

**GAMEDAY  
PREVIEW**

# The Red & Black<sup>®</sup>

Saturday  
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**GEORGIA**  
*VS.* AUSTIN PEAY

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Thursday, September 4, 2025

# BULLDOGS BACK AT IT



Georgia running back Nate Fraizer (3) is shown during warmups before Georgia's home opener against Marshall at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, August 30, 2025. PHOTO/ETHAN GREENE

**A4 STUDENT VOICES** DAWG FANS GIVE THEIR SEASON PREDICTIONS

**A6 MATCHUP PREVIEW** BULLDOGS LOOK TO DOMINATE GOVERNORS

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Georgia inside linebacker Channing Tindall (41) makes a tackle during a game against Austin Peay on Saturday, Sept. 1, 2018, at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia. FILE/STAFF

# Sanford shutout

## Remembering Austin Peay's 2018 trip to Sanford Stadium

Liam W. Dreesen

Austin Peay is familiar with the challenges of playing Kirby Smart in Sanford Stadium. Georgia won the only matchup between the two 45-0 in Week 1 of the 2018 season.

Week 2 of the 2025 season will bring the Governors back to Athens for another matchup with the Bulldogs. This year's game will bring a bigger payday for the Governors, whose athletic department will receive \$550,000 from Georgia, an increase from the \$500,000 received in 2018.

The payday was the only thing that went right for Austin Peay in 2018. The Bulldogs outgained the Governors by 356 yards and only allowed seven first downs. The score was 38-0 at halftime, before Georgia started putting in its backups.

Rodrigo Blankenship opened the scoring for the Bulldogs by drilling a 34-yard field goal early in the first quarter. Georgia then rattled off six straight touchdowns to reach its final total of 45 points.

The Bulldogs' running game was on full display in the matchup, tallying 284 yards on 33 attempts and adding three touchdowns. James Cook was the leading rusher out of the backfield with six carries for 66 yards. D'Andre Swift added eight carries for 43 yards and one touchdown. Demetris Robertson led the team in rushing yards after he took a jet sweep 72 yards for a touchdown on his only carry of the game.

Jake Fromm had an efficient day at quarterback, as he led the team in passing yards. He completed 12 of 16 passes for 157 yards and two touchdowns before being taken out of the game. Once Fromm's day was finished, Justin Fields took over at quarterback. The former five-star and highest-rated recruit in Georgia history, according to 247Sports, completed 7 of 8 passes for 63 yards and a touchdown in some of his only action as a Bulldog before



Georgia running back D'Andre Swift (7) jumps over a defender from Austin Peay during a game at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Sept. 1, 2018. FILE/STAFF

transferring to Ohio State in 2019.

Mecole Hardman Jr. led the game with 63 receiving yards on just two catches. The speedster scored after catching the ball near midfield and outrunning all of the Governors' defenders on his way to a 59-yard touchdown.

The Georgia defense fared just as well as the offense. The Governors only managed 91 rushing yards on 29 attempts, while gaining just 61 yards through the air. The blowout allowed Smart to put in some of his younger players, giving Georgia fans their first look at future team greats like Jordan Davis and Quay Walker, who went on to be key contributors on the 2021 national championship team.

The 45-0 victory was a great start to the year for the Bulldogs, who finished the season ranked No. 7 in the AP poll with an 11-3 record.

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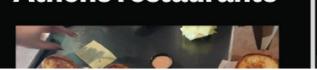
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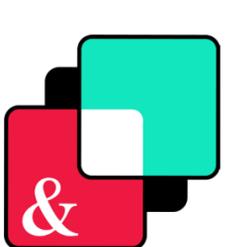
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# The Red & Black



Georgia wide receiver Dillon Bell (86) in action during the Georgia vs. Auburn game and homecoming celebration on Saturday, Oct. 5, 2024, at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia. Georgia won 31-13.

PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN

# Warding off woes

## Wide receiver room looks to recover after drop-heavy season

Braden Brownell

If there's one position group that will face the most scrutiny early in Georgia's 2025 season, it's the wide receivers. The Bulldogs led the nation in dropped passes last year, a statistic that has lingered in national conversations around the team.

Outside of Arian Smith, Dominic Lovett and Dillon Bell, the next five leading pass-catchers on the team weren't even wideouts. Whether that reflected offensive coordinator Mike Bobo's scheme or a lack of trust in the room remains up for debate.

Head coach Kirby Smart didn't hide from the struggles, admitting the drop problem was as much mental as technical.

