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SEIZE THE DAY

Georgia wide receiver London Humphreys (16) catches the ball for a touchdown during the second half of the football game between Georgia and Texas at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Nov. 15, 2025. Georgia won 35-10. PHOTO/KALEB TATUM

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SEC
COUNTDOWN

Georgia faces
Western Kentucky

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READY FOR
MORE

Elyiss Williams
steps up

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Matthew Stafford stands behind the line of scrimmage in a game against South Carolina at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Sept. 8, 2007. PHOTO COURTESY/UGA SPORTS COMM

A long time coming

Western Kentucky returns to Sanford Stadium after 20 years

Layla Nicholson

Georgia football will face Western Kentucky for only the second time in program history on Saturday. The Bulldogs played the Hilltoppers once before, winning 48-12 on Sept. 2, 2006 – a game that marked the collegiate debut of one Matthew Stafford.

The Bulldogs entered the game, which kicked off their 2006 season, ranked No. 15, returning to Sanford Stadium fresh off a 10-win season.

Georgia wasted little time taking control of that game. Wide receiver Mikey Henderson returned a punt 67 yards for a touchdown to give the Bulldogs a 7-0 lead about six minutes into the game.

Quarterback Joe Tereshinski then connected with Mario Raley for a touchdown to double Georgia's lead. Brandon Coutu added a 37-yard field goal, giving Georgia a 17-0 lead after the first quarter.

The Bulldogs continued to pull away in the second quarter. Gregg Lumpkin and Thomas Brown each scored on 2-yard rushing touchdowns to give Georgia a commanding 31-0 lead with just over seven minutes left in the first half.

Western Kentucky finally got on the scoreboard with 37

seconds left in the second quarter. Quarterback Justin Haddix threw a 17-yard touchdown pass to Curtis Hamilton, putting a small dent in Georgia's healthy lead.

Georgia added another field goal from Coutu in the third quarter before Danny Ware opened the fourth quarter with a 41-yard touchdown run. The Bulldogs led 41-7 with more than 14 minutes still to play.

Then came Stafford.

The freshman quarterback entered the game in the fourth quarter. He completed three of his five pass attempts for 40 yards, including a 13-yard touchdown pass to tight end Coleman Watson. The touchdown gave Georgia its final points in the 48-12 win.

It was a small debut for Stafford, who was not yet Georgia's starting quarterback. Tereshinski started the game, completing 7 of 17 passes for 90 yards and a touchdown. Stafford would have to wait a few more weeks before permanently claiming his spot as the Bulldogs' starter.

However, it did not take much longer for Georgia to recognize Stafford's ability and name him the starter. He finished the year with 1,749 passing yards and seven passing touchdowns while helping Georgia finish the season 9-4. Stafford and the Bulldogs ended the year with a 31-24 win over Virginia

Tech in the Chick-fil-A Bowl.

Stafford would go on to become one of the most recognizable quarterbacks in Georgia history. He finished his Georgia career with 7,731 passing yards and 51 touchdowns before being selected first overall in the 2009 NFL Draft. More than two decades after making his Georgia debut against Western Kentucky, Stafford is remembered as one of the best quarterbacks to ever play for the Bulldogs.

The 2006 game was not just about Stafford, though. Georgia's offense ran for 136 yards, while Ware led the Bulldogs with 68 yards and a touchdown on six carries.

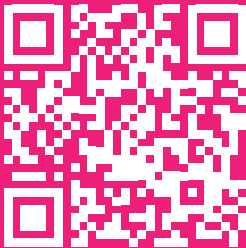
Georgia's defense held Western Kentucky to 193 total yards. The Hilltoppers ran for just 67 yards and Haddix completed 12 of 27 passes for 126 yards. Georgia also recorded four sacks and forced two turnovers.

The Bulldogs went on to win their next four games after Western Kentucky, including back-to-back shutouts over South Carolina and UAB.

Now, 20 years later, the two teams will meet again. Last time, Georgia's win served as the beginning of the story for one of the program's greats. This time around, it will look to dominate the Hilltoppers again and possibly provide opportunities for the next legendary Bulldog to shine.

