

GAMEDAY
PREVIEW

The Red & Black®

Saturday
10.04.25 NOON

GEORGIA
VS. KENTUCKY

VOL. 133 | No. 7 | Athens, Georgia

Thursday, October 2, 2025

HOMECOMING

DAWGS BITE BACK



Georgia offensive lineman Jamal Meriweather (72) before the Georgia vs. Alabama game at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Sept. 27, 2025. PHOTO/KALEB TATUM

A2

**Dominating
the Wildcats**

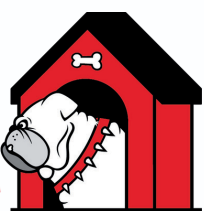
Georgia seeks 16th
straight win

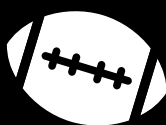
A4

**Position
preview**

Defense searches for
momentum against Kentucky

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An uneven matchup

Georgia looks for 16th consecutive win against Kentucky

Riley Baugh

Georgia and Kentucky first met on the football field in 1939. The series picked up momentum in the early 1940s, though it briefly paused in 1943 when Kentucky suspended its football program during World War II. Play resumed in Athens the following year, and by 1956, the matchup had become a staple on the SEC calendar.

Over the nearly nine-decade-long rivalry, the results have leaned almost entirely in Georgia's favor. The Bulldogs lead the all-time series 64-12-2 and enter this year's matchup riding a 15-game winning streak against the Wildcats.

The consistency of the series gives it its own identity. Georgia's annual games with Auburn, Florida and Tennessee have often carried playoff implications, but the Kentucky matchup has provided a different type of challenge. For the Bulldogs, it has been a test of execution in their demanding SEC schedule. For Kentucky, it has been a chance to measure itself against one of the sport's most established programs.

The two teams also share a rare example of coaching stability on the sidelines. Mark Stoops became Kentucky's head coach in 2013, the longest active tenure in the SEC. Kirby Smart took over from Mark Richt as head coach in late 2015 and is the second-longest-tenured coach in the conference. That continuity has helped shape the matchup in recent years, even as the outcomes have largely remained the same.

While the Bulldogs typically control the series, there have been notable moments that gave the series some extra weight.

2009: Kentucky 34, Georgia 27

Kentucky's last victory in the series came in 2009, and it was one of the more surprising results of the decade for Georgia. Statistically, the Bulldogs controlled the game. Georgia finished with 291 passing yards compared to Kentucky's 137, added 196 rushing yards to Kentucky's 123 and dominated time of possession. But turnovers and penalties flipped the outcome. Georgia quarterback Joe Cox threw two interceptions, including one to Kentucky defensive back Shane McCord that set up a Randall Cobb touchdown, and lost two fumbles on top of more than 50 yards of penalties. What was expected to be a comfortable home win turned into a collapse. The Bulldogs led by two touchdowns at halftime but were outscored 28-7 in the second half, with Cobb and running back Derrick Locke combining for four touchdowns in the comeback. The loss was a low point in a season where the Bulldogs finished 8-5, and it remains Kentucky's lone win in Athens this century.

2012: Georgia 29, Kentucky 24

Three years later, Georgia was tested again, this time in Lexington, Kentucky. Georgia quarterback Aaron Murray



Georgia wide receiver Mekhi Mews (87) runs with the ball during a game between Kentucky and Georgia at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Oct. 7, 2023. Georgia won 51-13. PHOTO/MADY MERTENS

threw four touchdown passes and set the school's career record for passing touchdowns, finishing with 427 yards. Georgia wide receiver Tavarres King caught nine passes for 188 yards and two touchdowns, while fellow receiver Malcolm Mitchell added nine catches for 103 yards. Despite 504 total yards of offense, No. 13 Georgia never really pulled away. Kentucky rushed for 206 yards and stayed within one score going into the fourth quarter. Murray's final touchdown pass gave Georgia just enough cushion to hold on to the win and stay in contention for the SEC East race.

