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LIFT OFF!

Contenders emerging as region schedule heats up

A LOOK AROUND DeKALB COUNTY SEE PG 6

The image shows two basketball players in action. The player on the left is wearing a white jersey with 'CROSS' on it, and the player on the right is wearing a black jersey with 'WESTLAKE' and '2' on it. They are both jumping to shoot or pass the ball. The background shows a crowd of spectators in a gymnasium.

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SCHOOL LISTING

CHEROKEE/FORSYTH: Cherokee, Creekview, Etowah, Forsyth Central, North Forsyth, Sequoyah, South Forsyth, West Forsyth, Woodstock
COBB: Allatoona, Campbell, Harrison, Kell, Kennesaw Mountain, Lassiter, Marietta, McEachern, N. Cobb, N. Cobb Christian, Pebblebrook, Pope, S. Cobb, Sprayberry, Walton, Wheeler
DEKALB: Chamblee, Columbia, Decatur, Druid Hills, Dunwoody, Lakeside, Marist, Miller Grove, M.L. King, Paideia, Redan, St. Pius X, Southwest DeKalb, Stephenson, Stone Mountain, Tucker
FULTON: Alpharetta, Blessed Trinity, Centennial, Chattahoochee, Douglass, Grady, Lovett, Mays, Milton, North Springs, Northview, Riverwood, Roswell, Tri-Cities, Westminster, Woodward Academy
GWINNETT: Berkmar, Brookwood, Buford, C. Gwinnett, Collins Hill, Dacula, Grayson, Greater Atlanta Christian, Meadowcreek, Mill Creek, Norcross, North Gwinnett, Parkview, Peachtree Ridge, South Gwinnett, Wesleyan
GORDON: Calhoun, Gordon Central, Sonoraville

THE HIGH SCHOOL PLAYERS OF THE WEEK



SHONZIKIO WILLIAMS
TUCKER HIGH

The senior wing for the Tigers was the team's leading scorer in the big 67-61 overtime win over Walton in the Tribute to a King Holiday Hardwood Classic on Monday. Williams has had some high point totals this season, going for 24 points (21 in the first half) in a 79-72 win over Lakeside-DeKalb in the DeKalb County Holiday Tournament. He is top-15 in scoring in DeKalb County.



ERIN HALL
WESLEYAN SCHOOL

The senior shooting guard went for a career-high 28 points in the Lady Wolves' 72-59 win over Osborne in the Tribute to a King Holiday Hardwood Classic. Hall was 12-of-20 from the field in the game, including four 3-pointers, and added four rebounds and two assists. Hall, who is committed to play college ball at Wake Forest, is trying to lead Wesleyan to its third straight state title.



THURSDAY JANUARY 21
CAROLINA, 7PM



TUESDAY JANUARY 26
ANAHEIM, 7PM



TUESDAY FEBRUARY 2
TAMPA BAY, 7PM



SATURDAY FEBRUARY 6
FLORIDA, 7PM



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JAN 22
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JAN 29
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TEAMS TO WATCH

SCORE
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ALEX EWALT



Top squads coming into their own in January as season surpasses halfway point

A few weeks into the New Year, we are starting to get a better idea of the identities of some of the state's boys hoops teams. Some of the contenders have been surprises, some were expected to be at the top. But all the following squads are definitely noteworthy in one way or the other. Here are a few squads to keep an eye on, and a look at how they got to where they are now.

Newton – The Class 5A Rams are enjoying a strong season with a 14-1 record at press time, the only loss being to '09 4A semifinalist Richmond Academy by five points. The team went undefeated in a Tennessee tournament in November and is fresh off a drubbing of Luella last Tuesday, 73-55. At 6-0 in the region, a playoff spot is highly likely, but what will the Rams have in store when they face some of the top teams in the state? Newton has lost to the only ranked team it has played, and isn't scheduled to play any ranked teams until the playoffs would start. Is the gaudy record a byproduct of less-than-stellar competition?

