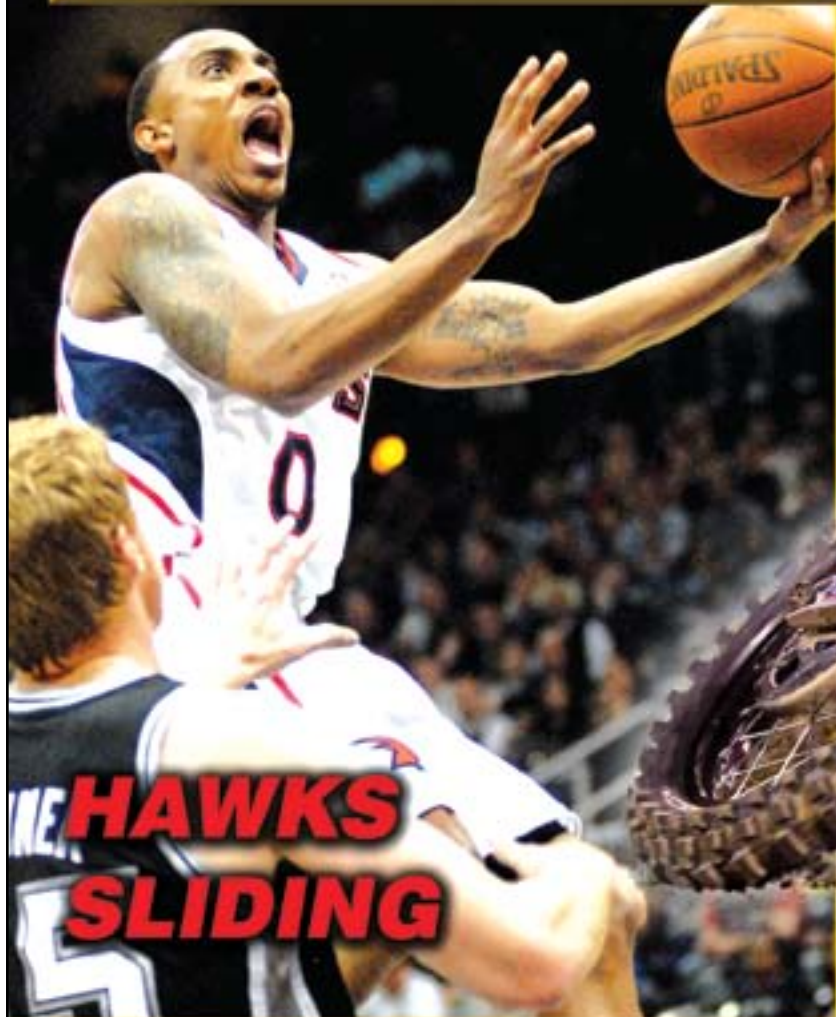


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CAN'T MISS THIS WEEK

- 4** Joe Deighton refills his "Cup of Joe" column.
- 5** In our cover story Fletcher Proctor revs up his engine for Supercross, which is coming to the Georgia Dome on Feb. 25.
- 7** Stephen Black previews this weekend's swimming and diving championships.
- 13** In our Score More section, our beat writers lament the Hawks' woes, discuss the Braves' new uniforms and more!



TEAM SCOOP AND VOICES

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 COVER PHOTOS COURTESY OF JON BARASH, BRIAN L. MORGAN
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INSIDE AT SCORE

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SHOT OF THE WEEK...



CLIPPED WINGS: Ivan Johnson gets knocked down by Sixers' center Spencer Hawes during the Hawks' 98-87 loss to Philly on Feb. 4 at the Highlight Factory. After a successful road trip, Atlanta has been steamrolled in three straight home games. Photo courtesy of Sonny Kennedy.

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THE FLETCH



Signing Day overshadows Super Bowl

By Fletcher Proctor

Maybe it is because Georgia has become one of the top football talent-producing states in the country and the fact that the Falcons were bounced early from the football playoffs, but did it not seem that National Signing Day was a much bigger deal than the Super Bowl this year?

SUPER WEDNESDAY ...

Across the radio airwaves and on every single newspaper site in the state, it was National Signing Day that soaked up more hours and more pages of coverage than the game that decided the NFL's champion. Even the radio stations didn't seem to send the prime time shows to radio row. Buck & Kincade repre-

sented 680 The Fan as the morning show and afternoon drive show both remained in Atlanta. Meanwhile, Steak Shapiro of 790 tweeted from Indianapolis Saturday but did not do any shows from the site of Super Bowl XLVI.

The AJC had a blog that was updated every few minutes with the latest commitments and the Gwinnett Daily Post, Valdosta Daily Times and Columbus Ledger-Enquirer ran stories the day before, day of and day after all about the top players and where they were going. The Marietta Daily Journal had a nice recap about the top players in Cobb County, and of course Score Atlanta had it covered.

The Score Newsletter went out extra

early, complete with predictions of 10 of the up-in-the-air prospects, and Score produced a second newsletter last Wednesday, wrapping up the day that was. If you followed Score Atlanta on twitter, you saw exclusive pictures from Buford and North Gwinnett's signing ceremonies and you were treated to the actual video of Tucker's Josh Dawson announcing he would attend the University of Georgia.

Score Atlanta's Fletcher Proctor also recapped National Signing Day on Football Night in Atlanta with John Michaels on Sports Radio 790 The Zone, and he shared some insight on some of the metro players headed to Georgia Southern with the Eagles Radio Network. Score was also able to have Chris Lionetti in Athens covering UGA and Thomas Watson on the Flats covering Georgia Tech. Robby Kalland was also able to snag an exclusive interview with Georgia State football coach Bill Curry.

Score had National Signing Day covered as it seemed as though that is what everyone in Atlanta cared about last week, moreso than the Super Bowl. I am sure National Signing Day would have been a footnote had the Falcons been playing in the big game, but as it

was, Atlanta gave much more of a rip about the future of the college game than the present of the professional game.

LOOKING AHEAD ...

With winter sports coming to a close, the traditional wrestling as well as the swimming and diving championships will be decided. The Score newsletter has ramped up its swimming coverage all week long with daily stories previewing the championships, and next week the newsletter will get down with the wrestling championships. If you missed any of the swimming stories, be sure to check out gaprepnews.com for an archive of the Score newsletter, both on the main page as well as on the special tab at the top.

The site of future Falcons home games has been a hot discussion of late and will be one to follow in the months and years ahead. As of right now, people seem to be open to a retractable dome and not so much a plain outdoor stadium. I find it interesting that people would rather be inside on Sundays watching football instead of outside in the elements.

Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.

A CUP OF JOE



Giants win frustrates Falcons fans

By Joe Deighton

The Super Bowl XLVI rematch between the Giants and Patriots looked a lot like Super Bowl XLII. Another Giant, this time Mario Manningham, made an incredible catch with two defenders on his back to key the Giants' winning drive. The catch was similar to David Tyree's catch four years ago, but not as spectacular. New York scored with under a minute to play just like they did in 2008. Tom Brady's desperation heave was knocked away and the Giants were the champions again. It was one of the great Super Bowls of all time and established Eli Manning, the game's MVP, as one of the greatest quarterbacks of our generation.

