

TN Valley

Thursday, September 25, 2025

GAMEDAY



HEDGE YOUR BETS

Crimson Tide heads between Georgia's hedges in major SEC showdown

Win a Mini Max Big Green Egg from Story & Lee!*

TAILGATE of the week RECIPE



Smoked Caramel Apple Crisp-Stuffed Apples

FOOD PREP:

Begin by dicing enough apples to equal 2 cups, setting aside 6 whole apples. Core and hollow the 6 whole apples, using a paring knife and spoon and set aside. Prepare the crumble by combining all the dry crumble ingredients with ½ cups of butter until the mixture holds together and set aside.

GRILL PREP:

Temp: 350 degrees

THE COOK:

In a medium sized cast iron skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of cold, unsalted butter, then stir in the bourbon, brown sugar and cinnamon. Add the diced apples and sauté until the apples are caramelized and fork tender. Set aside to cool. Pour a dollop of caramel sauce into the bottom of each cored apple and fill it with 2 tablespoons of the sautéed apple. Generously top with the crumble, covering the top of the apples. Bake in the smoker/grill for 15-20 minutes or until the apple is cooked through and the crumble is golden in color. Serve the warm apples with a scoop of vanilla bean ice cream and a drizzle each with caramel sauce. Garnish with fresh mint and toasted pecans.

**This week's recipe submitted
by Ashlee Henry,
Muscle Shoals, AL**

Submit your recipes now and you could win \$50 if your recipe is selected.

To enter, submit your recipe to:

Tailgate Recipe Contest, 219 West Tennessee St., Florence, AL 35630 - Attn: Mara Beth Cravens

*Weekly winners are entered for grand prize drawing for a Mini Max Green Egg.

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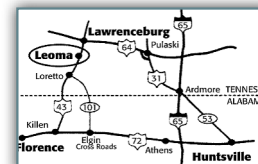
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BYU quarterback Bear Bachmeier and the Cougars hope to clutch a victory at Colorado on Saturday. [TYLER TATE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

THE LINE

(as of Tuesday)			
Thursday			
FAVORITE	TODAY	O/U	UNDERDOG
at EAST CAROLINA	5½	52½	Army
Friday			
Florida State	6½	59½	at VIRGINIA
at ARIZONA STATE	2½	55½	TCU
Houston	13½	47½	at OREGON STATE

Saturday			
at MINNESOTA	5½	50½	Rutgers
Duke	5½	60½	at SYRACUSE
at NORTH TEXAS	12½	62½	South Alabama
Notre Dame	4½	64½	at ARKANSAS
at KANSAS	5½	55½	Cincinnati
USC	6½	59½	at ILLINOIS
Georgia Tech	13½	52½	at WAKE FOREST
Louisville	4½	57½	at PITTSBURGH
at KANSAS STATE	5½	49½	UCF
at VANDERBILT	22½	59½	Utah State
at LA.-MONROE	2½	54½	Arkansas State
Baylor	21½	57½	at OKLAHOMA ST.
at MIAMI (Ohio)	20½	49½	Lindenwood
at BOSTON COLLEGE	6½	52½	Cal
at NAVY	14½	44½	Rice
UConn	4½	49½	at BUFFALO
at OLE MISS	1½	55½	LSU
Indiana	7½	48½	at IOWA
at TEXAS A&M	6½	52½	Auburn
Ohio State	8½	52½	at WASHINGTON
at NORTHWESTERN	6½	44½	UCLA
San Diego State	2½	42½	at NORTHERN ILL.
Utah	12½	47½	at WEST VIRGINIA
at AIR FORCE	6½	53½	Hawaii
Tulane	14½	53½	at TULSA
at NEW MEXICO	13½	53½	New Mexico State
Tennessee	7½	62½	at MISS. STATE
at KENNESAW STATE	7½	53½	Middle Tennessee
at WESTERN MICH.	7½	47½	Rhode Island
at NC STATE	10½	57½	Virginia Tech
at SOUTHERN MISS	4½	55½	Jacksonville State
Western Kentucky	4½	61½	at MISSOURI STATE
Memphis	13½	62½	at FLA. ATLANTIC
at IOWA STATE	6½	48½	Arizona
at MISSOURI	44½	56½	UMass
at STANFORD	2½	49½	San Jose State
at GEORGIA	2½	52½	Alabama
at PENN STATE	3½	52½	Oregon
at BOISE STATE	16½	60½	Appalachian State
at COLORADO STATE	4½	50½	Washington State
at SOUTH CAROLINA	6½	46½	Kentucky
at LA.-LAFAYETTE	1½	46½	Marshall
Louisiana Tech	4½	48½	at UTEP
BYU	6½	46½	at COLORADO



Kansas State safety VJ Payne and the Wildcats will try to bring the pain to Central Florida on Saturday. [RICK SCUTERI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

GAMES ON TV

Thursday

Army at East Carolina, 6:30 p.m., ESPN

Friday

Florida State at Virginia, 6 p.m., ESPN

TCU at Arizona State, 8 p.m., FOX

Houston at Oregon State, 9:30 p.m., ESPN

Saturday

Bowling Green at Ohio, 11 a.m., CBSSN

Cincinnati at Kansas, 11 a.m., TNT

Duke at Syracuse, 11 a.m., ACC Network

Georgia Tech at Wake Forest, 11 a.m., ESPN

Louisville at Pittsburgh, 11 a.m., ESPN2

Notre Dame at Arkansas, 11 a.m., ABC

Rutgers at Minnesota, 11 a.m., BTN

South Alabama at North Texas, 11 a.m., ESPN

UCF at Kansas State, 11 a.m., FS1

USC at Illinois, 11 a.m., FOX

Utah State at Vanderbilt, 11:45 a.m., SEC Network

Auburn at Texas A&M, 2:30 p.m., ESPN
Baylor at Oklahoma State, 2:30 p.m., ESPN2

California at Boston College, 2:30 p.m., ACC Network

LSU at Ole Miss, 2:30 p.m., ABC

Ohio State at Washington, 2:30 p.m., CBS

Rice at Navy, 2:30 p.m., CBSSN

UCLA at Northwestern, 2:30 p.m., BTN

Utah at West Virginia, 2:30 p.m., FOX

Hawaii at Air Force, 3 p.m., FS1

Tulane at Tulsa, 3 p.m., ESPN

Tennessee at Mississippi State, 3:15 p.m., SEC Network

Arizona at Iowa State, 6 p.m., ESPN

Memphis at FAU, 6 p.m., ESPN2

Minnesota at Ohio State, 6:30 p.m., NBC

UMass at Missouri, 6 p.m., ESPN

Virginia Tech at N.C. State, 6 p.m., CWTW

Alabama at Georgia, 6:30 p.m., ABC

App State at Boise State, 6:30 p.m., FS1

Oregon at Penn State, 6:30 p.m., NBC

San Jose State at Stanford, 6:30 p.m., ACC Network

Washington State at Colorado State, 6:30 p.m., CBSSN

Kentucky at South Carolina, 6:45 p.m., SEC Network

BYU at Colorado, 9:15 p.m., ESPN

Idaho at Montana, 9:15 p.m., ESPN2

TOP 25 SCHEDULE

Friday

No. 8 Florida St. (3-0) at Virginia (3-1), 6 p.m.

