three of those games, every matchup but the first one (110-96 loss at Cleveland) was close.

While I'm not going to predict an upset here, as I think Cleveland will eventually prevail, I do feel the Hawks will put a scare into the Cavs and take two. I also hope that, regardless of what happens, the Hawks take care of two matters in the offseason: extend the contract of coach Woodson and resign veteran point guard Mike Bibby. The team is now a big man away from really putting itself in a position to win it all. According to Score NBA expert Scott Janovitz, they should use the summer to go after 7-footer Marcin Gortat, who will be a free agent and is now playing behind Dwight Howard in Orlando. Because of Howard, Gortat doesn't get all the minutes he deserves, but many feel he is a future star in the NBA, especially on the defensive side of the ball.

## FALCONS ON A ROLL ...

How quickly fortunes are changing here in sports, as it has been years since this town has been this excited about the Falcons. While we have seen anything can happen in the NFL and despite the team's brutal schedule this year, I think the Falcons have to go into the season as one of the team's to beat in the NFC. The draft was a strong one for the Birds, but the big move has to be the addition of tight end Tony Gonzalez, who will help this team as much off the field as he will on it. As one football talking head said recently, "Gonzalez has forgotten more football knowledge than the players on the Falcons

years. Steve tells it like it is and was blasted by Miami Heat fans for being rough on their star, Dwyane Wade, mocking him and accusing him of dirty play. Before Game 6, Holman became the story. Look, Holman may be a homer, but he will do his share of ripping his own team. His best line of the series had to be when Wade and Heat forward James Jones sent Hawks forward Al Horford crashing to the ground. "Oh, my goodness! The Heat have resorted to thuggery!" screamed Holman. Keep it up Steve, and bang on LeBron for all of us.



**PHILIPS ON THE RISE:** Hawks players and coaches are always quick to stress the impact the home-town crowd has on the team, and the fans didn't disappoint in the first-round series against the Miami Heat. Philips Arena was as loud as it's been in its 10-year history and helped make it hard on Jermaine O'Neal (shooting) and the rest of the Heat. Now, the Hawks will look forward to Game 3 and the support of the fans against the Cavs on Saturday night in Atlanta. Photo courtesy of Don Jackson/Photographic Arts.

**SPORTS RADIO 790 CATCH I.J. ON SUNDAYS**

**But, remember, the Hawks were given no chance to beat Boston last year in the playoffs; all the experts cried for a sweep yet Atlanta took what are now the defending world champions to seven games. Anything, in other words, can happen.**

have football knowledge." From what I can tell from my close relationship with the team, you can expect to see a close relationship between the future Hall of Famer and young quarterback Matt Ryan, who reportedly is already soaking in Gonzalez's experience and the fact that he is a student of the game. Training camp can't come soon enough.

## GOOD FOR STEVE ...

I've always been a fan of Hawks play-by-play man Steve Holman, who has had to watch a lot of bad basketball over the

## WAITING FOR A BREAKOUT ...

I'm not sure what to think of the Braves so far this season. They are fortunate that no team in the East has jumped out to a big start like St. Louis has down in the Central and the Dodgers in the West. Except for the lowly Nationals, it really looks like it will be a four-team race, as the Marlins have proven they have the talent to hang around with the Braves, Phillies and Mets. What still concerns me about the Braves is their lineup and whether they have enough firepower to be

**ON THE COVER**

It wasn't the most conventional series, going seven games despite no lead changes after the first period, but the Hawks' home-court advantage paid off in the end. Sunday's 91-78 thrashing of Dwyane Wade and the Miami Heat marked the first time an Atlanta Hawks team has won a home Game 7. Now, LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers, fresh off a four-game sweep of the veteran Detroit Pistons in the first round, await the Hawks. The above photo and cover photo are courtesy of Don Jackson/Photographic Arts.

there at the end. Right now they are barely averaging four runs a game and are hitting .258 as a team. There also has to be concern about catcher Brian McCann and his eyesight as well as the slumping start of second baseman Kelly Johnson. I also don't like what I've seen out of new starter Kenshin Kawakami, who has allowed 17 earned runs (21.2 innings) and walked way too many batters in a 1-3 start. It's too early to say, but you have to wonder if the 33-year-old former Japanese league star may be over his head in the majors. It's way too early to be too concerned about this team and the top of the rotation has been strong, but it would be nice to see someone offensively start knocking the cover off the ball. Are you listening Jeff Francoeur?

Rosenberg can be reached at 404-256-1572 or [ijrosenberg@scoreatl.com](mailto:ijrosenberg@scoreatl.com). He can be heard every Sunday on 790 The Zone from 2-4 p.m. on "The Official Visit," Atlanta's only high school recruiting show. You can listen online every Sunday by checking out breaking news on [Scoreatl.com](http://Scoreatl.com)

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# SCORE LIST

BY ALEX EWALT

- 1 **HAWKS COOL HEAT:** In one of the strangest series anyone has seen recently (there were no lead changes after the first quarter in any of the seven games — hard to fathom), the Hawks finally took care of the Miami Heat in a home Game 7. Bring on LeBron!
- 2 **SECOND SEASON INDEED:** The Hawks-Heat series wasn't the only intriguing first-rounder. The Bulls pushed the Kevin Garnett-less Celtics to the brink with seven games, four of which went to OT. Man, we sure hate to see Boston teams struggle ...
- 3 **UP AND DOWN:** The Braves can't seem to find an identity early on in the year, standing at 11-13 as of press time. The team followed up a 7-2 series-opening win over St. Louis last week with two clunkers. Will this group of pitchers be able to come together?
- 4 **BABY BIRDS:** We're looking forward to seeing some of the Falcons' draft picks in action soon, and the undrafted free agents aren't bad either. Two UDFAs—John Parker Wilson of Alabama and Marietta native Aaron Kelly—could grab roster spots.
- 5 **RINK REVIVAL?:** Apparently, ratings and attendance numbers are up across the board for the NHL playoffs. To which we answer: what are these NHL playoffs you speak of? If I could find Versus on the television dial, I might—might—think of tuning in.
- 6 **ALMOST OUT:** Score List mainstay Michael Vick is almost out of the big house, as the soon-to-be former Falcons quarterback will enter a house-arrest program on May 20. Will we see the talented athlete in an NFL uniform come the fall?
- 7 **SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE:** The high school spring sports season is really heating up, with the lacrosse finals, boys track and field finals and soccer finals taking place this week. Baseball playoffs start this Friday as well, so pick a sport and bring the family!
- 8 **LOTTA GOOSE EGGS:** Speaking of prep sports, Mitchell High School pitcher Patrick Schuster has been a man among boys this season, throwing four straight no-hitters. He was denied a fifth in a row last week, but set the Florida record for consecutive no-nos.
- 9 **SOUTHPAW SLUGGER:** Boy, did the much-hyped Ricky Hatton-Manny Pacquiao bout not live up to its promise. All it took was two rounds for the deadly Filipino to take care of the brash Mancunian, as "Pacman" dropped Hatton for good with his killer left hook.
- 10 **OUT OF NOWHERE:** It was a pretty intriguing Kentucky Derby this past weekend, with several storylines. But none ended up being bigger than that of Mine That Bird, which took the 135th installment of the hallowed event despite 50-1 odds ... amazing.

# DUE UP

HOTTEST THINGS TO SEE AND DO OVER THE NEXT SEVEN DAYS

BY BRIAN JONES

- WEDNESDAY 6** **Braves at Florida. 96.1 FM. SportSouth.**  
Whenever the Braves and Marlins meet, it's always a dogfight. One matchup that fans should keep an eye on is Braves shortstop Yunel Escobar vs. Marlins shortstop Hanley Ramirez as they do battle at 7:10 p.m.
- THURSDAY 7** **Gwinnett Braves vs. Syracuse. 550 AM.**  
The Gwinnett Braves just completed their first month of play and they hope they can make some good things happen in May. They take on the Syracuse Chiefs at Gwinnett Stadium on Thursday at 7 p.m.
- FRIDAY 8** **Kennesaw State vs. Florida Gulf Coast.**  
The Owls have had a solid season and they look to finish strong as they take on Florida Gulf Coast in the first game of a three-game series. Come on out to Stillwell Stadium to support the Owls starting at 6 p.m.
- SATURDAY 9** **Drift Atlanta.**  
Drifting is a unique form of racing and the Formula Drift Series is coming back to Road Atlanta. Unlike other races, drifting is judged on style and execution rather than time. Come out to Braselton on Saturday and Sunday.
- SUNDAY 10** **Georgia Tech vs. Florida State. 790 The Zone.**  
Out of all the teams the Jackets have faced this season, Florida State could be the most important, as both teams are battling for first place in the ACC. They will play the series finale in Atlanta at 1 p.m.
- MONDAY 11** **Braves at New York Mets. 96.1 FM. Peachtree TV/ESPN.**  
The Braves-Mets rivalry is one of the most intense in the N.L. East. The teams are fighting for position in the division standings, which should make for a good series. Game starts at 7:10 p.m.
- TUESDAY 12** **Georgia vs. Georgia Tech. 91.1 FM. FSN South.**  
The football rivalry gets most of the publicity, but when the Georgia and Georgia Tech baseball teams get together, it's always a war. Tuesday's game will be played at Turner Field and will start at 7 p.m.

## WHOS HOT

THUMBS UP TO STEPPING UP



### Joe Johnson

The Hawks' All-Star shook off a slow overall start to the Heat series to score 25 and 27 points, respectively, in the team's Game 5 and Game 7 home victories. In the finale, Joe seemed to really find his rhythm with a couple of deep 3's that energized the home team.

### Falcons' draft

Birds brass did the right thing by taking defense with nearly all eight picks in the draft (all but offensive tackle Garrett Reynolds is on that side of the ball). Score Atlanta gives this group a solid 'A'; Thomas Dimitroff and Co. drafted smart and drafted for need.

### Larry Munson

The National Sportscasters and Sportswriters Association inducted longtime University of Georgia football play-by-play man Larry Munson into its Hall of Fame on Monday. He was the voice of the Dawgs from 1966 until his retirement last year.

### Unsaintly Saints

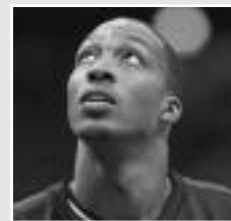
New Orleans Saints wide receiver Biren Ealy and tight end Kolomona Kapanui were charged last Sunday with several crimes stemming from their decision to urinate in an apartment complex parking lot in River Ridge, La. Oh, the NFL offseason ...

### Dallas injuries

In a freak accident, the Dallas Cowboys' practice facility in Irving, Tex. collapsed during a storm last week. Most injuries were minor, but team scout Rich Behm was paralyzed from the waist down and former Falcons coach Joe DeCamillis broke several vertebrae.

### Dwight Howard

The Orlando Magic still won the series, but the Atlanta native clearly took a swipe at the Philadelphia 76ers' Samuel Dalembert during a Game 5 win. Howard's elbow connected with the center's head, and he was suspended for Game 6 because of the shot.



## WHOS NOT

THUMBS DOWN TO THROWIN' 'BOWS

## CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS

**1999** Hawks' last playoff series win

**1970** Hawks' last seven-game series win

**1958** Last time the Hawks won more than one post-season series

## DON'T WORRY ABOUT TIGER

The PGA TOUR is in the middle of a strong two-week stretch, with play last week in Charlotte at the Quail Hollow Championship, and this week at the Players Championship. Two great golf courses, and two great fields. Those two elements are not unrelated.

Lots of people are asking, "What is wrong with Tiger?" Let's see, he has now played in two whole tournaments without a win. So, the answer is probably not much. Is there rust? Maybe there was before, but I think we are past that now. Last week in Charlotte, Tiger was-



n't inside the top 10 in any statistical category, other than sand saves. He was not outside the top 50 in any of them either. It seems to me Tiger is just making more mistakes than usual. The great shots are still there, but he seems to be playing from behind more than before. The bottom line is, don't worry too much for Tiger Woods. He is just fine.

Brian Katrek can be heard on 790 The Zone's "On The Green with Brian Katrek" Sundays from 8-9 a.m. and can be reached at [bkatrek@790thezone.com](mailto:bkatrek@790thezone.com).

## SANITY AT LAST

*"We wanted to get more urgent. We wanted to get faster. We wanted to build with all-in, leadership-type guys that are dedicated to the program. We accomplished all of those things."*

- Falcons GM Thomas Dimitroff on his draft class

# THE SPIN

## NEWS - NOTES - QUOTES

FROM THE ATLANTA SPORTS BEATS BOTH ON & OFF THE FIELD

### SCORE

## Falcons contribute to land grant; Tech, Southern to battle on gridiron in 2015

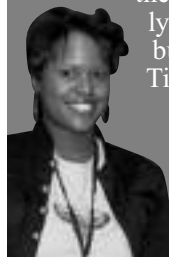
### YANKS PITCHING FLAILING

The Yankees are off to a less-than-stellar start this season, and the new Yankee Stadium has not been kind to its tenants. They claim it more or less has the same dimensions as the old stadium, so everyone wants to know why on earth balls are flying out of the park at a record pace. They've even gone so far as to contact a meteorologist to try to find an explanation. I'm only guessing, but awful pitching is probably a big factor.

In defense of the new stadium, they have their fair share of problems on the road as well. When they're not busy losing by two-and-a-half touchdowns to the Indians at home, they're on the road getting drilled by division rivals. Injured pitcher Chien-Ming Wang was the biggest culprit before he was diagnosed with weak adductor muscles in both hips and placed on the DL. His ERA was 34.50 in his three starts. I can't even begin to comprehend that. He's been the starter for their two most embarrassing losses this season. He gave up six hits and eight runs in just one inning of work in Tampa, then gave up eight hits and eight runs to the Indians in less than two innings in his next start. He spearheaded their 22-4 thrashing of the Yankees in their new home. Wang has faced 45 batters this season and 30 of them have reached base. The fact that he's only pitched six innings makes those numbers even worse. He's basically facing almost eight batters per inning!

I'm sad to have to write that my 16-year-old cousin who I wrote about a few weeks back lost his battle with cancer on April 18. He fought hard, but it was so aggressive there was nothing medically they could do. They buried him in his Elba Tigers No. 54 jersey.

