



ATLANTA'S WEEKLY FOOTBALL PLUS NEWSPAPER

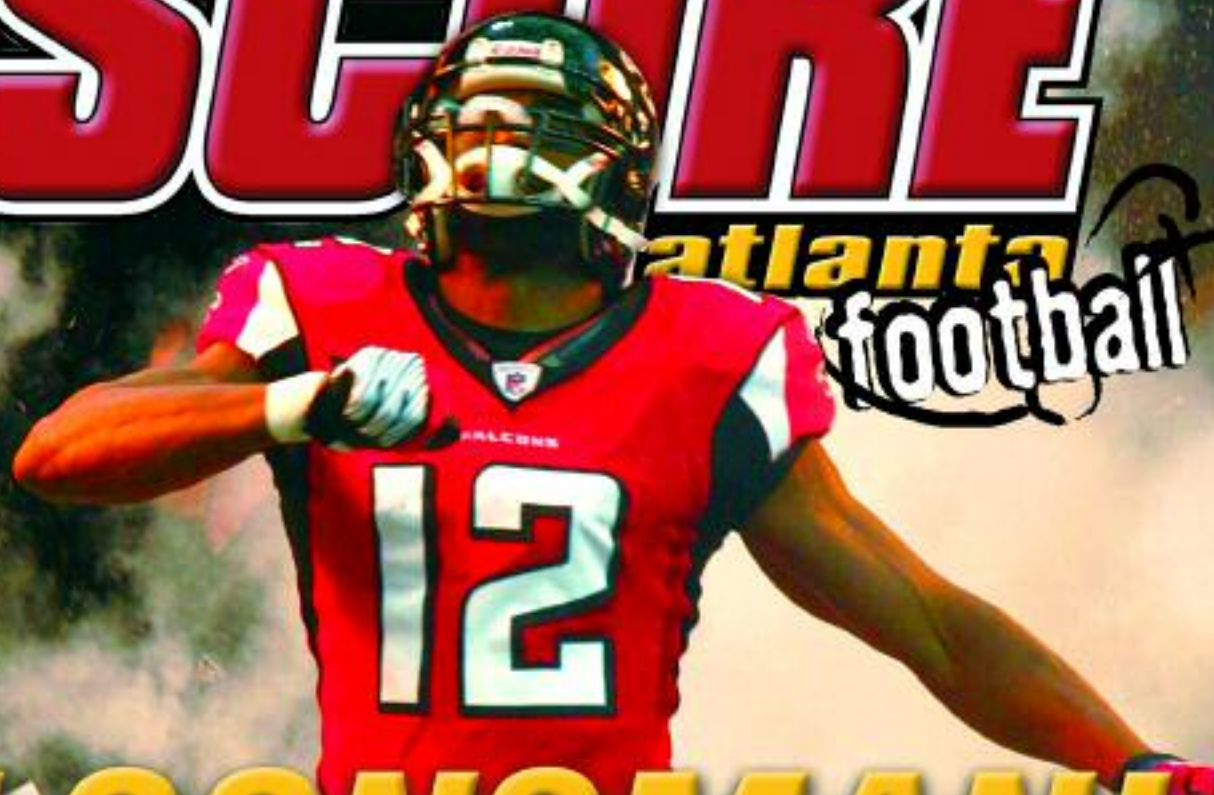
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A WHIRLWIND OF ATLANTA SPORTS NEWS AND COMMENTARY

SCORE SCOTT JANOVITZ



College football quick hits, Hawks schedule released and Vick's fooling no one

By now you are probably well aware of Florida head football coach Urban Meyer's six-year extension at \$4 million per year, which makes him the highest-paid coach in the Southeastern Conference. And, like him or not, it's hard to argue he isn't worth every penny, even in these tough economic times. If we assume what we make is based on our worth, Meyer would still be underpaid. ... Remaining on the college gridiron, ESPN writers Mark Schlabach and Ivan Maisel simulated a college football mock draft this week, divvying up the top programs in America. Southern California and Florida were taken one and two, respectively, while the University of Georgia was drafted 10th, ahead of the likes of Michigan, Nebraska, Florida State and Tennessee. The funny thing is, despite having not won a national championship since 1980, I bet most Bulldog fans would be livid over their location on the list. Note: last week, CBSSports.com named UGA the eighth-best team of the decade. ... In other college football news, don't be surprised next week if you stumble upon Lane Kiffin as you're driving through downtown Atlanta. The Tennessee lead man has plans to erect two 14-foot-by-48-foot digital billboards in the area touting UT and all its greatness.

But shouldn't he be more focused on devising ways to compete with Georgia and Florida on the football field? Will any number of signs help recruits forget the many losses the Vols are sure to suffer in '09?

TO THE HARDWOOD AND DIAMOND ...

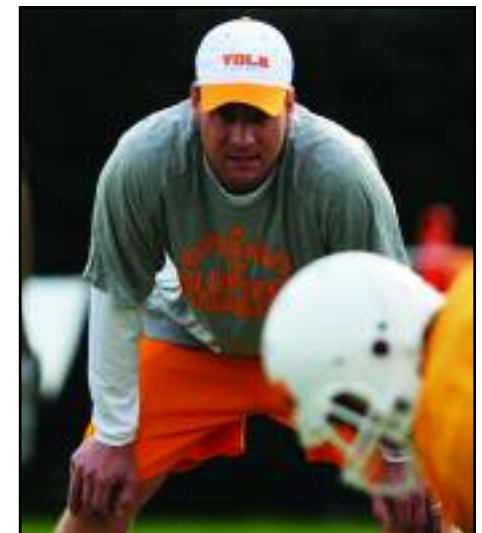
The NBA released its regular-season schedules on Tuesday and there's a lot to like for Hawks fans. Atlanta will not only be home and in action on Thanksgiving and New Year's, but will also appear in seven nationally televised games, the most in the last 12 years. I've always said, no one defines a team's place in the league like the national television networks. ... Isn't it interesting how many professional athletes call the ATL home? In late 2008, Julius "Dr. J" Erving purchased a home in our lovely city and fellow former NBA star and current Atlanta resident Ralph Sampson doesn't live far from NFLers Jerome Bettis (retired) and Brandon Marshall. The AJC's D. Orlando Ledbetter explored the issue deeper in a Monday column and it's certainly worth a read. ... Talk about loyalty and respect all you want, but sports management is about making tough decisions in the name of winning. So, for all you people who were outraged when the Braves decided not to re-sign John Smoltz, perhaps you should now

consider the 42-year-old's 2-4 record and 7.12 ERA or the fact that Atlanta currently has FIVE starters who have been more productive than the future Hall of Famer.

FINISHING UP ...

