GAMEDAY PREVIEW

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GEORGIA VS. OKLAHOMA

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SOONER OR LATER

SEC returns to Sanford

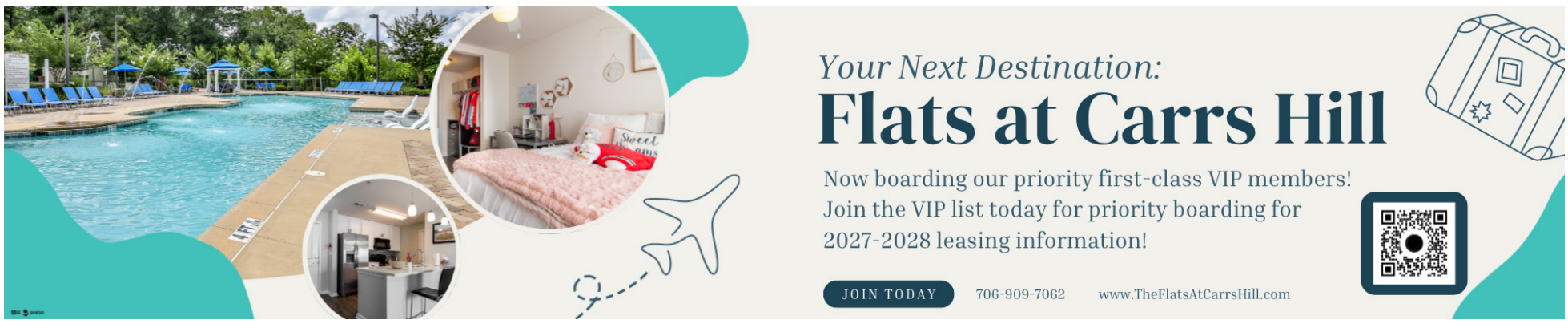


Georgia running back Nate Frazier (3) celebrates after a touchdown during the first half of a football game against Tennessee State at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Sept. 5, 2026. Georgia won 63-3. PHOTO/LILY KATE AKINS

A2 **COURT TO FIELD** Georgia's history with Oklahoma

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History everywhere you look

Georgia and Oklahoma's ties go beyond the field

Zach Pascuzzi



Georgia quarterback Jake Fromm (11) celebrates after beating Oklahoma 54-48 during the College Football Playoff Semifinals between the University of Georgia Bulldogs and the University of Oklahoma Sooners at the Rose Bowl Stadium in Pasadena, California, on Monday, January 1, 2018. The Bulldogs and Sooners went into double overtime before Georgia took home the win. FILE/STAFF

When Georgia and Oklahoma meet Saturday for only the second time in their history — and for the first time as SEC rivals — they will both need to be perfect if they are to outdo the thrilling showdown that transpired in their only other game.

The 2018 Rose Bowl between the No. 2 Sooners and No. 3 Bulldogs, that season's champions of the Big 12 and the SEC, respectively, was a semifinal for the College Football Playoff. It was the first Rose Bowl to not feature a team from either the Pac-12 or Big Ten conferences since 2002.

Needless to say, the four-hour, five-minute game lived up to the billing.

Georgia rallied from a 31-14 deficit to tie the game at 45 by the end of regulation, meaning the Rose Bowl went into overtime for the first time in its illustrious history.

After the teams traded field goals in the first overtime period, Bulldogs linebacker Lorenzo Carter blocked Oklahoma kicker Austin Seibert's field goal attempt in the second period, giving Georgia a chance to win the game with any points on its ensuing possession.

And it did just that, with running back Sony Michel taking a direct snap on second down and rushing for a 27-yard touchdown, securing a wild 54-48 win for the Bulldogs and earning Georgia a spot in the national championship game.

Michel, who had to quickly regain composure after a fourth-quarter fumble, ended up being named the game's Offensive MVP. He had three touchdowns and 181 yards on 11 carries, and on four receptions added 41 yards and a receiving touchdown.

"I made plays. I gave up plays. My team just had faith in me," Michel said, according to a USA Today article. "That's what this team is all about. They showed true character today."

The game broke several Rose Bowl records which still stand today. Georgia's rally from 17 points down to win remains the largest comeback in the game's history, and the 102 points the Bulldogs and Sooners combined to score are still the most total points ever scored in a single edition.

Georgia kicker Rodrigo Blankenship also kicked the longest field goal in Rose Bowl history in the second quarter, converting from 55 yards.

"One thing about this team is that these guys never give up," running back Nick Chubb said about the halftime deficit, according to NCAA. "I knew going into that situation that we were going to win. We've been in that situation before and we were just going to pull it out."

Both Georgia and Oklahoma have histories that many other college football programs would envy. Both are in the top five in total bowl game appearances, and in the top 10 in total wins, total NFL draft picks and total weeks spent in the AP Top 25 poll.

But despite all of that, these teams' biggest impact on college football may have come not on the field of play, but in a court of law.

On June 27, 1984, the Supreme Court decided the landmark case NCAA v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma — in which Oklahoma was joined by the University of Georgia Athletic Association — in favor of the two schools. At the time, the NCAA had complete control over television rights to college football games, and could limit the number of times per season a certain school could appear on national television. The NCAA believed that televising every game would cause live attendance to decline, a disputed claim.

The court ruled 7-2 in favor of Oklahoma and Georgia, finding that the NCAA's restrictions on TV rights created a monopoly that violated antitrust law. The decision granted individual universities and athletic conferences the right to negotiate their own independent media contracts.

The decision has had massive modern repercussions. The volume of televised college football games immediately surged without the NCAA's authority. Because larger programs and conferences benefitted substantially more from these new TV deals, the outcome of the case is one of the biggest factors behind the vast financial disparities that exist today between big and small college athletic departments.

Additionally, certain schools in recent years have undergone conference realignment, even when such moves make little geographic sense, in order to join more powerful conferences with lucrative media deals. Ironically, Oklahoma's recent move to the SEC itself is a major example of this.

The case also laid the groundwork for future challenges to the NCAA's governance in the 21st century, namely over NIL money and player eligibility.

Andrew Coats, the lawyer who represented Georgia and Oklahoma, admitted to NBC News in 2023 that he thought he "screwed up college football across the board."

"You feel bad how far it's gone," Coats said to NBC News. "But I don't think anyone could have predicted what would happen."

So, when Georgia and Oklahoma meet in Sanford Stadium, they will be more than just two powerful SEC teams squaring off on national television.

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Georgia tight end Elyiss Williams (10) leaps for a touchdown during the game against Tennessee State at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Sept. 5, 2026. Georgia won 63-3. PHOTO/LILY KATE AKINS

Time to be tested

Georgia faces Oklahoma in first high-profile matchup of season

Ryan Erdossy

After three dominant wins to start the season, including last week's victory over Arkansas in Georgia's SEC opener, head coach Kirby Smart had an unmistakable tone when discussing how his team will fare against SEC opponents.

Through the first three games, quarterback Gunner Stockton had thrown more touchdowns than incompletions, the team has totaled 178 points and 15 different Bulldogs have found the end zone.

Yet when asked about the fast offense and impressive play, Smart had two simple words to describe the difference-maker.

"Our opponents," Smart said.

Smart's answer points directly toward Georgia's next opponent, which will provide the Bulldogs with their first major test of the season.

Now 1-0 in conference play and 3-0 overall, the Bulldogs move into the heart of their SEC schedule as they host Oklahoma in Week 4.

One of Smart's key questions for his team after two games was how it will respond to adversity. Oklahoma has already faced that challenge once this season, when it was defeated by Michigan on the road 17-10 in Week 2. Whether that experience helps the Sooners earn a different result in Athens remains to be seen.

Oklahoma has experience playing through a difficult schedule, including going 5-1 against six ranked opponents last season. The Sooners finished the regular season on a four-game win streak, with three of those victories coming against ranked opponents.

The highest-ranked win came during that stretch, when Oklahoma defeated then-No. 4 Alabama on the road 23-21. The Sooners forced three turnovers, despite generating only 212 yards of offense, finding a way to win despite their struggles to move the ball.

That experience responding to adversity could be important for Oklahoma as it prepares to face Georgia in Athens after falling from No. 11 to unranked in three weeks. But the Sooners have something Georgia does not: recent experience against an opponent that has since appeared in the AP Top 25.

178

Total points scored by the Bulldogs during their first three games of the 2026-27 season.

Limit Mateer's production on the ground

Georgia's defense will have to account for more than Oklahoma's passing game when quarterback John Mateer has the ball.

During the 2024 season, his last at Washington State, Mateer cemented his dual-threat abilities, rushing for an outstanding 826 yards and 15 touchdowns.

Last season at Oklahoma, Mateer was the Sooners' second-leading rusher with 431 yards on 149 carries.

But Mateer has been unable to establish himself as a rushing threat at all this season, and the offense has struggled to move the ball in the two most recent contests against Michigan and New Mexico.

Georgia has experience defending quarterbacks who can make plays with their legs. In 2025, sacks led to Texas quarterback Arch Manning carrying the ball five times for minus-17 yards against the Bulldogs. Trinidad Chambliss rushed for 42 yards against Georgia during the regular season, primarily on short-yardage and red-zone opportunities, before being held to 14 yards in the team's College Football Playoff rematch.

CJ Allen, now with the Indianapolis Colts, served as the quarterback spy in several situations last season, along with Raylen Wilson and Chris Cole. Cole and Wilson could be tasked with containing Mateer inside the pocket and limiting his opportunities to make plays on the ground.

Oklahoma needs to establish the run game

In the first game of the season, Oklahoma faced UTEP with an emphasis on the run. The Sooners rushed for 170 yards as a team, with Lloyd Avant, a transfer from Colorado State, leading the team with 79 yards and one touchdown.

But the success Oklahoma found on the ground against UTEP was largely absent in the next two games. Mateer led the team in rushing with 45 yards on 13 carries against Michigan, and the offense as a whole had just 61 rushing yards against New Mexico.

Trailing 10-0 to the Wolverines at halftime, the Sooners relied heavily on the passing game in the second half.

Last season, Oklahoma head coach Brent Venables said a goal going into the offseason was fixing the "pathetic" run game. Improving the run game would help take pressure off Mateer and allow his dual-threat abilities to take over a game.

The Sooners finished the season ranked 113th nationally out of 136 FBS teams in rushing.

Offensive coordinator Ben Arbuckle is known for his Air Raid offense, putting pressure on opposing defenses with deep passes. For Oklahoma's offense to take advantage of Mateer's skillset, the run game will need to complement the passing game.

Oklahoma will also face a Georgia defense that improved significantly against the run last season. The Bulldogs allowed 130.1 rushing yards per game in 2024 before reducing that number to 81.5 yards per game in 2025.

If Oklahoma cannot establish the run, Georgia could put more pressure on Mateer and force the Sooners into more difficult situations in the passing game.

Win at the line of scrimmage

A strong run game for either team will begin in the trenches.

Part of Oklahoma's running woes against the Wolverines and Lobos can be attributed to the play of its offensive line. Michigan allowed just 289 yards of offense while recording three sacks and eight tackles for loss, while even New Mexico managed six tackles for losses of its own.