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Georgia's offensive line prepares to snap the ball during a game against Charlotte at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Nov. 22, 2025. Georgia won 35-3. PHOTO/JAKE WESTING

One final tune-up

Georgia faces Western Kentucky in last test before SEC play

Evan Waldman

For years, Georgia has been able to count on a game somewhere on its schedule to be a welcome contrast from the grind of SEC play.

Last season, the Bulldogs had three: Georgia beat Marshall 45-7 to open the season, defeated Austin Peay 28-6 the next week and handled Charlotte 35-3 in November.

Those matchups allowed Georgia to rotate depth players onto the field and clean up mistakes without facing the same consequences that come against conference opponents.



Georgia wide receiver London Humphreys (16) runs during a game against Florida at EverBank Stadium in Jacksonville, Florida, on Saturday, Nov. 1, 2025. Georgia won 24-20. PHOTO/KATHERINE DAVIS

After opening its season against Tennessee State, Georgia will look ahead to Western Kentucky, which travels to Athens on Saturday.

With the SEC expanding to a nine-game conference schedule, Georgia's matchup against Western Kentucky will be its last game against a non-Power Four opponent. Late-season opponents like Charlotte are now a bygone luxury for most teams, and the Bulldogs will have to run through their conference slate consecutively before finishing the regular season against Georgia Tech.

The matchup will look different for the Bulldogs, and not just because it is their second contest ever against the Hilltoppers. Georgia will wear its new all-white uniform combination, featuring white helmets, jerseys and pants.

Western Kentucky should not be completely overlooked as it finished last season 9-4, defeating Southern Miss 27-16 in the New Orleans Bowl. The Hilltoppers were impressive on the offensive side of the ball in 2025, averaging 29.7 points and more than 400 yards per game.

Georgia's final game before SEC play begins

Once Georgia finishes its matchup against Western Kentucky, the difficulty of its schedule quickly increases.

After kicking off conference play on the road against Arkansas next week, Georgia returns home to face Oklahoma and Vanderbilt in Weeks 4 and 5. The Bulldogs then face Alabama on the road and host Auburn, all before reaching their first bye week of the season.

The new format makes Western Kentucky the Bulldogs' final tune-up before they enter the stretch that will ultimately determine where their season goes.

Hilltoppers bring experience with nothing to lose

While Georgia enters Saturday looking to clean up mistakes before SEC play, Western Kentucky arrives in Athens with a much different set of expectations.

Under head coach Tyson Helton, winning seasons have become the expectation. Western Kentucky has reached a bowl game in each of his seven seasons leading the program, winning five of them.

Helton's experience gives the Hilltoppers a reason to be aggressive between the hedges.

Western Kentucky returns quarterback Rodney Tisdale Jr., who gained valuable experience as a freshman last season. He will also have returning wide receiver K.D. Hutchinson, who led the Hilltoppers with 66 receptions in 2025.

Against a Georgia team with significantly more talent across its roster, Western Kentucky will not benefit from playing conservatively. The Hilltoppers can afford to take shots downfield, attempt fourth-down conversions and find other ways to create opportunities against the Bulldogs.

For Western Kentucky, getting an early turnover or explosive play could change the complexion of the game and put pressure on a Georgia team preparing for SEC play.

The Hilltoppers enter Athens as the underdog, but that also gives them every reason to take chances.

Pressure Tisdale and limit the passing attack

If Georgia wants to prevent Western Kentucky from hanging around, slowing down Tisdale will be one of its biggest priorities.

Tisdale slotted into the starting role towards the end of his freshman year last season, completing 65.6% of his passes and recording multiple 300-yard performances. However, he struggled mightily in his final three starts, throwing four interceptions but no touchdowns.

As a team, Western Kentucky leaned heavily on its passing attack, averaging more than 270 passing yards per game.

The Bulldogs were one of the better defensive teams in the country in 2025, but their pass rush was not always consistent. Georgia finished with just 20 sacks across the season, so generating more pressure without having to rely on blitzes could be an early area to watch this season.