"The biggest thing is getting confidence in practice so that you can have confidence in games," Smart said on 92.9 The Game. "I think last year that's a cumulative effect of like, 'Oh God, oh God, oh God it's going to happen.' They did it to themselves."

### Colbie Young's proving ground

Georgia has often relied on tall, contested-catch receivers to bail out its quarterbacks. Javon Wims and Lawrence Cager once filled that role. The Bulldogs believe they may have found two such players this season.

Senior Colbie Young is back in the fold after his indefinite suspension for off-the-field legal issues made him miss most of the 2024-25 season. Smart praised Young for the way he has attacked camp.

"He's one of the leaders in the group, quietly. He just puts in really good work every day, really physical," Smart said. "[He] can block incredibly and has been a vertical, jump-ball, really good player for us in camp. I want him to keep doing what he's doing and continue to lead that young group of guys in that room."

Battling with him is Noah Thomas, a 6-foot-5 transfer from Texas A&M who posted 38 catches for 382 yards and five touchdowns last season. Thomas brings size and red zone value, but has also impressed coaches with his physicality.

### The Dillon Bell question

Few players embody Georgia's wide receiver paradox more than Bell. He flashed as a playmaker in 2024, but also became a liability down the stretch. After dropping just five passes across his first two seasons, Bell finished last year with six drops on 75 targets — all coming in his final seven games. The struggles were amplified in the postseason, with a drop in the SEC Championship and a disastrous bobble in the Sugar Bowl loss to Notre Dame. How he rebounds in 2025 will be a storyline to monitor.

"He brings size, toughness and experience," Smart said. "He can play every position across the board. He lines up at X, Z and F, and he's been a back ... [Bell is] an all-around really good football player."

Bell's versatility — lining up as both a wideout and in the backfield — makes him valuable. But if the junior can't become more reliable downfield, questions about his usage will persist.

### Zachariah Branch brings new explosiveness

Perhaps no addition to the team excites Georgia fans more than Zachariah Branch. The USC transfer and former five-star recruit brings speed and flair to a room that badly needs explosiveness.

**“The guy loves football, he loves working out, he loves taking care of his body. [I'm very] pleased with the energy he's brought to our team, the enthusiasm.”**

KIRBY SMART | GEORGIA HEAD COACH

"The guy loves football, he loves working out, he loves taking care of his body. [I'm very] pleased with the energy he's brought to our team, the enthusiasm," Smart said. "I'm looking forward to seeing him play because he's had a good camp and I think he really enjoys football. Those are the kind of guys that really enjoy Saturdays."

Branch's presence likely pushes London Humphreys, another former transfer, into a rotational role. Humphreys offers depth as a polished route runner with two years of meaningful SEC experience by this point.

Behind them, the staff is high on freshmen Sacovie White-Helton, CJ Wiley and Talyn Taylor. In limited playing time last season, White showed glimpses of his speed and versatility, hinting at the playmaking potential he could add to Georgia's receiving corps. Wiley brings size at 6-foot-4 and Taylor is considered one of the best route runners in his class. Jeremy Bell, though still raw, has drawn attention for his athleticism throughout the summer.

Veteran senior Cole Speer, who appeared in 13 games last year despite only recording three catches, remains in the mix as well. His familiarity with the system and contributions on special teams could keep him on the field.

Other newcomers — including Thomas Blackshear, Tyler Williams and Landon Roldan — will have to fight for opportunities but deepen the depth chart.

### Can depth become reliability?

Smart emphasized the number of receivers contributing on special teams as a sign of growth.

"When we look across special teams and we rank players on our team, just based on special teams, there's more receivers in the top 85 players than there has been in the past," Smart said. "I'm proud of the group, of what they've done so far, and I think they want to go out and prove it, put it on tape."

That depth will need to translate into production on offense. Last season showed that Georgia can't rely solely on its tight ends and running backs to carry the passing game. Bobo's offense demands versatility, and without the gravitational pull of Brock Bowers, it may finally be time for the wide receivers to step up.



Georgia wide receiver Colbie Young (8) runs with the ball during the Georgia vs. Tennessee Tech game at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Sept. 7, 2024. No. 1 Georgia defeated Tennessee Tech 48-3. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN



Georgia fans cheer during the home opener game against Marshall at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Aug. 30, 2025. Georgia won 45-7. PHOTO/ETHAN GREENE

## 'Another big year' UGA students give their 2025 football takes

Romell Williams

As Georgia football gears up for the 2025 season, expectations around Athens are sky-high. With Georgia coming into the season ranked No. 5, a new starting quarterback in Gunner Stockton, several key weapons returning and new high-profile transfers joining the team, students across campus are buzzing with predictions about how the season will unfold. For many students, an undefeated record is well within reach.