Every NFL fan hopes that his/her team will finish as the Super Bowl champions at the end of every season. Watching another year go by without the Falcons winning a championship is frustrating, especially because the Giants beat Atlanta in the playoffs. This could have been the Falcons' year. Last year should have been the Falcons' year.

Now that the season is finished, everything starts over and hope is renewed. Atlanta needs to make a decision at running back and improve the defense overall. Making a decision on whether to trade aging running back Michael Turner should be a top priority. Trad-

ing Turner for more draft picks to make up for the lost picks last year, after the Julio Jones move, makes sense. Turner will be 30 years old in 2012 and production almost always declines for running backs 30-and-over.

COOLING OFF ...

After starting the season 16-6, the Hawks had lost three straight games as of Wednesday. All three losses have come at home against teams that Atlanta should beat. This season has proved more than ever that the Hawks win when Joe Johnson plays well. In the team's 16 wins, Johnson is averaging 21.4 points per game, while in the six losses, the shooting guard's point production falls to 16 a game.

In a blowout loss to Memphis, Johnson scored just 10 points. The Hawks are one of the top teams in the Eastern Conference, but if their top scorer doesn't score, they can't win. The hot start put the Hawks in a great position to earn a top seed in the playoffs, especially during a shortened season. However, a hot start doesn't clinch anything, and if the Hawks want to succeed, they must beat teams they are supposed to beat, especially at home.

NEW THREADS ...

The Braves turned back the clock and introduced a new alternate uniform this week. 1966 was the inaugural season in Atlanta and the team will wear the same uniforms that it did that season for weekend home games this year. The original uniforms are creme-colored but lack the standard tomahawk across the front. The jerseys are also missing the "screaming warrior" patch that was present on the original sleeve. Instead, there is a patch with intersecting tomahawks and the year "1876" and "Atlanta" around the edge. This was probably the politically correct move, but there are mixed opinions about that.

Some American Indian groups were against the image back in the 1980's and the Braves have been fairly compliant with their concerns since then. I don't know what those groups feel when they see that image, but I think it is a pretty cool logo. Whether you agree with the image or not, the uniform looks sharp and the Braves should represent it well.

Deighton can be reached at jdeighton@scoreatl.com.



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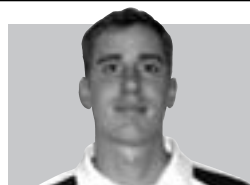
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SUPERCROSS SHOWDOWN



Local racer highlights AMA Supercross

By Fletcher Proctor



Jon Jovi once sang about being a modern day cowboy, riding a steel horse, aka a motorcycle. Sorry Jon, but you've got nothing on Davi Millsaps and the rest of the Monster Energy AMA Supercross racers who will be on display at the Georgia Dome Saturday, Feb. 25.

If you've never seen supercross, it is simply motorcycle racing involving off-road motorcycles on an artificially-made dirt track consisting of various obstacles and steep jumps. The AMA Supercross Championship events are mostly held in venues such as the Georgia Dome all across the country. The

supercross events have a high degree of difficulty and are tailored for television viewing.

DAVI BOY ...

One of the top racers on the AMA Supercross tour is Millsaps, a Georgia native who now calls California home. Millsaps is looking forward to returning to the Georgia Dome, an event he calls one of the highlights of his season.

"It is cool to come back so my family can come watch me race," said Millsaps about the upcoming AMA Supercross stop in Atlanta. In

fact it was his family that got him interested in racing when he was just three years old.

"I was riding down the road with my dad and my sister when we saw some bikes, and we wanted some." Christmas of 1991 was a happy one for Millsaps and his sister when both received small motorbikes.

After some early success, Millsaps received his first sponsor in 1995 and was winning early and often as an amateur. In 2001, Millsaps decided he wanted to ride motorcycles for a living. "I was brought into the pros in 2004 and then eventually switched to Joe Gibbs Racing," said Millsaps. "That was hard to do."

It may have seemed hard for Millsaps, but the decision for Gibbs Racing, Coy Gibbs in particular, was easy. Millsaps was one of the first racers whom Gibbs approached to ride for the newly formed motocross team. It took a while, but eventually Millsaps debuted for JGRMX in 2011. After a knee injury he began 2012 with a contract extension and he has been off to the races since.

Life as a Supercross racer may seem glamorous, but Millsaps said it is like most careers: highs and lows and not just the ones on the track. "It is amazing, but it is a job," said Millsaps of life as a professional. "Riding has to be the best job, but it is a job. We get up and do what we love to do." Millsaps noted that the travel is fun as well. "There is nothing like it, but it is a lot of work."

Typically, Millsaps said he will practice three or four days a week and travel on Fridays. The schedule depends on whether or not the circuit is in season. "I'll run three days (a week) in season or four (out of season), but you want your body to recover." Last year an injury forced him from a majority of the year, but he has recovered and is now going full bore after a title.

The injury occurred after a great 2010 for Millsaps, a year that saw him capture the Supercross 450 at San Diego, a win he calls his greatest achievement as a professional. Millsaps was fourth in the recent Anaheim race, moving him up to ninth in the season standings. The circuit will stop in San Diego, site of his huge 2010 victory, this weekend and Cowboys Stadium in Arlington next week before hitting Atlanta, an event for which Millsaps cannot wait.

HOMECOMING ...

"The (Atlanta) crowd is one of the best

on tour," said Millsaps. "It is fun and it's a great event." The scenery is also something Millsaps said he is looking forward to as he comes back to the city near where he grew up. "I have really great memories from past successes in front of my family."

Can Millsaps get the victory in front of his family? If so he will need to navigate a track that features plenty of twists and turns with jumps, mounds and hairpin turns. According to the supercrossonline.com, the Atlanta track will start with an immediate turn, followed by some fast moguls, followed by three hills in succession, a right turn followed by nine hills that crescendo then decrescendo into a stretch of straightaway. After a hairpin turn, four plateaus await the racers with three more hills quickly following. Racers will have the chance to speed into a small rhythm section then burn towards the final two hills and the finish line.

According to Millsaps, all of the tracks on the circuit are somewhat similar. "They all have the basic layout and features." Millsaps noted that once you get the jumps down, you have to nail the rhythm section and work through the race in your mind. He said he is looking forward to the Atlanta track and hopes to have success.

"The jumps are somewhat similar (to recent races)," said Millsaps. "The layout is different but jumps are jumps."

A company called Dirt Wurx designs and builds the tracks. Hundreds of truckloads of dirt and clay are brought in and laid down on the stadium floor to form a base. More dirt is piled on to top shape the jumps, bumps and berms. After the event, Dirt Wurx has the dirt out in less than twenty-four hours, and the dirt is stored at a private location to be reused at the next event.

Millsaps will try and gather in a little momentum the next two weeks before coming to Atlanta, near his hometown of Cairo, where he hopes to put on a show. Watch to see if he pulls off his favorite move, "the dead body," to give his fans an extra thrill. If he can master the jump sequence, expect Millsaps to receive an extra charge from his east coast fans and his family, which will be in attendance to cheer on his every move.

