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## PHILIPS HOSTS BAD BOYS

Hawks look to make it 10 straight in Highlight Factory

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## Hawks streaking in Highlight Factory; will Detroit be the next victim?

Philips Arena is becoming a frustrating place for opposing teams. On Wednesday, the Hawks played the Lakers and set a team record in the Highlight Factory as 20,190 fans watched the game. The fans got their money's worth as Atlanta ran the Lake Show out of the building by a score of 109-92. The win may surprise some because the Lakers are the defending World Champs and have one of the best records in the NBA. But like the Lakers, the Hawks have been lights out at home and that's why Atlanta is having one of their best regular seasons in over 10 years.

### BEATING THE BEST ...

Blowing out the Lakers at home is always good for any franchise and some would say it was the Hawks' biggest win this year. That may be true, but some other crucial wins this season have been in the 11-year-old building and may rival Wednesday's win as the most important this season.

Let's go back to the early stages of the 2009-10 season when the Hawks were going up against the Denver Nuggets, a team that reached the Western Conference Finals and were led by Carmelo Anthony and Chauncey Billups. Many thought this would be a game that would go back-and-forth and the Hawks would pull away at the end. Half of that is true as the Hawks did win, but they dominated the Nuggets from start to finish, winning 125-100. It was a coming out party for Jamal Crawford as he scored 25 points off the bench

which led all Hawks scorers.

Another home win that stands out was when they played the Toronto Raptors on Dec. 2 and blew them out of the water. Why is beating the Raptors a big deal? It's the fact that Atlanta scored 146 points in the game which is a season-high and the most points they have scored in a regular season contest since 1993.

In January, the Hawks hosted the Boston Celtics twice and it has been well-documented that the teams do not like each other. The first time was on January 8 and Crawford once again came up big, scoring 14 of his 18 points to give the Hawks a 93-85 win. The next time these two teams met was on January 29 and, while Crawford played his heart out, it was Joe Johnson that stepped up as he scored 16 fourth quarter points to give the Hawks the 100-91 win. The victory gave the Hawks a season sweep over Boston for the first time since 1995-96.

The Hawks have also had their share of last-second victories at Philips. The first one that comes to mind was when the Hawks took on the Rockets. The Hawks had a hard time pulling away from Houston that night, but Josh Smith slammed the game-winning dunk with less than a second left in regulation to give the Hawks the 105-103 victory.

Crawford and Johnson have also gotten into the mix with game-winning shots. Crawford hit a last second three-pointer to defeat the Phoenix Suns 102-101 on January 15. Johnson, who was coming back from an injury at the time, hit a 21-foot jumper with no time

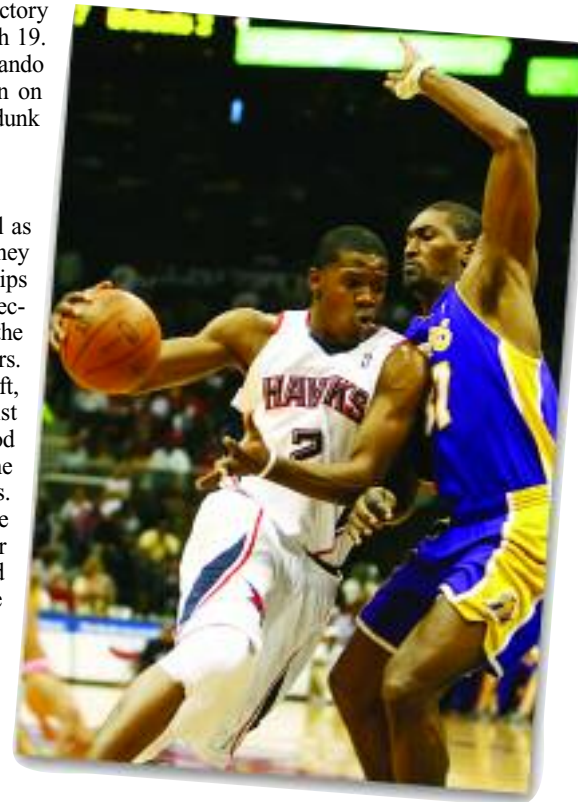
left to give the Hawks the 93-92 victory over Charlotte in overtime on March 19. The Hawks also defeated the Orlando Magic for the first time this season on March 24 thanks to another Smith dunk with no time left on the clock.

### TOUGH AT HOME ...

The Hawks are playing as well as any team in the NBA at home, as they have won the last nine games at Philips Arena. Their 31-7 home record is second-best in the NBA behind only the Cleveland Cavaliers and the Lakers. Atlanta has three home games left, including the one tonight against Detroit. A win would keep the good times rolling and give the team some momentum heading into the playoffs.

