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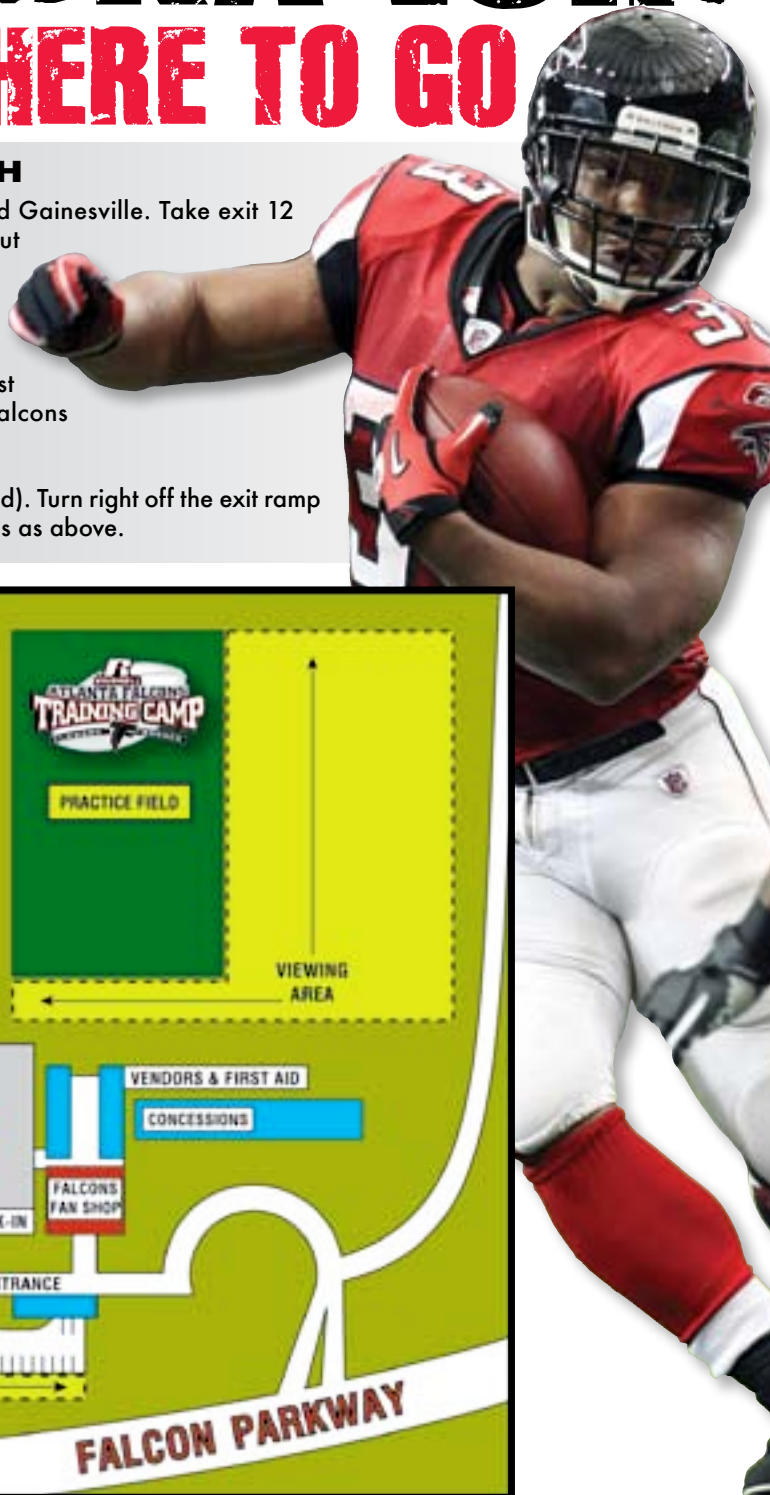
WELCOME BACK TO THE BRANCH!

WHEN AND WHERE TO GO

HOW TO GET TO FLOWERY BRANCH

From the south: Take I-85 north. Exit to the left on I-985 toward Gainesville. Take exit 12 (Spout Springs Road). Turn left off the exit ramp onto Spout Springs Road. Go under I-985, travel 1/4 mile and turn right on Thurmond Tanner Road. Proceed on Thurmond Tanner Road for about one mile to the stoplight, then turn right on Atlanta Highway (Ga. 13). Go about a mile on Atlanta Highway (which becomes Falcon Parkway) past the Wrigley plant on the left and back over I-985. The Falcons complex will be on the left (4400 Falcon Parkway).

From the north: Take I-985 south. Take exit 12 (Spout Springs Road). Turn right off the exit ramp onto Spout Springs Road. From here, use the same directions as above.



TRAINING CAMP PRACTICE SCHEDULE

DATE	TIME
Jul. 29	3:25 p.m.
Jul. 30	3:25 p.m.
Jul. 31	3:25 p.m.
Aug. 1	8:30 a.m.
Aug. 2	8:30 a.m.
Aug. 3	OFF
Aug. 4	8:30 a.m.
Aug. 5	Friday Night Lights 7:30 p.m.
Aug. 6	OFF
Aug. 7	8:30 a.m.
Aug. 8	8:30 a.m.
Aug. 9	8:30 a.m.

PRESEASON SCHEDULE

-  **Aug. 12**
vs. Miami 7:30 p.m. (CBS)
-  **Aug. 19**
@ Jacksonville 8:00 p.m. (FOX)
-  **Aug. 27**
@ Pittsburgh 7:30 p.m. (CBS)
-  **Sept. 1**
vs. Baltimore 7:30 p.m. (CBS)



LOOKING FOR AUTOGRAPHS?

Player autographs will be available on a first-come, first-served basis for 15 minutes following practice. Autographs can be obtained on the viewing hill or at the Falcons' merchandise booth (select days only). Please call the hotline number below if you have any questions.

FALCONS HOTLINE
770.965.2752



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TRAINING CAMP FAQs

THE 411 ON THE BRANCH

WHERE TO PARK ...

Training camp parking is available at the Hog Mountain Sports Complex and C.W. Davis Middle School across the street from the Falcons training complex. There is no general parking available at the training complex. Fans with disability parking permits will be allowed to park at the training complex. Disability permits must be properly displayed for law enforcement officials to grant entry. A designated seating area will also be provided for fans with disabilities.

WHAT YOU CAN BRING TO CAMP ...

Hats, jackets, rain gear, sunglasses, sunscreen, binoculars, blankets, umbrellas, lawn chairs and strollers. Coolers are NOT permitted at Falcons Training Camp, unless they are being used to carry critical medical supplies (e.g., insulin for diabetics). Alcoholic beverages and glass containers are prohibited. In addition, please do not bring noisemakers, loud radios, large signs or inappropriate attire. Backpacks and bags larger than 8.5 inches wide by 13 inches long by 5 inches deep are not permitted at training camp. All people, bags and purses are subject to inspection. Any individual who refuses an inspection will be denied entry.

HOW ABOUT A CAMERA?

