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Cuisine on the coast

How Frat Beach affects eateries on St. Simons Island

Jesse Wood

Every year for the Georgia-Florida football game, thousands of students from the University of Georgia flock to St. Simons Island for a costume party on East Beach, dubbed Frat Beach. Many locally owned and operated eateries must adapt to accommodate the sudden influx of college students.

Sarah Callaway opened Sandy Bottom Bagels with her husband in June of 2015 to serve freshly baked New York-style bagels, while Ada Owens took over CJ's Italian Restaurant in September of 2012 with her husband. Since their respective openings, both businesses have learned how to navigate the Frat Beach crowd.

Callaway said the Georgia-Florida weekend is one of the island's busiest times, which is why they begin ordering food and prepping weeks in advance at Sandy Bottom Bagels. They order up to 75% more inventory than normal. Sandy Bottom Bagels makes approximately 175 sales on a normal weekend, but during Frat Beach weekend, the bagel shop is making anywhere from 300 to 400 sales per day. Callaway said that at Sandy Bottom Bagels, they usually order a surplus of pickles, avocados and iced coffee.

"We make sure that we have a ton of those," Callaway said. "Those are the three funny things that always stand out on Georgia-Florida weekend."

Owens said that CJ's orders more cheese, ranch dressing and flour to make enough pizza dough for Georgia-Florida weekend. Since CJ's is a "small hole-in-the-wall restaurant," the restaurant does not staff more employees than usual, according to Owens. Sandy Bottom Bagels, on the other hand, does — their number of employees on shift goes from the normal seven up to 11.

During their shifts, employees at both establishments operate pick-up orders as well as in-store orders simultaneously. Sandy Bottom Bagels has an app that, according to Callaway, "goes crazy the whole [weekend]." Owens said that the printing machine merges



The line goes out the door at Sandy Bottom Bagels located in St. Simons Island, Georgia during the Georgia-Florida weekend in 2023. PHOTO COURTESY/SARAH CALLAWAY

in-store and online orders in the kitchen, but the crew tries to prioritize in-house orders.

"It's really just a juggling game," Owens said.

The island's population boost is viewed differently by many. Owens said that many locals stay in their house or leave the island altogether because St. Simons Island's inhabitants are of an older demographic and want to avoid the "partying college students and drunk drivers." Additionally, Owens said that many restaurants with a bar have damage after the weekend and "sometimes don't even know if [the extra business] is worth it."

"It's a given that something in the restaurant is going to get broken," Owens said. "Sometimes it's almost like babysitting. It's not your typical, retired island bar crowd. It's a whole different world."

On the other hand, Callaway said that she has only had good experiences with the UGA students that visit St. Simons Island, and that the weekend is "amazing for business." She said that some UGA students and alumni will return to the eateries they visited for Frat Beach when they come back to St. Simons Island months or years later.

"I look forward to [Georgia-Florida weekend]," Callaway said. "I think it's great for the community. I've yet, honestly, to see a downside of it ... We need it, especially this fall when we've had all of these closures for hurricanes and stuff."

Different directions

A look at Georgia and Florida's program trajectories since 2020

Bo Underwood

The Florida Gators went into Jacksonville on Nov. 7, 2020 and laid waste to the Georgia Bulldogs. It was a 44-28 thrashing that saw Georgia go only 2-for-13 on third downs, allow over 570 yards of total offense and complete just nine of its 29 passing attempts.

Fast forward to 2024, and that kind of performance across an entire 60 minutes of football is unfathomable for Kirby Smart's Bulldogs. But, it's become very fathomable for Billy Napier's Gators.

Since that game in 2020, the Bulldogs are 51-3. Florida is 24-26.

How did this happen? How did one side of this historic rivalry take such a meteoric rise while the other retreated into mediocrity? Not only has Florida not beaten Georgia since 2020, it hasn't even gotten close. Georgia has outscored Florida 119-47 in the teams' last three meetings.

"When you're building a program, you've got to beat the best teams in your division and Florida has certainly been

that, historically, one of the best teams in our division," Smart said.

Florida hired Billy Napier before the 2022 season, and his tenure has not gotten off to a spectacular start in the win column. Napier is currently 12-16 at the helm in Gainesville, and the team's struggles have led some fans to reminisce on the days of Napier's predecessor, Dan Mullen — who won an SEC Championship at Florida but was promptly let go due to lackluster recruiting issues.

Mullen was also maligned for being overly loyal to certain assistants, like embattled defensive coordinator Todd Grantham, who was with the team from 2018-2021 and responsible for Florida's 2020 season where it allowed its most points per game since 1917. After a 4-5 start to 2021, though, Mullen had to let him go.

Grantham's tenure at Florida is representative of a larger problem for the program: an inability to find the right people at the top. Sure, Napier might make Mullen look like Steve Spurrier by comparison, but neither man was the answer.

While it's definitely possible to win at a proud program like Florida, the reality is that the Gators don't have the profound recruiting advantages that some of their SEC foes like Georgia and Alabama enjoy. It takes a different kind of coach, the Spurrier or Urban Meyer type, to put together a juggernaut at Florida. The Gators just haven't found one yet. The low point of the Gators' season so far might have been a 33-20

loss to Texas A&M, which saw boos from their own fans.

"This is one of those places where there's history and tradition and expectations," Napier said following the Texas A&M game. "There's been a lot of really good football teams that played in that stadium in the past, and when you play ugly ball, and maybe it doesn't look quite like we all want it to, then hey, [the booing] comes with the territory."

