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PREVIEW

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GEORGIA
VS. MARSHALL

VOL. 133 | No. 3 | Athens, Georgia Thursday, August 28, 2025



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GRAPHIC/ABBY CROWE

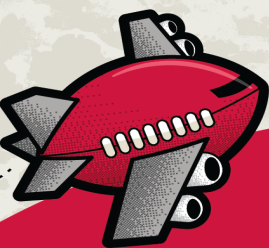
PHOTOS/RED & BLACK STAFF AND COURTESY CONOR DILLON, UGAAA

A2 KIRBY'S NINE PERFECT
CROWN STARTS

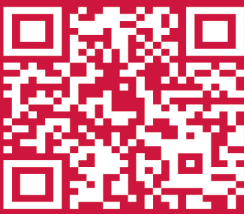
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Perfect starts

Remembering Kirby Smart's nine years of Week 1 wins



Georgia head coach Kirby Smart celebrates after the Aflac Kickoff Game between No. 1 Georgia and No. 14 Clemson at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia, on Saturday, Aug. 31, 2024. Georgia defeated Clemson 34-3. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN

Ben Kule

Since becoming the Bulldogs' head coach in December 2015, Kirby Smart enters this year's Week 1 contest against Marshall with a perfect 9-0 record in season openers. Georgia won these matchups by an average margin of about 28 points.

Teams often reserve the freedom to schedule any opponent for Week 1 before conference play begins, but Georgia hasn't always taken the easy road. Under Smart, the Bulldogs are 3-0 against ACC opponents in season openers and also have a win against Oregon, which was in the Pac-12 at the time.

Smart's first game as the Bulldogs' head coach was against North Carolina on Sept. 3, 2016. Georgia entered the game ranked No. 18 and the Tar Heels, led by star quarterback Mitch Trubisky, came in at No. 22.

In his first game back from a season-ending knee

injury suffered the year prior, Nick Chubb opened the scoring with a rushing touchdown, and Georgia held a 14-10 lead at halftime. Momentum swung in the Tar Heels' favor as they scored two quick touchdowns in the third quarter, including on the half's opening kickoff, to take a 24-14 lead. Smart's Bulldogs responded with a touchdown and a safety to cut the lead to one point.

A field goal in the fourth quarter put Georgia back in front, and Chubb broke loose on a 55-yard house call to extend the lead and bring his rushing total to 222 yards. The Bulldogs' defense stood strong and Georgia held on to win 33-24.

Georgia opened the 2021 season against Clemson for the first of two times under Smart. The game, played in Charlotte, North Carolina, was a defensive affair. The only first-half score was an interception returned for a touchdown by Georgia safety Christopher Smith. Neither offense managed to find the end zone in the second half, either.

After trading field goals, Georgia won 10-3.

Georgia and Clemson met again for the Aflac Kickoff Game in Atlanta in 2024. The first half was once again low-scoring, with Georgia ending that half leading 6-0 by way of two field goals.

In the second half, however, Georgia's offense clicked into gear. Colbie Young's touchdown catch and Nate Frazier's rushing touchdown gave Georgia a 20-3 lead. London Humphreys and Cash Jones both found the end zone in the fourth quarter, capping off a dominant 34-3 victory.

During Smart's tenure as head coach, Georgia has also jumped straight into conference play in Week 1. The Bulldogs cruised to a 30-6 victory over Vanderbilt in 2019 and defeated Arkansas 37-10 in 2020, when Georgia only played SEC opponents due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The win over Arkansas was also Stetson Bennett IV's first career start with the Bulldogs.

Other Week 1 opponents Georgia has faced and defeated under Smart include Appalachian State, Austin Peay and UT Martin.

While the first game of the year often serves as a way to ease into the season against an Football Championship Subdivision or lower-tier opponent, its importance cannot go unnoticed. Not only does starting the season with a victory help players gain confidence and give coaches the opportunity to prepare for games later in the season, it can also be a telling indicator of a team's national championship hopes.

Since Miami in 1983, no team has won a national title after losing its opener. The expanded College Football Playoff format gives Week 1 losers a higher chance of winning a title, but it's still unlikely.

Marshall has a history of success, and has finished the year with a winning record in 10 of the last 12 seasons. Last season was especially successful, as Marshall went 10-3 and were champions of the Sun Belt Conference.

9/9

The Bulldogs have won all nine of Kirby Smart's Week 1 games. This includes four ranked opponents: Clemson twice, North Carolina and Oregon.

