

**B** WEDNESDAY, FEB. 20, 2008 •••  
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# Sports

## GEORGIA BASKETBALL

### Bulldogs can't find the basket

Dennis Felton's Georgia team had a miserable shooting night in Lexington, falling 61-55 to Kentucky. **B5**



## NASCAR

### Looking toward Sprint future

Jeff Gordon eager to put poor Daytona 500 finish behind him. **B7**

► **Auto Club 500, 4 p.m. Sunday, Fox**



On [ajc.com/sports](http://ajc.com/sports): Go online for the result and to blog about the Hawks' late game against the Lakers.

## HIGH SCHOOL WRESTLING



### Time to get a grip

Team favorites, matches made in heaven and hard-luck tales at state. **B6**

ANDY SHARP / Staff

# Falcons: Heads or tails?

By STEVE WYCHE  
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**Flowery Branch** — The Falcons will learn Friday whether they will hold the third, fourth or fifth selection in the NFL draft April 26-27. Coin-flip tiebreakers will be held at the scouting combine in Indianapolis, which begins

## NFL SCOUTING COMBINE

Today-Tuesday; RCA Dome, Indianapolis.

today when prospects report for physicals.

Atlanta, Oakland and Kansas City finished with 4-

12 records. The Falcons and Raiders flip for the No. 3 pick behind Miami and St. Louis. The loser then flips with the Chiefs to decide who picks fourth and fifth.

New Falcons general manager Thomas Dimitroff will decide whether to call heads or tails.

Dimitroff talked about

other offseason issues facing the Falcons:

► **The possibility of trading the top draft pick:** "Philosophically, I'm not averse to one or the other. I have no strong feelings about one move or the other. If we deem we don't have exactly

► Please see **FALCONS, B2**

## BRAVES SPRING TRAINING



**MARK BRADLEY**  
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 MY OPINION

# James relieved shoulder treatable

**Lake Buena Vista, Fla.** — For most pitchers, being diagnosed with a bum rotator cuff would come as the worst news possible. For Chuck James, it arrived as a tonic.

James started 30 games last season to indifferent returns. He wound up 11-10 with an ERA of 4.24, and on a team crying for a No. 3 starter those numbers weren't good enough. He wasn't nearly the pitcher he'd been as a rookie in 2006, and try as he might — and he tried hard — he couldn't figure out why.

"It wasn't a question of velocity," James said Tuesday. "It was more the way the ball came out of my hand. Nothing was ever easy. I had to battle through every pitch every inning every time out."

Knowing his team needed him to do better, James worked harder. His regular side sessions usually numbered 20 to 25 pitches, but by the end of last season he was throwing 75 pitches in the bullpen between starts. "I thought it was a mechanical thing," he said, and if it was he

► Please see **BRADLEY, B4**



Sluggler **Mark Teixeira** chats with teammate **Brian McCann** at training camp. Teixeira said he wants to focus on baseball, not a new contract.

# Future fortunes

## Teixeira ignores contract buzz

By DAVID O'BRIEN  
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**Lake Buena Vista, Fla.** — Will he be a Brave beyond this season? That's all anyone wants to know about slugging first baseman Mark Teixeira. But it looks as if he's going to keep us guessing.

Tex rolled into training camp

Tuesday and said he's here to play ball and get ready for the 2008 season, not talk about his contract or whether he plans to test the free-agent waters next winter.

"If you're worrying about contracts, you're not going to take care of business on the field," he said. "Twenty-four other guys on this team don't

care about my contract."

Actually, they do care.

Veterans Chipper Jones and John Smoltz have said how important it is to try to re-sign Teixeira, who hit .317 with 17

► Please see **BRAVES, B4**

► **BRAVES NOTES:** Aaron says baseball is trying to clean up. **B4**

## KEY BRAVES DATES

► **Today:** First full-squad workout.

► **Feb. 27:** vs. University of Georgia, 1:05 p.m., Disney

► **Feb. 28:** at Dodgers, 1:05 p.m., Vero Beach

► **Feb. 29:** vs. Dodgers, 1:05 p.m., (ESPN)

## On ajc.com

Go online this morning for coverage of the first full-squad workout.

# A life of hard(wood) knocks

## Guard creates his shot

"You can find solace on the basketball court, a calmness. I did that. I think he did that."

**EDDIE BIEDENBACH**  
 Bryan Smithson's coach

By STEVE HUMMER / steve@ajc.com

**Asheville, N.C.** — Saturday was a hard night at the Justice Center. North Carolina-Asheville got rolled inside its own micro-gym by VMI 97-75. And backstage, Kennesaw's Bryan Smithson, the Bulldogs' shortest player and biggest scorer, was hobbling around.

Really, the kind of night that makes a person rethink the whole Web site thing because "Anonymous" was waiting, ready to pounce.