Read more from C.C. at <http://cocovents.blogspot.com>. C.C. can be reached at [cfelicec@yahoo.com](mailto:cfelicec@yahoo.com).



**ON THE LOOSE:** What exactly is going on in this picture, you ask? Well, during Game 3 of the Hawks' first-round playoff series, Spirit, the team's real-live mascot, decided to take a little trip around Philips Arena—while the game was in progress. Our feathered friend got away from his handler and hung out on a railing in the stands and on a backboard before returning to the trainer's arm some 10 minutes later. Photo courtesy of Don Jackson/Photographic Arts.

### CHECK THIS OUT!

Racing season is heating up all around the country, and it's no different in Atlanta, with some of the best races around taking place in town. Exhibit one is the exciting Formula Drift Series, which visits Road Atlanta on May 8-9. Drifting is one of racing's most difficult events, requiring the driver to slide sideways and weave through a heavily marked course. The racing begins on Friday, with 16 cars qualifying to go to the finals on Saturday. Passes to day one are \$22 in advance and at the gate, with a two-day pass costing just \$5 more. And, as a bonus, a purchase of a ticket in advance scores you one infield parking pass for free. Visit [Roadatlanta.com](http://Roadatlanta.com) today to learn more about the event and to purchase your tickets to one of racing's most unique events nationwide!

## HERE'S THE SCOOP ...

Written by Scott Janovitz

Remaining consistent with their always-giving ways and as part of the National Football League Grassroots Program, the Atlanta Falcons announced last week plans to donate a \$100,000 field development grant to the Boys & Girls Clubs of Hall County. The grant, officially awarded by the Falcons, the NFL Youth Football Fund and Local Initiatives Support Corporation, is only part of the \$2.5 million that has been spent this year on building and refurbishing playing fields in NFL communities. The Boys & Girls Clubs of Hall County will use the grant to build a new natural-grass football field at the Joseph Walters Boys & Girls Club in Gainesville. The field, scheduled to open this summer, will be used by more than 2,500 youths each year and will be an Atlanta Falcons Fitness Zone site.

Patrick Schuster's amazing run finally came to an end last Tuesday. Schuster, a pitching ace for Mitchell High School in Clearwater, Fla., had thrown four straight no-hitters heading into his team's district tournament last Tuesday. Schuster's bid at a fifth no-no in a row was denied when the talented senior gave up a single in the third. Though he came up two shy of the national record of six consecutive no-hit games, Schuster's four in a row was good enough to set a Florida state record. He has plans to attend the University of Florida next year, but could be drafted as early as the second round.

SI.com's Andrew Perloff used last week to come out with his "way-early" 2010 NFL mock draft and, as far as the football in this state is concerned, the results were somewhat surprising. After Georgia had two players selected in the first round of this year's draft, according to Perloff, don't expect a Dawg to go in the top 32 in 2010. Tech, on the other hand, will almost certainly provide the draft with some first-round talent, as physical running back Jonathan Dwyer is sure to be off the board early on day one; in Perloff's opinion, the talented Yellow Jacket will be taken 19th overall by the New Orleans Saints. Oklahoma quarterback Sam Bradford was slotted for first overall on the list with Tennessee's Eric Berry going at two, Oklahoma defensive tackle Gerald McCoy at three, Russell Okung of Oklahoma State going four and USC safety Taylor Mays taken fifth overall.

### NEW RIVALRY ...

A new in-state football rivalry may be joining the Georgia-Georgia Tech feud of old, as Tech has agreed to play Georgia Southern on the gridiron in 2015. When current Yellow Jacket head coach Paul Johnson hosts his former team, it will serve as the first time the two schools have ever met. Johnson coached the Eagles for five years and won I-AA national champi-

onships in 1999 and 2000. He was also an assistant there for four years. While Tech has never played Southern in football, Georgia has played the Eagles on four occasions and as recently as last season.

There's some incredible swimming taking place in Macon, and by someone younger than you'd expect. Eleven-year-old Marco Leo swims the 200 breaststroke for Swim Macon and does so in the seventh-fastest time in the nation for his age. The talented Leo had this to say of his pre-swim preparation: "Usually, I just clear my mind and focus on one thing, how to swim my race, like, 'Should I take it off fast, or pace it and bring it home at the end?'" Leo's coach, Justin Correia, estimates about 3,000 11 year-olds throughout the country swim with USA Swimming.

The Georgia Prep Sports Hall of Fame began in 1956 and a few years later expanded to include professional, college and Olympic athletes. Ten years ago the Hall found a home in Macon and the museum celebrated its first decade there last week. Some of the best-known inductees over the last 10 years were on hand for the event. Also, in honor of its first decade, the GSHF will open a new exhibit on May 1 entitled "Ten Years in Macon: Celebrating a Decade of Sports Heritage at the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame & Museum, 1999-2009."

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# SCORE PREP

May 6 - 12, 2009

## High School Sports Report



# NATIONAL SENSATION SCORE PREP

RAJESH GUPTA

## Gilstrap emerges as one of top sprinters in U.S.

There is one aspect of Kenneth Gilstrap's many athletic talents that is officially unquestionable; the guy can flat out fly. In a year in which high school athletes across Georgia garnered national attention for their abilities, the Miller Grove senior is capping off the 2008-09 class in fine fashion with his accomplishments in track and field.

Entering his senior year, Gilstrap had already built an impressive resume, attracting scholarship offers from elite programs in collegiate track such as Georgia Tech, Kentucky, and South Carolina. However, in his final season, he has taken his dominance in the sport to a new level. Since the Fort Valley State Invitational, where he ran a 10.47 100 meters on his way to a first-place finish, Gilstrap has sprinted to the forefront of high school track and, literally and figuratively, has never looked back. At the DeKalb County Championships last month, he set not only personal records, but also posted the fastest high school times in the country for 2009 with a blistering 10.31 100 meters and a 20.98 200 meters.

### FAST AND MULTIFACETED ...

The 5-foot-10, 170-pound Gilstrap is running track and playing football at Middle Tennessee State next year. Gilstrap and his coaches are confident in his abilities to handle both tasks. In fact, Miller Grove assistant track coach Greg Dillard believes his ability to play football in many ways ultimately makes him a better runner.

"He had a good football season," remarked Dillard. "He ran the ball more often for us and I think it really helped his

confidence carry over into the track season." Traditionally used more as a defensive threat, Gilstrap agrees that the ability to run the football added to his confidence and also attributes the mental toughness gained from playing football as an instrumental factor to his success on the track. Furthermore, he has added a new warm-up technique to his running regimen that he learned while competing with the US Junior Team at the 2008 Bank of Scotland Cup held in Grangemouth, Scotland, which he believes has greatly impacted his performance this season.

As the season winds down, the Miller Grove coaching staff is busy getting its team ready for state. With the school already enjoying an impressive athletic year, highlighted by top-tier football talent and a boys basketball state championship, the staff knows that it has the potential to bring home the top prize in boys Class 4A track; much of those chances for success hinge on the performance of Gilstrap. And it is a role that he is more than willing to accept, according to Dillard. "What drives Kenneth is he not only wants to win as an individual, but [he wants to help Miller Grove] win together as a team," he said.

If you have not yet seen Gilstrap run in high school, there's still time. The 2009 state championships will be held May 7-9 in Jefferson. It marks an opportunity to see one of the top performers in Georgia high school athletics this year.

If you go, just one piece of advice: Don't blink, because Kenneth Gilstrap might run right past you.

Gupta can be reached at [rgupta@scoreatl.com](mailto:rgupta@scoreatl.com).

## THE HIGH SCHOOL PLAYERS OF THE WEEK



**TRAVIS BENTON**  
REDAN HIGH

This weekend, the senior sprinter will be looking to improve upon his second-place finish in the 100 meters and fourth-place finish in the 200 meters last year in the Georgia Olympics. Benton's season-best times are a 10.74 in the 100 and a 21.80 in the 200 this year. Benton also competes in the long jump for the Raider track team and played wide receiver on the football team.



**MARY COFFED**  
MARIST SCHOOL

The Auburn commitment played a huge role in her team's title run a year ago as a junior, and was looking to do the same this time around going into the Lady War Eagles' game with Starr's Mill on Tuesday. Coffed is a member of the Tophat Gold soccer club in the Atlanta area and was recognized as one of the top Atlanta area girls players by ESPNRISE.

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**SIZING UP THE SEMIFINALS**



**Class 5A boys state soccer semifinals feature 2008 title-game rematch**

Here is Score Atlanta's preview of all boys semifinal soccer matches.

**CLASS 5A ...**

**Walton vs. Collins Hill:** It will be a rematch of last year's Class 5A state championship game when Walton and Collins Hill square off in a blockbuster semifinal clash. Walton prevailed in the 2008 championship showdown, but top-ranked Collins Hill is poised for revenge this time around. The Eagles, Region 7 champions, rolled over Greenbrier in last Saturday's quarterfinals and are welcoming the return of Furman signee Nicky MacKain for the semifinals. MacKain missed the past two games due to a red card in an opening-round win over Dacula.

**Centennial vs. East Coweta:** Walton is the only team remaining in 5A that did not win its respective region crown, as Region 6 champion Centennial and Region 4 victor East Coweta will do battle in the other semifinal. East Coweta won a second-round thriller over Coffee 4-3 on penalty kicks, breaking a 0-0 tie after regulation and overtime. The Indians then managed to scrape past South Forsyth 4-3 in the quarterfinals. They will have to go on the road for the first time in the playoffs to take on Centennial, which has looked impressive in victories over South Cobb, Peachtree Ridge and Warner Robins.

**CLASS 4A ...**

**McIntosh vs. Hillgrove:** If powerhouse McIntosh needed a wakeup call to get focused for the semifinals, it got one. The Chiefs are nationally-ranked and have won three state

championships since coach Bunky Colvin took over in 2000. Colvin and company are still alive for a fourth, but just barely. After dispatching Tucker 3-1 in the first round of the state playoffs, McIntosh clipped Apalachee 3-2 and needed overtime to beat Hardaway 2-1. McIntosh will take on a surprising Hillgrove squad for a spot in the title game. After finishing third in Region 7-AAAA, Hillgrove has won three straight road games—over Heritage-Rockdale, Chamblee and Evans—to reach the final four.

**Marist vs. Lakeside-DeKalb:** It will be a spirited clash between Region 6 foes when Marist takes on Lakeside-DeKalb. Marist has not allowed a single goal in the state playoffs after losing to Chamblee in the region final. The War Eagles beat Alexander 2-0, edged Habersham Central 1-0, and dominated Lakeside-Evans 4-0. Lakeside-DeKalb has surrendered one goal in each of its three games en route to the semifinals, but a high-powered Viking attack has poured in 10 of its own.

**CLASS 3A ...**

**Carrollton vs. St. Pius X:** Carrollton captured the Region 6-AAA title and has not looked back. The Trojans have been dominant through three state playoff games, ousting Riverwood 5-2, Gainesville 3-0, and Richmond Hill 4-0. Carrollton scored all four of its goals against Richmond Hill prior to halftime and most of the team's starters did not even see the field throughout the second 40 minutes. St. Pius, however, could provide the Trojans with their toughest test yet. Champions of Region 5, Pius advances to the final four with wins over Cartersville,

Creekview and Region 4 winner Woodward Academy.

**Oconee vs. West Hall:** All four semifinalists in 3A are region champions, as Region 6 representative Oconee County and Region 7 titlist West Hall will square off for the other spot in the title game. Both Oconee and West Hall advanced past the semifinals with 2-0 victories. That was the third consecutive shutout for West Hall, which had previously rolled over Franklin County 6-0 and Cedartown 4-0. Oconee escaped its first two rounds with 1-0 nail-biters over both Johnson-Gainesville and Southeast Whitfield.

**CLASS A/AA ...**

**Blessed Trinity vs. Westminster:** Blessed Trinity will be looking to take out a region champion for the third time in these state playoffs when it travels to face rival Westminster. After blanking a pair of region champs (Union County and Coosa) 1-0, Blessed Trinity edged Savannah Country Day 2-1 in a memorable quarterfinal clash. Seth Stratton scored the game-winner from 30 yards out with a mere 1.2 seconds remaining in double overtime. Westminster survived a 2-1 affair in the second round against Pacelli, but that was preceded by a 3-0 win over Our Lady of Mercy and followed by a quarterfinal 2-0 road shutout of Athens Academy.

**Thomasville vs. Greater Atlanta Christian:** GAC powered its way into the A/AA semifinals with a 6-2 win over host Savannah Christian last Saturday. Chris Thomas booted home five of those six goals, amazingly reaching the 50-goal mark for the season. Thomas and the Spartans will go on the road once again in the semis, but not to the antcipat-



**SECOND CHANCE:** In Wednesday's semifinals matchup, Furman signee Nicky MacKain and Collins Hill will try and turn the tables on Walton, which defeated them in the state championship game last season. Photo courtesy of Doug Smith/Athletesfoto.com.

ed destination. Thomasville upset top-ranked Walker 2-0 in a quarterfinal stunner. The Bulldogs will be competing in the soccer final four for the first time in school history.

Dimon can be reached at [rdimon@scoreatl.com](mailto:rdimon@scoreatl.com).

**A BREAKOUT '09 SEASON**



**Forsyth baseball enjoying historic year, will look to cap season with playoff success**

When the baseball season began back in February, all the focus in Class 5A was on Brookwood and whether they would repeat. Midway through the year, all the talk was about Roswell, the Hornets' red-hot start and national ranking. At the conclusion of the regular season, however, South Forsyth sat at 22-4 and was ranked No. 1 (Gasports.com) going into the playoffs. It would seem that the War Eagles came out of nowhere, but they were steady all year long and will be making their third straight playoff appearance.

In his fourth season as head coach of the team, Jamie Corr has put South Forsyth baseball on the map and in a position that it's never been before, as the 22 wins this season are a school record. For the first time in school history the team has made the playoffs three straight years. Despite South Forsyth's unprecedented

success in wins and losses this season, Corr spells out his program's philosophy thusly: "We try not to judge our team by wins and losses, but instead just by going out there and playing fundamental baseball, and wins and losses will take care of themselves."

