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Top 10 stories of week: UGA recruiting, Georgia Tech's spring game, and NCAA rules



Michael Carvell

Updated April 26, 2014 Filed in [ACC](#), [Georgia Bulldogs](#), [Georgia Tech](#), [SEC](#).

1. This week's most inspirational story has to be former Buford High School defensive back **Ryan Dillard**. He turned down football scholarships from smaller colleges because he thought he could play at the highest level. He never let go of that dream. Dillard walked on at USC. **After two years of hard work, Dillard was awarded a football scholarship by the Trojans this week.**



Ryan Dillard

2. UGA basketball coach **Mark Fox** has struggled with recruiting top-tier kids from Georgia, particularly in Atlanta, since he has been with the Bulldogs. In fact, five out Fox's last six signees are from out of state. It doesn't make a lot of sense because Atlanta, located an hour away from UGA, is one of the nation's top hotspots for college basketball talent. I've always thought Fox's biggest mistake was not hiring an assistant with true Atlanta connections. Now that UGA has a staff opening, maybe Fox will finally consider that option. My top choice would be **Sharman White**, who has built the greatest basketball dynasty the state of Georgia has ever seen at Miller Grove High School. White interviewed at Memphis a few years ago. There are plenty of other top high school candidates who would also make great college assistants somewhere, including **Eddie Martin, Cabral Huff, Jesse McMillan** and **Zach Smith**. All of those guys know Atlanta and are well-respected in coaching circles.

3. Somebody who is a trusted source in the coaching profession tried to tell me this week that UGA did not beat out Michigan State for **Yante Maten**, the 6-7 forward from Michigan who signed with the Bulldogs. "If Michigan State had wanted that kid, he would've signed with Michigan State. End of story. They never offered." Well, Maten's high school coach said that Michigan State offered, and it was reported by recruiting websites and Michigan newspapers. I'm not singling out Michigan State, but it is popular for colleges to claim they didn't offer when a kid commits elsewhere. Happens all the time in this business.



Mark Fox (AJC)

4. Clemson and Miami have offered football scholarships to a kid who hasn't played football since middle school in 2011. That would be Jonesboro High School freshman sensation James Walker, who is profiled **in this story by the Clayton News Daily's Derrick Mahone**. Walker passes all the eyeball tests at

6-foot-5 and 205 pounds. He's a basketball star who led Jonesboro to this year's state championship while averaging 15.3 points per game. Walker says football is his first love, and he projects to play wide receiver or safety this fall. Anyways, the early offers are not surprising because college scouts have to be aggressive and take some risks to effectively recruit Atlanta due to the heavy competition. Things like this happen more than you think in the recruiting biz: UGA got a commitment from **Brice Ramsey** before he ever started at quarterback for Camden County High School.

5. Tennessee **has released 6-foot-8 forward Phil Cofer of Whitewater High School** from the basketball letter of intent he signed last November, due to the coaching change. Cofer's pops played at Tennessee. There are reports **that another Tennessee signee from Georgia**, Morgan County High School forward **CJ Turman**, will do the same.

6. It got overlooked with all the news out of the NCAA this week, but **they've changed the rules for college transfers**. Essentially, the NCAA has ended the hardship waiver process (which made some student-athletes immediately eligible to play the year after a transfer), but it added an extra year on the back end. Transfers will now have as many as six years to play four, effective for the 2015-2016 calendar year. For example, if a football player was red-shirted at UGA for one season, played for two seasons, and decided to transfer another FBS school ... he would sit out at his new school for one season, and then have two seasons of eligibility. Under the old rules, he would have only one season of eligibility at his new school because he was forced to use his other season to sit out, per NCAA transfer requirements.

7. The NCAA still can be so confusing. I tried to get a clarification on the SEC winning its appeal of a recruiting rule. Let's start from the beginning: Under an NCAA interpretation last fall, kids who qualify to enroll early could sign non-binding financial aid agreements with multiple colleges. In return, those colleges had recruiting restrictions lifted, allowing "unlimited contact" with those prospects. The NCAA then changed the interpretation, saying that only the first college that the prospect signed with would have "unlimited contact." The SEC appealed (and rightly so) because colleges don't have to share financial aid info with each other and that could've led to schools committing tons of NCAA secondary violations without knowing it. Anyways, the SEC won the appeal, but the NCAA threw a curve ball in there with the ruling, saying **"but if that prospect does not enroll at the school, the school will be considered in violation of recruiting rules."** What kind of recruiting violation and what kind of penalty for the violation? We asked the NCAA, and a spokesman told the AJC, "I spoke with our enforcement staff, and the level (and therefore the penalty) would not be predetermined. The level of all violations is reviewed based on the specific circumstances of the case, and is based on significance, advantage gained, amount of benefit, etc." That's not confusing, is it?

8. For whatever reasons, I'm still hearing people in recruiting circles chirp about **several media reports, including The Big Lead and The Bleacher Report, claiming that only 117 people showed up to watch Georgia Tech's spring scrimmage** last Friday night. It's plain silly. A Georgia Tech spokesman told the AJC those reports are totally incorrect: "Because of the horrible weather conditions, the adjustment to pre-game activities and the post-game fireworks, we did not post an official attendance. Most here think the crowd was close to 2,000." Several big-name prospects braved the weather to make



Paul Johnson (AP Photo/Luis M. Alvarez)

an appearance, including Buford tight end **Isaac Nauta**, who might be the state's No. 1 prospect for 2016. He was offered by Georgia Tech as a defensive end.

9. I did an interview with **Mike Evans**, the Texas A&M wide receiver who is expected to taken in the first round of the NFL Draft. Evans wasn't highly-recruited out of high school, mainly because he was a basketball prospect. Evans said he has visited with at least four NFL teams, but would only confirm meeting with the Jacksonville Jaguars. Anyways, he said NFL visits are a lot like official visits during the college football recruiting process: "They are real similar. They fly you up, they put you in a nice hotel, and they feed you good. But it's more business with the NFL. Coming out of high school, they're all trying to get you. In the NFL, they're all trying to find out about you, and get a good feel for your character."

10. Our recruiting photo of the week comes from **Roquan Smith**, the 4-star linebacker from Macon County High School who visited UGA on Thursday:

*In dog nation first to ride the dog #GATA #DawgNation
pic.twitter.com/aRoVSkf6zA
— God's_Gift_4rm_Above (@RoquanSmith1) April 24, 2014*

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StingerSplash

Apr 26, 2014

Aren't the values of spring games, other than bringing in recruits as part of an overall visit, overstated anyway? If you look good on offense, are you that good or does your defense stink? If you look good on defense, is this offense abysmal? Besides, you've had 14 practices and scrimmages and you've got all summer to evaluate depth.

Like Reply



Steve Rogers

Apr 26, 2014

Eddie Martin and jesse the whiner Macmillan and zach smith have all recruited Atlanta better than Fox the last few years. You may be on to something.

1 Like Reply



MichaelCarvell moderator

Apr 28, 2014

@Steve Rogers Good point

Like Reply



DawgGoneIt

Apr 26, 2014

Thinking Roquan Smith is going to sign with Georgia. Just a hunch.

Like Reply



Gandolph

Apr 27, 2014

@DawgGoneIt You would think differently about that photo if for some reason he signs with Auburn or Florida. As a matter of fact, you might even think it disrespectful.

Like Reply