Westlake – The South Fulton school loses the best player in Georgia off last year's team (Jelan Kendrick – transferred to Wheeler) but simply proceeds to knock off most of the competition in its way until Tuesday when it lost to a good but not great Morrow team for its second loss of the season. The Lions are 15-2 at press time thanks in large part to the play of Clemson commit Marcus Thornton, a 6-8 player who can score and defend. With a win over Rice (N.Y.), the No. 17 team in the nation at the time according to USA Today, in the Chick-fil-A Classic over the holidays, we've seen what Westlake can do against top talent. The '09 5A semifinalist should again be a factor deep into the playoffs.

Norcross, Mill Creek – The Region 7-AAAAA monster, Norcross, may just get a challenge from upstart Mill Creek this winter. Norcross isn't the juggernaut it was when it won three state titles, the last coming in '08, but the Blue Devils aren't bereft of talent. Norcross is led by swingman Jeremy Lamb, headed to UConn, and sophomore shooter Chris Bolden, a Brookwood transfer, has stepped up nicely lately. The X-factor for Norcross will be how it copes without big, bruising forward Adrian Hubbard, who left the team a few weeks ago to nurse an injury and start preparing for his football career at Alabama as a tight end; he also could have been looked at as a basketball prospect had he stuck with the hardwood. Norcross gets a

tough out-of-state test against Thomas Jefferson (N.Y.) this Saturday, a game that should tell us if they can truly hang with the big boys this season. Mill Creek, on the other hand, has the same 9-1 record as Norcross in the region, but dropped a nine-point decision to the Devils last month; they'll get another crack at Norcross on Jan. 29 on the road. Mill Creek has surprised by surging into the rankings this season, but will want to prove its legit with some big second-half region wins.

Chamblee, Lakeside-DeKalb, Miller Grove, Tucker – What else can you say about Region 6-AAAA? These four teams are the frontrunners for playoff bids, although talented Stone Mountain and Southwest DeKalb teams will have a say come region tourney time; as we know, the four best teams don't always make it in. But in looking at these squads, each one ranked in at least one poll, the league has four elite teams. Chamblee is led by the scoring of senior David Mason and has risen to top-five status already. Lakeside-DeKalb is a quick, guard-oriented team that averages well over 80 points a game and recently dropped 111 on a good East Hall squad in the Tribute to a King Holiday Hardwood Classic at Centennial on MLK Day. Miller Grove loses Mfon Udofia and Stephen Hill to Georgia Tech (basketball and football, respectively), but has perhaps the state's best post tandem in sophomore Tony Parker (pictured) and senior Donte Williams, both 6-foot-9. And Tucker lost Virginia Tech freshman Manny Atkins from last year's runner-up squad (the Tigers were blown out by Miller Grove in the finals), but center Brandon Dawson (Kennesaw State commit), wing Shonzikio Williams and sharpshooter Chris Kingsberry have Tucker clicking again. It will be a slugfest from here on out in this league, but at least two or three talented teams will miss out on the postseason again from Region 6-AAAA.

Rockdale County – One of the surprises of the state so far, Rockdale has quietly compiled an 18-1 record, with the only loss a one-point defeat to out-of-state Gadsden City (Ala.). The Bulldogs are led by junior swingman Kevin Ware, a 6-4 prospect who can really fill it up. Fellow junior Bernard Thompson can also stuff the stat sheet as well. Rockdale has great wins, including a tournament championship at the Florida Shootout over the holidays, where Ware was named MVP. The 'Dogs have dropped top in-state competition, too, downing region rival

Clarke Central, a ranked squad, on Jan. 9, and Class 5A Stephenson on Dec. 28. Can they translate early success into a strong region finish and a postseason run?

Dunwoody – The Wildcats are back after a tough transition year in '09 which saw the team dealing with the loss of a number of top college prospects. Javon McKay is one of the top seniors in the state, and he's got Dunwoody back into the rankings and back onto the competition's minds. The 6-4 McKay gets help from big point guard Shane Porchea, also 6-4, on a senior-laden roster. Dunwoody lost 79-57 to Region 5-AAA powerhouse Columbia, a league opponent with its own hopes of playoff glory. The Wildcats have a relatively easy schedule between now and the final game, a home matchup with Columbia on Feb. 12 to close the regular season. The outcome in that contest could tell us whether the 'Cats are a contender or a pretender in 2010.