According to reports, Michael Vick will be in Atlanta over the weekend to take part in a special event with the Humane Society. Now, few people have defended Vick or sympathized with him more than I. But, really? The Humane Society? How naive does the retired dogfighter really think we are? ... Monday (Aug. 3) was the one-year anniversary of Skip Caray's death. It served not only as a good opportunity to remember the legend's life, but also as a reminder of the now declining import of local sports announcers. We will always miss you, Skip. ... And finally, what's better than watching little kids play the most boring sport of the year? If you're thinking of baseball and answered "nothing," you will be happy to learn the All-Star team from Warner Robins will be making the trip to West Virginia in the coming weeks, the last stop before Williamsport and the Little League World Series. Good luck, guys.

Janovitz can be reached at sjanovitz@scoreatl.com.



ATLANTA PRESENCE: Tennessee head coach Lane Kiffin will be featured prominently on two highway billboards in the metro Atlanta area. Photo courtesy of the University of Tennessee.



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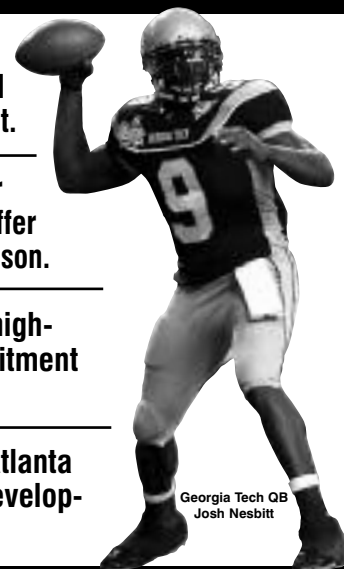
SHOT OF THE WEEK...



SHOWIN' OFF THE GUNS: At July's Countdown to Kickoff, Georgia linebacker Rennie Curran gave Bulldog fans a little glimpse of what they will see all year on the field. Curran and the team started fall practice on Monday in preparation for a tough opener at Oklahoma State on Sept. 5. Photo courtesy of Rob Saye.

CAN'T MISS THIS WEEK

- 8** Score Atlanta's Brian Jones was in Flowery Branch for opening weekend of training camp and has a full report.
- 9** We give an update on fall practice for both Georgia and Georgia Tech and offer a look ahead to the rest of the preseason.
- 15** Recruiting reporter Scott Janovitz highlights a couple of key recent commitment from Peach State athletes.
- 18** Columnist Fletcher Proctor keeps Atlanta sports fans in the loop on recent developments in the local sports media.



Georgia Tech QB
Josh Nesbitt

TEAM SCOOP AND VOICES

COVER DESIGN BY DJ GALBIATI.
COVER PHOTO COURTESY OF JIMMY CRIBB/ATLANTA FALCONS.

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INSIDE AT SCORE

Score Atlanta has moved to a new, football-focused format that will keep local fans up to date on the pro, college and high school games! From the latest recruiting news to features and stories on your favorite players from all levels, turn to Score Atlanta (found in all QuikTrips, Krogers and Blockbusters in the metro area) and Scoreatl.com!

ON THE

FALL IS FAST AT ROAD ATLANTA

SCORE

Petit Le Mans once again set to bring more superstars and blazing action to Braselton

You may know Road Atlanta through any number of its great yearly racing events, which in 2009 included the exciting Suzuki Superbike Showdown and the Ferrari Challenge in April, the Drift Atlanta race in May, and the WERA Cycle Jam in June. But coming up in September is perhaps the best known and most prestigious event on the Road Atlanta schedule, the annual Petit Le Mans.

On Sept. 23-26, the world-renowned 2.54-mile road course in Braselton (just up I-85 off exit 129) will host the 12th annual Petit Le Mans series race. The event is the marquee race in the American Le Mans series, and is also one of the original stops on the tour since its inception in 1999

(Petit Le Mans held its inaugural event in 1998 as a part of the Professional SportsCar Racing series).

In Petit Le Mans, as in the rest of the American Le Mans series, the field is divided up into two categories: prototypes, which are closed-fender vehicles specifically for racing; and the Grand Touring class, which consists of modified production cars (think a souped-up Ferrari made for the race track). Those two classes are then divided into two subcategories each, based on weight of the automobile and other characteristics.

So why is Atlanta's stop on the American Le

Mans series so important? It has to do with what's at stake. The winner of Petit Le Mans automatically wins entry into the famed 24 Hours of Le Mans, the oldest example of this genre of racing. Petit Le Mans is one of only two races in the world that grants an automatic berth in the 24 Hours of Le Mans race, which is held near the town of Le Mans, France.

Following the endurance

races in the traditional Le Mans style, Petit Le Mans is a grueling race, which utilizes several drivers per car over the course of the 10-hour marathon. For more information on Petit Le Mans, visit Roadatlanta.com or see our article on the September race on page 9.



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SITTING IN THE CHEAP SEATS

SCORE
I.J. ROSENBERG


A new era for Score, ESPN skips E.A. coverage and Braves need Blank

Score Atlanta has hit a new gear.

Born in January 2005 with a single product, a weekly sports edition which at that time was reaching just 350 locations, we have become Atlanta's grassroots sports marketing company, with strong relationships with everyone from the Falcons to the Georgia High School Association, from 790 The Zone to Fox 5 and the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Proudly, we are about to begin working with the company I worked at for more than 13 years, the AJC, where my career in sports journalism got a kick-start with my 1991 coverage of a lightly regarded team called the Atlanta Braves.

It's been 17 years since I chronicled that incredible worst-to-first season and, on Friday nights this year, you will see Score's real-time flash scoreboard on AJC.com. In addition to our weekly newspaper, we now have five prep editions during the school year, an around-the-clock monitored webpage (SCOREATL.COM), a daily high school newsletter called the Georgia High School Football Daily — which we produce through a partnership with two former AJC staffers I formerly worked with — a full division devoted to Webcasting, specialty print and event activation, two radio shows and soon our very own "Drudge Report" for Georgia high school sports, where we aggregate the best prep sports stories the Peach State has to offer.

But despite the downfall of newspapers, we still cherish the printed word and this week you will see a change in both the direction of Score's main edition as well as its distribution. It will now be easy to find, as it will be distributed to all QuikTrips, Krogers and Blockbusters in the metro area.

So enjoy the changes, the new columns and the increased emphasis on football and high school sports. Now, for a taste of how I am feeling these days

ESPN SHOULD BE ASHAMED ...

The network has become the Wal-Mart of sports, but isn't it funny that you haven't heard a word reported on any of their brands about the videotaping of Atlanta resident Erin Andrews wearing nothing but her birthday suit in a hotel room? After all, the story

the same courtesy to a female reporter working for CBS? No way. Shoot, Chris Berman would have been the first to give her a nickname. I can hear Chris now, "Let's go down to Erin Andrews Wearing No Pants." Fact is, like it or not, it's a story and ESPN is hypocritical for not reporting it. I guess from now on I better check my peephole when I am in a hotel room. But please don't take away my ESPN.

HOPING BLANK WILL BUY BRAVES ...