Georgia's resume, on the other hand, is well known at this point. The Bulldogs have won two national championships since getting blown out by Florida in 2020, with wins in the Peach Bowl and Orange Bowl on top of that.

That's not to say Georgia has been a model program either in that timeframe. The team has had a string of players arrested since 2023, with Colbie Young's indefinite suspension for unborn child endangerment being the latest, at the time of publication on Oct. 30. Both of these programs have had to face existential questions about the way they do things and the kind of culture they have. Florida is trying to repair its reputation on the field while Georgia is arguably trying to do the same off of it.

Regardless of what the future holds for either programs' reputation, Saturday's game will still hold the same weight for these two fanbases. The "War for the Oar" is still as important as ever, and Florida would like nothing more than to stun Georgia and get Napier his first signature win in one of college football's greatest rivalries.

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New jersey, same rivalry

Florida transfer Trevor Etienne makes homecoming debut with Bulldogs

Andy Mathis

Several Georgia running backs have gone on to become legendary household names over the years — Nick Chubb, Todd Gurley, Herschel Walker and Sony Michel are just a few in a long list.

Last year, however, Georgia seemed to lack the explosive plays from the backfield it's often produced in seasons past. In Georgia's 27-24 loss to Alabama in the 2023 SEC Championship, Daijun Edwards and Kendall Milton scored twice but only accounted for a combined 80 yards on the ground.

With both backs off to the NFL, the Bulldogs were left without much veteran presence in the backfield and no player in the room having over 70 career carries. Many fans wondered who would fill the gap.

That was before Florida-transfer Trevor Etienne announced his commitment to suit up in the red and black.

Etienne brings a missing element to the Georgia offense that the unit lacked last year. With a quick twitch ability and a burly frame to run defenders over with, the 5-foot-9 inch, 205-pound powerback has quickly meshed with Carson Beck and the offense.

"I can't imagine what kind of leader he would be if he'd



Georgia running back Trevor Etienne (1) runs during the Georgia vs. Auburn football game on Saturday, Oct. 4, 2024 in Athens, Georgia. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN

been in [our] program the whole time," head coach Kirby Smart said in September. "Because he's not afraid to speak out and talk and speak up. And I respect that about him because he hasn't had a full year of these guys, but he's not afraid to speak up. He's a tremendous leader."

Before his tenure with Smart, Etienne amassed 1,472 yards and 14 touchdowns on the ground in his two years as a Gator, while also bringing in 249 yards through the air and a trip to the end zone en route to a 2022 SEC All-Freshman team nomination. Etienne saw decent production at Florida but was limited by split-snap counts and wanted a chance to bring "RB1" potential to a CFP National Championship contender.

pillars symbolizes Bulldogs walking into the next chapter of their lives.

Another one of the most significant features of UGA's campus is Sanford Stadium, where the Bulldogs play between the hedges. Football is a major part of campus life, and brings a range of its own special traditions.

At the beginning of each game in Sanford Stadium, fans "call the dawgs" to get excitement up before kickoff. During the fourth quarter of night games, attendees are encouraged to pull out their phone flashlights and "light up Sanford."

While UGA students represent their mascot by barking, UF students chomp with their hands when cheering for their school to mimic their alligator mascot.

UF also has some unique traditions catered to their school — including one about completing the other traditions. During their time on campus, students can attempt to complete a list of 40 specified different traditions. If a student meets the challenge, they are awarded the title "Tradition Keeper" and granted a gold medallion to wear at graduation.

One game day tradition honors the late musician Tom Petty, a Gainesville-native, by playing his famous song "I Won't Back Down" in between the third and fourth quarters of home games. The tradition has been in place

"I could either be running back two on a losing team or go somewhere, possibly be running back one and win a natty, I mean that's the goal man," Etienne said on right guard Tate Ratledge's podcast, Real Talk Trench Talk, last February.

This season with the Bulldogs, Etienne has been just that — a strong "RB1" who has provided consistency through the first half of the season, even when the team has struggled. In Georgia's loss against Alabama, he picked up 55 yards and a touchdown on just 12 carries. He also anchored an otherwise shaky offensive showing from Georgia in its win over then-No. 1 Texas, rushing for 87 yards and three touchdowns on 19 carries.

Etienne did hold some early controversy amid charges of reckless driving and driving under the influence and was absent for the season opener against Clemson. Despite this, Etienne has rebounded fantastically, jumping into a leading role immediately following his return. Through six games, he has already amassed 422 yards and seven touchdowns on just 82 carries, and has found an unexpected role in the passing too. He has already caught 20 balls for 130 yards this year, nearly tying his career high at Florida of 21.

"It always helps to have a good running back where you feel comfortable turning your back to the defense and handing it off," Beck said after the win over Mississippi State. "Obviously we saw what he was able to do at Florida. We're really happy to have him, he's been working really hard and we're excited to see what he can do."

Now, Etienne returns to Jacksonville, Florida on the other side of the ball to take on his former team. The star running back should make big waves against a struggling Florida team boasting a 4-3 record and allowing 298 yards on the ground a game.

The bark vs. the bite

Traditions at UGA and UF

Emma Peterson

Rivalry week is one of the most intense parts of football season at both the University of Georgia and the University of Florida. The fiery competition between the two schools is one of the top things on students' and fans' minds.

While much of the focus may be on the game, rivalry week can be a time to discuss what makes each college unique. More specifically, how traditions on and off campus elevate campus life and bring people closer to the college they call home.