Greater Atlanta Christian – Class 2A's top-ranked boys team has streaked out to a 15-1 record, staying undefeated in the state with the only loss to a powerful Melrose (Tenn.) team in the finals of the Arby's Shootout over the holidays. The Spartans made a statement when they knocked off national power United Faith Christian (N.C.) at Centennial in the MLK Day showcase last Monday, showcasing a combination of great physical talent and maturity. This is a well-coached team that, right now, should be the favorite to take the title. Senior center Trent Wiedeman is a smart post player that can display bursts of athleticism as well as a great outside shot; he's headed to the College of Charleston next year. Junior wing player Malcolm Brogdon is the next big thing for GAC, as he scored 27 points against the tough United Faith team, which sports a

handful of D-I prospects.

Cover photos of Norcross' Jeremy Lamb and Westlake's Jeff Newberry are courtesy of Nat Carter/SydCamVisions. Next week, Score Prep will take a look at some of the more intriguing girls squads from around the state. Ewalt can be reached at aevalt@scoreatl.com.



SLAM IT DOWN: Miller Grove's powerful 6-foot-9 sophomore Tony Parker goes up for a jam. Parker is already one of the leaders on a relatively young Wolverines team that has lost six games to top competition, but that should be ready to defend its Class 4A title come the postseason. Photo courtesy of Nat Carter/SydCamVisions.

TWO FOR TUESDAY

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ON THE PREP BEAT




BRIAN JONES

Centreplex hosts wrestling state duals; GAC impresses in MLK Day showcase

Macon was the center of attention last weekend as the GHSA wrestling state duals took place at the Macon Centreplex. In Class 5A, Collins Hill defeated Pope 38-9 in the finals to win its third consecutive state title. Eleven Collins Hill wrestlers claimed victories in the finals, including T.J. Mitchell and Joel Smith. Mitchell has committed to Virginia Tech and Smith will spend his college career at Arizona State. The Eagles made their way to the finals by defeating Johnson-Savannah, Centennial and Valdosta. In the third-place match, Camden County defeated Valdosta 38-26.

In Class 4A, Loganville defeated Alexander 33-28 in the finals to claim the state title. Will Hale, Aaron Quade, Zach Wolaver, Matt Cragin, Jeremiah Vaught, Jon Williams, Justin Fancher and John Smith all came away with wins to help Loganville top Alexander. In the third-place match, Cass defeated Marist 37-21.

Gilmer was the top team in Class 3A as it defeated West Forsyth 47-18. Gilmer was able to dominate the lower weight classes with wins by Justin Karr (112), Zach Horton (125), Danyhul Becker (130) and Tyler Davenport (135). The Bobcats got past Riverwood, Columbus and Eastside to make their way into the finals against West Forsyth.

In Class 2A, Jefferson claimed the top spot with its 41-22 win over Sonoraville in the final match. Sonoraville got off to a strong start as Jay Teague defeated Isaac Kelly in the 112-pound class. They also got a win from the earlier stages of the finals when Richard Davis got a 12-5 decision over Daniel Barber in the 130-pound weight class. But Jefferson got on a hot streak in the middleweights to earn the school's ninth title in a row.

And finally in Class A competition, Bremen was able to top Gordon Lee 44-27 in the championship match. It was a contest that went back and forth, as Bremen would

win a couple of matches but Gordon Lee would follow with a couple of wins. One of the key wins for Bremen was in the 160-pound weight class when Slade Madden defeated Austin Goodlet via pin with less than 30 seconds left in the third period. That started a Bremen rally where they would win the last three of four matches to secure the victory. Collins Hill, Loganville, Gilmer, Jefferson and Gordon Lee will look to do the same thing when the traditional state finals take place in a month.

AROUND THE COURT ...