No. 24 TCU (3-0) at Arizona St. (3-1), 8 p.m.

Saturday

No. 1 Ohio St. (3-0) at Washington (3-0), 2:30 p.m.

No. 3 Penn St. (3-0) vs. No. 6 Oregon (4-0), 6:30 p.m.

No. 4 LSU (4-0) at No. 13 Ole Miss (4-0), 2:30 p.m.

No. 5 Georgia (3-0) vs. No. 17 Alabama (2-1), 6:30 p.m.

No. 9 Texas A&M (3-0) vs. Auburn (3-1), 2:30 p.m.

No. 11 Indiana (4-0) at Iowa (3-1), 2:30 p.m.

No. 14 Iowa State (4-0) vs. Arizona (3-0), 6 p.m.

No. 15 Tennessee (3-1) at Mississippi St. (4-0), 3:15 p.m.

No. 16 Georgia Tech (4-0) at Wake Forest (2-1), 11 a.m.

No. 18 Vanderbilt (4-0) vs. Utah St. (3-1), 11:45 a.m.

No. 20 Missouri (4-0) vs. Umass (0-3), 6:30 p.m.

No. 21 Southern Cal (4-0) at No. 23 Illinois (3-1), 11 a.m.

No. 22 Notre Dame (1-2) at Arkansas (2-2), 11 a.m.

No. 25 BYU (3-0) at Colorado (2-2), 9:15 p.m.

Alabama at Georgia

When: 6:30 p.m. Saturday

TV/radio: ABC/FM-93.9, FM 97.7, AM-920

Records: No. 17 Alabama (2-1, 0-0 SEC), No. 5 Georgia (3-0, 1-0)

The series: Alabama leads 44-26-4.

Four-down territory

1. Welcome back: The Crimson Tide got some much-needed good news this week with return of defensive lineman Tim Keenan III and running back Jam Miller. Tide coach Kalen DeBoer announced both will play Saturday. The veterans are key pieces that have been missing this season due to injuries. Without Keenan, the defense is giving up 138 yards rushing per game while the offense is producing just 123 yards rushing without Miller. "It's good to have him back," DeBoer said of Kennan. "He's had a couple good days here, we'll continue to build here through the week of practice is what we're expecting."

2. Bumpy road: The Crimson Tide has lost four of its last five road games under DeBoer, three last year and in the opener this season. They were favored to win in all four losses. The Crimson Tide is an underdog against Georgia and is playing in Athens for the first time since 2015. There are a few key factors to prevent mishaps on the road. "Really just prepare, invest, and do everything you can to be confident and do something special together," DeBoer said. "Just ask these guys to empty the tank every single day. And they've done that. That's what we've got to do on Saturday."

3. Steady hand: Ty Simpson has been nearly flawless in the past two outings. He is 41 of his last 46 passes for 608 yards with seven touchdowns. He leads the SEC with a 186.64 pass efficiency. That accuracy will get tested with a road atmosphere, but the good news is Georgia is allowing more than 200 passing yards a game. "When Ty starts fast and guys can feel that, that he's making great decisions and we've got command in the huddle and at the line of scrimmage, I think they feel that sense of control early in the game," Alabama offensive coordinator Ryan Grubb said.

4. Under the Gun(ner): Georgia's offense hasn't missed a beat with QB Gunner Stockton taking the helm. He's averaging 240 yards per game, but he is



Alabama defensive lineman Tim Keenan III will finally suit up at Georgia after missing the first three games with an injury. [VASHA HUNT/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

also dangerous with his legs when the pocket collapses. Mobile QBs are a sore spot for Alabama (see Florida State's Tommy Castellanos). "He's tough. He's gritty. He's willing to get the yards in the read game. He makes the right decisions the vast majority of the time," DeBoer said. "He has certainly brought an element to their run game that maybe they didn't have as much with Carson (Beck) a year ago."

Key matchup

Alabama LB Deonte Lawson vs. Georgia LB Raylen Wilson

Stopping the run, as well as preventing the quarterbacks from breaking loose outside the pocket, will be key for either team. Lawson leads Alabama with 19 tackles, including one for a loss. Wilson

leads UGA with 23 tackles and has one sack.

Player of the week

Tim Keenan III, DL

One of the Tide's team captains, Keenan hasn't played this season due to injury. He's been cleared to play and the run defense needs him in a big way.

By the numbers

1: Alabama's plus-six turnover margin (three interceptions, three fumble recoveries) leads the SEC.

15: Alabama has a 15-10 record against Georgia in Athens.

59: The Crimson Tide has won 59 of its last 61 games when scoring a touchdown on the first offensive possession of the game.

108: The Crimson Tide has allowed an average of just 108 passing yards, tops in the SEC and the third in the nation.

Prediction

Georgia 24, Alabama 14

Alabama owns the Bulldogs in the regular season, winning nine straight. But this is a new era and the Alabama dynasty is in the rearview mirror. Georgia has all the confidence in the world after stunning Tennessee a couple of weeks ago. Alabama built confidence with a solid win against Wisconsin, but the run game, a staple of Crimson Tide teams, has vanished. With Alabama's road history under DeBoer, it could be a long night and a longer trip back to Tuscaloosa.

— Edwin Stanton

After 10-year wait, UGA will host Tide

By Charles Odum
The Associated Press

ATHENS, Ga. — Kirby Smart has had to wait 10 years for his Georgia team to play at home against Alabama.

Saturday night's visit by No. 17 Alabama to No. 5 Georgia gives Smart, the former Crimson Tide defensive coordinator, a long-awaited opportunity to have the home-field advantage in the high-profile Southeastern Conference rivalry.

While waiting on this home game, Georgia has struggled to a 1-6 record against Alabama under Smart.

One of Smart's highlights of his decade leading the Georgia program is beating Alabama in Indianapolis on Jan. 10, 2022, to win the national championship, ending a 41-year title drought for the program. Georgia added a second straight national title the following year.

