

GAMEDAY
PREVIEW

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GEORGIA
VS. AUBURN

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A3

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Georgia co-defensive coordinator and safeties coach Travaris Robinson during a preseason scrimmage at Sanford Stadium on Saturday, Aug. 17, 2024. PHOTO COURTESY/TONY WALSH, UGAAA



Former Georgia co-defensive coordinator Will Muschamp before a game against Ball State at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia on Saturday, Sept. 9, 2023. PHOTO COURTESY/TONY WALSH, UGAAA



Former Georgia head coach Vince Dooley during a game against Samford at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia on Saturday, Sept. 10, 2022. PHOTO COURTESY/TONY WALSH, UGAAA

Beyond the rivalry

Exploring Georgia’s deep coaching ties to Auburn

Ansley Gavlak

For many people, Georgia versus Auburn is the biggest rivalry in the South. You either love Georgia or you love Auburn — and there’s no in between.

For others, the rivalry brings nostalgia of a time when they used to don blue and orange instead of the red and black.

This Saturday, that nostalgia will return for a number of coaches on Georgia’s staff.

Co-defensive coordinator and safeties coach Travaris Robinson, known as “T-Rob,” has deep roots in the plains of Auburn. Robinson, who is considered one of the nation’s best recruiters, replaced former co-defensive coordinator Will Muschamp on Kirby Smart’s coaching staff in January 2024.

Robinson played at Auburn from 1999-2002, where he was named to first team All-SEC by the Associated Press his senior year. After a short-lived NFL career with the Atlanta Falcons and Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Robinson joined Auburn’s coaching staff in 2006 as a staff assistant while finishing his undergraduate degree.

In 2007, Robinson worked as the graduate assistant coach at his alma mater before leaving to coach at various other colleges, including a four-year coaching stint as Florida’s defensive backs coach. He eventually made his way back to Auburn for a single season in 2015.

It is safe to say that Robinson has experienced meeting familiar faces in competitive rivalries, but he has yet to be immersed in this significant rivalry on the Bulldogs’ side of the ball.

Muschamp, defensive analyst and former co-defensive coordinator for the Bulldogs, has experienced a similar path. In fact, the two coached together for many years, representing an abundance of different college teams.

Muschamp played as a safety at Georgia from 1991-1994, where he was elected the de-

fensive team captain his senior year. He then, similarly, got his coaching career up and running as a graduate assistant at Auburn from 1995-1996.

Making his way back to Auburn in 2006, Muschamp served as the defensive coordinator for the Tigers until 2007, coaching with Robinson throughout the two seasons.

Muschamp went on to take up head coaching roles at both Florida, from 2011-2014, and South Carolina, from 2016-2020, both of which Robinson joined him in.

The two are now working together again this season — but this time, in the red and black.

Though a shorter term, offensive coordinator Mike Bobo also falls into the category of Georgia coaches who also represented the Tigers in their career. Bobo is a Georgia native who played quarterback for the Bulldogs from 1994-1997, with Kirby Smart as a teammate.

After working in an administrative role and as a graduate assistant at Georgia, Mark Richt hired Bobo as the quarterbacks coach in 2001, and he never looked back.

There was a brief pause in Bobo’s time at Georgia where he coached at several schools, including Auburn. Bobo signed a three-year coaching contract with the Tigers in 2021, joining the staff as an offensive coordinator. His contract was cut short when he was fired after one year when Auburn’s offense took a sharp decline in the back half of the season, leaving it with a 6-7 record.

The end of this contract allowed Bobo to rejoin Georgia’s coaching staff earlier than expected in 2022, and he was eventually promoted to offensive coordinator in 2023.

Although gone, there is one name that will never be forgotten in the world of college football and especially between the two universities: Vince Dooley.

Any Georgia fan knows the legacy of Dooley at their own university, but few know his grand ties to Auburn.

Dooley played quarterback at Auburn from 1951-1953, where he was captain of the Tigers his senior year. He didn’t waste much time before helping out as an assistant coach for Shug Jordan and the Tigers for eight seasons, leading the program to its first national championship title in 1957. Dooley later earned his masters in history from the university in 1963.

With no previous head coaching experience, Auburn’s former basketball coach Joael Eaves hired Dooley as the head coach of Georgia after three straight losing seasons.

