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PREVIEW

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GEORGIA
VS. OLE MISS

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Thursday, October 16, 2025

CALLING THE DAWGS HOME

REDEMPTION



The Georgia Bulldogs take the field before the game against Kentucky in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Oct. 4, 2025. Georgia won 35-14. PHOTO/HOSANNA WORKU

A3 Return to Athens Georgia looks to bounce back after 2024 loss

A6 Future on the line Georgia vs. Ole Miss has big implications

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An unpredictable battle

The storied history between Georgia and Ole Miss

Romell Williams

As Georgia and Ole Miss prepare for another high-stakes clash, it's worth revisiting some of the most memorable moments that have defined the matchup over the decades. Though Georgia holds a dominant edge in the series, the faceoffs have produced high drama, turning points and rare wins for the underdog Rebels.

A statistical backdrop

Since the teams' first meeting in 1940, Georgia has amassed a commanding upper hand in the series. The Bulldogs lead with a 33-13-1 record, not counting a 2016 Ole Miss win later vacated by the NCAA. At home, Georgia has been especially formidable, boasting a 19-4-1 record in the series. Ole Miss has historically fared better in Oxford, though it still trails overall 10-6 at home.

One of the most notable streaks in the rivalry came when Georgia won 12 straight from 1977 through 1988 — the longest win streak in the matchup's history. Still, Ole Miss has had its moments — and those make for compelling stories.

1995: Ole Miss 18, No. 20 Georgia 10

This victory for the Rebels stood out in an era when Georgia normally prevailed. Ole Miss picked up a hard-fought road win in Athens, demonstrating that when the Rebels turned up defensively and controlled the trenches, they could beat Georgia on its home turf. Ole Miss' offense was flowing, using balanced rushing and key passing plays to keep drives alive, with quarterback John Fourcade and kicker Tim Montz connecting on pivotal plays.

Georgia had opportunities to rally but could not overcome the Rebels' timely stops and efficient scoring. This hard-fought win underscored that even in Georgia's dominant periods, Ole Miss could turn in a performance that left a lasting mark on the series and gave the Rebels momentum for the rest of the season.

2023: No. 1 Georgia 52, No. 10 Ole Miss 17

In a dominant statement of SEC supremacy, No. 4 Georgia hosted No. 9 Ole Miss at Sanford Stadium and left little doubt who controlled the matchup. After falling behind 7-0 early, Georgia quickly answered with an explosive offensive attack. By halftime, Georgia had taken firm control, and the second half saw the Bulldogs pull away with a flurry of scoring drives.

The 52-17 rout also extended multiple school streaks, including a regular-season SEC win streak and a home winning streak. The game underscored Georgia's continued dominance over Ole Miss while providing a modern benchmark for memorable wins in the series.

2024: No. 11 Ole Miss 28, No. 2 Georgia 10

Ole Miss avenged the 2023 loss in convincing fashion with a 28-10 home victory in Oxford. The Rebels turned in a complete game, combining a stifling defense with efficient offense. The Ole Miss defense completely overpowered Georgia, sacking quarterback Carson Beck five times and allowing just three points in the second half. The Bulldogs kicked a field goal on their first drive of the second half to make it a one-score game, but the Rebels responded with a touchdown and forced turnovers on Georgia's next three drives to seal the victory.

Recent episodes and the 2024 breakthrough

Since 1997, Georgia has largely kept Ole Miss at bay — winning 11 of the last 12 matchups before 2024. Still, the faceoffs have produced big results in the past decade. This includes Ole Miss's blowout win in 2016, Georgia's dominant victory in 2023 and the Rebels' upset win in 2024.

The 2024 game might loom large in the historical narrative, not only because it ended a long Bulldogs run, but also because it serves as a reminder that in this rivalry, momentum can shift — even if only rarely.

Why this matchup matters

One might argue that Georgia vs. Ole Miss lacks the decades-long ferocity of some SEC series. But its value lies

in contrast — an unpredictable battle. When Ole Miss rises to the occasion, as in 1995 or 2024, the upset or statement win becomes part of Rebels' lore. When Georgia dominates, it underscores just how far the Bulldogs have come as a juggernaut in the modern era.

As the teams prepare for their next clash, there's more than pride on the line. Ole Miss enters the matchup ranked No. 5 in the nation, while Georgia sits at No. 9 — a rare reversal in the programs' recent history. With playoff implications looming and the SEC title game in Atlanta hanging in the balance, this year's contest could be one of the most significant meetings between the Bulldogs and the Rebels in decades. If history is any guide, the result is likely to be memorable.