How can the Hawks keep the home winning streak going? For starters, Johnson, Smith and Horford have to play at a high level while bench players such as Crawford, Zaza Pachulia and Mo Evans have to provide the energy that they have all season long. And, of course, the fans have to continue their passionate support for the Hawks. If those things continue to happen, Philips Arena will not be a friendly place for any opposing team.

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**SCORING MACHINE:** Hawks' guard Joe Johnson will look to duplicate his performance against the Lakers on Wednesday, when he dropped 25 points and eight assists on the defending world champions. Photo courtesy of David Caselli.

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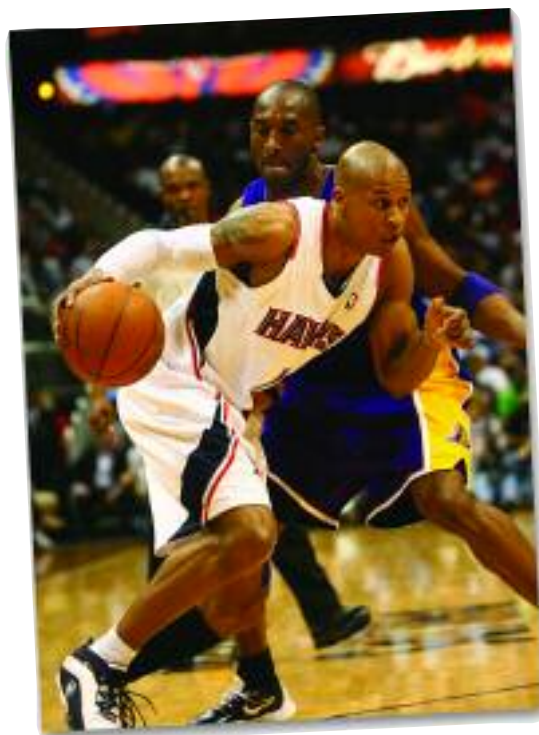
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# DETROIT AT A GLANCE




**JOSH BAGRIANSKY**

## Injuries to key players and poor trades have Pistons slumping down the stretch



**HAWKS NEED "MO" BENCH PRODUCTION:** Atlanta will rely on bench players like Maurice "Mo" Evans tonight against a banged-up Detroit squad. Evans sparked the Hawks on Wednesday night against L.A. with 18 points off the bench and a memorable clash with Lakers' instigator Ron Artest. Photo courtesy of David Caselli.

Once upon a time, the Detroit Pistons were amongst the NBA's top teams. They were an impressive group of veterans that played an inspired defensive style of basketball coupled with a consistent and unselfish offensive attack. It was a lethal combination that produced a team that was regularly among the top teams in the Eastern Conference and won an NBA Title in 2004. The reality is that it wasn't long ago that Detroit was a perennial contender for hardware, but it seems like ages since they were that team.

The downfall started last year after the team traded Chauncey Billups for Allen Iverson, which was a deal that resulted in disaster for an already aging squad, as the Cleveland Cavaliers breezed by Detroit in a first round sweep. Then, things got even worse. Despite the offseason signings of sharpshooter Ben Gordon and forward Charlie Villanueva, the team quickly suffered through a nine-game losing streak. It's been all downhill since for the last-place Pistons, and Atlanta should certainly be expecting a victory when a once-proud Detroit team enters Philips Arena looking like a shadow of their former selves.

### POSITION-BY-POSITION ANALYSIS ...

There is one beacon of hope for the Pistons, as point guard Rodney Stuckey continues to show flashes of being the franchise point guard that the team so desperately needed after Billups' departure. Stuckey is a load for

opposing point guards at 6-5, making him a major scoring threat in the paint. He's also a regular at the free throw line and he typically makes teams pay by shooting 83 percent from the charity stripe.

Tayshaun Prince and Richard Hamilton are the lone starters remaining from Pistons of old. Prince is not the shut down defender he once was, but he's still a ball hawk that will make things tough on the perimeter for the likes of Joe Johnson and Jamal Crawford. The Kentucky product is also a fine outside shooter. Meanwhile, Hamilton is averaging 18 points per game and figures to be Detroit's No. 1 option offensively. He's shooting a career low from the field and has struggled from outside the arc, but remains a threat to score at all times for the "Bad Boys."

One would be hard-pressed to find a bigger disappointment for Detroit this season than Gordon. Signed to a big contract last summer after a career season in Chicago, he is averaging five points below his career average. Usually a dead eye shooter from outside the arc, the UConn alum is shooting just 30 percent from deep this year. Known for his ability to score in bunches and hit the big shot, he'll surely want to finish the season strong after coming under fire during his first season in Detroit.