The economy has taken a bite out of everyone, but I sure hope Arthur Blank's checking account is big enough when the Braves go on the market in a few years. The current owner, Liberty Media, purchased the team for tax reasons and, because of IRS regulations, has to hold on to the team for a few more years. But when that time runs out, the Braves desperately need someone with heart and emotion running the club. I couldn't even tell you who from Liberty has anything to do with the Braves. Blank, who has done a great job with the Falcons, would give the Braves the boost they need, both in morale and in the wallet. Blank was interested in buying the team when Time Warner was selling it, but couldn't come close to matching the Liberty Media deal, which was all based on tax savings. My guess is that two years from now Blank owns the Braves and the team brings back some of the excitement we all witnessed in the 1990s. Imagine being in a town that has a chance to win a Super Bowl, World Series and NBA title. It could happen.

DOWN AT THE ZONE ...

I haven't commented on the recent move the Braves made by signing on with 680 The Fan as their new flagship. The team really didn't have much of a choice, as none of the big boys in town wanted to spend the money; 790 The Zone doesn't have the signal or an FM partner and the deal puts 680 on the map. I wish 680 well with the Braves, but I think this is going to benefit sports fans, as the team being on a sports talk station for the first time will really turn up the heat between 680 and 790. The latter, a strong



POTENTIAL BUYER: The Braves' contract with Liberty Media will be up in several years and Falcons owner Arthur Blank will almost certainly be a player in the bid to purchase the club. Blank considered buying the club when it was up for sale by Time Warner. Photo courtesy of Jimmy Cribb/Atlanta Falcons.



CATCH I.J. ON SUNDAYS

'My guess is that two years from now [Arthur] Blank owns the Braves and the team brings back some of the excitement we all witnessed in the 1990s.'

spread on the Internet like a virus. I like Andrews, went to lunch with her a few years ago and put her on our cover (just so happens she was interviewing Michael Vick). But that aside, Andrews and ESPN made it a story when she hired attorneys, an investigation began and, subsequently, the video leaked out. She is a public figure, but ESPN has refused to cover it. I wonder if ESPN would have given

OUT FRONT



The Atlanta Falcons are back at training camp after a surprising 11-5 season and a productive offseason. This weekend, the team will be hosting its second annual All-Access Weekend, which consists of a live scrimmage at Brookwood High School on Friday night and the Roam the Dome event, which begins at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday. If you're able to go to either of these events, be sure to check out Score Atlanta's official All-Access Weekend Guide. The cover and above photo are courtesy of Jimmy Cribb/Atlanta Falcons.

partner of Score, is at its best when 680 is nipping at its heels and the Zone isn't about to take this sitting down. I guarantee you 790 comes out swinging real soon, especially after hearing Braves vice president Derek Schiller say, "What appeals to us is the fact the Fan is the city's leading sports station." Schiller had to say all the right things about his new partner, but whether he believes that or not, I know management at 790 and station mouthpiece Steak Shapiro wasn't very happy to hear it. Like I said, the Zone isn't about to take this sitting down and I know I would like to see Steak and John Kincade in a cage match down at Wild Bill's. The bet here is Steak would take Johnny in about as long as it takes Kincade to say something stupid, which is about a minute into his show. Put the gloves on guys!

Rosenberg can be reached at ijrosenberg@scoreatl.com and 404-256-1572.



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SCORELIST

BY ALEX EWALT

1 **BACK AT THE BRANCH:** It's that time of year again! The Falcons are back in action up in Flowery Branch for fall training camp, and fans can get their first glimpse of NFL action — as well as the new draftees — in person at the team's complex.

2 **HE'S BACK ... SORT OF:** With Michael Vick free to sign with an NFL team, and eligible to play after Week 6, rumors have begun to swirl about where the controversial QB will end up. Will he get a shot right away to get back in the league?

3 **IS IT SEPT. 5 YET?:** The state's college football fans no doubt have that date circled on their calendars, as it marks the season openers for both Georgia Tech and Georgia. Camp opened this past week for the two programs, which both have high hopes in '09.

4 **BACK IN SESSION:** And last but not least, Georgia high schools got back into the swing of things with fall camp beginning last Saturday. The new Score Atlanta Football weekly will be following ALL things high school football, so stay tuned!

5 **BACKIN' OUT:** Retired quarterback Brett Favre out-waffled even himself when he decided to stay retired and not to join the Minnesota Vikings. The platinum-bearded QB is giving US gray hair with all the unnecessary drama surrounding his career.

6 **SCHIZO BRAVOS:** The team looks unstoppable one minute, then drops two crucial series to the Marlins and Dodgers when it looked like it was going to make a move. Will the Braves just stop teasing us and either win the division or tank?

7 **THE OTHER FOOTBALL:** With all this talk about the American game, sports fans were treated to not one but two sensational soccer matches at the Georgia Dome this summer. And we think the real grass the Dome was sporting for them was a great look!

8 **NO OFFSEASON:** Believe it or not, the NBA and NHL franchises in town haven't been just sitting around this summer. Hawks draft pick Jeff Teague reportedly looked good in his first workouts, and Thrashers draftee Evander Kane did as well.

9 **CAN'T HOLD HIM:** Tiger just keeps finding new ways to impress us. After looking rough in the first round at last weekend's Buick Open, Woods roared out to five straight birdies in Round 2 and coasted to a win over the weekend. What's next?

10 **CREEPY STUFF:** So ESPN personality Erin Andrews has had a rough month with the whole peephole video thing, then last week paparazzi camped out in her gated community in Dunwoody, leading her to call 911. It's time to let it go, people.

DUE UP

BY BRIAN JONES

FRIDAY 7 **Friday Night Lights.** It will be the second time the Atlanta Falcons will hold their Friday Night Lights event and it's where Falcons fans have an opportunity to see the players up close and personal at Brookwood High. It will start at 7 p.m.

SATURDAY 8 **Roam the Dome.** Still want some more football? Well, come on over to the Georgia Dome to see the Falcons go through a mock game. After the game, players will sign autographs and fans can watch the 2008 highlight video. The game kicks off at 12 p.m.

SUNDAY 9 **Braves at L.A. Dodgers.** 96.1 FM. Fox Sport South It's the beginning of August and the Braves are still in the playoff race. They have a tough task as they try to get a big win against the Dodgers, who have the best record in baseball. First pitch is at 4:10 p.m.

MONDAY 10 **Gwinnett Braves vs. Durham.** 550 AM. CSS. Another local baseball team fighting for a playoff spot is the Gwinnett Braves, who are gunning for the division. They play the Durham Bulls, a series that could determine the division leader. Game starts at 7 p.m.

TUESDAY 11 **Braves vs. Washington.** 96.1 FM. Peachtree TV. After a tough series against the Dodgers, the Braves come back home to take on the woeful Washington Nationals in a two-game series. See Brian McCann and the rest of the crew at the Ted starting at 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY 12 **Falcons Training Camp.** If you have never been to see Falcons Training Camp, it is quite an experience. Fans get a look at how an NFL practice works and the players sign autographs afterwards. The gates will open for fans at 7:30 a.m.