Otherwise, Alabama is 6-0 against Georgia in the Smart era. The Crimson Tide beat the Bulldogs 41-34 in Tuscaloosa last season in Kalen DeBoer's first SEC game as Alabama's coach. It was Alabama's second home win over Smart's Bulldogs. Alabama's other four wins over Smart and Georgia have come in Atlanta, including three SEC championship games and the 2018 national championship game.

Can Georgia's home-field advantage end Alabama's run of success against the Bulldogs?

"Playing at home, it helps," Smart said Monday. "The atmosphere helps, the crowd noise helps, being familiar with your surroundings and all that stuff helps, but at the end of the day, you have to go play football. It comes down to matchups, it comes down to who blocks and who tackles the best, who executes and does things in the key moments of the game. So, certainly glad it's at home, but we've still got to play well."

Georgia (3-0, 1-0) gained momentum for the visit from Alabama by beating Tennessee 44-41 in overtime on Sept. 13 in another important SEC game. Alabama (2-1, 0-0) beat Wisconsin 38-14 on Sept. 13. The Bulldogs and Crimson Tide were off last week.

Georgia's first two home games were wins over Marshall and Austin Peay. Smart wasn't happy to see fans leaving in the third quarter of the runaway 45-7 victory over Marshall on Aug. 30, and a



Georgia coach Kirby Smart has licked Alabama just once in seven previous meetings, but Saturday night's matchup will be the first that Georgia has hosted. [GEORGE WALKER IV/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

weather delay helped put a damper on the crowd in a sluggish 28-6 win over Austin Peay on Sept. 6.

There would be a significant difference in the Sanford Stadium atmosphere for any visit from Alabama. That edge could be intensified by the prime-time kickoff. Georgia's crowd noise is known to peak for high-profile night games.

"I would agree with that statement, that it's louder at night than day," Smart said. "... I think the crowd has a little longer to get prepared for it, and they're louder. I mean, they're not as taxed, not as much heat. So the games I've coached in, played in, been a part of, night games are a little more rowdy."

Georgia players used last week's extra practice time to begin getting excited about the big game.

"The talent they have and the talent we have, any time you get two elite programs going head to head, it results in some good games that we've all seen in the past," punter Brett Thorson said. "So obviously we want to win the SEC and we know Alabama is always going to be a tough team in the SEC. So any time that game comes up, you know it's going to be a good challenge really to test where we're at and where we're going this year. And it's exciting."

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Auburn at Texas A&M

When: 2:30 p.m. Saturday

TV/radio: ESPN/FM-94.9, FM 100.3

Records: Auburn (3-1, 0-1 SEC), No. 9
Texas A&M (3-0, 0-0)

The series: Texas A&M leads 8-7.

Four-down territory

1. Explosive player: Texas A&M ranks among the nation's best at generating 20 yard-plus rush or pass plays. Through three games, the Aggies have produced 22 (7.3 per game). Leading the way is receiver Mario Craver, who averages 22 yards per catch and had 207 yards last week against Notre Dame. All four of his touchdowns have been 20 or more yards, including one for 86 and another for 72. His 434 yards leads the SEC and is third in the nation. His 20 catches are second in the league.

2. Hard Reed: The Aggies have an explosive offense, and that starts with quarterback Marcel Reed. He is third in the SEC with 290 passing yards per game and can break loose outside the pocket. He has 124 rushing yards and has been sacked just twice. He's got nine passing touchdowns with one rushing. To put it mildly, he's dynamic. "As we saw last year, he's super twitchy and can throw and run it," Auburn coach Hugh Freeze said of Reed's 297 passing yards with three TDs and 66 rushing yards against the Tigers last season.

3. Thanks for nothing: Auburn got burned by Oklahoma last week on a touchdown that shouldn't have counted. A Sooners receiver faked walking off the field as if injured, but instead stopped near the sideline. He was wide open for a 22-yard touchdown. The SEC released a statement on the issue, admitting the TD should not have counted. "The officiating crew did not properly interpret the action as a hideout tactic. If properly officiated, the second-down play should have resulted in a team unsportsmanlike penalty of 15 yards assessed from the previous spot," the statement read.

4. Disappearing act: Auburn's leading rusher, Jeremiah Cobb, ran the ball just six times for 61 yards in the loss to Oklahoma. He broke one run for 44 yards, the Tigers' longest run of the day. Auburn's Jackson Arnold dropped back to pass 49 times and was sacked nine times. (Initially recorded as 10 sacks,



Auburn running back Jeremiah Cobb will need a big game for the Tigers to have a happy ending at Texas A&M. [BUTCH DILL/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

the total was revised to nine Sunday.) "I probably should have forced the run a little more," Freeze said. "But it was tough sledding in there to get those tough yards. I think we had the things in the passing game our guys could win on. I thought that was our best chance to win the game."

Key matchup

Auburn DB Raion Strader vs. Texas A&M DB Marcus Ratcliffe

Shutting down big plays in the passing game is the goal this week. Raion Strader is a leader in Auburn's secondary with two pass breakups and six tackles. Ratcliffe leads the Aggies in tackles with 17 and pass breakups with three.

Player of the week

Jeremiah Cobb, RB

Auburn got away from the run game last week. Cobb should get a chance Saturday. He has 374 rushing yards with four touchdowns.

By the numbers

1: The Tigers lead the SEC and rank fifth in FBS in rushing defense at 58.3 yards per game.

1: Aggie receiver Mario Craver leads the nation with 147.7 receiving yards per game.

4: The Aggies' passing offense ranks No. 4 nationally with a 15.6 yards per completion average.

2021: The Tigers are looking for their

first win against a top 10 team since defeating No. 10 Ole Miss 31-20 in 2021.

Prediction

Texas A&M 35, Auburn 21

Auburn has to find a way to bounce back after the tough loss at Oklahoma and going into College Station to knock off a top-10 team is asking a lot. The good news is Auburn is No. 1 in the SEC in run defense. If it can take away that and make the Aggies one-dimensional, there's a good shot at a win and putting the Tigers back in the top 25. The bad news, however, is Auburn is near the bottom of the league in pass defense.

— Edwin Stanton



Georgia Tech coach Brent Key and the Yellow Jackets have found unusual success this year. [COLIN HUBBARD/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

Buzz builds behind Ga. Tech’s success

By Maura Carey
The Associated Press

ATLANTA — Longtime Georgia Tech fan Luke Cowart can’t remember the last time the Yellow Jackets entered an ACC matchup as a two-touchdown favorite. Need proof? His name on X is Georgia Tech pain account. He’s been let down by this team a time or two.

But this week, BetMGM Sportsbook listed Georgia Tech as 14-point favorites over Wake Forest — a reflection of a program off to its first 4-0 start since 2014, now ranked No. 16 in the AP Top 25.