Giving Tisdale time in the pocket would allow Western Kentucky more opportunities to challenge Georgia's secondary. Forcing him to make quicker decisions could create instant turnover opportunities and prevent the Hilltoppers from sustaining drives and sticking around in this game.

Create explosive plays through the air

Georgia's offense will have a chance early in the season to show how dangerous its passing game can be against Western Kentucky before entering the more difficult portion of its schedule.

Last season, Georgia's offense was productive but sometimes had trouble collecting big gains consistently. The Bulldogs had 23 plays that picked up at least 30 yards, which ranked only 73rd nationally, and just seven plays that picked up at least 40 yards, ranking a dismal 122nd.

Led by quarterback Gunner Stockton, the Georgia offense relied on long drives rather than generating quick scores through the air. Western Kentucky allows Georgia to change that, as the Hilltoppers allowed 224.1 passing yards per game in 2025.

Rather than simply controlling the game, Georgia will have the opportunity to show it can turn favorable matchups into big plays.

The Bulldogs may have the personnel to air the ball out more successfully, too. Transfer wide receiver Isiah Canion

is expected to have a big role, and he caught a pass for at least 30 yards in five games for the Yellow Jackets last season. London Humphreys also showed he can beat defenders downfield last season, most notably hauling in a crucial 28-yard touchdown pass in Georgia's dramatic 44-41 overtime win over Tennessee.

Establish the run and win the line of scrimmage

Georgia should have a clear advantage in the trenches against Western Kentucky, and the Bulldogs need to take advantage of it from the start.

Establishing the run early would allow Georgia to control the pace of the game while opening up more opportunities for Stockton and the passing attack. The Bulldogs averaged 182.1 rushing yards per game and scored 31 rushing touchdowns last season.

Western Kentucky, on the other hand, struggled to stop the run, allowing 176.5 rushing yards per game and 4.9 yards per carry in 2025.

Winning on early downs would also keep the Bulldogs out of obvious passing situations and give the offense more options. Georgia should look to exploit the Hilltoppers' weaknesses from the start. If the offensive line can consistently create running lanes and allow the running backs to control the game, the Bulldogs can wear down Western Kentucky's defense early and often.

More importantly, Georgia should be able to control the line of scrimmage against the Hilltoppers. With SEC play beginning next week, this is the Bulldogs' final opportunity to build confidence up front before facing stronger and deeper defensive fronts.

If Georgia can consistently create running lanes and control the trenches, the Bulldogs should have little trouble moving the ball and controlling the game.

Prediction

Western Kentucky should give Georgia more of a challenge than Tennessee State, especially through the air. Tisdale may put together the first real test for the Georgia secondary, but the Bulldogs simply have too much talent and depth for the visitors to keep up for four quarters.

The Hilltoppers may find some early success as Georgia gets settled in, but the Bulldogs should eventually take control at the line of scrimmage and pull away.

The Bulldogs will take care of business here, but much tougher opponents are on the horizon.

Final Prediction: Georgia 38, Western Kentucky 13



Georgia quarterback Gunner Stockton (14) runs during a home game against Marshall at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Aug. 30, 2025. Georgia won 45-7. PHOTO/ETHAN GREENE



Georgia tight end Elyiss Williams (10) jumps after a snap during a game against Georgia Tech at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia, on Friday, Nov. 28, 2025. Georgia won 16-9 PHOTO/KATHERINE DAVIS

A big presence

Elyiss Williams brings size and versatility to Georgia’s tight end room

Ryan Erdossy

When No. 10 lines up on offense for Georgia against Western Kentucky on Saturday, he likely won’t be subtle. Listed at 6-foot-7, 255 pounds, Elyiss Williams is hard to miss.

What made Williams appealing as a recruit was not just his sheer size, but how it could be utilized in Georgia’s offense. A former five-star prospect and the nation’s top-ranked tight end in the 2025 class, according to 247Sports, Williams arrived in Athens with a reputation as a receiving and blocking threat.