**HOW THEY GOT HERE ...**

From start to finish, this regular season has been filled with long home runs, lock-down pitching performances and some historic games for the team from Cumming. Even before the season started, something special was happening with this program. Six seniors had already signed to play college baseball before they played their first game this year. This seemed to set the stage for a magical run. In the region opener against Peachtree Ridge, Zach Alvord hit a tremendous blast estimated

at 470 feet. Chris Rowley provided the team with a complete-game shutout, allowing just six hits in the 10-0 victory.

One of the most memorable games was at Turner Field against Mill Creek in the first-ever high school baseball game at that site. Although they were narrowly defeated 4-3, the War Eagles were owners of the game's most exciting moment when Andrew Barna hit a 385-foot shot into the first row of the seats in left-centerfield. That loss was one of only four on the season and all four were by only one run. In the region championship-clinching game, the War Eagles blew out North Gwinnett 11-3. Every batter in the lineup had a hit, including home runs from Alvord and Chase Fowler and a grand slam by Jordan Neese. The seniors were definitely the leaders of the team, but they

also got help from the underclassmen.

"We had great contributions all year long from everyone up and down the lineup," Corr said. "They always gave 100 percent effort and were 100 percent focused."

With the regular season now over, how is South Forsyth going to turn the success they've had all year into a state championship?

"First thing is you have to be good, second thing is you have to be lucky," said Corr. "We've prepared real hard to try to become a good ball club all season, now we just have to go out there and do what we've prepared to do."

The state tournament for South Forsyth starts this Friday against Grayson in a best-of-three series.

Deighton can be reached at [jdeighton@scoreatl.com](mailto:jdeighton@scoreatl.com)

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## PEACH STATE IN DEMAND



**SCORE**  
JAMES BUTLER

### Georgia high school products are hot commodities once again in NFL Draft

A total of 13 former Georgia high school graduates were selected in the 2009 NFL Draft this past weekend, including one player, William Middleton of Furman, who will be returning home. Middleton, who was selected with the second pick of the fifth round by Atlanta, played at the Marist School for head coach Alan Chadwick.

"He's certainly one of the hardest-working kids we have ever had," Chadwick said of Middleton. "He was always the first one on the practice field and stayed late to work on techniques, particularly defensive back techniques. It's easy to see with his work ethic how he got to this point."

Troy's Sherrod Martin, by way of Griffin High School, was the first Georgia high school alum chosen and the only one picked on Day 1. The 6-foot-1, 197-pound safety was the 27th pick of the second round, going 59th overall to Carolina. Former Tucker High School and University of Georgia cornerback Asher Allen was scooped up next, going to Minnesota in Round 3. Also going in the third round was one of Allen's SEC rivals, Jared Cook, and his Georgia teammate Corvey Irvin. Cook prepped at North Gwinnett before becoming a top-flight tight end at South Carolina, and is now on his way to the Tennessee Titans. Irvin, a defensive tackle on his way to Carolina, is a product of Laney in Augusta.

#### THE REST OF THE CROP ...

In the fourth round, Tampa Bay chose former Southern Cal and Houston County

defensive end Kyle Moore, while Tennessee took former Southern Mississippi and McEachern linebacker Gerald McRath. Jimmy Dorsey was the head coach at McEachern during McRath's time with the Indians and remembers his intangibles.

"The most unique thing about Gerald is that in just a short period of time he won over his teammates and coaches and just became an instant leader within our football program," Dorsey said. "He's one of the most well-rounded, mature, conscientious players that I ever coached."

Joining Middleton as fifth-round selections were former South Carolina and South Cobb High School wide receiver Kenny McKinley, who is headed to Denver, and former South Carolina and Thomson High School linebacker Jasper Brinkley, who is headed to Minnesota, and former Oklahoma guard and Washington High School lineman Duke Robinson, who is on his way to Carolina. Robinson's head coach at Washington, Rodney Cofield, said his first impression of the then-6-3, 300-plus pounder was that he was "impressive looking", but needed to mature.

"He came here with that aggressive behavior, very young, immature, was not focused," Cofield said. "We pulled him to the side and let him know that he's not going to be straddling the fence, he either was going to be the man or not play at all. He made that choice that he was going to be the man and the rest is history."

Former Georgia Tech Yellow Jacket Andrew Gardner and former Georgia Bulldog Jarius Wynn led off the Georgia high school products that were drafted in the sixth round. Gardner, an offensive tackle headed to Miami, attended Sandy Creek High School. Wynn, a defensive end picked by Green Bay, played at Lincoln County High School. Also going off the board in the sixth round was former Clemson and Douglass High School running back James Davis, who was the final Georgia high school product taken in the draft.

#### BEATING THE ODDS ...

Like Robinson, many of the Georgia draftees had to overcome obstacles to obtain success. For Middleton, college recruiters' biggest concern was his lack of size.

"He was not a real big physical-type kid, but he was kind of wiry and body-strong," Chadwick said. "The question was how much bigger and stronger would he get."

College recruiters also had questions about McRath's size, but another concern stemmed from a dislocated shoulder he suffered as a senior.

"He made it through the year, but it was very difficult," Dorsey said. "He would miss parts of games because it would slide out of place. Southern Miss didn't care. They saw



**LOCAL CONNECTIONS:** Andrew Gardner, former Sandy Creek and Georgia Tech left tackle and recent Miami Dolphins draftee, was one of the 13 Georgia high school products to hear their name called during NFL Draft weekend. Photo courtesy of Georgia Tech.

enough his junior year and sparkles of what he was his senior year."

Robinson, Middleton and McRath answered the questions surrounding them, giving the State of Georgia a new class of NFL players. According to USA Football, Georgia was fifth nationally with 83 players on NFL rosters at the start of the 2008 season. Atlanta was tied for fourth among cities with 12 players.

Butler can be reached at [jbutler@scoreatl.com](mailto:jbutler@scoreatl.com).

## LACROSSE PLAYOFF UPDATE

**SCORE**  
DEREK WILEY

### Playoffs heating up as state's top teams vie for spots in championship games

The GHSA lacrosse playoffs are well underway, and we've already seen some great finishes and matchups so far in the postseason. The boys semifinal matches were played on Tuesday (results not available at press time), and the girls Final Four contests will be played Wednesday. Here's a look at what has transpired so far in the playoffs.

#### ON THE BOYS SIDE ...

Lassiter, the 2004 and 2006 boys state champion, defeated Decatur 13-5 in the quarterfinals last Friday to reach the semifinals against Harrison (Lassiter defeated Harrison 13-10 in a regular-season game back on March 10). The Trojans, led by senior attackmen Griffin Lamie and David Banik, defeated Walton 17-12 in the first round of the playoffs.

Lassiter's Tuesday opponent, Harrison, defeated Westminster 15-6 to reach the semifinals, after taking down Alpharetta 11-7 in the first round. The Hoyas are led by 12 seniors, including stellar defenseman Wes Goldsberry and attackman Brad Garner.

Lassiter also defeated both teams in the other boys final four matchup, Milton and Lovett. These two powerhouses met once before on March 27, with Lovett winning 18-8. The Lions, last year's boys state champions, are led by attackman Owen Green and midfielder North Winship. Lovett defeated Sprayberry 18-4 and St. Pius X 12-1 to earn a spot in the semifinals against Milton. Their semifinal opponents, the Milton Eagles, defeated Woodward Academy 18-2 in the first round and Holy Innocents' 10-6 in the quarterfinals. Milton

relies on the combination of attackman Kevin Dunn and midfielder Kevin Reed.

#### GIRLS SEMIS PREVIEW ...

Milton has won the past four girls lacrosse state championships. This year, the state power will host St. Pius X in a semifinal matchup. This season, the Lady Eagles have big wins over Lassiter and Alpharetta, which was the only team to defeat St. Pius X during the regular season, prevailing 11-10 back on April 17. Milton also tied Chattahoochee, a semifinalist on the other side of the bracket, 9-9 on March 11. The Lady Eagles are led by senior Sarah Jeffery and junior Marissa Hardy. St. Pius is led by senior captains Rachel Hare and Natalie Owens. Pius defeated Walton 12-10 in the quarterfinals to set up the showdown with Milton.

Lassiter will play the underdog role in its semifinal matchup with Chattahoochee. The Lady Trojans reached the semifinals in 2008, but have already lost to Chattahoochee once this season, an 18-5 beating on Feb. 27. But a 17-8 win over Pope and a 7-4 quarterfinals victory over Starr's Mill last Saturday have Lassiter in the Final Four. Lassiter is led by senior Lauren Zinnershine, junior Hannah Sullivan and sophomore Haley Schneider. Chattahoochee defeated Westminster 18-9 and Roswell 14-7 in the quarterfinals to earn the rematch with Lassiter. The Lady Cougars are led by senior midfielder Maddie Fink, who has signed to play college lacrosse at the University of Cincinnati.

Wiley can be reached at [dwiley@scoreatl.com](mailto:dwiley@scoreatl.com).

SIX NEW SPORTS GREATS TO BE INDUCTED!

The Atlanta Sports Hall Of Fame will induct its next class of Hall of Famers at its fifth annual induction ceremony on Saturday, June 6, 2009 at 7 p.m. at the Emory Conference Center and Hotel. Tickets to the event, which is open to the public, are \$100. Individuals can make a reservation by calling Bev Bennett at 770-394-3359.

Find more information at [www.AtlantaSportsHallofFame.org](http://www.AtlantaSportsHallofFame.org)



## 'The campaign we have going on right now, "The Hunt Is On," I think is true'

*Longtime Atlanta sportswriter and Score Atlanta publisher I.J. Rosenberg spoke with Atlanta Falcons owner Arthur Blank. The subjects ranged from quarterback Matt Ryan to a new stadium. Here is what Blank had to say on the state of the franchise ...*

**I.J. Rosenberg: It's amazing to see where this franchise is compared to this time last year when it had hired a new general manager and head coach.**

**Arthur Blank:** Well, I had great confidence in the selections we made for our general manager and head coach, and obviously as soon as they worked together during free agency and the draft, we saw the quality of their decision making and then I saw what was happening with our OTAs (Organized Team Activities) and I really felt more confident about the team than I did prior to that. Did I think we would end up 11-5 and in the playoffs? I can't say I knew that was in the bag, but I certainly thought this team would be more competitive than most people thought.

**New GM Thomas Dimitroff now has a year under his belt. His draft class last season and free agent acquisitions made big contributions to the 11-5 record and playoff appearance. How has Thomas been so successful in such a short period of time, especially considering his youth and the fact that he had no GM experience?**

**Arthur:** I think the fact that he had no GM experience was not an issue. You have to remember, his dad was a scout in the NFL for a long time. Talent evaluations were discussed regularly in his home and he spent over 20 years on the road as a talent evaluator himself and came out of a great organization, New England, where he had been for six years and spent the last five as director of college scouting. So I had great confidence in his intellect and his creative thinking and all things relating to his character and integrity. So I'm not shocked he has been as successful as he's been.

**Coach Mike Smith has also made a major impact. Your feeling on Smith's first season as an NFL head coach?**

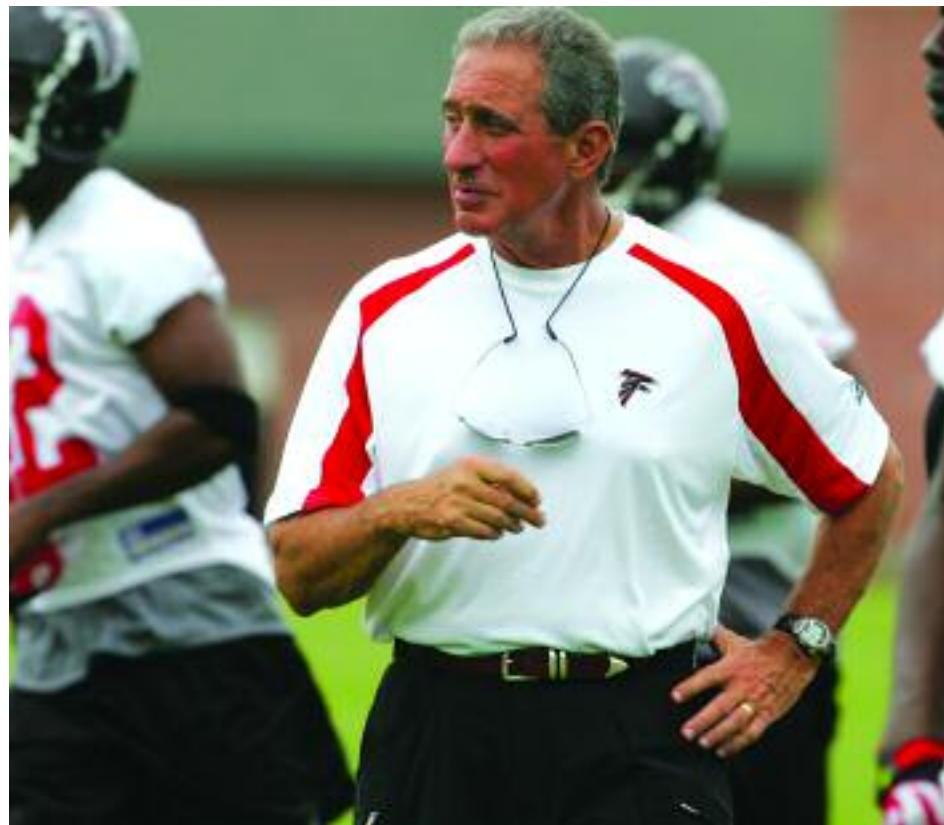
**Arthur:** The fact that he was named Coach of the Year was exceptional. He had a wonderful first year. He did a great job bonding with the players and developing a wonderful coaching staff. It's not just about the head coach, it's about the coordinators and the position coaches and Coach Smith has reached out to every other tentacle in this organization, whether it be finance, or marketing, or ticketing, or sales. In any area he could be supportive, as well as being active in the community, he's done it all in his first year. So he's had a wonderful first year and getting Coach of the Year was certainly a recognition he deserved.

**After going from four wins to 11 in one season behind rookie quarterback Matt Ryan, many around the league feel the Falcons are ready to take the next step and become one of the league's top franchises. How close do you feel this team is to giving this city the consistently winning team Atlanta has always hoped for?**

**Arthur:** I think we have to do two things at the same time: we have to focus on the immediacy of the current situation—that is the game of the week or the current season—but we also have to continue to build the roster and the team for the future at the same time. But I think Thomas and Mike both have the unique perspective and ability to do that.