THURSDAY 13 **Dream vs. Detroit.** The Atlanta Dream are fighting for their playoff lives, as they are a half game out of the last playoff spot. They take on the Detroit Shock on Friday, who have been struggling as of late. Come see Erika De Souza and company at 7:30 p.m.

HOTTEST THINGS TO SEE AND DO OVER THE NEXT SEVEN DAYS

WHOS HOT

THUMBS UP TO HAPPY RETURNS



Adam LaRoche

The Braves may have picked up the big bat they needed for a second-half push, picking up former Braves 1B Adam LaRoche in a trade with the Red Sox for 1B Casey Kotchman. LaRoche is great defensively and is a notoriously good hitter from July on. The deadline deal was a great move.

State's college football players

We know it's just preseason lists, but we like to see our Jackets and Bulldogs get a little recognition. Both teams were well represented on their all-conference teams as voted on by the coaches (Georgia with five total and Tech with three), and Tech QB Josh Nesbitt was put on the Davey O'Brien Award watch list.

Hawks on TV

Our Atlanta basketball team will finally get some prime-time exposure, as the team will enjoy being on national television seven times this season. That total equals the amount of times the team was on national television for the past 11 seasons combined. Finally, America will get a proper introduction to Joe and J-Smoove.

AFL troubles

At press time, it seemed likely that the 22-year-old Arena Football League was on the brink of folding, which would mean the end of the very popular Georgia Force franchise. The Force, which are owned by Arthur Blank, came into existence in 2002 and had been owned by Blank since 2004.

Braves fading?

After an encouraging start to the second half of the season, the Braves have fallen off and have slipped in the standings. At press time, the team had dropped to sixth in the Wild Card standings at 5.5 games behind the Braves and was all of six games behind the division-leading Phillies.

White out

At press time, Falcons WR Roddy White was holding out in order to restructure a contract that is up at the end of the coming season. White was the only Falcons player to choose to stay out of practice for contractual reasons, and is being fined almost \$16,000 for each missed day.



WHOS NOT

THUMBS DOWN TO HOLDOUTS

CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS

175 lbs

Weight of the Falcons' lightest player, CB Chris Houston

333 lbs

Weight of the Falcons' heaviest player, OG Justin Blalock

4,800

Pounds of chicken the Falcons will serve by the end of training camp

TOUGH TIMES

There will be folks announcing the end of professional golf on the heels of a good investment. But probably not for companies that are in bankruptcy, or are being run by the government. Buick leaving golf is sad, but if you couldn't see this one coming, you haven't been paying attention.

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.



SANITY AT LAST

"The last two games' performance by the officials is something that makes you sit back and wonder. And as a player, it makes you not want to play when that stuff happens. Because you don't have a chance."

— Braves' Chipper Jones after a game against the Marlins in which umpire Bill Hohn ejected Bobby Cox and Brian McCann

CAMPING WITH THE FALCONS


BRIAN JONES


White holdout the dominant story from first week of camp; looking ahead to the preseason

The 2009 NFL season is upon us and the Atlanta Falcons got training camp underway last week. All the rookies were signed and checked in, but Roddy White, who had a monster 2008 season at the wide receiver position, has decided to hold out for a new contract.

"There's no reason to get angry," said head coach Mike Smith after the first practice session on Saturday. "I can only coach the guys that are here along with our coaching staff. That's how we are going to approach the situation."

Speaking of the players that were on the field, all of them looked sharp in the first week of training camp. Quarterback Matt Ryan looks more and more comfortable in the offense, and a lot of credit has to go to tight end Tony Gonzalez, who catches everything that is thrown at him.

But it's the defense that has been making the most noise. CB Brent Grimes had a couple of interceptions in the first day of camp and S Thomas DeCoud is having a solid start

to camp and is listed as the player to replace Lawyer Milloy. Also, LB Mike Peterson brings the same leadership that Keith Booking brought every year, and DT Peria Jerry looks to be more confident and is working more with the first-string defense.

There were also some signings in the first week of camp, as linebacker Jamie Winborn and offensive lineman Adam Speer agreed to terms.

COMING UP ...

So what to expect in the second week of camp? More fans will be able to take a closer look at the team with the Friday Night Lights event at Brookwood High School on Friday and the Roam the Dome event at the Georgia Dome on the following day. This will give fans an opportunity to see who has improved from last season and which rookies look ready to play right now.

After that, the Falcons will get ready for

their first preseason game against the Detroit Lions. It will be interesting to see how the defense does against No. 1 pick Matthew Stafford and to see if it can rattle the quarterback out of Georgia. In game two of the preseason they will go on the road again to face the St. Louis Rams. This should be a game where the veterans play a little more as they get back into playing shape.

The last two preseason games will be at the Georgia Dome, as the team plays the San Diego Chargers and the Baltimore Ravens. These two contests will be important for players that are on the fringe to make an impression; the coaching staff will make cuts after both games.

Jones can be reached at bjones@scoreatl.com.

BACK IN THE SWING: Second-year Falcons quarterback Matt Ryan is shaking off the rust during the first week of training camp. With intense film study over the summer, Ryan should be ready to shine in year two. Photo courtesy of Jimmy Cribb/Atlanta Falcons.



goarmy.com

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DAWG DAYS OF SUMMER



STEPHEN BLACK



Talented young players mix in with veterans as Georgia opens fall camp

After what was a disappointing 2008 season by the University of Georgia's lofty standards, the Bulldogs come into the 2009 campaign relatively under the radar. The Dawgs started last season No. 1 in the rankings before getting blown out in two of their biggest games and then losing to archrival Georgia Tech for the first time since 2000.

First-round draft choices Matt Stafford and Knowshon Moreno are gone, but UGA fans are still optimistic about their team's chances in the SEC East.

Senior Joe Cox will get the nod at quarterback. Cox has started one game in his career (Ole Miss, 2006) and has seen spot duty in several others. Despite his lack of playing time, the 6-foot-1 native of Charlotte is one of the most respected players on the team and is the unquestioned leader in the locker room.

The Dawgs may be taking a running back by committee approach, as the team sports five solid options at the position. Sophomore Caleb King will likely get most of the first team reps in fall practice, but could be unseated by Richard Samuel or Carlton Thomas. Redshirt freshman Dontavious Jackson and true freshmen Washaun Ealey will push for playing time.

A.J. Green leads a talented, yet inexperienced, receiving corps that will try to get past a season-ending torn labrum injury to Kris Durham. Mike Moore will be a solid second option for Cox, while talented sophomore Tavarres King should start at split end.

True freshman tight end Orson Charles has made waves since arriving over the summer and should play at both wide receiver and tight end this season. Sophomore Aron White will get the start at tight end.

Georgia's offensive line has transformed seemingly overnight from a weakness to a strength. The Dawgs return all five starters as well as tackle Trinton Sturdivant, who missed all of 2008.

ON DEFENSE ...

