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Bark vs. bite

Remembering 2024 and previewing 2025

Braden Brownell

Georgia's narrow 34-20 win over Florida in Jacksonville, Florida, last November delivered a scare for the Bulldogs, who were coming off a dominant 30-15 win at No. 1 Texas. Despite the two-score victory, the Bulldogs spent most of the game trying to offset mistakes.

Then-quarterback Carson Beck, playing in his hometown, had a shaky performance despite throwing for 309 yards and two touchdowns. He was picked off three times, including twice in the first half, which contributed to Georgia's early struggles.

Florida capitalized, jumping out to a 10-3 lead midway through the second quarter. The Gators' offense was led by then-freshman quarterback D.J. Lagway and a productive ground game that kept Georgia's defense on its heels. Lagway sparked the attack with a 43-yard touchdown pass

to wide receiver Aidan Mizell on the first play after an interception from Florida corner back Devin Moore.

Momentum shifted, however, when Lagway exited with a hamstring injury with five minutes remaining in the first half. The stadium atmosphere, dominated by rowdy Florida fans after the touchdown, shifted as walk-on quarterback Aidan Warner replaced him and completed just 7 of 22 passes for 66 yards. Georgia took control in the second half, pulling away while Florida's offense sputtered without its dual-threat leader.

This season, Lagway returns as the Gators' starter but has had a mixed sophomore campaign. After going 6-1 as a freshman starter and earning the label of Florida's next great quarterback, he's off to a 3-4 start in 2025. His offseason development was limited by injury, and some of the early promise he showed has faded.

Still, Georgia's defense will need to be sharp, especially against the Florida run game. Sophomore back Jadan Baugh, averaging nearly 20 touches per game, is the Gators' workhorse. Ja'Kobi Jackson, Florida's second option in the backfield, also had success last year, rushing for 74 yards and a touchdown against Georgia. Both backs present a challenge Georgia must prepare for.

Defensively, the Bulldogs will look to replicate their second-half showing against Auburn earlier this season. Following halftime, Georgia contained mobile quarterback Jackson Arnold and held the Tigers to just 10 rushing

yards. After a rough performance in the offense-dominated home win against Ole Miss, Georgia's defense will need to show up in Jacksonville to contain Florida's run game.

Georgia will rely on quarterback Gunner Stockton, who has thrown just one interception this season. He has avoided turnovers and managed games efficiently — a sharp contrast to Beck's performance against Florida last year.



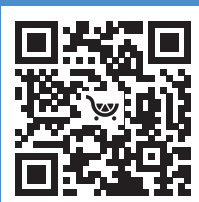
Georgia tight end Ben Yurosek (84) runs with the ball during the game between Georgia and Florida at EverBank Stadium in Jacksonville, Florida, on Saturday, Nov. 2, 2024. Georgia won 34-20.

PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN

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Strength on strength

Florida's Jadan Baugh faces stout Georgia run defense

Owen McDaniel

If Georgia's defense silences Florida's offense on Saturday, it will likely be because it keyed in on running back Jadan Baugh. The sophomore has been involved in 30% of Florida's offensive plays this season and has shouldered over half of the Gators' rushing attempts.

Baugh's usage has largely coincided with Florida's success this year. The Gators relied heavily on Baugh in its Week 6 upset over Texas, handing him the ball 27 times, which he turned into 107 yards and a score. His most productive game this season came in Week 8, when Florida narrowly beat Mississippi State 23-21 and Baugh ran for 150 yards and a touchdown on 23 attempts.

However, he only carried the ball 10 times in the Gators' 20-10 loss to LSU and 12 times when they lost 26-7 to Miami. He was held to 3.6 yards per rush against Texas A&M, which boasts one of the SEC's best run defenses.

Baugh will face another stifling defensive front at EverBank Stadium on Saturday. Tennessee tailback Star Thomas' 60 rushing yards against Georgia were the most

the Bulldogs have surrendered to an opposing back all season, allowing just 91.1 total rushing yards per game. In Georgia's most recent game against then-No. 5 Ole Miss, it held standout tailback Kewan Lacy to just 31 yards on 12 carries — his lowest total of the season up to that point.

The Bulldogs' unit is anchored by redshirt junior defensive tackle Christen Miller, who has solidified himself as one of the sport's best run stoppers early this season. The 6-foot-4, 310-pounder uses his strong lower frame to prevent opposing linemen from opening running lanes.

Georgia linebacker C.J. Allen has also been a key contributor in the team's run defense. The junior is pacing the team in tackles with 56 and has been the Bulldogs' leading tackler in each of their five SEC games. Pro Football Focus grades Allen's run defense at 91.6 — one of the highest scores in the country.

"[Allen has] been dealing with a hamstring [injury] and he's played through it, but he's a leader, man," head coach Kirby Smart said in a press conference on Oct. 13. "He's a special kid in terms of what he's willing to sacrifice and give up for the team and how much he pushes our team."