The famed Arch at UGA marks the entrance to campus. When walking from downtown Athens onto North Campus, students who have not graduated yet walk around the sides of the Arch, while alumni are free to walk under it. This tradition dates back to 1905. Walking under the Arch prior to graduation is seen as bad luck — some say it even means you won't graduate on time. But upon receiving their degree, walking between the Arch's



GRAPHIC/RYLEE TOOLE

since UF decided to commemorate the singer at their 2017 game against Louisiana State University, five days after Petty's death.

Both schools have such significant traditions near and dear to not only their campus but also their surrounding community. It is an illustration of each school's loyal, long-lasting support from students and fans that dates back many years.

This dedication from both UGA and UF is a big part of what brings the hype and competitive energy to rivalry week, culminating with Saturday's game.



Fans cheer during the first half of the game between UT Martin and Georgia at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia on Saturday, Sept. 2, 2023 PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN

OPINION

The bulldog spirit

How UGA rises to the occasion

Luke Taylor

The time has come once again for the legendary Georgia-Florida game. As one of the most storied rivalries in college football, the game never fails to bring an army of Georgia fans charging south to Jacksonville, Florida. The iconic showdown always ignites the signature enthusiasm and school-spirit of UGA's student body, leaving other schools shaking in their boots.

UGA has now held the Okefenokee Oar, the Georgia-Florida rivalry trophy, for three consecutive years. The "War for the Oar" is approaching once again, and Georgia fans are ready to rally behind the Bulldogs in this year's faceoff.

The excitement for this game is evident through its iconic pregame festivities. For many UGA students, Georgia-Florida weekend means leaving Athens early and stopping at St. Simons Island for an all out rager on the beach. Students gather on the now famous Frat Beach, parading around in Halloween costumes by the Atlantic ocean. This unique tradition fuels the student body's unwavering support for their team well before the game has begun.

Georgia currently leads the rivalry with 56 wins against Florida. Across the 1980's, Vince Dooley trounced Florida eight times, and now his name decorates Dooley Field in UGA's Sanford Stadium. With a strong tradition of success and outstanding coaching,

UGA students are eager to give their all in Jacksonville, Florida.

Even though the Georgia Bulldogs often make it look effortless, dominating other teams isn't always easy. Through it all, though, the fans remain unwavering. They always give the Bulldogs their best, pushing them to rise to the occasion and achieve the impossible. It's this relentless spirit that gives UGA the edge over Florida in their matchup.

A great example of UGA's persistent fighting spirit was seen in their 2007 bout against Florida. Led by head coach Mark Richt, the Bulldogs scored an early touchdown on their opening drive. The entire team then flooded the end zone to celebrate with their offense, instantly overflowing the stadium with the energy of Georgia fans and giving the team a massive psychological advantage. UGA went on to win the game, sacking Heisman Winner Tim Tebow six times in the process. This iconic victory would go on to be known as the "Gator Stomp."

The school spirit of UGA has yet to be matched anywhere else. Both students and players stand tall through unprecedented disaster and dominance. No matter how a game is going for the Bulldogs, their opponent will always have to contend with unbridled energy of the UGA students, who never fail to support their team.

Luke Taylor is a junior journalism major.

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Frat Beach fallout

How volunteers keep St. Simons Island clean

Navya Shukla

A team of local volunteers takes on the challenge of keeping St. Simons Islands' beaches clean after costume-clad University of Georgia students take on Frat Beach, a party on East Beach ahead of the Georgia-Florida football game.

Keep Golden Isles Beautiful is a volunteer-based nonprofit dedicated to cleanup and beautification efforts in Georgia's Golden Isles. While KGIB holds multiple litter prevention and other nature conservation events throughout the year, the Friday and Saturday of the Georgia-Florida gameday weekend are reserved for Frat Beach cleanup.

Lea King-Badyna is the executive director of KGIB and has led the Frat Beach initiative since its start 17 years ago.

"This is our home. I mean, we live here, we work here," King-Badyna said. "We have the privilege of being the stewards and the caretakers of our natural resource."

King-Badyna said KGIB adopts a three-pronged cleanup approach. Around 20 volunteers are sent out across the beach on Friday morning to quickly begin removing litter,



Keep Golden Isles Beautiful volunteers clean up during Frat Beach in fall 2023. PHOTO COURTESY/KEEP GOLDEN ISLES BEAUTIFUL with another 20 volunteers arriving later in the day.

The Friday beach volunteers are carefully handpicked and committed in advance to guarantee there are enough of them. This also allows KGIB to recruit people who can handle the potentially volatile Frat Beach crowd and understand KGIB's ultimate goal of not changing behavior but just picking up the trash, according to King-Badyna.

Sharon Hindery, a 70-year-old volunteer, has participated in the KGIB Friday cleanups with her husband for around eight years. For Hindery, these are "no-nonsense cleanups." She enjoys her interactions with students on the beach, which she said have almost always been positive.

"I think the kids go away with an appreciation because they realize that somebody is picking up after them," Hindery said. "There's somebody out there taking care of the impact that they're putting on the beach."

Armed with trash bags, gloves and the occasional trash picker, the Friday volunteers work through both the sand and the water line to clear the beach of everything from beverage cans to small cigarette butts and synthetic feathers shed by costumes.

These smaller pieces of trash can be especially harmful for the environment, containing microplastics that are not biodegradable and can cause significant harm when ingested by marine life, which is why King-Badyna believes the Friday cleanup effort is so important.