Still cameras with lenses less than 12 inches and without flash attachments are permitted during all training camp workouts. No flash photography will be permitted at any time. No audio or video recording devices are allowed, including camcorders and cellular phones with video capabilities.

WHAT IF THERE'S BAD WEATHER?

Check the Falcons' website at www.atlantafalcons.com for updates or call the Atlanta Falcons Training Camp Hotline at 770-965-2752. Practice times are subject to change without notice.

CAN I BUY FALCONS MERCHANDISE?

Get your training camp and Falcons merchandise at the Falcons365 trailer at camp and at Kia Motors

Friday Night Lights. The trailer will be open before, during and after practice. (The lost and found area is also at this location.)

FOR THOSE WHO ARE HUNGRY ...

The main concessions are located in the sponsor activation area.

FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO BEAT THE HEAT ...

In an effort to ensure comfort for all fans who attend a Falcons practice during training camp, the club has a 10-by-10-foot area at the top of the spectator hill for fans to get out of the sun and cool off.

FOR YOUR SAFETY AND SECURITY ...

For your safety and protection, Atlanta Falcons security personnel — along with the Flowery Branch Police Department, Hall County Police Department and other local law enforcement officials — will be present at training camp. In serious cases of rowdy behavior or profane/abusive language, security will first issue a warning. If the disruptive behavior continues, the fan will be subject to removal or arrest. Multiple violations may result in the individual being banned from the Falcons complex.

THERE WILL BE FIRST-AID HELP ...

A Falcons first-aid station will be set up adjacent to the training camp fan field's main entrance. Authorized medical personnel from the Falcons and Hall County will be available one hour before each practice through one hour after each session.

THE INFORMATION BOOTH ...

Any questions about training Camp may be directed to associates at "Ask Me" towers or the Falcons365 trailer.

ARE THERE ACTIVITIES FOR THE KIDS?

The Atlanta Falcons invite youth ages 17 and under to experience Youth Weekend at Falcons training camp in Flowery Branch July 29-31. Activities both days include the Kids Only Autograph Zone and Look Like a Pro, where kids will have the opportunity to try on authentic equipment used and worn by Falcons players. There will also be unique activities taking place on each day, such as Football Flurry (July 30, 3:45-5:35 p.m.) and Helmet and Jersey Frenzy (July 31, 3:45-6:25 p.m.). The Kids Zone opens one hour prior to each practice session.

SPECIAL GUESTS AND VIPS ...

Special guest, VIP and sponsor check-in sites are located near the main building entrance of the Atlanta Falcons training complex.

IS SMOKING ALLOWED?

For the comfort and health of all fans, the Falcons training complex is a smoke-free environment. There is no smoking allowed anywhere on the grounds or inside the buildings.

WHERE CAN I FIND DAILY UPDATES?

Check the list of daily activities on the club's Web site (www.atlantafalcons.com) or inquire about events in the Falcons365 trailer. Or by calling the Training Camp hotline number at 770-965-2752.



CAMP PARTNER

Russell Brands, LLC is proud to sponsor Russell Athletic® Atlanta Falcons Training Camp each year at the Falcons training facility in Flowery Branch.

This sponsorship includes designating Russell Athletic as a preferred supplier of promotional apparel and premium items and presenting sponsor of all preseason games on WGCL-TV and its affiliates, radio spots during 20 Atlanta Falcons games on Falcons Flagship radio stations Star 94 and 790 The Zone, and dominant signage presence throughout the interior of the Georgia Dome including the high-profile branded fan zone where fans will receive one-of-a-kind Russell Athletic apparel. Russell-branded products will also be available for purchase at all Falcons home games.



KIA FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS

For the fourth year, Friday Night Lights (at Norcross High School in Norcross, 7:30 p.m.) will once again bring the team to the fans. This grassroots event includes a fan fest with interactive inflatable games, sponsor activation, a post-event autograph session and a spectacular fireworks show. During the live scrimmage, several players including the Falcons quarterbacks and certain position players will be mic'd so fans can get an "under the helmet look" at the action on the field.

The Falcons Training Camp Guide was produced and published by Score Publishing, a division of Score Atlanta. The publisher is I.J. Rosenberg, editor is Stephen Black and creative art director is DJ Galbiati. The photos in the Guide were taken by Falcons team photographer Jimmy Cribb. Score is a full-service marketing company and can be reached at 404-256-1572 and SCOREATL.COM.





A WORD FROM THE OWNER'S BOX



Falcons owner Arthur Blank continues to move the franchise towards winning a Super Bowl Trophy and feels strongly that this year's team can compete with anyone. Score Atlanta founder I.J. Rosenberg sat down with Blank for a chat about what has been a very interesting offseason, as well his team's chances in 2011.

How important is it that the new collective bargaining agreement will be in place for the next 10 years?

Blank: I think it's very important. I think a 10-year agreement is just as important as the terms of the agreement. To our fans, to our sponsors, to our media partners, to the people that develop plans for the long term, I think it's critical for them to be able to make their plans based on that kind of commitment. I think it's very significant.

How worried were you that there could be actual football missed because of the labor disagreement?

Blank: I can't say that I was never worried about it, but I didn't think that it was a real possibility. My view was that the industry itself is so sizeable and healthy in total, and there had to be a sustainable agreement long term for both sides, which I think we have now. I think it was a matter of hearing what each side was saying, and I think the negotiating teams did that very effectively and tried to respond. So I was very optimistic we would not lose any part of our season in 2011. I think that this is America's game and everyone understood that – owners, players, staffs, and all supporting attorneys.

How important is it to have a player like Matt Ryan who can be the face of your franchise?

Blank: Matt is everything we had hoped for when we drafted him. He's obviously a wonderful football player in terms of productivity. He has more wins in the last three seasons than any other quarterback in the league, so we're thrilled with that. But beyond that, he's a great leader on and off the field, and he creates a great environment in the locker room. During this offseason, Matt was our player-coach, really, and was the one who arranged for the players to continue their workouts on their own schedule. Certainly on the offensive side of the ball he's done a tremendous amount in terms of developing a workout that was productive for everybody. So I'm thrilled with every aspect of him.

The team sent a league-best nine players to the Pro Bowl last season. Talk about what this meant for the Falcons.

Blank: I think it's a great achievement, it's a great milestone in the history of our franchise.

It speaks to the team last year winning 13 games out of 16, although we didn't play well in the playoffs, obviously. But we had a wonderful year last year and I think that's one of the reasons that Coach [Mike] Smith and [General Manager] Thomas Dimitroff received Sporting News recognition as Coach of the Year and Executive of the Year, the second time in three years for both of them, which makes them the first duo since the Redskins' Joe Gibbs and Bobby Beathard to accomplish this.

Since you've been owner, the franchise has continued to earn recognition as one of the most stable and successful in the league. What did it take to get to this point?