It’s more than just buzz. No. 16 is the Yellow Jackets’ highest ranking since 2015. The ceiling appears high for a Georgia Tech team likely favored in all but one of its remaining regular-season games. The stands at Bobby Dodd Stadium are filling up on Saturdays as the Yellow Jackets have entered national chatter and quarterback Haynes King creeps into the Heisman conversation.

Cowart would know best that it hasn’t always been like this. His family has been season-ticket holders for 32 years. He didn’t miss more than 10 home games from age 2 to 18.

“Opposing fan bases would completely take over our stadium,” he said. “The lowest point of that was when I went to watch us play Ole Miss in 2022 and we

lost 42-0, and it was the first time I had heard us boo our own team and coach.”

Coach Brent Key should be credited for fostering this new era of Georgia Tech football. Key took over as interim head coach midway through the 2022 season, succeeding former coach Geoff Collins. He was promoted to head coach the next fall, and in 2024 he was given a five-year extension, keeping him with the Yellow Jackets through 2029.

For eager fans, it’s felt like a somewhat slow build. But what Key and his supporting crew have accomplished in recent years is admirable. The Yellow Jackets have gone 22-16 under Key. The team has steadily brought in new talent through recruits and the transfer portal. And in an era where retaining players is just as challenging as recruiting them, the core group has continued to lead the charge.

The team can feel the energy radiating from the stands. Those numbers translate directly to noise, momentum and confidence on Saturdays.

“It’s always an amazing feeling to see the stands filled up to max potential because that gets us juiced up,” senior defensive back Clayton Powell-Lee said. “For us on defense, us hearing third downs being called and you just hear the stadium rocking, it’s like ‘OK, we’re here to play some ball.’”

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Tennessee at Mississippi State

When: 3:15 p.m. Saturday

TV/radio: SEC/ FM-97.9, AM-1340

Records: No. 15 Tennessee (3-1, 0-1 SEC), Mississippi State (4-0, 0-0)

The series: Tennessee leads 30-16-1.

Four-down territory

1. Receiving praise: Tennessee's Chris Brazzell is one of the top receivers in the country. His six touchdowns lead the nation, and he leads the team with 426 yards on 25 catches. He's a key cog in the offense this week as the Vols take on a stingy Bulldogs pass defense. "Chris, obviously, what he's done here in the first few ball games, is really special, but all of us, him included, have got to continue to grow and take another step here this week," Tennessee coach Josh Heupel said.

2. Taking their shots: Tennessee's Joey Aguilar has hit on four passes of 50-plus yards. Mississippi State's Blake Shapen has five. They are two of three SEC quarterbacks (Ole Miss' Trinidad Chambliss, four) with four plays over 50 yards. Tennessee had six pass plays of 50 or more yards all of last season. "There are some things in our play-calling that has played a part in that," Heupel said. "Joey is a big piece of that. He's making accurate throws down the field and letting our guys go and make plays."

3. Beware of dog: Mississippi State is off and running in 2025 with a 4-0 mark, including a win over then-No. 12 Arizona State in Week 2. Tennessee downed the Bulldogs last season but should expect a much better game this time. The defense is giving up just 129 passing yards a game and has five interceptions while allowing just 12 points per game. "I think their entire roster, they're deeper than they were a year ago. Their young guys that they had a year ago have continued to develop. They're playing extremely well," Heupel said.

4. More cowbell: Tennessee hits the road for the first time this season and will have to endure excessive clanging of cowbells from the Mississippi State fans. It's a unique environment. The key to handling the odd noise is communication and getting everyone in sync. Overall, though, Tennessee defensive lineman Bryson Eason said the Bulldog tradition is unique and fun. "I think



Tennessee receiver Braylon Staley could see some open field Saturday with Mississippi State focusing on Chris Brazzell II. [GEORGE WALKER IV/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

it's going to be cool to be in that type of environment, and to be in that hostile area," Eason said. "I am ready for it. I love hostile environments, I feel like it brings the best out of people."

Key matchup

Tennessee RB Star Thomas vs. Miss. State RB Fluff Bothwell

This is a great matchup based just on their names. They are also evenly matched. Thomas leads the Vols with 272 yards and four TDs while Bothwell is steady for the Bulldogs with 271 yards with four TDs.

Player of the week Braylon Staley, WR

All the attention will be on Chris Brazzell II, which gives Staley a chance to make some plays. He's second on the team with 281 yards with two touchdowns.

By the numbers

12: Joey Aguilar's 12 passing touchdowns lead the SEC.

12: The Vols have scored on 12 of their 15 offensive drives in the first quarter.

18: Boo Carter ranks third in the SEC in yards per punt return with 18.4.

40: Heupel got win No. 40 last week

and is the quickest Tennessee coach to reach that milestone.

Prediction

Tennessee 38, Mississippi State 17

Reality sets in for the Bulldogs. A 4-0 start is great, but a brutal SEC schedule begins and topping the Vols is not happening. A nice bounce-back win for the Vols over UAB last week sends a clear message that Tennessee is moving forward, determined to finish the season strong and compete in the postseason.

— Edwin Stanton

ADs wait and see about sponsor patches

By Eric Olson
The Associated Press

The leader of the largest multimedia rights holder in college athletics is confident sponsor patches will begin appearing on team jerseys sooner than later with schools under pressure to find new ways to make money in this new era of revenue-sharing with athletes.

Learfield President and CEO Cole Gahagan told The Associated Press the 67 power-conference schools and Notre Dame could combine to tap into hundreds of millions of dollars of new revenue once NCAA approval is granted. Gahagan predicted approval would come within months.

Sponsor patches on the front, back or sleeves of jerseys have been part of international soccer for decades and have become common in the NBA, NHL, MLS and Major League Baseball in recent years. Last year, the 23 MLB teams with jersey patches generated a total of \$204 million from those ads, according to sports marketing data firm SponsorUnited.

“There’s no reason why colleges should sit behind those leagues with that opportunity, as sizable as it is,” Gahagan said.

Other than the logo of a school’s apparel sponsor, corporate branding patches on uniforms are prohibited by the NCAA. But the NCAA’s decision last year to allow commercial advertisements on football fields makes approval of uniform patches seem inevitable.

“It’ll come, and it should come,” Nebraska athletic director Troy Dannen said. “As part of the NCAA modernizing its rules, it’s overdue.”

A potential holdup would be the exclusivity clauses in schools’ contracts with apparel partners. Brands such as adidas, Nike and Under Armour do not allow marks of other corporate sponsors on the uniforms they supply to schools. Auburn, Alabama and Tennessee are Nike schools.