2024: Georgia 13, Kentucky 12

Last season's meeting at Kentucky's Kroger Field was far closer than expected. No. 1 Georgia came in undefeated, but stumbled through the first half, managing only 63 yards of offense and trailing at halftime. Georgia quarterback

Carson Beck struggled under pressure, and the running game stalled. The Bulldogs finally broke through in the second half when running back Branson Robinson scored on a short touchdown run. Georgia's defense kept Kentucky off the scoreboard on its final two drives and the Bulldogs escaped with a 13-12 win — the closest the Wildcats have come to ending Georgia's 15-game win streak over them. The result showed how disruptive Kentucky's style could be, even against one of the nation's top-ranked teams.

As the programs prepare for their 79th meeting, the history is clear. Georgia has owned the series, while Kentucky is still searching for the type of breakthrough it last found over 15 years ago. The numbers say Georgia dominates, but last season's game proved that the Wildcats are as capable as ever of complicating the day in Sanford Stadium.

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Georgia inside linebacker Chris Cole (9), inside linebacker Terrell Foster (30) and defensive back Adrian Maddox (14) wait for the play to start during a game against Austin Peay at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Sept. 6, 2025. Georgia won 28-6. PHOTO/KATHERINE DAVIS

Cats vs. Dawgs

Previewing Georgia vs. Kentucky

Ben Kule

Georgia football is home for the second consecutive week, hosting Kentucky for Saturday's homecoming game at noon. After a 24-21 loss to then No. 17 Alabama, Georgia enters this game ranked No. 12 and 3-1. Kentucky lost to South Carolina on the road last weekend, falling to 0-2 in SEC play and 2-2 overall. The Bulldogs look to get back in the win column and regain their confidence after narrowly avoiding an 0-2 SEC start. Georgia has an all-time record of 83-18-2 on homecoming weekend, and has not lost a homecoming game since 2016. Georgia has also defeated Kentucky in homecoming games twice during that stretch, including a 30-13 win in 2021.

64

Georgia has 64 wins in its 78 matchups played against Kentucky, dating back to 1939. The Bulldogs have only lost twice this century to the Wildcats – in 2006 and 2009.

Nail-biter in Lexington

While Georgia went 10-2 in the 2024 regular season and won the SEC Championship Game and Kentucky went 4-8, the team's records show no indication of how close their matchup was last year. Georgia traveled to Lexington to face former Bulldogs quarterback Brock Vandagriff for its SEC opener on Sept. 14, 2024.

Georgia's offense got off to an extremely slow start. Bulldogs quarterback Carson Beck failed to gain yards on his first four pass attempts, and just three first downs on the first four drives resulted in four Georgia punts. Luckily for Georgia, its defense didn't allow the Wildcats to take advantage. Following a strip sack from linebacker Raylen Wilson, the Bulldogs kicked a field goal to tie the game, then Kentucky responded with a field goal in the final minute of the first half to take a 6-3 halftime lead.

Kentucky and Georgia traded field goals in the third quarter, with the Wildcats entering the final quarter still leading, 9-6. The Bulldogs' first drive of the fourth quarter was comprised of short but consistent gains, with a Branson Robinson 3-yard touchdown giving Georgia its first lead of the game. Kentucky then answered with a field goal to go down one point, 13-12.

Kentucky quickly got the ball back with a chance to win the game, but the Bulldogs' defense stood strong, ultimately holding on for a one-point victory.

The underwhelming performance dethroned Georgia as the No. 1 team, and the Bulldogs ultimately fell to No. 5 after a loss to Alabama the next game.

Bulldogs own all-time record

Despite the close contest last year, wins over Georgia have not come easy for Kentucky over the years. The Bulldogs and Wildcats have faced off annually since 1956, with Georgia winning every contest since 2010 and losing just twice since 1997. Georgia is 64-12-2 against Kentucky all time, with an even split of 32 wins in Athens and 32 in Lexington.

Even in seasons when Kentucky was competitive, it has struggled to beat Georgia. The Wildcats won 10 games in 2018 and 2021, with Georgia and Tennessee being the only teams to beat them in both years. Kentucky's 10 wins in 2021 were later vacated, however, due to a scandal involving NCAA violations.

Perhaps the most hyped-up recent matchup between Georgia and Kentucky took place in 2021, when Wildcats star quarterback Will Levis led No. 11 Kentucky, then undefeated, into Sanford Stadium. Georgia quarterback Stetson Bennett IV and tight end Brock Bowers connected for over 100 yards and two touchdowns in a statement victory, as a late Kentucky score softened the blow and Georgia won 30-13.