The pressure disrupted Mateer's timing and made it difficult for Oklahoma to consistently move the ball. That ultimately contributed to a late-game interception that gave the Wolverines the ball back to score a game-winning touchdown, securing the victory.

The Sooners will also have to account for the health of star left tackle Michael Fasusi, who has been limited early in the season because of a lingering shoulder injury.

Against Georgia, Oklahoma will face a defensive front that has the ability to make the offensive line's job even more difficult. If the Sooners cannot protect Mateer or create running lanes, Georgia could force Oklahoma into the same one-dimensional offense it showed against Michigan. The offensive line will also have to handle the crowd noise from Sanford Stadium, which could make communication more difficult.

For Georgia, winning the battle up front could be the key to limiting both Oklahoma's rushing attack and Mateer's ability to extend plays outside the pocket.

Georgia's young offensive line will have its hands full with Oklahoma's defensive line under Venables, however. Beginning with the 2025 season, Venables took over defensive play-calling responsibilities, overseeing a playoff defense that led the nation in tackles for loss going into the postseason.

The Sooners' defensive line features David Stone, a preseason All-SEC selection, and Jayden Jackson, a defensive tackle who earned freshman All-American honors as a true freshman. Georgia's offensive line will have to contend with both players as it looks to establish the run and protect Stockton.

Georgia maintains balanced offensive attack

To counter the Sooners' aggressive defense, the Bulldogs can balance their offensive attack. Georgia has emphasized the run game under offensive coordinator Mike Bobo.

After Georgia's first three games against Tennessee State, Western Kentucky and Arkansas, the running attack looked strong with returner Nate Frazier headlining the room. Despite exiting with an injury against Arkansas, Frazier has rushed for 202 yards on 24 carries, reaching the end zone five times.

Michigan's Bryce Underwood rushed for 87 yards on 18 carries against the Oklahoma defense. Stockton also demonstrated his ability as a runner last season, highlighted by his rushing performances against Ole Miss and Auburn, and last week he shattered his career longest rush with a 62-yard burst against the Razorbacks.

With a reshaped wide receiver room, Smart said the offensive "DNA" is about spreading the ball.

Georgia's young receivers have shown their ability early in the season. Establishing the run could open opportunities for Stockton to find receivers downfield.

Oklahoma's defense held Michigan to 17 points, while Underwood completed 9 of 17 passes for 111 yards. The Sooners' secondary will provide another test for Georgia's young receivers, who have three games under their belts and will face their toughest defensive opponent of the season to date.

Georgia will look to spread the ball among multiple receivers, including Sacovie White-Helton and Talyn Taylor.

History of the matchup

Georgia and Oklahoma have met just once, with their only matchup being in January 2018 in the Rose Bowl. The Bulldogs defeated the Sooners 54-48 in double overtime to advance to the College Football Playoff National Championship.

Georgia rallied from a 31-14 deficit behind quarterback Jake Fromm. Heisman Trophy winner Baker Mayfield led the Sooners under head coach Lincoln Riley.

Eight years after their only meeting came in the CFP, the teams will meet again with possible postseason stakes attached. As Oklahoma seeks to get its season back on track before it's too late, Georgia has the opportunity to pick up its most impressive win yet.

Prediction

Oklahoma should give Georgia its first real test of the season, especially with a defense that can create pressure and limit explosive plays.

Sanford Stadium has also been a difficult place for opponents to play, with Alabama's win in 2025 marking the first home loss the Bulldogs have suffered since 2019.

Whoever wins the battle in the trenches should win the game, and in this case, the Bulldogs have the edge. The Sooners still seem to be finding their rhythm on the ground and establishing their offensive identity early in the season.

With two defenses capable of limiting opposing offenses, the game could produce a lower-scoring result.

If the Bulldogs can establish the running attack and keep Mateer contained, Georgia should win the contest, a good tone-setter as it heads into the tougher stride of its schedule.

Both teams made the College Football Playoff last season, and with the talent on both rosters, another meeting between the Bulldogs and Sooners later in the conference title game or CFP is not out of the question.

Final Prediction: Georgia 24, Oklahoma 10

Emerging defensive star

Elijah Griffin steps into bigger role on Georgia's defensive front

Evan Waldman



Georgia defensive lineman Elijah Griffin (90) lines up against Western Kentucky at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia on Saturday, Sept. 12, 2026. Georgia won 70-20. PHOTO/EVAN FRILINGOS

Elijah Griffin entered his sophomore year with a much different responsibility on the Georgia defensive line.

As a freshman, Griffin was one of several defensive linemen attempting to work his way into the rotation. Now, the Bulldogs are relying on the 6-foot-4, 310-pounder to become one of the most disruptive players on defense and give Oklahoma a challenge on Saturday.

These expectations were made clear by head coach Kirby Smart at the 2026 SEC Media Day.

"He's an incredibly intelligent and articulate kid and we need him to be a playmaker for us this year," Smart said. "We want to see a big jump in his play and his disruption inside."

Griffin showed flashes of his potential during his first season in Athens, recording 22 tackles, one sack and one forced fumble. Those stats were good enough for Griffin to earn a spot on the 2025 SEC All-Freshman Football Team.

Griffin's biggest moments came in Georgia's final game of the 2025 season against Ole Miss in the College Football Playoff. Despite the Bulldogs' 39-34 loss, Griffin recorded a career-high four tackles and forced a fumble that was returned for a touchdown.

During spring practice leading up to the 2026 season, Griffin showed Smart the combination of strength and athleticism that demonstrates his potential to be a real disrupter in opposing backfields.

"He's very quick for his size. Just being unblockable is what we'd like to see, and playing with a high motor and a destructive attitude," Smart said, according to UGA Sports.

Smart also acknowledged that Griffin has the capability of developing into an elite player, but that development has required more than Griffin just relying on his physical traits. Griffin's breakout is no surprise, as he was the No. 1 defensive lineman and No. 3 overall prospect in ESPN's 2025 recruit rankings.

After experiencing his first collegiate season, Griffin said he entered his sophomore year with a better understanding of what it requires to play on the Georgia defensive line.

"Last year coming in, I did not know what to expect," Griffin said in a September press conference. "But now ... I know the playbook a lot better and development-wise, I feel like I can strike blockers better."

Griffin's second season has gotten off to as good a start as it could have, considering the opponents the Bulldogs have faced. In the Week 1 victory against Tennessee State, Georgia held the Tigers to just 109 total yards, including just 10 rushing yards, while recording three sacks. Griffin recorded his first career start in the season opener, but did not play much as a result of the game's trajectory.

The following week against Western Kentucky, Griffin again started in the middle of the Georgia defensive front.

His individual stats were modest, with just two assisted tackles, but Georgia once again controlled the game on both sides of the ball. The Bulldogs held Western Kentucky to 225 total yards and a measly three yards per play in a 70-20 victory.

Despite the limited opportunities so far for Georgia's starting defensive front, Smart isn't using game statistics as the primary form of evaluation.

"I don't know if there's a measuring stick of on-field performance," Smart said ahead of the Arkansas game. "You can't really measure that with the number of snaps they had; I look at it as day-to-day interaction, buy-in and work ethic."

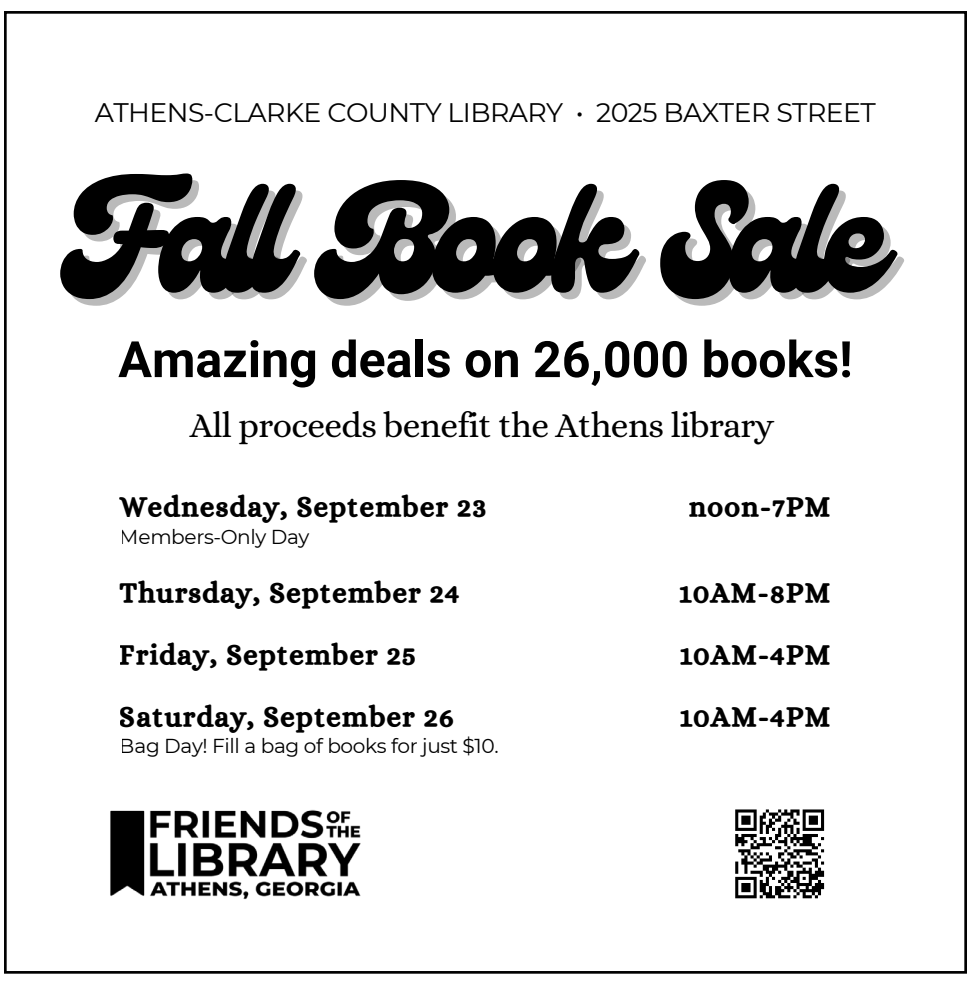
Through the early season, Griffin has yet to produce the type of eye-catching numbers that would indicate a statistical breakout season, but Georgia's expectations for him extend beyond the tackle column.

The Bulldogs finished last season with only 20 sacks, the fewest in the SEC, and struggled to consistently create tackles for loss, despite ranking among the best teams in the country at stopping the run. Griffin's ability to create chaos in the backfield and disrupt plays on the interior is crucial in 2026.

Georgia's first few games offered Griffin an opportunity to adjust to his expanded role without the pressure of SEC competition. That changes as conference play, specifically a tough matchup against Oklahoma, provides both Griffin and the rest of the Georgia defense with a real test.

As a freshman, Griffin only needed to provide flashes of potential. But now, Georgia is counting on those flashes to become something the Sooners and future opponents have to account for every week.