One pleasant surprise for the visitors has been Jonas Jerebko. The rookie was drafted 39th overall last season after spending the rest of his career overseas. It appears that general manager Joe Dumars may have found a diamond in the rough in the Swede, whose hustle and dedication on both ends of the floor have given opposing teams fits.

Local fans will remember Will Bynum

from Georgia Tech. The former Yellow Jacket has had a tough time breaking into the league, but appears to have found a home in Detroit and has started 12 games this season. Keep an eye on Bynum distributing the ball, as he is averaging 4.6 "dimes" in just 25 minutes per game.

Keep an eye on the ultra-athletic Jason Maxiell, who makes up for his lack of size with hustle and the ability to jump out of the gym. The Chicago native is the type of work-horse that gives the Hawks fits down low.

Long-time assistant John Kuester is at the helm. And like many of the players, he has had to endure much criticism as the team floundered during his first year in charge.

### NOT A PUSHOVER ...

To the naked eye, this matchup might appear to be a breeze for Atlanta. But the Pistons showed the Hawks just how costly overconfidence can be in this league when they shocked Atlanta at The Palace at Auburn Hills in November, beating the visitors with Gordon, Hamilton and Prince all out of the lineup with injuries.

While the playoffs may be just a stone's throw away for Atlanta, they'll want to grab some momentum for the playoffs by finishing the regular season in strong fashion. A visit from the struggling Pistons gives them the perfect opportunity to do just that, and they'll look to gain some confidence and swagger tonight with a big win. Perhaps they can show a team that once contended for a title every year that times have most certainly changed in the Eastern Conference.

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# 2010 ATLANTA HAWKS/DE



## 10 MIKE BIBBY • G

Bibby has provided the Hawks leadership and playoff experience since being traded to Atlanta in 2008. He is not the scorer that he once was, but scored 12 against the Lakers on Wed. night in just under 22 minutes of action.



## 27 ZAZA PACHULIA • C-F

Pachulia had his first double-double of the season against the Lakers on Wednesday night, when he grabbed 10 boards and scored 10 points. He is a consistent rebounder off the bench and has become one of the best passing centers in the game today.



## 34 JASON COLLINS • G

The eight-year veteran does not see too much time on the court, but he has been in the league for a while and has plenty of postseason experience. The Stanford product was with the New Jersey Nets when they went to the Finals in 2003.



## 32 JOE SMITH • F-C

The former No. 1 pick has been in the NBA for 14 years and has done it all. Smith only averages three minutes per game, but can rebound effectively and score in the post when needed. The former Maryland Terrapin is also relied upon as a role model for younger players.



## 11 JAMAL CRAWFORD • G

Kobe Bryant said after the Hawks' win over L.A. on Wednesday that Jamal Crawford is the obvious choice for the 2010 NBA Sixth Man of the Year. The Seattle native leads all bench players in points-per-game and is one reason that the Hawks are having a marvelous season.



## 5 JOSH SMITH • F

Earlier this season, Smith became the youngest player to ever block 1,000 shots in his career. The Powder Springs native averages 15.7 points, 8.7 boards and 2.1 blocks. Smith's dunk follow to beat Orlando is one of Atlanta's plays of the year.



## 1 MAURICE EVANS • F-G

Evans is in his second year with the Hawks and has been one of their more reliable bench players. He can play guard or forward, is a great defender and showed his toughness by getting in the face of Ron Artest on Wednesday night. "Mo" had 18 points off the bench against L.A.



## 0 JEFF TEAGUE • G

Teague is in his first year in the NBA but sparked the Hawks in the second half against L.A. with a fast-break dunk. He is averaging just 10 minutes per game but has done a good job of controlling the offense when Mike Bibby is on the bench.



## 15 AL HORFORD • C-F

The third-year player out of Florida is making averaging 14.2 points and leads the team with 9.7 rebounds this season. The NBA is starting to pay attention to the native of the Dominican Republic, naming him as an All-Star team reserve last month.



## 6 MARIO WEST • G

West doesn't get much playing time, but no one outthrusts him when he is on the court. The Georgia Tech alum can be relied upon to get loose balls and has the ability to play stellar defense. The Huntsville native replaced Othello Harrington on the roster midway through the 2010 campaign.



## 2 JOE JOHNSON • G

Mr. Consistency is what fans should call Johnson, as the superstar guard once again leads the team in scoring with 21.4 points-per-game. The former Arkansas Razorback was named to his fourth-consecutive All-Star game this year and started for the first time. Johnson had a game-high eight assists on Wed.