I've seen many decisions they've made over the last 12 months that were not only the right decisions for the team at the current time, but they will feed into building the right kind of roster for us in the future. I'm all about creating and sustaining a winning organization for a long period of time as opposed to just a one-year wonder deal and that's the avenue that the organization is moving towards.

**A lot has been written and said about your young quarterback Matt Ryan. Is it fair to say he is going to be one of the greats in this league some day?**



**THE MAN IN CHARGE:** Falcons owner Arthur Blank overhauled the franchise last offseason and set his team up for a playoff run in 2008. Now that the fans, players and personnel are energized after an encouraging 11-5 season, the Falcons are hoping for even bigger things in the years to come. Photo courtesy of Jimmy Cribb/Atlanta Falcons.

**Arthur:** I think he had a good first year and learned a lot, but he knows he needs to get better in his second year and he knows that his decision making will need to continue to improve. He can still understand the coaches and their schemes better and can work to open up the playbook even further. Whether that leads to greatness in the National Football League, hopefully, if he keeps his sense of humility, which I believe is an integral part of who he is, and continues to work on improving, then someday that will be said about him. But I don't think he, nor I, are focused on him being great today.

**Ryan has also become the face of the franchise. How important is his play and popularity in giving you the complete franchise you have always wanted to build?**

**Arthur:** I think it's important, but it's really not about one person. This is about a team; it's about a team of coaches, it's about a team of personnel folks who are all working together, it's about a team of players that have a common vision and a common understanding about what they are trying to get done on the field. It's not about "me," it's about "us," and I think that Matt certainly supports that.

**Your team will face one of the toughest schedules in the league, playing non-division games against clubs from the AFC East and NFC East. Can your team match last year's win total or even better it playing teams like the Patriots and Giants?**

**Arthur:** It is a very tough schedule. Based on wins and losses from 2008, we have the fourth most difficult schedule in the NFL. Having said that, that's all about last year and we're about this year. I think it's going to be better. We have a lot of young players who now have had a year of on-the-job experience and we will continue to build the roster through the draft. Also, our coaches will have

be an opportunity for the fans to see all those things and really appreciate them. We will also definitely have some new and exciting stuff for fans to see.

**There continues to be talk of the Falcons building a new stadium. Where are you on this possibility?**

**Arthur:** We have a great partnership with the Georgia World Congress Center and will continue to do so. By the year 2015, '16, or '17, when our bonds are paid off, we will have an option to move to a different site and our stadium will be close to 25 years old. While we've put a lot of money into the Dome, about 50 million dollars in the last three years, eventually, in order to have the best environment for our fans and for us financially, we will need a new stadium. So we will be looking at sites downtown and at some other sites in the greater Atlanta area as well.

**The economy has wreaked havoc on professional sports in general, even having an effect on the NFL, considered the strongest financially of all the sports. How are you handling this with your franchise and how will you continue to make it affordable for fans to come to Falcons games?**

**Arthur:** We made a tremendous commitment in 2008 to try and hold the line on ticket pricing. In 2009, 69 percent of our tickets were either held flat or went down as well; we increased about 30 percent of our tickets. So we're very sensitive to the economy, from both our fans' perspective and our sponsors' perspective. We try to give both as many options as possible and we try to maintain our prices as well as we can; we are well below the league average in terms of all the seating components.

**How encouraged are you about the fan base and where it is headed?**

**Arthur:** I'm very encouraged; we are one of the top teams in the NFL in ticket renewals and probably second or third in the league in terms of new ticket sales and all that is a tribute to Atlanta. Having said that, we have a lot of tickets available still, at all price ranges, and I would encourage any of our fans to come out and support the team and take advantage of opportunities that will not always be there in the future.

**You have always been one that has worn his heart on his sleeve. A year ago you talked about the 2007 season and said it was one of the most difficult experiences in your life. But you and the Falcons appear to have taken that experience, grown from it and have a city buzzing about their professional football team. How excited are you about the 2009 season and what's ahead for this franchise?**

**Arthur:** I cannot be more excited than I am. I'm excited because I've seen the quality of our play this last year with the team, the quality of the leadership, particularly with our general manager and our head coach, and a lot of our great play came from young players that are only going to get better over time. So, I look at that and I see the preparation and the thought process that went into the draft and the opportunities we will have to pick up players that will make us better; I'm very excited about that. But having said that, that's all on paper. We have to go out and play the games and win the games. The campaign we have going on right now, "The Hunt Is On," I think is true. The hunt is on for us and our competitors, and on the field on Sundays the hunt is certainly on. We understand that given today's economy and today's reality, we have to work harder than we've ever worked before.

*Rosenberg can be reached at [ijrosenberg@scoreatl.com](mailto:ijrosenberg@scoreatl.com).*



## Addition of Gonzalez gives Falcons future Hall of Famer and veteran presence

With Pro Bowlers at running back and wide receiver last season, and a rising star at quarterback, the Atlanta Falcons established themselves as one of the top offenses in the NFL last season. Now after filling one of their few offensive holes with a pass-catching tight end in future Hall of Famer Tony Gonzalez, they will only get better. General manager Thomas Dimitroff signed off on a deal last week with the Chiefs, trading a 2010 second-round draft pick to the Kansas City Chiefs for Gonzalez, one of the best to ever play his position.

"His credentials are incredibly strong," said Falcons Owner and CEO Arthur Blank last Friday at a press conference at the Blank Family Office. "Most folks would describe Tony as the league's most accomplished player at the tight end position."

Gonzalez's reputation certainly lives up to the praises of Blank, Dimitroff and Head Coach Mike Smith, who all echoed similar compliments when Gonzalez was introduced to the media.

"Tony is, for us, the type of guy on and off the field that we want to continue to bring the program around," Dimitroff said. "When we drafted Matt Ryan last year we talked about providing him with tools and instruments to make this offense continue to jell and evolve."

### ALREADY A LEGEND ...

The Cal-Berkeley alum has appeared in the Pro Bowl 10 consecutive times in his 12 seasons in the NFL. He also may end up going down as the best tight end in the history of the game. Gonzalez ranks first on the all-time list at the position in receptions (916), receiving yards (10,940) and 100-yard

receiving games.

But the Huntington Beach, Cal., native made it clear that stats aren't why he wanted to be in a Falcons uniform this fall.

"I'm here for one reason, that's to win a Super Bowl," Gonzalez said soon after taking the podium.

Now Gonzalez joins wide receiver Roddy White, NFL Rookie of the Year quarterback Matt Ryan, and running back Michael Turner to form the core of what could be a truly prolific Falcons offense.

"You double-team somebody or you stack the box and somebody is going to get open," Gonzalez said. "Do I think I'll get 100 balls? I don't have to. I've been fortunate to have such a good career it's not about going out there and breaking records. This is about going in and moving those chains."

The Gonzalez signing also could help plug a few of the offense's weaknesses and will especially help Atlanta's red zone offense. Gonzalez is known for getting into the end zone. He caught 10 touchdown passes last season, and has caught 76 for his career, another category in which he ranks first all-time at his position.

The move means that Justin Peelle, who caught three touchdown passes last season, should join Ben Hartsock in a backup role, with both getting most of their time on running downs. Peelle also could be used in the red zone, an area where he made several important scoring grabs last year.

While he will improve the passing game greatly, the trade should also pay dividends in the run game. Gonzalez has been one of the

best run-blocking tight ends in the league, paving the way for running backs such as Priest Holmes and Larry Johnson.

The Falcons also felt that Gonzalez's leadership ability and intangibles were essential in pulling the trigger on last week's deal with the Chiefs.

"Everyone realizes that we need to continue to bring in veteran leadership," Dimitroff said. "It's something that we feel strongly about, knowing that we are a younger team, and we need to continue to sort of sprinkle in the free-agent acquisitions that have that presence, and obviously Tony has that."

### LOOKING FORWARD TO FALL ...

The Falcons are getting a great player in Gonzalez, and one that just might have what it takes to get Atlanta into the Super Bowl for the second time in franchise history. Gonzalez is already excited about preparing for what the Falcons are hoping is a great season this fall.

"This is an unbelievable opportunity," Gonzalez said. "To be able to play with the guys out here, guys like Matt Ryan, Roddy White, Turner in the backfield, wide receiver Michael

Jenkins, the list goes on and on.

"This is going to be something special. I'm really looking forward to being a part of this."

Bagriansky can be reached at [jbagriansky@scoreatl.com](mailto:jbagriansky@scoreatl.com)



**BIG MOVE:** The Falcons are hoping that Tony Gonzalez can provide quarterback Matt Ryan with another offensive weapon, especially in the red zone. Gonzalez ranks first all-time among tight ends with 76 career touchdown grabs. Photo courtesy of Jimmy Cribb/Atlanta Falcons.



## Braves pitcher continuing to serve community while recovering from injury

Even though he hasn't taken the mound since last season due to undergoing Tommy John surgery, Tim Hudson, as always, is staying active in the Atlanta community. Score Atlanta Braves beat writer Fletcher Proctor caught up with Hudson during last week's Braves-Cardinals series, and here's what the injured starter has been up to recently:

**Proctor:** You and your wife are very active in the community, giving back to kids that are less fortunate. What are your plans for the future in terms of community outreach?

**Hudson:** We're always really involved with

the Make-a-Wish foundation. It's a big organization we've been involved with, gosh, going on about 10 years now. The Make-a-Wish and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, we've been involved with a bunch, including the golf tournament. We're forming our own foundation right now, the Hudson Family Foundation.

**What will be the focus of that organization?**

It will be geared towards children's charities, children who are less fortunate due to illness or what-have-you. It's something that we've been passionate about for a long time, children's charities and children in need. It's something

that long after baseball, we're going to be passionate about.

**Is there anyway people can go online to find out more about how they can help?** Our website is going to be up and going in the next week or so, the Hudson Family Foundation. You can get on there and look up different things that we've got going on, a lot of different events that we'll have. We've got a bunch of different fundraisers coming up. We'll have a lot of things like a concert to raise some money and obviously some golf tournaments and some other little things. We're going to try to be creative and have some fun.

**I know you are anxious to get back out there after the injury. While you are rehabbing from surgery, is it great to be able to come into the clubhouse and hang out with the guys and feel like you are still a part of the team?**

Absolutely. Last year was really tough, not being able to dress out with the team and not traveling, so it's nice to come in and get in my locker and put my uniform on and help pull for these guys.

You can learn more about the Hudson Family Foundation and its activities online at <http://hudsonfamilyfoundation.com>. Proctor can be reached at [fproctor@scoreatl.com](mailto:fproctor@scoreatl.com)



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**Soccer, lacrosse to hold championships this weekend; baseball playoffs ready to start**

The baseball regular season is finished and the seedings are set for the postseason. One notable first-round matchup in Class 5A features Region 7 and current state No. 1 (Gasperts.com) South Forsyth and Grayson, a team that has been a tough out in the playoffs in recent years and has experience in the post-season; the Rams finished 18-8 for the regular season to earn the No. 4 seed out of Region 8. Region 6 winner and Class 5A state No. 2 Pope will face Woodstock, the Region 5 No. 4, in a first-round pairing. ... Conspicuously absent from the playoffs this year is 2008 runner-up and 2007 champion Walton, which finished with a 7-11 record in a much-improved Region 6.

Other region winners and No. 1 seeds are Marist out of Region 6-AAAA, with a perfect 15-0 record, Dalton out of Region 7-AAAA, with a perfect 14-0 record, and Cartersville out of Region 7-AAA, with a perfect 13-0 record. Cartersville is the defending Class 3A champion and will try to repeat behind multi-talented senior Donovan Tate, the likely first overall pick in the upcoming amateur baseball draft. Lovett (Region 6-AA), Calhoun (Region 7-AA), Providence Christian (Region 7-A) and Holy Innocents' (Region 6-A) also came out on top of their leagues to earn top seeds.

**SPRING SPORTS BONANZA ...**

The tennis final matches were not set by press time, but will be played on May 8-9 at the Clayton County International Park in

Jonesboro. At press time, a number of 2008 champions were still alive and thinking repeat: the Northview boys, Walton girls, Woodward Academy boys and girls, Riverwood girls, Westminster boys, Greater Atlanta Christian boys, Walker girls, Brookstone girls, and Athens Academy boys. That's an amazing (and seemingly impossible until you consider class movement from last year) number of teams looking to win back-to-back (at least) titles.

The boys track and field state championships—or the Georgia Olympics—will be held once again in Jefferson this Thursday through Saturday, and the girls championships will be held May 14-16 in Albany. Among the teams to watch will be the Collins Hill girls, who will be going for their third straight team title in Class 5A; the Lady Eagles are currently on top of the Gatfxc.com all-classification rankings, with Westlake and Southwest DeKalb (also a defending champion, in Class 4A) rounding out the top three. On the boys side, Redan, led by sprinter Travis Benton and hurdlers Justin Sims and Steve Emere, sits on top of the rankings, with perennial track and cross country powerhouse Chapel Hill second and Grayson third. At fourth, Miller Grove benefits from the sprinting of two-event star Kenneth Gilstrap and long-jumper Stephen Hill (read more about Gilstrap on page 8). ... The gymnastics championships were held last Friday, as Providence Christian's Michele Shealy won the all-around championship while helping her school to the team title.

**WEEKEND TITLE GAMES ...**

The boys soccer semifinals are set for Wednesday; the girls Final Four matches were played Tuesday, and results were not available at press time (for a full preview of the boys soccer semis, turn to page 9). The soccer state championships will be played on Friday and Saturday. ... Likewise, the lacrosse semifinals will be completed for both boys and girls by Wednesday night; boys Final Four lacrosse matches were played Tuesday. Both of the lacrosse state championship games will be played on Saturday. ... The state golf championships were played at 10 different sites throughout the state on Monday. Fans traveled to such locales as the Jekyll Island Golf Resort (for the Class 5A boys and girls finals, played on the Oleander Course and Indian Mounds Course, respectively) and the Forest Hills Golf Course in Augusta (for the Class A boys) to take in the championships.

**GHSA ON ALERT ...**

With spring sports already postponed in Alabama and Texas, the GHSA has announced its plan to deal with Swine Flu should it affect Georgia high school sporting activities. GHSA executive director Ralph Swearngin said that the state would institute plan similar to that of Texas, which canceled all athletic activities until a certain date and is focusing on completing the state championships in the respective sports as soon as play can resume.