Ole Miss fans climb the goalposts after the Georgia vs. Ole Miss football game at Vaught–Hemingway Stadium in Oxford, Mississippi, on Nov. 9, 2024. Ole Miss won 28-10. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN



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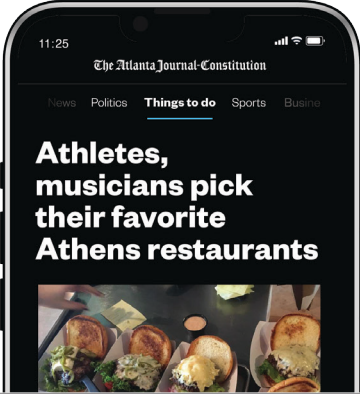
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The Kentucky offensive line faces off against the Georgia defensive line during the Georgia vs. Kentucky football game at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Oct. 4, 2025. Georgia won 35-14. PHOTO/ASHTIN BARKER

Looking for revenge

Predicting Georgia vs. Ole Miss

Braden Brownell

Georgia hosts Ole Miss in Athens at 3:30 p.m. on Saturday, and the game is shaping up to be a defining showdown in the SEC. Both teams remain in the race for the SEC title and the College Football Playoff. For Georgia, this will be the first ranked matchup following the Bulldogs' first home loss in nearly six years, when then-No. 17 Alabama beat them 24-21 on Sept. 27.

Ole Miss has been powered by the dynamic Trinidad Chambliss at quarterback, a Division II transfer from Ferris State who stepped in after Austin Simmons' injury and retained the starting job. The offense combines Chambliss' dual-threat ability with running back Kewan Lacy, who has three 100-plus-yard games including 142-yards on 24 carries in the Rebels' last outing against Washington State. Ole Miss is seventh in the country in total yards per game and 14th in scoring offense. The Rebels' start puts them in first place in the SEC and in position to make the program's first playoff appearance.

Georgia looks for revenge

Last season, Ole Miss hosted Georgia in Oxford and stunned the No. 3 Bulldogs 28-10. Head coach Lane Kiffin's team won the line of scrimmage, recording five sacks and forcing four turnovers, while Georgia produced only 245 yards. Former Georgia quarterback Carson Beck was pressured consistently, throwing an interception and losing a fumble.

Georgia will attempt to avenge last year's loss by attacking Ole Miss' revamped defense. Against Alabama, Georgia ran for 227 yards but failed to convert on a crucial fourth-and-1 when defensive lineman L.T. Overton stopped Cash Jones for a 2-yard loss. That play typified Georgia's inconsistent short-yardage execution, especially against big fronts like it'll face again versus Ole Miss. The running back

tandem of Chauncey Bowens and Nate Frazier will need to deliver to keep the Rebels' defense honest. In SEC play, the duo has averaged 4.9 yards per carry, an impressive number that will be important as Georgia looks to open up the ground game.

Georgia's defense must also improve on third downs. Alabama converted 12 of 19 attempts in a game that head coach Kirby Smart will surely use as a benchmark for improvements in practices leading up to the clash against the Rebels. The Bulldog defense looked promising against Kentucky, limiting a solid rushing attack to 45 yards and producing its first fumble recovery of the season.

The Bulldogs' secondary will be tested by a balanced Ole Miss receiving corps who, much like Georgia, run the offense through a group of players as opposed to a singular star. Harrison Wallace III and Georgia native Deuce Alexander have emerged as the leaders in the room, with tight end Dae'Quan Wright also providing a receiving threat. Georgia cornerbacks and linebackers must be sound in coverage but also mindful of Chambliss' ability to hurt them on the ground to avoid a repeat of last season's game, when quarterback Jaxson Dart posted 50 rushing yards, including a 28-yard run.

Kiffin and Kirby

Ole Miss has embraced an underdog mentality against Georgia in recent years under Kiffin, but this year feels distinctively different. Ole Miss enters on even footing as a top-tier team with realistic playoff aspirations after coming up just shy last year — a decision from the College Football Playoff Committee that Kiffin was very vocal about. This year, the Rebels hope to take matters into their own hands. Ole Miss has a winning record against Smart, which only two other SEC programs — LSU and Alabama — can say.

Kiffin made some comments recently that Smart and company may use as bulletin board material.

"In my opinion, the dynasties are over," Kiffin said in an interview with ESPN. "Alabama with Coach [Nick] Saban and then Kirby at Georgia, where they had those rosters year in, year out and there would be a bunch of wins by 30 points in the conference. Those days are done."

Smart's familiarity with Kiffin dates back to their time together on Saban's staff at Alabama. Smart will likely stress discipline in countering Kiffin's aggressive playcalling and rapid tempo. It will be interesting to see how well Georgia sets the edge after historically struggling against dual-threat quarterbacks like Chambliss.

“ In my opinion, the dynasties are over ... there would be a bunch of wins by 30 points in the conference. Those days are done.

LANE KIFFIN | OLE MISS HEAD COACH

Chambliss emerges as Ole Miss starter

Chambliss is one of college football's surprise stories. A 6-foot-1, 200-pound quarterback from Florida, he received no Division I offers and enrolled at Division II's Ferris State, in Michigan. There he led Ferris State to two Division II national titles, passing for 2,925 yards and 26 touchdowns and rushing for 1,019 yards and 25 touchdowns. Chambliss entered the transfer portal in April 2025 and joined Ole Miss after spring practice.