During his final two seasons at Camden County High School, Williams led the team in offensive production, recording 54 receptions for 789 yards in his senior season. Now, entering his second year at Georgia, the blocking part of his game is drawing attention.

“He is as physical a blocker as maybe I’ve seen in my career of coaching for a tight end,” head coach Kirby Smart said. “He strains to block you. He enjoys the physicality of what he does. He has really improved as a pass catcher. He has improved as a run after catch guy.”

Williams showed glimpses of that ability as a freshman. During the SEC championship game, he could be seen tapping his back before plays, communicating with the offensive line and other tight ends about blocking adjustments.

The communication was barely noticeable, but it showed Williams’ involvement in Georgia’s blocking scheme and his understanding of the game’s complexities before the ball was even snapped. Even when not being targeted as a receiver, he contributed as a blocker in two or three tight-end packages.

With offensive coordinator Mike Bobo continuing to emphasize Georgia’s desire to run the ball, Williams’ development as a blocker could become an important part of his role.

Last season, Oscar Delp set a standard for Georgia’s tight ends, specifically in the run game. On tape, wherever Delp was blocking was usually where the ball was going. With Delp now in the NFL, an opportunity has opened for another tight end to emerge.

Georgia has seen the very best of what a two-tight-end combination can provide. During the Bulldogs’ back-to-back national championship seasons in 2021 and 2022, Darnell Washington and Brock Bowers gave the offense two tight ends who could contribute in different ways. Washington provided strong blocking ability, while Bowers developed into a dynamic receiving threat.

Using both players was a notable piece of former offensive coordinator Todd Monken’s championship-winning offense, creating favorable mismatches and run-game opportunities. Now, with senior Lawson Luckie returning and Williams

entering his second season, Georgia has another pair of tight ends who can make an impact in the blocking and passing game.

But Williams’ skillset does not end at blocking.

With several Georgia receivers moving on to the NFL, the tight end’s ability to stretch the field gives the Bulldogs another receiving option.

It did not take long last season for Williams to showcase his receiving ability. Saturday’s game against the Hilltoppers will allow him to continue to prove himself.

During the fourth quarter of the Bulldogs’ home opener against Marshall in 2025, the then-freshman lined up on the outside and caught a 23-yard touchdown pass, showing off his route-running ability to find the end zone in his first collegiate game.

He finished the season with 117 yards on seven receptions and his lone touchdown against Marshall. He had his most efficient performance against Kentucky, with three receptions for 48 receiving yards, including a 27-yard gain.

The 2025 season featured a crowded tight end room, forcing Williams to compete for snaps. Against Western Kentucky and throughout his entire second season, it may not just be Williams’ size that is hard to miss, but his potential to emerge as a dual-threat tight end for which elite defenses will struggle to find an answer.



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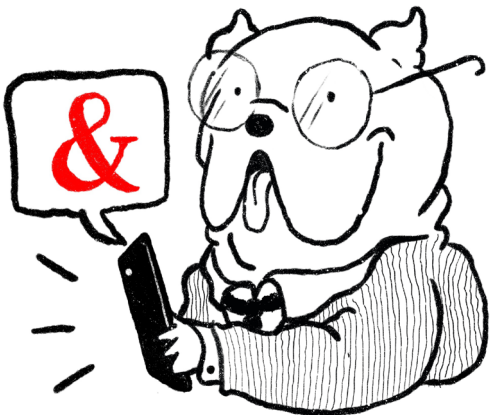
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GRAPHIC/JACK HESPRICH

OPINION Donning all white

Zach Pascuzzi

Teams unveiling new jerseys with nontraditional color combinations is hardly unexpected news in sports anymore. But it will be a big deal in Athens on Saturday, when Georgia will wear all-white alternate uniforms complete with white helmets for the first time in its history for its matchup against Western Kentucky.

The game will be only the fifth the Bulldogs have played under Kirby Smart wearing alternate jerseys. They have won the previous four, including most recently in the 2021 Peach Bowl, when the team donned black uniforms in a 24-21 victory over Cincinnati.

Smart, to be clear, is not necessarily opposed to uniforms that do not align with Georgia's conventional home and away looks. Understandably, he just has more important things to care about.

