

Gladiators turn in season-ending roster

FROM STAFF REPORTS

DULUTH — The Gwinnett Gladiators announced their season-ending roster Tuesday, an early step in the building of this season's team.

By ECHL rule, teams are allowed a maximum of 20 players on the final roster, but those who did not sign an ECHL contract in 2014-15 may not be included (i.e., players who were under contract to teams in either the NHL or the American Hockey League).

After completing their remaining future consideration trades on Monday, the Gladiators submitted a final roster of 20 players: Kevin Albers, Daniel Bahntge, Ian Barteaux, Art Bidlevskii, Nathan Burns, Justin Buzzeo, Todd Fiddler, Thomas Frazee, Ryan Hegarty, Brock Higgs, Jacob Johnston, Alexander Lavoie, Brandon Maclean, Eric Meland, Mike Merrifield, Matt Register, Tyler Shiplo, Jeff Silengo, Eric

Springer and Zach Yuen. Each team is entitled to reserve rights to a maximum of eight players from the list of 20 by extending a qualifying offer no later than July 1.

Of the eight qualified players, no more than four can be veterans (260 regular season professional hockey games played as of the start of the 2015-16 season). Players on open qualifying offers cannot be traded. Teams are not required to extend a qualifying offer to players who sign a contract prior to July 1, making the next two weeks a key period.

The qualifying offer must remain open for acceptance until Aug. 1, at which time the qualifying offer is void and the team may sign the qualified player to any salary or may elect to take no further action. Teams that extend a valid qualifying offer to a non-veteran player shall retain the rights to that qualified player for one playing season.

GAC's Cochran commits to Vandy

By PAUL THOMAS
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Greater Atlanta Christian rising senior offensive tackle Devin Cochran verbally committed to Vanderbilt on Sunday after an unofficial visit over the weekend.



Devin Cochran

Cochran chose the Commodores over offers from 17 other programs, and seriously considered Tennessee, Miami, Florida and South Carolina.

"I honestly just kind of fell in love with it on

the campus tour, talking with (head) coach (Derek) Mason, talking with (offensive line) coach (Kevin) Lightner," Cochran said. "Over time I just started to feel that this is the right place for me. I talked to my parents while I was there and I told them I really wanted to commit, but we just decided to wait until (the visit) was done. Then to play in the SEC, which is the hardest conference to play in, so if you're able to have a great or good season SEC-wise you can still be noticed and possibly go to the NFL after everything's over. But if you don't the Vanderbilt education will stick with you."

The 6-foot-7, 305-pound lineman is rated a three-

star prospect by 247sports.com. Cochran originally thought his future would be as a basketball recruit, but after he transferred to GAC as a sophomore and rode the bench he put his energy into football.

After helping lead the Spartans to the Class AA state final this season Cochran received his first scholarship offer in January. His frame made him one of the more sought after offensive line recruits in Gwinnett County before he pledged to Vanderbilt Sunday.

"I used to play basketball," he said. "Honestly I never would have thought I'd be where I am now."

Last summer was the first time Cochran real-

ized that he did have what it took to play in college. Working alongside teammates like Auburn signee Darius Slayton and Tennessee signee Micah Abernathy gave him a confidence boost.

Abernathy and Slayton assured Cochran that summer that his recruiting would pick up soon, once teams saw his film.

"It boosted me a lot," Cochran said. "It really started during that summer leading into (last season), where I go to work out and get first-team reps, getting Micah (Abernathy) running behind me. It all felt great and it just made me feel like I was meant to be out there and I was meant to play."

Holt hits for cycle as Sox snap streak

By GETHIN COOLBAUGH
The Sports Xchange

BOSTON — Brock Holt became the first Red Sox player to hit for the cycle since John Valentin on June 6, 1996, tripling in the eighth inning to cap the rare feat as Boston snapped a season-high, seven-game losing streak with a 9-4 win over the Atlanta Braves on Tuesday at Fenway Park.

The second baseman singled in the first, doubled in the fifth and homered in the seventh to set himself up for the historic three-bagger with two outs in the eighth.

The Red Sox avoided their longest losing streak since last summer's eight-game skid.

Boston broke open the game with three runs in the sixth, sparked by center fielder Mookie Betts' leadoff triple. He tied a career high in hits for the second straight game, going 3-for-5.

Betts scored the go-ahead run on shortstop Xander Bogaerts' ground ball to Braves second baseman Jace Peterson, who fired home on the play. Catcher Ryan Lavarney couldn't hold on as Betts slid under the tag, but he recovered in time to throw Bogaerts out at second.