And sure enough, the posting to bryansmithson.com came right on time: "Lost the third straight. Your season is down the crapper" — Anonymous.

You hang yourself out there on the

► Please see **SMITHSON, B5**



BRETT WHITSELL / Special

UNC-Asheville guard **Bryan Smithson** (10), a North Cobb graduate, drives through the North Carolina defense en route to 25 points in a Jan. 9 loss.

# Ex-'wise guy' knows the score

By MATT WINKELJOHN  
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Michael Franzese was at Georgia Tech on Tuesday evening, not the normal stomping grounds for a convicted member of New York's infamous Colombo crime family.

"We're recruiting," Franzese said. "The government's been doing a good job getting our guys off the street; our numbers are down."

Actually, Franzese was a member of the Colombo crime family, did seven years in prison on racketeering charges, and admits to fixing college and pro sports events through point shaving.

He has renounced his life of crime and was joking about recruiting. But he was on campus to persuade in two sessions that were mandatory for Tech athletes.

Leah Thomas, who works in Tech's

► Please see **FRANZESE, B7**



NASCAR

Gordon moves beyond Daytona

By RICK MINTER rminster@ajc.com

Jeff Gordon said Tuesday during a media event at Atlanta Motor Speedway that he plans to put his Daytona bad luck behind him and focus on the upcoming Sprint Cup schedule...

NEXT FOR NASCAR

- What: Auto Club 500
When: 4 p.m. Sunday
TV; radio: Fox; 106.7 FM

turned around soon and make sure we get ourselves back up in the points and also start working on getting ourselves competitive where we can win races...

"Hopefully, we'll get those results that we were capable of in Daytona this weekend in Daytona."

But he did acknowledge that leaving Daytona for the intermediate tracks requires some adjustments.

"It's easier when you finish 39th," he said. "It might be a little harder for Ryan Newman, who is still celebrating the victory and wanting to savor that moment as long as they possibly can."

Gordon said his team's focus is on avoiding the type of mechanical problem that knocked him out at Daytona, especially now that the crew knows how much strain the suspension setups put on the "Car of Tomorrow," which is now the only



GLENN SMITH / Associated Press Jeff Gordon finished 39th in the Daytona 500 because of a broken suspension part.

vehicle used in Sprint Cup.

"It was a wake-up call for all of us what kind of stress we're putting on the suspension components," he said. "We prepared as best we could to prevent those things from happening, and it still happened."

But he said Daytona usually punishes cars more than other tracks, such as AMS.

And, in a bit of good news for Atlanta fans, he said that the use of the COT at AMS, although relatively untried on similar tracks, won't affect the kind of side-by-side racing that has come to be expected on the 1.54-mile oval.

"As long as you have a multiple-groove race track, you're going to see great racing, and that's what we have here," he said.

SCOREBOARD

ON THE AIR

Table with columns: Sport, Event, Time, Station. Includes College Basketball, Cycling, Golf, Basketball, Soccer.

CALENDAR

Calendar grid showing events for Thrashers, Hawks, Gladiators, Ga. Tech, Georgia, Georgia State, Kennesaw State, Men's Basketball, Women's Basketball, Tennis, and ATP Tour.

TICKETS

- Georgia Tech Call 888-TECH-TIX
Georgia: Call 706-542-1231
Thrashers: Season tickets or individual tickets (\$10-\$250): 866-715-1500 or atlantathrashers.com

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BRIEFLY

Tide player admits to robbery

FROM STAFF, WIRE REPORTS

Alabama defensive lineman Jeremy Elder admitted robbing two students at gunpoint Saturday night, according to sworn testimony reported Tuesday by the (Mobile) Press-Register.

Elder, a 19-year-old from North Clayton High who was redshirted last season, was arrested Sunday and charged with two counts of felony first-degree robbery.

The Mobile paper said a deposition filed Tuesday in district court by authorities said Elder "admitted to committing the robbery."

The newspaper said the student alleging Elder robbed him of \$26 at gunpoint Saturday night identified the player Sunday on video footage taken at the athletic dorm.

Elder has been suspended indefinitely from all football-related activities.

opener at Daytona last week and during testing last month, will be replaced by former truck series champion Travis Kvapil. Roush said in a statement that the team will re-evaluate its plans before the series races at Atlanta Motor Speedway on March 7.

MORE RACING Open-wheel union 'heating up'

A possible unification of America's two open-wheel series is still on track. David Higdon, Champ Car World Series spokesman, said discussions are "heating up."

Rangers' Kinsler gets 5-year deal The Rangers and second baseman Ian Kinsler agreed on a five-year, \$22 million contract with a club option valued at \$10 million for the 2013 season...