*Ewalt can be reached at aewalt@scoreatl.com.*



**THREE-PEAT?:** Going into the finals of the state tennis playoffs, the Northview boys were hoping to capture their third straight Class 5A title. Despite the loss of current Alabama tennis player Ricky Doverspike from last year's team, the Titans were 19-0 on the season as of press time. Photo courtesy of Photographic Arts.

OUR MAN ON  
**RECRUITING**



**SCORE**  
SCOTT JANOVITZ

**Morant looking at Bulldogs; Under Armour Combine brings top talent to Dome**

The Bulldogs received some good news last week when South Carolina defensive end Dexter Morant announced that Georgia is among his three favorite schools. "I want to commit before my season starts," Morant recently told ESPN's J.C. Shurburt. "I will probably wait until August, but it just depends on when I see one that I really like and if it's where I really want to be. I have a top three right now, and really, it is Georgia, Florida and Alabama."

According to the 6-foot-7, 235-pound prospect, the differences between his top schools are negligible. "Right now there is nothing that really separates them. I like about the same thing from each one of them," he said. "They all have great campuses and great academic areas and graduation rates. Also, they all have good football teams so I could go there and be seen."

**ATLANTA COMBINE ...**

Under Armour held its Atlanta combine at the Georgia Dome on April 25 and a lot of the big names in the world of recruiting were on hand to show off their skills. On the offensive side of the ball, Henry County receiver Markeith Ambles was the top performer, as the 23rd-ranked player nationally (according to Rivals.com) showed the skills that have gained him so much recognition.

The 6-2, 182-pound Ambles looked extremely smooth in his route running and displayed solid hands and good speed. He also proved to be strong enough to get off a jam at the line and had consistent success against some of the top defensive backs in the country.

"It was up to par. I just wanted to come up here and compete," he said after the day of training.

Ambles also appeared on our all-recruiting radio show on 790 The Zone, The Official Visit, later in the day and talked a little bit about the recruiting process in general, explaining in particular how honored he is to have received so many offers from such great schools. According to Ambles, Southern California is making the strongest push for his services while the University of Florida is a close second.

Another offensive standout at the combine was Flowery Branch quarterback Connor Shaw. Shaw, who is committed to South Carolina and is the younger brother of Georgia Tech quarterback Jaybo Shaw, displayed exceptional athleticism on the day as well as the throwing mechanics and accuracy to stay at the quarterback position at the college level.

On the defensive side of the ball, Newnan safety Alec Ogletree, who is ranked

31st nationally according to Rivals.com, stood out the most, going head-to-head with Ambles on numerous occasions and holding his own. In one-on-ones, Ogletree had no problem running step-for-step with every wideout thrown his way, displaying excellent speed and coverage ability.

Ogletree, however, may not have been the best player on the defensive side of the ball, as 2011 recruit and South Lake High School (Fla.) defensive back Nick Waisome might have been the star of the day.

"[Ambles] got me good once," Waisome said. "But then I jammed him pretty good the next time. It gives me great experience to go up against a receiver like that. It gets me even better to see what it's like to go against players that are going to the next level."

*Janovitz can be reached at sjanovitz@scoreatl.com*

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## Hawks outlast Heat in seven-game series

On Sunday, the Hawks ousted the Miami Heat from the playoffs, won their first postseason series since 1999 and captured their first seven-game series win in 39 years. Though inconsistent and unpredictable at times, when Atlanta beat the Heat it did so with stifling defense and high-octane, fast-paced offense. That the Hawks excel in transition, rather than in half-court sets, is a team trait that was only further reinforced in round one. A new discovery for the Hawks that was unearthed, however, was some extra depth along the bench, as both Mario West and Solomon Jones made noticeable contributions in Atlanta's first-round win. But, most importantly, we learned that Joe Johnson can lead his team to postseason victory, as the Hawks' shooting guard finished with a team-high 27 points in the series-clinching Game 7 win, going 10-of-19 from the floor and hitting 6-of-8 shots from beyond the arc.

"He's the foundation of our team," Hawks head coach Mike Woodson said of Johnson, a three-time All-Star. "We've built around Joe Johnson, and here he is in his fourth year now, going into the second round of the playoffs, and that speaks volumes for Joe Johnson."

Yet while Johnson might have been the hero of Game 7 (if there was one; remember, Atlanta did win the game by 13 points), Josh Smith was probably the most emotional Hawk after it.

"These are the days you live for," the fifth-year forward said. "To see where we've come from to where we are now is crazy. And this isn't some Cinderella story. We've worked for every bit of this. We earned the

right to be here. And now we're moving on to the next round."

Smith had 21 points and nine rebounds in Atlanta's 91-78 win. For the seven-game series, J-Smoove averaged 16.3 points to go along with 8.9 rebounds and recorded double-doubles in two of the seven games against the Heat.

However, every bit as notable as Johnson's Game 7 performance and Smith's post-game confessional was the fine series Zaza Pachulia put together. In the first round, the sixth-year center out of the Republic of Georgia averaged 7.6 points and 7.1 rebounds in just 23 minutes of action and recorded 12 points and an amazing 18 rebounds in a decisive Game 4 road victory. And, aside from the box scores, Z-Pac's heart and hustle no doubt played a significant role in Atlanta's seven-game defeat of Dwyane Wade and the Heat.

### OFF THE COURT ...

The Hawks will be hosting their annual Hawks Summer Basketball Camp presented by Philips and Sprite for boys and girls ages 8 to 17 between June 1 and 5, and registration became open to the public last week. The camp costs \$295 per participant and includes instruction from former NBA and college players, guest speakers, games, daily lunch, a T-shirt, and more. Russell Athletic is the official apparel provider for the 2009 version of the Atlanta Hawks Summer Basketball Camp. Visit [www.hawks.com](http://www.hawks.com) for more information as well as registration materials.

Janovitz can be reached at [sjanovitz@scoreatl.com](mailto:sjanovitz@scoreatl.com).

## Thrashers faring well in international play

The season may be over for the Atlanta Thrashers, but that hasn't kept many of the team's stars from getting in some action on the ice over the last few weeks. Nine Thrashers have traveled across the pond to take part in the 2009 IHF Hockey World Championships in Switzerland.

The largest contingency of Thrashers is with Team USA, where Zach Bogosian, Ron Hainsey and Colin Stuart are attempting to push the States past reigning champion Russia. Speaking of Russia, the team also has multiple Thrashers, as Ilya Kovalchuk and Ilya Nikulin have each returned to defend their country's championship. Canada, Sweden, Finland and Slovakia each have one representative from Atlanta, as Colby Armstrong, Tobias Enstrom, Ansi Salmela and Boris Valabik have returned home to play for their respective countries.

For fans of the Thrashers, the news has been mostly good; all six teams with a Thrasher on the roster are still in contention for the gold medal. However, one Thrasher won't be affecting his team's chances of taking the big prize. Tobias Enstrom left Sweden's second game of the preliminary round after suffering an injury to the face after being slammed into the boards by Martins Karsums. There has been no word on the severity of the injury or when he could possibly return for Team Sweden.

Leading the tournament so far have been Russia and Canada, which is not a surprise to hockey enthusiasts. The two have combined for zero losses as the tournament moves to the qualifying round. Kovalchuk has led the Russians to their perfect record, leading the team in points and goals scored. Kovy has scored three goals

with six assists, putting him in second place in overall scoring for the tournament.

The most surprising team so far in the tournament has been the United States. The Americans have lost only once in regulation, and even won their group in the Preliminary Round, defeating Sweden, Latvia and Austria for the top spot. Defensemen Hainsey and Bogosian have combined for three points in five games during the tournament. The single-elimination portion of the tournament will begin on May 6.

### LOOKING AHEAD ...

The Stanley Cup playoffs have moved into the second round and after the first round only one former Thrasher still remains in contention for Lord Stanley's Cup. The Thrashers made four trades through the course of the season, sending players to four different playoff teams. Atlanta made deals with New Jersey, Montreal, Anaheim and Columbus. However, three of those teams could not make it out of the first round as the Devils, Blue Jackets and Canadiens each lost their opening-round series. Surprisingly, Erik Christensen and his eighth-seeded Anaheim Ducks were the only team of the four to make it into the second round, as they upset the top-seeded San Jose Sharks in six games.

Now the Thrashers and the other eliminated teams will turn their attention to the upcoming 2009 NHL Entry Draft. The draft will take place on June 26 in Montreal, Canada. The Thrashers have the fourth overall pick behind the New York Islanders, Tampa Bay Lightning and Colorado Avalanche.

Boral can be reached at [jboral@scoreatl.com](mailto:jboral@scoreatl.com)



## Falcons draft for defense, sign Haynes, Miles

The Falcons drafted largely for need in the NFL Draft, selecting a number of players that will fill holes and perhaps even garner starting positions by opening day or at some point next season.

Defensive tackle Peria Jerry of Ole Miss was the first-round pick for the Birds, giving Atlanta a much-needed big body to fill the void at the position after Grady Jackson was not re-signed this offseason.

"You have to be able to stop the run in this league," head coach Mike Smith said after the pick was made. "That's something that we talked about from day one."

Jerry was at the top of the SEC in several categories. He was first in tackles for loss, fifth in sacks, tied for sixth in forced fumbles, and was voted first-team All-America by the Associated Press.

"I think [Jerry] is a guy that can be very disruptive," said Smith. "He creates plays in the backfield. I think that is very important when you have negative-yardage plays presented by the defense. I like his work ethic and he did a great job this season at Ole Miss."

Atlanta took safety William Moore in the second round. Moore was rated as a first-rounder after his junior season before suffering through an injury-riddled season in 2008. An extremely versatile player, Moore can play the strong or free safety position.

The rest of the picks were cornerback Chris Owens of San Jose State, former Richmond Spider defensive end Lawrence Sidbury, Atlanta native and Furman cornerback William Middleton, gigantic offensive tackle Garrett Reynolds of North Carolina, linebacker Spencer Adkins from Miami, and Georgia Tech defensive tackle Vance Walker.

### OTHER MOVES ...

The Falcons did plenty of work outside of the draft as well. They signed University of Georgia grad Verron Haynes for the upcoming season.

Once thought of as too undersized to make it in the NFL at just 5-9, Haynes proved the doubters wrong, playing six seasons with the Pittsburgh Steelers and picking up two Super Bowl rings in the process. He carried the ball 174 times for 738 yards and three touchdowns as a Steeler. Haynes is also a threat to catch the ball out of the backfield, as he tallied 58 receptions for 429 yards and two touchdowns in Pittsburgh.

Atlanta also signed linebacker Edmond Miles. The two-year pro has played in 18 games, spending 2007 with the Miami Dolphins and last year with the New York Giants. Miles led the Dolphins in special-teams tackles with 16 after making the team as an undrafted rookie.

### IN THE COMMUNITY ...

On April 28, defensive tackle Trey Lewis, linebacker Tony Gilbert, center Alex Stepanovic, tight end Justin Peelle and defensive tackle Tywain Myles participated in an intense volleyball practice with the Special Olympics Georgia volleyball team. ... The Falcons organization donated a \$100,000 field development grant to the Boys & Girls Club of Hall County. The grant, which is a part of the NFL Grassroots Program, will help to build a natural-grass football field at the new Joseph Walter Boys & Girls Club in Gainesville.

Bagriansky can be reached at [jbagriansky@scoreatl.com](mailto:jbagriansky@scoreatl.com).

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## Baseball looks to recover; Fox signs player

After getting off to a 31-7 start (12-2 in SEC play) and being ranked the No. 1 baseball team in the country as late as the fourth week in April, Georgia all of a sudden hit the skids. The Bulldogs lost seven of their next nine games, including five in a row, after dropping their first two games of a three-game home series with Florida. If Georgia does not rebound from its recent defeats, the team is in danger of earning a less-than-favorable seed for the SEC Tournament. Florida took a one-game lead over Georgia atop the SEC East standings by virtue of winning the first two games of the series, putting Georgia at risk of not getting a top-two seed in the May 20-24 tournament. LSU, Arkansas, Ole Miss and Alabama all have their eyes on a Western Division Championship and the other top two seeds.

The Bulldogs' saving grace, however, may be their league schedule after the Florida series. Georgia has a three-game home series with Vanderbilt starting Friday and ends its regular season with a three-game series at South Carolina. Both the Commodores and Gamecocks had losing conference records as of last weekend and will likely be the last two teams to qualify for the eight-team SEC Tournament. The Bulldogs' annual matchup with Georgia Tech in the Spring Baseball Classic at Turner Field is sandwiched between those two series, as it is scheduled for Tuesday. Tech won the teams' only other meeting this season.

### SIGN OF THE TIMES ...

The April NFL Draft saw former Bulldogs Matthew Stafford (Detroit), Knowshon Moreno (Denver), Mohamed Massaquoi (Cleveland), Asher Allen (Minnesota), Corvey Irvin (Carolina) and Jarius Wynn (Green Bay) selected in the first six rounds. And after the draft was complete,

several more ex-Georgia players signed free agent contracts. Safety CJ Byrd and line-backer Dannel Ellerbe looked to maximize their chances of sticking in the league by signing with defensive-minded clubs Tampa Bay and Baltimore, respectively. Also, full-back Brannan Southerland signed with the New York Jets and cornerback Ramarcus Brown inked a free agent deal with San Diego, while wide receivers Demiko Goodman and Kenneth Harris will try to make the rosters of Pittsburgh and New Orleans, respectively. Unlike the free agents, Stafford, the No. 1 pick of the 2009 draft, has his spot in the league guaranteed for quite some time, as he has already signed a six-year, \$78 million contract with Detroit.

The men's basketball team also got into the signing mix last week, as new head coach Mark Fox announced his first-ever signee at Georgia, Vincent Williams, a 6-foot-1 point guard from Homestead, Fla. As a senior, Williams averaged 26 points and nearly six assists a game. His signing put the Bulldogs' 2009 class back at two, after fall signee Daniel Miller was released from his Letter of Intent. Franklin County guard DeMario Mayfield is the Bulldogs' other signee. The spring signing period ends on May 20th.

### UP NEXT ...

The men's tennis team (22-3), looking for its third consecutive national championship, is seeded fourth in the NCAA Tournament and will host its Round 1 and 2 matches on Friday and Saturday. ... The SEC champion women's tennis team is 23-2 and will host first- and second-round matches on Saturday and Sunday.