"I hear that stuff all the time, the chatter online about how much I supposedly hate all that stuff," Smart said in a press conference. "That's never been my stance. Just because somebody doesn't do it, doesn't mean you don't like it. For me, I focus on the guys playing the game and worry more about winning the game than what you wear, and that's been a staple for me."

However, even if hate is a strong word, Smart is known to be an admirer of tradition. After all, he only donned Georgia's traditional red and white with silver britches during his playing career at Georgia, and he was the defensive coordinator at Alabama — a program that almost never messes around with its on-field colors. Other legendary football programs, like Michigan, Notre Dame and USC have likewise historically refused to tinker much with their jersey designs.

For Smart, new uniforms represent little more than a motivational gimmick.

"Some of the best places I've played, great atmosphere," Smart said in 2024. "They never change their uniform, they're traditionalist. If it takes changing the uniform to get people fired up, then I'm at the wrong place."

However, programs such as Oregon, known to frequently showcase different uniform designs, have not struggled to win games or generate a strong home atmosphere.

Additionally, the only reason why colors become iconic in

the first place is because of their association with winning. Alabama's crimson, Notre Dame's blue and gold and Michigan's maize strike fear into opponents because of the history associated with them.

No matter what colors Georgia wears, nothing can change the fact that Athens is one of the best places in the country both to play and cheer for college football. That reputation would not exist without the undeniable passion and energy the players and the fans both bring.

And so, if the players want a new outfit every now and then, it's nothing if not richly deserved.

Safety KJ Bolden and tight end Lawson Luckie, the players who first stepped out at a team meeting in August wearing the all-white combination usually shown only to recruits during official visits, are both looking forward to showing them off.

"I really didn't want to believe it at first," Bolden said. "I thought they were just trolling the team, but [Smart]'s actually serious. ... It's gonna be an electric Week 2 coming, for sure."

Luckie believes the new uniforms will add even more to the already-raucous Sanford Stadium atmosphere.

"It'll bring some extra juice from the guys running out of the tunnel, and I think the fans will love it," Luckie said.

When Bolden and Luckie revealed the new uniform to their teammates, Smart confirmed they would wear them in a real game. The surprise was exactly what linebacker Raylen Wilson had wanted since Smart first teased the idea of wearing the jerseys during an actual game in the spring.

Wilson had not seen the all-white look since his earliest days as a Bulldog. In fact, he used a photo of himself in the all-whites to affirm his commitment to Georgia.

But even with the players on board, the fans still had to play their part in making the all-white uniform debut a reality. All Smart had to do was promise it as a reward.

"If they can triple our subscribers to Glory Glory, I'll wear the sh-t," Smart said in a press conference in March earlier this year. "So if they wanna triple the subs and get it done by G-Day, I'll be all about it. Y'all get them to do it, and I'm in."

They did it. And he's in.

Zach Pascuzzi is a senior journalism major at the University of Georgia.

NUMBERS TO KNOW: Week 2

#1: Georgia wide receiver Talyn Taylor

With Zachariah Branch moving on to the NFL, there is an opportunity for a young receiver to become Stockton's top target against Western Kentucky. Taylor generated excitement last season before suffering an upper-body injury during practice in October that required surgery. He appeared in six games and finished the season playing in the SEC championship game and College Football Playoff matchup against Ole Miss. Taylor was the first five-star wide receiver Georgia signed since George Pickens in 2019. In high school, he led the team with 1,617 yards and 24 touchdowns during his senior year. Last season showed flashes of what he could contribute to the Bulldogs' offense, but 2026 could see him grow into a more prominent role.

#2: Western Kentucky wide receiver K.D. Hutchinson

The matchup with the Bulldogs will bring Hutchinson back to the state of Georgia, where he played high school football. The redshirt senior enters the season with plenty of experience, having played every game since 2023. That experience will matter against Georgia's strong secondary, which includes KJ Bolden and Ellis Robinson IV. The Hilltoppers graduated Matthew Henry, their leader last season in receiving yards and touchdowns. In his absence, Hutchinson may be asked to take on more of the offensive load. Last season, he found success rushing and receiving, finishing third on the team in all-purpose yards and leading Western Kentucky with 66 receptions.