After a double from first baseman Mike Napoli put two runners in scoring position with two outs in the inning, left fielder Alejandro De Aza hit a two-run double to center to make it 5-2.

Second baseman Brock Holt hit a solo home run to left an inning later. De



Boston's Mookie Betts (50) scores against Atlanta catcher Ryan Lavarney during the sixth inning at Fenway Park on Monday in Boston. (Photo: Mark L. Baer/USA Today Sports)

Aza tacked on an insurance run with his RBI triple to right in the eighth and right fielder Rusney Castillo hustled out an infield single that allowed De Aza to score, giving Boston a six-run cushion.

Holt's milestone triple scored Castillo from first and capped the scoring.

Braves shortstop Pedro Ciriaco and catcher A.J. Pierzynski both had RBI doubles against Red Sox right-hander Koji Uehara in the ninth, but five runs was as close as Atlanta came.

Boston left-hander Wade Miley (6-6) tied a season high with eight strikeouts while allowing two earned runs, five hits and two walks in 6 1/3 innings.

Atlanta right-hander Julio Teheran (4-3) took the loss, allowing six earned runs and 13 hits in

6 1/3 innings. Boston (28-38) got off to a quick start, scoring two runs in the first.

Betts lined a double to center field to score Holt, who doubled to lead off the inning. Betts later crossed the plate when third baseman Pablo Sandoval grounded into a double play, which was upheld after an unsuccessful Red Sox challenge on the call at first.

Atlanta (31-34) evened the score with two runs in the fourth. Center fielder Cameron Maybin scored on first baseman Freddie Freeman's double to right and a groundout to first from right fielder Nick Markakis brought Freeman home after he advanced to third on a Miley wild pitch.

Notes: Atlanta is 29-31 all time against Boston but has gone 17-14 at Fen-

way Park. ... Braves INF Andrelton Simmons (sore hand) was out of the lineup and is day to day after taking a pitch off his right hand Monday. Pedro Ciriaco, who spent parts of two seasons with the Red Sox, started at shortstop. ... C Ryan Lavarney, another former Red Sox, made his Braves debut behind the plate. ... INF Dustin Pedroia (sore left knee) and OF Hanley Ramirez (back soreness) were out of the Red Sox lineup. Brock Holt played at second base and Alejandro De Aza was in left field. ... MLB commissioner Rob Manfred was in Boston for Tuesday's game and spoke with reporters about a variety of subjects. ... Atlanta wraps up its home-and-home series against Boston with a two-game set at Turner Field starting today.

Trades

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games with Ontario.

The 25-year-old was a huge factor in the play-offs with 18 points in 19 games as the Reign made a run to the Western Conference finals.

"He's a big addition," Gladiators head coach Andy Brandt said. "We'll look to him to lead from the back end and be crafty at the blue line in the offensive zone."

Fiddler spent the bulk of the 2014-15 season with the Quad City Mallards, with 27 points in 50 games, before being traded to Ontario in early March.

"He's a young guy who can score when given the opportunity," Brandt said. "He can put the puck away — he proved that in the WHL."

Fiddler, just 21 years old, had 48 goals and 88 points in 52 games with Prince George in 2013-14 before turning pro last year.

Both players come to Gwinnett after a March 11 deal that sent Nunn to the Reign, who pushed eventual Kelly Cup champion Allen to seven games before seeing their run end May 27.

Trading another of their top offensive weapons, Casey Pierro-Zabotel, got the Gladiators forwards Jeff Silengo and Jason Wilson at the time of the deal. They now also get the rights to forward Alex Lavoie. The Anjou, Quebec native appeared in 67 games for Florida, notching 21 goals and 36 assists for 57 points.

"He's a good second-line center who can win faceoffs and can be relied on in our own end," Brandt said.

Gwinnett acquired another quality centerman, Thomas Frazee, from Greenville. Frazee and defenseman Ryan Hegarty are the rest of the Gladiators' compensation in a three-way deal that saw Scott Arnold land in Gwinnett and hot-handed forward Anthony Luciani go to Greenville.

Hegarty spent the

past two seasons with Greenville, appearing in 68 games last year as an assistant captain and amassing 34 points off of 10 goals and 24 assists.

Frazee scored 41 points in 70 games last season.

The Gladiators sent goalie Mark Guggenberger to Fort Wayne in March and are now getting back defenseman Ian Barteaux.

After completing five seasons with the University of Alberta Golden Bears, where he won the CIS national championship as a senior, Barteaux joined the Komets for his rookie campaign in 2014-15.