Butler can be reached at [jbutler@scoreatl.com](mailto:jbutler@scoreatl.com).

## Hoops inks newcomers as Lawal tests draft

Help could be coming just in time for the men's basketball team, and not simply because Paul Hewitt and company are coming off a last-place finish in the ACC. Sophomore forward Gani Lawal entered his name in the NBA Draft but has not hired an agent, thus leaving open the possibility of returning to Georgia Tech. Lawal, who averaged 15.1 points and 9.5 rebounds per game in his second season, has until June 15 to pull out of the draft.

Regardless of Lawal's status next year, Hewitt will be welcoming an abundance of new talent into the fold. Heralded recruit Derrick Favors recently turned his verbal commitment into signing a National Letter of Intent with the Jackets. Favors poured in 28.1 points and added 13.3 rebounds per game in leading South Atlanta to the Class 3A state title earlier this year. Named USA Today's National Player of the Year last month, Favors chose Tech over Georgia, N.C. State, and Memphis.

Georgia's loss also became the Yellow Jackets' gain when Loganville Christian Academy senior Daniel Miller switched from one in-state rival to the other. The 6-foot-11 center originally signed with the Bulldogs, but he was released from his commitment after head coach Dennis Felton was fired midway through last season. Miller and Favors join an impressive Georgia Tech recruiting class that includes Kammeon Holsey, Brian Oliver, Glen Rice, Jr., and Mfon Udofia.

### GOLF WINS ACC CHAMPIONSHIP ...

Georgia Tech's golf team captured its third ACC title in the last four years, winning the conference tournament in New London,

N.C. Junior Chesson Hadley fired a 6-under par 66 in the final round and senior Cameron Tringale shot a 2-under par 70 as the Jackets held off Clemson by a total score of 279 to 281. ... The men's and women's tennis teams were not as fortunate in their respective conference championships. In a surprising upset, the seventh-ranked women lost a quarterfinal clash to No. 17 Florida State by the narrowest possible margin of 4-3. National Champions in 2007, the women are still advancing to the NCAA Tournament as the No. 9 national seed. The men dropped a 4-1 decision to N.C. State in the ACC opening round to end their season.

### JOHNSON HURLS PERFECT GAME ...

Senior pitcher Tiffany Johnson tossed a perfect game last Saturday, as the softball team routed host Maryland, 8-0. Johnson struck out nine Maryland batters to pave the way for Tech's fifth straight victory. "I didn't realize it until the game was over and I looked at the scoreboard and it said 0, 0, 0," Johnson explained. "Then I was like, 'Oh my gosh, I did pitch a perfect game!'" With the win, the Jackets (17-3 in ACC play) clinched the regular-season conference title. ... Baseball enjoyed a six-game winning streak in mid-April before splitting a two-game series against Western Carolina and getting edged by Clemson 2-1 in a three-game tilt. The 10th-ranked Jackets bounced back last weekend, however, with two wins over visiting Presbyterian. Jeff Rowland hit a walk-off home run in the bottom of the 10th inning to give Tech a 9-8 win in the second of three games.

Dimon can be reached at [rdimon@scoreatl.com](mailto:rdimon@scoreatl.com).

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## Braves tangle with N.L. Central; Hanson wins

The Braves wrapped up the team's 10-day road trip with a series win over Cincinnati before returning to The Ted for a three-game set with the St. Louis Cardinals. In game one, Jair Jurrjens pitched well, going six innings and allowing just two runs. His run support, though, was MIA as the team could only scratch across two runs for the entire game and the team fell 3-2 in game one. Casey Kotchman was 3-for-4 but flew out with the bases loaded in the eighth to end the team's last threat. In game two, Matt Diaz came through with a clutch two-out, two-run single in the eighth. Jo-Jo Reyes didn't pick up the win but did go seven innings, striking out seven and allowing just one run. Pete Moylan earned the win and Mike Gonzalez struck out the side in the ninth to pick up the save. In the rubber match, Javier Vazquez pitched eight innings, striking out eight but giving up a big four-run fifth inning to doom the Braves. The Cardinals blooped in three straight two-out RBI singles and raked six hits total in the inning. Omar Infante was 3-for-5 in the game with an RBI. For the month of April, the Braves were 10-11.

The month of May brought the return of the oft-injured former Brave Mike Hampton and the Astros to Turner Field. Hampton was greeted with boos from the fans and hits from his former teammates. Jeff Francoeur blasted a first-inning home run and later added another RBI while Yunel Escobar and Omar Infante both went 2-for-4 with two RBIs apiece. Atlanta won that contest 7-2 as Derek Lowe pitched 6.2 innings and picked up his third win of the season. In game two, rain forced the Atlanta bats to run to the clubhouse, where they seemingly forgot to

return once the delay ended. Houston won the second game of the series 5-1, with Atlanta's only run coming via a wild pitch on which Francoeur scurried home. Braves skipper Bobby Cox penciled Jordan Schafer into the leadoff spot for that game for the first time in the rookie's career. Schafer responded with a 2-for-5 day but was caught stealing and was picked off once. Cox also shook up his lineup Friday, when he moved Frenchy into the cleanup spot, replacing Kotchman. In Sunday's finale, the Braves could not scratch out anything against the Astros bullpen in four innings as Houston took the game 7-5 and the series 2-1.

### MCCANN SENT DOWN ...

Braves All-Star catcher Brian McCann was placed on the DL and went to Myrtle Beach for a rehab assignment. The injury listed was blurred vision, dating back to the season-opening series in Philadelphia. McCann and the team thought the problem was fixed in Washington when the catcher received a contact lens, but a trip to the DL was assessed to fully correct the problem. McCann had Lasik surgery several off-seasons ago. After several appearances with the Pelicans, McCann was sent to Gwinnett for a rehab stint, where he will try out prescription sunglasses.

Finally, Braves super-prospect Tommy Hanson earned his first victory of the season with Class AAA Gwinnett last week thanks to six innings of shutout work against Pawtucket in a 5-0 victory. Hanson struck out nine and currently leads the International League in strikeouts with 38. For the season, Hanson is 1-3 with a 1.69 ERA in five starts.

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



**NEWS FROM THE OWLS** 

FOR TICKETS: [WWW.KSUOWLS.COM](http://WWW.KSUOWLS.COM) **STEPHEN BLACK**

## Baseball looks to grab top spot in conference

The Owls (27-18, 17-6) took two out of three from Atlantic Sun rival Jacksonville over the weekend. Curtis Van Wyck went 3-5 with six RBIs and two home runs while Ric Bishop was 4-for-5 with two doubles and three runs. Jayce Whitmer got into the act by going 2-for-5 with four RBIs. Justin Edwards (4-3) got the win for KSU by going five innings and giving up three runs on six hits. The Owls are now just 1.5 games out of first place in the conference.

The first game of the series was played on Friday night in Stillwell Stadium. However, the game was postponed until Saturday due to rain. The visiting Dolphins ended up getting the win by a score of 2-1. The Owls fought back in Game 2 on Saturday. Behind solid pitching from Chad Jenkins, KSU captured an 11-4 victory. Jenkins pitched a complete game and gave up just one earned run on six hits. Bishop and Whitmer had big days at the plate, going 3-for-5 and 4-for-4, respectively. Bishop accounted for five RBIs and homered twice. Whitmer also homered and drove in four runs.

Next up is a crucial three-game weekend set against conference leaders Florida Gulf Coast. First pitch on Friday is at 6 p.m. at Stillwell Stadium.

### OTHER SPRING SPORTS ...

The softball team ended the season at 21-30 overall and 7-13 in the A-Sun. The

final series of the year was a split against East Tennessee State on April 25. Klair Wells and Jackie Warren each homered in the win, which was a 4-2 triumph on the last day of the season. In the first game of the season-ending doubleheader, the Lady Owls dropped a 1-0 heartbreaker. Pitcher April Harper tossed seven innings and gave up no earned runs; the one run ETSU scored was due to an error. On the previous day, the Lady Owls split a doubleheader against USC-Upstate. Both games were shutouts with KSU winning the first 3-0 and dropping the second 1-0. Harper (10-8) got the win by pitching seven shutout innings. Catherine Tarvin knocked in all three runs for the Black and Gold.

Basketball coach Tony Ingle was enshrined into the Cherokee County Sports Hall of Fame on April 29 in Canton. "Without question this is one of the proudest times of my life," said Ingle. "To be recognized by the Cherokee County Hall of Fame Committee is an honor that I am truly humbled to receive."

The tennis teams each finished their season on April 11. The women's squad completed its best Division I season in school history by finishing 11-9 overall and 6-3 in the A-Sun. The men ended the season at 7-12. Both teams wrapped up their seasons with wins over North Carolina Central.

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



**THE SPORTS SCENE AT GEORGIA STATE**

**DAVE COHEN**

## Women's tennis looking to extend historic season; basketball signs two more

Earning its first-ever NCAA berth, the Georgia State women's tennis team will be the No. 3 seed in the NCAA Clemson Regional, May 8-9 at the Hoke Sloan Tennis Center in Clemson, S.C. The four-team regional also includes host and top seed Clemson, No. 2 seed North Carolina and No. 4 seed Winthrop. "We are very happy to be playing close to home, but we will be facing stiff competition," said GSU head coach Miha Lisac, the 2009 CAA Coach of the Year in his second season with the Panthers. The No. 46-ranked Panthers (11-4) will face 20th-ranked North Carolina (18-10) in first-round action on Friday, May 8, at 11 a.m. "Our team has responded to the challenges thus far and we are facing another one in North Carolina. We are looking forward to preparing for the upcoming tournament and building on the confidence we've

gained in the last couple of weeks of the season and in the conference tournament."

Leading the Panthers at No. 1 singles is freshman Diana Nakic, who was honored as the Player and Rookie of the Year in the CAA. No. 2 singles player senior Martina Nitkova was another first-team all-CAA selection after compiling a 10-2 mark in singles, while senior Dariana Kozmina went 10-5 at No. 3 singles to earn second-team all-CAA honors. Nakic has also been selected to play in the NCAA Singles Championship May 20-25 at College Station, Tex.

### POSTSEASONS STARTING UP ...

Earning their fifth NCAA Regional berth in the last seven years, the 29th-ranked Georgia State women's golf team has been selected to the 2009 NCAA Central Regional, May 7-9 in Columbus, Oh., hosted by Ohio State. Georgia State earned an automatic bid to

the NCAA Regional by winning the Colonial Athletic Association championship by one stroke on April 19. "Our season-long goal has been to win the conference, qualify for a Regional, and compete at the National Championship," said Georgia State head coach Cathy Mant. "The girls have done everything to meet the goals we've set. They've worked hard with purpose, a plan and a vision." The Panthers will continue to be led by senior Anna Scott, the highest-ranked golfer in the conference at 93rd in the nation.

Panther baseball finished off a sweep of VCU this past weekend, which moves the team closer to securing a spot at the CAA baseball tournament (May 20-23 at Wilmington, N.C.). "We were able to bounce back this weekend after a tough series at James Madison last weekend and to earn the sweep really showed the character of this team," commented head coach Greg Frady. Georgia State improved to

29-18 and 11-7 in the CAA. (Listen to Panther baseball on WRAS-FM (88.5) ... Georgia State has earned the No. 2 seed in next week's CAA Softball Championships, May 6-8 at Hofstra University in Hempstead, N.Y. The Panthers open the tournament against third-seeded Towson.

Men's basketball coach Rod Barnes has announced the addition of two junior college standouts to an already strong recruiting class with the signing of 6-foot-8 forward Jamar Taylor and 6-4 guard Mi'kyel Nero, both from Brunswick Community College in Supply, N.C. ... Follow the Panthers online at [www.georgiastatesports.com](http://www.georgiastatesports.com). For basketball and football season ticket information call 1-866-GA-STATE.

Dave Cohen is in his 26th season as the "Voice of Georgia State Basketball and Baseball" on WRAS-FM (88.5) and works on the football radio crew at Furman University in Greenville, S.C.



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## What we learned in Round 1: How will the Hawks' stars fare against the Cavs?

It may not have been pretty and it certainly took them long enough (seven games and 15 days, to be exact), but the Hawks outlasted the Heat in the first round of the 2009 NBA Playoffs last Sunday, moving on to the second round of the postseason for the first time since the 1999 season. In defeating the Heat in seven games, Atlanta's first seven-game series victory in 39 years, the Hawks gave their fans plenty of to see, some of it good and, inevitably, some bad. Then, with Atlanta's postseason advancement in mind, here's a look at how some notable Hawks performed against Dwyane Wade and the Heat in Round 1 and how I expect them to contribute against the Cavs from Cleveland in Round 2.

### THE PLAYERS ...

**Mike Bibby:** For the series, Bibby scored 14.9 points, shooting 47 percent from the floor, and dished out 4.4 assists in 36.4 minutes per game. While he was never really exceptional—though he did score 20 first-half points in Game 6 before going scoreless in the second half—Bibby was one of Atlanta's most consistent performers.

Against Cleveland, Bibby earns the right of matching up with Cavs All-Star point guard Mo Williams. Williams is a deadly 3-point shooter and scores nearly 18 points a game (17.8), meaning Bibby's value will not just be found behind the 3-point line on the offensive end of the floor, but also in denying

penetration and outside shooting on the defensive side of things as well.

**Joe Johnson:** Considering Joe is the team leader and its one and only All-Star, he had what could only be considered a disappointing first-round series against the Heat. His 17.1 points per game average was more than four points below his season scoring average and he shot only 41.5 percent from the floor. Still, Big Shot Joe did a lot to redeem his mediocre play by putting up a team-high 27 points in the series finale in addition to recording four assists and five rebounds.

In Round 2, Joe will have to take his game to a level it's never been before, as Cleveland will be sure to slow the tempo of the series, forcing the Hawks into half-court sets where only Joe excels.

**Zaza Pachulia:** Believe it or not, Z-Pac may have been the MVP of Atlanta's first-round series, using heart and hustle to track down loose balls and provide easy garbage points, igniting game-changing plays/runs. To illustrate just how big a role Zaza played in the Round 1 victory, check out what Heat forward James Jones said of Pachulia after Atlanta's all-important, series-changing, Game-4 W: "They made all the plays. Zaza was the guy who every time they needed a big play, he made it. Whether it was a rebound, a tip or a layup, he was the momentum breaker tonight and I think he kind of sealed our fate."