Highlights from the Sept. 12 game against Western Kentucky


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OPINION Georgia faces road warriors

Ben Kule

Oklahoma's 17-10 loss to Michigan, the same team that just a week prior narrowly defeated Western Michigan 13-12 on a controversial final play, makes it considerable underdogs for its contest against Georgia in Athens and deservedly so.

As the Bulldogs are the two-time defending SEC champions and a program that has been steadily on or near the top of the conference for decades, SEC newcomers have predictably struggled when they first suit up between the hedges. Texas, which joined the conference alongside Oklahoma in 2024, has gone 13-3 in regular-season SEC tilts in its first two seasons, but suffered two of those defeats to Georgia, including a 35-10 blowout in Athens in 2025.

The two teams that joined most recently before the Longhorns and Sooners, Texas A&M and Missouri, have not fared well against the Bulldogs either. The Aggies lost in their only trip to Athens since joining the SEC, and Missouri has won just once in six tries in Athens since it joined the conference, losing by margins such as 53-28, 27-0 and 43-6.

It seems as if defeating Georgia is a rite of passage for those who want to prove they can be true competitors in the conference. Yet Oklahoma, although not favored to do so, has a better shot than one may think.

The Sooners hired head coach Brent Venables ahead of the 2022 season, and his tenure can be described as very up-and-down. Oklahoma went a lackluster 6-7 in both 2022 and 2024, a step back from the Sooners' four College Football Playoff appearances in five years not long before Venables' arrival. In the odd years, though, he led Oklahoma to a 10-2 regular-season record and is fresh off a CFP appearance.

Regardless of whether their overall seasons have been successful, one thing has been consistent since Venables and the Sooners joined the SEC: Oklahoma can win on the road.

In their first-ever road SEC game in 2024, the Sooners emerged victorious over Auburn, overcoming an 11-point fourth-quarter deficit to win 27-21 in a raucous Jordan-Hare Stadium environment. The next year, they excelled on the road even more, sweeping their SEC slate away from home including back-to-back top-15 wins.

Oklahoma grinded out a 33-27 win over No. 14 Tennessee at Neyland Stadium, then, after its bye week, upset No. 4 Alabama 23-21 at Bryant-Denny Stadium to put itself firmly in the playoff picture.

So, can the Sooners continue this trend and get their season back on track by winning their first-ever trip to Athens? Not necessarily.

No place has been tougher to win in than Sanford Stadium this decade. Georgia recently held a 33-game winning streak at home which lasted until 2025, and has won another six in a row at home since that defeat.

Additionally, Georgia is planning a "stripe out," attempting to coordinate a color pattern in the stands to add to an already intimidating stadium atmosphere. When the Bulldogs last held a stripe out, they picked up their highest-ranked win of the 2025 season with a 43-35 statement over Ole Miss.

Still, Oklahoma's recent road success is why Georgia cannot afford to overlook this game. In Georgia's first two games — blowout victories over Tennessee State and Western Kentucky — head coach Kirby Smart was vocally displeased with some of his players' performances. While Georgia also won its SEC opener on the road against Arkansas handily last week, the Sooners will easily be Georgia's toughest test of the young season so far, and failure to prepare could result in another upset road victory for Venables' squad.

It would not be a surprise if Oklahoma shows more poise and vigilance than most teams do when they enter Sanford Stadium. Still, Georgia has more than enough talent to expose Oklahoma's weaknesses, and the Bulldogs have consistently proven that playing at home gives them another advantage.

Quarterback John Mateer has not looked the same since his hand injury last season, and the Sooners are coming off a year in which they finished third-to-last in the conference in rushing yards, giving Georgia's strong run defense a clear mismatch to exploit.

However, Oklahoma has proven since entering the SEC that it does not need the crowd cheering it on to deliver big results. If the mistakes Smart noticed in the first two games of the season start to happen again at the wrong times, the Sooners might be able to pounce and reestablish themselves as legitimate contenders both in the conference and for the CFP.

Ben Kule is a senior journalism major at the University of Georgia.

NUMBERS TO KNOW: Week 4

Georgia linebacker Raylen Wilson

#5

Fresh off a season in which he tallied 74 total tackles, the third-most for the Bulldogs, Wilson returned to Athens to serve as one of the defense's biggest leaders for his senior season. With Wilson over the middle, Georgia's linebackers look as intimidating as ever in the young season. He has yet to play a full game's worth of snaps, but Wilson has already made an impact with an impressive two sacks and a forced fumble against Arkansas. Oklahoma will be the toughest opponent the Bulldogs have faced so far this season, but if Wilson's intelligence and composure can give a boost to the rest of the defense, Georgia will be in a good position to remain undefeated.

Oklahoma defensive back Peyton Bowen

#22

Not to be confused with the legendary Manning brothers, Peyton Bowen and his brother Eli were both preseason All-SEC second-teamers and are starters in Oklahoma's secondary. Peyton Bowen is already living up to the preseason hype, as the senior forced a fumble and deflected one pass in the Sooners' season opener against UTEP, had six tackles in a tight defensive contest with Michigan and a registered sack against New Mexico. In 2025, he tied for the team lead in both deflections and interceptions. Oklahoma has allowed the second-fewest passing yards in the SEC so far, so if Georgia finds itself trailing, Peyton Bowen might make it tough for the Bulldogs to stage a comeback through the air.

Georgia offensive guard Dontrell Glover

#63

Also a member of the All-SEC second team, Glover is making waves as just a sophomore on Georgia's offensive line. Despite being one of the Bulldogs' younger offensive starters, Glover's impact has been substantial, as Georgia's victory over Arkansas was his 11th consecutive start at offensive guard. He has helped the Bulldogs' offense, particularly the efficiency of the running game, get off to an exceptional start to the season, but will have a tall task against Oklahoma. With star defensive linemen such as David Stone and Taylor Wein on the other side, Glover's skillset will be crucial in keeping Georgia's offense on track.

Oklahoma linebacker Owen Heinecke

#38

A veteran in the Sooners' locker room, Heinecke will likely be communicating intensely with his defense to keep his team composed when it enters Sanford Stadium. While Heinecke is beginning his fourth season, his collegiate career actually began as a lacrosse player at Ohio State, meaning he is actually in his sixth year. Last season, Heinecke registered 74 total tackles, putting him two behind the team lead, and he is off to a monster start to the 2026 campaign. Heinecke was Oklahoma's leading tackler in all of its first three games, including nine against Michigan, and could be a major factor if Oklahoma is able to pull off the upset.

Georgia wide receiver Craig Dandridge

#81

Dandridge has been a pleasant surprise for Georgia, as the four-star freshman has already made a name for himself in a wide receiver room desperate for a star to emerge. Dandridge has been featured a lot so far with high route participation, breaking out in Week 3 by being the Bulldogs' leading receiver with three catches, 74 yards and his first career touchdown. Oklahoma will be Dandridge's first high-profile opponent and will be another opportunity to prove why he deserves a bigger role in offensive coordinator Mike Bobo's offense.

Oklahoma tight end Rocky Beers

#81

Beers may have first gotten attention this offseason on social media solely for his name, but his performance to start the season has turned heads. As Oklahoma's second-leading receiver in both catches and receiving yards, Beers scored a highlight reel touchdown against UTEP when he hurdled a defender, then had six catches for nearly 100 yards against Michigan. The Colorado State transfer has seemingly become one of the surprising favorite targets of quarterback John Mateer, and that connection could become all the more important when facing Georgia's mighty defense.

Ben Kule

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Room to run

Georgia's running back room builds depth

Layla Nicholson



Georgia running back Chauncey Bowens (5) runs the ball during the first half of a football game against Tennessee State at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Sept. 5, 2026. Georgia won 63-3. PHOTO/LILY KATE AKINS

Four carries, 72 yards, three touchdowns.

If Georgia needed a reminder of what its star running back can do, Nate Frazier provided one in about 10 minutes against Tennessee State in Georgia's season opener.

Now, three games into the season, the junior has continued to look like the Bulldogs' top option in the backfield. Frazier has carried the ball 24 times for 202 yards and five touchdowns, averaging 8.4 yards per carry. His 48-yard touchdown in the season opener showed off the explosiveness Georgia will need as it faces Oklahoma and prepares for a tougher schedule.

"I'm excited for Nate," head coach Kirby Smart said after the game against the Tigers. "He's worked really hard. He just hit right where some big holes opened up and he did a nice job being explosive through them."

But this season means more to Frazier than simply proving himself as Georgia's leading rusher.

His father died in March, just months before the start of his junior season. After his father's death, Frazier wrote on social media that he would carry their last name to the fullest, and that game days would feel different because he would be playing for his father, too. He also said he would try to keep a smile on his face because he knew that was what his father wanted.

In Week 2 against Western Kentucky, he picked up where he left off, just with fewer opportunities.

Frazier ran for 55 yards and a touchdown on six carries in Georgia's 70-20 win. His 20-yard run was one of the longest rushing plays of the game, and his efficiency has made it difficult to argue with his place at the front of the rotation.

But Georgia's running back room was never supposed to be just about Frazier — Chauncey Bowens is waiting right behind him.

The junior already has a season of SEC experience under his belt, rushing for 526 yards and six touchdowns in 2025. He showed what he could do last season with a 119-yard performance against Alabama, and Georgia entered this year expecting him to play a significant role.

Bowens carried the ball four times for 24 yards against Tennessee State and added two catches for 32 yards. Against Western Kentucky, he had just one carry for four yards, but he found another way to contribute, catching two passes for 45 yards, including a 21-yard touchdown from quarterback Gunner Stockton.

However, the numbers do not tell the entire story of Bowens' place in the offense. He remains Georgia's second established option at running back, giving the Bulldogs a player they can turn to if Frazier's workload needs to be managed or if the offense needs a different skill set against the Sooners and moving forward.

Behind Frazier and Bowens, there are plenty of players waiting to take advantage of opportunities. That depth became even more important when Dante Dowdell's severe injuries, sustained as the result of an ATV accident in the summer, took another experienced running back out of the equation.

Dowdell, a Kentucky transfer, was expected to give Georgia another veteran presence after rushing for 560 yards at Kentucky in 2025.

Instead, Georgia has had to find out what its younger backs can do sooner than expected.

Jae Lamar has already provided one answer. The freshman got his first taste of college football in the opener and made it count. Lamar broke into the end zone on an 11-yard touchdown run against Tennessee State, finishing the game with three carries for 15 yards. He added three more rushes for 11 yards against Western Kentucky.

He has only had one touchdown in a game in which Georgia won by 60 points, but those are exactly the kinds of opportunities that can matter later in the season.

Freshman Nick Peal has also started to carve out a role. He carried the ball nine times for 41 yards against Western Kentucky, giving Georgia another young option to work into the rotation. Arkansas, the first SEC challenge for the Bulldogs, gave Georgia a chance to see what its running back room could do against a tougher opponent. Frazier carried the ball 14 times for 75 yards and a touchdown, while Bowens added 39 yards and three touchdowns on 11 carries. Together, the two combined for 114 rushing yards and four touchdowns as Georgia ran for 254 yards in a 45-17 win.

Bowens' performance became even more important when Frazier left the game with an injury in the third quarter. Georgia did not have to abandon its ground game. Instead, Bowens stepped into a larger role and gave the Bulldogs another reliable option in the backfield.