Photo courtesy of Hoppenworld.com. Proctor can be reached at fproctor@scoreatl.com.

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WHOS HOT

THUMBS UP TO THE PANTHERS



GSU Hoops

Tech and Georgia men's hoops teams are struggling through the winter, but the Panthers are trending way up. Ron Hunter's club has a legit shot at a 20-win season and a winning record in the CAA. There's no need to head up 316 or to an empty Philips Arena for your college hoops fix. Just go downtown to State!

Swimming and Wrestling

These two great high school sports are wrapping up another record-breaking season. The swimming and diving championships are this weekend at Georgia Tech's which hosted the 1996 Olympics swimming and diving events. Next week, the Arena at Gwinnett hosts the traditional wrestling tournaments. Saturday's wrestling finals will be on WSB-TV from 4:00 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Braves Caravan

As the equipment guys pack up for spring training in sunny Orlando, Braves players, coaches and executives are crisscrossing the south to interact with their loyal fans. This goodwill gesture may be the only time kids from Braves County get to see their diamond heroes up close and personal. Kudos to the Braves!

Oversigning

Signing Day is supposed to be fun. But North Atlanta's Justin Taylor was one of those who probably didn't have as happy a signing day as everyone else. While Taylor was able to sign with Kentucky, he was essentially "cut" by Alabama due to scholarship numbers. At what point does the NCAA crack down on this highly unethical practice?

The Peyton Situation

Seriously, could there be a greater waste of the almighty ESPN's resources? No. Here's what you need to know. The neck is fine, but the arm is about as weak as your cousin Sally's. If it doesn't get better fast, he's done. But, he's done with the Colts, no matter what. Boom!

Your Atlanta Hawks

The Hawks opened the season red hot. But, after three consecutive losses at the Highlight Factory over the past week, they may be headed to south, like to the South Pole. They're ice cold. Opponents have obviously learned to exploit the weakness down low caused by Al Horford's injury and absence.



WHOS NOT

THUMBS DOWN TO SLUMPS

SCORE LIST

BY BRIAN JONES

- 1** **LOSING MOMENTUM:** After a hot start by the Hawks, they have now lost three consecutive games as of Wednesday morning. The loss of Al Horford is starting to show because the Hawks are lacking size. And when you add the loss of Jason Collins, who is out for two weeks, it does not help the situation. The Hawks are still in good position to make the playoffs, but they have to find a center in order to stop the bleeding. If they don't, the Hawks will endure long two months.
- 2** **SECONDARY ISSUE:** Georgia's losses of Nick Marshall and Chris Sanders are probably more troubling than we originally thought. Because Marshall and Sanders will no longer be with the team, the Bulldogs have only nine scholarship defensive backs on the roster. And with Sanders Comings going through his own issues, the Bulldogs could be down to eight at the start of the season. They do have five walk-ons and they also signed Sheldon Dawson, but it's clear the Bulldogs' secondary lacks depth and can't afford any more losses.
- 3** **RAM TOUGH:** Anyone that follows high school football in Georgia knows how good Robert Nkem-diche is and how valuable he was to the Rams and their state title run last year. Well, it looks like the rest of the nation is taking notice because the rising senior is now considered the No. 1 prospect in the country according to numerous recruiting services for 2013. He is being recruited hard by Georgia and every other power program in the country. It will be a challenge, but I hope he signs with UGA.
- 4** **GOING POLITICAL:** Former Falcons linebacker Buddy Curry and current Falcons kicker Matt Bryant got a chance to speak at the Georgia Concussion Coalition hearing at the State Capitol on Wednesday to support House Bill 673. The bill is to help young athletes and their parents become aware of concussions. This has been a serious issue in the NFL and commissioner Roger Goodell has submitted a letter supporting the bill. Offensive lineman Andrew Jackson and wide receiver Kevin Cone were also there to support the bill.
- 5** **GARDEN STATES:** Earlier in the week, the Braves revealed their new alternate home uniforms and they have an old school feel to them. The "New Jerseys" are cream colored, as are the pants. The jersey also has the traditional Braves script across the chest but there is no tomahawk. The Braves will wear the uniforms during Saturday and Sunday home games. I have to say I love the new jerseys and I can't wait to get my own.

CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS

BY RICKY DIMON

- 3** Consecutive games in which the Hawks have been outscored by at least 10 in one quarter
- 5** Consecutive games in which at least one Hawk has scored in double figures off the bench
- 7** Games in their next nine in which the Hawks will face a team currently above .500
- 15** Games out of the last 19 in which Ivan Johnson has logged double-digit minutes
- 2-16** Combined current streaks of the Hawks (0-3), Georgia Tech (1-6) and Georgia (1-7) as of Wed.
- 4** Super Bowl wins for the New York Giants, tied for fourth all time with Green Bay
- 100** Percent of the Giants' four Super Bowl wins in which they trailed at halftime
- 13** Coaches who have won multiples Super Bowls, including NYG's Tom Coughlin
- 15** Giants players who were on the roster for Super Bowl XLII and Super Bowl XLVI
- 12,233** Super Bowl-related Tweets per second being posted at the end of the game

TRIVIA QUESTION

What player has led the Hawks in scoring the most times this season as of Feb. 7?

Answer on Page 14

SANITY AT LAST

"We are not going to panic. This is not a time to panic. Is it a time for concern? Yes."

- Hawks coach Larry Drew on the team's three-game home losing streak.

COACH'S DIARY

New Centennial football coach Jeffrey Carlberg has invited Score along for the ride during his first year at the helm.

The last seven days have been exciting as I have now officially begun working at Centennial. This past Monday was my first day of work at Centennial after finally getting my transfer approved.

The days leading up to my first day were busy, too. I met with Principal Mileto last Thursday to discuss teaching positions at Centennial, then I met with another fundraising company to listen to a strategic plan to help Centennial raise money for the program.

Friday and Saturday were spent mostly at the Frank Glazier Clinic at the Cobb Galleria. I listened to various speakers with some coaching friends. Sometimes



in the coaching business, you only get to see past associates once or twice a year, so it was nice to catch up. The Frank Glazier Clinic afforded me the opportunity to meet with vendors to discuss the purchase of items for the Knights program, such as player packs, helmets, tackling sleds, etc.

I was glad to finally begin at Centennial, but my first day was a long one. I also met with the Touch-down Club Executive Board (Patrik Estes, Matt Risse, Herman Howard, Frank O'Neil and Tom Prescott) to discuss fundraising and the setting of the budget.

The week was capped off by finalizing spring practice dates and to begin the summer scheduling of workouts and seven-on-seven camps. It was a nice first few official days at Centennial, but I am excited about the work ahead.

SCORE

PREP



**DRIVE
FOR FIVE**



REPEAT FOR WOLVES

Strong returning champs will be challenged

By Stephen Black

It has been, once again, a great year for swimming in the state of Georgia. Here we are at the state finals meet in one of the best facilities in the state for swimming: the Georgia Tech Aquatic Center.

What better place for the championship meet than a pool that once hosted Olympic swimming?

