

# Gladiator News

Bradenton Gladiators Volume 1, Issue 2

Posted by the Bradenton Herald Sat, March 8, 2008

## Good time to be a Gladiator

By MIKE HENRY  
[mhenry@bradenton.com](mailto:mhenry@bradenton.com)

Millard Dawson was playing in a flag football league last fall when he heard the Bradenton Gladiators were looking for a quarterback.

The minor league team needed to kick-start its offense after an 8-6 loss against Sarasota in the first round of last season's playoffs. Dawson, a minor league center fielder for the Charlotte County Redfish and a personal trainer for Lifestyle Family Fitness, wanted to see how he measured up.

If you head to Palmetto High for today's 7:05 p.m. Florida Football Alliance game against the Orlando Outlaws, you'll discover Dawson made a good choice. His addition to a team loaded with fast, sure-handed receivers has helped the Gladiators to a 6-0 record and first place in the Western Conference of the FFA.

"Our job is to make him look good," receiver Bon Bean said. "Just get the ball out there, and we'll get it."

Bean refers mainly to himself and fellow Manatee High graduate Jeff Charlton, who made an unbelievable grab for a 60-yard touchdown three weeks ago in a 29-3 victory against the Treasure Coast Hornets. Realizing Dawson's pass was a trifle overthrown, Charlton found another gear and plucked the football from the air in full stride while beating two defenders.

Dawson, a former college receiver who hadn't played quarterback since 1998 - his freshman year of high school at Robert E. Lee in Montgomery, Ala. - can scarcely believe his good fortune. He possesses a Tom Brady-sized satchel of pass catchers in Bean, Charlton, James Judge, Greg Kennon and Frankie Romo.

"I'm surrounded by a good group of guys who play hard every week, and that makes my job a lot easier," Dawson said. "I'm grateful to have a great corps of receivers, veteran guys on the line, a defense that has been playing together for what seems like 10 years and coaches who are going to put us in a position to win."

Dawson is one of about 10 new players for the Gladiators, who were a combined 19-6 in the Southern States Football League the past two seasons and reached the league championship game two years ago.

"Some of us are getting up in age," said team president and defensive end Edrick Sweeting. "The future of the Gladiators basically rests on our young guys."

Head coach Wendell Faison believes there is a perfect-storm quality to Dawson, whose mobility, strong arm and solid decision-making stamp him as a dual threat.

"He studies film hard and has learned our system. Teams have to respect his running ability, and he's made the offense a lot more open."

The FFA is about the love of the game. A light drizzle Thursday night provided a dreamlike quality to the team's practice at Lincoln Community Park, where about 30 grown men living out boyhood dreams went through final rain-soaked preparations for tonight.

The Minor League Football News has the Gladiators No. 4 in the nation, behind the Las Vegas Island Warriors and fellow FFA unbeaten Miami Magic City and Duval.

"It's a very good feeling," Faison said. "Everyone has bought into what we're doing."