Blank: In every business, it's all about people. It's all about leadership, it's about hiring the best people, providing them with the right kind of environment, setting the right kind of standards in the organization, giving them the resources to get the job done and, really, staying out of their way to make sure they make the decisions they're capable of making. With Rich and Thomas and Smitty, we have three incredible leaders. And beneath them, both on the football side and the non-football side, we have people like [Chief Financial Officer] Greg Beadles, [Chief Marketing Officer] Jim Smith, [Vice President of Sales] Dave Cohen, [IT VP] Danny Branch and [Football Communications VP] Reggie Roberts. We also have outstanding coordinators. Mike Mularkey was named coordinator of the year by Sporting News. So we have a great team of people, and that carries down to the locker room and our players and everyone who supports our players.

What is your mindset when Dimitroff and his staff decide to make a big personnel move, such as trading up 21 spots to draft wide receiver Julio Jones?

Blank: That's why they get paid, quote, 'the big bucks,' if you will. Those are very difficult decisions to make. You look for an effort that's a collaborative one. It's not a one-person deal. So if Thomas felt strongly, say, about Julio, but the offensive coordinator or receiving coach did not, or if someone who worked for Thomas did not, that would be a red flag for me that maybe there's some issues here. But when you have group consensus for a decision like that and everybody feels the same way to a large extent, then that gives you the comfort to want to pull the trigger and to spend the money that we'll have to in order to move up to make the pick for Julio.

You do so much charitable work in the community through your family foundation and the Atlanta Falcons Youth Foundation. What drives your passion in this area?

Blank: At the end of the day, whether it's the home improvement business, the football business, the golf business or therapy centers, it is about making a difference in people's lives. And we try to do that in our all businesses, including our guest ranch where we spend most of our summer in Montana. Whether it's guests at Mountain Sky Guest Ranch, or fans of the Falcons, or patients at our Atlanta Falcons Physical Therapy Centers or customers in our PGA TOUR Superstores, we really try to make a difference in their lives in a variety of ways. And that gives us the opportunity, if we're good at what we're doing, to add to the estate, 95 percent of which will be recycled back through our family foundation to make the world a better place through the thoughtful decisions that our foundation staff makes on a daily basis. To me, I like the expression, 'there is no finish line.' It's part of my life philosophy. But I would like to feel that the efforts of all our associates and all our businesses and our foundation are making a difference in people's lives every day.

In five years, what do you hope to have accomplished with the Falcons franchise? What are your expectations for this season?

Blank: I hope to see us continuing with winning seasons, like the three that we've had, back to back to back, which is obviously the first time in the history of our franchise that we've done that. Beyond that, I'd like to see us go deep in the playoffs and become a more serious contender in the playoffs. It is single-game elimination, so I'd like to see us get to the Super Bowl and I'd like to see us be in a situation where we can bring one home for Atlanta and the State of Georgia. This year I think our team will be better. Whether or not our record will be better really remains to be seen. There's no question in my mind that the team will be better. So we have to get to the playoffs and we have to play better in the playoffs than we did last year and we have to take it a game at a time. The coaches and staff are focused and looking forward to the season, as I know our fans are.

This year, let's rise up even higher.

We're proud to support the Falcons in their quest to be the best.

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¹Government 5-Star Safety Ratings are part of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA's) New Car Assessment Program (www.safercar.gov). ²Max HP for LX non-turbo engine is 200 hp @ 6,300 rpm; max HP for Super Ultra Low Emission Vehicle (SULEV) — the only non-turbo engine available in CA, CT, ME, MD, MA, NJ, NM, NY, OR, PA, RI, VT and WA — is 192 hp @ 6,300 rpm. ³2012 EPA fuel economy estimates for LX 2.4L GDI (non-turbo) engine with manual transmission are 24 mpg/city, 35 mpg/hwy; for SX 2.0L turbo (shown), 22 mpg/city, 34 mpg/hwy. Actual mileage may vary. ⁴Max HP for 2.0L Turbo GDI engine is 274 hp @ 6,000 rpm. Turbo engine available only on EX Turbo and SX. ⁵MSRP for Optima LX base model is \$19,950. MSRP for Optima SX model shown with Premium Package is \$29,100. Prices include \$750 freight, and excludes taxes, title, license, other options and retailer charges. Actual prices set by retailer and may vary.



NFL LABOR RESOLUTION



SCORE
SEAN CONWAY

Fans rejoice as complex labor negotiations end and football season returns

The first thing we should have done as fans of the NFL is give up. Like a kid settling into his seat on the Scream Machine at Six Flags, NFL fans should give up trying to figure out the complexities, posturing and legal-ese of labor negotiations. No matter how hard Adam Scheffer of ESPN or Mike Florio at ProFootballTalk try to educate us, most fans will never truly understand (or appreciate) the complexities and intricacies of negotiations between athletes and owners. Plain and simple. As fans, we are better off trying to relax and not obsess over what we can't control.

BACK IN BUSINESS ...

Football is back. Thankfully, the lockout has been lifted, and reasonable boardroom warriors on both sides of the table prevailed. That's what matters to us as fans. Yes, the

players and owners fought hard for their respective interests since (basically) the Super Bowl. Fans, too, would have fought with tooth, nail, hamstring, wallet and long-term well-being if we only had the worry of hundreds of millions of dollars in assets or had put in decades of hard work (and in many cases won the athletic DNA lottery). But we didn't have to fight. We were left helpless and standing on the electronic sidelines watching. All we could do is fret and maybe take a side. Who wouldn't? Football is our national pastime (sorry baseball) and, in the DVR and Slingbox era, the only surviving appointment-television programming.

As Robert De Niro, playing Al Capone in *The Untouchables*, said, "It's touching. Like a lot of things in life, we laugh because it's funny, and we laugh because it's true." It is oddly amusing that after all these months, despite the vitriol and vexation, we all win. Wait, how can that be? Simple: the owners got five percentage points of revenue back, the players' lifestyle and security will improve, businesses and economies dependent upon an NFL season can go back to thriving and we the fans get pro football.

BEGINNING OF THE RIFT ...

Beginning in 1993, there was a sustained period of harmony between the owners and the players. Then, in 2008, the owners opted not to renew the collective bargaining agreement, and the deal expired after last season. The owners, being businessmen, could not help but notice that our nation's economy was not exactly at its apex. Their teams (their investments) needed to be managed, and screws needed to be tightened. Profits in many markets had dipped. The value of some franchises stopped rising like mercury on an August afternoon in Atlanta. The owners had given the players an unprecedented share of profits in the last labor agreement. Now, they wanted the players to share in their pain. (Side note: Pain is all relative, but if you owned a team and the responsibility of your family's well-being for generations, you'd be nervous, too).

The main takeaway from the owners' side of the table is simple, as ownership will now retain more of the revenue. The pie these guys are dividing up is about \$9 billion annually, so it's a pretty nice slice. Add in a glass of cold two percent milk, and the owners should sleep better at night.