The much-maligned Bulldog defense looks to have improved during the spring and early reports from summer workouts say that the unit is hungry and ready to live up to its "Junkyard Dawg" nickname.

The forte of the defense will be up the middle, starting with deep and experienced defensive tackles. Jeff Owens and Geno Atkins return as the starters, but the unit also boasts solid backups in senior Kade Weston and sophomore DeAngelo Tyson.

The end position has more questions, but returns several bodies at the position, includ-

ing Justin Houston, who is suspended for the first two games. Senior Rod Battle and junior Demarcus Dobbs will start.

The linebacking corps welcomes back Marcus Washington at the Mike position. Preseason All-SEC first-teamer Rennie Curran returns at Will along with Darryl Gamble at Sam.

The secondary will be led by junior Reshad Jones at strong safety and Prince Miller at cornerback. True freshman Brandon Smith may start at the other corner position while senior Bryan Evans will make the switch from corner to free safety.

Brandon Bogotay will battle Blair Walsh over kickoffs, but Walsh holds the place kicking duties. Drew Butler looks to be in the lead at punter.

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JACKETS HIT FIELD



ALEX EWALT



Questions loom as Jackets reopen playbook; Jones making swift recovery

So far at fall practice for Georgia Tech, one quote pretty much sums up the sessions.

"We were way ahead of where we were a year ago at this time," said head coach Paul Johnson to AJC beat writer Doug Roberson after Monday's opening practice. Fans would hope as much, and they'd be right. In the spring, the team avoided the fumbles and the offensive hiccups that occurred last season throughout the spring and fall, and should be looking like a confident, second-year triple-option offense.

According to onlookers and media members, the quarterbacks looked crisper. Specifically, starting QB Josh Nesbitt's throws were looking crisper and more accurate than they did at times last year during the season; this was one of the noted areas of improve-

ment over the offseason, as the Jackets can use a more productive passing game to match the unstoppable (at times) running game, led by (dare we say, Heisman Trophy candidate?) junior B-back Jonathan Dwyer.

After practicing in shorts and helmets on Monday and Tuesday, the team graduated to wearing shoulder pads the next two days. On Friday, Tech will be decked out in full pads.

There were a few noteworthy roster tidbits that surfaced during the first week, including a transfer of a player in the two-deep. Redshirt freshman S Kamaron Riley of Hawkinsville will transfer to Georgia Military College after some reported academic issues; no word on whether he plans to try and rejoin the team after spending time at GMC. True

freshman Jemea Thomas of Fitzgerald had been getting reps at safety after reports surfaced that the athletic and versatile player would get the first shot at A-back.

Also, A-back Roddy Jones, who dislocated his wrist in a weightlifting accident earlier in the summer, is expected to make a full recovery in time for the first game of the season. No word, however, on whether the coaches expect to play him on Sept. 5 against Jacksonville State at home with Clemson waiting just five days later.

FRESH FACES ...

One of the thrills of fall practice is to see the incoming freshmen compete on the field and make their bids for immediate playing time.

While a number of true freshmen for Tech will likely redshirt (QBs David Sims and Jordan Luallen, for example), several have established themselves as competition for the older players.

DE Emmanuel Dieke from North Clayton was an early enrollee that can push for the two-deep on the defensive line, while WR Stephen Hill, possibly the most heralded recruit for Johnson's '09 class, has been impressive in passing drills and in fielding punts. The 6-foot-4 Hill has been mentioned by some as a possible starter alongside redshirt junior Demaryius Thomas if all goes right, but right now, he is just an enticing prospect with a lot of upside and even more to prove (think: blocking) if he wants to see early action.

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SCORE MORE

FAST TIMES AT
ROAD ATLANTA

BRIAN JONES



Petit Le Mans brings world-class speed

The eyes of the racing world will be on Braselton on Sept. 23-26, as the 2009 Petit Le Mans will take place at Road Atlanta.

What is it you ask? The Petit Le Mans is a sports car endurance race which is 1,000 miles (394 laps) long or about 10 hours, whichever comes first. The first Petit Le Mans took place in 1998 and it has become the biggest event at Road Atlanta ever since.

RACERS TO WATCH ...

One driver to keep an eye on is Rinaldo Capello, an Italian racer who has won races at Petit Le Mans five times since 2000. He drives with team Audi Sport North America along with British diver Allan McNish, who has also won multiple times at Braselton.

In fact, at the event last year, McNish finished 20 minutes under the 10-hour limit. Formula 1 superstar Helio Castroneves made his first professional appearance at the Le Mans race and came in first in his classification.

So expect Capello and McNish to make some noise again, and if Castroneves comes back, expect him to lead his team to another victory.

FAMILY FUN ...

One of the great perks of catching this exciting event at Road Atlanta is that children ages 12 and under get in free. And that is not just for the Petit Le Mans race, that is for every race at Road Atlanta throughout the year. The festivities for Petit Le Mans last four days, so you can take the family camping with a ticket for the campgrounds.

Tickets are on sale now for the event. Fans can buy a one-day pass, a two-day pass or a four-day pass. Tickets can be bought online for an advance price, which will end on Sept. 18. If you want more information on tickets, parking or other events going on at Road Atlanta, go to www.roadatlanta.com or call 1-800-849-7223.

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NEWS FROM THE
HAWKS

SCOTT JANOVITZ



Hawks, Williams move closer to deal

The Hawks have reportedly moved closer to re-signing free agent Marvin Williams, apparently coming to an agreement on a contract worth \$40 million over five years. If the reports are accurate and Williams does in fact sign on the dotted line, Flip Murray will become the team's only free agent not to have re-signed with the club. Of course, the trade that brought dynamic scorer Jamal Crawford from Golden State to Atlanta makes the loss of Murray far less significant.

But back to Williams. The deal would keep him and Josh Smith, who signed a five-year deal worth \$58 million last summer, together for the foreseeable future. It also says a lot about the team's willingness to spend money. With Zaza Pachulia set to make nearly \$5 million next year, Mike Bibby making more than \$6 million, Smith earning close to \$12 million and Williams on track to earn right around \$8 million, the team is obligated to spend \$30 million next season on four players right when its best player, Joe Johnson, is set to hit the free agent market. With the likes of LeBron

James, Dwyane Wade, Carlos Boozer, Chris Bosh and Johnson all available in the summer of 2010, teams around the league have been preparing their finances for years to make runs at such big guns. As a result, if Atlanta is serious about keeping Big Shot Joe and becoming a title contender, it will have to fork over yet another large sum of money. It will not only be interesting to see how much Williams demands, but the impact the contract will have on the Hawks' future negotiations with Johnson, their only all-star.

QUICK FINISH ...

It was exciting when we learned Josh Smith would be participating in Team USA's July minicamp. And it was equally as frustrating to read the post-camp synopsis of his play. According to ESPN's Chris Sheridan, Smith seemed to be "packing on a few extra pounds," and his game still appears "unrefined." Here's to hoping he uses the rest of the offseason wisely.