## 24 MARVIN WILLIAMS • F

Williams has great athleticism and is one of the Hawks' most prolific outside shooters. One of his best games of the season came against Charlotte on March 19 when he scored 12 points and pulled down 14 rebounds. The former North Carolina product was the Hawks' No. 1 pick in the 2005 Draft.



## 33 RANDOLPH MORRIS • C

Morris is another guy that does not see a lot of action, but is a big body that provides depth at the center position. The Kentucky product had his best game against the Memphis Grizzlies on Dec. 16, when he scored seven points and grabbed three rebounds.



## MIKE WOODSON • HC

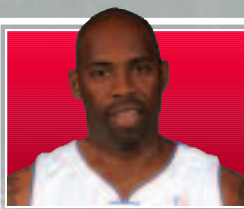
Woodson's teams have improved in the win column every year since being named head coach in 2004. In his first year, the Hawks won just 13 games. This year, the Hawks have a chance to win 50 games for the first time since 1997-98 and have already surpassed last season's win total.



# ROUND ONE PLAYOFFS ON SALE



# TROIT PISTONS MATCHUP



## 17 CHUCKY ATKINS • G

The veteran guard from South Florida provides quickness and savvy off the bench. Atkins is averaging just over four points per game but also averages 2.2 assists and shoots 95.7 percent from the charity stripe. The 5-11 guard gets in the game for 16.1 minutes on average.



## 54 JASON MAXIELL • F

The former Cincinnati Bearcat will back up Jerebko at the No. 4 position and averages 6.6 points and 5.3 boards for Detroit. The Chicago native scored 19 points the last time the Pistons played in Atlanta but is currently recovering from a back strain.



## 38 KWAME BROWN • C

The Brunswick native was "The Next Big Thing" coming out of high school at Glynn Academy, then skipped college and has been somewhat of a disappointment in the NBA. Brown is in his ninth year as a pro and is averaging 3.1 points and 13.3 minutes per game.



## 22 TAYSHAUN PRINCE • F

The former Kentucky Wildcat starts at small forward for Detroit and is pouring in 12.9 points and 5.1 rebounds per game. Prince has an amazing wing span and is a terror on defense, as he is generally matched up with shorter players. The native of Compton is in his eighth NBA season, all with Detroit.



## 12 WILL BYNUM • G

Atlanta-area fans will remember Bynum from his days at Georgia Tech. The Chicago native is second on the team in assists with 4.6 per game and is third in steals. Bynum, who is averaging almost 10 points per game, shares the point guard role with Stuckey.



## 3 RODNEY STUCKEY • G

The Seattle native is second on the team in scoring with 17 points per game and leads the team in assists with 4.9. Stuckey also contributes four boards per game and scored 23 points in Detroit's win over Atlanta on Nov. 29. The 6-5 guard is in his third year with the Pistons.



## 5 AUSTIN DAYE • G-F

The 6-11 guard/forward has started two games this year, but usually comes off the bench. Daye can shoot the three if necessary, but can also help out on the boards as well. The Gonzaga product scores 4.7 points per game and grabs 2.2 rebounds for the Pistons.



## 35 DAJUAN SUMMERS • F

The rookie from Georgetown was the No. 5 pick of the second round in the 2009 NBA Draft. In two games against Atlanta this year, Summers played one minute and scored one total point. However, Summers scored a career-high 12 points in two different games during mid-March.



## 31 CHARLIE VILLANUEVA • F

One of three UConn alums on the team, Villanueva was acquired in the offseason from Milwaukee. The 6-11 forward leads the team in three-pointers, as he has made 86 of them this season. The Queens native scored 13 points in the Nov. 29 win over the Hawks.



## 7 BEN GORDON • G

The former Connecticut Husky is the second on the team in three-point shooting and is starting at shooting guard. Gordon's first year in Detroit has been a rough one for the sixth-year vet, as his 13 points per game average is by far the worst of his career.



## 6 BEN WALLACE • C

The starting center for Detroit has soreness issues in his knees and missed several games in March because of it. However, Wallace still leads the team in rebounding and blocked shots. The Alabama native was a member of the Pistons' 2004 World Championship squad.



## 32 RICHARD HAMILTON • G

"Rip" is in his 11th NBA season, all but three of which have been in Detroit. Hamilton is leading the team in scoring with 18.1 points per game and is also third on the team in assists with 4.4. Like Gordon, the starting No. 2 guard is a UConn product.