So the players will give a little back percentage-wise, but they, too, are winning. The new CBA should benefit the longevity of players' careers and their lifestyles. The slotting and lowering of rookie contracts will actually benefit many players who have longer careers. The money that owners would have spent on rookie bonuses and long-term deals still goes to the players. Now, it will simply be rechanneled into the contracts of proven players who have demonstrated that they are more reliable (relatively speaking) than an unproven 21-year-old prospect fresh off campus. Another big win for the players is that they will get their lives back. Two-a-day practices have gone the way of AstroTurf and helmets without facemasks. In future offseasons, the players won't be tethered to practice facilities. This freedom allows them to avoid the potential micro-management of strength coaches and coordinators throughout the league.

Some economists have said that in a prolonged lockout, the economy would not be affected much. Massive companies would shift

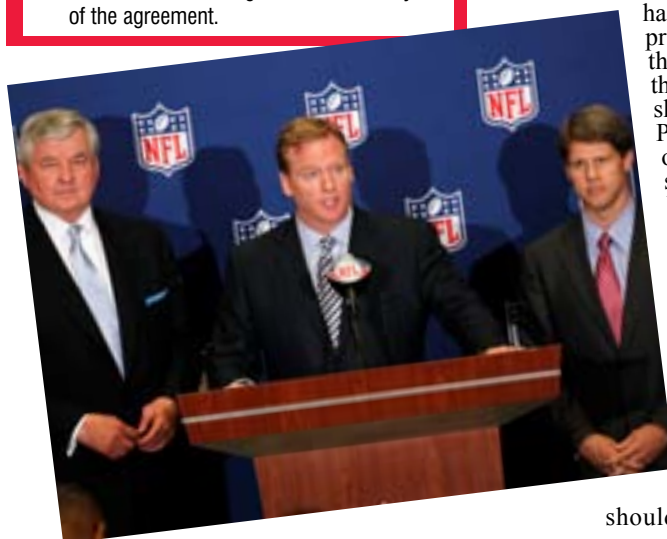
their marketing dollars to other willing recipients. Fans would spend their pocket money in other places, maybe a round of Sunday golf or NASCAR apparel. Both could very well be true. It's also true that certain pockets of the economy in our major cities do rely on wind-fall from an NFL weekend. In a work stoppage, the "everyman" in hotels, restaurants, retail and a variety of other trades would lose work hours, take-home pay and often a job.

Most importantly, the fans win. It was tough turning on months of SportsCenter speculations or searching online for insight from the often misdirected media. They did the best they could, trying to interpret the scowls of men in expensive suits as they postured and then scurried from hotel ballrooms. But it was worth it, wasn't it? The game we love, the one we rush home from church to watch on the east coast and wake up for on the west coast, is back. It's like NFL football never really left at all.

Conway can be reached at sconway@scoreatl.com.

WHAT THE NEW DEAL MEANS

- Player share of all revenue will average 47-48% for the 10-year term of the agreement. Old deal provided for about 58% of revenue less certain expenses.
- Former free agent rules return. Players need four years of experience before becoming an unrestricted free agent.
- 2011 salary cap is set at \$120.375 million per team. This year, teams have the option of using a \$3 million exemption to help free up room.
- The new rookie wage scale will cut salaries of top draft picks by about 50 percent.
- Minimum salaries increase by 10 percent in 2011 with continuing increases each year of the agreement.



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10 THINGS F FANS TO BE EX

JULIO MANIA — General Manager Thomas Dimitroff made one of his patented “gutsy moves” during the 2011 NFL Draft to trade up for the No. 6 pick of the first round. With that selection, the Falcons took Julio Jones, the super-freak wide receiver out of Alabama. Boasting blazing speed and an athletic 6-foot-3, 220-pound frame, Jones will be relied upon to give Matt Ryan another toy to play with in the passing game. Along with Roddy White and tight end Tony Gonzalez, Ryan has three playmakers to throw to. Along with running back Michael Turner, the Falcons have one of the top offenses in the league.

RYAN-TO-WHITE — This combo is becoming as potent as legendary quarterback-wide receiver pairs like Montana-to-Rice and Aikman-to-Irvin. Both players made last year’s Pro Bowl, while White was named All-Pro after leading the NFL in receptions. It was Ryan’s first Pro Bowl appearance, but the fourth-year signal caller has been a vital part of White’s three consecutive appearances. While the pair clicked during Ryan’s first two seasons in Atlanta, they exploded last year. The 115 receptions by White easily eclipsed his previous career high of 88. And, while White caught 16 touchdown passes his first three seasons, he has nabbed 21 the last two seasons combined.

LOFTY EXPECTATIONS — A second-round choice out of Oklahoma in the 2008 NFL Draft, Curtis Lofton has emerged as one of the Falcons’ leaders on defense. The three-year veteran has started all but one game in his career and has led the team in tackles the past two seasons. Defensive coordinator Brian VanGorder’s scheme relies heavily on the middle linebacker, and Lofton has proven to be up to the challenge. With other stout defenders like Dunta Robinson and John Abraham, the Falcons feel comfortable when their stop troops are on the field.

DEFENDING DIVISION CHAMPS — In 2010 the Falcons won the NFC South Division for the second time, giving the franchise its fourth overall division title. Atlanta finished the season with the best record in the NFC and was rewarded the top postseason seed in the conference. It will be another rough-and-tumble year in the NFC South with rivals New Orleans, Tampa Bay and Carolina providing formidable competition, but many experts have the Falcons winning the division once again. Last year, Atlanta swept the Bucs and Panthers and split with the Saints.

UNLOCK THE DOORS — After an excruciating summer in which the NFL was torn over labor discussions, everything is back to normal. The owners and players are back to being on the same page and the season was virtually unaffected. The 10-year deal means no more potential labor stoppages for a decade, and NFL fans couldn’t be happier. In what could be a positive omen for the Falcons, the final agreement was reached here in Atlanta. It was great to see the two sides come together despite their differences in time to have a full football season. This is what makes the NFL the best league in sports.

FOR FALCONS EXCITED ABOUT

THE OWNER — Since taking over the team in 2002, Mr. Blank has made no secret of his ambition for the Falcons: to win, and win all the time. And Blank has delivered on his promise, hiring the best and brightest front office personnel and coaches. Four of his teams have made the playoffs, and two have won division titles. Blank hired what may be the best leadership of any NFL franchise, with General Manager Thomas Dimitroff, President Rich McKay and Head Coach Mike Smith. With Blank at the forefront of that group, the Falcons will be competitive for years to come.

ON THE FRONT LINES — Atlanta not only has one of the best owners in professional sports, they also boast one of the top front office staffs. Led by McKay, and now Dimitroff, the Falcons' management has brought in key players like John Abraham, Tony Gonzalez, Mike Peterson, Michael Turner and Dunta Robinson. In addition to these key acquisitions, the front office has had some of the most successful recent drafts in the NFL. The move to draft Jones this year was roundly praised, while previous top draft picks like Matt Ryan, Sean Weatherspoon and Roddy White have worked out nicely.

CAPTAIN SMITTY — Mike Smith returns to Flowery Branch for his fourth season with Atlanta. "Smitty" heads up one of the most stable coaching staffs in the NFL, one that has made a name for itself over the past few seasons by turning around the Falcons after a rough 2007. In his first NFL head coaching position, Smith has done nothing but win. He has yet to post less than a winning season and has made the playoffs in two of his three seasons. Smith is the only coach in Falcons history to have three consecutive winning campaigns.