With the height and physicality of Cavs center Zydrunas Ilgauskas sure to give Hawks

center Al Horford problems, Pachulia's defense and energy off the bench—that is, if head coach Mike Woodson doesn't choose to start the Republic of Georgia native against Cleveland's big, physical front line—will be key in the series outcome.

**Josh Smith:** Perhaps the Hawks' most emotional player, outside of the aforementioned Z-Pac of course, Smith began the series on a high note, contributing a double-double in each of Atlanta's first two games at home. While he slowed down a bit as the series progressed, posting below average marks in Games 3, 4 and 6, J-Smoove's scoring, rebounding and shot-blocking averages in the first round were all elevated from his regular-season numbers, though his postseason shooting percentage was down a full seven percentage points.

As for the series against Cleveland, though Joe is the team leader and no doubt its best player, his overall consistency compared to Smith's relative lack thereof make J-Smoove possibly the most important Hawk in Round 2. He will most likely be guarded by Cleveland power forward Anderson Varejao, who is a good player and high-energy guy but lacks the speed and athleticism to run with Smith. Smith's main value can be found in the open floor, where the Hawks, too, happen to be at their best, and his ability to turn games into track meets rather than half-court chess matches will go a long way in deciding the outcome of this second-round matchup.

Janovitz can be reached at [sjanovitz@scoreatl.com](mailto:sjanovitz@scoreatl.com).



**READY TO SLAM CAVS?:** Al Horford returned from a Game 6 absence to make a big contribution in the series finale win. Who will be able to elevate their level of play against LeBron James and the powerful Cavs? Photo courtesy of Don Jackson/Photographic Arts.

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**Collegiate Prep Basketball Academy Boys/Girls Camp.** June 15-19, 2009 (grades 7-6), 8:00am-3:00pm; Crabapple First Baptist Church Premier Boys Camp July 20-24, 2009 (ages 9-16), 8:00am-3:00pm; St. Francis Middle School - Roswell Premier Girls Camp July 13-17, 2009 (ages 9-16), 8:00am-3:00pm; Mount Pisgah Christian School-Johns Creek Contact 678-778-9027 email: admin@collegiateprep.com, website: collegiateprep.com.

**Top of the Key.** Ongoing. Personal basketball lessons with Olympian Debbie Miller-Palmore, boys and girls ages 8-18. For information call 770-465-1502.

**Southern Xposure.** Ongoing. Cobb County Christian School - Marietta. AAU and YBOA tryouts for 9-and-under and 8-and-under teams. For information call 404-447-3992 or email pharper333@yahoo.com.

**Peach State Basketball.** Ongoing. Basketball skill development training for college caliber high school players throughout the off-season. Players can use these sessions to continue improving all year long. Contact Brandon Clay at 404-422-3946 or visit www.peachstatehoops.com for more information.

**Suwanee Sports Academy.** Ongoing. Basketball training and development for boys and girls grades K-12. Rising Stars, Future Stars, Suwanee Basketball League, On Court Player Development, nationally-recognized year-round comprehensive player development program. For more information contact Mike Brown at 678-541-0176 or visit www.ssasports.com.

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## BASEBALL

**Braves.** May 6 at Florida 7:10 PM. May 7 at Florida 12:10 PM. May 8 at Philadelphia 7:05 PM. May 9 at Philadelphia 3:40 PM. May 10 at Philadelphia 12:40 PM. May 11 at New York Mets 7:10 PM. May 12 at New York Mets 7:10 PM. May 13 at New York Mets 1:10 PM. May 15 vs. Arizona 7:30 PM. May 16 vs. Arizona 7 PM. May 17 vs. Arizona 1:30 PM. May 18 vs. Colorado 7 PM. May 19 vs. Colorado 7 PM.

**Gwinnett Braves.** May 6 vs. Syracuse 7 PM. May 7 vs. Syracuse 7 PM. May 8 vs. Durham 7 PM. May 9 vs. Durham 7 PM. May 10 vs. Durham 2 PM. May 11 vs. Durham 2 PM. May 12 at Buffalo 7:05 PM. May 13 at Buffalo 7:05 PM. May 14 at Buffalo 1:05 PM. May 15 at Buffalo 7:05 PM. May 16 at Leigh Valley 7:05 PM. May 17 at Leigh Valley 1:35 PM. May 18 at Leigh Valley 7:05 PM. May 19 at Leigh Valley 10:35 AM.

**Prospect Watch.** Ongoing - Buckhead. Baseball pitching and hitting lessons by a former college and minor league coach. For information call 404-869-7966 or visit www.eteamz.com/tryouts.

**Adult Baseball League Metro Atlanta.** Ongoing. MSBL 18+, 28+, 38+, and 48+. Sunday League contact info is 770.785.2588, e-mail info@atlantamsbl.com, MSBL 18+ Saturday League contact info is 770-436-8114, e-mail AtlantaMABL@aol.com. MSBL 18+ Midweek Wood bat league contact info is 770-436-8114, e-mail AtlantaMABL@aol.com. MSBL 18+ Fall League contact info is 770-436-8114, e-mail AtlantaMABL@aol.com. For more information about our Atlanta Adult Baseball League, please visit our website at www.AtlantaMSBL.com.

**TNT Sports.** Ongoing. Baseball pitching and hitting lessons by Rob Blair, former college coach, Snellville. To set up a free pitching or hitting analysis call 678-344-5876.

**Jack City Baseball.** Ongoing. Baseball pitching and hitting. Instruction with former pro Keith Whitner. 18-y looking for high school players. The new location is inside Velocity Sports in North Gwinnett. For more information call 770-633-0948 or visit jackcity.net.

## FOOTBALL

**Topps Matt Ryan Youth Football Clinic.** Features instruction by Matt Ryan, Justin Blalock and Sam Baker of the Atlanta Falcons. Boys and girls ages 7-14, non-contact. June 6, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Centennial High School. Visit www.mattryanclinic.com or call 513-793-CAMP for more information.

**Georgia Mustangs Football Tryouts.** 2008 Southeastern Division Champs. AAA Minor League Football team. Tryouts May 9 at 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Oglethorpe University. Website is www.gamust.

tangsfootball.com.

**Sports Championship Management Camp.** High school and youth camp at Oglethorpe University. June 15-19 for high school and July 6-10 for youth ages 7-13 weeklong day camp. Website is www.scmgroup-inc.com. Endorsed by current and former NFL players from the Atlanta chapter of NFLPA.

**Collins Hill Athletic Association.** Ongoing. Accepting applications for qualified coaches in all age groups. For information email Craig Deneau at deneauc@charter.net

**Grayson Athletic Association.** Ongoing. Football coaches needed for eighth grade and all age groups. For information call Duane Davis at 678-300-0282 or visit www.gaasports.org.

**Flag Football.** GSL -- Georgia Sports Leagues. Georgia's Largest Flag League. Registration ongoing. We offer 7-Man, 8-man, Youth and Co-Ed styles of play around Atlanta. We play ALL year round. For information please contact (678)799-0159 or email mark@georgiasportsleagues.org. Visit www.georgiasportsleagues.org.

**Georgia Force Home School High School Football Program.** If you are a home school student or a student that attends a Christian school in the Gwinnett or Hall county region and would like to participate in high school football, please contact Scott Willis at 770-531-1499 ext 401 or email at apsttmtn@aol.com The Georgia Force High School football program participates in the GFL (Georgia Football League) and is accepting players from the ages of 13-18 years old. We currently offer a JV and Varsity program. For more information, please go to our web site at www.forcehighschoolfootball.com.

**Arena Indoor Football.** Ongoing. Youth and Adult Leagues. Youth 7 vs. 7; Adult 6 vs. 6. For information, call 678-714-7454 or e-mail info.indoor@atlantasilverbacks.com. www.atlantasilverbacks.com/indoor.

**Capitol City Officials Association.** CCOA is accepting ongoing registration for the upcoming GHSA High School season in football. We hold weekly training meetings. For more information, contact Irvin Seabrook at 404-957-3331 or e-mail lrv\_seabrook@yahoo.com.

## HOCKEY

**Peachtree Booster Club.** Ongoing - Pickneyville Roller Hockey Rink. Fees: \$95 for 12-game season, \$30 out-of-county fee. For information visit www.pbsports.org.

## SOCCER

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**Fair Play Sports Center.** Ongoing on Saturdays. Indoor soccer for ages 4-7, 30- to 60-minute classes. For information call 770-831-3210.

**Hall of Fame soccer clinics.** Ongoing on Fridays - Clarkson Community Center. For under-6 through under-12 players. Fees: Free. For information call 404-508-1050 or visit www.clarkstoncommunitycenter.org. 5:30-7 PM.

**Competitive Amateur Soccer in Atlanta** For more information, visit www.majesticoccer.com.

## TENNIS

**Technique Clinics.** Ongoing - Betsy Grant Tennis Center. Tuesdays (serve/volley) and Saturdays (forehand/backhand). Fees: \$18. For information call 404-790-4772 or email jimhines01@yahoo.com. 2 PM on Saturdays, 6:30PM on Tuesdays.

**Tennis camps for kids.** Ongoing weekly. Lost Mountain Tennis Center. For information call 770-528-8525.

## LACROSSE

**Lacrosse.** Ongoing. Registration for 1st-8th grades. For information call 404-216-5870, email jasona@bagatawaylacrosse.com or visit www.bagatawaylacrosse.com.

**PlayLax Lacrosse.** Ongoing. Players, coaches, referees needed for play at Gwinnett Sports Center. For information call Chris Chico at 678-429-0094 or email chris@kicks-sticks.com.

**Double Stix Lacrosse.** Ongoing - Leagues, Travel Teams and Tournaments for youth, high school and adult's boys and girls. More information about the best lacrosse programs in Georgia can be found at www.doublestixlacrosse.com or by contacting Chris Smith at chris@doublestixlacrosse.com or 404-550-5322.

## RUNNING

**10th Annual Colt's Cup 5K/Mile.** May 9. Milton, 8 AM. 404-583-1611.

**Tucker Road Race 5K/Mile.** May 9. Tucker, 8:00 AM. 770-315-8167.

**River Town Days 5K.** May 9. Bainbridge, 8 AM. 229-400-3674.

**Knotty Pine Run 5K.** May 9. Swainsboro, 8 AM. 478-237-9067.

**River Road Run 5K/Mile.** May 9. Columbus. lynnew67@yahoo.com.

**5K for Relay Fun Run/Walk.** May 9 Griffin, 9:00 AM. 770-412-7211.

**5K Run and Walke for Tyler.** May 9. Cumming, 8:30 AM. 770-887-8315.

**Madison in May 5K/12K.** May 9. Madison, 7:30 AM. 706-224-0002.

**Bremen BRIDGE Family Festival 5K.** May 9. Bremen, 8 AM. 404-961-2234 or web site.

## CAMPS

**Nike Basketball Camps.** Camps located in Snellville, Roswell, Kennesaw, Oxford and 0894-4297 to find out which dates suit your campers best.

**Georgia Tech MaChelle Joseph Basketball Camp.** Ages range from 7-17. Day camps, overnight camps and team camps available. Visit www.ramblinwreck.com or call 404-894-4297 to find out

which dates suit your campers best.

**Harlem Legends.** The Harlem Legends have scheduled their 2008 Shoot for the Stars Basketball & Physical Fitness Camps. The "Shoot for the Stars Youth Basketball Camps and Clinics" are a unique form of learning experiences geared towards young basketball players of all skill levels. There are two Gwinnett County camps this year. Please visit our website (www.harlemlegends.com) or call 404-837-6719 for additional camps.

## VOLLEYBALL

**Gwinnett Sports Center.** Registration ongoing. For information call Jerry Robison at 678-491-0203 or visit www.gsctfun.com.

**Suwanee Sports Academy.** Ongoing. Volleyball training and development for boys and girls grades 3-12. VolleySkills, VolleyStars, VolleyTraining, and OnCourt Player Development, a year-round comprehensive player development program. For more information, contact Mary Carnell at 770-614-6686 x108 or visit www.ssasports.com.

**High School Volleyball League.** Beginning February 7 @ Suwanee Sports Academy for girls grades 9-12. This league is designed for athletes who want to get in the gym but don't want to commit to club volleyball. For more information, contact Christy Howard at 770-614-6686 x106 or visit www.ssasports.com.

**Volleyball Clinic.** Ages: 5th-8th Grade Date: Sunday May 3rd, 10th, 17th and 31st http://www.alltournamentplayerspark.com/

## SWIMMING & DIVING

**Swimming lessons.** Ongoing - Alpharetta City Pool - Alpharetta, Ga. - 1825 Old Milton Parkway. For information call 678-297-6107.

**Gwinnett Aquatics.** Ongoing - 2800 Quinberry Drive and Bethany Church Road. For ages 5-18. Swim team and lessons available. For information call 770-972-4055.

**Senior Water-Exercise class.** Ongoing - Mountain Park pool - Lilburn, Ga. Fees: \$1 per class. For information call 770-546-4650. 10-10:50 AM.

**SwimAtlanta Sugarloaf at Kid's Village.** Ongoing. Swim team, lessons, lap swimming, master's program, water aerobics and scuba available. For information call 678-442-7946.

## YOUTH REGISTRATION

**Sports Championship Management Camp.** High school and youth camp at Oglethorpe University. June 15-19 for high school and July 6-10 for youth ages 7-13 weeklong day camp. Website is www.scmgroup-inc.com. Endorsed by current and former NFL players from the Atlanta chapter of NFLPA.

**Soccer-Soccer Alley.** Ongoing - 3265 Roswell Road-Atlanta. For information call 404-266-0762 or visit www.starsoccerclub.com.

**Tucker Youth Soccer.** Ongoing - 2803 Henderson Road Tucker, Ga. For information call 770-414-0538 or visit www.tyusa.com.

**Track and Field - Peachtree City Flash Youth Track Team registration.** Ongoing - Riley Field -Peachtree City, Ga. For ages 6-14. For information call 770-631-3552 or email ptcf@bellsouth.net.

**Gymnastics - Georgia Gymnastics Academy.** Ongoing. For registration in Lawrenceville call 770-962-5867; in Suwanee call 770-945-3424.