"I think the team is going to be really solid," Easton Vititoe, a senior general business major, said. "We have a lot of depth, and having a lot of our bigger games at home sets us up well for another playoff run. I'd say 12-0 with an SEC title."

Though Georgia lost many of last season's key pieces to the NFL, some students, such as senior Zaire Leonard, believe Georgia's roster depth makes perfection possible.

"I think the team will go undefeated," Leonard said. "They recruited well in the offseason to maintain the high level of talent they already had. I don't think it's a situation of whether [Stockton will] be better [than previous Georgia quarterbacks] or not — he just needs to be a reliable quarterback and limit as many mistakes as he can."

Georgia plays five opponents that enter the season ranked in the AP Preseason Top 25 poll: No. 24 Tennessee, No. 8 Alabama, No. 21 Ole Miss, No. 15 Florida and No. 1 Texas. That has not affected many students' confidence in the team, but some see Texas as a major roadblock standing in Georgia's way.

"Georgia will go 11-1 with a loss to Texas," Jackson Nicholson, a senior sports management major, said. "[I think] we finally beat [Alabama], but still lose to Texas, who will be the best team this year."

"I think we have a strong offense," junior psychology major Sabrina Sciortino said. "We have really good receivers in Zachariah Branch and Dillon Bell and a strong offensive line. I think we will go 11-1 and our solo loss will be to Texas."

Other students believe that Georgia's success will depend heavily on its quarterback play. Stockton will need to get settled into the offense quickly, as Georgia's first two

conference games are against ranked opponents.

"It's going to be another big year, and I think Georgia will still be in the playoff mix in 2025, but it might take time for the team to find its rhythm with a first-year starter at quarterback," junior finance major Garrett Young said.

Though former quarterback Carson Beck had his fair share of success at Georgia — he went 24-3 as a starter and was a Manning Award finalist in 2023 and 2024 — many students believe that Stockton has the potential to be even more productive.

"As for Gunner, I think he has all the tools to be a great quarterback, but Carson was already proven and consistent," Vititoe said. "It'll be tough to top what Carson has done, but Gunner definitely has the talent to compete at that level."

"I think Gunner will be better than Carson in certain ways," Sciortino said. "He won't be as experienced as Beck was, but I think he will be more successful due to how explosive our offense is and the amount of weapons we have."

In his only start of 2024, Stockton went 20-for-32 passing for 234 yards and one touchdown in a playoff loss to Notre Dame. He finished last season with 45 completions on 64 attempts with 440 passing yards, one touchdown and one interception. Stockton also ran the ball six times for 24 yards, with sack yards excluded, in Georgia's 22-19 victory over Texas in the SEC Championship last year.

Some students believe that Stockton may not necessarily outperform Beck on the stat sheet, but that he still gives Georgia a new look at the position and could bring even more success to the program.

"Gunner is talented and I love his competitiveness, but I don't think he'll be better than Carson right away," Young said. "Beck's accuracy and decision-making were underrated last year, especially since Georgia led the nation in dropped passes. Gunner has the tools and ability to grow into that level, but this season will probably be about managing games, limiting mistakes and building chemistry."

Whether students see 12-0 or 11-1, the expectations remain the same: Georgia is once again a national title contender. And in Athens, that's become the standard.

## NUMBERS TO KNOW: Week 2

Georgia tight end Oscar Delp

# #4

Delp steps into the spotlight once again this season as Georgia's starting tight end. Expectations are high for the senior, who has shown flashes of becoming an elite Georgia tight end but has yet to put together a true breakout performance. With so much anticipation of him being Brock Bowers' heir, what better time for him to finally emerge than a tune-up game against the Governors? With Georgia's offense leaning on the passing game early and facing an Austin Peay linebacker group riddled with transfers, Delp's name will be a focal point in the Bulldogs' offense in Week 2.

Austin Peay defensive back Ellis Ellis Jr.