Though Florida quarterback D.J. Lagway looked sharp in last year's edition of at "The World's Largest Outdoor Cocktail Party" before he was sidelined with a hamstring injury, he has been much less consistent this season. In the LSU game, Lagway dished out five interceptions, and against Miami he managed just 61 passing yards.

If the Gators are going to throw the ball successfully



Georgia inside linebacker C.J. Allen (3) looks at the quarterback during the Georgia vs. Alabama game at Sanford Stadium in Athens, Georgia, on Saturday, Sept. 27, 2025. Alabama won 24-21.

PHOTO/KALEB TATUM

on Saturday, they will likely need to keep Georgia honest with an effective ground game, especially on early downs. The Bulldogs will need to prioritize stopping Baugh, who has proven to be a threat in both the rushing and passing game. He has the third most receptions on the team, so Georgia should pay close attention to him wherever he is on the field.

Should the Bulldogs neutralize the threat Baugh provides, they will be in excellent position to extend their win streak over Florida to five games.

Between the Hedges and the Swamp

Traditions keep rivalry week alive

Guinevere Grant

Every fall, Georgia and Florida fans meet in Jacksonville, Florida, for one of college football's most storied rivalries — a matchup that divides states, families and friendships. But beyond the field, the rivalry highlights traditions that make each campus unique and the pride that fuels both fan bases long after the final whistle.

At the University of Georgia, traditions are woven into nearly every corner of campus life. The most iconic of all is the Arch, standing tall at the entrance to North Campus. Since the early 1900s, students have avoided walking under it until after graduation, a superstition that's said to bring bad luck, or even delay one's diploma. For graduating seniors, the walk beneath the Arch marks a rite of passage, a symbolic step into life beyond Athens.

Gameday in Athens brings a different kind of energy. Sanford Stadium, home of the Bulldogs, comes alive as fans "Call the Dawgs," echoing chants of "Go Dawgs! Sic 'em! Woof! Woof! Woof!" that can be heard across campus. When the sun sets, the stadium lights are joined by thousands of

phone flashlights during "Light Up Sanford," a relatively new but beloved tradition that unites students, alumni and fans in one glowing sea of red and black.

Of course, no Georgia game is complete without Uga, the university's live English bulldog mascot, who has his own air-conditioned doghouse in Sanford Stadium. Generations of Ugas have watched over the team since 1956, becoming just as recognizable a symbol of Georgia pride as the Arch itself.

Across state lines, the University of Florida's traditions shine just as bright and sometimes just as loud. In "The Swamp," as Ben Hill Griffin Stadium is affectionately known, Gators fans make their presence known through the signature "Gator Chomp," with arms snapping in



Georgia tight end Lawson Luckie (7) celebrates with fans during the Georgia vs. Florida game at EverBank Stadium in Jacksonville, Florida, on Saturday, Nov. 2, 2024. Georgia won 34-20.

PHOTO/LANEY MARTIN

unison to mimic their alligator mascot.

Florida students also celebrate their school spirit through the Tradition Keeper program, a challenge that encourages Gators to complete 40 campus traditions before graduation. From attending Gator Growl, one of the nation's largest student-run pep rallies, to exploring life across Gainesville, Florida, these traditions encourage students to embrace every part of the university experience. Those who complete the list earn a medallion and the title of "Tradition Keeper," a badge of honor that symbolizes their connection to the university.

Perhaps one of UF's most emotional traditions came in 2017, when fans began singing Tom Petty's "I Won't Back Down" between the third and fourth quarters of home games. The tribute honors the Gainesville native, whose music continues to echo through the stadium as thousands of voices join together in a moment that's become a cornerstone of Gator pride.

For both Georgia and Florida, these traditions extend far beyond the sidelines. They reflect decades of shared history, community and devotion, the kind of loyalty that turns a football rivalry into something much bigger.

When the Bulldogs and Gators meet in Jacksonville, it's more than just a battle for bragging rights. It's a celebration of school spirit, a clash between red and black, orange and blue and two sets of traditions that remind fans why rivalry week is one of the most anticipated times of the year.



Fans react during the 2022 Georgia-Florida game in Jacksonville, Florida, on Saturday, Oct. 29, 2022. Georgia won 42-20. FILE/STAFF

OPINION: Home and home

Georgia-Florida deserves to be in Athens and Gainesville, Florida

Ben Kule

The contest between Georgia and Florida has been a staple on the college football calendar for just shy of a century. Excluding 1943, when the game was skipped due to World War II, the Bulldogs and Gators have faced off every season since 1926. As expected, the SEC kept Georgia and Florida as annual opponents at least until 2029 and, barring something unexpected, “The World’s Largest Outdoor Cocktail Party” will continue far into the future.

