

Locals struggle in Tulsa

White, Nagy face long odds to make match play at Amateur

From staff reports

Local golfers struggled Monday in the first round of the 109th Amateur Championships at Tulsa, Okla. Then again, almost everyone else in the field of 312 qualifiers had difficulty as well.

Only five golfers shot below par in the opening round, which was held at both Southern Hills and Cedar Ridge Country Clubs.

Tim Jackson of Germantown, Tenn., who is currently the leader with a 2-under 68 in stroke play, was the only golfer that shot under par at Southern Hills.

Matthew Broome of Barrington, R.I., John Peterson of



Matt Nagy



James White



Anders Albertson

Fort Worth, Texas, Will Strickler of Gainesville, Fla. and Cameron Tringale of Laguna Niguel, Calif. each shot a 69 at Cedar Ridge.

Former Harrison High School standout and current Georgia Tech golfer James White (76) and Kennesaw State golfer Matt Nagy (77) will have to fare much better in the second round if they want to make the top 64 and qualify for match play, which runs Wednesday through Sunday at Southern Hills.

White, who is currently in 114th place, got off to a rocky start with four bogeys on the front nine at Cedar Ridge. He did fare better on the back nine holes, however, by cutting his bogeys in half and recording two birdies on the par-4 10th hole and the par-5 13th.

Nagy, who is in 148th after his first round outing at Cedar Ridge, also made four bogeys on the front nine. He added three more on the back nine while carding just two birdies on the day.

Etowah High School standout Anders Albertson is in even worse shape.

He carded an 82 at Cedar Ridge, which puts him toward the bottom of the list at 267 th. He finished with four birdies, plus three doubles hurt his score.

White will begin his second round today on No. 10 at 8:20 a.m. at Cedar Ridge, and Nagy will tee off at 2:35 p.m.



The Associated Press

With Nate McLouth, Garrett Anderson and Ryan Church all out of the lineup, Atlanta outfielder Matt Diaz has stepped in and helped the Braves continue their rise toward the top of the National League wild card standings.

PICKING UP THE SLACK

Diaz curing ills in Braves' outfield

By Charles Odum
Associated Press Sports Writer

ATLANTA — Nate McLouth was on the disabled list with a hamstring injury. Garrett Anderson and Ryan Church were out because of sore backs. That left Atlanta Braves manager Bobby Cox without his top three outfielders for most of an important weekend series against the Florida Marlins.

Up stepped Matt Diaz, who got six hits in wins over the Marlins on Saturday and Sunday, giving Atlanta's NL wild-card hopes a big lift.

Diaz had four hits and scored two runs in the Braves' 7-5 win over the Marlins on Sunday. He is batting .429 (21 for 49) with four home runs and 11 RBIs in the last 16 games.

The Braves were off Monday and start a three-game set against San Diego on Tuesday night. Cox said Anderson and Church could return for the series opener.

Atlanta began the day four game behind NL wild card-leading Colorado, helped in large part by Diaz.

"He hits just about anything they throw," Braves manager Bobby Cox said. "He's one of those hitters. He was hot."

Diaz, who was hitting .282 on Aug. 5, has lifted his average to .310 with nine homers and 39 RBIs.

The 31-year-old Diaz hit .317 in July and is hitting .375 in August with five homers, more than doubling his total of four for the first four months. He even has a career-high eight steals.

"It's something that every guy

who's been a bench guy longs for, a chance to step up and help the team," Diaz said after Sunday's win.

Diaz has never been a full-time starter and has never reached 400 at-bats in a season, but he boasts a .309 career batting average. He hit .338 with a career-high 12 homers in 2007 and .327 in 2006.

After slumping to .244 in 2008, when he battled a left knee injury, Diaz opened this season as the team's fourth outfielder and was expected to share time in left field with Anderson.

Atlanta's outfield has evolved through the season. Diaz has seen more starts in right field following the July 10 trade which sent Jeff Francoeur to the New York Mets for Church. The team acquired McLouth earlier in the year to start in center field.

Even with the additions of McLouth and Church, Diaz has seen his at-bats increase three straight months.

The Braves have gained momentum with Diaz, winning 13 of their last 18 games to move past Florida into second place in the NL East.

The Braves have missed the playoffs three straight seasons, but Diaz says he sees a difference on this year's team.

"The difference in our club this year is our depth and the fact that we trust everyone on this team to contribute when it has to be done," he said.

"We don't really get down. We have a mentally tough team. We have a lot more confidence this year than we have in the past."

Ryan's primary backup trying to stay ready

By George Henry
Associated Press Sports Writer

FLOWERY BRANCH — As a resident of the nearby Lake Lanier Islands, Chris Redman has shown Matt Ryan the right way to fish in fresh water.

As one of the NFL's rising stars, Ryan has been helped by Redman as they have helped make the Atlanta Falcons into a playoff contender.

"Anything I can do to help him improve — that's what I want to do," Redman said Monday. "Ultimately, I think he's going to be a Hall of Fame quarterback. I really do. I think he's that caliber of guy."

Redman, the favorite to work a second straight season as Ryan's primary backup, proved invaluable in helping the 2008 NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year.

"All the work Chris does is really hard to appreciate unless you see it the way we do, up close," Ryan said. "He's a leader in our meeting room, and all of our quarterbacks know it."