When starting quarterback Austin Simmons suffered an injury in early September, Chambliss took over. In his first SEC start, he accounted for 415 total yards and three touchdowns against Arkansas. He followed with 314 passing yards and 71 rushing yards in a 24-19 upset of No. 4 LSU, earning SEC Offensive Player of the Week honors. Through five games, he had thrown for 1,033 yards with a 64.4% completion rate and five touchdowns, rushed for 266 yards and was the first SEC player in 30 years to record 300 passing yards and 50 rushing yards in three consecutive games. His breakout has vaulted him into the Heisman Trophy conversation. Georgia's linebackers must maintain gap discipline to prevent him from gashing them on scrambles.

Prediction

Playing at Sanford Stadium, the Bulldogs will look to feed off a hungry and motivated crowd after losing their historic home game win streak against the Crimson Tide in September. Quarterback Gunner Stockton's rushing ability adds a dimension that was lacking with Carson Beck last year. If the Bulldogs protect the ball and win early downs, they can control the tempo.

Ole Miss, however, is arguably just as equipped as the team that beat Georgia last year. Chambliss gives Kiffin a dynamic element, and the defense that suffocated Georgia last season has reloaded and retained some key contributors. Chambliss has yet to walk into such a hostile environment in a big game like a ranked matchup in Sanford Stadium. The Rebels' success is contingent on the transfer avoiding turnovers and pressuring Georgia's youthful offensive line, which has struggled at times this year. The game will likely hinge on red zone execution, as seen in Georgia's matchup against Alabama.

Expect a one-score game going into the fourth quarter before Georgia's rushing attack wears the Rebels down and the Bulldog defense leans on the atmosphere as the sky turns dark and the lights in Sanford turn red to stifle Ole Miss. Georgia showed it can hunker down defensively in the second half against Auburn, and it's hard to believe it won't rectify mistakes and execute late in the game offensively to keep itself in the SEC title race.

Prediction: Georgia 34, Ole Miss 24.



Georgia tight end Lawson Luckie (7) in action during the Georgia vs. Ole Miss football game at Vaught–Hemingway Stadium in Oxford, Mississippi, on Saturday, Nov. 9, 2024. Ole Miss won 28-10. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN



Georgia running back Chauncey Bowens (33) in action during the Georgia vs. Austin Peay football game at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Sept. 6, 2025. Georgia won 28-6. PHOTO/ETHAN GREENE

Backfield switch-up

Chauncey Bowens’ mid-season breakout

Liam W. Dreesen

After struggling to run the ball last season, Georgia football put an emphasis on the ground game heading into this year. So far, that work has paid off — the Bulldogs have one of the better rushing attacks in the conference, but a surprise name is now leading the backfield.

Georgia ranks seventh in the SEC with 185.5 rushing yards per game, an improvement from the 124.4 yards it averaged last season, which ranked second-to-last.

There has been a conscious effort to not only run the ball more, but also more efficiently. In 2024, the Bulldogs ran the ball just over 30 times per game and averaged just 4.06 yards per carry. So far this season, the Bulldogs are running the ball 41.2 times a game and averaging 4.5 yards per carry.

After leading the team with 133 carries for 671 yards and eight touchdowns as a freshman, Nate Frazier was thought of as the clear lead back in the Bulldogs’ 2025 offense. However, as the season has progressed, a new name has emerged: Chauncey Bowens.

The 5-foot-11, 225-pound redshirt freshman has become head coach Kirby Smart’s most trusted back. Last season, Bowens carried the ball just 16 times for 58 yards in four games while redshirting.

Throughout the season, Bowens’ volume slowly increased before his breakout game against Alabama. Bowens rushed 12 times for 119 yards and a touchdown against the Crimson Tide, cementing himself as the lead back for the Bulldogs after Frazier was benched following a second-quarter fumble. Bowens was one of the few bright spots for the Georgia offense in the team’s first home loss since 2019.

Bowens built on this momentum the next week against Kentucky, once again leading the team in carries and yards,

finishing with 15 attempts for 70 yards.

Bowens was given the start for the first time in his young career against the Wildcats. He spent the first five snaps lined up next to quarterback Gunner Stockton and took the first handoff of the game around the left side of the offensive line for a 13-yard gain.

“It was a good feeling,” Bowens said. “It’s something I dreamed of as a kid, being able to go out there first and represent this program.”

Bowens only received four carries against Auburn because of a calf injury, but Smart said he “should be ready to go” against Ole Miss.

Bowens is a very balanced back. His size and frame give him the ability to finish off strong runs and fight through contact, and his speed makes him a constant threat to break off explosive plays.

He showed this ability on a 29-yard rush to kickstart the Bulldogs’ offense against Alabama, leading to their first touchdown of the game. Bowens took a handoff to the right side and bounced outside before hitting the jets. His speed allowed him to get around the edge of the defense, and he finished off the run with a stiff arm, which helped him gain some extra yardage.

Bowens also ran track in high school and had a personal best time of 10.88 in the 100-yard dash, an impressive time for a 225-pound athlete.