Georgia offense threatens

The Georgia offense has steadily produced on the ground and through the air, displaying the potential to carve up Kentucky's defense both ways. In the Bulldogs' first two matchups, virtually the whole depth chart got involved. Quarterback Gunner Stockton posted a quarterback rating (QBR) above 93 against Marshall and Tennessee.

Against Austin Peay, Stockton completed 76.5% of his pass attempts, his highest mark of the season, with a QBR of 36.7. His low QBR was largely a result of the running back room's success, as Nate Frazier and Chauncey Bowens combined for all four of Georgia's touchdowns. The duo combined for 26 carries against Tennessee, but goal-line back Josh McCray powered in two scores and Stockton ran in another. Bowens was the clear lead back after Frazier lost his second fumble of the season against Alabama, rushing for 119 yards on just 12 carries and scoring once.

Wideouts Zachariah Branch and Colbie Young have been the Bulldogs' top two pass-catchers so far. The two have combined for 31 receptions and 454 yards, with Branch scoring twice and Young once. The tight ends have been relatively quiet in the passing game so far, but look to make a bigger impact. Receiving back Cash Jones also has the sixth-most catches (six) and fourth-most receiving yards (57) of the Bulldogs.

Additionally, Kentucky's pass defense has been extremely weak. The Wildcats have allowed 270 passing yards to Toledo, 235 to Ole Miss, 330 to Eastern Michigan and 163 to South Carolina. The Wildcats were expected to beat Toledo and Eastern Michigan, but the weak pass defense let both MAC teams hang around.

The Wildcats simply don't have a clear top defensive back who can cover elite receivers, so Georgia will have the opportunity to score on big plays with busted coverage.

Kentucky quarterback struggles

Just two weeks into the season, Kentucky head coach Mark Stoops replaced senior starting quarterback Zach Calzada with freshman Cutter Boley. Calzada, a native of Buford, Georgia, almost gave away the game to Toledo in Week 1. He scored on a quarterback sneak, but completed just 43.5% of his passes, threw for only 85 yards and dished out an interception.

Two interceptions from Kentucky's defense kept the Wildcats in the game against Ole Miss in Week 2, but Calzada struggled again, completing 15 of 30 passes for 149 yards and zero touchdowns. Boley entered the game for the final two drives, but couldn't make up the seven-point deficit.

Boley was named the starter against Eastern Michigan in Week 3, where he leaned on the running game but performed a bit better than Calzada had been playing, as the Wildcats won 48-23. Boley threw for 240 yards, two touchdowns and no interceptions. In his first career SEC start against the Gamecocks, however, Boley completed just 10 passes for 124 yards, threw two interceptions and zero touchdowns in the loss.

Boley is in line to continue starting against Georgia, but the Wildcats are yet to find a signal caller capable of

leading the team to meaningful victories. The Bulldogs will look to capitalize on Boley's inexperience, and force the young quarterback into turnovers and failed third downs.

Prediction

Although Georgia is coming off a frustrating loss and its only true blowout win was against Marshall in Week 1, the Bulldogs shouldn't have much of a problem against Kentucky. No SEC game is ever a guarantee, but given Georgia's strong history against Kentucky and the Wildcats' early struggles, the Bulldogs are heavily favored to win.

Since Kentucky's passing attack is still yet to catch its stride, the Wildcats may try to lean on the run game. Georgia's defense has performed very well against the run, however, and this won't be a sustainable strategy if Kentucky is trailing. Meanwhile, despite some struggles against Alabama, Stockton's confidence is rising and his familiarity with SEC play is growing, which should lead to Georgia constantly getting on the scoreboard. The Bulldogs will hope to improve on their shaky performance against Kentucky last year, and all signs point towards them doing so.

Prediction: Georgia 38, Kentucky 10



PHOTO/KATHERINE DAVIS



Georgia defensive linemen, Nnamdi Ogboko (95), Xavier McLeod (94) and JJ Hanne (96) line up during the home opener against Marshall University at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Aug. 30, 2025. Georgia won 45-7. PHOTO/KALEB TATUM

Searching for stars

Georgia defense looks for breakout game

Liam W. Dreesen

When Kentucky visits Athens on Saturday, Oct. 4, Georgia will be the heavy favorite. However, in a game the Wildcats always seem to make interesting, there will be plenty of matchups to look out for.