The swimming and diving championships are loaded with talented teams and athletes from metro Atlanta. While programs from Cobb and Gwinnett have owned the Class 5A titles in recent years, intown private schools like Marist and Westminster have dominated Class A-4A. Despite the usual suspects winning championships in recent years, upsets are very possible in this year's state meet.

TRADITIONAL POWERS ...

Parkview won its 18th Gwinnett County championship in 21 years this season and is

among the contenders in both boys and girls this weekend. Gwinnett programs have won the past 12 Class 5A boys state crowns, and the Panthers won six of those. Their last title, however, came in 2007. Coach Jack Gayle hopes his squad returns to the winner's circle behind a state record 40 competitors in today's championships.

Meanwhile, in girls swimming, Lassiter looks to complete an unprecedented five-peat in the state's highest classification. The Trojans are coming off their 12th county championship in 13 years and are led by super sophomores Nicole Prendes and Micaela Janco as well as senior captain Sarah Williford.

Also from Cobb, the Walton boys will attempt to win their first state swimming title since 1983. The Raiders won the Cobb County championship two weeks ago behind another solid performance from All-American diver David Sanchez. Lassiter will be tough

to beat again, though, as Jimmy Yoder leads a stacked Trojan squad. Yoder qualified two All-American times in the Cobb meet.

TALENTED UPSTARTS ...

Although Marist has won the last five state championships in the girls Class 4A meets, Westminster upset Marist in the Wildcats' home pool at the 42nd Annual Metro Swimming and Diving Championship two weeks ago. However, the state championships this weekend are at a neutral site. We'll see how that affects the Marist-Westminster matchup and whether or not the Wildcats can again edge the War Eagles. Regardless, Westminster will surely provide Marist with a stiff challenge and could pull off the upset yet again. Rachel Astles and Katie Christy lead the strong Westminster girls squad.

Meanwhile, after winning six state crowns in a row, the Westminster boys have not won state gold since 2008. The Wildcats, however, appear to be loaded this year and come to Georgia Tech as one of the favorites in Class 4A. But Wesleyan brings a talented bunch of Wolves into the meet as well, led by seniors Anthony McMurry and Nick Salyers,

who have each set school records in their four years on campus.

ATHLETES TO WATCH ...

One of the most accomplished swimmers in the state this year has been David Barnes of West Forsyth. Barnes didn't do much this season – other than qualifying for the state championship meet in every event and relay. A four-year varsity letterman for the Wolverines, Barnes has led his team in points in two consecutive years. Barnes qualified for the state meet in the 200 Free 1:55.58, 200 IM 2:10.43, 50 Free 22.51, 100 Fly 57.62, 100 Free 50.21, 500 Free 5:14.76, 100 Back 58.84, 100 Breast, 1:07.76 200 Medley, 200 Free and 400 Free.

Also, in the diving portion of this weekend's activities, Jack Nyquist is the guy to watch in the boys' Class 5A competition. The junior from Alpharetta High School is the two-time defending state champion and is strongly favored to win again this year. He has only been diving for seven years, but has already proven himself as the state's best diver twice.

Photos courtesy of Lassiter High School and Brian L. Morgan. Black can be reached at sblack@scoreatl.com.

BASKETBALL NEWS



Teams prepare for postseason play

By Brian Jones

It's the final week of the regular season, and the competition is heating up as the top teams try to position themselves into winning regions and secure top seeds in region tournaments.

REGION ACTION ...

One of the top games this past weekend featured the Miller Grove boys taking on Southwest DeKalb. The Wolverines were able to come away with a narrow 59-53 win over the Panthers to complete the season sweep and earn a slim lead over the Panthers for the No. 2 seed in the Region 6-4A tournament. The Wolverines also defeated Lithonia on Tuesday 75-42 to strengthen their lead over the Panthers.

Over in Class 5A, Shiloh continues to play great basketball as the Generals took down Parkview 67-36 over the weekend to hold a firm grip on Region 8-5A. However, they almost lost that grip on Tuesday, as they barely got by South Gwinnett, 59-58. Robert Carter and Jordan Gaiter each had 14 points, but Kyle Lewis shot the go-ahead three-pointer with 25 seconds left to give the Generals the crucial win.

Over in Region 7-5A, defending state champion Norcross has the lead in the region, but North Gwinnett is not far behind. The Bulldogs got another big win against Meadowcreek 66-42. Chris Bolden led the team with 15 points while Kwesi Abakah scored 10 points and pulled down five boards. The Bulldogs are 11-2 in the region and are right on Norcross' heels.

ANOTHER RUN? ...

And speaking of Norcross, are the Blue Devils going to be a darkhorse to win the state title, even though they are the defending champions? The Blue Devils are going through a tough stretch this season, suffering nine losses including a 62-42 shellacking against Mill Creek.

That said, they did lose nine games last year during their state title run. However, their last loss came against North Gwinnett of Jan. 18 last year. This year has not been the same story as the Blue Devils have lost three of their last eight games. They will have a huge contest tonight when they take on North Gwinnett which will be for the No. 1 seed in the region.

But are they still one of the top teams in

5A? They are not ranked in the top 10, and with the way North Gwinnett is playing, it will be interesting to see how the Blue Devils can hold up against their rivals as well as teams like Shiloh, Wheeler, Westlake and last year's state runner-up Milton.

And speaking of Milton, the Eagles are looking like the favorites to win the state title for the second time in three years. They have won 16 consecutive games, and the last time they lost a game was on Dec. 10 when the Eagles fell to Tift County 57-52. With a team that features Evan Nolte, Charles Mann and Shaq Johnson (who had seven dunks in the first half against North Forsyth last Tuesday), the Eagles seem to improve each game and will be tough to beat once tournament play begins.

NO DIAMOND NEEDED ...

Losing Diamond DeShields was a huge

blow for the Norcross Lady Blue Devils, and head coach Angie Hembree had to make certain that her team plays consistent basket ball down the stretch. The Blue Devils have done that and more, winning their last six games including an 81-40 win over Meadowcreek. Patrice Butler has been stepping up in DeShields' absence as she had 22 points and 12 rebounds in the win against the Mustangs.

But as good as the Blue Devils are playing, can anybody stop McEachern? The Indians remain undefeated and have beaten top-ranked teams such as Norcross, Hillgrove and Marietta. With the leadership of Pachyaanna Roberts and Dominique Wilson, the Indians are looking bring a state title back to Powder Springs.

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SWIMMING NEWS



Previewing state championship meet

By Ricky Dimon

In the girls Class 5A meet, Lassiter has reloaded after a trio of stars graduated in 2011 to swim at the next level in Division I and remains the favorite. Recently the Trojans captured their 12th Cobb County championship in their last 13 appearances. A virtual two-team race between Lassiter and Walton saw the Trojans edge the Raiders 542-522.5.

Brookwood and Mill Creek, which finished second and third behind Lassiter at the 2011 state meet, should once again contend.

The Marist girls have won five state titles in a row in Class A-4A. However, Westminster looks poised to turn the tide and end Marist's streak after triumphing at the Metro Swimming and Diving Championship, where the host Wildcats won with 212 points to the runner-up War Eagles' 193.