Despite the recent success, Marshall will look a lot different this season. Former Marshall head coach Charles Huff accepted the head coaching job at Southern Mississippi, leading to a wave of players and coaches transferring out, and the team having to decline its invite to the Radiance Technologies Independence Bowl.

The new-look Thundering Herd are currently nearly 40-point underdogs against Georgia, according to ESPN. The heavily favored Bulldogs look to start the season off strong and extend Smart's undefeated season opener streak to 10 games.

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Georgia quarterback Gunner Stockton (14) passes the ball during the 2025 Allstate Sugar Bowl College Football Playoff quarterfinal game between Georgia and Notre Dame at the Caesars Superdome in New Orleans on Thursday, Jan. 2, 2025. Notre Dame won 23-10. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN

Home sweet home opener

Georgia hosts Marshall to kick off 2025 season

Owen McDaniel

After an 11-3 season that saw the Bulldogs summit the SEC but fall to Notre Dame in the quarterfinals of the College Football Playoff, Georgia begins its new ascent by welcoming Marshall to Sanford Stadium on Saturday, Aug. 30.

The Bulldogs' 2025 roster features many new faces in key places, including at the quarterback position. The home opener against the Thundering Herd will likely reveal how prepared Georgia's newcomers are and which players have emerged as the leaders of the team.

Gunning for glory

Every starting quarterback at Georgia gets their own era. The Stetson Bennett era will be enshrined in Georgia lore forever. The Carson Beck era will be remembered for its lofty peaks and steep valleys. The Gunner Stockton era is still largely unwritten, though it is off to a solid start.

The beginning of his chapter came rather unexpectedly. Stockton entered the 2024 SEC Championship Game after halftime in place of an injured Beck, completed 75% of his passes, put his body on the line on multiple occasions and ultimately led Georgia to victory.

“I feel like [Malaki Starks] and [Dan Jackson] definitely prepared me the right way to lead the group. I’m just trying to lead the way they did.

KJ BOLDEN | SOPHOMORE SAFETY

The Bulldogs lost in Stockton's first career start in the CFP quarterfinal against Notre Dame, but he threw for 234 yards and a touchdown despite being under heavy pressure for much of the game.

Going forward, everything is intentional for Stockton. He has a full offseason of first-team reps under his belt now and his coaches and teammates are confident that he is



Georgia defensive back KJ Bolden (4) celebrates after a play during the Georgia vs. Tennessee Tech game at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Sept. 7, 2024. No. 1 Georgia defeated Tennessee Tech 48-3. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN

their guy. The pen's in Stockton's hand, and now it's up to the junior signal-caller to etch his name in Georgia history, beginning with the season opener.

Stockton can take advantage of a Marshall defense that's still finding its identity — the unit is made up almost entirely of transfers and the Thundering Herd have a new defensive coordinator in Shannon Morrison.

If all goes as planned for the Bulldogs, this game will be a great opportunity for Stockton to build a rapport with offensive coordinator Mike Bobo and his receivers and gain confidence in himself.

Experience meets opportunity

Georgia's defensive makeup is a blend of experienced leaders, guys that have waited their turn and fresh faces who came to Athens to prove they are of elite caliber.

Among the proven returnees are senior cornerback Daylen Everette, junior linebackers Raylen Wilson and CJ Allen, redshirt junior defensive tackle Christen Miller and sophomore safety KJ Bolden.

Bolden had the sixth-most snaps on the defense as a true

freshman last season, and that wealth of experience has elevated him into a leadership role this year.

“Taking on a [leadership] role this year has definitely been challenging, but it's fun at the same time,” Bolden said before a fall camp practice on Aug. 14. “I feel like [Malaki Starks] and [Dan Jackson] definitely prepared me the right way to lead the group. I’m just trying to lead the way they did.”

Army transfer edge rusher Elo Modozie is one of several players who will make their Bulldog debuts against Marshall.

The highest-rated defensive player in Georgia's 2025 transfer portal class, Modozie recorded seven sacks, 37 pressures and 21 quarterback hurries last season with the Black Knights, according to Pro Football Focus.

Modozie is in a great position to emerge as one of the Bulldogs' most impactful players this season, and Week 1 could be the catalyst.

40

The Georgia Bulldogs are favored by nearly 40 points against Marshall, according to ESPN.

Prediction

Given the continuity and depth of Georgia's roster, compared to the complete overhaul that Marshall underwent in the offseason — it lost 50 players in the transfer portal and brought in 56 — it's hard to imagine the Thundering Herd mounting much resistance in any phase of the game.