Dooley became the winningest football coach in Georgia history, with his teams claiming six SEC titles and the 1980 national championship along the way. The rest is history.

Dooley remains in both the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame and the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame.

Although the rivalry between the Bulldogs and Tigers is an elite one, the ties between the two will always run deep. For many coaches, it is a reminder of different times and the journeys they took to get where they are today.

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Dajun Edwards (30) runs the ball during a game between Georgia and Auburn at Jordan-Hare Stadium in Auburn, Alabama on Saturday, Sept. 30, 2023. Georgia won 27-20. PHOTO/LANDEN TODD

Back in Athens

Previewing Georgia vs. Auburn between the hedges

Andy Mathis

The Deep South's Oldest Rivalry is returning to Athens once again. After an up-and-down start to the season, the Bulldogs return to Sanford Stadium on Saturday, Oct. 5, to take on the Auburn Tigers. This matchup will be a critical test for the Bulldogs after narrowly defeating the Tigers 27-20 just over a year ago and a rocky start to the season.

History and high stakes

The Georgia-Auburn rivalry dates back to 1892, making it one of the oldest in college football. Georgia leads the all-time series 64-56-8 and is currently enjoying a seven-game winning streak against the Tigers. At their last meeting at Jordan-Hare Stadium, Georgia overcame a first-quarter deficit to secure a grueling come-from-behind win on a late Carson Beck to Brock Bowers touchdown.

The rivalry has also produced some of the most unforgettable moments in college football. In 2013, Auburn pulled off a miraculous 43-38 victory known as "The Prayer at Jordan-Hare." Facing fourth-and-18 with just 36 seconds remaining, Auburn quarterback Nick Marshall launched a deep ball that Georgia safety Josh Harvey-Clemons tipped into the hands of Ricardo Louis for a game-winning touchdown. The play stunned the Bulldogs and remains one of the most dramatic finishes in college football history.

The following year, however, Georgia avenged its loss by mercilessly clobbering Auburn 34-7 in Athens. The Bulldogs overcame an early Auburn touchdown by rattling off 34 unanswered points of their own, as freshman running back Nick Chubb gashed the Tigers for 144 yards and two touchdowns. Florida-transfer Trevor Etienne could see a similar performance this week as Georgia looks to make a statement win over its longtime SEC rival.

In 2017, the two teams met twice in a single season for the first time. Auburn won the regular-season matchup 40-17, handing Georgia its only regular-season loss. However, the Bulldogs got their revenge in the SEC Championship game, defeating the Tigers 28-7 to secure a spot in the College Football Playoff.



Former Georgia tight end Brock Bowers (19) catches the ball with one hand during the second half of the game between Georgia and Auburn at Jordan-Hare Stadium in Auburn, Alabama on Saturday, Sept. 30, 2023. PHOTO/LANDEN TODD

Two's a streak

This game will feature a clash of similar philosophies, with both teams emphasizing winning at the line of scrimmage and flying to the ball on defense. Head coaches Kirby Smart and Hugh Freeze have faced off many times before, but Smart only got the best of Freeze for the first time last September. Now, he and the Bulldogs must carry that momentum into this year.

2005

The last time Georgia lost to Auburn at home was in 2005. The Bulldogs are since a perfect 8-0 against the Tigers between the hedges.

Offensively, Georgia will look to maintain balance. Beck has been efficient this year but far from perfect; to succeed, he will need to spread the ball to his receivers, make the right reads and be patient — as the Tigers are only allowing 16.8 points per game. The Bulldogs' ability to protect Beck and open lanes for Etienne and the rest of the backs has also been shaky this season and will be a critical factor in determining success against Auburn.

Auburn, who has rotated between freshman Hank Brown and senior Payton Thorne under center, will likely attempt to establish its running game with running back Jarquez Hunter — who has already amassed 437 yards and two touchdowns through five games. The Tigers' offense has shown flashes of potential but struggled with consistency down the stretch. Facing a stout Georgia defense known for depth and versatility, Auburn will need to execute at a high level to keep up.

Special teams could also play a significant role against the Tigers. Field position often makes the difference in tightly contested games, and Georgia's own Brett Thorson has been nothing short of electric this season, pinning eight punts inside the 20-yard line. Look for Thorson to continue to play a sleeper role in determining the outcome of this game.