Basketball was in full gear on Martin Luther King Day as the third annual Tribute to a King Holiday Harwood Classic took place at Centennial. There were five games that started from noon to 9:30 p.m., but the marquee game had to be the boys contest between Greater Atlanta Christian and United Faith, a school from Charlotte, N.C. United Faith is considered one of the best programs in the country, but it was the Spartans' night to shine as they took down the Falcons 78-55. Trent Wiedeman, a College of Charleston signee scored 11 points and pulled down 13 rebounds while Elliott Long added 22 points, which was a career best. Malcolm Brogdon added 27 points in the win. GAC has proved that it can play with some of the best teams in the country, losing a close game to Melrose (Tenn.) 55-51, a team that was ranked No. 21 in the nation at the time. With the win, the Spartans improved their record to 15-1. They will have another showcase game on Jan. 30 when they take on Greene County (Ala.) in the Norcross Showcase at Norcross High School.

In football news, Da'Rick Rogers is getting more attention by the national media, as MaxPreps named the Calhoun receiver the Small Schools National Player of the year. Rogers ended the 2009 season with 85 catches for 1,647 yards and two touchdowns and led

the Yellow Jackets to two consecutive state title appearances. Other players to make the Small Schools All-American team were Kolton Huston and Jessel Curry, both from Buford, and they also made the first team. Lineman Catlin Alford out of Adairsville and quarterback Nick Marshall from Wilcox County made the second team. To be considered for the MaxPreps award, a player had to be at a school with less than 1,000 current students.

Two more of the top players in Georgia were honored last week, as Alec Ogletree and Garrison Smith got National High School Player of the Year awards from the Touchdown Club of Atlanta. Ogletree was named Bobby Dodd National High School Back of the Year

while Smith was named Bobby Dodd National High School Lineman of the Year. They will receive their award at Georgia Tech on Feb. 13, when the Touchdown Club of Atlanta will name its all-metro team.

Northside-Warner Robins has found a new coach. The man that will be succeeding Conrad Nix will be Kevin Kinsler, who has been Northside's defensive coordinator for the last 15 years. Since 1998, his defense has allowed less than 10 points per game nine times and 15 points per game just once. Nix decided to retire after leading Northside to two state titles in 2006 and 2007.

Jones can be reached at bjones@scoreatl.com.

WRESTLING STATE DUALS TOP FINISHERS

AAAAA		AAAA	
1st Place.....Collins Hill	1st Place.....Loganville	1st Place.....Jefferson	1st Place.....Sonoraville
2nd Place.....Pope	2nd Place.....Alexander	2nd Place.....West Forsyth	2nd Place.....Sonoraville
3rd Place.....Camden County	3rd Place.....Cass	3rd Place.....LaFayette	3rd Place.....Henry County
4th Place.....Valdosta	4th Place.....Marist	4th Place.....Eastside	4th Place.....Lovett
AAA		AA	
1st Place.....Gilmer	1st Place.....Jefferson	A	
2nd Place.....West Forsyth	2nd Place.....Sonoraville	1st Place.....Bremen	2nd Place.....Gordon Lee
3rd Place.....LaFayette	3rd Place.....Henry County	3rd Place.....Wesleyan	4th Place.....Bowdon
4th Place.....Eastside	4th Place.....Lovett		

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NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTY




JOSH BAGRIANSKY

Region 6 hoops stays strong; county football prospects preparing for signing day

The Miller Grove boys basketball team lost a lot of talent from last year's state championship team. But it continued its strong showing this year with two impressive victories. North Springs was no match for them on Friday in a 116-67 rout, upping their Region 6-AAAA record to 5-1. Then they came up with a great win over Aiken (Oh.) in the Flyin' To the Hoop Classic the following day. They held the out-of-state team to 29 percent shooting, while sophomore sensation Tony Parker had 12 points and 11 boards down low.

Keep an eye on Chamblee, who have quietly amassed a 5-0 region record despite being unranked. They upset Tucker 60-53 on Friday, and then handled a struggling Stephenson team on Saturday behind seven 3-pointers from Langston Hall. A pesky Marist team awaits on Friday in one of the week's more intriguing matchups, as both teams will try to prove themselves as legitimate threats in the one of Georgia's toughest regions.