The young back could be in for another standout performance against an Ole Miss team that has struggled against the run this season. The Rebels rank third-to-last in the SEC in rushing yards allowed per game, with 157.6 yards, and in yards per attempt allowed, with 4.78 yards.

The Rebels’ struggling rush defense faces Bowens and a formidable Bulldogs rushing attack on Saturday. If the Rebels cannot find a way to stop the run, Bowens could be a key factor in a strong Georgia performance.

NUMBERS TO KNOW: Week 8

Ole Miss wide receiver Cayden Lee

#19

Lee, the projected No. 1 receiver for the Rebels heading into the season, started the year slow, only recording three catches in the first two games. However, he established a rapport with quarterback Trinidad Chambliss, who took over for the injured Austin Simmons in Week 3, hauling in 12 receptions for 261 yards over the last four games. Georgia has struggled to contain elite receivers this season, so Lee could feast on Saturday.

Georgia running back Chauncey Bowens

Bowens has flown up the depth chart this season, making the most of his reps to become the Bulldogs’ lead back. The redshirt freshman blossomed in the Alabama game, rushing 12 times for 119 yards. Over half of Bowens’ rushing yards this season have come after contact. That kind of relentless running could expose an Ole Miss defense that is allowing 4.78 yards per carry — the seventh-worst in the Power Four.

#33

Ole Miss quarterback Trinidad Chambliss

#16

Chambliss has been a revelation for the Rebels this season. The Ferris State transfer has led Ole Miss to four straight wins, including a gritty 24-19 victory over then-No. 4 LSU in Week 5. Chambliss threatens with both his arm and his legs and Georgia has historically struggled against mobile quarterbacks. If Chambliss can make plays outside of the pocket and scramble to extend drives, it may give the Rebels the edge.

Georgia defensive tackle Christen Miller

If anyone has the opportunity to single-handedly alter the outcome of this game, it’s Miller. The redshirt junior has emerged as one of the nation’s best run-stopping defensive tackles, largely because of his ability to hold his ground against double and triple teams. Miller isn’t normally a sack threat, but if he can create enough of a push to collapse the pocket on Chambliss and clog his scrambling lanes while also contributing to the run defense, he could play a critical role in stunting the Ole Miss offense.

#52

Ole Miss guard Patrick Kutas

#75

Kutas has been one of the driving forces of Ole Miss’ potent run game that ranks 27th in the nation in yards per game. The Arkansas transfer was named an SEC Co-Offensive Lineman of the Week for his performance in the Rebels’ win over LSU, during which Chambliss was never sacked. Facing a Georgia run defense that is 14th nationally in yards allowed per rush, Kutas will be tasked with opening running lanes for the Rebels’ backfield and facilitating some offensive balance.

Georgia offensive tackle Monroe Freeling

While Georgia’s offensive line play has been inconsistent throughout the season, Freeling has held down the left tackle position. He has allowed just five pressures all year protecting quarterback Gunner Stockton’s blind side and is gradually improving with each game. Coming off an ankle injury suffered against Kentucky, Freeling will face off with Ole Miss edge rusher Princewill Umanmielen, who has generated 17 pressures and two sack this season.

#57

By Owen McDaniel

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CORRECTIONS

In the Oct. 2 print edition, on page A3, the wrong photographer was credited for the photo cutout. The correct photographer was Ethan Greene and we regret this error. As a student-run news organization with the mission of training journalists, we know that mistakes happen and we do our best to correct them as quickly as possible. If you spot a factual error, please let us know by sending a correction to editor@randb.com. Corrections to items in print editions are published in the next possible print issue. Corrections for online-only articles are posted at redandblack.com/corrections.

Dreams on the line

SEC and CFP bids at stake between the hedges

Ben Kule

When No. 9 Georgia hosts No. 5 Ole Miss this Saturday, the result will have major implications. For Ole Miss, it could be a signature win in one of the most successful seasons in recent memory or the start of another mid-season collapse like the ones the Rebels suffered in 2024 and 2022. For Georgia, it could be the difference between reaching its fifth consecutive SEC Championship game and a struggle to stay in the College Football Playoff race.

Last year's fallout

No. 3 Georgia traveled to Oxford, Mississippi, to face No. 16 Ole Miss in Week 11 last season — a game that also had large implications. The Bulldogs got off to a hot start, as Dan Jackson intercepted Rebels quarterback Jaxson Dart on the first drive and a Nate Frazier rushing touchdown put the Bulldogs ahead 7-0. However, Georgia's offense was completely stifled for the rest of the game. Ole Miss scored 16 unanswered points and Georgia only managed a field goal after its first drive, as the Rebels defeated the Bulldogs 28-10.

The win seemed to herald the revival of Ole Miss' season, as it rose to No. 9 and significantly increased its odds to reach the SEC Championship game and CFP. However, the Rebels suffered their third loss of the season the next week when they were defeated by Florida, dropping them out of playoff contention.