The Bulldogs are favored by nearly 40 points, according to most oddsmakers, and, barring any major hiccups, the game will likely get far enough out of hand for Georgia's backups to rotate in.

The season opener will be a great opportunity for the Bulldogs to iron out the wrinkles from turnover in pivotal positions as Stockton gets in the win column as a starter for the first time.

Final Prediction: Georgia 45, Marshall 13



Georgia runs onto the field before kickoff of the 2023 SEC Championship game between Georgia and Alabama at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia, on Saturday, Dec. 2, 2023. PHOTO/MADY MERTENS

Georgia faces unfamiliar foe

Marshall returns to Sanford Stadium after 21 years

Liam W. Dreesen

Georgia will face Marshall on Aug. 30 to kick off the season. The Bulldogs have played the Thundering Herd only once before, winning 13-3 on Sept. 18, 2004 — a date many Georgia students weren't even alive for.

The game took place in Week 3 of the 2004 college football season. The Bulldogs entered the game 2-0 and were ranked No. 3. They were heavy favorites against Marshall, which entered the game 0-2.

However, Marshall got out to a 3-0 lead early in the first quarter after a 33-yard field goal from Ian O'Connor. They held this lead for over eight minutes before a Michael Cooper 2-yard rushing touchdown gave the Bulldogs a 7-3 lead with 2:35 remaining in the first quarter.

Despite being outmatched, the Thundering Herd defense held the Bulldogs to just two field goals for the rest of the game: a 33-yarder in the second quarter and a 29-yarder in the fourth. That gave Georgia the 13-3 win and improved its record to 3-0, while the Thundering Herd remained winless.

Marshall stayed in the game thanks to Georgia's miscues. The Bulldogs had 11 penalties for 102 yards and one turnover. Marshall had 10 penalties for 63 yards and avoided turning the ball over.

Despite the win, Georgia did not perform well. The Bulldogs outmatched Marshall in every way on paper, yet the final score didn't reflect it.

David Greene was the leading passer for the Bulldogs, completing 17 of 30 attempts for 209 yards. DJ Shockley also threw a pass, completing it for 16 yards. Marshall quarterback Stan Hill completed just 48% of his passes for 123 yards and no touchdowns.

The Bulldogs ran the ball a staggering 41 times for 146 yards and one touchdown. Freshman running back Thomas Brown led the Bulldogs with 81 yards on 18 carries, averaging 4.5 yards per carry. Cooper added 48 yards and the sole touchdown of the game on 11 rushes.

Marshall managed just 37 yards on 23 carries. Senior running back Earl Charles led the team with 33 yards on 13 carries.

Georgia finished the year 10-2, ranked No. 7, and won the Outback Bowl 24-21 against No. 16 Wisconsin. Marshall finished the year 6-6, but two of those losses came against top-10 opponents. It had a 6-2 conference record and lost to Cincinnati in the Fort Worth Bowl, 32-14.



Scenes from the Georgia vs. Mississippi State football game in Athens, Georgia, at Sanford Stadium on Saturday, Oct. 12, 2024. PHOTO/AVNI TRIVEDI

NUMBERS TO KNOW: Week 1

#3

Georgia running back Nate Frazier

The Bulldogs averaged just 124.4 rushing yards per game in 2024, which ranked them at 102 in the nation and was the lowest mark under head coach Kirby Smart by a margin of nearly 50 yards. With running back Trevor Etienne off to the NFL, Frazier will have to rectify Georgia's rushing attack, starting with Marshall. If the sophomore can generate consistent yardage, it will open up the playbook for offensive coordinator Mike Bobo and take pressure off first-year starting quarterback Gunner Stockton.

#83

Georgia linebacker Chris Cole

One of the players responsible for stopping Payne will be Cole, who emerged as one of the more versatile players in Georgia's defense in the back half of last season. The former five-star has the size and strength to play on the edges, but also the length and range to stand up and play outside or inside linebacker. Smart said before the season that the Bulldogs need Cole to be able to line up and cover tight ends, and that starts with the first game.

#9

Marshall defensive back Boogie Trotter

One of the key ingredients in pulling off an upset is forcing turnovers — something that Trotter specializes in. The senior transfer from Tennessee State racked up three interceptions, a forced fumble and three fumble recoveries last season and was named to the All-Big South-OVC First Team. If Trotter can force at least one take-away against Georgia, it could swing the pendulum in the Thundering Herd's favor.