"I don't want to sit around and complain. I want to get in there and be part of the solution," King-Badyna said. "So part of the solution is for me to pick up the trash as soon as it's dropped."

As Frat Beach wraps up on Friday, the second prong of the cleanup is enacted by other volunteers who focus on the surrounding parking lots. On Saturday morning, the Community Beach Sweep begins, where anyone from the general public is welcome to participate in a final thorough effort to clean the beach and all 41 of its access points.

Throughout the weekend, KGIB also works closely with Glenn County officials, who dispose of the trash picked up and handle medical emergencies and security concerns.



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Daylen Everette (6) in action during the Georgia vs. Auburn game on Saturday, Oct. 4, 2024 in Athens, Georgia. PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN

Out on an island

Georgia defensive backs show signs of improvement

Olivia Sayer

The Georgia defense went to Austin, Texas and stepped up to the challenge.

Entering the game, it had been a rough 2024 season for the unit. After allowing just three points to Clemson — who is now averaging 48.5 points per game since its

season-opening loss — the Bulldogs struggled to contain opposing offenses, especially ones that featured elite wide receivers.

Alabama's Ryan Williams, who is the youngest player in the FBS, burned the Bulldogs for 177 yards receiving and a touchdown in Georgia's 41-34 loss.

Even Mississippi State, whose 1-6 overall record puts it last place in the SEC, had success with its passing game. In Week 7, Mississippi State threw for 306 yards with three touchdowns in a 41-31 loss to the Bulldogs.

There was belief that this trend would continue against then-No. 1 Texas, who featured an explosive offense filled with pre-snap motion and a Heisman-caliber quarterback. However, in front of a crowd of 105,215, the Bulldogs limited the Longhorns to just 15 points.

The success began with Georgia's defensive line, who pressured both Quinn Ewers and Arch Manning all night. The Bulldogs recorded a pair of strip sacks, and Jalon Walker established his presence in the backfield with eight tackles, three sacks and four quarterback hits.

The constant disruption left the Longhorns one-dimensional. Georgia knew Texas had to throw the ball, meaning its secondary would be challenged.

In the first half, it passed with flying colors. The Bulldogs limited the Longhorns to just 38 yards of total offense with 36 yards passing. Cornerback Daylen Everette, whose play has garnered criticism this season, recorded two take-

aways, including his second-career interception.

With a struggling running game, Texas came out firing in the second half. The Longhorns tested cornerback Julian Humphrey, who surrendered a long pass in the third quarter to get Texas out of its own end zone. However, Humphrey also broke up a slant on fourth down to end the drive.

Despite the improved performance, there are still opportunities for growth. The Bulldogs tackled better but still let multiple plays slip away. Head coach Kirby Smart said Georgia left "1,000 plays on the back end."

The unit has a chance to continue refining against Florida but will be without key defenders Dan Jackson and Joenel Aguero for the first half due to targeting ejections. However, Georgia's depth should set it up for success. KJ Bolden has already made an impact this season, and Smart indicated he wants to give fellow freshman Ellis Robinson IV more playing time.

"He's blessed with God-given talent. He's really talented," Smart said after the Mississippi State game of Robinson. "He's practiced better the last two weeks than he has all year. Like, I think he has the stamina to go practice the whole time, the attention to detail, to focus in meetings."

The Gators began their season 1-2 but have since displayed an offense that is averaging over 30 points per game with over 9 yards per passing attempt. The matchup will provide another test for Georgia's cornerbacks, who know humility is only a week away.

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Highlights from past Georgia-Florida games



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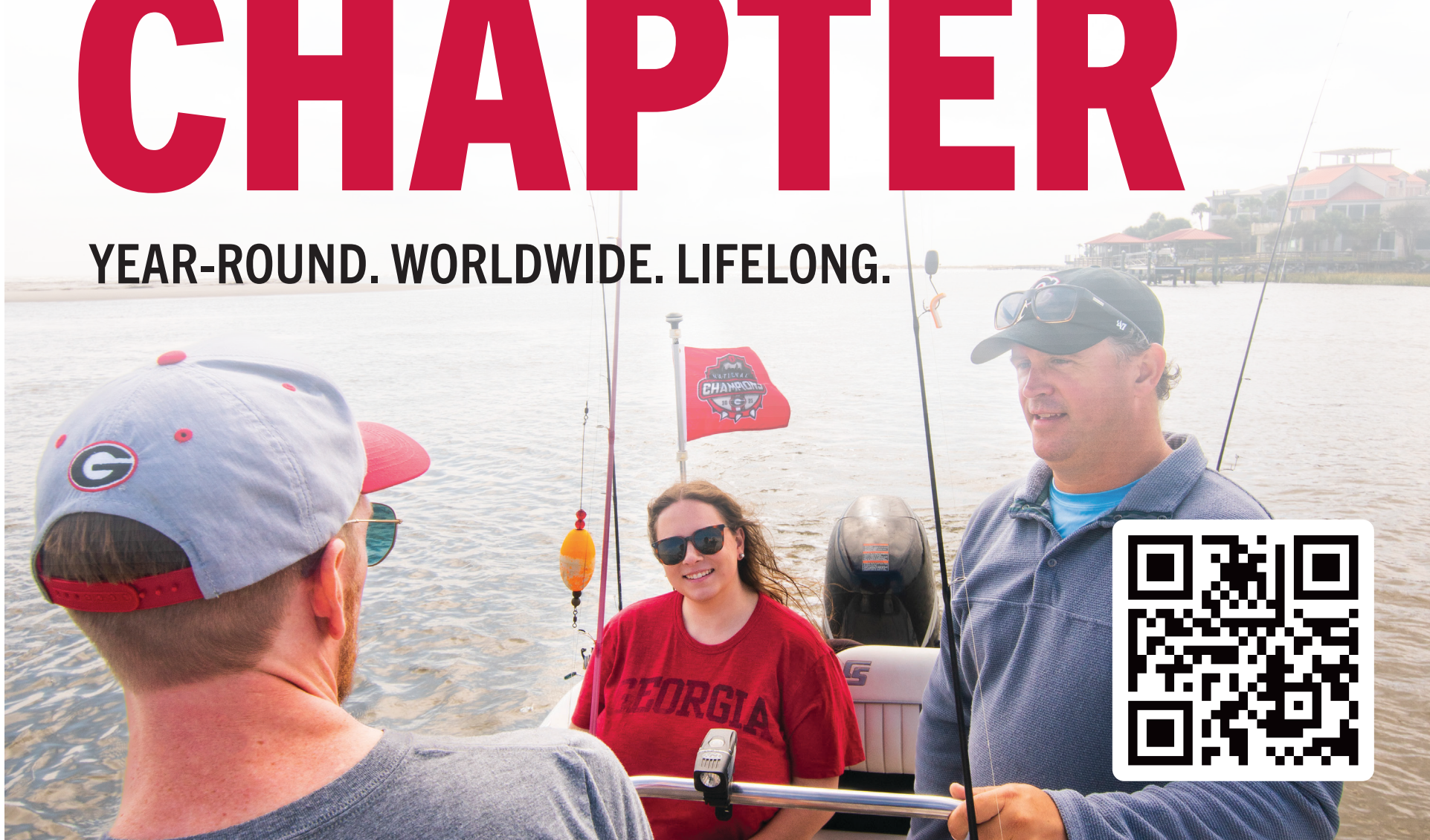
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Most memorable moments in Florida-Georgia football rivalry