#10: Georgia linebacker Zayden Walker

Walker, a former five-star recruit, closed out his freshman season on a high note. In the SEC championship game, Walker sacked Alabama quarterback Ty Simpson for a five-yard loss. In his second season, Walker will look to expand his role. CJ Allen headlined the linebacker room last season before being drafted by the Indianapolis Colts, and his departure could offer Walker more opportunities. The Bulldogs still have depth at the position with players like Raylen Wilson, Chris Cole and Justin Williams. Head coach Kirby Smart said Walkeunderwent shoulder surgery in the offseason for a torn labrum. After missing spring practices, getting snaps in the first few games could be important for Walker as he works his way back.

#5: Western Kentucky quarterback Rodney Tisdale Jr.

Tisdale started for the Hilltoppers in the final six games of the 2025 season. One of the games was against another SEC foe, LSU, where Western Kentucky lost in a 13-10 nail-biter. The redshirt sophomore now looks to carry over his momentum from last season. Western Kentucky won four of the six contests with Tisdale starting. The Florida native finished the season with 1,432 yards and nine touchdowns. He also found success on the ground, notching two scores. Tisdale now has the keys to the Hilltoppers' offense to begin the season, but will immediately be tested against a defense that has backed Georgia's two consecutive SEC-winning seasons.

#23: Georgia tight end Jaden Reddell

Jaden Reddell has headlined the offseason after his strong performance in the annual G-Day scrimmage. The redshirt sophomore tight end recorded 61 total yards and hauled in one touchdown. He received praise from Smart postgame, who called him the most improved and most explosive player. The tight end room for Georgia features several notable players who could emerge this season alongside senior Lawson Luckie, including Reddell. He appeared in all 14 games during the 2025 season, featuring as a key blocking tight end and on special teams. After his performance in G-Day, Reddell could be in line for a larger role in his second season.

#7: Western Kentucky defensive back Jaylen Lewis

Lewis began his career at Arkansas playing four games during the 2022 and 2023 seasons, so he has some SEC experience for the upcoming contest. Now, as a redshirt senior, the defensive back has established himself with the Hilltoppers. In his first year at Western Kentucky, he had his most productive season yet, finishing tied for second on the team in total tackles with 74 while also recording 3 1/2 tackles for loss and a team-high three interceptions. Georgia expects to have a younger group of wide receivers emerging this season for returning quarterback Gunner Stockton, and Lewis will be tasked with defending them.

Ryan Erdossy

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CORRECTIONS

As a student-run news organization with the mission of training journalists, we know that mistakes happen and we do our best to correct them as soon as possible. In the Aug. 6 edition, on page B2, it was misstated that Dexter Fisher is already serving as mayor; his start date is in January 2027 while Kelly Girtz finishes his final term, and on A7, the wrong date and credit was used in a photo caption. The Red & Black regrets these errors and they have since been fixed. If you spot a factual error, please let us know by sending a correction to editor@randb.com. Corrections to items in print editions are published in the next possible print issue. Corrections for online-only articles are posted at redandblack.com/corrections.

Lockdown focus

Georgia football’s defensive backs look to shut down the pass in 2026

Ben Kule

Georgia football’s secondary will likely be one of its make-or-break groups this season, and this week’s matchup with Western Kentucky serves as its final chance to prove itself before conference play begins.

Early in the 2025 season, Georgia’s biggest weakness appeared to be its inability to stop the pass. In their first SEC contest of the year, the Bulldogs’ cornerbacks were beaten for large gains on numerous occasions, leaving quarterback Gunner Stockton with nearly no room for error as Georgia barely snuck out of Knoxville, Tennessee with a 44-41 win.

Ellis Robinson IV, a former No. 2 overall recruit with expectations to be Georgia’s next great defensive back, was particularly gashed by Volunteer receivers, leading many to question if he would ever live up to his full potential. The next game, Robinson gave up another touchdown in man coverage against Alabama wide receiver Germie Bernard, and the Bulldogs saw their 33-game home winning streak snapped by the Crimson Tide.