Gahagan said he and other stakeholders have had promising conversations with the apparel companies to ease that restriction. Learfield in December announced a program that would provide additional marketing opportunities for the apparel providers in exchange for allowing other jersey patches. Nike and Under Armour did not respond to requests for comment and adidas



Nike, which supplies the uniforms for Auburn, Alabama and Tennessee, currently does not allow marks of other corporate sponsors. [ALONZO ADAMS/ THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

declined to comment.

Texas Tech athletic director Kirby Hocutt said he didn’t foresee his apparel sponsor being a roadblock.

“I’ve found that adidas in everything we’ve had conversations about — jersey patches included — has been open minded and reasonable and willing to consider any opportunity that’s going to advance Texas Tech athletics,” he said.

Nebraska and Texas Tech, like most other power-conference programs, are spending the maximum \$20.5 million on

direct revenue-sharing payments to athletes this school year. They’ve had to be creative in finding ways to fund the new expense, and Hocutt said jersey patches show promise.

“It’s definitely something that is in the sponsorship deck that we’re presenting to select partners about that opportunity in anticipation of it happening,” The said. “Do we have a deal on deck? Not quite yet.”

For some schools, Dannen said, the patches might not be as lucrative as believed.

When a school grants its multimedia rights to companies such as Learfield or Playfly, the school is paid a guaranteed amount of money to have the rights-holder handle all marketing and advertising.

Nebraska in 2022 signed a 15-year, \$300 million contract with Playfly. Under the terms, Nebraska receives a \$13.5 million guarantee for its multimedia rights in 2025-26. For revenue Playfly generates in excess of \$20 million in 2025-26, Nebraska receives a 72.5% royalty.



Caleb Dozier and the South Alabama defense will need to muscle up against North Texas’ high-scoring offense. [SOUTH ALABAMA ATHLETICS]

This week’s SEC, state games

South Alabama at North Texas

When: 11 a.m. Saturday
TV: ESPN
Records: South Alabama (1-3), North Texas (4-0)
The series: North Texas leads 2-0.
The lowdown: South Alabama, with last week’s 38-20 home loss to Coastal Carolina, has lost three straight and last dropped four in a row to end the 2021

season. ... North Texas is 4-0 for the first time since 2018. ... The Mean Green has dropped 50 points in both of its home games, including 59-10 over Washington State two weeks ago. ... North Texas has gone to overtime (and won) both of its road games: at Western Michigan and Army. ... UNT freshman Caleb Hawkins ran 13 times for 99 yards and four touchdowns, including the game-winner, in

last week’s 45-38 OT win at Army. ... The Mean Green averages 47 points a game, which ranks ninth in the nation. ... South Alabama has the nation’s No. 17 passing defense, while the Mean Green’s passing offense ranks 15th with 10 touchdowns. ... The Jags haven’t left the Lone Star State with a victory since 2011 when they beat Texas-San Antonio 30-27 in double overtime. ... USA’s Keenan Phillips ran

for 104 yards against Coastal Carolina.
No. 22 Notre Dame at Arkansas
When: 11 a.m. Saturday
TV: ABC
Records: Notre Dame (1-2), Arkansas (2-2)
The series: First meeting.



It's hard to tell who's been more frustrated over the last couple of weeks, Sam Pittman and Arkansas or the Razorbacks fans. [ROGELIO V. SOLIS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]



Alabama A&M kicker Victor Barbosa could be looking to set his career-long field goal for a third straight week after making a 47-yarder against Division II Lane. [ALABAMA A&M ATHLETICS]

SEC

From Page G10

The lowdown: This is the sixth time Notre Dame has faced a first-time opponent during Marcus Freeman's tenure as coach, but the first time such a game will take place on the road. ... This is the fourth time the Fighting Irish will face a current SEC school on the road in an inaugural meeting. They won the previous three: 13-6 at No. 19 South Carolina in 1977, 27-17 at No. 18 Missouri in 1976 and a 30-7 win at Texas in 1913. ... This will mark Sam Pittman's 66th game as Arkansas' coach. Fifty-four of those have come against a team from the SEC, another Power Four conference or an AP top-25 team. Pittman has a 32-33 career record. ... The Razorbacks have lost each of their last two games — 41-35 at Ole Miss and 32-31 at Memphis — on fumbles with less than two minutes left in the fourth quarter. Jalen Brown had the first. Mike Washington the second.

Utah State at No. 18 Vanderbilt

When: 11:45 a.m. Saturday

TV: SECN

Records: Utah State (3-1), Vanderbilt (4-0)

The series: First meeting.

The lowdown: Vanderbilt's ranking is its highest in September since it was No. 15 in 1965. ... The Commodores are looking for their first 5-0 start since 2008. Vanderbilt finished that season 7-6. ... The Commodores have 11 other



The last time Vanderbilt celebrated a 5-0 start? That was 2008 after the Commodores upset No. 13 Auburn. [MARK HUMPHREY/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

5-0 starts since 1900. All 11 are from 1902-43. ... Utah State is 2-27 all-time against current members of the SEC. The Aggies beat Kentucky 35-6 in 1970 and were awarded a 2-0 forfeit win against Oklahoma in 1972. ... The last

time Utah State won four of its first five games was 2021. The Aggies finished that season 11-3. ... Vanderbilt has a seven-game home win streak against nonconference foes. ... Utah State last beat an AP top-25 team in 2021 when it

beat No. 19 San Diego State 46-13 in the Mountain West championship game. ... The highest-ranked team the Aggies have bested was No. 18 BYU in 2014. Utah State won 35-20.

Alabama A&M at Bethune-Cookman

When: 2 p.m. Saturday

TV: SWAC TV

Records: Alabama A&M (3-1, 0-0 SWAC), Bethune-Cookman (1-3, 0-0)

The series: Bethune-Cookman leads 11-7

The lowdown: Alabama A&M kicker Victor Barbosa, after a career-long 45-yard field goal against Tennessee State two weeks ago, added to it with a 47-yarder in last week's 49-7 home win over Division II Lane. ... The Bulldogs scored the game's first 49 points and had their shutout spoiled with 5:45 remaining on an interception return for a touchdown. ... A&M's last shut-out was in 2018. ... Bethune-Cookman snapped a three-game losing streak with last weekend's 35-9 win over Division II Edward Waters. ... Maleek Huggins caught six passes for 177 yards and two touchdowns last week for the Tigers. He was the SWAC's offensive player of the week. ... Khamani Robinson ran for 114 yards, including a 75-yard touchdown. ... The Wildcats haven't had a winning conference record since 2019 and, since joining the SWAC in 2021, have never had over two league wins. ... A&M beat Bethune-Cookman 56-12 last year for



Either Ole Miss or LSU will be celebrating a fifth straight win. The other will be left rather disappointed. [OLE MISS ATHLETICS]

SEC

From Page G11

homecoming in the Bulldogs' largest margin of victory in the series.