WINNING WILDCATS ...

On the boys side, the story is much different—especially in Class A-4A. Westminster's string of six consecutive state titles came to an end in 2009 and there have been four different state champions in the past four years. The Wildcats last triumphed in 2008, followed by Marist, Greater Atlanta Christian and most recently Wesleyan in 2011.

Three of those schools just faced each other at the Metro Swimming and Diving

Championship and all three finished in the top four. Marist took home top honors with 153 points, Westminster was right behind with 143 and Wesleyan came in fourth with 127.

There has been a history of repeating in Class 5A. Parkview won four straight state titles from 2000 to 2003, Collins Hill went back-to-back in 2004 and 2005. Parkview followed suit with two more championships in succession then Brookwood captured a trio of titles from 2008 through 2010. Now it is Peachtree Ridge's turn to defend its 2011 championship. A repeat may not be in the cards, though, because the Lions struggled amidst a loaded field at the recent Gwinnett County Public School Championship. They finished in seventh place behind all of the recent state champions—Parkview, Collins Hill and Brookwood.

Parkview finished a mere three points behind Peachtree Ridge at last year's state meet and has to be considered the favorite to win its seventh title in the last 13 years. The Panthers, who are armed with a whole host of state qualifiers, dominated the Gwinnett competition with 1016.5 points.

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BOYS

CLASS AAAAA	CLASS AAAA	CLASS AAA	CLASS AA	CLASS A
1. Milton	1. Miller Grove	1. Columbia	1. Vidalia	1. Whitefield Academy
2. Shiloh	2. Fayette County	2. Washington County	2. Jordan	2. North Cobb Christian
3. Westlake	3. Douglas County	3. Eagles Landing	3. Buford	3. Wilkinson County
4. Tift County	4. Chattahoochee	4. Carrollton	4. GAC	4. Wilcox County
5. Wheeler	5. Southwest DeKalb	5. Walnut Grove	5. Morgan County	5. Lanier County
6. Berkmar	6. Lovejoy	6. Drew	6. Albany	6. Turner County
7. Harrison	7. Jonesboro	7. Thomson	7. Thomasville	7. Athens Christian
8. North Cobb	8. Woodland-Bartow	8. North Hall	8. East Hall	8. Mount Paran Chr.
9. Johnson (Savannah)	9. Effingham County	9. Allatoona	9. Manchester	9. Landmark Christian
10. North Gwinnett	10. Osborne	10. Grady	10. Model	10. Portal

GIRLS

CLASS AAAAA	CLASS AAAA	CLASS AAA	CLASS AA	CLASS A
1. McEachern	1. Chamblee	1. Washington County	1. Morgan County	1. Wesleyan
2. Norcross	2. Statesboro	2. Westover	2. Laney	2. Calvary Day
3. Parkview	3. Douglas County	3. St. Pius X	3. Model	3. SW Atlanta Christian
4. North Gwinnett	4. Alcovy	4. Carrollton	4. Buford	4. St. Francis
5. Alpharetta	5. Creekview	5. Columbia	5. Lovett	5. Darlington
6. Marietta	6. Forest Park	6. Cartersville	6. Decatur	6. Holy Innocents'
7. Hillgrove	7. Fayette County	7. Cross Creek	7. East Hall	7. Taylor County
8. Stephenson	8. Miller Grove	8. Westside-Macon	8. GAC	8. Pace Academy
9. North Cobb	9. Cedar Shoals	9. Westside-Augusta	9. Rabun County	9. Pelham
10. Lowndes	10. Jonesboro	10. Allatoona	10. Dade County	10. Gordon Lee

WRESTLING NEWS



Spartans break through for first area title

By Stephen Black

Greater Atlanta Christian won its first Area 6-2A wrestling championship Saturday as all 14 of its wrestlers made at least the third-place match. The host Spartans were dominant, claiming 228 total points to second-place Lovett's 39. Five wrestlers won weight classes for the Spartans, four won for Lovett and three took first place for Blessed Trinity. Chip Ness won the 170-pound class for Buford while Justin Geeza won the 285-pound class for Westminster.

At the Area 5-3A tournament, Woodward Academy took first place while McNair was the runner-up. The War Eagles were led by Chad Pyke, Chandler Pyke, Max Pastor and Max Wilsley, who all won their weight classes. It is the fourth consecutive region title for Woodward. Cole Waldron won the 145-pound class for third-place St. Pius.

Woodland-Bartow won the Area 7-4A championship and was followed by Cass, Chattahoochee, Creekview and Lambert. Josh McMahon (152) and Brandon Danzig (160) won weight classes for Chattahoochee, while Gantt Bauer (220) and Michael Nelems (132) won for Lambert. Joe Hulen won the 138-pound class for Creekview.

Harrison won the Area 4-5A championship as five Hoyas won weight classes. Deuce White (132), Anthony Fiacco (152), James Douglas (182), Dylan Porter (195) and Jake Shump-

ert (285) each took home a title for the Hoyas. Meanwhile, Wheeler won the Area 5-5A title and was followed by Lassiter and Walton.

North Forsyth conquered Area 6-5A behind five individual champions. John Brown (126), Travis Scott (132), William Robinson (152), Mitchell Abreu (172) and Evan Miller (180) all won their weight classes for the Raiders.

Collins Hill triumphed once again in the Area 7-5A ahead of North Gwinnett and Meadowcreek. It is the Eagles' eighth straight region championship, and they were led by seven individual champions. Collins Hill qualified all 14 of its wrestlers for the sectionals, which are held in Tifton this weekend. Seven Eagles won titles: Sean Russell (106), Ryan Milhof (113), Drew Ferguson (120), Steven Bradtmueller (132), Spencer Rickman (138), Matthew Connell (160), and Andrew Krawulski (170).

Pope took its fifth straight area championship and its second consecutive in Area 5-4A. The Greyhounds blew away the competition with five individual winners in scoring 307.5 points to second-place Alexander's 218.

Marist won the Area 6-4A title with 212.5 points, ahead of Southwest DeKalb's 165.5 and Miller Grove's 160.5.

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MJCCA THIS WEEK



Center prepares teen fitness program

By Fletcher Proctor

Proper fitness is crucial for a lifetime of both physical and personal wellness. In today's age of Xbox 360, iPhones and HDTV, it is refreshing to see many teens eschewing sedentary activities and replacing them with fitness programs. One such program is the MJCCA's Teen Sports Performance Program, which focuses on running, spinning and Boot Camp, some of the hottest programs in today's fitness field. According to Sandra Bass, the Sports and Fitness Program Director at MJCCA, the Teen Sports Performance Program has been carefully designed to promote and enhance physical wellness among teens.

Laura Johnson, one of the fine trainers at the MJCAA, helped create the program after hearing from parents. "There is such a need for kids to do something after school if they aren't in a sport already."

LEARNING FUNDAMENTALS ...

Bass believes that fostering an environment that further develops fitness at all skill levels helps to engender in today's youth a lifelong passion for personal wellness.