Trouble in paradise?

Often referred to as the "new standard in college football," the Georgia Bulldogs have struggled to stay consistent through SEC play up to this point in the season.

Beck and the offensive unit looked rough in their first conference game of the season, scoring only 13 points on 262 yards of total offense. Kentucky's Demie Sumo-Karngbaye also thrashed the defensive line all night, as the unit surrendered 170 yards on the ground to the Wildcats.

The trend continued against Alabama, with the defense surrendering 547 yards of total offense. Quarterback Jalen Milroe gashed the Bulldogs on the ground, running for 117 yards and two scores.

The offense did not look much better, with Beck turning the ball over four times. Inconsistent play from the position players also put Georgia in passing situations that it could not convert for a majority of the game.

However, the Bulldogs are facing a team in Auburn that should allow them to get back on track. The Tigers have scuffled this season, dropping three of their first five games. After putting up 73 points in its season-opening matchup, Auburn has yet to show a true offensive threat. On defense, the Tigers have been solid but lack many true playmakers.

Prediction

Given Georgia's recent dominance and home-field advantage, the Bulldogs should be favored to continue their winning streak. However, rivalry games are unpredictable, and Auburn will undoubtedly bring its best effort.

Expect a hard-fought contest where physicality and execution will be paramount. Georgia's balanced offensive attack and hard-hitting linebacker core may prove too much for the Tigers to overcome.

Georgia 31, Auburn 17



Mykel Williams (13) attempts to tackle Alabama's quarterback Jalen Milroe (4) during the Georgia vs. Alabama game at Bryant-Denny Stadium in Tuscaloosa, Alabama on Saturday, Sept. 28, 2024. Georgia lost 41-34. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN

Wrap them up

Georgia must rectify its tackling issues

Bo Underwood

It's rare for a team to go on the road, play a top-five match-up, miss tackles and still win. The difference between games is so often who makes the plays in space and who doesn't. One missed tackle can turn into a touchdown, which can turn into a loss. That's an unfortunate predicament for Georgia, who has uncharacteristically struggled with getting opponents on the ground all season.

The Bulldogs missed 16 tackles in their narrow 13-12 scare against Kentucky, and they continued to struggle with it in their 41-34 loss at Alabama. Georgia had not allowed a touchdown all season before the Crimson Tide marched down the field on their first four possessions of the game. The reason for that was simple: Georgia could not tackle anyone in space.

Alabama quarterback Jalen Milroe made defenders look silly time and time again, echoing the exact same issue that Georgia had against Kentucky. Even the likes of All-SEC defensive back Malaki Starks were missing on plays that once felt like automatic stops. On fourth-and-1 early in the second quarter, Milroe ran to the right on a designed quarterback keeper. Starks had the opportunity to tackle Milroe

before the first down marker, but a whiff left the quarterback running all the way to the end zone to give Alabama a 28-0 lead.

The plays that were once so easy for the Bulldogs are now what's losing them games. Couple that with quarterback Carson Beck's recent struggles, and it's hard not to be concerned about the Bulldogs' long-term prospects this season. Struggles against mobile quarterbacks are nothing new, as passers such as Brock Vandagriff and even Auburn's Payton Thorne have gashed the Bulldogs on the ground.

Georgia is staring at an absolute gauntlet of a schedule the rest of the way, with SEC heavyweights Texas, Tennessee and Ole Miss all on tap. If the Bulldogs continue to struggle with finishing plays on defense, it's hard to imagine they see much success in any of those games.

For a team with national title hopes that prides itself on doing the little things right, these types of mistakes are both unthinkable and inexcusable. The only way out for Georgia, right now at least, is a complete turnaround in terms of its tackling. Otherwise, the Bulldogs could be in for an early playoff exit and a disappointing end to a year where they started as the preseason No. 1 team. There's a lot to address in Athens.