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NEWS FROM THE
THRASHERS

RAJESH GUPTA

SCORE

Revamped roster getting ready for season

Are you tired of the summer heat? Why not think cold? Lost in the summer sun is the fact that we have blown by the halfway point in the NHL offseason with the Thrashers ready to kick off the 2009-10 campaign on Oct. 3 at Philips Arena. The Thrashers finished last season on a much more positive note than they started, leaving fans with loftier expectations for this upcoming year. Right off the bat, GM Don Waddell wasted no time wheeling and dealing, especially on defense where he bolstered a line that at many times gave up too many shots on goal, and goals in general, last season. One of the biggest deals included trading defenseman Garnet Exelby for defenseman Pavel Kubina, who is coming off of a solid 2008-09 season with the Maple Leafs in which he played in all 82 games, scored 14 goals (nine on power plays) and totaled 40 points. He also contributed 133 blocked shots, 91 hits and 94 penalty minutes. However, Kubina's main selling point is his ability to contribute on offense, while Exelby was known solely for his defensive skills. The

Thrashers may miss Exelby's big hits, but came out ahead in this deal.

For a team crippled by a bad start last year and hurt by the loss of several key players to injury during the season, the hopes this year are that the youthful Thrashers can return to the playoffs, something they have done only once in their brief nine-year history.

Some key dates to mark on your calendar are Sept. 17 when the Thrashers open preseason play against the Predators in Nashville; Oct. 3, which marks the start of the regular season as the Thrashers face the Carolina Hurricanes at home; and November 21, when the Pittsburgh Penguins, the reigning Stanley Cup Champions, come to town.

As usual, the Thrashers organization is participating in a busy schedule of offseason charitable events around Atlanta, such as building Habitat for Humanity homes, donating books to Kayla's Reading Garden, and visiting kids at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta-Scottish Rite.

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UNDER THE LIGHTS

FOSTER LANDER

SCORE

Labor Day has lots in store at AMS

Labor Day NASCAR action returns to Atlanta Motor Speedway for the first time since 2003. The weekend kicks off on Saturday, Sept. 5 with NASCAR Sprint Cup Qualifying. Later that night, the NASCAR Nationwide Series Degree V12 300 gets underway beneath the lights. On Sunday, Atlanta Motor Speedway welcomes NASCAR Sprint Cup racing at night for the first time with the Pep Boys Auto 500 at 7 pm.

In previous years, the Pep Boys Auto 500 has been run either in October or November as part of the Chase for the Sprint Cup, at which the NSCS Champion is crowned. Last year, Carl Edwards took the lead from Denny Hamlin with 15 laps to go and beat out pole-sitter Jimmie Johnson, but Edwards couldn't gain much ground on the points leader. Johnson ran into early trouble after a Pit Road speeding penalty but stormed back from 30th place and a lap down to second place, minimizing Edwards's gain. The second-place finish essentially clinched the championship for Johnson, who extended his lead over Edwards to 183

points with just three races to go. Hamlin, Matt Kenseth and Kyle Busch rounded out the top five. Dale Earnhardt Jr. left Atlanta frustrated last year after getting knocked around and damaging his car on Pit Road, causing him to slip to an 11th-place finish after running in the top 10 all afternoon.

Atlanta Motor Speedway, known by some around NASCAR as the fastest track on the circuit, always provides exhilarating finishes: Kevin Harvick won by just .006 seconds in 2001; in 2005, Edwards beat out Johnson by just .028 seconds.

Tickets start at just \$25 (\$30 after Aug. 7) for the Nationwide Series, while Sprint Cup Series tickets run as low as \$39 for adults and \$19 for students. Pit passes also are available for both the Saturday (\$75) and Sunday (\$100) races. AMS provides plenty of free parking on race day, but parking passes can be attained for \$75. Fans can log on to atlantamotorspeedway.com or call 877-9-AMS-TIX to purchase tickets for both events.

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SCORE MORE

ON THE PANTHER FOOTBALL BEAT



DAVE COHEN

Curry and football team ready to begin fall practice; program teams up with NFL/YET

It's history in the making here at Georgia State, as head football coach Bill Curry and the staff get ready to begin practice with the first squad of Panther football players. Twenty-seven scholarship student-athletes and upwards of 30 walk-ons will take the field on Friday, Aug. 14 to make the Panther football vision a reality.

Where will practice be held you may ask? Well, while construction continues at the permanent location on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Georgia State has entered into a partnership with the National Football League


Youth Education Town to utilize the Atlanta NFL/YET facility as a temporary practice site this fall. It's located just a few minutes from campus on Hill Street. The site includes both natural and artificial turf fields, which are also utilized by the NFL/YET program and the adjacent Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School. "This is a wonderful partnership because it provides an opportunity for our student-athletes to give back to the local community," said Curry. "We will be practicing football there in the afternoons, but we also plan to be involved with the young peo-

ple who benefit from this center. It's very important that the student-athletes in our program understand that they are role models and they can make a difference."

The newest addition to the coaching staff is former NFL player Todd Perry, who will coach the tackles and tight ends. Perry played for Curry at Kentucky and then played 11 seasons with the Chicago Bears and Miami Dolphins. ... Also joining the staff as the director of football operations is Dave Kaplan, who directed and managed Atlanta's former PGA Tour event, the AT&T Classic, from

1983 through 2008. "Dave Kaplan is ideal for our organization. He has vast experience in the leadership and logistics of complex entities. He is a remarkable communicator, and an outstanding human being," said Curry. ... Tune in Friday, Aug 14 from 2-3 p.m. for our Panther Football preview show on WRAS-FM (88.5) live from the team's first practice.

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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CHECKING IN ON THE DREAM



ALEX EWALT

Dream look to solidify playoff bid with long July homestand, favorable matchups

It's a totally different season in 2009 for the Atlanta Dream, who are in the thick of the playoff hunt after setting a league record for losses in a season in their inaugural year. After the All-Star break, the team won its first two games out of the gate, a surprising 106-76 blowout win over Phoenix on July 30 and an 89-83 home win over New York on Aug. 1. With a 10-10 record at press time, the Dream were in fourth place in the Eastern Conference, which would put them in the playoffs. Moreover, the team was less than a game out of

second place in the conference, just a half game back of both Connecticut and Washington, which were both 10-9. Indiana leads that side of the league with a 16-4 overall record, tops in the league. Now that the stage is set, here's a look ahead to the rest of the season and some games that will determine if the Dream are postseason-bound. (The team met San Antonio on Thursday night on the road but results were unavailable at press time.)

Thankfully, the team will enjoy six straight home contests beginning this

Saturday before embarking on a five-game road trip that will take the team up to the final week of the season. The Dream will try to start this long homestand with wins over Eastern Conference teams the Chicago Sky and Detroit Shock, both of which could challenge Atlanta for that final seed in the playoffs. The Sky have All-Star starters in Sylvia Fowles and Candice Dupree, but are atrocious on the road (2-9 on the year). Next, Atlanta will host Detroit on Thursday, which was only 1.5 games behind the Dream in the chase for

the final postseason spot. After those two Eastern clashes, the Dream host four Western Conference teams in a row in Seattle, San Antonio, Los Angeles and Sacramento; the homestand ends on July 25.