Perhaps the most impactful will be between the Kentucky offensive line and the Georgia defensive front. The Bulldog's defensive line unit has struggled to get after the quarterback so far this season. Georgia is tied for second-last in the SEC with just five sacks through four games.

All five of those sacks came from linebackers, with Chris Cole leading the team with three. The defensive line not recording a sack four games into the season is certainly a cause for concern, especially when the position is usually considered a strength for the Bulldogs.

Despite the trouble pressuring the quarterback, the defensive front has done a good job defending the run. The Bulldogs rank fourth in the SEC with 2.79 rushing yards allowed per attempt.

Fans should be watching the Georgia defensive line against the Kentucky offensive line because in this matchup last year, the Bulldogs' unit had an excellent game and found some momentum moving forward into the year.

The Bulldogs totaled 23 pressures in last year's matchup with the Wildcats. They also had three sacks, including two strip sacks, with one being recovered and leading to Georgia's first three points of the game.

This defensive line production is something the Bulldogs have been lacking in the 2025 season. The unit had just nine pressures against Austin Peay, 10 against Tennessee and eight against Alabama. They have yet to have a player jump into the star pass-rushing role, which is crucial when

it comes to disrupting opposing passing attacks.

However, the team had its star pass rusher emerge in last year's matchup with the Wildcats in the form of Jalon Walker. The linebacker and edge rusher finished the game with five pressures and a sack while cementing himself as one of the stars of the defense. He built on the momentum from the Kentucky game and had a great rest of the season, ultimately winning the Butkus Award.

The Bulldogs will certainly be hoping their defensive line can find as much success as they did last season in this year's matchup.

Cole is one of the most likely players to emerge as an elite pass rusher. The six-foot-three, 235-pound sophomore has the frame and athletic traits to be an elite edge rusher with room still to grow. Because he already leads the team in sacks, Cole is a strong candidate to be the next Walker in defensive coordinator Glenn Schumann's defense.

The Wildcats' 35-13 loss to South Carolina last weekend exposed their pass protection as a major vulnerability. The Gamecocks racked up six sacks, including one that forced a fumble and was returned for a touchdown.

The path to success in this game for the Wildcats will be controlling the pace of the game by developing a strong rushing attack and protecting quarterback Cutter Boley when he does need to drop back to pass. The Wildcats' shaky offensive line play will clash with a Bulldogs unit that has struggled with generating pressure, but excels in stopping the run.

The Bulldogs have talent all over the defensive line, but that talent has had very little impact early in the season. The Kentucky matchup offers the unit a stage to come into its own against one of the conference's most inconsistent offensive lines. The battle between the two units will likely have a huge impact on the outcome of the game.

NUMBERS TO KNOW: Week 6

#8

Georgia wide receiver Colbie Young

Through four games, Young has been a reliable target in Georgia's passing attack. The senior wideout has hauled in 17 receptions for 238 yards, averaging 14 yards per catch. He froze an Alabama cornerback with a sharp route that got him wide open for a 38-yard touchdown, his first of the season. Young's ability to move the chains and stretch the field makes him a steady option for Gunner Stockton. Against Kentucky's secondary, Young's size and consistency could give Georgia an edge in critical third-down situations.

#14

Kentucky defensive back Ty Bryant

Bryant has been the leader of Kentucky's secondary this season, recording 24 tackles and a team-high two interceptions. His ball-hawking instincts make him a constant threat in coverage, and Georgia will have to be mindful of where he is lined up at all times. If Bryant can limit Stockton's options and create a turnover, he could help Kentucky win the field-position battle against a powerful Bulldog offense.

#1

Georgia cornerback Ellis Robinson IV

The redshirt freshman has wasted no time making his presence felt, notching three tackles and a key interception early in the season. Robinson's ball skills help Georgia in the secondary, and he'll be tested against Kentucky's young quarterback Cutter Boley, who has shown a willingness to push the ball downfield. Robinson's ability to flip momentum with turnovers could swing the game in Georgia's favor.