Eventually, Frazier's average of 8.4 yards per carry is going to come back down to earth. Georgia will not face teams like the Tigers, Hilltoppers and Razorbacks every week. The Bulldogs will need to find ways to use their running back depth to its full potential before tougher SEC games, starting with Oklahoma on Saturday.

Frazier has already shown he can be the guy at the top. Bowens has shown he can fill the receiving back role and complement him. Lamar, Peal and Bo Walker are getting early opportunities that could see them turn into much more than insurance policies.

For now, Georgia does not have to choose between relying on Frazier and developing its depth.

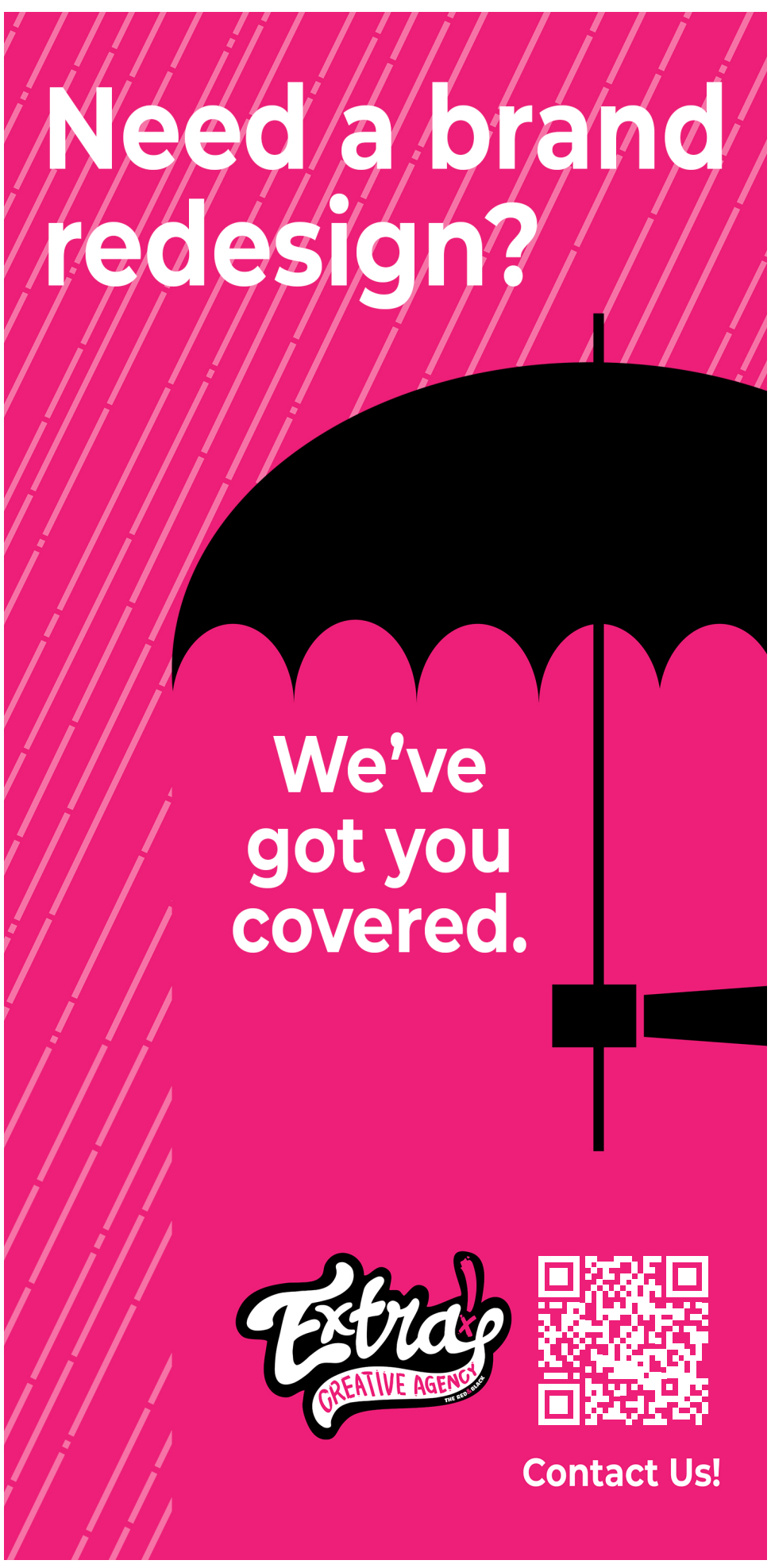
It can do both.

And if the first three games are any indication, the Bulldogs have plenty of running backs ready to make sure the answer at the position is never just one name.



Georgia running back Chauncey Bowens (5) runs with the ball against Western Kentucky at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Sept. 12, 2026. Georgia won 70-20. PHOTO/EVAN FRILINGOS

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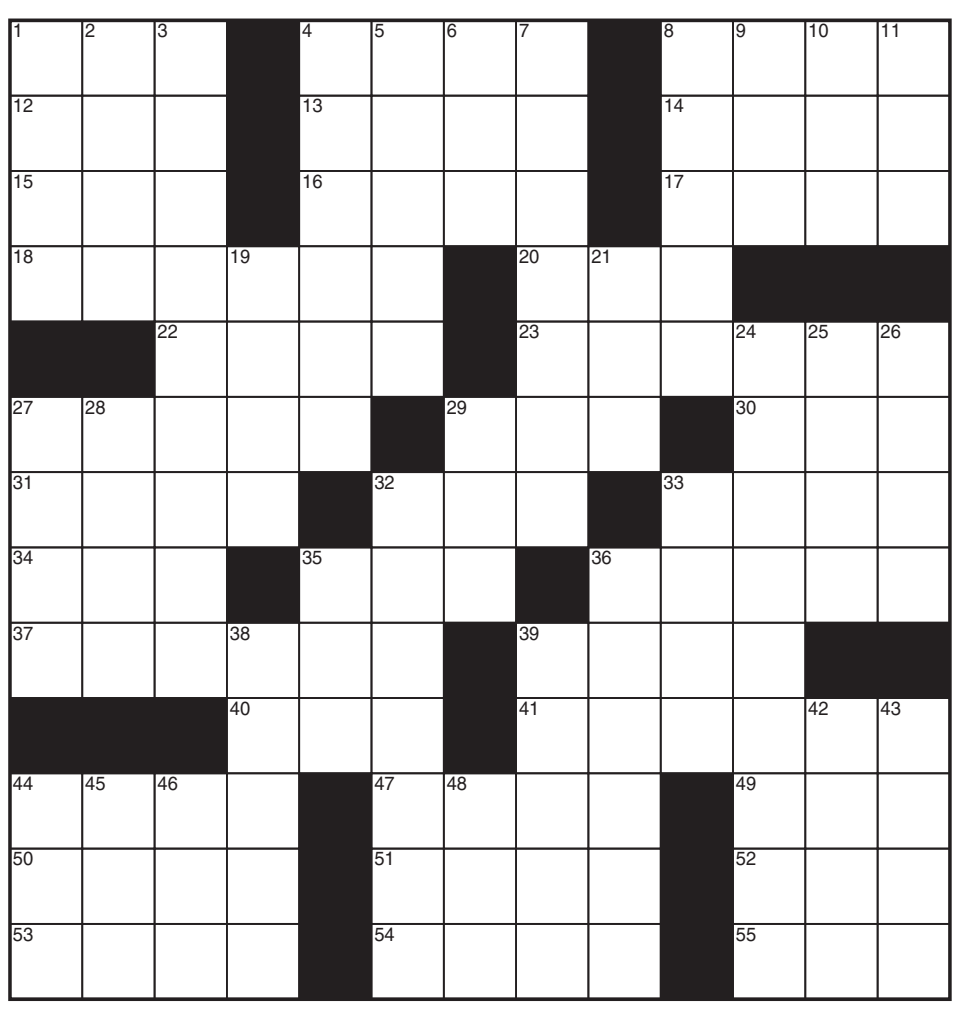


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ACROSS

1. Bellhop's burden
4. Big stinger
8. Fancy
12. "____ questions?"
13. Bird in hieroglyphics
14. Jot
15. Neighbor of Swed.
16. Hardly Herculean
17. Santa checks it twice
18. Gets game
20. Camp sight
22. Deli allowance
23. Locked, in a way
27. Does some PR work
29. One who cries foul?
30. Girl or boy of song
31. Had an effect
32. Hitched, so to speak
33. Aesop's also-ran
34. Samovar
35. Puppy talk
36. Blush or flush
37. Home maker
39. A fortune-teller's guide
40. Hooter
41. Memorable Gandhi
44. ____ rags
47. Sign in a store window
49. "____ and the City"
50. Fix, as fences
51. Asian staple
52. ____ kwon do
53. Like Felix Unger
54. Do-gooder's doing
55. Text, briefly

DOWN

1. Embargoes
2. Soon, to a bard
3. Elvis was known for them
4. Windshield cleaners
5. Invective
6. Atoner's worry
7. Excited
8. Languishes
9. ____ polloi
10. Part of T.G.I.F.
11. Art surrounder
19. Major, for one
21. Dolt
24. David and others
25. Continental coin
26. Lots of bucks
27. Daze
28. Perspiration passage
29. Certain theater, for short
32. Military leader
33. Cargo deck
35. Wood for an archer
36. Preserved
38. Spiced liquor
39. Cake helping
42. Copier supply
43. Graph lines
44. Clock standard (abbr.)
45. "South Pacific" prop
46. "Is there more?"
48. Pizzeria order

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McKenna Edwards

Senior Editor of Guides & Magazines

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

My coursework at Grady prepared me for my role at The Red & Black through hands-on learning experiences in my reporting and photojournalism classes. My professors have been a huge help over the years, showing me ways to get involved in my career on and off campus.

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

The most rewarding part of serving in an editor role at The Red & Black has been the professional skills and confidence it has given me as a journalist.

Major:

Master's in journalism and mass communication

Position Description:

Oversee stories and visuals for special publications including the Visitor's Guide, Eat & Drink Guide and Housing Guide; update and fact-check; pitch new feature story ideas with assistant editor.

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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University of Georgia School of Medicine Nathan Demas poses outside Winnie Davis Hall on the UGA Health Sciences Campus in Athens, Georgia on Friday, Sept. 4, 2026. PHOTO/LILY PERELLA

Clinics, lectures and case studies

A day in the life of a UGA medical student

If you told Nathan Demas a year ago that he would be waking up at 6 a.m. for class, he would have said, "That's just not happening." Now, as a first-year medical student at the University of Georgia's new School of Medicine, waking up early is part of his normal routine.

Demas is one of 64 students who make up the UGA School of Medicine's inaugural cohort. Although he has been fully immersed in his studies for the past month, medical school wasn't always his plan. Demas received his undergraduate degree in exercise and sports science from UGA this past May.

Demas initially considered a career as a physician assistant or physical therapist. However, after shadowing an orthopedic surgeon during his sophomore year, he realized medical school was the right path.

"The way that [the surgeon] talked and interacted with his patients was really amazing," Demas said. "I was like, 'This is awesome, I really want to do this.'"