"He's a stay-at-home defenseman, similar to a Cody Brookwell," Brandt said, comparing Barteaux to one of Gwinnett's most reliable former blueliners. "He's not going to wow you off the hop, but he's a steady, penalty-killing defenseman."

The Gladiators acquired the rights to two more D-men on Monday.

Jacob Johnston comes from the Utah Grizzlies to complete the March 9 trade for Brendan Walker. Johnston played briefly in Greenville last season before joining Utah for 59 games. He finished with 40 points over 69 total games. Finally, to complete a Feb. 6 transaction that sent Anthony Perdicaro to the Wichita Thunder, the Gladiators receive the rights to Eric Meland. The defenseman appeared in 61 games with the Thunder and had 36 points.

"We did get good value with these trades," Brandt said. "But when you make a trade, nothing is 100 percent."

Several of these players — Hegarty, Johnston and Meland — are planning to play overseas next season.

"If that happens, we'll wish them luck," Brandt said. "We'll keep their rights and we'll keep the lines of communication open."

But there are still plenty of other players Brandt is interested in adding to the roster.

"If we do our job, we'll be fine," Brandt said.

Brown

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assumed she would play her entire career in the ACC, but Maryland switched conferences.

When she announced her decision to leave Maryland, Brown expressed a desire to get closer to Suwanee.

"I want to thank Coach (Brenda) Frese, the staff

and my teammates for two great seasons at the University of Maryland," Brown said in a statement released by Maryland's athletics department.

"After talking with my family, I thought it was in my best interest to continue my education and pursue playing basketball at a university closer to my home."

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"I set a record out there in scoring with 51 points in one game. I really started to come into myself as a player."

The decision to play overseas was tough for Graham because his family was back at home, he had to practice unfamiliar traditions and cultures, and he was playing with unfamiliar teammates. In the end, he opted for basketball abroad because of his love for basketball and his intent on making a statement.

"I was going overseas with a taste in my mouth to try to really prove and show what I could do, especially since I didn't reach my goal of getting to the NBA my first season," Graham said.

Graham continued to make a statement during his 2015 season.

He won the Mexican League championship with Soles de Mexicali this season, his second with the club. The coach for Soles de Mexicali had kept in touch with Graham over Facebook, so when the opportunity to play for the franchise in 2013-14 arose,

Graham researched the organization's history and flew to Mexicali, Mexico for his first season.

Soles de Mexicali finished the regular season in first with Graham as shooting guard, but the team was eliminated in the first round of the playoffs. Shortly after the season, Graham decided to return to Soles de Mexicali, recalling the players' "bad taste in (their) mouths" because they didn't reach their championship potential.

For that reason alone, Graham decided to return for the 2014-2015 season although he had better offers financially.

"There was just some unfinished business that we had in Mexico, and I really wanted to make the sacrifice and devote my time back there to finish what we had started," said Graham.

He said he had one of his hardest-working summers before landing in Mexico, and all of his teammates were present for the preseason and training camp. The few months of training during summer and preseason combined with eight months of hard work throughout

the season contributed to Graham's team winning the championship, he said. He added the character and devotion of his teammates played a large role as well.

"I feel like we were the hardest-working team in the league this year," Graham said. "It's really rare that you have a team full of guys that are all bought in and have the same goal in mind. Everybody just put our egos aside and sacrificed for the team, and that's what it takes. That's what took us to the championship."

In the championship series, Soles de Mexicali won the first two games in Cancun, then lost its first game at home, and won the next one. By the time the third game at home took place, "the atmosphere was just crazy" because the "whole city was at the game." The game was a close matchup, but Soles de Mexicali seized the championship.

Graham named the Mexican League Guard of the Year, as well as first-team all-league and all-imports team selections, a product of leading the league in scoring.

"We took care of busi-

ness, and afterwards, I've never been a part of something like that," said Graham. "It was my first championship as a pro, and I really just can't describe the feeling of putting in eight months of hard work with your brothers. Just seeing all the confetti fall, all of the fans rushing onto the court, it was a really good feeling. Now that I have one championship under my belt, I want to get more."

Graham is currently in Puerto Rico for the summer season, but once that season finishes, his main focus will be the "things that lead up to training camp and making the roster" in the NBA. This summer will keep him in shape and allow him to continue developing as a player until the opportunity for him to join the NBA occurs.

"I want it to happen this summer or as soon as possible, but it's all in God's timing," Graham said. "The timing just has to add up right. That's what I've learned about the league. The only thing that I can control is the work that I put in and being ready once my opportunity comes."