For Georgia, the loss put pressure on the next three games. The Bulldogs would have to defeat Tennessee at home in order to hold the necessary tiebreaker for a spot in the SEC title game. After beating the Volunteers, they needed to win their final two games — against UMass and Georgia Tech — to avoid putting their playoff hopes in serious jeopardy. Georgia ultimately won out and defeated Texas for the SEC title.

If Georgia wins

According to FanDuel Sportsbook, Georgia has the third-highest odds of winning the SEC championship, while Ole Miss has the fourth-highest. Three teams remain undefeated in SEC play, but as more conference games are played, this contest may prove to be a major gateway to reaching the SEC Championship game.

Still, Georgia has catching up to do after already suffering a conference loss. If Georgia wins, the win would significantly boost its resume, and avoiding an unranked loss in its final three SEC games would likely be enough to reach the conference championship game.

Additionally, the first CFP rankings will be coming soon after the matchup. Defending home field and taking down the No. 5 Rebels would bode well for the Bulldogs, putting them comfortably in position for a playoff spot.

Ole Miss taking its first loss of the season would sting, but it is positioned to be successful either way. After Georgia, the Rebels' only remaining ranked game is Oklahoma, led by quarterback John Mateer, who struggled against Texas after returning from thumb surgery.

Ole Miss also hosts South Carolina and Florida and will play on the road against Mississippi State in Week 14. If the Rebels finish 11-1, they would be a lock for the CFP and they would most likely be in the conference championship game. Suffering another loss and going 10-2 might not be



Georgia defensive back Daylen Everette (6) intercepts the ball during the 2024 SEC Championship football game between Georgia and Texas at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia, on Saturday, Dec. 7, 2024. Georgia won 22-19. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN

good enough for the SEC Championship game, but considering BYU was the only two-loss Power Four school to miss the CFP last season, Ole Miss would still likely get in.

If Ole Miss wins

A win could be monumental for the Rebels, as it could be their toughest win along an undefeated journey — their first since 1962. The path to 12-0 becomes extremely feasible with a win on the road at Georgia, especially if Mateer does not return to form for the Sooners by Oct. 25.

If Ole Miss comes out of Athens victorious, its chances to reach both the SEC Championship game and CFP are very high, even if it drops a game toward the end of the season. A win would also give the Rebels a victory in three of the last four contests with the Bulldogs, and it would be the first time they beat Georgia in consecutive years since

1995 and 1996, when they did it despite a combined record of 11-11 over those two years.

For Georgia, a loss would mark just the second time the Bulldogs lost twice in the same season at Sanford Stadium under head coach Kirby Smart — the first being Smart's first season at the helm in 2016.

After Ole Miss, Georgia still must face challenging opponents such as Texas at home and Florida and Georgia Tech at neutral sites. A loss to Ole Miss and Georgia Tech, for example, would put Georgia at 9-3. Last year, Clemson went 9-3, but still reached the CFP by winning the ACC Championship game. Since a Georgia Tech loss wouldn't count against Georgia's conference record, the Bulldogs could make the CFP that way as SEC champions. However, losing to Ole Miss could still seriously muddy Georgia's path to the playoffs.



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ACROSS

- Bowling pin wood
- Stadium regulars
- Flanders of fiction
- "Manhattan" director
- Buffalo's lake
- Having the skills
- Ashcan School painter
- Nits, eventually
- Appaloosa's relative
- Puts under a spell
- Partial prefix
- Cereal container
- Oscar-winner Hayward
- Autocrat's worry
- Laryngeal woe
- Still kicking
- Cooler residents
- Prop for Chaplin
- Circuit-board wrecker
- Energy field, of sorts
- Tires out
- Quell, as concerns
- Stood up to
- Atlas features
- Extract metals by heating
- Many chiliads
- Angel's prop
- Acted like a control freak
- Again from the top

DOWN

- Brewer's preparation
- Adversary's antithesis
- Rainspout sound
- Pastrami preference
- Lend dignity or honor to
- Oscar's "The Odd Couple" pal
- Grand Canyon's loc.
- Heading on Santa's list
- Doesn't raise or fold
- Wombats, bandicoots, etc.
- Violas' pit neighbors
- Vicuna's kin
- Bolshevik hero
- Day care attendee
- Hoagie
- Hare vs. tortoise event
- Flair or gusto
- It climbs the walls
- Caused a spill

- Quite excited
- Embargo target
- Green hue
- Hardly captivating
- Pacific island
- Deposited, as eggs
- On the way, in a way
- Aromatic chemical

- Felt deeply
- Convoy components, often
- "Blood and Sand" cry
- Cordage fiber
- Game guide
- Shucks!
- Asserts
- Bag, zoologically
- Chocolatier's vessel
- Mouseketeer notable
- Charged particle
- Must, in a contract
- Fervor
- Incense resin
- Figure skating figure
- Artist's light touches
- Wolfish look
- Haunted house noise
- Valentine's Day deity
- Go on and on
- Head start, say
- Diary opener

Highlights from the Oct. 4 Georgia vs. Kentucky game



PHOTO CREDIT: ASHTIN BARKER (1,3,4), HOSANNA WORKU (2,5,6)





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Slow starts

Georgia’s first quarter problems cause fourth quarter headaches

Riley Baugh

The first 30 minutes of game time keeps creating the same problems for Georgia.