#8

Kentucky quarterback Cutter Boley

In his first career start, the redshirt freshman impressed with 240 passing yards and two touchdowns on 12-of-21 passing. Boley's poise and ability to generate explosive plays give Kentucky a new wrinkle offensively. Still, he'll face his toughest challenge yet against a Georgia defense that thrives on forcing mistakes and creating pressure by shutting down the run game. If Boley can stay composed, he could give Kentucky's offense enough balance to keep the Bulldogs honest.

#5

Georgia linebacker Raylen Wilson

Wilson has emerged as one of Georgia's defensive leaders in his junior season. He's been active both in run support and when brought on blitz packages, tallying 29 tackles, the second most on the team. His speed allows him to close gaps quickly, making him difficult for ballcarriers to outrun. Facing Kentucky's Seth McGowan — who has already scored seven rushing touchdowns — Wilson's role in containing the ground game will be crucial.

#3

Kentucky running back Seth McGowan

The senior running back has been a touchdown machine to start 2025, rushing 68 times for 387 yards and seven scores. McGowan is a physical runner with a nose for the end zone, and he thrives in red zone opportunities. For Georgia, slowing him down will require discipline up front and strong tackling from linebackers like Wilson. If McGowan can get rolling, he'll take pressure off Boley and give Kentucky a fighting chance on the road.

By Romell Williams

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Stepping into the spotlight

C.J. Allen leads linebacker group to contain Kentucky

Braden Brownell

If there has been a clear-cut leader of the Georgia defense this fall, it would have to be inside linebacker C.J. Allen. An ESPN preseason All-American, Allen has carried his success from last season into 2025. He enters Saturday's matchup against Kentucky firmly on the Butkus Award watch list and with more responsibility than ever as Georgia looks to keep pace in the SEC race.

That responsibility takes on extra weight because of what happened the last time these two programs met. Kentucky ran for 170 yards against Georgia in 2024, when the Bulldogs escaped Kroger Field with a 13-12 win. The game served as a reminder that controlling the line of scrimmage against Kentucky is never easy.

Allen's 2024 breakout

Georgia eased Allen into the rotation as a freshman in 2023, but by his sophomore year, he had become indispensable. In last year's tight win over Kentucky, he finished with six tackles and two quarterback pressures. Those efforts helped hold the Wildcats to just 12 points.

That game was part of a season that saw Allen rank second on the team with 76 tackles, adding an interception against Florida and a season-high 10 tackles in the rivalry game against Georgia Tech. By the end of 2024, he had 117 career tackles and a reputation as one of Georgia's smartest, most reliable defenders.

Stepping into the spotlight in 2025

This season, Allen has taken another step forward. His emergence in 2024 brought in national attention and the preseason honors rolled in: first team All-SEC, a second-team All-America recognition from Athlon, ESPN and Sporting News and inclusion on the watch lists for the Butkus Award, Bednarik Award and the Senior Bowl Top 300.

Allen delivered four tackles in the opener against Marshall and followed that with seven tackles and a sack against Austin Peay. In the SEC opener against Tennessee, Allen recorded a career-high 11 tackles, which led the team, and a pass breakup in the overtime win. He paced the Georgia defense once more against Alabama with eight tackles.

Production and presence

Allen's track background shows up every Saturday, translating into sideline-to-sideline range. His 2024 interception against Florida underscored his ability to read the quarterback's eyes in coverage, while his sack against Austin Peay this fall proved he's becoming a more complete pass-rushing threat. He diagnoses plays quickly and has shown the versatility to impact every level of the defense.

But just as important as the tackles and highlights is the leadership that comes with them. Allen has followed in the footsteps of former Georgia defensive leaders such as Roquan Smith and Nakobe Dean. For Allen, the value of being part of the program has motivated him to take on that role.

"Being a linebacker at the University of Georgia, you get developed by the best," Allen said at SEC Media Days. "You're going to get coached by the best, you're going to get pushed and you're going to know the game inside and out. I think it's about knowing ball, knowing your position and making the guys around you better."

Looking ahead to Kentucky

When Georgia hosts Kentucky on Oct. 4 for Homecoming, the Wildcats are expected to test the Bulldogs on the ground again. They've shown throughout September that they can churn out rushing yards regardless of the opponent.