Given the team's recent run of good form and a favorable schedule through the end of the month, fans have a great chance to see our hometown team in the playoffs after one of the biggest one-season turnarounds in recent sports memory.

Ewalt can be reached at aewalt@scoreatl.com.



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OUR MAN ON RECRUITING

SCORE
SCOTT JANOVITZ


Gators steal another recruit from Peach State; Clemson has huge week

Last Monday was a busy day along the Georgia recruiting trail, with three top in-state recruits announcing their college declarations. The University of Florida picked up a commitment from Jackson defensive end Neiron Ball. Ball, a 6-4, 210-pound dynamic athlete, chose the Gators over the hometown Bulldogs and was the second Georgia recruit to commit to the Gators in a three-day span, with the other being M.L. King running back Mack Brown. ... Also on Monday, Stanford earned a commitment from Centennial offensive tackle David Yankey. The 6-5, 275-pound Yankey represents the fourth Georgia prospect to commit to Jim Harbaugh and the Cardinal in this class. Henry Anderson (Woodward Academy), Daunte Carr (Gainesville) and Tai-ler Jones (Gainesville) represent the other three. ... Finally, Peachtree Ridge receiver Bradley Roby chose the Vanderbilt Commodores on Monday,

becoming the ninth Georgia player to choose Vandy in the class of 2010. Roby opted to play for Bobby Johnson over offers from Wake Forest, West Virginia, Auburn and Boston College, to name a few.

On Tuesday, Henry County wide receiver Markeith Ambles chose the University of Tennessee over the University of Florida. The 6-2, 182-pound Ambles is the fourth-ranked player in the state of Georgia, according to Rivals.com.

Clemson had a dynamic week recruiting the state of Georgia, landing three top Peach State recruits on Thursday and only days after earning the commitment of Centennial DB Martin Jenkins. First the Tigers received commitments from a Carver-Columbus duo in Corey Crawford and David Beasley. Crawford, a 6-5, 235-pound defensive end, chose Clemson despite earning offers from top schools such as Georgia, Florida State,

Alabama and Auburn. Beasley, a 6-4, 287-pound offensive guard, selected Clemson over Maryland, Memphis, Miami, and Ole Miss. Later in the day, Westlake cornerback Darius Robinson gave his verbal pledge to the Tigers. The 6-0, 170-pounder was also receiving interest from Kentucky, Miami, Michigan, Michigan State and Stanford.

Last week, Florida State earned commitments from its second and third Georgia recruits in the class of 2010. First, Columbia defensive end Tank Sessions gave the Seminoles his pledge on Wednesday. The 6-5, 230-pound Sessions also had offers from Maryland, Ole Miss, N.C. State, Oklahoma and Auburn. On Friday, FSU struck again by getting a verbal pledge from Telvin Smith, a 6-3, 196-pound linebacker out of Lowndes high school. Smith also had offers from Georgia, Georgia Tech, LSU, Louisville and Ole Miss, to name a few.

To end the week, Callaway receiver Quantavious Leslie made his decision known, choosing the University of West Virginia over East Carolina, Clemson, Kentucky and LSU. Leslie is a big, physical wideout at 6-4, 180 pounds.

LAST WEEK ON THE VISIT ...

Last Sunday, The Official Visit, Score Atlanta's Sunday (2-4) all-recruiting radio show on 790 The Zone, got the chance to speak with some of the state's top recruits. Among them was Westlake linebacker Michael Taylor, who told The Visit he has settled on a final three of LSU, Tennessee and Stanford. Taylor had previously hoped to take his time with the process, but will now announce in the next few weeks due to the flurry of early commitments in the class of 2010.

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THE SEASON IS NEAR

SCORE
ALEX EWALT


High school football begins again as fall practice opens; checking in on champs

It seems that anticipation for the high school football season keeps finding ways to reach new peeks.

A number of programs, including Thomas County Central in football-crazy Thomasville, took advantage of the rule that allowed programs to start practicing at 12:01 a.m. on Aug. 1 (Saturday) by holding a college basketball-style "Midnight Madness" practice session. It was estimated that Thomas County Central's fan attendance for the event was well over 1,000 for the late-night session, which lasted only about an hour or so before players headed back to bed; they had a Saturday morning session as well.

WHAT'S UP WITH THE CHAMPS? ...

Score Atlanta has spent a lot of time catching up with the top programs in the state so far, as we've been partnering with high school football writers Todd Holcomb and

Chip Saye to put out daily previews of each team in the state via an email newsletter, the Georgia High School Football Daily. We have previewed the state's teams all the way through Class 4A, with Class 5A running next week Monday-Thursday. Here's what we've found out about the returning champs from Classes A-4A:

Wesleyan, Class A: The Wolves were as big a surprise state title winner as we've seen in recent years when they upset ECI last December. The main catalyst of that explosive attack is back in the form of junior RB Kyle Karempelis, a Georgia High School Football Daily Class A first-teamer and its favorite player in Region 8. Karempelis had 1,902 yards rushing and 31 TDs last season, amazing numbers for a sophomore. It looks as if the underdog will become the favorite, as Wesleyan should be a consensus No. 1 team heading into the fall.

Buford, Class 2A: We've learned recent-

ly that it just doesn't matter how much talent Buford loses to the college ranks; you can't keep the Wolves down. Rising seniors Du'Von Millsap and Kolton Houston should make Buford's lines two of the biggest and most feared in the state. The transfer of elite RB Storm Johnson to Loganville for his senior year hurts, as does the defection of vaunted S Daunte Carr to Gainesville, but Buford picks up a transfer from Woodward Academy CB Ryan Dillard, himself a college prospect. Once again, Buford will be the favorite in Class 2A.

Cairo, Class 3A: The first school we've named that won't be the favorite to repeat, the Syrupmakers (who were recently voted No. 1 in a Sports Illustrated poll for the country's best high school mascot) were decimated by graduation and only return three total starters. Gone is the backfield tandem of QB Angelo Pease and RB Reginald Bryant, who combined for

almost 2,400 yards rushing last season, but back is RB Laquinton Williams, who projects to adequately replace Bryant for Cairo.

Tucker, Class 4A: This is another team that was hit hard by the loss of a big senior class. While the Tigers still have a good bit of talent, the graduation of RB/LB Jonathan Davis (Central Florida), RB/DB Drayton Calhoun (LSU) and about 30 other seniors will leave the DeKalb County powerhouse a bit thinner than in recent years. DE James Vaughters (who projects as a LB in college) has offers from Southern Cal, Ohio State and Florida before ever playing a snap as a junior, and senior RB/DB/KR/PR Devin Scott will carry the team at the skill positions.

Sign up for the GHSF Daily by sending an email to ghsfdaily@bellsouth.net. Ewalt can be reached at aewalt@scoreatl.com.