Ellis Jr. returns as one of the leaders of Austin Peay's secondary. The double-named redshirt junior finished last season with 26 tackles, a forced fumble and three interceptions. He also had six pass break-ups and led the Governors in total passes defended in the United Athletic Conference. A preseason All-UAC selection, Ellis Jr. has shown an ability to read quarterbacks quickly and disrupt passing lanes. If Georgia tests him downfield, he is capable of turning a mistake into a momentum swing.

# #1

Georgia wide receiver Colbie Young

# #8

The senior from Miami enters the 2025 season with something to prove. Young gives Georgia size and athleticism on the outside at 6-foot-3, 215 pounds. He played in five games last season, recording touchdowns in the Bulldogs' first two games before missing the rest of the year due to off-the-field issues. Despite his shortened season, Young averaged 13.5 yards per catch and showed off his strong jump-ball ability. If Young can continue the production that he showed early in 2024, he could emerge as Gunner Stockton's go-to target.

Austin Peay offensive lineman Chandler Kirton

Kirton is a leader and anchors the Governors' offensive line. A 2022 All-ASUN and 2023 First Team All-UAC selection, he earned his second straight preseason All-UAC selection heading into the 2025 season. In 2024, he started all 12 games for Austin Peay and became a force on the line of scrimmage, only being called for a holding penalty once and allowing just one sack. Kirton is hard to get through, and he provides an equal force to combat Georgia's powerful defensive line and pass rush.

# #52

Georgia outside linebacker Elo Modozie

# #18

Modozie, a transfer from Army, joined the Bulldogs this spring to provide much-needed pass rushing. He recorded 6 1/2 sacks last season and brings an edge to Georgia's front seven. With the Bulldogs losing top edge rushers like Mykel Williams and Jalon Walker, Modozie's ability to generate pressure becomes even more valuable. Against a weaker Austin Peay offensive line, Modozie has the opportunity to make his name known in Sanford Stadium.

Austin Peay defensive lineman Davion Hood

Hood brings experience and production to Austin Peay's defensive front. The redshirt senior appeared in all 12 games last season, finishing with 27 tackles, seven tackles for loss and led the Governors in quarterback pressures with 23. He thrives at applying constant pressure on opposing quarterbacks. Hood could expose the Bulldogs' newly retooled offensive line, which lost many of last year's starters. His strong presence could help him make a major impact in how effectively Georgia protects its backfield.

# #17

By Riley Baugh

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# Bouncing back

## Oscar Delp looks to dominate in 2025 season

Ben Kule

After two-time John Mackey Award winner Brock Bowers declared for the 2024 NFL Draft, Oscar Delp emerged as the leading candidate to become Georgia's starting tight end. Delp saw limited playing time as a sophomore while backing up Bowers in 2023, but performed capably in two starts while Bowers was sidelined with an injury.

While Delp was the projected starter following Bowers' departure, head coach Kirby Smart opted for a tight-end-by-committee approach. Delp, sophomore Lawson Luckie and graduate transfer from Stanford Ben Yurosek were utilized relatively equally in 2024. Luckie led the group with 24 receptions and 348 receiving yards, while Delp's four touchdowns narrowly trumped Luckie's three. Yurosek was used more in rushing situations and handled more of the blocking, but still hauled in 15 catches for 185 yards.

With Yurosek now in the NFL after signing with the Minnesota Vikings as an undrafted free agent, Delp and Luckie are expected to handle the bulk of the tight end duties this season.

If Delp had exceeded or even met his expectations last season, he would likely be in the NFL now. One productive year as Georgia's clear-cut starting tight end could have drawn serious NFL interest, especially given Delp was the highest-rated tight end recruit in the 2022 class. However, with Luckie and Yurosek limiting Delp's usage, he was unable to show enough promise to justify an early declaration for the draft.

Although Luckie will still be involved in the Bulldogs' offense in 2025, Delp has the opportunity for a bounce-back season, solidifying himself as Georgia's next elite tight end. The disappointing year has motivated Delp to improve, prompting an intense offseason of preparation.

"I came back for a reason," Delp said during a fall media availability. "I want to have a great season. In the summer, we work out a bunch. So I was going to just go as hard as I could."

Smart praised Delp, as well as the tight end room as a whole, as they trained to begin the season. In addition to Delp and Luckie, sophomore Jaden Reddell could see some sporadic involvement at the position. Georgia also added some youth to the room, including Elyiss Williams, the fourth-ranked tight end recruit in the 2025 class according to 247Sports.

"I'm excited about that room," Smart said during SEC media days in July. "Having [Delp] back gives us something that not many teams have. He can physically block you at the point of attack. He's stronger than most tight ends you play against. He's a great play-action threat."