No. 4 LSU at No. 13 Ole Miss

When: 2:30 p.m. Saturday

TV: SEC

Records: LSU (4-0, 1-0 SEC), Ole Miss (4-0, 2-0)

The series: LSU leads 66-43-4.

The lowdown: The teams play for the Magnolia Bowl Trophy, a large block of wood with a replica magnolia. It was first handed out in 2008. LSU has won the trophy 11 times and Ole Miss five. ... The Tigers lead the series when played in Oxford with an 11-10-1 record. ... The Rebels are 4-0 for the second straight season. The last time that happened was 2015. ... LSU's Brian Kelly (199) and Ole Miss' Lane Kiffin (109) are two of three active SEC coaches with at least 100 FBS victories. Georgia's Kirby Smart (108) is the other. ... This is the Tigers' second road game against a ranked opponent. They won 17-10 at then-No. 4 Clemson in their season opener. ... Ole Miss receiver Harrison Wallace III ranks third in the SEC in receiving yards with 343 on 16 catches. ... LSU ranks second to last in the league in yards per carry with 3.7.

Jacksonville State at Southern Miss

When: 6 p.m. Saturday

TV: ESPN+

Records: Jacksonville State (2-2), Southern Miss (2-2)

The series: USM leads 2-1.

The lowdown: Cam Cook ran for 147 yards and two touchdowns in Jax State's 45-10 homecoming win over FCS Murray State last weekend. The Gamecocks had 562 total yards. ... Cook is tied with Michigan's Justice Haynes for third in the nation with 537 rushing yards. UTSA's Robert Henry (624) and Missouri's Ahmad Hardy (600) have more. ... USM's Brayton Braxton threw for 392 yards in last week's 30-20 loss at Louisiana Tech. It was Southern's first 300-yard passing game since Oct. 2, 2021 — a span of 1,449 days — when Jake Lange had 304 vs. Rice. ... Braxton has nine touchdown passes. ... The Golden Eagles are playing seven games in Hattiesburg this year for just the third time in school history. The others: 2020 and 1920. ... USM's Charles Huff and JSU's Charles Kelly are both in their first seasons. ... Jacksonville State beat Southern Miss 44-7 last year at JSU. ... The Gamecocks have never scored in Hattiesburg, losing two previous games by a combined 123-0. ... Maybe JSU can erase the stench from 1946's 65-0 and 1937's 58-0 defeats.

SEE SEC, G13



Missouri starting quarterback Beau Pribula might have to provide some alternative entertainment for Missouri fans with UMass coming to town. [L.G. PATTERSON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]



Cam Cook will be looking to help stiff arm Jacksonville State's abhorrent history in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. [JACKSONVILLE STATE ATHLETICS]

SEC
From Page G12

UMass at No. 20 Missouri

When: 6:30 p.m. Saturday
TV: ESPNU
Records: UMass (0-3), Missouri (4-0)
The series: Missouri leads 1-0.
The lowdown: Mizzou, with last week's 29-20 win over South Carolina, has won seven straight, matching the fourth longest win streak in school history. The Tigers, with a win Saturday, would match the second-longest streak from 1941 and 2024. ... Missouri notched a 99-yard scoring drive on Carolina, its third 99-yard TD drive of the season, the most for the Tigers since at least 1984. ... Mizzou had three 70-yard rushers for the first time in a game since 2011. ... Missouri ventured to UMass last year and scored in the opening minute in a 45-3 victory. ... Last year's win at UMass was the first true nonconference road victory for the Tigers since a 2018 win at Purdue. ... The Minutemen are historically one of the worst FBS programs. Their last bowl game was the 1972 Boardwalk Bowl in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in a 35-14 win over UC Davis. The only other bowl was the 1964 Tangerine Bowl, a 14-13 loss to East Carolina in Orlando, Florida. ... UMass last had a winning season in 2010 and rejoined FBS in 2011. The Minutemen, since the start of the 2019 season, are 10-67. ... This year, the Minutemen

have lost to Temple 42-10, Iowa 47-7 and to FCS Bryant 27-26. ... Bryant kicked a walkoff field goal on the Minutemen, capping a 13-play, 78-yard drive.

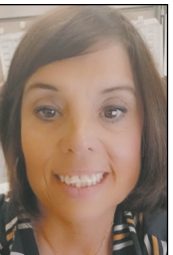
Kentucky at South Carolina
When: 6:45 p.m. Saturday
TV: SECN
Records: Kentucky (2-1, 0-1 SEC), South Carolina (2-2, 0-2)
The series: Carolina leads 21-14-1.
The lowdown: Kentucky is playing its road opener. ... LaNorris Sellers was 18-of-28 passing for a season-high 302 yards and two touchdowns in South Carolina's loss at Missouri last week. It was his third career 300-yard game. ... Vandrevius Jacobs led the Gamecocks with seven catches for 128 yards, both career highs, and a 49-yard touchdown. ... USC's Vicari Swain has three of the nation's 24 punt-return touchdowns this season. ... Kentucky was off last week following a 48-23 win over Eastern Michigan. ... The Wildcats had 492 yards total offense against the Eagles, their most vs. an FBS team since putting 511 on Louisville in 2021. ... Kentucky is 14-of-15 in the red zone this year. ... The Gamecocks have skinned the 'Cats each of the last three years, including 31-6 at UK last season. ... In their last nine meetings, the losing team has not scored over 18 points. ... In the entire series, no team has been shut out.

— A. Stacy Long and David Glovach



South Carolina would likely be OK if receiver Vandrevius Jacobs posted career highs for a second straight week to avoid a three-game SEC losing streak. [L.G. PATTERSON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

PICKS
PANEL

								
	STACY LONG	DAVID GLOVACH	GREGG DEWALT	SIRVELL CARTER	RENITA JIMMAR	DEANGELO MCDANIEL	MARA BETH CRAVENS	CALEB SUGGS
Alabama at Georgia	Georgia	Georgia	Alabama	Alabama	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia
Auburn at Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Auburn	Texas A&M	Texas A&M	Auburn
Tennessee at Mississippi State	Tennessee	Tennessee	Tennessee	Tennessee	Tennessee	Mississippi State	Tennessee	Tennessee
LSU at Ole Miss	Ole Miss	Ole Miss	Ole Miss	Ole Miss	Ole Miss	Ole Miss	Ole Miss	LSU
Notre Dame at Arkansas	Notre Dame	Notre Dame	Notre Dame	Notre Dame	Notre Dame	Arkansas	Notre Dame	Notre Dame
Kentucky at South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina	South Carolina	Kentucky	South Carolina	South Carolina
Oregon at Penn State	Penn State	Oregon	Penn State	Penn State	Penn State	Penn State	Penn State	Penn State
TCU at Arizona State	Arizona State	Arizona State	Arizona State	Arizona State	TCU	Arizona State	TCU	TCU
Jacksonville State at Southern Miss	Southern Miss	Jacksonville State	Jacksonville State	Southern Miss	Southern Miss	Jacksonville State	Jacksonville State	Southern Miss
UCF at Kansas State	Kansas State	UCF	Kansas State	Kansas State	Kansas State	Kansas State	UCF	UCF
Last week	7-3	9-1	5-5	4-6	4-6	6-4	6-4	5-5
Season record	28-12	27-13	26-14	23-17	23-17	23-17	22-18	20-20