**Gym Elite.** Ongoing. Registration for ages 2 and older. Cheerleading for ages 6 and older. For information call 770-242-0678.

**Youth Soccer Training.** Ongoing. Start age 3 and up. For information, call 678-714-7454 or e-mail info.indoor@atlantasilverbacks.com. www.atlantasilverbacks.com/indoor.

**Flag Football.** GSL -- Georgia Sports Leagues. Georgia's Best Sports Leagues. Registration ongoing. We offer Youth Flag Football for ages (6-8) and (9-12) year olds for both Boys & Girls. Games are played in the Chamblee, Doraville, Dunwoody area. Next season starts in February. For more information please contact (678)799-0159 or email mark@georgiasportsleagues.org. Visit www.georgiasportsleagues.org

**Atlanta Junior Golf.** Boys and girls, ages 7-18, can enjoy summer and fall tournaments throughout Metro Atlanta and Middle and North Georgia (from Dalton to Macon and from Carrollton to Athens) in one of the nation's premier junior golf associations. All skill levels are welcome, from beginner to experienced players, with more than 8,000 rounds of golf available during the summer program alone. For more information, log on 770.850.9040.

## SOFTBALL

**AYSA Spring Season.** Ongoing - North Park - Cogburn and Bethany - Alpharetta. Fees: If Alpharetta Residential Property Tax IS NOT PAID at the primary residence of the player, then the Non-City Resident Fee must be paid. After Jan. 13, \$101 ate fee is charged.

**Senior Softball League.** Ongoing - Best Friend Park, Jimmy Carter Blvd., Norcross, GA. All Skill levels welcomed. Men age 45+ and women age 40+. Open practice on Saturdays and games on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays. For information call Gary Mastrodonato at 770-266-7042 or visit www.atlantaseniorssoftball.com.

**Open Recreational Softball.** GSL -- Georgia Sports Leagues. Georgia's Best Sports Leagues. Registration ongoing. We offer "Men's" and "Co-Ed" styles of play in Doraville/Dunwoody area. Monday, Wednesday & Sunday league play available. Next season starts in February. We play ALL year round. For more information please contact (678)799-0159 or email mark@georgiasportsleagues.org. Visit www.georgiasportsleagues.org.

**Capitol City Officials Association.** CCOA is accepting ongoing registration for the upcoming GHSA High School season in fast-pitch softball. We hold weekly training meetings. For more information, contact

Irvin Seabrook at 404-957-3331 or e-mail lrv\_seabrook@yahoo.com.

**K-Club Classic -- D1 Fastpitch Softball.** February 20-22. Kennesaw State, Memphis, Buffalo, Miami, Drexel and Iowa are schedule to participate. Entry fee \$300. All Tournament Players Park, 3910 Canton Hwy Marietta, GA 30066. Register at www.alltournamentplayerspark.com or (678) 384-6500.

## GYMNASTICS

**Gymnastics Classes at Gymnastics Academy of Atlanta.** Ongoing - 3126 Cobb Parkway Kennesaw, Ga. For information call 770-975-8337 or visit www.gymnasticsacademyofatlanta.com.

**Gymnastics Classes at Gwinnett Gymnastics Center.** Ongoing - 927 Killian Hill Road Lilburn, Ga. For information call 770-921-5630.

**Atlanta School of Gymnastics in Lawrenceville.** Ongoing. Classes for tots through teens. Cheerleading classes for ages 5 and older. For information call 770-277-9434.

**The Little Gym of Snellville.** Ongoing. Noncompetitive gymnastics and motor-skills development classes and camps. For ages 10 months-12 years. For information call 770-982-0901 or visit www.tlgsnellville.ga.com.

## RACING

**Off-Season Legends Race.** May 8 at Atlanta Motor Speedway.

**Safetenn Georgia Driving Academy.** May 9 at Atlanta Motor Speedway.

**Richard Petty Driving Experience.** May 14-17 at Atlanta Motor Speedway.

**Sports Car Club of America Time Trials.** May 15-17 at Atlanta Motor Speedway.

**Friday Night Drags Pre-Season Test and Tune.** May 15 at Atlanta Motor Speedway.

**Drift Atlanta.** May 8-9 at Road Atlanta.

## OFFICIATING

**Basketball - Duluth basketball association.** Ongoing. Looking for youth officials with training provided. For information call Barry Sullivan at 770-623-1750.

**Football - Lanier Football Officials Association.** Ongoing. GHSA member accepting applications with weekly training meetings. For information call Tom Tipton at 770-967-3197, ext. 239 or visit www.lanierofficials.org.

**Metro Atlanta Wrestling Officials Association.** Ongoing. Needs officials. For information call Bud Hennebaul at 770-338-0705 or email BudHen27@aol.com.

**9RCorp Sports Officials.** Ongoing. Provider of sports officials for multiple sports including basketball, flag football, & softball. Looking for additional officials. For information call Dennis Reagan at 404-213-0588 or email 9rcorp@150mail.com.

## ATLANTA SPORTS COUNCIL

**Chick-Fil-A Bowl.** Dec. 31, 2009. Georgia Dome. For tickets, call 404-444-4444.

**To reach the Atlanta Sports Council call 404-586-8510 or visit www.atlantasportscouncil.com.**

## MISC

**Pool Tournament.** Every Monday - Ongoing - Motorheads Bar 'n' Grill - Henry County. Cost: No cover. For information call 770-898-0008 or visit www.motorheadsbarandgrill.com. 7 p.m.

**Pool Tournament.** Nightly - Ongoing - Sean Patrick's Bar & Grill - Buckhead. Fees: No cover. For information call 770-650-5723. 8 PM.

**East Cobb Bass Club.** Ongoing - Ryan's Family Steakhouse - Canton Road - Marietta, Ga. Boaters and nonboaters welcome. Meets the first Tuesday of each month. For information call 770-364-3036 or email noeyf@aol.com. 7 PM.

**GEORGIA BIKES! Membership.** Ongoing. The effectiveness of GEORGIA BIKES! is dependent on volunteers, supporters, and members, like you, who are willing to make a Club/Small Business: \$100.

**Performance Training Inc. at Suwanee Sport Academy.** Ongoing. Offers speed, agility, and quickness training for athletes across multiple sports. For more information, contact Dustin Wolf at 770-614-6686 x121 or visit www.ssasports.com.

**Suwanee Sports Academy.** Pre-K Athletics for 2, 3 and 4 year-olds introduces the basic skills needed to play basketball, soccer, and t-ball. Also, there is a unique after school program that provides students with a weekly sports curriculum along with the after school classroom setting. For more information, call 770-614-6686 or visit www.ssasports.com.

**Club Sport.** Club Sport opens registration for summer leagues on May 1st with league play beginning in June. Club Sport is Atlanta's recreational sports and social group with over 10,000 participants each year on 120 teams in 120 leagues. Each season Club Sport offers leagues in flag football, softball, soccer, sand and indoor volleyball, basketball and more. Club Sport is where Atlanta comes to play! For more information about Club Sport, upcoming events, photos or interviews with the owner, please contact Rich Alvarez at 678-994-0793 ext. 818 or visit www.usclubsport.com.

**Stout Irish Sports Pub Events and Specials.** Monday: Dart League and Free Pool from 11 p.m.-close; Tuesday: Texas Hold'em; Wednesday: Trivia Night and Free Pool from 11pm-close; Thursday: College Night with DJ All Night; Friday: Happy Hour Food Specials; Saturday: Game Day all day long on Stout's big screen plasma TVs; Sunday: Game Day all day long on Stout's big screen plasma TVs. Miller High Life Beers are always \$1. Beer Club: Guests join for \$120 and receive a prestigious Stout Club Mug engraved with their name on it. Each visit over the course of the year, members enjoy their first beer of choice on the house. For more, call 404.869.1151 or email www.stoutish.pub.com.

# WRAPPING UP THE DRAFT



JOSH BAGRIANSKY

## DT Jerry leads athletic group of defenders

With the acquisition of tight end Tony Gonzalez, the Falcons were freed up to focus almost entirely on the defense in this year's NFL Draft. Here's a rundown of the team's eight picks.

**Peria Jerry:** Atlanta filled one of its defensive holes when it picked Jerry No. 24 overall. The 6-foot-2, 290-pound defensive tackle was one of the more dominant inside forces in college football last season at Ole Miss. He led the SEC in tackles for loss with 18, and also made seven sacks. He could very well start right away. "We are very excited about having Peria on board," said Falcons general manager Thomas Dimitroff. "Peria is a big, strong, country guy. He is going to hold the point of attack. He also has the ability to be a one-gap guy and be disruptive behind the line of scrimmage." ESPN and the Associated Press rewarded Jerry's standout senior season by voting him first-team All-America.

**William Moore:** Like Jerry, Moore should challenge for a starting spot this fall. The former Missouri Tiger was projected as one of the top safeties after his junior season in which he notched eight interceptions, ranking first on the all-time single-season list at Mizzou. But Moore suffered through a tough senior campaign, as questions about the mental side of his game arose and his stock plummeted. However, Moore did play with an injured foot that bothered him ever since the first game of the season. "He is a downhill, blow-you-up kind of tackler," Dimitroff said. "He's a guy that is very physical on the field, but he also has range. He is a mid-4.4 guy, so he has speed for us. This guy definitely brings speed and urgency to our football team and this defense." Draft guru Mel Kiper called Moore one of the hidden gems in the draft in the buildup to the event, predicting that Moore's junior season was far more indicative of his capabilities.

### SECOND-DAY SELECTIONS ...

**Chris Owens:** Dimitroff continued to focus on the defense with the first pick of Day 2. He took San Jose State's Chris Owens with the 90th pick in the third round. Owens started 38 games as a Spartan, making 228 tackles and 13 picks. The 13 interceptions were tied for second in SJSU history.

**Lawrence Sidbury:** Jamaal Anderson's continued struggles at the defensive end position opened up the possibility of drafting a player to push him in training camp, and

perhaps eventually win the job. Although he played his college ball at an FCS school in Richmond, Sidbury has huge potential. He made 11.5 sacks in 2008, the third highest single-season mark in team history.

**William Middleton:** The Falcons drafted an Atlanta native in Middleton, who attended The Marist School. Middleton started for three seasons at Furman, accumulating 186 tackles, 16.5 of them for a loss, and seven interceptions.

**Garrett Reynolds:** Atlanta traded up to get the mammoth offensive tackle out of North Carolina. Reynolds made 26 starts at right tackle as a Tar Heel, and was selected second team All-ACC by the Associated Press last year. Standing at, 6-7, 310 pounds, Reynolds certainly has the size to compete.

**Spencer Adkins:** Linebacker Spencer Adkins could help provide depth at the position, and also could play on special teams early on for Atlanta. The 156th overall pick made 72 career tackles at the University of Miami, and recorded a career-high 52 tackles in the 2007 season.

**Vance Walker:** The Georgia Tech product was a huge part of the Jackets' resurgence on the defensive side of the ball over the last few seasons. He made 8.5 sacks in 2007 from the defensive tackle position.

### UNDRAFTED FREE AGENTS ...

The Falcons signed 10 undrafted free agents after the draft. Among them was former Alabama Crimson Tide quarterback John Parker Wilson, who will push D.J. Shockley for the third-string quarterback job in training camp. Wilson passed for 7,894 yards in his time at Tuscaloosa. Florida State linebacker Derek Nicholson also got the call from Dimitroff. He led the 'Noles in tackles last season with 81. Another ACC product in Aaron Kelly will enter the mix. A graduate of Walton High School in Marietta, Kelly made 67 catches for 722 yards and four touchdowns his senior season. Kelly's 20 career touchdown catches are also the most in Tiger history. Joining them are wide receiver Darren Mougey (San Diego State), defensive end Maurice Lucas (Colorado), long snapper Robert Shiver (Auburn), offensive lineman Ryan Stanchek (West Virginia), offensive lineman Jose Valdez (Arkansas), punter/kicker Robbie Dehaze (Northern Arizona) and linebacker Brock Christopher (Missouri).

Bagriansky can be reached at [jbagriansky@scoreatl.com](mailto:jbagriansky@scoreatl.com).

## SAID ON THE AIR

*"Dwyane didn't like it. He said, 'I hurt my head before. Now you can't push me. You can't foul me when I go to the basket. I have a hurt head, and I'm Dwyane Wade. I do commercials!'"*

- Hawks radio play-by-play announcer Steve Holman during Game 5 of the Hawks-Heat series

## KEEPIN' AN EYE ON

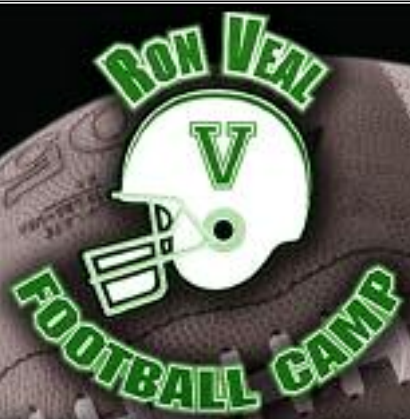
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

As usual, Sekou Smith has done a commendable job covering the Hawks, specifically throughout the first round of the playoffs. On Thursday, Smith blogged on many different topics, including the status of the injured Al Horford, the statistical advantages the Hawks maintained in each victory, and Zaza Pachulia's new and more important role. But a quote from Jermaine O'Neal was best among the information provided: "Don't make any plans for Sunday. I promise you, we'll be back here Sunday."

The NFL Draft may be over, but that doesn't mean we're through discussing it. On Thursday, D. Orlando Ledbetter posted his recent interview with Falcons general manager Thomas Dimitroff, and the second-year GM had a lot of good things to say. Dimitroff discusses each of the team's eight draft picks and seems particularly excited about Richmond defensive end Lawrence Sidbury, whom the team selected in the fourth round.

## MEDIA HALL OF FAME

Sports Illustrated came out with its way-too-early 2009 college football preseason rankings and, as expected, both Georgia and Georgia Tech made the list. What was a departure from the norm, however, is the fact that the Yellow Jackets landed a higher ranking than the Bulldogs, coming in at 14th on the list, one spot ahead of UGA. As expected, the Florida Gators earned the No. 1 ranking, with Texas and Oklahoma landing Nos. 2 and 3, respectively. In all, five SEC schools made the list while only three ACC schools were included.



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