After shadowing, Demas knew that medical school would be an environment where he could challenge himself and further pursue his love of learning.

Demas begins his day at around 6 a.m. by getting ready, making breakfast and studying flashcards.

After about 30 minutes of studying, Demas goes to class at UGA's Health Sciences Campus on Prince Avenue. His classes consist of small group learning (SGL) and lecture. SGL takes place every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8-10 a.m.

During these sessions, teams of seven to eight students, along with an M.D. and a Ph.D. facilitator, learn medical science by working through clinical cases. Students receive a simulated patient case study and work through the case together. First-year students typically work on one case per week, while second-year students have two cases per week.

Carrie Kelly, an associate professor of medical education in pediatrics and assistant dean for faculty development at the UGA School of Medicine, explained that the teaching style at the School of Medicine not only helps students learn medical knowledge, but teaches the skills needed to maintain that knowledge in a constantly evolving medical environment.

"We give [students] their objectives, but they really are kind of teaching themselves, teaching each other," Kelly said. "We want you to know how to keep up with these guidelines and how to look things up."

During one of his SGL sessions, Demas and his peers had a practice case where a fake patient expressed concern about a lump in her breast. They approached the case by first asking, "What would you do if you're a doctor?"

"You might order some labs, you might order a test, you might do some imaging to see what it is, to get a clearer picture," Demas said.

The initial visit takes place on Monday, where the students receive background information about the patient and problem. On Wednesday, they receive more information about the case to gain a better understanding. Friday is resolution day. From there, students learn how to follow up with the patient to ensure their peace of mind and provide next steps.

Amy Baldwin, a professor of medical education who serves as the director of Humanism in Medicine at the school of medicine, participates as an operator in the simulation curriculum. She describes herself as the "voice of the patient," bringing humanism to medicine through that role.

"[Humanism is] really providing excellent clinical care that's kind, safe and trustworthy," Baldwin said. "We are all about promoting training our medical students in person-centered care."

Lectures, which take place Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to noon, align with small group activities. For example, during the week they worked with a patient with a lump in her breast, students had a lecture completely dedicated to cancer.

> "It's a collaborative space, that's the point of medicine. You're supposed to be in a team."
>
> **NATHAN DEMAS** | FIRST-YEAR MEDICAL STUDENT

Also on Monday, medical students volunteer with Athens Free Clinic as a part of their Community and Population Health (CPH) curriculum. Their service provides care to community members with complex health needs and barriers to care.

On Tuesdays, students have clinical skills at 1:30 p.m., which Demas describes as "learning how to be a doctor." During the first year of clinical skills, students learn communication and physical examination skills. Currently, Demas is learning how to ask patients targeted and open-ended questions.

On Thursdays, Demas has anatomy lab at 1 p.m. Anatomy lab is a hands-on learning environment where first and second-year medical students can gain a deeper understanding of the human body through cadaver dissection. Cadavers are deceased human bodies of individuals who decided to donate their bodies to help medical students, physicians and scientists learn anatomy and surgical skills.

SEE **MEDICAL SCHOOL** FROM PAGE **B3**

'Can We Say That Out Loud?'

Podcast allows working mothers to share what's left unsaid

Adaleigh Weber

Working mothers' professional and maternal spheres often appear to be in competition, requiring sacrifice and an either-or mindset. Some may feel that they need to give up parts of motherhood to excel in a career, or vice versa.

The Integrated Mom began in 2024 with the goal of creating a "community where working moms tell the truth." According to their website, the support network and coaching program aims to help women through the beauty and pain of balancing motherhood and a career. To recognize the often-unnoticed parts of the working mother experience, co-creators and co-hosts Greer Van Dyck and Kara Fresk launched the "Can We Say That Out Loud?" podcast.

Van Dyck and Fresk created the podcast to provide working mothers with a space to voice their thoughts and shift their mindset from "either-or" to "both-and." It creates a community for working mothers to hear from others with similar experiences and find mutual support.

"We realized that there are a lot of realities about working motherhood that just kind of live in silence," Van Dyck said. "They don't really have the opportunity to be voiced, and therefore they don't really have the opportunity to be normalized."

When Laurie Curtis sent her children to preschool, she felt there was something missing in her day-to-day life. Curtis, the current director of children's ministries at Athens Church, wanted to return to work, but felt guilty doing so.

"Money was something we needed the whole time that I was not working," Curtis said. "I just wanted to be able to be there for my kids. I wanted to be able to be there when they took all of their first steps and everything."

Curtis was a recent guest on the "Can We Say That Out Loud?" podcast, and has been a day-one listener. Curtis discovered her leadership skills after finding a job as a preschool ministry director. She felt her decision to return to work helped her thrive as a mother and connect more with both herself and her children.

"There was something inside of me that I think needed the development of tackling something additionally that helped me to be a better mom," Curtis said. "I'm a better mom because I work. I don't think I would be the same mom if I didn't have a job."

A common feeling among working mothers is guilt. Navigating working motherhood can involve balancing a career with managing a safe and orderly household, a responsibility that can often feel isolating. Without a place to share their thoughts, many working mothers feel alone in their struggles and the choice between work responsibilities or their children.

Curtis often felt guilty about working as a mom and missing her children's activities, but when she asked how they felt about it, she was relieved by their response.

"I just remember asking my kids, 'Hey, do you feel bad that your mom works?'" Curtis said. "They were like, 'No, Mom, I'm so proud of you. It's so cool that you get to do what you do. I feel special because you do your job.' And I'm like, 'Oh well, great!' So that was definitely an affirming thing."

Van Dyck, born in Athens, and Fresk, a current Athens resident, developed the podcast after talking about their personal experiences with working motherhood. They realized they could record and share their discussions for other mothers to relate to.

"A lot of what we talk about is, 'How do we support working mothers in giving them the time, space and permission to actually explore what it is that they want, or what it actually looks like, in real life, to honor professional ambition and simultaneously work toward being a good mother?'" Van Dyck said. "Everyone's version of that looks a little bit different, and so this really isn't a one-size-fits-all exploration. It's so individual, and that's why we really have been loving working with working mothers."

SEE **MOM PODCAST** FROM PAGE **B3**



Greer Van Dyck (left) and Kara Fresk (right) pose for a photo as co-hosts of their podcast, "Can We Say That Out Loud?". The podcast is for working moms to express their feelings and unique journeys of motherhood. PHOTO COURTESY/SARA WOOTEN

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Let the little dawgs eat

Family-friendly favorites to try on gameday

Arianna Flynn

Finding a restaurant where children can play and parents can unwind is the ultimate winning strategy for families visiting Athens on gameday. From sandbox patios to quick-service menus, several downtown eateries offer stress-free spaces designed to feed the whole family.

Ted's Most Best

Ted's Most Best has served artisan pizzas, salads, paninis and desserts in a renovated tire store garage since the summer of 2011. Located at 254 W. Washington St., the restaurant has been voted the best " Kid-Friendly Local Restaurant" by Flagpole multiple times since 2012.

Alma Martinez, the general manager of Ted's Most Best for 10 years, said the restaurant appeals to families because they can enjoy a meal together while their kids burn off energy in the sandbox.

Originally a bocce ball court, the sandbox is a staple of the restaurant's kid-friendly atmosphere, according to Martinez.

"Our patio is really large for tons of families," Martinez said. "We never run out of seating."

Sarah and Bridges Sinyard have been frequenting Ted's Most Best since they lived in Athens as college students 12 years ago. The couple, who now have two toddlers and live in Albany, Georgia, has made Ted's Most Best their go-to dining spot when they visit Athens for football games.

"We don't even try to go to another restaurant," Sarah Sinyard said. "We always just come here because they can play."

The Sinyards enjoy the pear and gorgonzola pizza and salad, but that's not the only reason they consistently choose Ted's Most Best.

"Well, the food's phenomenal, the sand pit is awesome and it's outdoors, baby!" Bridges Sinyard said.



The Place located in downtown Athens, Georgia on Thursday, Sept. 17, 2026. PHOTO/EVAN FRILINGOS



Paloma Park located in downtown Athens, Georgia on Thursday, Sept. 17, 2026. PHOTO/EVAN FRILINGOS

> "We don't have to worry about getting on anyone's nerves here. [The kids] can just be toddlers, and nobody judges us."
>
> **SARAH SINYARD** | TED'S MOST BEST CUSTOMER

The Sinyards noted that many adults do not like toddlers in restaurants. Though they understand why, they also say it would be nice to have more family-friendly spaces like Ted's Most Best in Athens.

"We don't have to worry about getting on anyone's nerves here," Sarah Sinyard said. "[The kids] can just be toddlers, and nobody judges us."

Another perk is the quick delivery from kitchen to table. According to Martinez, pizzas are cooked in a stone oven and served in seven minutes or less. She says kids enjoy the variety, from kalamata olives to classic pepperoni pizza and spaghetti. On gamedays, the restaurant even serves themed red cake pops with black and white sprinkles.

Paloma Park

Paloma Park is a Tex-Mex restaurant, bar and outdoor music venue in downtown Athens, located at 235 W. Washington St.

"We attract a family crowd," Will Held, the general manager of Paloma Park, said. "That's who we would prefer to be in here, people with their kids, and the moms and dads are having a great time."

He recalled parents who came into Paloma Park for the first time and left impressed by the restaurant's service.

"They told me that they were surprised because they thought that this was a little bit of a younger place, but they actually felt like they were served as if they were their age and just treated with respect and good care," Held said.

Held aims to create an atmosphere at Paloma Park where everyone can find something to enjoy, including parents, children and even dogs.

"Whenever I see a dog out on the beer garden, I make sure to bring him a bowl of water so that people feel like they're welcome here, like anyone in the family is welcome here," Held said.

To keep the kitchen running efficiently during busy gamedays, Paloma Park uses a modified menu featuring sharable, family-style items including quesadillas, tacos and nachos.

"Those are staples here, and there's no way they would ever be off the gameday menu," Held said.

The Place

In the heart of downtown Athens, The Place is an eatery inspired by family recipes. The restaurant, located at 229 E. Broad St., offers Southern fare from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Saturdays.

Bryant Keith, general manager of The Place, enjoys how the atmosphere is split between the livelier upstairs bar and the cozy downstairs dining room.

As general manager, Keith has overseen The Place serving large crowds of children during baseball and softball tournaments, as well as swim meets. He takes extra measures to accommodate families with small children, such as providing high chairs, although the restaurant does not specifically market itself to families.

"People happen to stumble upon us a lot," Keith said.

While there is no formal kid's menu, popular staples for children include chicken tenders, mac and cheese, fruit and grilled cheese sandwiches. Chicken and waffles are also a hit.

"When a kid sees [chicken and waffles], they definitely want that," Keith said.

For home game Saturdays, Keith uses a menu featuring burgers and chicken sandwiches.

The Place also offers call-ahead seating on gamedays, allowing parties to call or email in advance, although seating is not guaranteed.

"A lot of people say we're like a family here, but we say we're more of a team," Keith said. "You have to work together to be a good team."