Watching last season as his

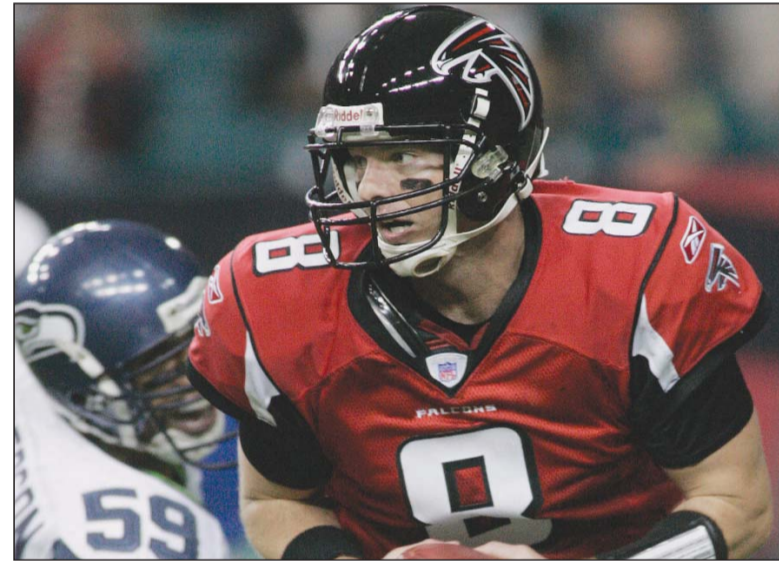
teammates made the plays to win 11 games and earn a wild-card playoff spot, Redman used his desire to compete to fuel an eagerness to help Ryan mature.

"Some of the games we try to pick up on signals, or if he's a little late on something or didn't see something and went to the wrong side, I'll point out what I saw," Redman said. "He knows when he's playing good and when he's not. We try to keep a good routine, on and off the field, and it made a big difference because he works so hard, as much as anybody on the team."

Mentoring a friend and teammate, however, only goes so far for a third-round draft choice of Baltimore in 2000. Redman wants to play, not at Ryan's expense, but his love for football and excelling at the game's highest level means more.

"You have to be prepared so you'll be ready if you get thrown in there," he said. "I'm trying to see what they're doing in different down and distance situations. I want to

See Backup, Page 3C



The Associated Press

Atlanta quarterback Chris Redman is the favorite to be Matt Ryan's backup for the second straight year.

Teammates saying Vick is ready to play

By Rob Maaddi
Associated Press Sports Writer

PHILADELPHIA — Michael Vick jogged off the field after another long practice and headed straight for the air-conditioned comfort indoors.

All that extra work could be paying off. Vick's teammates said the quarterback looks ready to play when the Philadelphia Eagles host Jacksonville on Thursday.

"I'm not a quarterback or a quarterback coach so I wouldn't know exactly, but as a defensive guy watching I can tell you that he's ready," safety Quintin Mikell said Monday.

Coach Andy Reid is expected to say Tuesday whether Vick will make his Eagles debut in an exhibition home game against the Jaguars.

Vick is eligible to play the

next two preseason games, but not in the regular season. NFL commissioner Roger Goodell said he would consider Vick for full reinstatement by no later than Week 6 (Oct. 18-19).

"He's ready for another chance," offensive lineman Shawn Andrews said.

Since Vick's first day with the Eagles, he has stayed after practice to work with offensive coordinator Marty Mornhinweg. He was joined Monday for 20 minutes by Donovan McNabb.

The Eagles have kept practices open, but are not allowing the media to report on specifics, a standard policy around the NFL.

The Eagles prefer to keep their intentions to themselves, it's clear Vick wasn't brought to Philadelphia to be a backup and that he figures into the team's plans.



Michael Vick



The Associated Press

Georgia Tech quarterback Josh Nesbitt is gaining confidence as the game starts to slow down as he enters his second season as the starter.

Nesbitt's confidence soars as Tech's quarterback

By Charles Odum
Associated Press Sports Writer

ATLANTA — Josh Nesbitt had to learn Georgia Tech's spread option offense on the run last season.

Everything has slowed down in his second year as the starting quarterback for the No. 15 Yellow Jackets.

"Now when I'm under center, everything is like it's in slow motion," Nesbitt said Monday. "It means I know what I have to do. When you feel like everything is so fast, you really don't know what to do. You can't adjust on the run."

Nesbitt said more proof that

he is making better decisions comes in meetings with coach Paul Johnson and the assistants.

"They don't get on me for the same things I did last year," Nesbitt said. "That's a good thing."

Nesbitt led Georgia Tech to a 9-4 record in Johnson's first season as head coach. He ran for 693 yards and was the second-leading rusher in an offense that ranked fourth in the nation.

Georgia Tech won nine games despite ranking only 116th of 119 major schools in passing as Nesbitt completed only 43.9 percent of his throws for 808 yards with two touchdowns and five interceptions.

Nesbitt's increased confidence could lead to an increase in passing yards, though Johnson's attack will always be run first.

"I think Josh is way ahead of where he was a year ago, no question," Johnson said. "He has his days, certainly, where he could do better. Everybody does. I think overall his understanding is way better."

Safety Cooper Taylor said players can see Nesbitt is "light years ahead" of last year.

"Josh is on a different level than last year," Taylor said. "Our whole offense is on a different level. He understands where everybody is going so much better, he's making his reads so

much quicker and he's just carrying himself with the kind of presence that he's going to do something special with this team."

Nesbitt missed all or part of four games in 2008 due to injuries. Jaybo Shaw, who played behind Nesbitt last season, will miss the start of this season with a broken collarbone.

Tevin Washington, a redshirt freshman from Wetumpka, Ala., has moved up as Nesbitt's backup. Freshman David Sims and redshirt freshman Quentin Sims, a receiver who played quarterback at Colerain High in Cincinnati, also are working behind Nesbitt.