COLLEGE STANDINGS

(Through Sept. 20 games)

American Athletic Conference							
	Conference			All Games			
	W	L	P	F	A	P	
Navy	2	0	80	47	3	0	132 54
North Texas	1	0	45	38	4	0	188 78
Rice	1	0	28	17	3	1	89 81
Memphis	0	0	0	0	4	0	143 64
South Florida	0	0	0	0	3	1	127 86
Tulane	0	0	0	0	3	1	100 106
East Carolina	0	0	0	0	2	2	124 61
Temple	0	0	0	0	2	2	124 104
UTSA	0	0	0	0	2	2	125 121
FAU	0	0	0	0	1	2	91 91
Tulsa	0	1	23	42	2	2	91 82
UAB	0	1	24	38	2	2	131 164
Army	0	1	38	45	1	2	89 96
Charlotte	0	1	17	28	1	3	73 117

Atlantic Coast Conference								
	Conference			All Games				
	W	L	P	F	A	P		
Georgia Tech	1	0	24	21	4	0	155	77
Syracuse	1	0	34	21	3	1	153	110
Virginia	1	0	48	20	3	1	182	78
Duke	1	0	45	33	2	2	136	129
NC State	1	1	67	69	3	1	126	117
Stanford	1	1	50	68	1	3	73	118
Florida St.	0	0	0	0	3	0	174	30
Louisville	0	0	0	0	3	0	119	48
Miami	0	0	0	0	4	0	147	46
California	0	0	0	0	3	1	96	66
Pittsburgh	0	0	0	0	2	1	130	57
North Carolina	0	0	0	0	2	2	84	91
SMU	0	0	0	0	2	2	139	106
Virginia Tech	0	0	0	0	1	3	95	119
Wake Forest	0	1	24	34	2	1	76	53
Boston College	0	1	20	30	1	2	126	82
Clemson	0	2	42	58	1	3	79	91

Big 12 Conference

	Conference			All Games				
	W	L	P	W	L	P		
Houston	1	0	36	20	3	0	98	29
Iowa St.	1	0	24	21	4	0	119	57
Texas Tech	1	0	34	10	4	0	208	45
Arizona St.	1	0	27	24	3	1	119	82
Kansas	1	0	41	10	3	1	149	66
Arizona	0	0	0	0	3	0	111	26
BYU	0	0	0	0	3	0	130	16
TCU	0	0	0	0	3	0	125	59
UCF	0	0	0	0	3	0	119	26
Cincinnati	0	0	0	0	2	1	121	40
Oklahoma St.	0	0	0	0	1	2	42	95
Utah	0	1	10	34	3	1	147	59
Baylor	0	1	24	27	2	2	138	117
Colorado	0	1	20	36	2	2	108	90
West Virginia	0	1	10	41	2	2	96	85
Kansas St.	0	1	21	24	1	3	97	106

Big Sky Conference

	Conference			All Games		
	W	L	P	W	L	P
Montana	0	0	0	3	0	129 60
N. Arizona	0	0	0	3	1	140 141
UC Davis	0	0	0	2	1	91 128
Cal Poly	0	0	0	2	2	123 122
Idaho	0	0	0	2	2	95 80
Montana St.	0	0	0	2	2	95 96
N. Colorado	0	0	0	2	2	77 71
Sacramento St.	0	0	0	2	2	114 84
Weber St.	0	0	0	2	2	93 158
E. Washington	0	0	0	1	3	101 130
Idaho St.	0	0	0	1	3	167 116
Portland St.	0	0	0	0	4	23 184

Big South-OVC Association								
	Conference			All Games				
	W	L	P	F	A	P		
L'wood (Mo.)	1	0	35	28	2	2	91	110
Tennessee Tech	0	0	0	0	3	0	182	31
Gardner-Webb	0	0	0	0	2	2	122	169
E. Illinois	0	0	0	0	1	2	68	94
Tennessee St.	0	0	0	0	1	2	48	103
SE Missouri	0	0	0	0	1	3	99	163
W. Illinois	0	0	0	0	1	3	92	176
UT Martin	0	0	0	0	0	4	44	148
Chas. Southern	0	1	28	35	0	4	38	127

Big Ten Conference								
	Conference			All Games				
	W	L	P	W	L	P		
Southern Cal	2	0	78	48	4	0	210	81
Indiana	1	0	63	10	4	0	219	33
Maryland	1	0	27	10	4	0	130	43
Oregon	1	0	34	14	4	0	203	37
Iowa	1	0	38	28	3	1	132	58
Michigan	1	0	30	27	3	1	140	71
Ohio St.	0	0	0	0	3	0	121	16



For Missouri mascot Truman and the Tigers, the buck has stopped with them this season. Missouri is one of eight Southeastern Conference teams still unbeaten. [L.G. PATTERSON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

Penn St.	0	0	0	0	3	0	132	17
Washington	0	0	0	0	3	0	167	55
Minnesota	0	0	0	0	2	1	103	37
UCLA	0	0	0	0	0	3	43	108
Illinois	0	1	10	63	3	1	145	85
Michigan St.	0	1	31	45	3	1	137	115
Nebraska	0	1	27	30	3	1	174	54
Rutgers	0	1	28	38	3	1	167	96
Purdue	0	1	17	33	2	2	112	106
Wisconsin	0	1	10	27	2	2	83	75
Northwestern	0	1	14	34	1	2	59	64

Coastal Athletic Association								
	Conference			All Games				
	W	L	P	W	L	P		
Rhode Island	2	0	62	37	4	0	99	51
Monmouth (N.J.)	1	0	51	33	3	1	177	142
William & Mary	1	0	28	27	2	2	99	112
NC A&T	1	0	33	30	1	3	81	184
Campbell	1	1	70	79	1	3	97	163
Elon	0	0	0	0	2	2	125	109
New Hampshire	0	0	0	0	2	2	95	87
Towson	0	0	0	0	2	2	99	104
Albany (N.Y.)	0	0	0	0	1	3	69	105
Bryant	0	1	48	50	2	2	120	101
Villanova	0	1	33	51	1	2	63	120
Hampton	0	1	30	33	1	3	78	115
Stony Brook	0	1	17	31	1	3	85	121
Maine	0	1	27	28	0	4	61	114