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Kara Fresk (left) and Greer Van Dyck (right) pose for a photo as co-hosts for their podcast, "Can We Say That Out Loud?". The podcast is for working moms to honestly express their feelings and unique journeys of motherhood. PHOTO COURTESY/SARA WOOTEN

MOM PODCAST FROM PAGE **B1**

Van Dyck found that when she stayed silent about her struggles, she felt as though she were failing and experienced a sense of shame. However, once she opened up to others, she was met with responses such as, "Oh, me too!" which helped her work through her challenges more quickly.

"It has allowed me to not live in a personal climate of shame," Van Dyck said. "It actually allows me to expand what I thought was possible for myself. That's been my experience."

Fresk said the responses to the first 11 episodes of the podcast demonstrated how many women needed to hear these conversations out loud.

"Working mothers do not need another conversation telling them how to optimize every part of their lives," Fresk said in a press release. "They need room to tell the truth about ambition, guilt, identity, exhaustion and joy."

Guests on the podcast have the freedom to direct the conversation. Each episode begins by asking what aspect of working motherhood has been the most difficult or taboo to say out loud, then explores that topic throughout.

"The things that have come to us, we're either like, 'Oh my gosh, we haven't explored that yet,' or, 'Oh, no one has said it that way, that's a really cool way to think about it,'" Van Dyck said. "We are not coming up with the topics; our guests are."

April Farlow, a motivational speaker, author and previous podcast guest, felt that the discussion gave her a space to express both the difficult and beautiful moments of her journey.

"I've been on a good many podcasts as a guest, and this particular one felt very conversational and comfortable, which made me share more than I often share," Farlow said. "I think that the listeners benefit from the style of Greer and Kara as they ask their questions."

Farlow has been both a stay-at-home-mom and a working mom, saying that "both are good and both are hard," and that the podcast makes space for both of these identities.

> **"We realized that there are a lot of realities about working motherhood that just kind of live in silence."**
>
> **GREER VAN DYCK** | HOST/CO-CREATOR

"I think it's unique to have a podcast that speaks to both women and work, and helping women find a way to to be celebrated both for the work that they do and for their work as a mom," Farlow said. "I'm not sure there's a lot of conversation about that."

Curtis said she wishes she had a podcast like this when she was first starting her working motherhood journey, so she could have felt less alone.

"I had this belief, that was a really wrong belief, that you couldn't be a good mom and a working mom," Curtis said. "You had to pick one or the other, and I think my parenting journey, plus this podcast and seeing all of these stellar women that are doing both, gives you the freedom to be like, 'No, actually, I can be both a good mom and a working mom.' Those are not mutually exclusive at all."

The podcast began releasing a new wave of episodes on Sept. 8.

"We're on the front end of this whole experiment of what working motherhood could look like," Van Dyck said. "I feel really empowered and excited in being even a small part of changing that narrative into something way more powerful, versus something that's very limiting and, you know, frankly just kind of scary."

In addition to amplifying the voices of working mothers, the podcast has also provided Fresk and Van Dyke with new insights and positive takeaways.

"Every single episode I feel like I take away a new lesson, a new tool, a new perspective, a new insight, a new question to ask myself," Van Dyck said. "If I could consolidate the learnings, I have had even more validation that every single thing I have experienced as a working mother is normal, it is human, it is valid."

MEDICAL SCHOOL FROM PAGE **B1**

Isabel Buyers, a first-year medical student at UGA, said it has been rewarding to apply the information she learned throughout her undergraduate years at Emory University in anatomy lab.

"We're actually studying the human body, and you can see the material you're learning in class and before class on a real person," Buyers said.

Following a long day of classes, Demas reinforces what he learned by watching YouTube videos and doing more flashcard practice. When he returns home, he meal preps, goes to the gym if he has time and gets more studying in. Ideally, he finishes up by 10 p.m. and goes to sleep at 11 p.m.

With all of this to cram into a single day, Demas says it can be difficult to balance his personal life with his professional obligations. But he does still find ways to have fun, like attending Georgia soccer games.

"Soccer is super sacred to me. Like, that's my sacred time," Demas said.

While trying to enjoy the game, however, his thoughts kept drifting to studying for his upcoming quiz. Lately, he's been working on finding more balance in his schedule.

FAST FACTS

- 77 counties in Georgia have no emergency medicine physicians
- 19 counties have no family medicine physicians
- 63 counties have no pediatricians
- 82 counties have no OB-GYNs
- 10 counties have no physicians at all

"I'll know I'm gonna do something fun, like go to the soccer game, and I will build that in my calendar. But I'll make sure from the time I wake up to when I go to that game, I am studying," Demas said. "[Going to the game] gives me some relief, like I can be a human being. I can enjoy myself."

Although medical school has been busier and more academically challenging than his undergraduate years, Demas finds that building meaningful relationships in medical school, both with his professors and peers, has been easier.

"I've been to my professor's house already, which is something I didn't do during undergrad," Demas said.

Kelly said that because of the relatively smaller class size, professors get to know the students very well. She hopes this allows students to feel comfortable talking to them when medical school becomes overwhelming.

"Hopefully they've got somebody that they can come to that's been through it, that they can kind of process things with," Kelly said.

Kelly also said that students are not in competition with each other, but rather boost each other up to make each other better.

"Being in a smaller class, you're bound to run into someone and meet, start talking, forming that initial relationship [more quickly] compared to having to recognize 200 different names and faces," Demas said. "There's something unique about everyone, which is really neat."

Demas was surprised by how supportive the medical school environment turned out to be. As an undergraduate, he found that people were more competitive. His experience in medical school has been the polar opposite.

"It's a collaborative space, that's the point of medicine," Demas said. "You're supposed to be in a team."

Demas is still exploring the vast field of medicine, but says he's interested in specializing in emergency medicine — a specialty that 77 countries across Georgia have no access to.

The UGA School of Medicine was founded to help address Georgia's physician shortage, as 19 counties have no family medicine physician, 63 counties have no pediatrician, 82 counties have no OB-GYNs and 10 counties have no physician at all. Georgia also ranks 39th nationally in active patient care physicians and 41st in public medical students per capita.

The School of Medicine's founding mission to address the state's unmet healthcare needs and serve rural and underserved communities resonates deeply with students and faculty alike.

"I was really excited about the mission of serving all of Georgia," Buyers, a Marietta native, said.

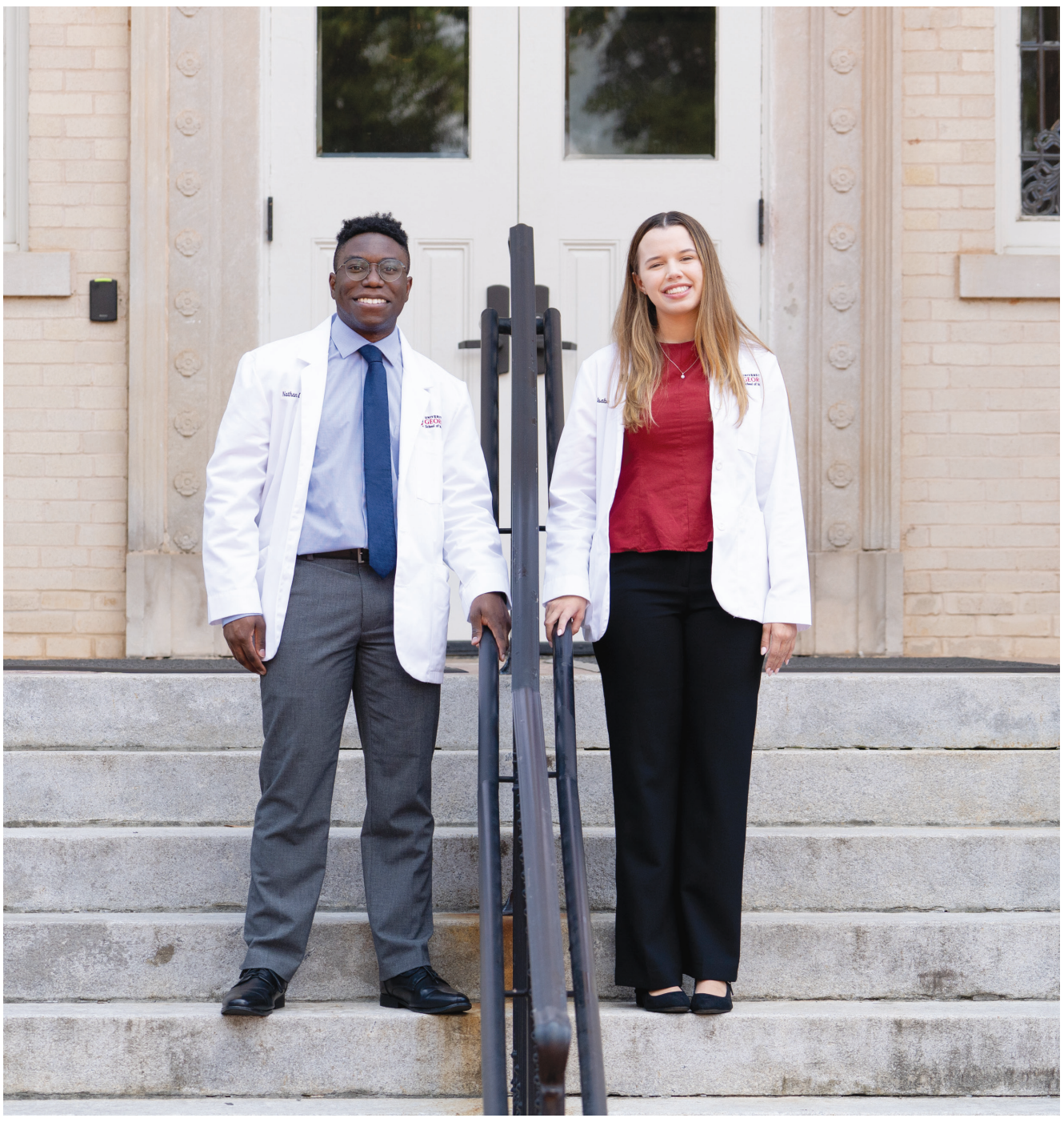
Over the summer, students in the inaugural cohort traveled the state to learn more about Georgia's communities and healthcare landscape. Buyers said the tour showed her the need for more physicians in Georgia.

Baldwin is also the co-lead for the School of Medicine's Serving Georgia and Beyond curricular thread. Improving the health of communities in Georgia through meaningful impact will be at the forefront of the curriculum throughout all four years of medical school. Baldwin said being able to train physicians who are desperately needed and help increase the workforce is what she is most excited about in this role.