NUMBERS TO KNOW: Week 5

#97

Georgia defensive tackle Warren Brinson

The biggest Achilles' heel for the Georgia defense this season has been its line, specifically in stopping the run. The position group has been badgered with injuries since before the season even began, as Mykel Williams, Brinson, Jordan Hall and Xzavier McLeod have all missed time. Kentucky's running backs took full advantage, rushing for 141 yards with an average of 4.5 yards per carry. The Bulldogs will need Brinson, an excellent run stopper, to be a disruptive force against an Auburn team that racked up 219 yards on the ground in last year's contest — and will likely be heavily reliant on the run game again on Saturday.

Auburn running back Jarquez Hunter

Auburn's sole preseason All-SEC offensive player, Hunter, has been on a tear to start his senior season, averaging 6.7 yards per carry through the Tigers' first five games. Hunter has excellent patience and vision, a potent mixture of balance and explosiveness that allows him to tear through arm tackles and break-away speed that makes him a home run threat. Given the inconsistency and turn-over-prone nature of Auburn's passing offense, a gargantuan performance from Hunter might be the key ingredient in the Tigers' recipe for pulling off the upset.

#27

Georgia guard Micah Morris

#56

With preseason All-American guard Tate Ratledge sidelined for several weeks, Georgia's offensive line looks to its "next man up," Micah Morris. The 6'4", 330-pound junior has plenty of experience, appearing in 13 games last season and all four games this year. The Bulldogs will need Morris to be a human wrecking ball against an Auburn defense that is 13th in the SEC in opponent rushing yards per game. The absence of Ratledge also leaves the Bulldogs without one of their best blitz identifiers. Morris will need to take charge so that Carson Beck has the time to pick apart a shaky Auburn secondary.

Aurbun linebacker Eugene Asante

Despite a slow start to the season, Asante could play a critical role in Saturday's game. The preseason All-SEC third team selection has a great instinct for the ball, as he led the Tigers in tackles last season. Perhaps his best quality, though, is his pass rushing. Asante rushed just 54 times in 2023 but recorded 22 quarterback pressures, including five sacks. Expect Auburn to utilize him to make Carson Beck uncomfortable, especially against a Georgia offensive line that has struggled at times to pick up blitzes and stunts.

#9

Georgia safety Malaki Starks

#24

The Bulldogs have lost just five games over the past five seasons. In those five games, Georgia forced just three turnovers, losing the turnover battle by a combined margin of 3-19. Facing an Auburn offense on Saturday that turned the ball over 14 times in its first four games, Starks, the Bulldogs' active leader in career interceptions, could help dictate the script of the game. If Starks is able to pounce on a pass or two from Auburn quarterback Payton Thorne while also helping shut down leading receiver KeAndre Lambert-Smith, the Bulldogs will be at a massive advantage.

Auburn quarterback Payton Thorne

Thorne has had an interesting season, to say the very least. After throwing four interceptions in Auburn's loss to California, the fifth-year senior was benched for freshman Hank Brown. However, head coach Hugh Freeze gave the reins of the offense back to Thorne when Brown was picked off three times in the first half against Arkansas. Thorne almost got things together against No. 21 Oklahoma, throwing for 338 yards, and three touchdowns, but also threw a backbreaking pick-six that lost Auburn the game. That game proved that the Auburn offense is dangerous when Thorne is at his best, but the Tigers will need him to be more consistent against Georgia.

#1

By Owen McDaniel

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Tyron Ingram-Dawkins (93) in action during the Georgia vs. Georgia Tech game at Bobby Dodd Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia on Saturday, Nov. 25, 2023. Georgia won 31-23. PHOTO/MADY MERTENS

Tyrion Ingram-Dawkins blossoming into impact player for Georgia

Once a five-star recruit and a top-20 player in the nation, the redshirt junior defensive tackle's college career up to this point has been largely defined by injury. He missed all of last spring with a foot injury, and another foot injury limited him to just three games last season. It's been a frustrating fate for a player with so much potential.

“ I went through a lot mentally when I missed the season last season, so I'd just say my teammates and coaches, the love that they give me every day, that's what keeps me driving.

Knock on wood, but things look like they're starting to turn for the beleaguered Bulldog. Ingram-Dawkins has been getting on the field more than ever for Georgia, and he's emerged as one of the defense's most productive players in 2024.