The Gators and Bulldogs have traded blows for over a century in what has turned into one of the more iconic matchups in college football

By Jack Meyer

Alligator Staff Writer

In a rivalry with as much historical significance as Florida-Georgia, there tends to be little love lost between the two schools. Ever since the Gators and Bulldogs first met in Jacksonville over 100 years ago in 1915, the event formerly known as the “World’s Largest Outdoor

Cocktail Party” has spawned all kinds of memorable moments, photo finishes and all-around chaos.

While Georgia leads the all-time series 56-44-2 (or, if you ask Florida fans, 55-44-2), both programs have seen their share of roaring highs, as well as some controversial finishes that are scrutinized to this day.

Here’s a look back at some of

the most memorable moments between the Gators and the Bulldogs, and how each one has cemented its place as a staple in the rivalry.

1904: The beginning of an era (or not?)

The exact starting point of the Florida-Georgia rivalry has remained in dispute between the two schools. In 1904, the

Georgia Bulldogs played host to the University of Florida Blue and White football team. This squad, which was originally based in Lake City, Florida, served as a predecessor to the Florida Gators football program established in 1906.

While Georgia came away with a resounding 52-0 win against the Blue and White, Florida does not recognize the game as a part of its

record between the two schools. Instead, the Gators recognize their first meeting with the Bulldogs as their 1915 meeting in Jacksonville, where UGA came away with another lopsided 37-0 victory.

Nonetheless, Georgia still recognizes the 1904 contest as the first meeting between the two squads.

SEE RIVALRY, PAGE 8



Namari Lock // Alligator Staff

Linebacker Jamer Bates (left), quarterback Eric Kresser (middle) and wide receiver Chris Doering (right) were members of the 1995 Florida football team.

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National championship crossroads: Florida and Georgia's women's tennis rivalry

For nearly a decade, collegiate postseason women's tennis ran through Athens and Gainesville



Alligator File Photo

UF women's tennis coach Roland Thornqvist: "I think we are getting better and getting tougher. Our freshmen aren't freshmen anymore, we are going to be ready for whatever comes our way."

By Noah White

Alligator Sports Writer

When discussing the history of Florida and Georgia athletics programs, it would be impermissible not to mention one of both schools' most successful sports: women's tennis.

While not the most conventionally crowd-generating, the Florida-Georgia women's tennis rivalry remains one of the fiercest in the collegiate tennis world, and for good reason.

From 2007-13, collegiate women's tennis was played at an elite level between the two SEC schools.

UF's women's tennis team entered the late 2000s as one of the most dominant programs in the nation, facing limited competition in the SEC. Under the guidance

of recently retired UF head coach Roland Thornqvist, who joined the program in 2002, the Gators had notched five consecutive titles, SEC regular season and tournaments alike.

Thornqvist was one of the premier young coaches in Division I tennis after winning the 2003 national championship only two seasons into his tenure at Florida. The Gators entered the 2007 season preparing for another dominant SEC run. However, that didn't come to fruition.

Meanwhile, Georgia's women's tennis program wasn't on the same level as Florida's at the time, experiencing a slight decline after winning the 2000 national championship. Then, things abruptly changed.

In Thornqvist's first six matches with Georgia, he went 5-1, the

strongest start for any coach in the rivalry. In their 2007 match, the Gators had a strong contingent of returning players. But Georgia outplayed UF, dethroning the Gators from atop the SEC standings for the first time in five years at the 2007 SEC tournament.

"I have to congratulate Georgia. They showed that they were tougher today," Thornqvist said after the loss. "They had a little bit more than we did."