The MJCCA Teen Sports Performance Program isn't just lifting weights or running miles. Participants will learn the importance of proper stretching, core conditioning, technique, pacing as well as post-workout components such as healthy nutrition and goal-setting. Wellness is achieved, according to Bass through a smart combination of these elements and trainers are available to provide the necessary assistance, support and fitness tools for reaching that overall wellness.

"We want to give the kids an education while they are working out, not just on weights but on energy and how food affects

how they feel," said Johnson. Training plans and goals are worked on by the instructors and the participants.

The MJCCA encourages sportsmanship, responsibility and respect in the proper environment for wellness success. All fitness levels are welcome as each participant sets his/her own goals and is encouraged to participate at his/her appropriate level. Johnson said that she sees plenty of teens coming back because it is designed to be entertaining as well as educational. "We make it a lot of fun. We want them to want to keep coming back," noted Johnson.

Children as young as eight-years old can participate in various classes including a running program, a spinning class, a core program and a Youth Boot Camp Program. Teens can ramp up the fitness workouts with Krav Maga classes and advanced Boot Camp and Spinning Plus Core Programs. In a brand new program, male teens can take an Intro to Strength Training Class, a program designed to instruct teens on the proper way to work out in a gym.

The participants will be given an in-depth orientation to the equipment, designed to teach them how to use the machines properly and which muscle groups teach piece works. They will also learn how to set up an effective and efficient strength training plan to get maximum results while avoiding injury.

YOUNG TRIATHLETES ...

Johnson also noted that teens can also take part in an upcoming Youth Triathlon on site at the MJCCA. Don't worry though, said Johnson, as the MJCCA sets up the participants for success. The triathletes will take part in two one-hour training sessions per week (Sunday plus one weeknight) over the course of 12 weeks. The regime is designed to improve and develop correct running, swimming and cycling techniques in preparation for the big event. The proper technique also includes etiquette and nutrition suggestions. The goal, according to the MJCAA's website, is to ultimately challenge every participant and allow him/her to reap the rewards of participation. If health and wellness goals are achieved, then the program was a success. The upcoming triathlon programs start for ages 7-10 and 11-14 on Feb. 19.

The MJCCA also offers plenty of youth leagues in addition to the classes. Registration for sports leagues such as flag football, baseball, T-ball, soccer and basketball can all be found on the MJCCA's site under the Youth & Teen Sports page. While basketball probably has the most participants, the soccer leagues and the spring flag football leagues are quickly catching up in popularity. Whatever class interests you or your teen, be sure to take advantage of the opportunity to strive for personal wellness.

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PANTHER PROWL



Basketball team rebounds on the road

By Robby Kalland

The Georgia State basketball rollercoaster season continued as the Panthers dropped a pair of crucial games against two of the top teams in the CAA. The Panthers took to the road to take on Drexel, which trounced the Panthers 68-46 in one of the worst showings of the season. The Dragons dominated defensively, smothering State's shooters and not allowing any easy shot opportunities.

CLOSE LOSS ...

Back home, the Panthers looked to bounce back against the reigning conference champs and Final Four participants, the VCU Rams. The atmosphere inside the Sports Arena was electric as the two teams did battle. The game started out as a close defensive struggle, and at the half it was 25-24 Rams. The Panthers offense sputtered coming out of

the locker room, only scoring seven points in the first 10 plus minutes of the second half, and the deficit ballooned to 11. They came back in the end to only lose by one, 59-58, but that was only after a last second heave from half-court by Josh Micheaux with only 0.3 seconds left on the clock.

Georgia State took to the road for two more games last week, and it found its rhythm offensively, dominating first at UNC-Wilmington and then again at Hofstra. The Panthers made quick work disposing of the Seahawks 68-53. Turnovers were the key to victory as the Panthers took the ball away 15 times. They rolled into Hofstra later in the week and took care of business, defeating the Pride 59-43.

BROKEN RECORDS ...

The biggest story was senior center Eric Buckner breaking Zavian Smith's career

blocks record that had stood for 18 years. Buckner swatted away six shots in the Hofstra game, giving him 129 career blocks, a new school record in just his second year playing for the Panthers. Buckner ought to break the single-season record shortly as he is only one back of Sylvester Morgan's mark of 81 set during the 2004-05 season.

On Wednesday, the Panthers took on Northeastern to kick off Spirit Week (results unavailable at press time), which continues Saturday against Delaware. After these two home games the Panthers will hit the road again to face James Madison before returning to the Sports Arena for their bracketbusters matchup with UTSA on Saturday, Feb. 18. State will look to finish the season strong heading into the conference tournament as its hopes for a chance at the dance remain alive.

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BULLDOG BEAT



Familiar failures stalk Georgia's season

By Stephen Black

Georgia dropped to 1-7 in the SEC after a 73-62 loss at Tennessee Saturday night in Knoxville. Despite the loss, head coach Mark Fox was pleased with his team's effort.

"You have to give Tennessee credit," said Fox. "They made some key baskets in the second half. They made a couple of back-to-back [three-pointers], and we could never get it back. I was really proud that we competed and the way we came out and battled through adversity."

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope led the Bulldogs with 16 points, while Dustin Ware had 15. Point guard Gerald Robinson added 13 points and had seven assists. Georgia is now 10-12 on the season.

SHOOTING WOES ...

In a 59-51 loss at Auburn, Georgia shot just 25 percent in one of its worst shooting performances in recent memory. The Bulldogs were 13-for-52 from the field and 6-of-23 from three-point land. The shooting performance continues a trend, as the Hoop Hounds are the worst in the SEC in scoring average (60.6 point per game) and field-goal percentage (38.8 percent).

On the bright side, Robinson led the team

in almost everything, with 16 points, four assists and eight rebounds. Ware overcame a horrendous shooting night (2-for-12) to tally 10 points. They were the only two Bulldogs in double figures.

SECOND GO-AROUND ...

Georgia started the second half of the SEC season with a game versus Arkansas Wednesday night (results not available at press time). Following the game against the Hogs, Georgia will travel to Mississippi State Saturday, then South Carolina on Feb. 15. It would be a big boost for team morale if the Bulldogs could pull out one of these games on the road, as the team is 1-6 in opponents' gyms this year. Fox's squad is 0-4 in SEC road games, as its lone win was at Southern California on Dec. 17.

With two games left against South Carolina and one versus LSU, Georgia has some good chances for wins later on in the schedule. Also, in recent years, the Bulldogs have been a team that has shown it can win games against teams many thought they couldn't. Still, getting to just four SEC wins seems like a steep climb at this point.

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TECH TALK



Basketball team snaps six-game skid

By Thomas Watson

Georgia Tech's men's basketball team ended its six-game losing streak with a victory over Boston College this past weekend. The 51-47 victory was just the second win in the last 12 games for Tech, and the first in Philips Arena.

"It's been a while since we won," head coach Brian Gregory said after the game. "It is a good start to the second half (of the season); we are 1-0 and 1-0 at home. We haven't won here yet, but we played some pretty good teams... Every day we have to keep getting better, staying positive and making sure that the guys that are buying in are getting the rewards for that buy in."