AUTO RACING Clanton replaced for truck race

Tyrone's Joey Clanton won't be driving Jack Roush's No. 09 Ford in Saturday's Craftsman Truck Series race at California Speedway. Clanton, who crashed in the season

league contract with the Nationals that will pay him \$850,000 if he makes the major league club. ... Astros right fielder Hunter Pence crashed through a sliding glass door in the bathroom of his spring training home Monday night, leaving him with multiple cuts that will sideline him for a week.

PRO FOOTBALL K.C. uses franchise tag on Allen

The Chiefs put a franchise tag on defensive end Jared Allen, who led the NFL in sacks last season with 15 1/2. ... The 49ers waived line-backer Derek Smith, cutting ties with their longtime leading tackler whose role was assumed last season by rookie Patrick Willis.

Franzese: Must-hear message

Continued from B1

life-skills programs, hired Franzese to speak about several topics, chiefly dangers inherent with gambling.

"If I have 100 of you in here, I know 25 are gambling or know somebody who is," he said. "I guarantee you by the time I get back to my hotel room somebody in this room, probably more than one, will e-mail me to discuss a gambling issue. I was at Auburn [Monday] night; I had six e-mails."

Franzese, who will lecture today at Georgia, has been doing this since 1996, shortly after getting out of prison. He has spoken on more than 300 campuses and addressed NBA and Major League Baseball teams, tennis players and more.

He tells of how he and some of the "300 maniacs" he used to captain in New York convinced student-



Michael Franzese was a member of the Colombo crime family and served time in prison.

athletes to shave points. "When I was on the street, we put many athletes in trouble, both on the professional and college level," he said. "When they got in trouble, they had to pay up. If they didn't, some got hurt, and some were forced to shave games."

Freshman point guard Moe Miller said this lecture was less boring than most.

"We go to a lot of meetings like this," he said. "This one was actually kind of interesting."

Franzese, 57, earned millions of dollars a week in the 1970s and '80s, much of it by bootlegging gasoline.

He said his life changed gradually as he became a Christian at the behest of his wife, Camille, whom he met in 1985.

Franzese said that, yes, he has worried about his safety over the years, and that he knows what college is about,

with three of his seven children there now. Franzese also lectured about drugs and alcohol.

He said he never ratted out former associates, but suggested that relying on similar secrecy in this day and age won't work.

"[Former Falcons quarterback] Michael Vick, an example. People that were close to him ... that he financed in that [dog-fighting] operation. ... They got arrested and within 48 hours every single one agreed to testify," he said. "What does that tell you? The day of the stand-up guy ... it's over, people."

Thomas got what she wanted out of Franzese.

"I had read the kind of feedback student-athletes have given him," Thomas said. "We do these presentations frequently, and I'm always looking for something that is going to get their attention."

Greg Smith, a sophomore wide receiver, said, "This right here was real. The way he explained how you could make \$10,000 ... it's wrong, but I can see how people would be tempted."

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

TUESDAY'S RESULTS

Table of college basketball results for Tuesday, categorized by region: South, Midwest, South West, Women, East, and Midwest.

TUESDAY'S MEN'S SUMMARIES

Florida St. 64, Clemson 55
CLEMSON (19-7): Perry 0-2-0-0, Mays 0-3-0-14.1, Booker 5-6-2-6.12, Rivers 4-15-11-10, Hammonds 5-11-2-3-13, Stitt 2-6-2-3-7, Sykes 0-1-1-2, Potter 0-4-2-2-2, Oglesby 1-7-0-0-2, Grant 3-1-2-7, Total F: 60-123-55

No. 13 Connecticut 65, DePaul 60
DEPAUL (10-15): Green 3-11-0-0-6, Clarke 3-8-0-0-8, Koshwal 3-10-0-0-6, Burns 6-15-6-9-20, Clinckales 2-3-0-0-4, Tucker 1-8-0-0-2, Walker 5-13-0-0-10, Posicic 2-2-0-0-4, Totals 25-50-6-9-60

No. 15 Indiana 77, No. 14 Purdue 68
PURDUE (21-6): Hummel 7-12-0-0-17, Calasan 1-6-2-3, Kramer 3-8-2-4-8, Grant 4-13-0-0-10, Moore 3-15-4-5-11, Crump 0-1-0-0-0, Martin 5-13-1-2-12, Green 2-2-2-1, Johnson 2-2-2-6-2, Totals 25-72-11-21-68

Bradley 72, No. 16 Drake 71
BRADLEY (16-12): Wilson 6-14-3-15, Salley 4-5-1-1-9, Maniscalco 2-8-1-2-7, Crouch 8-11-2-3, Ruffin 4-11-0-0-11, Cole-Scott 11-0-2-2, Austin 2-4-0-0-4, Singh 0-2-1-2-1, Totals 27-57-7-0-7

BASKETBALL CBA STANDINGS American Conference
W L QW PTS AVG
Minot 22 18 101.0 131.0 4.8
Pittsburgh 22 18 90.0 155.5 3.9

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