Speaking of the War Eagles, they enter the matchup with a bit of momentum, thanks to last week's 50-39 win over Forsyth Central. The victory was spurred on by a 20-3 third-quarter run and 27 points from Kash Manzelli. The win got Greg McClaire's squad to 3-2 in the region, getting them back over .500 in the region for the first time since early December.

Dunwoody also had one of the more successful weekends in the county, getting two wins on back-to-back nights. They cruised past Clarkston on Friday by a final score of 69-35. Senior captain Javon McKay led the way for a balanced scoring attack with 21 points. McKay followed that

game up by hitting the game-winner in overtime with 12 seconds left to lead the 'Cats to a 59-58 win over Westminster. Shane Porchea checked in with 13. Cedar Grove and McNair await them on Monday and Tuesday of next week.

In 2A, Decatur is looking poised to make a run at a playoff berth out of 6-AA, handling Westminster and Buford last week to increase its win streak to eight games. A showdown with Eddie Martin's 15-1 Greater Atlanta Christian team looms on Friday.

No. 1 Redan and No. 4 Stephenson faced off in what was likely the biggest girls matchup of the week. In the end, Redan continued their dominant, undefeated season with a 60-48 win over their Region 2-AAAAA foes. Alisha Andrews dropped 15 points and helped RHS control the game's tempo from her point guard position as the home team kept the Lady Jaguars at arm's length all game long. Meanwhile, Aneesah Daniels and Nia Evans joined her in double-figures with 12 points apiece.

Redan now faces three region games in under a week with Union Grove, Douglass and M.L. King all on the radar. Stephenson will try to get back on track against Luella on Friday, before facing a non-region matchup with Campbell the following day, and then Greenbrier on Tuesday. The two teams face off again on Feb. 9, when a region championship could potentially be on the line.

WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIPS AND MORE ...

Several DeKalb County wrestling teams were active at the state team duals. Towers represented 5-AAA well by winning a tight

match over Locust Grove, but faltered in round two against future-semifinalist Jackson County. Marist finished in fourth in 4A, losing in the third-place match to Cass.

Football recruiting continues as well with signing day less than a month away. Marist punter Justin Moore switched his commitment from Miami of Ohio to Georgia Tech last week, and could see playing time early on considering Tech's problems in the kicking game this season. Current starter Scott Blair will be a senior next season.

The Tennessee coaching fiasco didn't appear to faze Southwest DeKalb cornerback

Marques Dixon, who affirmed his verbal commitment to the Vols.

The race for Stephenson defensive tackle Michael Thornton is getting more intense by the day. Although still undecided, the 6-2 280 specimen has already been offered by Georgia, Penn State and Miami, although he skipped a visit to Coral Gables last weekend. USC are also making a late push for his services, but it appears that Thornton will be holding out until close to signing day before making his decision.

Bagriansky can be reached at jbagriansky@scoreatl.com.

DEKALB COUNTY SCHEDULE

TUESDAY, JANUARY 26

BOYS BASKETBALL

Greenbrier vs. Stephenson
M.L. King vs. Redan
Chamblee vs. SW DeKalb
Lithonia vs. North Springs
Miller Grove vs. Marist

Tucker vs. Lakeside-DeKalb
McNair vs. Dunwoody
Druid Hills vs. Columbia
Avondale vs. Decatur
Arabia Mtn. vs. Greenforest Chr.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Greenbrier vs. Stephenson
M.L. King vs. Redan
Chamblee vs. SW DeKalb
Miller Grove vs. Marist
Forsyth Central vs. Stone Mtn.

Tucker vs. Lakeside-DeKalb
McNair vs. Dunwoody
Washington vs. St. Pius X
Avondale vs. Decatur
Arabia Mtn. vs. Greenforest Chr.