The win didn't come easy. Brandon Reed hit two free throws in the final seconds to ice the game, and Glen Rice Jr. scored after rebounding his own miss to make it 48-45 with 48.9 seconds left. Tech's improved team defense helped to overcome a continued lack of offensive production. Rice was 4-10 from the field and Mfon Udofia was 0-7. If not for 10-point outings by Kammeon Holsey and Daniel Miller, Tech's defensive surge might have been for naught. Holsey was 5-7 from the floor, while Miller was 4-6 and hit both his free throw attempts.

UDOFIA'S STRUGGLES ...

Despite Udofia's struggles shooting the ball, he played 36 minutes in the game and didn't commit a single turnover while dishing out six assists. "He is not going to have very many 0-for-7 days," said Gregory. "I think that his best look came when the shot clock was winding down, and it gave Kammeon [Holsey] an opportunity to put it back. He goes 3-for-7 or 4-for-7 and he has eight points and six assists and you are looking at a point guard's day's production, we just have to put those two days together now."

POWER NEEDED ...

The Yellow Jackets will hope for similar offensive displays in future games at Philips Arena, where they have struggled to score this season. The highest point total (74) came in a loss against Duke. In the five other games played in the arena the Jackets scored only 60, 48, 38, 49, and 51 points, the last being the only victory.

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HAWKS HAVEN



Road trip success followed by home swoon

By Ricky Dimon

Philips Arena was known as "Blueland" when the Atlanta Thrashers were still in town and playing inside the arena. Now that the Thrashers have hit the road, Philips has suddenly become "Blueland" for the Hawks.

Larry Drew and company started off well enough at home, winning eight of their first nine games at the Highlight Factory. After going 4-1 on a road trip to end January, the Hawks boasted a 16-6 overall record and were heading back to Atlanta for four consecutive home games.

Ideal situation, right? Wrong. The Hawks dropped three straight heading into Wednesday night's date with Indiana (results were not available at press time). They were blown out by Memphis 96-77 last Thursday, trounced by Philadelphia 98-87 last Saturday and lost to Phoenix 99-90 on Monday.

Atlanta is simply not answering when its opponents get hot. The Grizzlies went on a 41-16 spurt during the second and third quarters of their dominant performance. The 76ers outscored the Hawks 26-11 in the last seven minutes of the first half. The Suns went on a 21-4 first half run to all but bury Atlanta.

"We didn't respond well to the runs," Drew told the Atlanta Journal Constitution

after Monday's loss. "I just don't see how we respond as if the game is over. I was hoping we were past that point. It's a point that we are going to have to get better at. This is the NBA. Teams make runs all the time. It just seems to knock the wind out of our sails when a team makes a run."

PLAYING HARD ...

The Hawks have been outclassed in just about every department of late, and that includes hustle and effort. Enter Ivan Johnson, who continues to be Atlanta's high-energy guy play in and play out. With Al Horford and Jason Collins injured, Johnson has logged double-digit minutes in five consecutive games. He had 10 points and nine rebounds against Memphis; 14 and 13 against Philadelphia; nine and five against Phoenix.

"He plays physical," Drew said of Johnson after the Philly game. "He plays with energy. When you don't have the energy and the physicality, you go with a guy who brings it. If he keeps doing what he's been doing, he's going to keep getting minutes."

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FALCONS FLIGHT



Smith makes final adjustments to staff

By Sean Conway

Technically, this is in the "offseason" for the NFL. But for the entire Atlanta Falcons organization, all the lights are on, and it's simply full speed ahead. There's definitely not any dust accumulating at the Falcons' facility in Flowery Branch.

COACH SPEAK ...

After a coaching shakeup that ushered in the arrival of defensive coordinator Mike Nolan and offensive coordinator Dirk Koetter, head coach Mike Smith has finished tweaking his staff. Former Fresno State head coach Pat Hill has been hired to coach the offensive line. Hill won 112 games at Fresno and has assistant level experience in the NFL with the Cleveland Browns (under Bill Belichick) and the Baltimore Ravens.

Nolan tabbed former Miami Dolphins assistant defensive backs coach Joe Danna to mentor the Falcons' secondary in 2012. Danna was on the Atlanta staff in 2008 and 2009. Glenn Thomas has been promoted from within to replace Bob Bratkowski as the quarterbacks coach. Andrew Weidinger has also been promoted to offensive assistant.

DUE DILIGENCE ...

While the coaching staff spends time getting to know (or become reacquainted with) each other and evaluating the talent on the current roster, general manager Thomas Dimitroff is busy scouting. The Falcons have 18 free agents, but Dimitroff will only aggressively

pursue signing about half that number, possibly including former Pro Bowl defensive end John Abraham and cornerback Brent Grimes.

When the NFL Combine convenes in two weeks in Indianapolis, Dimitroff, his staff and the coaches will get a look at the best college prospects available for April's draft. In the meantime, there will be considerable time spent studying college underclassmen who have declared themselves eligible for the draft. Of course, the biggest "name" underclassmen will be long gone before the Falcons make their initial selection in the second round.

Two local pass-catchers will be among the underclassmen eligible. Tight end Orson Charles from Georgia and wide receiver Stephen Hill from Tech, both could be available to the Falcons. Charles is an intriguing possibility. Future Hall of Famer Tony Gonzalez has said he'll retire after this season, so the transition timeline fits nicely.

LOVE BIRD ...

The Falcons are continuing their annual Valentine's Day PR event: Freddie-Grams. For \$200, fans can send mascot Freddie Falcon to deliver a Valentine's Day message, roses, chocolate, a t-shirt and a Freddie Falcon doll to their sweetheart. Fans will also receive a free hair makeover from Salon Red.

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CHOP SHOP



New unis highlight spring preparations

By Fletcher Proctor

The Atlanta Braves will have a new look at Turner Field this year. While the roster remains largely unchanged, the team will don new uniforms on weekends that pay homage to the franchise's first two seasons in Atlanta. The new home-alternate uniform will have a cream base with the player's number on the front instead of a tomahawk under the "Braves" script. Two crossed tomahawks will be featured on a sleeve patch.

"We think these uniforms reflect the timeless tradition of Braves baseball," said Braves President John Schuerholz in a release sent out by the team. "In honoring our past we retain a classic look, yet move forward with an updated design."

The player's name will also be on the back, something the uniforms in 1966 and 1967 did not feature. The jerseys will come with matching cream-colored pants, and the team will wear the traditional red-billed hat to complete the look. The red tops worn in Sunday games in recent years will instead be worn on Friday night games. The standard white uniforms will be worn on Monday-Thursday home games. Road games will still be either gray or blue with the gray pants, pitcher's choice.

BOBBY'S BACK ...

Former Braves skipper Bobby Cox will be back in the dugout managing the Braves, at least the Future Stars of the Braves organization. The parent club will wrap up Spring Training in Gwinnett with an April 3 exhibition game against a team of prospects before opening day. The game will be played at Coolray Field, home of Class AAA Gwinnett.

PARTY CRASHERS ...

The team announced that 21 non-roster invitees will report for Spring Training this year. Seven pitchers including 2011 first-round pick LHP Sean Gilmartin, reliever Peter Moylan and Kell alumnus Zeke Spruill were invited as were catchers Christian Bethancourt and J.C. Boscan. Bethancourt will be interesting to watch, especially with Brian McCann nearing the end of his contract.