#52

Georgia defensive tackle Christen Miller

Georgia has had nine defensive linemen selected in the last four NFL Drafts, and Miller is likely next in line. The redshirt junior emerged as an anchor in the defense last season, often holding his own against double-teams and clogging up running lanes. The Bulldogs will need Miller to disrupt a Marshall offense that ran the ball 59.72% of the time in 2024, the 16th-highest total in the nation.

#70

Marshall offensive guard Jalen Slappy

Slappy will be tasked with overpowering Miller and the Georgia defensive line, but that challenge is a conquerable one for the 2025 Preseason All-Sun Belt Second Team selection. The redshirt junior was a stalwart on the Thundering Herd offensive line last year, starting all 13 games in the middle of a top-20 rushing attack in the country. Marshall needs Slappy to be at his best in the season opener and help enable the run game.

By Owen McDaniel

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CORRECTIONS

In the Aug. 7 print edition, on page B2, there was an error regarding which school Athens Mayor Kelly Girtz was the former principal of, and on page B4, the wrong caption was used; we regret these errors and they have since been corrected online. 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.



Georgia running back Nate Frazier (3) runs with the ball during the 2025 Allstate Sugar Bowl College Football Playoff quarterfinal game between Georgia and Notre Dame at the Caesars Superdome in New Orleans on Thursday, Jan. 2, 2025. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN



Georgia running back Nate Frazier (3) after the Georgia vs. Clemson game at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia, on Saturday, Aug. 31, 2024. PHOTO/JAXON MEEKS

Late enrollee to honoree

Nate Frazier’s rise and prospects for the 2025 season

Romell Williams

As Georgia football prepares to open its 2025 season, one name has emerged as the centerpiece of the offense: sophomore running back Nate Frazier. After a promising true freshman campaign, Frazier now finds himself not only Georgia’s lead back, but also as one of the key figures in Georgia’s pursuit of another College Football Playoff run.

Frazier’s freshman season was especially notable because he enrolled late, joining the Bulldogs in the summer of 2024 rather than taking part in spring practice. Despite that late start, he flew up the depth chart and had an immediate role in the backfield. He rushed 133 times for 671 yards, averaging 5.0 yards per carry, and scored eight touchdowns. He also added 12 receptions for 85 yards, giving him 756 total scrimmage yards on 145 touches.

The highlights came quickly. In his debut against Clemson, Frazier ripped off a 40-yard run and hauled in a 24-yard reception, showing right away he could contribute to the team.

Later in the season, he erupted for 136 yards and three touchdowns against UMass. In one of the most memorable moments of Georgia’s 2024 season, he powered in the game-winning two-point conversion during Georgia’s eight-overtime victory over Georgia Tech. At the end of the year, he earned SEC All-Freshman Team honors, establishing himself as one of the most impactful newcomers

in the conference.

Still, his first season wasn’t without growing pains. A few fumbles and some missed opportunities for chunk plays showed that he was still adjusting to the speed and physicality of the college game.

That learning curve, however, seems to have fueled his offseason. Entering the 2025 season, Frazier looks like a far more polished player.

Kirby Smart has praised Frazier’s improved understanding of blocking schemes, his attention to pass protection and his overall situational awareness.

“His knowledge and pickups [have improved the most],” Smart said during a press conference on Aug. 12. “Third-down pass [protection], knowing when I can get in, when I can get out, when I have to stay in and protect, how I protect. The knowledge and understanding of that is not having to rely on the quarterback to tell him. I think that’s big. His confidence in his run and his ability to give effort and his conditioning level are much better than he was as a freshman.”

Those elements, coupled with his conditioning and toughness, have elevated him into a leadership role within Georgia’s running back room.

That leadership will be vital this fall. Georgia added Illinois transfer Josh McCray, who rushed for 609 yards and 10 touchdowns last season, to bolster the depth chart. Behind him, promising young runners like Chauncey Bowens and

Dwight Phillips Jr. are also vying for touches.

Signs are indicating that Frazier will be the starting running back in 2025. In a recent scrimmage, he flashed that trademark power and explosiveness, breaking free for a 15-yard touchdown run and finishing through contact, according to Sports Illustrated. Coaches managed his workload in fall camp, saving his legs for what they expect to be a long and productive season.

The system around him should only amplify his impact. With Gunner Stockton stepping in as Georgia’s starting quarterback, opposing defenses will be forced to account for his mobility. That element could open up more running lanes for Frazier and give him the kind of spacing that allows him to showcase his combination of vision, burst and strength.