DOMEFIELD EDGE — Smith's squad went 7-1 at home last year in the regular season, and it wasn't because the Georgia Dome is an easy place to play. NFL opponents fear the Dome these days, as the building is regularly sold out and LOUD. Last season, the Birds monitored crowd noise in the Dome and measured almost 120 decibels at its peak, which is louder than most rock concerts. And if that isn't enough to prove how serious this "Domefield Edge" is, keep in mind that Matt Ryan has a 20-2 record in Atlanta as a starter.

HOME SCHEDULE — The Falcons will try to capitalize on their domefield advantage again this year against a dynamic list of visiting teams. On Sept. 18, Philadelphia and Michael Vick return to the Dome. Not only will that matchup garner attention because of the Vick storyline, but both franchises will be among the favorites to win the NFC. Meanwhile, the returning Super Bowl champion Packers come calling on Oct. 9 and the Birds will be looking to avenge last year's home playoff loss. In addition to those two marquee matchups, Atlanta will also host its three NFC South rivals.





THOMAS & SMITTY GIVE US THE SKINNY



After winning an NFC Division championship and facing a five-month business shutdown, Falcons General Manager Thomas Dimitroff is hustling to get all his player moves in place this summer. I.J. Rosenberg sat down with Dimitroff the day before training camp opened.

How tricky is free agency when you have a stoppage like this?

Dimitroff: “Clearly, you have to have a plan. One of the key components of our plan is to try and sign as many of our own guys as possible. These are key guys we’ve developed and in many cases guys we have drafted, so we are familiar with them and they are familiar with us and how we do things around here. From a college free agent standpoint, Les Snead, Lionel Vital, and Dave Caldwell and other members of our personnel department have done a tremendous job of researching and identifying the players we were interested in, and we’ve gone about our business to sign those guys.”

You made a big splash by trading up for Julio Jones in the draft. At what point did you know you wanted to make that deal?

Dimitroff: “One of the things we talked about when we all arrived here three years ago was that we were going to be an aggressive organization that would always provide QB Matt Ryan with the necessary firepower in an effort to ignite our offense. I think we’ve been consistent in that area based on the fact that we never waver or hesitate when an opportunity to improve our roster presents itself. With regards to Julio Jones, we felt like we needed more explosiveness on offense at the end of the 2010 season, and Julio Jones obviously fills that need. We are excited about this young man’s size, athleticism, and deep speed, and we look forward to seeing him on the field with the rest of our offense.”

After the Saints won the Super Bowl, the Falcons rose up and took the division last year. Talk about how important that was for the players.

Dimitroff: “One of the first goals Coach Smith and his coaches talk to the players about at the beginning of each season is to win the division. That’s so important when you start to talk about your team goals and objectives for the season. Smitty does a great job of breaking down the tasks for the week, for the season, and for the year into bite-sized portions that our guys can easily digest. He never overloads our guys and does an excellent job of managing the ups and downs of a 16-game NFL season. That’s not an easy thing to do when you are dealing with 53 players, 20 coaches, and everyone in the building, but Smitty does it as good as anybody in our league.”

In the league, Matt Ryan is widely considered to be in that second group of QBs behind the legends like Manning, Brees, Brady, etc. Do you think he has to win a few games in the playoffs before he can approach their status?

Dimitroff: Matt Ryan has done everything we’ve asked him to do since we drafted him with the third overall pick in the 2008 NFL Draft. Remember, football is a team game. Matt is a Pro Bowl QB and everyone associated with him clearly understands that the arrow on him is pointing upward. Matt is very aware of his own evolution as an NFL QB. He understands that he has to continue to work hard to refine his craft, and we all believe that he will do whatever is necessary to become the elite player that he wants to become.”

You lost an excellent coach in Bill Musgrave, who left the QB coaching job here to become the OC in Minnesota. Talk about his replacement, Bob Bratkowski.

Dimitroff: “Bob is a veteran coach who is excellent at what he does. His is known in NFL coaching circles as an excellent teacher and an offensive coach that is really good at finding the mismatch or the weak spot in the defense. He and Falcons offensive coordinator Mike Mularkey will work very well together because they have similar personalities, and both of those guys understand the finer points of offensive football.”

On offense, it seems like a good problem to have that you almost have a surplus of playmakers. Talk about your depth at the skill positions.

Dimitroff: “Fundamentally, we want to be a team that runs the football and a team that stops the run. Smitty and I believe that this is how you win football games. We also believe you have to be a team that’s able to get yards in big chunks so you also have to be a team that can effectively pass the football as well. We like the weapons on our football team. Anytime you have the offensive skill guys with the talent of Matt Ryan, Michael Turner, Roddy White, Tony Gonzalez and you add to that mix guys like Julio Jones and Quizz Rodgers, you’ve given yourself a chance to be very successful on offense.”

What are your overall expectations for this season?

Dimitroff: “My expectations are for us to be a very good football team. We’ve got fantastic ownership. Arthur Blank is one of the most competitive guys I’ve ever met, and he is extremely passionate about his football team. We’ve got an excellent head coach and coaching staff that do a great job of preparing our guys every week, and we’ve got a locker room full of smart, competitive, tough guys who have an intense desire to be successful. We like where we are, and we look forward to the 2011 season.”

Score Atlanta publisher I.J. Rosenberg sat down with Atlanta Falcons head coach Mike Smith just one day before the start of the club’s 2011 training camp. Here is Smith’s Q&A on a wide range of topics, including his passion for fly fishing, the competitiveness of the NFC South, and the team’s tough early schedule.

It’s been a while since we chatted and it’s obviously been a very long offseason for you and your coaching staff. Give us an update about how the last seven months have gone for you.

Smith: We carefully analyzed all three phases of our team at the end of the year. We looked at our offense, defense, and our special teams units in an effort to find out what we did right and to identify the areas where we need to improve. Since we obviously had more time than normal because of the lockout, we took our time to go over every aspect of our operation, and we learned some things that I feel will help us as we move forward. We did a good job in many areas last season, but we can improve and I know that we will.

You have been named Sporting News and KC 101 Club Coach of the Year twice over the past three seasons. That’s pretty good recognition for a guy who worked his way up from the small collegiate ranks to the big chair of the head coach’s office of an NFL team. What’s your secret?

Smith: I tell people all the time that there have been more unsuccessful NFL coaching staffs than unsuccessful head coaches throughout the 91-year history of the National Football League. It really is very simple. You can’t win in this league without an excellent coaching staff that’s comprised of good teachers, excellent motivators, and guys who know a ton of football, and I believe we have the best coaching staff in the entire NFL. You also can’t win in this league without good players. We’ve got both here in Atlanta and that’s why we’ve had some success, but we can play better and I believe we will.

Your players are always quick to talk about how you keep things new, fresh, and innovative as you present information to them each week. How do you do that?