"He's done a great job. He talked to the team today about where he was in terms of his mental space when he was a young player and thought he should be playing more," head coach Kirby Smart said in the week following the Kentucky game. "It's funny because he's matured so much from the time he was like, 'I should be starting, I should be playing,' to realizing that he wasn't ready and that he needed to get better. Unfortunately, he didn't get to play a lot last year because of injury, but he has been able to play a lot this year and he's done a really good job."

"I want to see him lead," Smart said. "I want to see him continue to practice with great effort so that he can play in the games with great effort and sustain more snaps. He's practicing a few more reps now."

Thursday Crossword - Answer Online FRIDAY, Oct. 4

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20. Yen
21. Miffed
22. Make-up artist?
24. Emulated Jack Horner
26. Evening hour
28. Angler's attachment
29. Liberal pursuits
30. Top
32. "___ not!"
34. Romance, e.g.
37. Copper finish
39. Hearts
40. Military standings
42. Eye drop?
43. Pantomimed disco title
44. Do a number
46. Halloween purchase
48. In shape
49. Possibilities
50. Mi, fah, ___, lah
51. Really test

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- Taylor Swift



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Tried and true

Through change, the ‘Deep South’s Oldest Rivalry’ remains the same

Olivia Sayer

A wave of electricity ran through the crowd at Sanford Stadium. As the fourth quarter began, Soulja Boy’s “Crank That” blared through the overhead speakers, eliciting an eruption from the 92,746 fans decked out in all black.

The 2007 ‘blackout game’ marks just one of many memorable moments embedded within the “Deep South’s Oldest Rivalry.”

The rivalry between Georgia and Auburn began in 1892 when Auburn professor George Petrie was asked to referee Georgia football’s inaugural game against Mercer. Petrie, who was the head coach of the Tigers at the time, sent one of his players to officiate and in turn asked if the Bulldogs would play his team at Piedmont Park.

Georgia head coach Charles Herty agreed, and on Feb. 20, 1892, the “Deep South’s Oldest Rivalry” began. For just 50 cents a ticket, fans watched as Auburn, who at the time was known as the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Alabama, earned a 10-0 victory.



Chaz Chambliss (32) tackles an Auburn player during the first half of the Georgia vs. Auburn game at Jordan-Hare Stadium in Auburn, Alabama, on Saturday, Sept. 30, 2023. Georgia won 27-20.

PHOTO/LANDEN TODD



Fans cheer during the second half of a game between Georgia and Auburn at Jordan-Hare Stadium in Auburn, Alabama on Saturday, Sept. 30, 2023. Georgia won 27-20. PHOTO/LANDEN TODD

Since that game, the Bulldogs and Tigers have met 127 times, making it one of the most played rivalries in college football. However, what used to be a back-and-forth battle has recently turned one-sided.

The Bulldogs slightly lead the series 64-56-8 but currently own a seven-game winning streak against the Tigers. Georgia has also won nine of the last 10 contests and has not lost to Auburn in Sanford Stadium since 2005.

Despite the Bulldogs’ recent dominance, the rivalry is filled with unforgettable moments that are now displayed in photographs and record books.

One of the most iconic moments came in the 100th matchup. Georgia won 56-49 in what was the SEC’s first overtime game, but it was the Bulldogs’ mascot that stole the show.

After Auburn wide receiver Robert Baker found the end-zone, the cute but feisty Uga attempted to bite him. The motion caused Baker to leap back, creating a photograph that can now be found in many households.

“The noise scared the dog and startled it,” sideline handler Charles Seiler told ESPN. “Bulldogs are kind of bred to run and catch things. And, in a playful way, I think the dog turned around, and there was this big guy coming his way, and so he lunged out at him.”

Seiler, whose family owns the line of Bulldog mascots, said it was a good thing he secured Uga’s leash because, if not, the bulldog would have “lit [Baker] up.”

Georgia is no stranger to the noise associated with Jordan-Hare Stadium, as showcased in one of the most jaw-dropping plays in the history of college football.

With Auburn leading by 20 and less than 10 minutes to go, Georgia quarterback Aaron Murray orchestrated three near-perfect drives to give the Bulldogs a one-point lead

with less than two minutes remaining in the game.

On a fourth-and-18 situation, the Tigers heaved the ball down the field in desperation. Instead of deflecting the pass, Georgia defenders Tray Matthews and Josh Harvey-Clemons attempted to intercept it. As a result, the ball bounced off them and into the hands of Auburn wide receiver Ricardo Louis for a 73-yard touchdown. Matthews later transferred to Auburn.