The season opener against Marshall will be the first chance to measure his progress. Ball security will remain an area of focus after last season’s mistakes, but the coaching staff’s confidence in him suggests that he is ready to shoulder the responsibility.

From late enrollee to SEC All-Freshman honoree, Frazier’s trajectory has been steep, and all signs point to another leap forward in his second year. He has the production and work ethic to become one of the SEC’s most dynamic backs. As Georgia kicks off the 2025 campaign, Frazier stands poised to be not just a contributor but the tone-setter for the Georgia offense.



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1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12	13
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ACROSS

- Fad or frenzy
- Opportunity, so to speak
- Infiltrator, perhaps
- Traveling, say
- Spoonbills do it
- Pillow filler
- Juniors, e.g.
- Fractious
- Lumberjack’s cry
- Big beef piece
- Border duty
- What tellers do
- Advent
- Like a span of oxen
- “The Water Diviner” actor
- Redressing
- Communal pronoun
- Farm hand, at times
- Call, in Vegas
- Broadway handouts
- Updates a blog
- Get another magazine
- Weapon for a trooper
- Frees from doubt
- Extreme cruelty
- Checklist bit
- High beam?
- Sousaphones

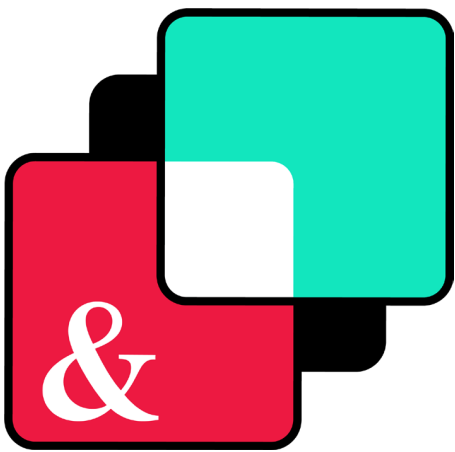
- Strip of leaves
- Word with secret or press
- “So be it!”
- Trap starter
- Frat letter
- Indicates yes
- Grown grigs

DOWN

- Go on a tirade
 - Expect anon
 - Type of radiation
 - Something to tweeze
 - Overshadows
 - High-quality table wood
 - Coleridge works
 - Pine secretion
 - Became exhausted, with “out”
 - Be a bad witness
 - Campaign creations
 - Trawler attachment
 - Venture
 - Paris flower
 - Library gizmo
 - Savage
 - ___ of hope
 - Out of whack
 - Church dogma
- A sphere lacks them
 - Breaks the news
 - Coconut product
 - Recreation center posting
 - Grad school grillings
 - Western Colorado sights
 - Bathroom cleaner?
 - “___ don’t say!”
 - Latte preparer
 - Bicycle
 - Hole in the head
 - Empire builders
 - Chair or car style
 - In need of freshening
 - Mercury, for example
 - Office comm.
 - Pilates count
 - Body image, briefly?
 - “Yuck” cousin
 - Quilting social
 - Carpenter at the picnic?
 - Served dinner

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Georgia wide receiver Dillon Bell (86) in action during the NCAA football game between Georgia and Florida at EverBank Stadium in Jacksonville, Florida, on Saturday, Nov. 2, 2024. Georgia won 34-20. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN



Georgia tight end Oscar Delp (4) scores a touchdown during the NCAA college football game between Georgia and Tennessee at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Nov. 16, 2024. Georgia won 31-17. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN



Georgia celebrates the game-winning score during the NCAA college football game between Georgia and Georgia Tech at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Friday, Nov. 29, 2024. Georgia won 44-42. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN



Georgia outside linebacker Damon Wilson II (10) and inside linebacker Smael Mondon, Jr. (2) in action from the 2024 SEC Championship NCAA football game between Georgia and Texas at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia, on Saturday, Dec. 7, 2024. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN



Georgia football players run onto the field during the Aflac Kickoff Game between Georgia and Clemson at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia, on Saturday, Aug. 31, 2024. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN



Georgia running back Trevor Etienne (1) in action during the Georgia homecoming game against Auburn on Saturday, Oct. 5, 2024 in Athens, Georgia, at Sanford Stadium. Georgia won 31-13. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN



The Georgia football team celebrates during the 2024 SEC Championship game between Georgia and Texas at the Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta, Georgia, on Saturday, Dec. 7, 2024. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN

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New faces, same standards

Georgia’s defensive line looks to rebuild and reload

Braden Brownell

In recent years, Georgia hasn’t been a program that rebuilds — it reloads in the trenches with waves of highly recruited talent. This season, however, the defensive line and pass rush are areas that resemble a true rebuild.