## 9 CHRIS WILCOX • F

The former Maryland Terrapin backs up Ben Wallace at center and averages about 13 minutes per game. Wilcox has been out for most of the last two months with a sore back and has not played since Feb. 23. The Raleigh native was the No. 8 selection in the 2002 NBA Draft by the Clippers.



## 33 JONAS JEREBKO • F

The rookie from Sweden has been a pleasant surprise for head coach John Kuester and is averaging 9.3 points and 5.9 boards per game for the "Bad Boys". Jerebko starts at power forward for Detroit and has been in a slump during the team's recent losing streak.



## JOHN KUESTER • HC

The former North Carolina point guard has been coaching in the NBA since 1995, when he was an assistant with the Celtics. Kuester was named Pistons head coach in 2009 and has compiled a 23-51 record in his first season at the helm. The Richmond native played three seasons in the NBA.

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# THE HEAD-TO-HEAD MATCHUP



## Pistons visit brings back old playoff memories; Hawks need rebounding edge

Strange as it may seem, it is still hard to see the Pistons on the Hawks' schedule and not get nostalgic. Pardon the walk through history, but in the 1980's, such a matchup would boast the likes of Isaiah Thomas, Joe Dumars, Bill Laimbeer, Dennis Rodman, Rick Mahorn and John Sally, who were commonly referred to as the "Bad Boys", against legendary Hawks such as Spud Webb, Dominique Wilkins, Kevin Willis and Doc Rivers. However, those days are gone, and as the teams meet for the third time in 2009-2010, the Pistons are hitting new lows, a drastic change from the Bad Boys image which stood for tenacious defense and physical play.

### THE FIRST TWO MEETINGS ...

Detroit beat Atlanta 94-88 in the first of two matchups this season on Nov. 29. It was an impressive display of rebounding that helped the Pistons win as they won the battle on the boards 53-27. While Atlanta had only six offensive rebounds, Detroit had 24 which was one of the most telling factors in the team's ability to get 16 more shot attempts than the Hawks. The Pistons were also without Tayshaun Prince, Rip Hamilton and Ben Gordon due to injury. A surprisingly energetic bench picked up the slack for Motown as they outscored the Atlanta bench by 16 points. Looking back on the matchup, it seems more like one of those tough

defeats that all good teams unfortunately endure in an 82-game season.

More recently, the Hawks hosted the Pistons and put on one of the most impressive first half efforts of any team in the NBA this season. Ultimately winning the game 112-99, the Hawks converted 83.3 percent of their attempts from the field in the first quarter and 73 percent of their attempts in the half. Atlanta's early and efficient offense trumped anything that Pistons could do as far as trying to get back into the game. Frustrations boiled over for the Pistons as Will Bynum and head coach John Kuester both got technical fouls in the first quarter. The Hawks also remedied one of the other problems that hurt them in Detroit by closing the rebounding gap to a respectable 33-31 difference in favor of the Pistons. The Hawks also outscored the Detroit bench 34-29. Even with a furious second half comeback, the damage was already done as the Hawks cruised to victory.

### THE THIRD MEETING ...

As the Hawks and Pistons are set for Game Three of the season series, the big question on everyone's mind is what shape this game will take in light of what we saw in the first two meetings. Though it would be tough to anticipate another start quite as good as the Hawks' last showing in Atlanta, it's not hard to imagine the team continuing their domination in Philips Arena. Atlanta is currently on a nine-

game winning streak on their home court.

In contrast, the season continues to hit new lows for the Pistons are going in the wrong direction in the win/loss column. The team currently holds the third-worst record in the Eastern Conference and the second-worst road record in the conference, winning only seven games away from the Palace this season.

One key player for the Hawks should be Joe Johnson, who scored 26 points against Detroit in the last meeting. It was a much better showing for Johnson than the first meeting when he only scored 10 points on five-for-19 shooting. Johnson is coming off an outstanding game at Philips against the Lakers where he scored 25 points with eight assists. Another key player for the Hawks is Josh Smith, who scored 23 points and had seven rebounds in the team's first meeting and dropped 18 points and 11 assists in the second game.

As always, the Hawks' bench should play a big role in this game. After another impressive showing in the Lakers game, it looks as though the reserve players show no signs of backing down. In regards to the Hawks nine-game home winning streak, as the old adage goes "all good thing must come to an end", but looking at the way these two teams have played as of late, it's hard to think it will be today.

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**HOT SHOOTING WILL BE KEY:** Marvin Williams and the Hawks hit 73 percent of their shots in the first half of the last meeting with Detroit, a 112-99 triumph. However, Atlanta scored just 88 points in a loss on Nov. 29 in the Motor City. Photo courtesy of David Caselli.



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