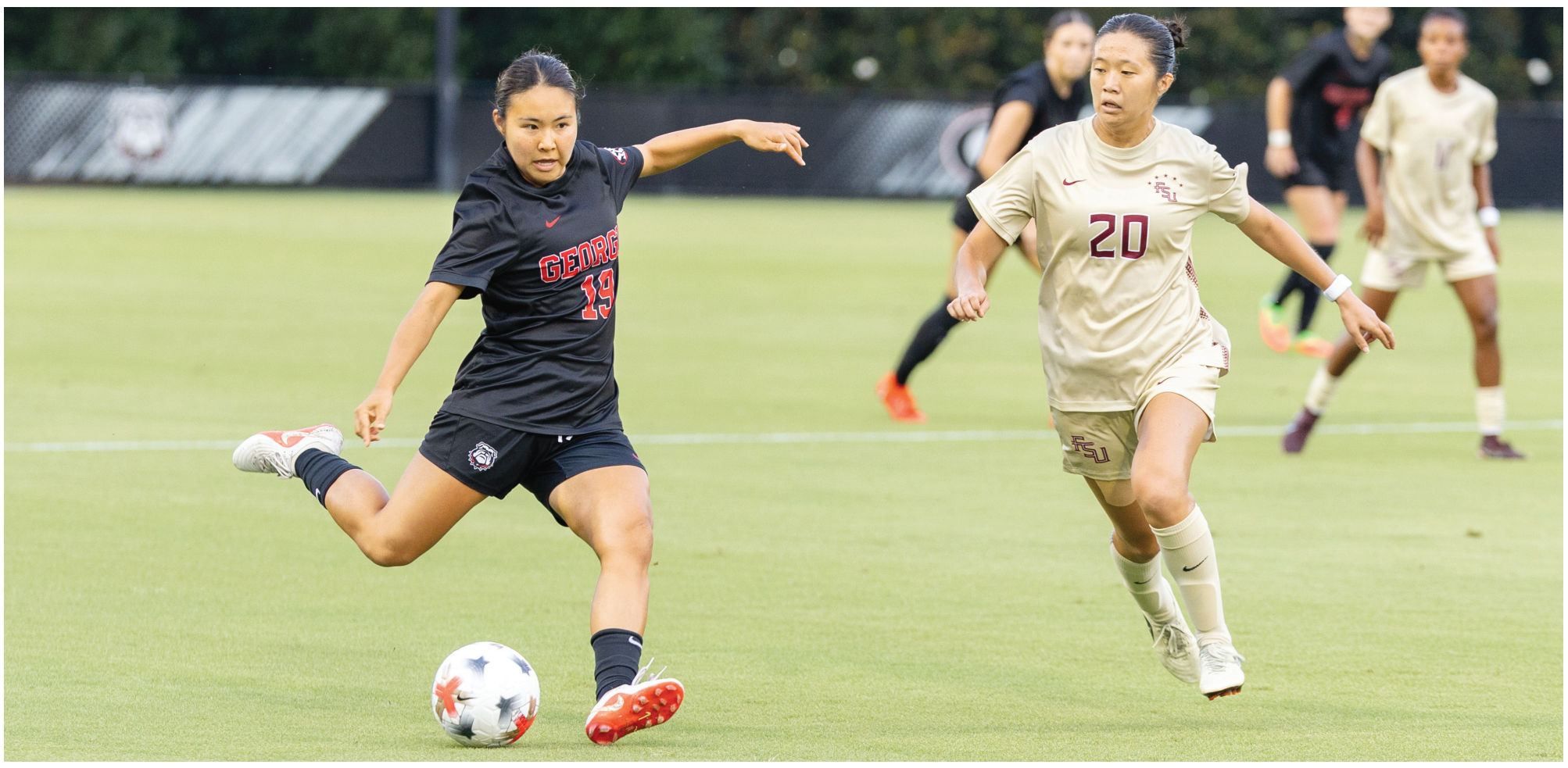
"We have so many counties that have no physicians at all," Baldwin said. "It's such an honor to be able to serve in these roles that I occupy here, especially being from Georgia, having gone to UGA, and it just means a lot to me personally."

Baldwin emphasized the importance of providing kind clinical care, but also advised medical students to provide that same kindness to themselves.

"To not focus only on others' well-being, but also your own well-being so that you can help build a more resilient workforce," Baldwin said. "I think those things are key."



University of Georgia School of Medicine students Nathan Demas and Isabel Buyers pose outside Winnie Davis Hall on the UGA Health Sciences campus in Athens, Georgia on Friday, Sept. 4, 2026. PHOTO/LILY PERELLA



Georgia midfielder Honoka Hamano (19) passes the ball during a match against Florida State at Turner Soccer Complex in Athens, Georgia, on Thursday, Sept. 3, 2026. Georgia lost 2-1. PHOTO/EVAN FRILINGOS

'A joy to be around'

Honoka Hamano continues to make Georgia soccer her home

Matthew Carr

For many, performing in front of others is terrifying. Even a small audience can rattle the average athlete. The idea of having to be at your best in front of 25,433 people would be petrifying for many. But senior midfielder Honoka Hamano isn't like most people. Under the brightest lights, she consistently finds a way to elevate her play.

Whether it be her brace against James Madison in front of an NCAA soccer record-setting crowd at Sanford Stadium, her long-range strike against Milwaukee just three days later on Senior Night or her heroics against No. 2 Vanderbilt, Hamano always seems to have a trick up her sleeve when her team needs her most.

This ability to show up in the biggest moments is rooted in the joy with which Hamano plays. She relished the chance to score a goal for her family, who recently made the journey from Japan to see her play.

"My teammates and coaches have been great for me. I think one of the reasons why I was able to feel good and play well is because they have been trusting me. That means a lot," Hamano said. "I wanted to score for [my family], and then I was able to, so it was awesome."

Soccer has always been important in Hamano's family, with her mother having played professionally in Japan. Having a former professional athlete as a parent can add pressure to a child, but Hamano notes that her journey with soccer wasn't forced on her; rather, it was something she was allowed to choose on her own.

Growing up in Japan, she earned opportunities to play in big matches at a young age. She attended the JFA Academy Fukushima, a soccer academy run by the Japanese Football Association, the governing body of Japanese soccer. Even while playing with some of the most talented players in her age group, Hamano was able to set herself apart and lead her team to back-to-back league titles in 2020 and 2021.

With dreams of playing professionally herself one day, Hamano decided she wanted to play at the collegiate level in the U.S. Her college career began at Memphis, where she was able to play alongside several other Japanese players who helped her adjust to her new environment. After her freshman year, she transferred to UCF, where she would spend her sophomore and junior seasons.

As Hamano continued to grow as a midfielder, she also grew in her relationships with those around her. Recalling her time at her previous two schools, she was grateful for the bonds she was able to form above anything else.

"At UCF I met so many incredible people that I still talk to," Hamano said. "I just loved the people at UCF and the environment."

Known affectionately as "Noki" by her coaches and teammates, Hamano has started to build her own community in Athens. As someone who has had to move around a lot in pursuit of her dream, Hamano has grown accustomed to change. Even still, being away from her family and rarely getting to call the same place home for too long is not always easy. Hamano attributes her ability to thrive in the midst of change to getting along with people and building community.

"I think I'm pretty good at making friends and being close with my teammates," Hamano said.

Beyond playing soccer at a high level, Hamano says it is extremely important to be a good teammate to those around her. These intentional efforts to be there for others have not gone unnoticed by the team. Georgia soccer head coach Keidane McAlpine has been amazed by Hamano as a player and as a person.

"She's a wonderful human and a joy to be around. She's loved by all of her teammates," McAlpine said.

While talking about her unique skillset, McAlpine was struck by Hamano's ability to handle the ball cleanly, while simultaneously excelling creatively. He noted that Hamano's character has allowed her teammates to learn some of these skills from her.

"Because of the way she goes about her business, younger players are able to look up to her and try to replicate some of the things she does," McAlpine said. "When you see your teammates do something [like that], it's easier for you to believe that you can."



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OPINION We need to stop flock cameras before it's too late

Matthew Carr

If you've spent any time online in the past few months, you have probably heard of Flock cameras. These automated license plate reader (ALPR) cameras from Flock Safety and other companies have become a recent subject of public scrutiny, and for good reason.

Notably the term "Flock camera" is often used as a catch-all — not all ALPRs are produced by Flock Safety.

According to Flock Safety, the intended purpose of these high-speed camera systems is to help law enforcement officials log vehicle data, track vehicle sightings and aid in investigations. By acting as an extra set of eyes to watch for suspicious activity, these cameras can help ensure that fewer crimes occur. But this is also what can make ALPRs so dangerous — they act as eyes surveilling communities, regardless of whether members of that community are committing crimes.

Beyond their stated noble intentions, these cameras have the potential to be exploited for nefarious purposes. In the wrong hands, this technology can be used to stalk and endanger citizens' lives. Is the extra protection these cameras provide worth the extra security risks they introduce, especially when there have been numerous documented instances of these devices being abused?

As these cameras appear across Athens, many Athenians and UGA students have begun to voice concerns about the invasion of the machines. In light of the news that an Athens-Clarke County Police Department employee misused his access to ALPRs, these concerns have only grown among the community, with Athenians making their disapproval of these license plate readers known to local officials at the Mayor and Commission meeting.

I support these citizens because I think ALPRs pose a serious risk to the general population. The most alarming aspect of ALPRs is not how they exist today, but rather the precedent they set for the future.

One of my favorite books is George Orwell's "1984." In "1984," Orwell describes a society stripped of civil liberties. The characters in the book are subject to an oppressive regime that commands obedience through fear, violence and constant surveillance. While reading the book, I often find myself wondering how the world in the story got to the point it did.

Sadly, though, it is becoming easier for me to see reflections of our modern lives in the fictional world of "1984." Where there was once a sense of detachment from the plot, there is now a feeling of familiarity. What once appeared outlandish has become a part of the mundane.

It is in this slow erosion of our rights that the greatest danger exists. Surveillance states do not come out of nowhere. They are often built slowly and methodically. One way to accomplish this is to frame intrusions on our autonomy as initiatives to advance the public good. This is what concerns me most about ALPR devices.



GRAPHIC/JACK HESPRICH

ALPRs become truly terrifying when seen for what they could be: a test of our boundaries. If we allow these cameras to be introduced into our communities with minimal resistance, we send an implicit signal to the powerful that more direct forms of surveillance can be implemented in the future. How far do things have to go in our local communities before we begin to ask ourselves how our world got to the point that it did?

We must raise our voices to show that we do not accept machines that violate our sense of personal security. Protesting, writing to local representatives and continuing to raise awareness about the issue ensures that it cannot just be brushed off. A life of freedom is not a surveillance state. It requires a constant effort to make sure we never fall into a place from which we cannot return.

Matthew Carr is a sophomore history and intended economics major at the University of Georgia.



COMIC/JACK HESPRICH

STUDENT VOICES

UGA students share opinions on presence of artificial intelligence in classroom

Gaby Ellis, Photos: Evan Frilingos

As artificial intelligence (AI) use has become more widespread, it has significantly impacted the everyday lives of many people. Opinions on whether AI is helpful differ — while some try to avoid usage as much as possible, others use it to a varying degree. Supporters often suggest that usage improves efficiency, or is convenient for offloading tedious work. Opponents believe AI is an environmental concern, a potential security risk and a tool to spread misinformation.

The argument concerning AI use has now spread to universities. With AI-related policies often being left up to their discernment, university staff are now faced with a decision. They can embrace it, or they can discourage its use.

The Red & Black asked UGA students to share their opinions on the usage of AI in the classroom and beyond.