After losing proven starters like Mykel Williams, Nazir Stackhouse and Chaz Chambliss, head coach Kirby Smart and defensive line coach Tray Scott will lean on a mix of rising talents and fresh faces. With only Christen Miller returning as a starter, how the reps get divided early on and which newcomers seize rotation spots will be one of the team’s biggest storylines.

Big shoes to fill

Turnover is the main reason Georgia’s defensive front feels more like a rebuild than a reload. Williams and Stackhouse leave huge shoes to fill after anchoring Georgia’s front for the past two seasons, with both moving on to the NFL. The same is true for Tyrion Ingram-Dawkins and Warren Brinson, who were selected in the NFL Draft in the fifth and sixth rounds, respectively. Chambliss and Jalon Walker also made the leap, leaving a void in Georgia’s pass rush. Add in the transfer of Damon Wilson II to Missouri, and the Bulldogs suddenly find themselves relying on young, unproven talent in ways they haven’t in recent years.

The anchor: Christen Miller

At 6-foot-5, 305 pounds, Miller is the clear veteran presence on the defensive front. The junior defensive tackle enters the year with growing national recognition as both a projected NFL prospect and the anchor of an otherwise inexperienced group. Known primarily last season as a stout run-stopper who commanded double-teams, he’ll now be counted on not just to plug gaps but also to generate backfield disruption — pressuring quarterbacks, creating turnovers and setting the tone for a young rotation still finding its identity.

Depth chart risers

Joseph Jonah-Ajonye is projected to leap into the starting lineup at defensive end after earning rotational snaps early last season before a foot injury sidelined him. The former five-star prospect brings prototypical length and burst at 6-foot-4, 275 pounds.

Junior Jordan Hall and sophomore Justin Greene are expected to provide depth and disruption on the interior and edge, respectively. Transfer tackle Xzavier McLeod, who arrived last season from South Carolina, gives Georgia another big body with SEC experience to rotate in where Stackhouse once played. On the edge, redshirt freshman Gabe Harris is working in a hybrid outside linebacker role that could offer pass-rush flexibility, as Chambliss did a year ago.

Impact newcomers

Beyond the familiar returnees, the biggest intrigue comes from Georgia’s new additions through recruiting and the transfer portal.

Elo Modozie, a transfer from Army, adds maturity and versatility to a young rotation. Georgia targeted him as a veteran outside linebacker to help replace Chambliss and Wilson.



Georgia defensive lineman Jordan Hall (44) during the second half of the game between South Carolina and Georgia at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Sept. 16, 2023. Georgia won 24-14. PHOTO/ LANEY MARTIN

Elijah Griffin, the highest-ranked defensive lineman Smart has ever signed, arrives with sky-high expectations. The five-star prospect is already being discussed as a potential plug-and-play option, with the quickness and power to draw comparisons to former Georgia standout Jalen Carter.

Joining Griffin is another highly touted freshman, five-star edge rusher Isaiah Gibson. If even one of these newcomers makes an early impact, Georgia’s defensive line could shift quickly from a question mark into a strength.

Looking ahead

Although Georgia’s pass rush may not be as seasoned or star-studded as in years past, the potential is clear, and the opportunity for young contributors to shake things up is also apparent, as Smart pointed out on SEC Media Day.

“We do things a lot of times defensively by committee. We play a lot of players. I think we had the third- or fourth-most players over 100 snaps,” Smart said. “If you come to Georgia, you expect to play, and we want to give you an opportunity to play, so we get a lot of those guys reps and grow them and we’ll see where we are in fall camp at that position.”

Veteran tackle Miller anchors the interior alongside returners Hall and McLeod, while Jonah-Ajonye and Harris are expected to take on greater responsibility off the edge. Transfer Modozie adds athleticism and experience, and freshmen will have chances to earn snaps in a youthful rotation. With so many moving pieces, Georgia’s defensive line could change quickly as the season unfolds.



Georgia defensive lineman Christen Miller (52) in action during the 2025 Allstate Sugar Bowl College Football Playoff quarterfinal game between Georgia and Notre Dame at the Caesars Superdome in New Orleans on Thursday, Jan. 2, 2025. Notre Dame won 23-10. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN

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