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AJC GIRLS BASKETBALL RANKINGS

Class AAAAA

1. Redan
2. Parkview
3. Norcross
4. Mill Creek
5. Stephenson
6. Campbell
7. McEachern
8. Westlake
9. Bradwell Institute
10. Douglass

Class AAAA

1. Fayette County
2. Rome
3. Southwest DeKalb
4. Northwest Whitfield
5. Douglas County
6. Madison County
7. Bainbridge
8. Statesboro
9. Forest Park
10. Osborne

Class AAA

1. Kendrick
2. Washington County
3. Carver-Atlanta
4. Lakeview-Fort Oglethorpe
5. Columbia
6. Pickens
7. Rutland
8. Chestatee
9. Stephens County
10. Franklin County

Class AA

1. Buford
2. Laney
3. Rabun County
4. Vidalia
5. Northeast-Macon
6. Greater Atlanta Christian
7. Fannin County
8. Lovett
9. Henry County
10. Dodge County

Class A

1. Wesleyan
2. Taylor County
3. Randolph-Clay
4. Calvary Day
5. Paideia
6. Gordon Lee
7. Southwest Atlanta Christian
8. Holy Innocents'
9. Savannah Christian
10. Bryan County

AJC BOYS BASKETBALL RANKINGS

Class AAAAA

1. Milton
2. Westlake
3. Centennial
4. Norcross
5. Walton
6. Central Gwinnett
7. Wheeler
8. McEachern
9. Mill Creek
10. Newton

Class AAAA

1. Rockdale County
2. Chamblee
3. Miller Grove
4. Tucker
5. Richmond Academy
6. Cass
7. Fayette County
8. Hillgrove
9. Bainbridge
10. North Clayton

Class AAA

1. South Atlanta
2. Columbia
3. Liberty County
4. Monroe
5. LaGrange
6. Elbert County
7. Dunwoody
8. Westover
9. Franklin County
10. North Hall

Class AA

1. Greater Atlanta Christian
2. Northeast-Macon
3. Decatur
4. Dublin
5. Laney
6. Southwest-Macon
7. Dade County
8. Thomasville
9. Putnam County
10. Jefferson

Class A

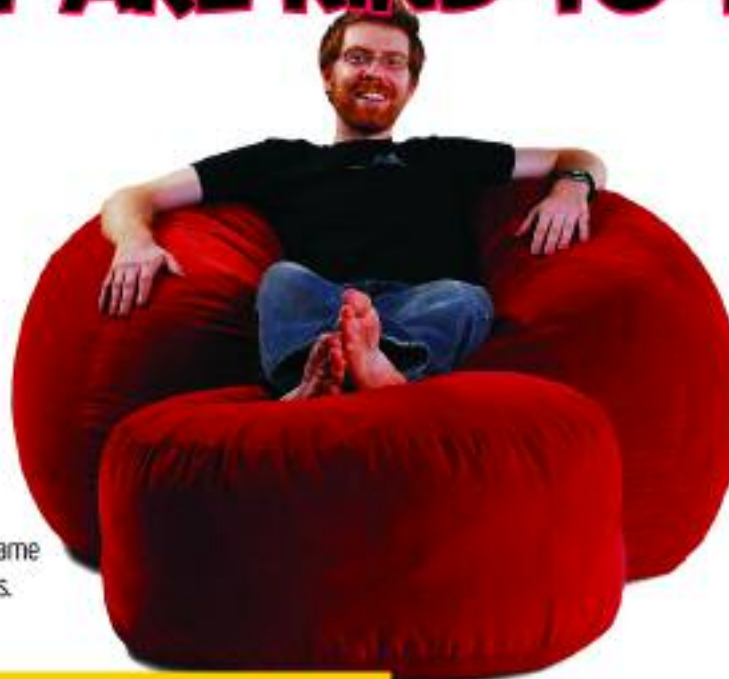
1. Whitefield Academy
2. Wilkinson County
3. Wesleyan
4. Lanier County
5. Claxton
6. Wilcox County
7. Terrell County
8. Bowdon
9. Pace Academy
10. Greenville

Rankings based on results through Sunday, January 17 and were compiled by Todd Holcomb and Chip Saye.

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