If Delp is able to have the breakout season Georgia fans have been waiting for, his connection with new starting quarterback Gunner Stockton will likely be a key factor. Delp and Stockton have been roommates since arriving at Georgia, and their connection has been palpable in their limited playing time together. Stockton completed two passes to Delp during his game-winning drive against Texas in overtime to secure an SEC Championship victory. In the Sugar Bowl, Delp hauled in two passes from Stockton, the only receptions by a Georgia tight end in the 23-10 loss to Notre Dame.

"There's no one I trust more than [Stockton], seeing what he does at home, on and off the field," Delp said.

From Bowers' backup to the veteran of the tight end room, Delp is poised to become one of Georgia's standout offensive contributors with Stockton at the helm in his senior season.



Georgia tight end Oscar Delp (4) celebrates with lineman Zion Logue (96) during the second half of a game between Missouri and Georgia at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Nov. 4, 2023. Georgia won 30-21. PHOTO/LANDEN TODD



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63						64					65			

#### ACROSS

- 1. Water collection areas
- 6. Birdhouse nester
- 10. Burns up the telephone line
- 14. Columbia catch
- 15. Lifted, as an anchor
- 16. Dash of panache
- 17. Athenian square
- 18. Old World wild goat
- 19. Bailiff's request
- 20. Indignant displeasure
- 22. Apportion (out)
- 23. Dow Jones listings (abbr.)
- 24. Like some points
- 25. More of a busybody
- 29. Fever or cruiser preceder
- 32. Heroic narratives
- 33. Tears
- 37. Commend a G.I.
- 38. Cause of waste?
- 39. Backyard tree dangler
- 40. Memory stirrers
- 42. Comic-strip wife
- 43. Facilitates
- 44. Starter's need
- 45. Ahead of the bell
- 48. Was out of sight?
- 49. Boot camp truant
- 50. Greens

- 57. Matter of interest?
- 58. Of higher rank than
- 59. Bolivian beast
- 60. Fox or turkey chaser?
- 61. Having no loose ends?
- 62. Urchin
- 63. His partner
- 64. Benevolent order
- 65. Hub for United

#### DOWN

- 1. Award of merit
- 2. Do more than ask
- 3. Calls from the field
- 4. Unblemished
- 5. Golf coach's concerns
- 6. Instincts sometimes indulged
- 7. Choir member's outerwear
- 8. Without bumps
- 9. Cry to the queue
- 10. Sprouts
- 11. Xenophobe's thorn
- 12. Cookbook instruction
- 13. Ugly expression
- 21. Geologic feature
- 24. Christmas staple
- 25. Head turner?
- 26. Early Ron Howard role
- 27. Developer's concern

- 28. Bits of hail
- 29. Detective's load
- 30. Circus lineup
- 31. Bonnet invader
- 33. Placid, for example
- 34. Commit a pinball foul
- 35. Deducer's word
- 36. Playful pinniped
- 38. Isn't out of
- 41. Verbalize
- 42. Spanish nobleman
- 44. Cherry center
- 45. Inheritance of the meek
- 46. Not in the dark?
- 47. Palindromic spinner
- 48. Chisholm Trail sights
- 50. November exhortation
- 51. Good competition
- 52. Computer whiz
- 53. Far from thrilling
- 54. "Lost Horizon" figure
- 55. Bahrain bigwig
- 56. Fit to be tried?

# Governing the gauntlet

## Previewing Georgia vs. Austin Peay between the hedges

Owen McDaniel

Following a season-opening 45-7 rout of Marshall, Georgia will look to keep the momentum rolling when it hosts Austin Peay on Saturday. The Marshall game gave the Bulldog fan base its first real look at the 2025 roster in action, and it revealed several key insights about the team.

First, offensive coordinator Mike Bobo has completely molded the scheme around quarterback Gunner Stockton. The offensive game plan against Marshall included

quarterback keepers and read options, both of which play to Stockton's strengths and were not part of last season's approach. Second, the defense is deep. Thirty-eight different defensive players recorded at least one snap in Week 1, and even when the more inexperienced players were in, the unit still held the Marshall offense in check apart from a late touchdown.

Both of those elements will likely continue to play out against Austin Peay in a matchup where Georgia has the clear edge.

### Trust the tandem

In Austin Peay's one game last season against a Football Bowl Subdivision opponent, the Governors surrendered 571 yards of total offense, including 293 yards and three touchdowns on the ground. Poor rush defense was a consistent issue in their losses — they allowed an average of 195.6 rushing yards in those eight games.