Smith: I think the one thing that has really helped me throughout my 29 years in coaching is what I learned from my parents who were both educators. People all learn differently. Some guys can look at a playbook one time and understand it completely. Some guys need you to get on the board, draw up plays, and they can quickly comprehend what you are trying to teach them. Other guys learn courtesy of the videotape machine, and some need to physically perform it on the field. The key is finding out what works for your players and doing everything in your power to

break the material down in small-sized nuggets so that they can play fast, play smart and play hard. We want to keep it simple for one player, sophisticated for 11, and complicated for the opposing team and coaching staff.

Walk us through the NFL Draft, where you moved up 21 slots to draft University of Alabama wide receiver Julio Jones. What were your thoughts moments before you and GM Thomas Dimitroff pulled the trigger?

Smith: We did our due diligence and spent a considerable amount of time talking to people who we knew would give us an accurate read on Julio. Thomas and his staff are the best in the NFL, and they did a great job with the research on Julio. At the end of the day, we were very comfortable with the information we received. We spent a lot of time talking to Julio about his skill set and what he could bring to the professional game and we came away very impressed with him not only as a football player, but as a person as well. A lot of research and effort goes into a move like this one, but when you do your due diligence, it’s easier to pull the trigger.

You often talk in great detail regarding the competitiveness of the NFC South. Do you think it’s the toughest division in football?

Smith: I believe that it is. All you have to do is to start with the four quarterbacks who lead the four NFC South teams. Matt Ryan is a Pro Bowl quarterback for us; Drew Brees is a Pro Bowl and Super Bowl-winning MVP quarterback for the Saints; Josh Freeman is a young, tough, talented QB in Tampa Bay who led his team to 10 wins last season; and Carolina drafted Cam Newton No. 1 overall last April. The NFL is a quarterback-driven league, and the NFC South has four very good quarterbacks and four very good teams. It’s arguably the most competitive division in football.

You start the regular season with five tough games (against four playoff teams from 2010 and one 10-win team), how do you prepare your team for this early challenge?

Smith: We know the season is a marathon not a sprint, so we prepare with that fact in mind. In this business, it is a week-to-week proposition. We start with training camp and work our way through each preseason game and then on to the regular season. Our philosophy will not change.

We are told that you are an avid fly fisherman when you’re not devising defensive schemes to beat up on your NFC South opponents. Is that true?

Smith: I am an avid outdoorsman, and I do enjoy fly fishing. I like to find a stream up in the mountains and go battle those fish.

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2011 Atlanta Falcons Tailgate Team Schedule

Player/Cheerleader appearances on select dates. See our Facebook Page.

8/22/11	2900 Peachtree Road, N.E., Atlanta, GA 30305	10/6/11	1727 Mars Hill Road, Acworth, GA 30101	11/17/11	11800 Haynes Bridge Rd, Suite B, Alpharetta, GA 30009
8/23/11	2095 Highway 211 N.W., Braselton, GA 30517	10/7/11	104 Town Boulevard, Atlanta, GA 30319	11/18/11	3045 Panola Road, Lithonia, GA 30038
8/24/11	250 East Atlanta Road, Stockbridge, GA 30281	10/10/11	4422 Hugh Howell Road, Tucker, GA 30084	11/21/11	4840 Golden Parkway, Buford, GA 30518
8/25/11	5805 State Bridge Road, Johns Creek, GA 30097	10/11/11	370 Bullsboro Dr., Newnan, GA 30263	11/22/11	5958 Snow Hill Road, Suite 168, Ooltewah, TN 37363
8/26/11	3649 Flakes Mill Road, Decatur, GA 30034	10/12/11	2415 Moores Mill Road, Auburn, AL 36830	11/28/11	3370 Sugarloaf Parkway, Lawrenceville, GA 30044
8/29/11	1451 Riverstone Parkway, Canton, GA 30114	10/13/11	130 Peachtree East S/C #4, Peachtree City, GA 30269	11/29/11	1109 S. Park Street, Carrollton, GA 30117
8/30/11	2675 Lee Road, Lithia Springs, GA 30122	10/14/11	4274 Washington Road, Evans, GA 30809	11/30/11	7334 Spout Springs Road, Flowery Branch, GA 30524
8/31/11	5900 Spout Springs Rd., Flowery Branch, GA 30542	10/17/11	4325 Atlanta Highway, Loganville, GA 30052	12/1/11	1000 Peachtree Industrial Blvd., Suwanee, GA 30024
9/6/11	1100 Hammond Dr. Suite 300, Atlanta, GA 30328	10/18/11	1641 East Greenville Street, Anderson, SC 29621	12/2/11	3721 New Macland Road, Powder Springs, GA 30127
9/7/11	3120 Mathis Airport Parkway, Suwanee, GA 30024	10/19/11	3605 Sandy Plains Road, Marietta, GA 30066	12/5/11	2715 Loganville Highway, Loganville, GA 30052
9/8/11	1735 Buford Highway, Cumming, GA 30041	10/20/11	2774 North Cobb Parkway, Kennesaw, GA 30152	12/6/11	8644 East Brainerd Road, Chattanooga, TN 37421
9/9/11	5015 Floyd Road, Mableton, GA 30126	10/21/11	1639 Bradley Park Drive, Ste 600, Columbus, GA 31904	12/7/11	120 Prominence Point Parkway, Canton, GA 30114
9/12/11	1190 University Blvd, Tuscaloosa, AL 35401	10/24/11	4480 South Cobb Drive, Smyrna, GA 30080	12/8/11	930 New Hope Rd., Lawrenceville, GA 30045
9/13/11	1605 Beltline Road, Decatur, AL 35603	10/25/11	80 Seven Hills Boulevard, Dallas, GA 30132	12/9/11	11155 Tara Blvd., Hampton, GA 30228
9/14/11	12796 Bailey Cove Road, Huntsville, AL 35803	10/26/11	1860 Barnett Shoals Road, Athens, GA 30605	12/12/11	6055 Highway 124 West, Hoschton, GA 30548
9/15/11	1584 Montgomery Hwy., Hoover, AL 35216	10/27/11	334 East Martintown Road, North Augusta, SC 29841	12/13/11	7953 Villa Rica Hwy., New Georgia, GA 30157
9/16/11	4041 Atlanta Highway, Montgomery, AL 36109	10/28/11	139 Commerce Avenue, LaGrange, GA 30240	12/14/11	4045 Five Forks Trickum Road, SW, Lilburn, GA 30047
9/19/11	2451 Cumberland Parkway, Atlanta, GA 30339	10/31/11	5550 Chamblee Dunwoody Rd., Dunwoody, GA 30338	12/15/11	108 Pavilion Parkway, Fayetteville, GA 30214
9/20/11	1860 Sandy Plains Road, Marietta, GA 30066	11/1/11	2730 Hwy. 155 South, Locust Grove, GA 30248	12/16/11	1025 Veterans Memorial Hwy, SE, Mableton, GA 30126
9/21/11	3316 Highway 5, Douglasville, GA 30135	11/2/11	911 Duluth Highway, Lawrenceville, GA 30043	12/19/11	879 Dawsonville Highway, Gainesville, GA 30501
9/22/11	100 Old Cherokee Road, Lexington, SC 29072	11/3/11	2380 Buford Drive (Hwy. 20), Lawrenceville, GA 30043	12/20/11	916 Loganville Highway, Bethlehem, GA 30620
9/23/11	12424 Cumming Highway, Canton, GA 30115	11/4/11	15 Laurel Canyon Village, Canton, GA 30114	12/21/11	3201 Macon Road, Ste 255, Columbus, GA 31906
9/26/11	17 Monroe Highway, Winder, GA 30680	11/7/11	5158 Memorial Drive/Ste 402, Stone Mountain, GA 30083	12/22/11	3760 Sixes Road, Suite 110, Canton, GA 30114
9/27/11	6525 Calhoun Memorial Hwy., Easley, SC 29640	11/8/11	4300 Chapel Hill Road, Douglasville, GA 30135	12/27/11	2158 Highway 20 West, McDonough, GA 30253
9/28/11	195 Tom Hill Sr. Blvd., Macon, GA 31210	11/9/11	1905 Scenic Highway, Snellville, GA 30078	12/28/11	909 Eagles Landing Pkwy/#300, Stockbridge, GA 30281
9/29/11	13015 Brown Bridge Road, Covington, GA 30016	11/10/11	831 Auburn Road, Dacula, GA 30019	12/29/11	13800 North Hwy. 9, Suite E, Alpharetta, GA 30004
9/30/11	403 Fury's Ferry Road, Martinez, GA, 30907	11/11/11	5451 Bowman Road, Macon, GA 31210	12/30/11	920 Highway 81 East, McDonough, GA 30253
10/3/11	1380 Atlantic Dr. NW, Ste 14135, Atlanta, GA 30363	11/14/11	720 Dacula Road, Dacula, GA 30019	1/2/12	4850 Sugarloaf Parkway, Lawrenceville, GA 30044
10/4/11	2000 Mirror Lake Blvd., Villa Rica, GA 30180	11/15/11	1512 Highway 74 North, Tyrone, GA 30290	1/3/12	5630 Roswell Road, NE, Atlanta, GA 30342
10/5/11	2035 Mt. Zion Road, Morrow, GA 30260	11/16/11	300 Cherokee Place, Cartersville, GA 30120	1/4/12	6015 Watson Blvd., Byron, GA 31008