The Bulldogs have spent the past two seasons falling behind early, fixing issues late and wondering why the rhythm never comes sooner. The pattern has shown up in every kind of setting: at home, on the road and in playoff situations.

Before facing Kentucky at home, Georgia trailed in its past eight matchups against Power Four opponents. Six of those teams scored first. During the 2024 season, the Bulldogs averaged just 2.3 points per first quarter and only 5.7 per first half in losses to Alabama, Ole Miss and Notre Dame in the College Football Playoff quarterfinal. Each of those games followed a similar script: a slow start, a second-half push and not enough time to finish the comeback.

Last year, at Bryant-Denny Stadium in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, the Bulldogs fell behind 28-0 in the first half before finding any rhythm. Quarterback Carson Beck helped Georgia rally in the second half, even taking the lead for a brief stint in the fourth quarter, but the Crimson Tide responded late, winning 41-34. A few months later in the College Football Playoff, Georgia again came out flat, this time against Notre Dame. The Bulldogs only managed a field goal in the first half and lost 23-10.

The problem was even seen in Georgia’s wins last season, including in the rivalry matchup against Georgia Tech. The Bulldogs trailed 17-0 at halftime, and required four consecutive second half drives with touchdowns to escape home field with a 44-42 win after eight overtimes.

2.3

During the 2024 season, the Bulldogs averaged 2.3 points per first quarter.

The trend has carried into this season, especially against Georgia’s biggest opponents. In Knoxville, the Bulldogs went down 21-7 in the first quarter before fighting back to win 44-41 in overtime. At home against Alabama, the Bulldogs again let their opponent control the first half. Though Georgia kept the Crimson Tide scoreless in the second half, Alabama’s double-digit halftime lead proved too much for Georgia to overcome. The Bulldogs didn’t score until 13 seconds left in the first half in their 20-10 win over Auburn. Even against a Football Championship Subdivision opponent, Austin Peay, the Bulldogs only scored on two of their first six drives and led by just 11 points at halftime. This phenomenon has plagued the discussion surrounding



Georgia punter Brett Thorson (92) punts the ball during the Georgia vs. Auburn football game at Jordan-Hare Stadium in Auburn, Alabama, on Saturday, Sept. 30, 2023. Georgia won 27-20. FILE/STAFF

Georgia football. Head coach Kirby Smart doesn’t seem to understand the slow starts either.

“I don’t have an explanation for it,” Smart said after the 24-21 loss to Alabama. “Not starting well on defense. The two better opponents we played, we did not execute well in the first. It’s really frustrating because we show we can in the second half.”

The numbers and results point to the same issue. Whether it’s the offense, defense or special teams, the Bulldogs have the talent and coaching to compete with anyone, but their early-game execution continues to give opponents momentum. In a conference built on small margins, first halves can decide everything, and Smart recognizes that the way a team starts and finishes play equal roles in the outcome.

“Every coach in America would love a fast start,” Smart said in a preseason media availability. “It’s the most trivial thing ever said, ‘Why would you not like a fast start?’ So it is a lot more indicative of a team that can start fast and finish strong. I’ve seen teams that started fast and didn’t finish, and I’ve seen teams that did start fast and did finish.

So every team gets on a different train, but obviously the goal is to start fast and execute.”

It is also dangerous for Georgia and its fans to become conditioned to seeing the Bulldogs mount near-impossible second-half comebacks each week. That kind of faith in a turnaround masks the problem. At some point, the second-half rally won’t come, and everyone will have something to say. Allowing any opponent, let alone a ranked SEC opponent, to get a quarter or half-long head-start is irresponsible and consequential.

That reality makes Saturday’s meeting with Ole Miss more urgent. Ole Miss head coach Lane Kiffin’s offense is top-20 in the country in points per game, having not trailed going into halftime all season. The Rebels play fast and force defenses to adjust from the first drive. Their defense has shown early lapses — Ole Miss went down two scores in the second quarter to Kentucky before rallying to win 30-23, and again struggled as they narrowly escaped an upset bid from Washington State. If Georgia spends another first quarter chasing the Rebels’ heels, the game could look familiar to so many of the Bulldogs’ recent ranked matchups.

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Katie Guenthner

Editor-in-Chief

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

Classes at Grady prepared me to understand the basics of reporting, which is how I started out at The Red & Black. Grady gave me a fundamental understanding of the legal and ethical rights and obligations of being a journalist, and how to best serve my community in a rapidly changing news environment.

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

The most rewarding part of being Editor-in-Chief is watching student journalists grow into their roles. Being able to see the next generation of journalists learn and practice their skills in the real world, all while serving the Athens and University of Georgia communities, is honestly the best part of my job.