Against Toledo, Kentucky running back Dante Dowdell ripped off a 79-yard touchdown and finished with 129 yards on 14 carries. The next week against Ole Miss, it was tailback Seth McGowan who powered the offense, tallying 93 yards and two scores.

Kentucky totaled 252 rushing yards against Eastern Michigan, with McGowan again leading the way with 104 yards and three touchdowns, while freshman Jason

Patterson added 80 yards of his own.

Through three games, McGowan has already piled up 387 yards and seven touchdowns, while Dowdell sits at 238 yards with an average of 4.9 yards per carry. Add in Patterson's burst, and it's clear Kentucky has multiple backs capable of breaking open a drive.

That puts Allen right at the heart of the matchup. Georgia will rely on Allen's ability to read keys, fill gaps and pressure the quarterback to keep the Wildcats from controlling the tempo.

"When you sign up for the SEC, that's what you sign up for," Allen said. "We're not focused on down the road, just focused on working hard and getting better day in and day out."



Georgia inside linebacker C.J. Allen (3) in action during the game between Georgia and Florida at EverBank Stadium in Jacksonville, Florida, on Saturday, Nov. 2, 2024. Georgia won 34-20. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN

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- ACROSS

1. What Spitz has done well

5. Poker player's response

9. Best-case scenario

14. Macadamize, e.g.

15. Ham's sign-off

16. "West Side Story" song

17. Produce a faint image of

19. Biblical gift

20. Insert more ammo

21. Bank fixture

23. Precipitated

25. Extended a subscription

30. Washer button

32. Place for fox hunting

33. Bottomless void

36. Professional associate

38. Do some pruning

39. ___ lazuli

40. Simon's couple

41. Kind of rush

44. Chromatic nuances

46. Not so bold

47. Beany's TV pal

49. Bone-like

51. Least encountered

54. "How peachy keen!"

56. Award

58. Nepal neighbor

62. Bile-duct blocker

64. Heckle

65. African lily

66. Give stars to, perhaps

67. Wheel rod

68. Does tailoring

69. In peak position?
- DOWN

1. Train for a fight

2. Kid in a kiddie pool

3. Throat pendant

4. Personal histories

5. Oversized groups

6. Eggs, in the lab

7. Court calls

8. Dismal, to a poet

9. Really big

10. It breaks early

11. Be at fault

12. Hang out to dry

13. "Well, ___-di-dah!"

18. Sources of woe

22. Has emotions

24. Decorative sticker

26. Traveler's concern, for short

27. Dennis the Menace's toy

28. Chopin forte

29. Scout's good works

31. Matter

33. Battle to remember

34. Is an omen of

35. Belgian city famed in W.W.I

37. Queen Elizabeth, for one

39. Lash of bygone westerns

42. Manage, with "out"

43. Delivery room delivery

44. Treaded things

45. Chipmaker's substitute

48. Coaxial and booster

50. Exploit accounts

52. Ermine, in summer

53. Lone Ranger's rescuer

55. Fishing souvenir?

57. Show grief

58. Neither his nor hers

59. Shut-eye

60. Dynamic team?

61. It comes out of a pen

63. Sound heard from the herd
- © Lovatts Puzzles

Highlights from Georgia against Alabama



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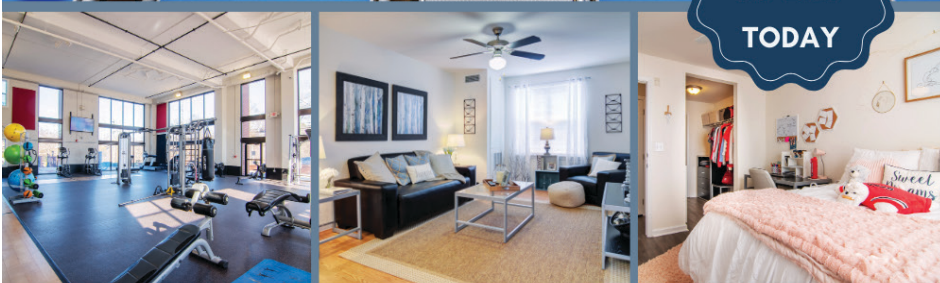
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