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ATLANTA FALCONS 2011 REGULAR SEASON SCHEDULE

Compiled By Jason Parker

Sept. 11 1:00 p.m. FOX		@ Chicago Soldier Field Chicago, IL	The Falcons open the 2011 season in the not-so-friendly confines of Soldier Field. Atlanta has beaten the Bears in both meetings since Mike Smith became head coach, each time at the Dome. Bears QB Jay Cutler will attempt to rebound from his disappointing performance in last year's NFC Championship game.
Sept. 18 8:20 p.m. NBC		vs. Philadelphia Georgia Dome Atlanta, GA	Michael Vick returns to the Georgia Dome once again for an epic Sunday Night showdown between two of the NFC's best teams. The Falcons will look to break a five-game losing streak to Philly. A key matchup in this game will be WR DeSean Jackson against CB Dunta Robinson.
Sept. 25 4:15 p.m. FOX		@ Tampa Bay Raymond James Stadium Tampa, FL	The Falcons head to Tampa to play the up-and-coming Bucs. Third-year QB Josh Freeman has developed nicely, while head coach Raheem Morris has his young team motivated. Raymond James has always been a tough place to play for the Falcons, and this could prove to be a pivotal game in the division race.
Oct. 2 4:00 p.m. FOX		@ Seattle CenturyLink Field Seattle, WA	The Falcons play their third playoff team in four weeks against the Seahawks. Seattle is one of the toughest places to play in all of football. The Falcons won't take the Seahawks for granted, as everyone saw what Pete Carroll's team did to the Saints last year in the playoffs.
Oct. 9 8:20 p.m. NBC		vs. Green Bay Georgia Dome Atlanta, GA	The Falcons' daunting schedule continues, as the defending Super Bowl champions head to town. Atlanta will be looking to avoid a repeat performance of last year's divisional playoff game. The defense must step up to try and stop Super Bowl MVP Aaron Rodgers.
Oct. 16 1:00 p.m. FOX		vs. Carolina Georgia Dome Atlanta, GA	The Falcons finally find a team on their schedule that finished towards the bottom of the league last season. However, Atlanta could have its hands full with rookie sensation Cam Newton. The Falcons took both of last season's games from the Panthers, who are breaking in new head coach Ron Rivera.
Oct. 23 1:00 p.m. FOX		@ Detroit Ford Field Detroit, MI	The Falcons finish out their pre-bye week schedule against the up-and-coming Lions. Detroit presents a ferocious defensive line, including second-year Pro Bowler Ndamukong Suh and rookie Nick Fairley. Two of the league's top receivers in Roddy White and Detroit's Calvin Johnson will face off.
Nov. 6 1:00 p.m. FOX		@ Indianapolis Lucas Oil Stadium Indianapolis, IN	The Falcons take on Peyton Manning for the first time in the Mike Smith/Matt Ryan era. Both teams have Super Bowl aspirations, so this game should be a good midseason measuring stick. The Falcons' offensive line must prepare to stop all-pros Dwight Freeney and Robert Mathis.
Nov. 13 1:00 p.m. FOX		vs. New Orleans Georgia Dome Atlanta, GA	The Falcons and Saints renew their rivalry, as last season both teams won on the road. New Orleans handed the Falcons their only regular season home loss a year ago when Drew Brees' late TD pass gave the Saints a 17-14 win. The winner of this game could be in the driver's seat for a division title.
Nov. 20 1:00 p.m. CBS		vs. Tennessee Georgia Dome Atlanta, GA	The Falcons welcome Chris Johnson and the Titans to the Dome for the first time since 2003. This game should be won in the trenches, as both teams love to run the football. Rookie QB Jake Locker, the No. 8 overall pick, could very well be starting for the Titans.
Nov. 27 1:00 p.m. FOX		vs. Minnesota Georgia Dome Atlanta, GA	Adrian Peterson and the Vikings head to Atlanta for this rematch of the 1998 NFC Championship Game. Minnesota will have a new quarterback after the retirement of Brett Favre, but John Abraham and company will have to stymie a potentially high-powered Vikings offense.
Dec. 4 1:00 p.m. FOX		@ Houston Reliant Stadium Houston, TX	The Falcons will take on the Texans for just the third time ever. The overall series is tied 1-1. This game comes during a critical stretch, as both teams have playoff aspirations. The Falcons have a chance to make it two wins against former Atlanta QB Matt Schaub.
Dec. 11 1:00 p.m. FOX		@ Carolina Bank of America Stadium Charlotte, NC	The Falcons make their annual trip to Charlotte. Last year in Carolina, RB Michael Turner rushed for 112 yards and three touchdowns in a 31-10 blowout victory. The Panthers sported one of the worst offenses in the league last year on their way to a 2-14 record.
Dec. 15 8:20 p.m. NFL Network		vs. Jacksonville Georgia Dome Atlanta, GA	The Falcons finish off the NFL Network's Thursday Night Football schedule at home against Jacksonville. The Falcons could see yet another rookie QB in Blaine Gabbert, depending on the type of season Jacksonville is having. This is another matchup between run-oriented teams.
Dec. 26 8:30 p.m. ESPN		@ New Orleans Superdome New Orleans, LA	It has become an annual tradition for these two teams to meet on Monday Night Football, and this year's game could decide the division. The Falcons hope to repeat last year's Superdome performance, in which they won in dramatic fashion on a 46-yard Matt Bryant field goal in OT.
Jan. 1 1:00 p.m. FOX		vs. Tampa Bay Georgia Dome Atlanta, GA	The Falcons finish the regular season against division-rival Tampa Bay. The Bucs finished last season 10-6, a seven-win improvement over their 2009 total, but narrowly missed the playoffs in the NFC. Like the previous week, this final matchup could decide the division.