Majors:

Journalism, Spanish and Latin American and Caribbean Studies

Position Description:

My job consists of reviewing all editorial content including articles, photo galleries, podcasts, social media posts and more. I meet at least twice a week with members of my staff, and organize community outreach events.

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

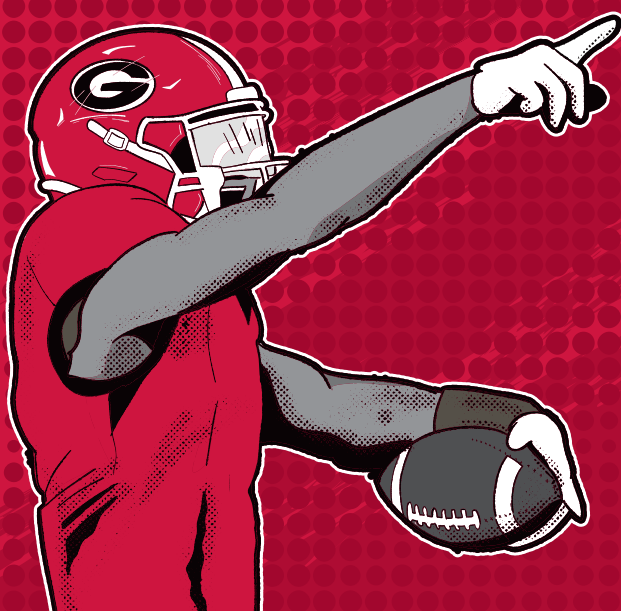


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Fans attend ESPN College GameDay at Myers Quad at the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Nov. 16, 2024. Some students and fans were in line since the night before to earn a spot and a hard hat from The Home Depot. PHOTO/LIBBY HOBBS

GameDay on Myers

College GameDay returns to Athens for Week 8

Ben Kule

College GameDay is coming to Athens on Saturday, Oct. 18 for the top 10 matchup between No. 9 Georgia and No. 5 Ole Miss, the University of Georgia Athletic Association announced Sunday.

GameDay will be held at Myers Quad and will be broadcast from 9 a.m. until noon on ESPN, ESPNU and Disney+. Additionally, country music stars Luke Combs and Bailey Zimmerman will perform on the GameDay set.

ESPN chose Athens over four other ranked matchups — this week No. 17 Vanderbilt hosts No. 10 LSU in Nashville, No. 6 Alabama hosts No. 11 Tennessee, No. 23 Utah travels to No. 15 BYU for the “Holy War” and No. 20 USC heads to South Bend, Indiana, to take on No. 13 Notre Dame.

However, GameDay already went to Tuscaloosa two weeks ago, the Georgia-Ole Miss matchup holds more weight for the SEC standings than LSU-Vanderbilt and the other two are rivalry matchups that are not broadcast on an ESPN network.

This will mark the 11th time GameDay has come to Athens, including eight appearances in the last seven

11

College GameDay has visited Athens 11 times, including eight times in the last seven years.

years. It was most recently held in Athens last year when No. 12 Georgia hosted No. 7 Tennessee, and the Bulldogs pulled away in the fourth quarter to win 34-17.

GameDay was also in town for Ole Miss’ most recent trip to Athens in 2023. In another top 10 matchup between the Bulldogs and Rebels, 2nd-ranked Georgia cruised to a 52-17 victory over 9th-ranked Ole Miss. Georgia has won the last seven times that GameDay has visited, with its last loss being in 2008. All of these visits were for SEC matchups except in 2019, when the Bulldogs hosted Notre

Dame, defeating the Fighting Irish 23-17 in front of Sanford Stadium’s largest crowd ever.

Ole Miss has hosted GameDay twice, winning both times, defeating Texas A&M in 2021 and upsetting No. 3 Alabama in 2014. When Alabama hosted GameDay during the rematch in Tuscaloosa the next year, the Rebels won again in upset fashion, 43-37.

Georgia will enter this game ranked lower than its opponent while hosting GameDay for the first time since 2022, when the Bulldogs took down No. 1 Tennessee 27-13. The Volunteers suffered a second loss two weeks later causing them to miss the playoffs, while the Bulldogs won their next four games by an average margin of almost 20 points and remained in perfect condition to win their second consecutive national championship.

After a shaky win over Washington State, Ole Miss will look to stay undefeated and atop the SEC standings while under the spotlight in Athens. Georgia will have the opportunity for a statement victory following its 20-10 comeback victory over Auburn, and could potentially leapfrog the Rebels to hold a top five ranking once again.

AP poll movement

Georgia moves up one spot before facing No. 5 Ole Miss

Owen McDaniel

Georgia climbed one spot to No. 9 in the Week 8 AP Top 25 poll after a 20-10 comeback win at Auburn on Saturday. The Bulldogs went down 10-3 at halftime, but held the Tigers scoreless in the second half and ran for two touchdowns to secure their second straight SEC victory and move into fourth place in the conference.