SEASON BEFORE THE SEASON

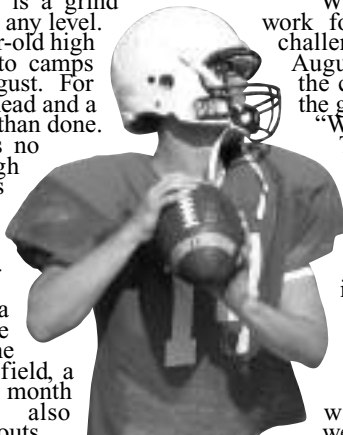
SCORE
JOSH BAGRIANSKY


Roswell QB and team prepare for bounce-back year with tough August workouts

Preseason training camp is a grind for any football team, at any level. That goes for 15- to 18-year-old high schoolers who will head to camps across the state this August. For them, maintaining a clear head and a healthy body is easier said than done. The intense preparation is no different at Roswell High School, where the Hornets are looking to improve on last season's 5-5 record.

"5-5 was unacceptable," said senior quarterback Brian Hickman.

Hickman (pictured), a returning starter, directs the offense on game day. But he also leads on the practice field, a role he plays not just this month throughout camp but also throughout offseason workouts.



While many might think that the work for the new season starts with challenging practices under the hot August sun, training camp is actually the capper to many months of laying the groundwork.

"We had workouts Monday through Thursday over the summer where we would lift [weights], throw a little, and get together and run plays," Hickman said.

For a more experienced player like Hickman, the wear and tear of training camp is nothing new. But for younger players, making the adjustment to the expectations of varsity football is often somewhat trial by fire.

"We're out here working hard for 2 hours straight along with lifting and conditioning, so we have to stay mentally strong,"

Hickman explained.

Hickman knows how tough training camp can be. He went through trials and tribulations as an underclassman when he served as the backup QB for the Hornets.

"Moving from Junior Hornet Football to varsity level was the hardest thing for me," he said. "Just seeing the change of speed to the change in intensity."

But Hickman benefited from that time on the sidelines, learning from then-starting quarterback Dustin Taliaferro, who quarterbacked RHS to a Class 5A state championship in 2006.

"Just being able to stay on the sideline and watching him do what he does helped me a lot," Hickman recalled. "We talked all the time, warmed up together, and senior year we did the same thing."

Now Hickman is trying to mimic Taliaferro's role, as he continued to push his teammates throughout the offseason and now

preseason camp.

"I just try to set the example," he said. "I try to push myself and say 'hey if I can do it, you can do it, too.'"

Thanks to the guiding hand of Hickman and an experienced roster that returns plenty of talent and includes close to 30 seniors, things appear bright at Roswell.

But RHS is only one of many teams across Georgia getting ready for the fall, and how much stronger the Hornets can become as a unit during the next month will go a long way in determining their fate.

"This year is going to be a whole different ball game. We have a lot of players returning and we have that mindset that we're going to make playoffs," Hickman said. "Personally, I think we have a chance to go undefeated with the talent we have."

Photo courtesy of Roy Hickman. Bagriansky can be reached at jbagriansky@scoreatl.com.

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Sports talk stations positioning for future; WSB's Dowdle to retire

In today's sports world it seems that as long as a competition is going on, the television, radio or print media is covering it. And who is going to keep tabs on all of that coverage? Score Atlanta, that's who. Every week we'll break down what the various forms of media are doing in Atlanta and across the country. So with no further ado ...

The Hawks will be on national television seven times this upcoming season. Getting to the second round certainly has its perks. Not only are you on the national stage with a chance to win a title, but you get to be on ESPN and TNT the following year so everyone can track whether or not you'll make it back. ESPN has selected six Atlanta games, four of which will be played at Philips Arena. The first national broadcast will be live from Boston on Nov. 13, but Hawks fans can pack Philips on Thanksgiving night as well as New Year's Night. Considering the Hawks used to never even sniff ESPN or TNT, this is a big deal. People love their Joe Johnson and Josh Smith.

RADIO NEWS ...

The Atlanta Braves will be moving next season. No, not to a new stadium, but to a new radio station. Braves games will be heard on AM 680 The Fan as well as 100.5 FM starting in 2010. The team signed a five-year deal and will move to The Fan, which also owns the broadcast rights to the NHL's Thrashers. The Fan works with two other smaller AM stations, so NHL coverage will likely get pushed to The Fan2 or The Fan3 when schedules conflict. The games are cur-

rently aired on Project 96.1 FM and AM 640.

This move makes sense for the Braves because with Leo Mazzone now on the station's morning show, "The Rude Awakening," and Buck Belue on in the afternoon, the team will get plenty of coverage, though you have to wonder if the coverage will be slanted to the positive because of the affiliation. John Kincade gives hard-hitting commentary on the Braves and it would be a shame for him to have to curb his opinions because of a fear of backlash.

The Fan is also adding Florida Gator football. For the last three seasons, the Fan has been the home of Auburn football, but with Atlanta being home to so many Florida alumni, and with the Gators seeking their second straight title and third in four years, the Fan decided to strike while it is hot. With Auburn going through a transition year, and as long as Tim Tebow is doing the Gator chomp, this change will seemingly bring listeners out of the woodwork. The question is, though, will the station give the Gator faithful the Urban Meyer call-in show? Maybe I missed it, but I don't remember hearing from Tommy Tuberville all that much when he was roaming the sidelines for the Tigers. WSB 750 AM will still carry the University of Georgia games with extended coverage and Sports Radio 790 The Zone is still the flagship station of Georgia Tech.

Speaking of 790 The Zone, football still lives on the station and Friday nights will once again feature high school football. Trey McDaniel returns to call play-by-play and

John Michaels will give color commentary on all of the action. McDaniel calls a solid game and Michaels originally got his feet wet working with the Georgia Force. The two called games together last season and this year the pair should be able to flow off of each other. Those fans looking for the Saturday morning recap might be disappointed, however, as High School High Five will not return for a third season. Those looking for high school football news will need to tune in to 790 Sundays from 2-4 for The Official Visit, presented by Score Atlanta. Starting the week after Labor Day, the Official Visit will move to Mondays, 7-9 p.m.

GOODBYE TO CHUCK ...

Finally, WSB's Chuck Dowdle will retire at the end of the year. Dowdle has been with Atlanta's WSB for 24 years. He won't be leaving the Atlanta sports scene, however. Dowdle will still do the weekly Mark Richt coach's show as well as handle post-game interviews for the Georgia Bulldog Radio Network. It's a shame to lose a staple of the local television scene, especially when you consider how much of a professional he was on the sports report. Dowdle never seemed to fall victim to the ESPN poseur-trap that so many sports anchors did when SportsCenter hit its peak earlier this decade. You never seemed to get a Craig Kilborn/Dan Patrick impersonation with Dowdle; you just got Chuck, and that was perfect for Atlanta.

Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.

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