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2011 FALCONS DRAFT PICKS ...

WR Julio Jones

Drafted: First Round, Pick No. 6
College: Alabama

The Skinny: Jones will help spread the ball around in Atlanta's passing game. At Alabama, he amassed 2,653 yards on 179 receptions and scored 15 touchdowns. He also gained 3,084 all-purpose yards with the Tide. His receiving yards and receptions rank second in school history while his touchdowns are tied for fourth. During his junior season, Jones reaped second-team All-American honors and was named first-team All-Southeastern Conference. He also was awarded Alabama's Most Valuable Player Award and was one of the six players presented with the team's Commitment to Academic Excellence Award. In 2008, Jones became the 11th Tide player to start in an opener as a true freshman. At the combine back in February, Jones ran a 4.39 in the 40-yard dash and had a vertical of 38.5 inches.

LB Akeem Dent

Drafted: Third Round, Pick No. 91
College: Georgia

The Skinny: Dent should help bolster the Falcons' special teams units as a rookie just like he did throughout his career at Georgia. Dent will have the luxury of learning the rigors of linebacker play in his first NFL season through the aide of veterans such as Curtis Lofton, Stephen Nicholas and Sean Weatherspoon. During his senior season, he posted 126 tackles, which stood as the second highest mark in the SEC. In 2010, the Associated Press

named Dent second-team All-SEC and he represented the Georgia defense as a team captain. As a junior and senior, Dent was chosen as a member of the Georgia Athletic Director's Academic Honor Roll, and during his senior year, he received the team's 'True Grit' Award.

RB Jacquizz Rodgers

Drafted: Fifth Round, Pick No. 145
College: Oregon State

The Skinny: At Oregon State, Rodgers rushed for 3,877 yards in 788 attempts and scored 46 touchdowns; in addition, he amassed over 1,000 yards receiving and five touchdowns as a Beaver. The addition of Rodgers should help open up the rushing game because he uses his speed and agility to cut through defenses while starter Michael Turner uses power to bust through the line. Rodgers also plays well in space in the passing game. He has proven in game situations to have great quickness. In high school he earned the nickname "Mr. Touchdown."

P/K Matt Boshier

Drafted: Sixth Round, Pick No. 192
College: Miami

The Skinny: The Falcons took Boshier for his versatility as a punter and kicker. At Miami he made 84.9 percent of his field goal attempts, and he holds the school record for most consecutive field goals with 14. On extra point attempts Boshier posted superb numbers as well, making 127 of 130 attempts to yield a 97.7 percent efficiency rate. He also averaged 40 yards per punt in his collegiate career.

OG Andrew Jackson

Drafted: Seventh Round, Pick No. 210
College: Fresno State

The Skinny: The Falcons might have gotten a steal in Jackson with the 210th pick. Jackson originally had been projected to go in the third through fifth rounds. The slip probably occurred as a result of an injury-plagued senior year in which he suffered from a high ankle sprain. However, during his junior season he was named first-team All-WAC and was awarded first-team academic All-American honors, the first player in school history to earn that distinction. Also in 2009, he played on the offensive line that helped create holes for Ryan Matthews, the nation's leading rusher and currently the starting running back for the San Diego Chargers.

DE Cliff Matthews

Drafted: Seventh Round, Pick No. 230
College: South Carolina

The Skinny: With Williams, the Falcons seem to have drafted John Abraham's mirror image. Like Abraham, he is 6-foot-4 and only about five pounds lighter at 257 pounds. He was a second-team All-SEC player and a two-time defensive captain. As a senior, Matthews recorded 38 tackles with 6.5 for a loss and had 4.5 sacks. At South Carolina, Matthews was also a workhorse who set the school record for the most career starts at 46, surpassing Travelle Wharton's record of 45. His coaches nicknamed him "The Exposer" for his constant ability to expose opponents' weaknesses.



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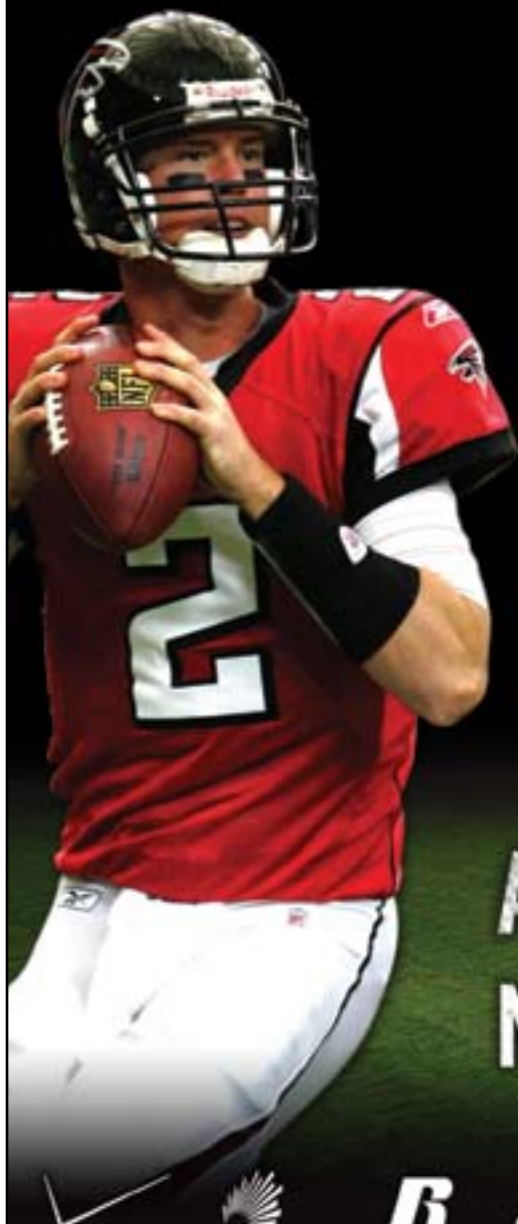
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