Conference USA									
	Conference				All Games				
Delaware	1	0	38	16	3	1	124	105	
Louisiana Tech	1	0	49	14	3	1	110	57	
W. Kentucky	1	0	41	24	3	1	148	91	
Jacksonville St.	1	0	34	24	2	2	123	92	

New Mexico St.	0	1	14	49	2	1	54	66
FIU	0	1	16	38	2	2	96	109
Kennesaw St.	0	0	0	0	2	2	73	100
Missouri St.	0	0	0	0	2	2	86	131
Liberty	0	1	24	34	1	3	78	95
Middle Tenn.	0	0	0	0	1	3	66	131
UTEP	0	0	0	0	1	3	93	103
Sam Houston St.	0	1	24	41	0	4	65	171

Ivy League								
	Conference			All Games				
	W	L	P	F	A	P		
Brown	0	0	0	0	1	0	46	0
Dartmouth	0	0	0	0	1	0	27	20
Harvard	0	0	0	0	1	0	59	7
Penn	0	0	0	0	1	0	24	21
Yale	0	0	0	0	1	0	28	10
Columbia	0	0	0	0	0	1	14	38
Cornell	0	0	0	0	0	1	10	13
Princeton	0	0	0	0	0	1	35	42

Mid-American Conference								
	Conference			All Games				
	W	L	P	W	L	P		
Buffalo	1	0	31	28	2	2	103	78
W. Michigan	1	0	14	13	1	3	50	107
Bowling Green	0	0	0	0	2	2	86	94
Cent. Michigan	0	0	0	0	2	2	85	132
Ohio	0	0	0	0	2	2	109	116
N. Illinois	0	0	0	0	1	2	38	75
Akron	0	0	0	0	1	3	79	116
Ball St.	0	0	0	0	1	3	62	133
E. Michigan	0	0	0	0	1	3	107	159
Miami (Ohio)	0	0	0	0	2	3	55	103
Toledo	0	1	13	14	2	2	134	59
Kent St.	0	1	28	31	1	3	73	176

COLUMN

It's bag-packing time for the SEC

By Doug Segrest
For GameDay

It's time to start packing up, fellas. Sam Pittman has had competitive teams at Arkansas, despite an annual exodus of talent via the transfer portal. This year's edition continues to be snake-bit, though. The latest example: blowing an 18-point halftime lead at Memphis before fumbling away the opportunity for a go-ahead score at the end.

We really like Pittman, whose team could be 4-0 with a break or two. But the inability to grow the program makes a change inevitable.

At Florida, Billy Napier salvaged his job last season by winning five of the last seven games — including upsets of Top 25 rivals LSU and Ole Miss.

But that seems like a sepia-toned memory now. The Gators are 1-3 and weren't competitive in a 26-7 beatdown at Miami.

Those who knew Napier at previous stops as an assistant, including Alabama and Clemson, believe he will be a big success somewhere. Just not at Florida.

If AD Scott Stricklin makes the call, expect it soon. The Gators are off until an Oct. 4 date with Texas. Jon Gruden is openly campaigning for a job in the SEC and there are plenty of next-generation head coaches out there who would seemingly be a good fit.

But if you're expecting things to change, think again. Dan Mullen couldn't do it there. Neither could Will Muschamp. Frankly, if you look at Florida's history, there have only been two elite periods — one led by Steve Spurrier and another by Urban Meyer (at least until Nick Saban came along). This is a historically underachieving program, so there's evidence the problems go beyond coaching.

At Auburn, Hugh Freeze has dealt with his own hot-seat drama. But in a loss at Oklahoma, the Tigers problems were evident — lack of protection for quarterback Jackson Arnold as Oklahoma recorded a school-record nine sacks (initially recorded as 10 sacks before being revised Sunday) and some controversial calls that cost Auburn a 14-point swing.

Auburn has shown improvement in terms of the eye test, but the schedule alone could crank up the heat again if



Georgia will host Alabama at Sanford Stadium for the first time since a rainy October day in 2015. The Bulldogs got pelted by the weather and the Crimson Tide 38-10. [BRETT DAVIS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS]

Auburn doesn't rebound quickly at Texas A&M.

At Alabama, Kalen DeBoer has the Crimson Tide looking the part of a contender again. The idea of firing a second-year coach of his caliber is ludicrous, but if the Tide doesn't show up Saturday, the rumors begin again.

Looking ahead

• **Auburn at Texas A&M (2:30 p.m. Saturday on ESPN):** Are the ninth-ranked Aggies for real? The only evidence thus far is an incredible come-from-behind victory at Notre Dame. A year ago, A&M was riding a seven-game winning streak before getting ambushed at South Carolina. Three weeks later, dreams of a playoff ended with a four-overtime loss at Auburn — Hugh Freeze's biggest win

to date. The Aggies want vengeance, but if Auburn fixes things up front this one goes down to the wire again.

• **LSU at Ole Miss (2:30 p.m. on ABC):** Will the real powerhouse contender please stand up? LSU's defense looks like a national title unit. If the offense catches fire, look out. Ole Miss has the offense clicking no matter who's at quarterback, and a 45-10 throttling of Tulane deserves more credit than Lane Kiffin and Co. get. This one is under the radar, but it should be a back-and-forth affair.

• **Tennessee at Mississippi State (3:15 on the SEC Network):** Who'da thunk that State would welcome the Vols as the undefeated team? The Bulldogs already have arguably one of the league's two biggest nonconference wins (thank you, Arizona State). But Tennessee upgraded

at quarterback with Joey Aguilar and can score points in a hurry — enough to pop State's bubble.

• **Alabama at Georgia (6:30 p.m. on ABC):** The South's biggest rivalry of the last decade resumes between the hedges, where Kirby Smart points out it's the Tide's first visit since he became head coach. Alabama has owned this series, winning nine of the last 10 (and only playing outside the state of Georgia thrice). This already seems a must-win for Bama, but all the pressure is on Georgia because of Smart's track record against his former team.

Doug Segrest, who covered college football for 28 years for numerous newspapers in Alabama and Tennessee, is a freelance columnist.



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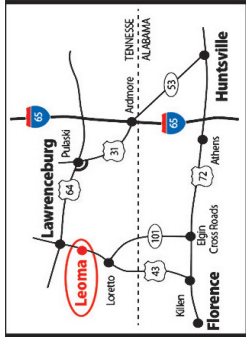
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