The Bulldogs' dominance came to a head in 2009 when the Gators faced Georgia twice in three weeks. After a disappointing 4-2 loss to the NCAA title favorite Bulldogs, Florida prepared for an NCAA tournament round of 16 matchups against Georgia. The result was no different. Georgia ended Florida's season.

In a common theme of their

repeated matchups from 2007-13, Thornqvist emphasized his respect for Georgia's program, knowing it was what remained between Florida and a second NCAA title.

"We knew we were playing a team that was picked to be a favorite for the national championship. We were probably underdogs in most of the spots," Thornqvist said. "When we play them, we certainly have to be sharp at everything we do."

During the 2009 offseason, the Gators focused their attention on the beast that stood in front of them: the Bulldogs. Florida designed its practices to improve the weaknesses that Georgia exposed. UF shifted its attention to leaping the hurdle that remained in Athens, Georgia.

Between 2010-13, Florida faced

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'Into enemy territory': Former Gator James Bates' storied battles against Georgia

The former UF linebacker played in the Florida-Georgia game in Gainesville, Athens and Jacksonville

By Max Tucker

Alligator Sports Writer

One of the oldest and most storied rivalries in the history of college football has been played on a neutral site for nearly 30 years. However, former UF linebacker James Bates has experienced every rabid atmosphere that the two passionate fan bases offer when the Florida Gators and Georgia Bulldogs meet on the gridiron.

Growing up in Texas, Bates wasn't particularly well-versed regarding the Florida-Georgia matchup, he said. Nevertheless, it didn't take long for Bates to realize just how much the decades-long rivalry meant during Florida's run in the 1990s with former Florida head coach Steve Spurrier at the helm.

"You learn in a hurry where the rivalries are," Bates said. "Especially with Coach Spurrier. I mean, Coach Spurrier, if he ever showed any little bit more of emotions during getting ready for a game, it was the Georgia game. He loved to beat the Bulldogs."

Spurrier constructed perhaps the most illustrious coaching career in the history of UF's program. His 122 victories over 12 years are the most in Florida history. Spurrier's coaching resume also includes a dominant 11-1 record against Georgia.

Bates' roots to UF stem deeper than his playing days. His father was Spurrier's first ever defensive coordinator with the Gators, although he wasn't coaching by the time Bates arrived on campus as a redshirt freshman.

Late in the third quarter of Florida's matchup against Georgia at Ben Hill Griffin Stadium in 1994, Bates intercepted a pass thrown by former UGA quarterback Eric Zeier and returned it for a touchdown.

"It was pretty neat, because my dad, he was coaching in the NFL at that point, and he rarely got to see me play," Bates said. "But whenever he came to our games, I always had an interception."

Bates had the unique experience of being one of the only players in UF history to compete in the Florida-

SEE **BATES**, PAGE 9



Courtesy to the Alligator from James Bates

James Bates, a linebacker on the Florida football team from 1992-1996, tackles a Georgia Bulldog during the 1995 game in Athens, Georgia.



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A century-long battle

RIVALRY, from pg. 3

1966: Steve Spurrier hounded by the Bulldogs

Despite Georgia's early dominance in the rivalry, Florida started building some momentum of its own in the series. Entering their 1966 contest with UGA, the Gators had won 11 of their last 14 matchups against the Bulldogs. Clocking in at No. 7 in the country with soon-to-be Heisman Trophy winner Steve Spurrier under center, UF was seen as a heavy favorite to take down the unranked Bulldogs.

Instead, Georgia's defense put together one of its strongest showings of the 1966 season, intercepting Spurrier three times to pull off a stunning 27-10 upset victory. UGA defensive lineman Bill Stanfill, who grew up on a farm with his father, later compared sacking Spurrier to "holding pigs for my dad to castrate."

In the end, however, Spurrier would get the last laugh. Upon returning to Florida as the "head ball coach" in 1990, he led the Gators to an 11-1 record against the Bulldogs in his tenure at UF.

1980: "Run, Lindsay, run!"

Seeking its first national championship since 1942, then-No. 2 Georgia's undefeated season was in jeopardy against No. 20 Florida. With less than a minute to go in the contest, UF squeaked ahead to take a 21-20 lead. The Bulldogs needed a miracle to emerge victorious – and they got one from wide receiver Lindsay Scott.

Facing a third-and-long from his own seven-yard line, UGA quarterback Buck Belue scrambled around his own end zone before finding a wide-open Scott at the 25-yard line. From there, the Georgia wideout took off running, leaving

Florida's secondary in the dust en route to a 93-yard touchdown.

The Bulldogs would go on to win the game 26-21, which in turn catapulted them to No. 1 in the country.

2002: Florida avenges its championship ghosts of the past

After decades of seeing Georgia play spoiler for their potential championship ambitions, the Gators finally turned the tables on the Bulldogs in 2002. UGA entered the contest ranked at No. 5 in the country, while Florida entered the game with a 5-3 record, struggling in its first season following Spurrier's departure to the NFL.

While fans and analysts alike expected the game to be nothing more than a pit stop in Georgia's road to a championship, the Gators went on to shock the college football world with a stunning 20-13 victory. UF quarterback

Rex Grossman, who was named an SEC Football Legend on Oct. 22, threw for 339 yards and two touchdowns.