Georgia should look to exploit that weakness. The Bulldogs will likely have the advantage in the trenches, which will make things easier for one of college football's most dynamic runners, sophomore Nate Frazier. Georgia also picked up Illinois transfer Josh McCray in the portal, a 6-foot, 240-pound running back, who the Bulldogs will rely on in short yardage situations and pass protection.

Austin Peay hired a new defensive coordinator in the offseason, Greg Jones, who held the same position at Tennessee Tech last season — the same team that Georgia dismantled 48-3 in Week 2. The Bulldogs recorded nearly seven yards per rush in that game using five different running backs. If that is any indicator for how Jones' new defense will fare, the Governors may be doing a lot of backpedaling on Saturday.

### Defensive gameplan

Georgia defensive coordinator Glenn Schumann's main goal should be to lean into what the team does best. The defense outmatches the Governors' offense in just about every aspect, so Schumann should be aggressive from the get-go. Sending relentless pressure at a weak Austin Peay offensive line will allow the Georgia defensive line and linebackers to impose their strength and athleticism.

The Governors' offensive line allowed 42 sacks in 2024, which was by far the most in the United Athletic Conference. Their projected starting quarterback, Mississippi State transfer Chris Parson, has struggled against blitzes in the limited action he's seen. In two games in 2023, Parson threw three interceptions and completed just 33.3% of his passes when blitzed. If the redshirt sophomore signal-caller does start, Schumann should look to make him uncomfortable by dialing up pressure.

Georgia lost several of its most productive pass rushers from last season, but filled those holes with both home-grown and transfer portal talent. Edge rushers Elo MODOZIE and Gabe Harris Jr. can bring pressure from the outside, while Schumann can call on linebackers CJ Allen and Raylen Wilson to shoot through gaps and wreak havoc in the backfield.

### Prediction

Contests that feature a smaller school being paid to play a larger school have often been labeled as "guarantee games" because the odds are so heavily in favor of the larger school. That title is spot-on for this matchup, which will likely be closer to a glorified scrimmage than a hard-nosed football game, giving Georgia opportunities to experiment with new plays, formations and personnel.

Upsets can happen, but there is no real reason to believe one could occur this Saturday. This game should serve as one final tune-up game for the Bulldogs before SEC play begins at Tennessee on Sept. 13.

**Final Prediction: Georgia 52, Austin Peay 3**



Georgia defensive lineman Elijah Griffin (90) celebrates a tackle with teammates during the opening home game against Marshall at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Aug. 30, 2025. Georgia won 45-7. PHOTO/ETHAN GREENE

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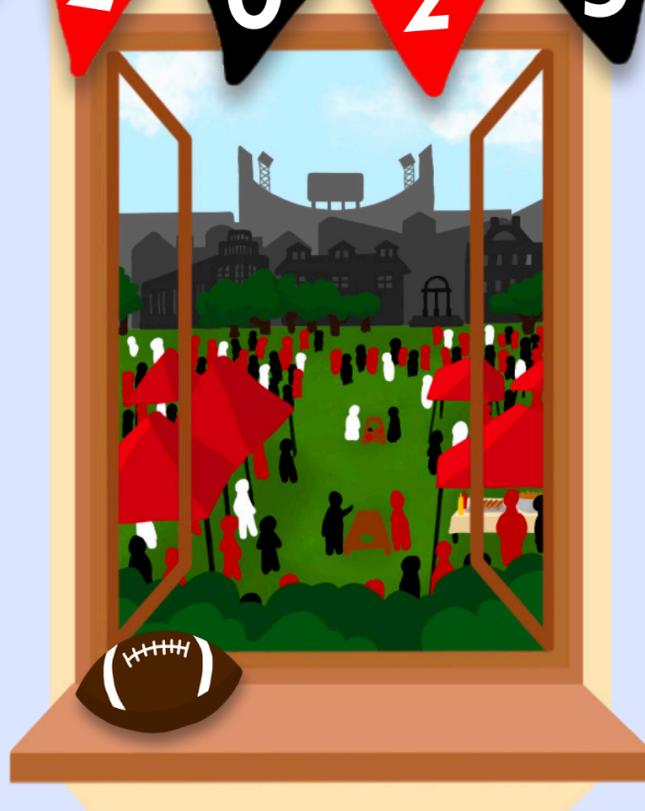


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