Ohio State and Miami remained in the top two spots, but Indiana received three first-place votes and shot up four spots to No. 3 — its highest ranking in program history. The Hoosiers traveled to Eugene, Oregon, and beat the No. 3 Ducks 30-20 for their second top 10 win this season. Indiana has a favorable path to the College Football Playoff the rest of the way, as it does not face another ranked opponent.

Oregon fell to No. 8 while Ole Miss, Georgia’s next opponent, dropped one spot to No. 5 after surviving an upset scare at home against Washington State. That allowed Texas A&M to move up one place to No. 4 and Alabama and Texas Tech to jump two spots to No. 6 and No. 7, respectively.

LSU reentered the top 10 at No. 10 following a 20-10 home win over South Carolina. The Tigers were as high as No. 3 this season, but fell to No. 13 after losing to Ole Miss. Oklahoma plummeted all the way to No. 14 following its 23-6 loss to Texas. Sooners quarterback John Mater played just 17 days after having surgery on his thumb and threw three interceptions in the defeat.

That allowed Texas to climb back into the rankings at No. 21. The Longhorns were the top-ranked team in the preseason poll, but dropped all the way out of the Top 25 after suffering their second loss of the season at Florida in Week 6.

USC, Utah, Cincinnati and Nebraska all entered the top 25 as well, coming in at No. 20, No. 23, No. 24 and No. 25, respectively. The Trojans and Utes both picked up ranked wins on Saturday, while the Bearcats and Cornhuskers won conference games. Five teams tumbled out of the poll: No. 15 Michigan, No. 17 Illinois, No. 21 Arizona State, No. 22 Iowa State and No. 25 Florida State. The Fighting Illini lost 34-16 to No. 1 Ohio State, while the other four teams all fell to unranked opponents.

The biggest riser in Week 8 was USF, which leaped five spots to No. 19. The Bulls handed North Texas, another contender for the non-Power Four playoff spot, its first loss, scoring four touchdowns in under four minutes to pull away and win 63-36.

The SEC now occupies five of the top 10 spots and has the most ranked teams with 10. The Big Ten is second with five teams, the Big 12 is third with four and the ACC has



Georgia running back Kendall Milton (2) runs with the ball during a game between Ole Miss and Georgia at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Nov. 11, 2023. Georgia won 52-17. FILE/STAFF

three. There are also five ranked matchups set for Saturday, Oct. 18. No. 5 Ole Miss visits No. 9 Georgia, No. 6 Alabama meets No. 11 Tennessee in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, No. 10 LSU travels to No. 17 Vanderbilt, No. 13 Notre Dame hosts No. 20 USC and No. 21 Utah goes down the road to No. 15 BYU for the “Holy War” rivalry game.

College GameDay will be in Athens for the top-10 matchup between the Bulldogs and Rebels, while SEC Nation will travel to Tuscaloosa for the Volunteers-Crimson Tide contest — a rivalry game that will be played every year until at least 2029.

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Highlights from Homecoming Week 2025



Scenes from the University of Georgia Homecoming Week Film on the Fifty on Wednesday, Oct. 1, 2025 in Athens, Georgia. Students gathered to watch the live action “How to Train Your Dragon” from the seats in Sanford Stadium. PHOTO/ASHTIN BARKER



Cristina Christophe and Jehdeiah Heflin ride the Sizzler at the University of Georgia Homecoming Carnival, hosted by University Union, at Legion Field in Athens, Georgia, on Thursday, Oct. 2, 2025. Attendees were able to enjoy carnival rides, games, food and other activities for free if they are students or \$5 for non-students. PHOTO/SARAH ROPER



Members of the Hispanic Student Association and Latinos Invested in the Students of Tomorrow pose for a portrait during the 103rd University of Georgia Homecoming Parade in downtown Athens, Georgia, on Friday, Oct. 3, 2025. PHOTO/KRINA PATEL



Members of the University of Georgia Baptist Collegiate Ministry pose during the 103rd UGA Homecoming Parade in downtown Athens, Georgia, on Friday, Oct. 3, 2025. PHOTO/KRINA PATEL



Members of the University of Georgia Spike Squad march during the 103rd University of Georgia Homecoming Parade in downtown Athens, Georgia, on Friday, Oct. 3, 2025. PHOTO/ KRINA PATEL



The University of Georgia Spike Squad cheer for the parade during the 103rd UGA Homecoming Parade in downtown Athens, Georgia, on Friday, Oct. 3, 2025. PHOTO/KRINA PATEL



Garrett Hudder waves at the crowd during the 2025 University of Georgia Homecoming halftime celebration at the Georgia vs. Kentucky homecoming football game on Saturday, Oct. 4, 2025 in Athens, Georgia. PHOTO/ASHTIN BARKER



University of Georgia Homecoming Queen Kate Hacker and King Jacob Harper pose for a photo with UGA President Jere Morehead and with the 2024 homecoming King Stephen Amolegbe, Jr. and Queen Maggie Epps, on Saturday, Oct. 4, 2025 in Athens, Georgia. PHOTO/ASHTIN BARKER

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