2007-08: The "Gator Stomp" and the extra timeouts

The Urban Meyer years at Florida would prove to be some of the more fierce ones in the Florida-Georgia rivalry. In 2007, the Gators were fresh off of a national championship victory and had won 15 of their last 17 against the Bulldogs. Then-UGA head coach Mark Richt gave his team rather unconventional instructions after the Bulldogs scored their first touchdown of the game: giving the nod for the sideline to mob the end zone and excessively celebrate until there were flags everywhere.

It appeared that Richt's motivation tactics worked. As soon as UGA running back Knowshon Moreno found the end zone to take a 7-0 lead, Georgia's sideline emptied out as players poured onto the field in what is now widely seen as one of the most famous (or infamous) celebrations in college

football history. The Bulldogs would go on to secure a 42-30 upset victory, marking the first time in the history of the rivalry that both teams scored 30 or more points.

Needless to say, Florida had a newfound chip on its shoulder coming into 2008's rematch. UF entered the game ranked at No. 5 in the country, while UGA clocked in at No. 8. Add in the lingering effects of the "Gator Stomp," and tensions were already at an all-time high between the two schools.

Meyer publicly denied that the "Gator Stomp" incident would have any influence on his play calling or approach to the game. However, that stance was all but reversed in the waning moments of the matchup in 2008. As Florida held onto a 49-10 lead with less than a minute to go, Meyer elected to burn his two remaining timeouts, seemingly to suck the life out of the Bulldogs to the very last second.

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James Bates' legacy

BATES, from pg. 6

Georgia rivalry games in Gainesville, Jacksonville and Athens, Georgia.

Ben Hill Griffin Stadium is Bates' favorite place in the world, he said. He noted how some of his fondest memories in life have stemmed from his time under the lights there.

Along with his passion for playing in front of Florida fans, Bates was no stranger to kicking his skills and mindset into a different gear when taking on an opponent on the road.

"I used to love to load it up and get on the bus with my teammates and go into enemy territory," Bates said. "It's kind of like that whole gladiator feel, where you've got 100,000 people around, wanting you to go down, but you and your boys are back to back."

Bates helped lead Florida's

1996 squad to a national championship against Florida State in the Sugar Bowl. He appeared in 34 of UF's games from 1994-96, a span that saw the Gators tally a 34-4 record against their opponents.

However, as Bates takes a walk down memory lane, he fondly recalls traveling to Athens, where Georgia fans hoped to see the Gators crumble under brutal crowd conditions. Instead, the Bulldogs were on the receiving end of a 52-17 loss at the hands of Florida in 1995.

"Being how big the rivalry is, the fact that we could go between the hedges, such a storied place, such an incredible stadium in itself, and to go and not just to beat them, but to just put it on them, that was something that I'll never forget," Bates said.

Today, you'll find Bates roaming the halls of Weimer Hall at UF on his way to teach

his play-by-play broadcasting class as an adjunct professor. However, just across the street from Weimer, he used to sack quarterbacks, tackle running backs and return interceptions for touchdowns, sending a then-packed Ben Hill Griffin Stadium into pandemonium.

Bates wants nothing more than for the program to return to its place of prominence that it was in during his playing career. He knows as well as anyone how special a place Gainesville can be when the Gators are playing at elite status.

"We're playing a little bit better [right now], and that's fun," Bates said. "But I just, man, I teach a class at UF, and I tell them all the time, I just want them to be here when we're kicking butt, because it's so magical."

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Tennis court rivalry

WOMEN'S TENNIS, from pg. 5

Georgia six times, winning every contest. The Gators went 58-2 during the 2011 and 2012 seasons, winning the national championship in both years.

Florida faced Georgia in the SEC Tournament in 2012 and 2013, leveling Georgia 4-1 and 4-0, respectively.

"That was the SEC's finest right there, the two best teams in the league without a doubt. It was high-level tennis from start to finish," Thornqvist said after the 2012 victory. "I'm just very pleased."

Florida's final notable postseason match with Georgia came in 2013, when two of the top 4 teams met with the SEC championship on the line.

After Florida's first sweep against Georgia in a decade, Thornqvist emphasized how his

players stepped up in a huge moment with Georgia across the net.

"Georgia is very, very talented. Our freshmen were really amazing," Thornqvist said. "They've gotten tougher and tougher."

The Gators and Bulldogs haven't met beyond the regular season since 2016, with Georgia having won each of the pair's last eight contests. Nonetheless, the rivalry always burns on. When the Gators and Bulldogs face off, there is a different energy on the court.

"When I see our girls play and see how they fight and play with so much passion, it's electrifying," former Gator Olivia Janowicz said about facing the Bulldogs in 2013. "It helps you."

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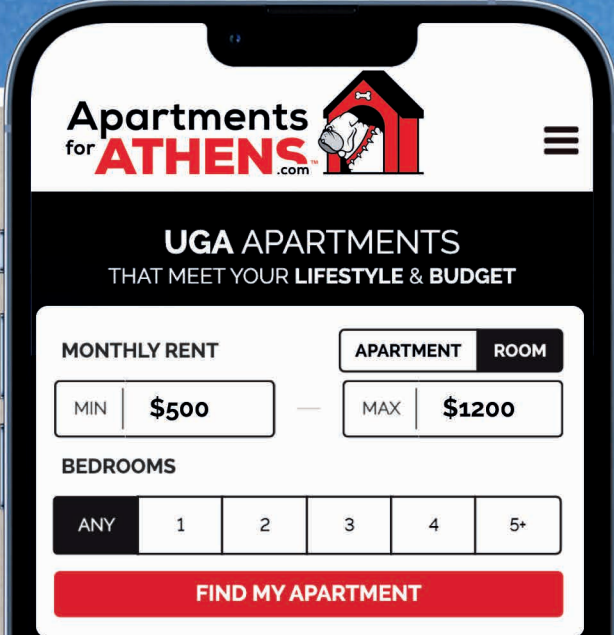
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Basketball coach's departure offered Florida a Golden opportunity

The Florida Gators men's basketball team made a seismic coaching change during the 2022 offseason

By Luke Adragna

Sports Writer

For many Gators fans, few things exist that are more repulsive than the color combination of Arch Black and Bulldog Red.

