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Department Holds Annual Meet the Eagles Fan Fest

Annual event always a hit among players and supporters

Michael Chastain



Football | 8/13/2016 4:13:00 PM

Story Links

[PHOTO GALLERY](#)

STATESBORO, Ga. - Eagle Nation had the opportunity Saturday afternoon to interact with players during the annual Meet the Eagles Fan Fest on the new turf of Paulson Stadium. Fans roamed around the field getting autographs, taking pictures and

conversing with the players.

"To me, this signals the start of football season. We wait on this from the day after the last game ends," said fan Brad Trower, accompanied by his son, Zane. "It's an exciting time to be out here meeting the players. Georgia Southern has come a long way, we accomplished a lot last year with the bowl game and are just ready to get started."

Fans had a blast with the dunking tank featuring new President Jaimie Hebert, Athletic Director [Tom Kleinlein](#) and football legend [Tracy Ham](#), along with seniors [Favian Upshaw](#), [Ironhead Gallon](#) and Matt Brieda. Even the mascot Gus got in on the action dunking Dr. Hebert, who was not complaining about escaping the heat to take a splash in the cool water.

The volleyball, cheerleading, men's soccer and women's soccer team joined in on the fun with goals set up for fans to test their skills. The competitiveness of the football players could be seen as they jumped in to dribble soccer balls and serve volleyballs with the fans. It also saw volleyball player [Kendra Koetter](#) show her football skills, throwing perfect 30-yard spirals with teammate [Alex Beecher](#). Koetter should be able to handle a football as her father is Dirk Koetter, head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. The field was also equipped with an inflatable football toss, bounce house, obstacle courses and cornhole to provide fans of all ages with an action packed day amongst their favorite team.

"It's awesome; it's the best feeling in the world and these fans are the best in America," said senior [Andy Kwon](#). "This is what I work for the entire offseason and it's great to know that football season is back. I know it's hot, but I appreciate the fans for coming out today."

A scrimmage was held in the morning directly before the start of Fan Fest giving fans their first view of the team this season. After the scrimmage ended, Coach [Tyson Summers](#) brought the entire team up into the stands to make a very special presentation in front of the crowd. Coach Summers began with ushering a round of applause for the players for thirteen days of hard work during camp and the fans for coming out to show support.

"This senior group has made a ton of accomplishments," said Coach Summers, continuing to address the crowd. "This has been their third head coach and they have stuck together like no group I have ever seen."

After a round of applause for the seniors, Coach Summers gave the floor to senior players Matt Brieda, [BJ Johnson III](#) and [Nick Sewak](#) who each made a special announcement to the crowd announcing three fifth-year seniors of the football team who would be earning full scholarships. Offensive lineman [Sean Gaddy](#), cornerback [Rayquan Sam](#) and long snapper [Jake Abraham](#) were all presented with this achievement and each time the team erupted in excitement and swarmed the player in celebration.

"It means a lot; I've been here working my butt off with the guys I love. They treat me well and mean everything to me" Gaddy said, speaking on being awarded the full scholarship. "Being able to have this and further my education is super exciting for me. I have a lot of respect for Coach Summers. He comes in and has a tough job and it means a lot to get something from a guy like that in my last year."

"I think giving these scholarships is great. You are talking about three guys that have already graduated, that are either working on their second degree or masters," Summers said. "Three guys that aren't guaranteed anything from a playing-time standpoint, but guys who love this football team. They had the opportunity to get a job, make money and start their lives, but instead they chose to come back for a fifth year. So I think that's the piece that's most rewarding and it was special to have their fellow seniors present them with it."

The team will hold a light practice on Sunday evening before wrapping up camp. On Monday, with the start of school, the team will begin its in-season practice schedule which can be found below. The Eagles will host Savannah State on Sept. 3 at Paulson Stadium in the season opener.

Georgia Southern Preseason Practice Schedule

Date (Time, Location)

Mon., Aug. 15 (4-6:30 PM, Eagle Creek); Day 1 (8 PM, Paulson)

Tues., Aug. 16 (7:30-10 AM, Paulson)

Wed., Aug. 17 (4-6:30 PM, Eagle Creek)

Thurs., Aug. 18 (7:30-10 AM, Paulson)

Fri., Aug. 19 (4-6:30 PM, Eagle Creek)

Sat., Aug. 20 (TBD)

Sun., Aug. 21 (TBD)

Mon., Aug. 22 (4-6:30 PM, Paulson)

Tues., Aug. 23 (7:30-10 AM, Paulson)

Wed., Aug. 24 (4-6:30 PM, Eagle Creek)

Thurs., Aug. 25 (7:30-10 AM, Paulson)

Fri., Aug. 26 (4-6:30 PM, Paulson)

Sat., Aug. 27 (TBD)

Sun., Aug. 28 (TBD)

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