Ro Hilson

JUNIOR MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS MAJOR

"Professors have the right to do what they want to. Personally, I think regardless of whether or not they ban it, students are going to use it anyway, or find a way to use it," Hilson said. "But I definitely can see why professors would want to ban AI, just for the purposes of learning."



Walter Moody

JUNIOR MUSIC MAJOR

"I think it makes it way easier to avoid learning the material. I'm definitely against AI, just because of the environmental impact," Moody said. "I'm completely against it. Like BlackRock buying up the land just so they can build data centers and raising our housing prices — I mean, it's not great, and so I'm completely against it."



Habib Rahman

SENIOR PSYCHOLOGY AND ACCOUNTING MAJOR

"It's like two sides. Some professors are still 'no AI at all' and then other professors are using it in their assignments, or they're giving us AI chatbots that have the class material in it so we can use it to study. Some professors still hate it; others, I think have just surrendered in a way," Rahman said.



Britney Nguyen

SENIOR RISK MANAGEMENT AND INSURANCE MAJOR

"I don't think they should completely ban it. Going back to just the huge classes, you can't really have one-on-ones with professors all the time — there's a lot of loopholes in education. I feel like AI can help you study. For example, for exams, you can put the slides into AI and just generate sample questions." Nguyen said.



Miembros del ROTC de la Universidad de Georgia suben 110 tramos de escaleras en Sanford Stadium en Athens, Ga. el 11 de septiembre del 2026. Los primeros respondedores locales se reúnen en Sanford Stadium cada año para subir las escaleras como un tributo a los primeros respondedores que murieron en los ataques terroristas en la Ciudad de Nueva York el 11 de septiembre. FOTO/JESSE CORSO

En homenaje a los caídos

Athens honra al 9/11 con Ascenso Conmemorativo de Escaleras

Hannah Silver, Traducción: Genesis Maestre-Ruperto

Más de 200 primeros respondedores, miembros del programa de Army & Air Force ROTC y miembros de la comunidad se reunieron en Sanford Stadium el viernes para tomar parte del tercer anual Ascenso de Escaleras en Memoria del 9/11.

El evento empezó a las 5:30 de la mañana con una palabra del coordinador de comunicación y alcanzamiento en la Oficina de Seguridad Pública en la Universidad de Georgia, Greg Trevor, un sobreviviente del 9/11. Trevor dejó a los participantes con un recuerdo final antes que empezaran su ascenso.

"Antes que te vayas a Sanford Stadium para pagar homenaje a estos soldados caídos", dijo Trevor. "Algo que yo me digo a mi mismo cuando me levanto cada mañana…Cada día es un regalo. Cada suspiro es una bendición".

Después de la palabra de Trevor y algunas instrucciones breves, participantes llenaron el fondo de Sanford Stadium y empezaron su ascenso, yendo hacia arriba y hacia abajo de sus secciones 19 veces para simular las 110 tramos de escaleras los primeros reponedores subieron dentro del World Trade Center el 11 de septiembre del 2001.

Estudiante de tercer año estudiando leyes y miembro del programa de Air Force Detachment 160, Aaron Johnwon se juntó con su grupo para completar el ascenso de las escaleras para recordar a esos que sacrificaron y perdieron sus vidas el 11 de septiembre del 2001.

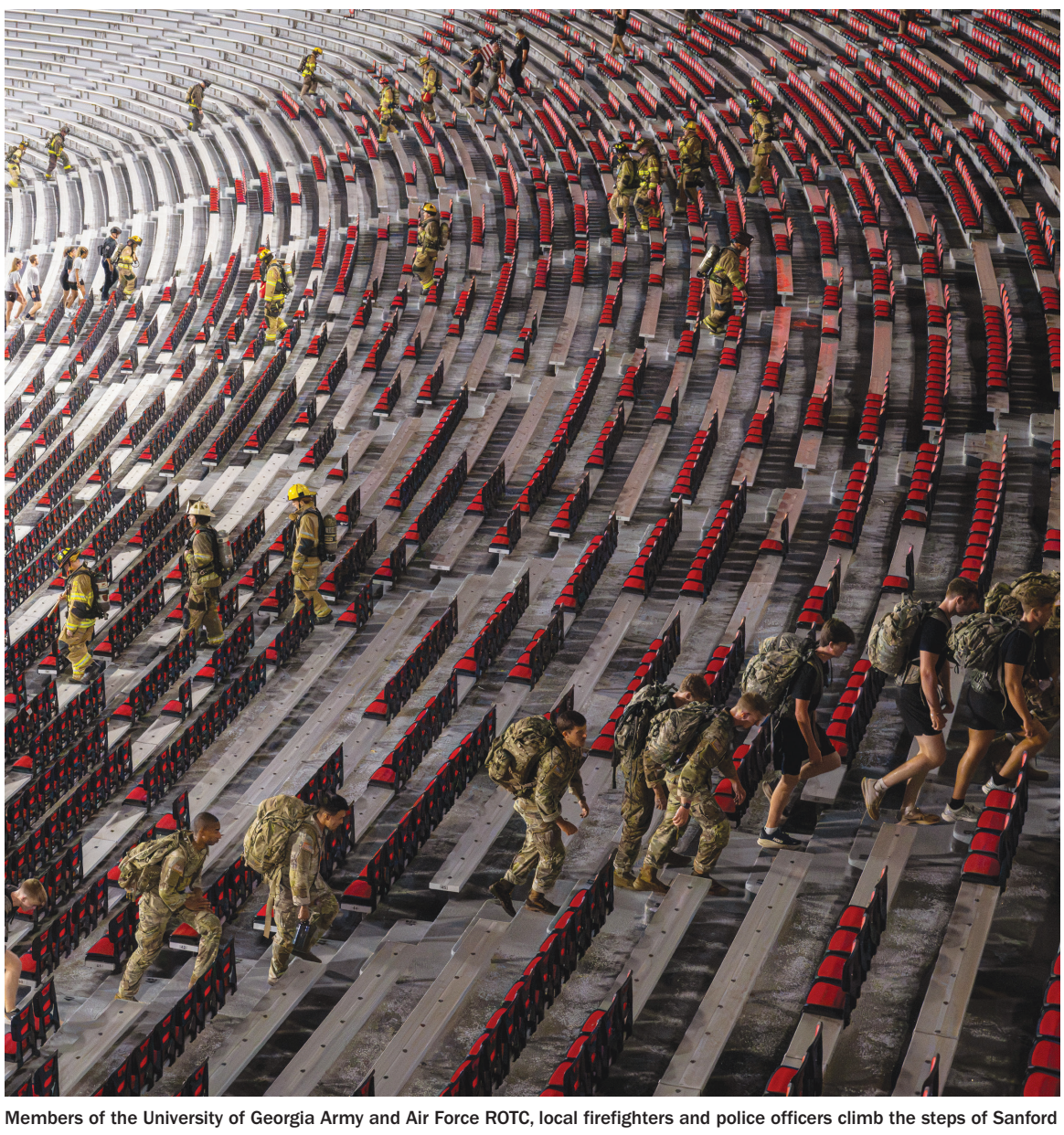
"Yo pienso que el valor y el amor general para el uno al otro que fue mostrado ese día, de verdad que mostró que el amor puede conquistar todas las cosas", dijo Johnson.

"Esto es un evento inspirador", dijo Trevor. "Es una manera tan increíble para pagar homenaje a todos los individuos, tanto personal y civiles, quienes ambos corrieron hacia el edificio del World Trade Center y se quedaron atrás para ayudar salvar vida, ayudar atender a los heridos, pero también para dirigir una de las evacuación más grande en la historia humana". El sargento Ben Sharpton ha estado trabajando para el Departamento de Fuego de Athens-Clarke County por nueve años. Sharpton reflejo sobre qué significaba tanta gente de la comunidad viniendo a este evento. "Yo tenía ocho años cuando el 9/11 pasó, entonces me acuerdo un poco del caos. Entonces nosotros tenemos diferentes niveles de recuerdo, incluso hasta la gente que no estaban vivos cuando ocurrió", dijo Sharpton. "Entonces para poder ver toda la gente que vinieron, honrando a ellos, es demasiado genial".

Johnson describió lo que significó para él su último ascenso en Athens.

"Significa mucho porque ya me voy a graduar y ya me voy a ir", dijo Johnson. "Para tener una vez más de ver los bomberos… y los oficiales de policía que vinieron acá y apoyaron, y las amistades y familia que estan aca, es una experiencia demasiada alentadora y genial de tener una última gira aquí en Athens y espero que donde sea que termino viviendo puedo continuar esa tradición".

Visit redandblack.com for more Spanish-translated journalism.



Members of the University of Georgia Army and Air Force ROTC, local firefighters and police officers climb the steps of Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Friday, Sept. 11, 2026. The third annual Memorial Stair Climb honors first responders who died in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York City. PHOTO/JESSE CORSO



A firefighter climbs the stairs of Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Friday, Sept. 11, 2026. The steps honor the 110 stories first responders climbed in the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001. PHOTO/JESSE CORSO

In tribute of the fallen

Athens honors 9/11 with Memorial Stair Climb

Hannah Silver

Over 200 first responders, UGA's Army and Air Force ROTC program members and community members gathered at Sanford Stadium Sept. 11, 2026 to take part in the third-annual 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb.

The event began at 5:30 a.m.with a speech from the coordinator of communications and outreach in the Office of Public Safety at the University of Georgia Greg Trevor, a survivor of 9/11. Trevor left the participants with a final reminder before they began their climb.

"Before you head over to Sanford Stadium to pay tribute to these fallen soldiers," Trevor said. "Something I tell myself when I wake up each morning ... Every day is a gift. Every breath is a blessing."

Following Trevor's remarks and some brief instructions, participants filled the bottom of Sanford Stadium and began their climb, going up and down the stairs of their sections 19 times to simulate the 110 stories that first responders climbed inside the World Trade Center on Sept. 11.

Third-year law student and Air Force Detachment 160 program member Aaron Johnson joined his fellow detachment in completing the stair climb to remember those that sacrificed and lost their lives on Sept. 11.

"I think that the courage and just the overall love for each other that was shown that day, it really demonstrated that love can conquer all things," Johnson said.

"This is an inspiring event," Trevor said. "It is such a wonderful way to pay tribute to all the individuals, both uniformed personnel and civilians, who both raced into the World Trade Center complex and who remained behind to help save lives, help attend to the injured, but also to lead one of the largest evacuations in human history."

Sergeant Ben Sharpton has been working for the Athens-Clarke County Fire Department for nine years. Sharpton reflected on what it meant for so many community members to show up to this event.

"I was eight years old when 9/11 happened, so I remember a little bit of the chaos of it. So we have different levels of remembrance of it, even all the way down to where people weren't even alive when it happened," Sharpton said. "So being able to see the turnout, everybody here, honoring them, it's pretty awesome."

Johnson described what his last climb in Athens meant to him.

"It means a lot because I'm about to graduate and I'm about to leave," Johnson said. "To have one more time of seeing the firefighters ... and the police officers that came out here and supported, and just the friends and family that are out here, it's a really encouraging and cool experience to have one last go here in Athens and then hopefully wherever I end up continue that tradition."

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