

Swarm players, coaches balance jobs with lacrosse

By KAITLIN LONG
Staff Correspondent

Shayne Jackson is one of the exceptions.

The new Georgia Swarm lacrosse team, officially introduced Thursday with a press conference at the Arena at Gwinnett Center, will feature professional athletes, though only a few are like Jackson. The 5-foot-9 forward makes lacrosse his full-time career, playing both indoor and out-

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door, but the majority of players and coaches in the National Lacrosse League have occupations outside of the sport.

"All of these players have regular jobs just like you and I during the week, and then they come play lacrosse on the weekend," said Swarm owner and general manager John

Arlotta, whose team debuts in Duluth in January. "They really do it for the love of the sport. I tell them, and they don't always understand and appreciate this because they're not old enough to, but they're like the NFL players of the 1950s. They're so passionate about their sport and their game, and they're really doing it because they love the game. You're going to love them as a result."

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Jack Thornton, 10, of Buford, has his shirt autographed by Georgia Swarm defenseman Kiel Matisz during Thursday's press conference at the Arena at Gwinnett Center in Duluth. (Photo: Kyle Hess)

SEC MEDIA DAYS

On the offensive



Georgia head coach Mark Richt fields questions during SEC media days at the Wynfrey Hotel on Thursday in Hoover, Ala. (Photo: Kelly Lambert/USA Today Sports)

Richt addresses questions about Bulldogs' production

By DAVID FRIEDLANDER
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HOOVER, Ala. — As expected, it didn't take long during his turn on the dais for SEC Media Days for Georgia football coach Mark Richt to be asked once again who his starting quarterback will be for the 2015 season.

In fact, it was the very first question he was asked.

His answer was just as expected despite the release earlier this week of the Bulldogs' initial depth chart for 2015 that showed sophomore Brice Ramsey listed ahead of junior Faton Bauta as the starter, with incoming Virginia

“He's a very good teacher and communicator, and I think he's got a great personality for the college game as far as being able to recruit and being able to relate to young people.”

— UGA coach Mark Richt on new offensive coordinator Brian Schottenheimer

transfer Greyson Lambert not yet listed at all.

"I have no idea who the starter will be," Richt said. "We are going to have a tremendous

competition, continue that competition for that position. It's going to — I think it's going to take a while.

"We have 29 practice opportunities before the first game, and we're going to get a rotation where we can see the guys that we want to see compete and then make a decision on who should be the starter. But right now, I don't know who that is."

That first, obvious question out of the way, most of Richt's session Thursday at the Hyatt Regency Birmingham Wynfrey Hotel was spent talking offense.

Small wonder, given the number of unknowns facing Georgia as preseason practice for the 2015 campaign rapidly

approaches.

Aside from finding, and then breaking in, a new quarterback, the Bulldogs must also adjust to both the new features and personality of first-year offensive coordinator Brian Schottenheimer, who came in after his predecessor Mike Bobo accepted the head coaching job at Colorado State in the offseason.

As far as Richt is concerned, so far so good on that front.

"I think the players have taken to him well," Richt said of Schottenheimer. "He's a very good teacher and communicator, and I think he's got a great personality for the college game as far as being able to recruit

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Media picks UGA to win east

Whether Dawgs meet Auburn or Alabama in Dome depends on perspective

By DAVID FRIEDLANDER
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HOOVER, Ala. — The culmination of the final day of SEC Media Days every year is the release of the media's predictions for the order of finish in both of the conference's divisions, as well as the prediction of which team will celebrate at midfield of the Georgia Dome after the SEC Championship Game in December.

Such was the case Thursday as the 2015 edition of the list was released to bring this year's pre-season event at the Hyatt Regency Birmingham Wynfrey Hotel to a close.

And this year's prediction contained an oddity and a paradox.

The one thing the gathered media members polled agree on is that Georgia will be representing the East Division at the Georgia Dome, but will fall to the West Division winner, though whether that winner will be Auburn or Alabama depends on how one looks at the poll.

The Tigers were the media's choice as the predicted overall SEC champions, garnering 96 points to outpoll their bitter in-state rival, which was second in the overall poll with 80 points. Georgia was a distant third with 28 points.

However, in the poll predicting which team would win the West Division, it was the Crimson Tide that came out on top with 1,405 points to Auburn's 1,362 despite the fact the Tigers actually had more first-place votes (108 to 92).

The East Division vote fit more in line with the overall conference predictions, with Georgia the consensus choice to make it back to Atlanta in December.

The Bulldogs received 166 of 225 first-place votes among their 1,498 points to easily outpoll runner-up Tennessee's 36 first-place votes and 1,231 points.

Two-time defending division champion Missouri polled third with 20 first place votes and 1,196

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Buford's Alexander reflects on long journey

By DAVID FRIEDLANDER
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HOOVER, Ala. — To Vadal Alexander, it seems like a lifetime ago that he was facing a very serious medical issue that clouded his football future.

In reality, it was only back in 2010 that the now LSU senior offensive lineman had more than just his junior season at Buford High School put into serious jeopardy by a rare condition known as Guillain-Barre Syndrome. "It was a really pivotal

moment in my life, one of those life-changing events," the 6-foot-6, 320-pound tackle said bluntly during Thursday's final session of SEC Media Days at the Hyatt Regency Birmingham Wynfrey Hotel.

Just five years later, Alexander's life has changed dramatically, and for the better.

Entering his fourth and final season as a starter on the Tigers' offensive line, he has an All-SEC selection to his credit, is on the preseason watch lists for two prestigious national

awards for linemen — the Lombardi Award and Outland Trophy — and is considered a top prospect for next spring's NFL Draft.

It all could have slipped away when he was diagnosed with the rare autoimmune disorder that attacked his nervous system and left him with diminished sensation in his legs, perhaps the most important point of strength to an offensive lineman.

But Alexander was determined not to let that happen, working hard

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LSU offensive tackle Vadal Alexander, a Buford grad, answers questions Thursday during SEC Media Days at the Wynfrey Hotel in Hoover, Ala. (Photo: Kelly Lambert/USA Today Sports)