In both the nail-biting victory over Tennessee and the loss to Alabama, Georgia’s opponents picked up significantly more yards through the air than they did on the ground. However, after their struggles in the beginning of the season, the defensive backs showed substantial improvement.

The Bulldogs won the remainder of their regular-season games, and the secondary played a major role. Excluding the 43-35 shootout win over Ole Miss, Georgia’s defense seemed unbreakable, and star quarterbacks were stifled.

Georgia saw improved play from Robinson as well as veteran cornerback Daylen Everette and safety KJ Bolden, and the results showed it. Texas and Georgia Tech, Georgia’s final two ranked opponents in the regular season, were held to a combined 19 points, and their respective quarterbacks, Arch Manning and Haynes King, finished with quarterback ratings (QBRs) under 70.

But the biggest example of improvement came in the SEC championship game, when Georgia held Alabama to seven points and quarterback Ty Simpson to a dismal completion percentage of 48.7% and a QBR of 19.5—by far his worst mark of the year.

While the secondary could not do enough to secure a post-season win, the groundwork was laid for the position group to have a strong 2026 campaign, especially with Robinson and Bolden returning as upperclassmen.

“He has been an extraordinary teammate since being here. He helped so many guys in the secondary,” head coach Kirby Smart said of Bolden at the beginning of camp. “I always hear him coaching back behind me, being positive with guys and being a leader.”

In addition to those two star returners, Georgia used the transfer portal to add depth to the secondary. Two new comers are expected to crack the starting lineup and will have the opportunity to get more acclimated to the team against the Hilltoppers: Khalil Barnes and Ja’Marley Riddle.

Barnes was the first player to commit to the Bulldogs in this year’s transfer portal, and it serves as a homecoming for the Athens native and North Oconee High School alum. Now a senior, Barnes spent his first three seasons at



Georgia defensive back Ellis Robinson IV (1) makes a tackle during the first half of the SEC championship game between Georgia and Alabama at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, on Saturday, Dec. 6, 2025. Georgia won 28-7. PHOTO/KALEB TATUM

Clemson, where he was a First Team Freshman All-American in 2023 and contributed to the Tigers’ Atlantic Coast Conference championship in 2024. He turned in another solid year in 2025, finishing his Clemson tenure with 139 tackles and seven interceptions.

Riddle took a different path to get to Georgia, first becoming a Group of Five star. The junior spent two seasons dominating the American Conference with East Carolina, recording 70 tackles, three interceptions and six pass deflections last year to lead the Pirates in all three categories.

Redshirt sophomore Demello Jones is expected to be squarely in the mix against Western Kentucky and moving forward, as well as safeties Rasean Dinkins and Zion Branch. Jones showed flashes last season that demonstrated he can be a capable cornerback opposite Robinson when Everette goes on to the NFL, but his season ended on a sour note when

he was beat by Ole Miss wide receiver De’Zhaun Stribling late in the Sugar Bowl, allowing the Rebels to kick the game winning field goal that eliminated Georgia.

Smart believes the key to a successful pass defense comes from mental discipline.

“Sometimes Ellis [Robinson] is so competitive, and I put Demello [Jones] in the same category, that they get down on themselves,” Smart said. “It’s good for them to experience some failure and have to overcome that because I’ve never seen a corner that just shut everybody out.”

While Georgia is not expected to have much trouble defeating Western Kentucky, its ability to prevent quarterback Rodney Tisdale Jr. from connecting with his receivers on Saturday could be the biggest indicator of whether the secondary has what it takes to lead the team deep into the postseason.