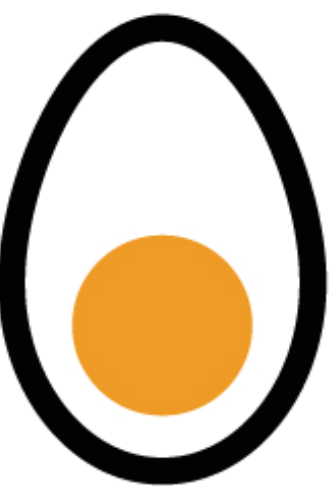
The play was coined “the Prayer at Jordan-Hare” and remains one of the most prominent moments in the Georgia-Auburn rivalry.

A happier moment for the Bulldogs at Jordan-Hare Stadium occurred in the 1986 matchup. After Vince Dooley and Georgia upset No. 8 Auburn 20-16, many fans rushed the field in celebration.

The public address announcer warned fans to stay in the stands, but they were enthralled in the emotion of the game and rushed the field anyway. As a result, Auburn turned the water on, drenching Georgia fans in what is now known as “the game between the hoses.”

“The funny thing is that in some magazine there was an article about the 25 most memorable things that have happened in the SEC, and Bear Bryant winning 315 games was like, number 24 or something,” Paul Conner, who was responsible for opening the valve, told the War Eagle Reader in 2011. “But us wetting the Georgia Dawgs was number 11. They remembered that more than anything Bear Bryant did.”

Moments as such are why the SEC made Auburn one of Georgia’s permanent opponents when the conference did away with divisions in the offseason. Commissioner Greg Sankey said “traditional rivalries” would play a factor into schedules. With over 130 years of history, the “Deep South’s Oldest Rivalry” certainly falls into the category.

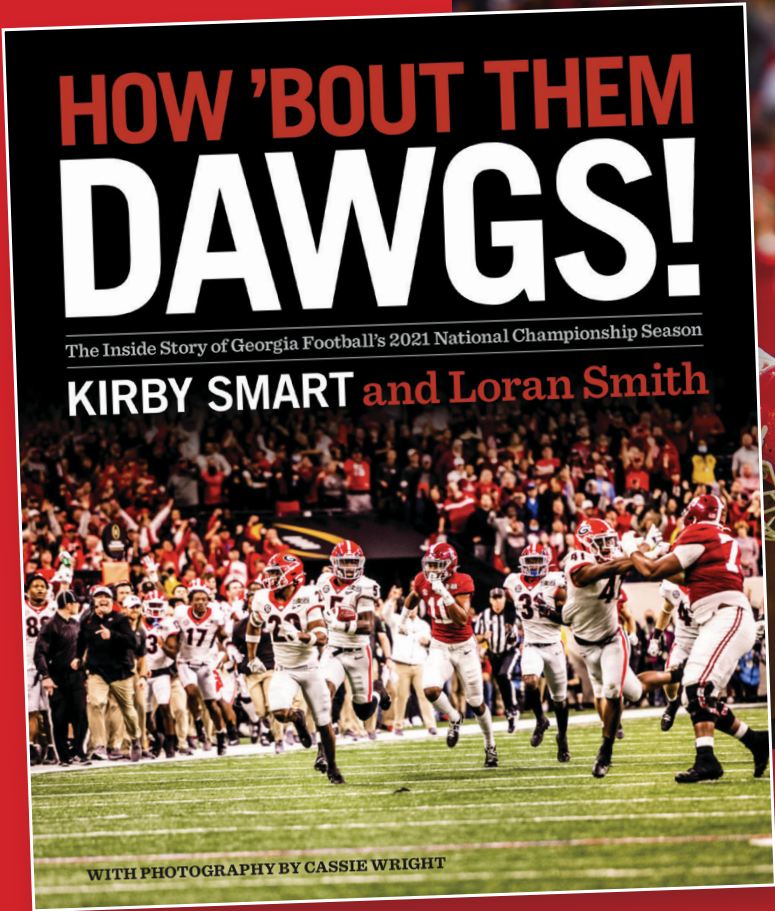
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