Several infielders to keep an eye on include shortstop prospect Andrelton Simmons and Arizona Fall League standout Joe Terdoslavich. The latter has been working at third base and could eventually take over for Chipper Jones. Pitchers and catchers report Sunday, Feb. 10 while position players are set to report Feb. 24. The team will hold its first full squad workout Feb. 25.

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GWINNETT GLADIATORS



Gladiators lead Eastern Conference

By Joe Deighton

The Gwinnett Gladiators are playing their best hockey of the season and possibly the best hockey in franchise history over the past two weeks. Gwinnett leads the ECHL's Eastern Conference with 60 points. The conference lead is due in large part to a franchise record nine-game home winning streak.

The Glads notched another home win against Greenville 3-2 in a shootout on Saturday. Forward Nikita Kashirsky and defenseman Dallas Jackson each scored goals in regulation. Pat Galivan scored the game-winner in the fifth round of the shootout. The win put the team three points ahead of Greenville in the South Division and the conference. Gwinnett trails only Alaska (70) and Las Vegas (64) for most points in the entire league.

BAD NEWS ...

Just as the team is playing so well, it received news that starting goalie Jeff Jakatis will be out for the rest of the season with what is most likely a torn ACL but is being deemed a leg injury. "Jeff cannot be replaced by one individual," Gladiators head coach John Wroblewski told the team's website. "His blend of determination, athleticism and character is infectious." Jakatis earned his fifth shutout of the season with a 3-0 blanking of Greenville on Friday but was run into by Road Warrior

forward Brandon Wong on Saturday, knocking him out for the season.

The Glads' goaltender ranks second in the league with a 2.03 goals against average and leads the Eastern Conference with 17 wins. Toledo goalie Ryan Zapolski was acquired in a trade for future considerations to help replace the loss of Jakatis. Zapolski has played in just two games this year, winning one game with a 2.02 GAA. Back-up goaltender Joe Palmer will start the majority of the games going forward. He played well in relief of Jakatis on Saturday with 16 saves on 17 shots faced.

ON THE DOCKET ...

Riding a season-high five-game winning streak and nine-game home winning streak, the Gladiators will play three more home games this week. The Chicago Express and Kalamazoo Wings will invade the Arena at Gwinnett Center this weekend. The Express and Glads have played just once this year when Gwinnett took a 3-2 shootout victory. This will be the first and only game against North Division leading Kalamazoo this season. The Wings have 55 points, which ranks third in the Eastern Conference.

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TRIVIA ANSWER

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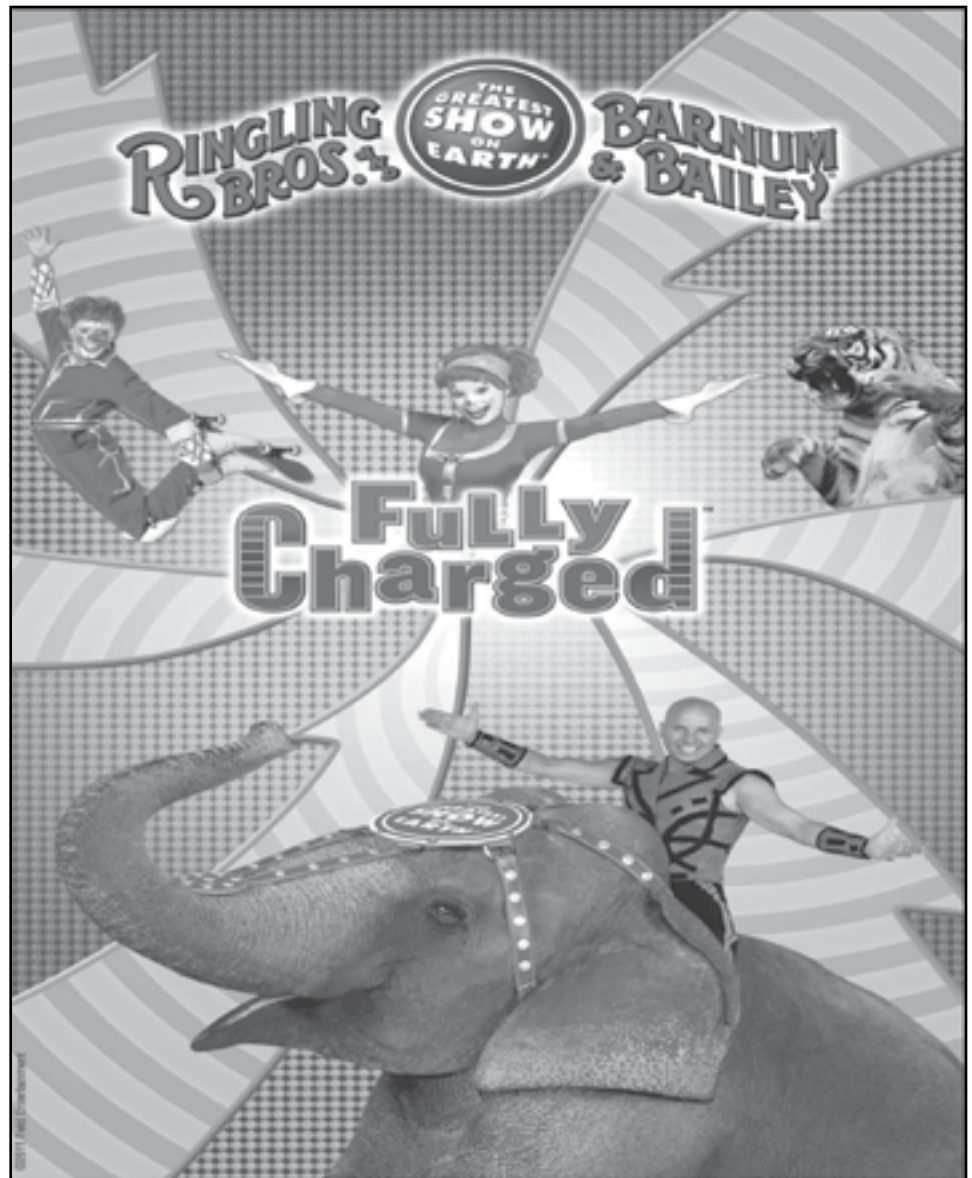
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Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.	Mon.
FEB. 15	FEB. 16	FEB. 17	FEB. 18	FEB. 19	FEB. 20
7:30 PM	7:30 PM	10:30 AM*	11:00 AM	11:00 AM	11:00 AM
		7:30 PM	3:00 PM	3:00 PM	3:00 PM
			7:00 PM	7:00 PM	

*No Pre-show activities.

FEB. 23 - 26
The Arena at Gwinnett Center

Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
FEB. 23	FEB. 24	FEB. 25	FEB. 26
7:30 PM	10:30 AM*	11:00 AM	11:00 AM
	7:30 PM	3:00 PM	3:00 PM
		7:00 PM	7:00 PM

*No Pre-show activities.

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