Thursday Crossword - Answer Online FRIDAY, Sep. 11

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
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42	43	44				45		46				
47					48					49	50	51
52					53					54		
55					56					57		

ACROSS

- 1. Hit the slopes
- 4. "Agreed!"
- 8. Get ready for a trip
- 12. Archer's skill
- 13. Arm bone
- 14. Strong team
- 15. Econ. indicator
- 16. Canoeing challenge
- 17. Conga formation
- 18. More fit
- 20. "Beau ____"
- 21. Almost unique
- 23. Studio stock
- 25. End of a bridal path
- 27. Like a bairn
- 28. Grammy category
- 31. Binaural
- 33. ____ Beach, Calif.
- 35. Okra, essentially
- 36. Put to the test
- 38. Drew in mysteries
- 39. Kind of sprawl
- 41. Boardwalk treats
- 42. Greek thinker
- 45. Goodness
- 47. Cheerful tune
- 48. Cognizant of
- 49. Artificial conception

- 52. Crowning point
- 53. Chic or cheeky
- 54. It's nothing, really
- 55. Accessible
- 56. Arborist's concern
- 57. Brewer of golf

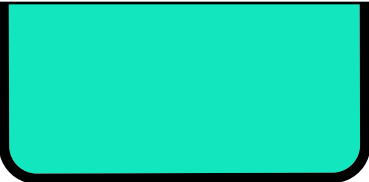
DOWN

- 1. Bed problem
- 2. Clan members
- 3. Made known
- 4. Face-off
- 5. Experienced one
- 6. First name of two U.S. presidents
- 7. Act like a chicken?
- 8. Explorers' destinations
- 9. Allies opponent
- 10. Small change
- 11. On bended ____
- 19. Den denizen
- 20. Collect slowly
- 21. Blacksmith's implement
- 22. Choral voice
- 24. Grig, when grown
- 26. Back in?
- 28. Boxing
- 29. "____ bitten, twice shy"
- 30. Picks up the check

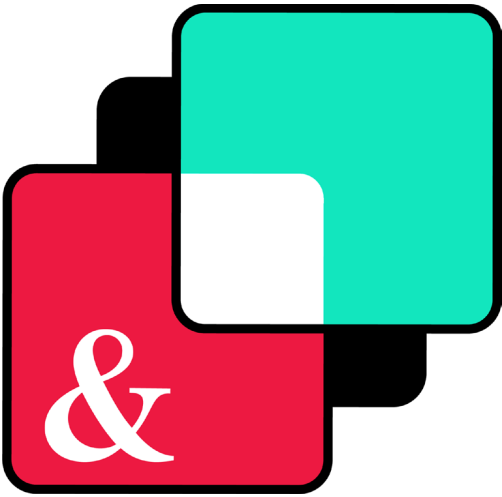
- 32. An eye for the poetic?
- 34. Canter, for example
- 37. It's a bore
- 39. Complete
- 40. ____ Dame
- 42. Blueprint
- 43. Some parasites
- 44. Soprano Gluck
- 46. Classroom drilling
- 48. Make a choice
- 50. By way of
- 51. Wing it?

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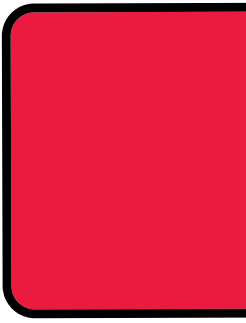
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Alan Jimenez

Alumni Communications Manager

How has your coursework at Grady College prepared you for your role at The Red & Black?

My coursework at Grady has taught me how to communicate with different audiences while still creating work that feels engaging and purposeful. I've been able to take what I've learned about writing, strategy and storytelling in the classroom and apply it to real-world communications at The Red & Black.

What has been the most rewarding part of serving in a leadership role at The Red & Black?

It has been seeing how much I've grown as a communicator and being trusted to contribute ideas and take ownership of meaningful work. It's also rewarding to work alongside other students who care about The Red & Black and its history.

Major:

Advertising

Position Description:

Writing and producing alumni communications; creating and scheduling social media content highlighting alumni achievements; assisting with alumni outreach and mentorship programming; supporting special projects and events.

At Grady College, we are proud of our students who learn the core values, ethics and skills of journalism in our classrooms, then apply them to writing and visualizing features in The Red & Black. This is one in a series of profiles about our student leaders who serve The Red & Black.



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