The University of Georgia's colorway represents pure evil in the eyes of Florida fans. According to them, wearing it would be nothing short of committing treason.

So on Jan. 27, when Mike White, the former head coach of the Florida Gators men's basketball team, entered the Stephen C. O'Connell Center donning the red and black colorway, reactions ensued as expected.

Florida fans chanted, "F*ck Mike White!" as a raucous chorus of boos took over UF's student section.

Despite White enjoying moments of success throughout his tenure with the Gators, it seemingly flew out the window as soon as he stepped foot back on campus.

White served as Florida's head coach for seven seasons before making the unique decision to leave after the 2021-22 season for the head coaching position at Georgia.

According to Associated Press reporter Mark Long, the decision was made due to the toxicity of Florida's fan base in reaction to the team's underperformance. Moreover, White did it to protect his children.

"Mike White leaving Florida for Georgia shows just how badly he and his family wanted out," Long wrote on X. "It had become really toxic with a vocal segment of the fanbase, and White didn't want his young kids affected by it at school and via social media."

Gators fans' disappointment had reached a boiling point in White's final season. Florida lost in the NCAA Tournament Round of 32 in three straight seasons — disregarding the 2020 tournament, which was canceled due to the COVID-19 outbreak — and failed to receive a tournament bid his last year as UF's head coach.

Then, White parted ways with Florida and joined its rival school, Georgia.

"I am beyond excited for the opportunity to lead the men's basketball program at the University of Georgia," White said in his opening statement at



Jiselle Lee // Alligator Staff

Florida head coach Todd Golden coaches the Gators during a practice the day before their Southeastern Conference tournament game Wednesday, March 8, 2023.

UGA. "I am extraordinarily grateful to the leadership of Scott Stricklin and to the entire Florida Athletics staff for an amazing experience during my tenure... We are truly thankful for our time at the University of Florida."

In the world of sports journalism, media members found the choice made sense for both parties.

According to Swamp 247 reporter and former Alligator reporter Graham Hall, White's decision came about due to a culmination of factors, including high expectations, difficult strength of schedule and untimely injuries.

"There were a lot of unfortunate situations outside of his control and the expectations of the footsteps he followed in," Hall said.

It was nearly impossible for White to come close to his predecessor Billy Donovan in terms of on-court success. Donovan served as the Gators' head coach for 19 seasons, winning back-to-back NCAA Championships in 2006-2007, four SEC Championships and earning the most wins in program history.

Every day White was at the practice facility, a mural of Donovan and his championship team metaphorically stared

down at him. UF even named the Exactech Arena court after Donovan during White's tenure.

When White left for a rival school, fans were livid. But it's a change that brought a new face and new wins.

The Gators hired current head coach Todd Golden on March 18, 2022, who has revamped Florida basketball since his arrival.

Golden finished his second season with a 24-12 record (11-7 SEC). The Gators went on to reach the SEC championship game for the first time since 2014 and received an NCAA Tournament bid as a No. 10 seed.

Now, Golden will look ahead to his third year with lofty expectations and a reloaded roster featuring three transfers in former Washington State freshman center Rueben Chinyelu, former Chattanooga sophomore forward Sam Alexis and former junior Florida Atlantic guard Alijah Martin.

All three newcomers are expected to emerge as significant contributors in the upcoming season. Additionally, the Gators return a pair of preseason All-SEC selections in senior guard Walter Clayton Jr. and sophomore forward Alex Condon.

"I thought we added the pieces we needed to and retained who we wanted to keep," Golden said. "I don't want to say it gets easier, but the longer you are somewhere, the more confident you get in your processes. Things start working a little easier together, and I thought we had a good offseason."

On the other hand, the success hasn't been quite as high for Georgia but has been equally as drastic.

The Bulldogs finished their 2021-22 season with a 6-26 record before firing former head coach Tom Crean. Under White, the program jumped to 16-16 and 20-17 in his first and second years, respectively.

"When you look at the Georgia basketball roster this year, they're going to be much better than people think," Hall said. "Those games this year [between Florida and Georgia] are going to be really, really good."

The Bulldogs' roster features one of the most talented freshmen in the country in 6-foot-11 forward Asa Newell. Additionally, UGA acquired former Vanderbilt guard Tyrin Lawrence through the transfer portal, who was extremely successful for the Commodores last season.

Regardless of what White's lack of success can be attributed to or the misfortunes that occurred behind-the-scenes during his tenure, there is no denying Florida fans will continue to be upset with the decision to join its rival school.

"How quickly the team has become competitive under Todd Golden has furthered the notion, in a lot of people's minds, that changing coaches was the right move," Hall said. "If anyone looks back fondly on Mike, it's not going to happen for years and years, or it would come as a double-edged sword. It would take a collapse on the current regime and Georgia to be more competitive than Florida."

Since White switched programs from Florida to Georgia, he is 0-4 against UF. The Gators and Bulldogs will face each other once again Jan. 25 at the Stephen C. O'Connell Center at 3:30 p.m.

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