Because Georgia and Florida fans alike would agree on the importance of this game, playing it on the best possible stage is of the utmost importance. Of the 103 games played between the two teams, 92 have taken place at the neutral site of Jacksonville, Florida. Since 1933, the teams have met in northern Florida every year, except for 1994 and 1995, when the Gator Bowl Stadium was remodeled and renamed Jacksonville Municipal Stadium in preparation for the then-new Jacksonville Jaguars.

To enhance the viewing experience, and for the convenience of fans, Sanford Stadium in Athens and Ben Hill Griffin Stadium in Gainesville each hosted a Georgia-Florida game during these two years. However, now that Jacksonville’s stadium — now called EverBank Stadium — is undergoing renovations once again, two neutral-site locations were chosen to host the game instead: Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta in 2026 and Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Florida, in 2027.

The 2026 game is Georgia’s turn to serve

as the home team, and playing in Atlanta serves as a de facto home game for the Bulldogs. The next year, Tampa does the same for the Gators.

However, does playing in comparatively smaller stadiums that are farther from campuses add to the spectacle more than it takes away?

The argument for playing in Atlanta and Tampa is that even though the NFL stadiums have lower capacities, the game belongs in high-profile venues in large-market cities. However, Jacksonville works because many Georgia students flock to St. Simons Island for the weekend of the game, leaving Bulldogs and Gators fans both less than 90 minutes away from the stadium.

The problem with Atlanta and Tampa is that they lack proximity — Gainesville is more than 300 miles from Atlanta and Athens is almost 500 miles from Tampa. While there are Georgia and Florida fans all over who will have an easier time flying to the game, students or fans who live near their respective campuses pay the price. Meanwhile, playing in Athens and Gainesville serves the home fans, requires a similar distance of travel for many away fans and benefits recruitment for both sides.

SEC play is known for its thundering crowds and hostile environments, best showcased in stadiums with immense capacities and fan attachment. The Georgia-Florida game means so much to both students and fans that playing it in Athens and Gainesville would help maintain the spirit and intensity of the rivalry more than the chosen neutral-site locations.

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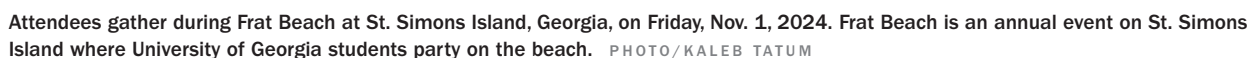
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Caroline Newbern

“My whole [Alpha Delta Pi] pledge class is trying to do something, which I think will be really fun because there’ll be, like, 100 girls running around as the same thing,” Bou-lus said. “I think this year it’s definitely going to end with a



Butler considers Frat Beach to be “the best weekend of

“You know, Georgia winning or losing? I mean, the win makes it so much better, but it’s just a great time with great camaraderie.” Butler said.







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Penalty yardage to factor into rivalry matchup

Ben Kule

The rivalry between Georgia and Florida has proven to be one of the fiercest throughout college football history. The Gators were consistent national championship contenders throughout the 1990s and 2000s, defeating the Bulldogs 17 times in those 20 years, while Georgia has more recently emerged as one of the sport's most consistent powerhouses, winning seven of the past eight matchups.

During these phases, both teams have suffered their share of blowout losses in the annual meeting. Regardless of who the favorite is, each year provides a chippy, physical game with emotions sometimes leading to momentum-shifting penalties.

Both teams keep composure

So far this season, Georgia and Florida have limited unforced errors, committing a below-average number of penalties. As of Week 8, Georgia averages 4.6 penalties per game, the 14th-fewest in the Football Bowl Subdivision, and 43 penalty yards per game, the 27th-fewest. Florida narrowly trails Georgia, averaging 5.9 penalties per game,

the 46th-fewest, and 49.1 penalty yards per game, the 44th-fewest. Both teams rank top 5 in the SEC in penalties and penalty yardage surrendered per game.

The neutral site, however, poses a different challenge. In the seven games each team has played so far this season, Georgia has had home-field advantage in five of them, and Florida has had it in four. While they've benefited from their fans staying quiet while they have the ball, the mixture of Georgia and Florida fans in Jacksonville, Florida, results in loud conditions regardless of who has possession.

Sportsmanship after the whistle will be key

Georgia committed 48 yards of penalties against Florida in last year's matchup, while the Gators ceded 42, both roughly in line with this year's averages. While penalties were not a huge factor in Georgia's 34-20 win, they could have been. Big hits were laid, players celebrated hard and multiple scrums took place. While much of this went unpenalized, each team committed an avoidable penalty during a play that changed the result of an early drive.

On Georgia's second drive of the game, a 17-yard completion to wide receiver Dillon Bell in Florida territory resulted in a 10-yard loss due to a holding call against right tackle Xavier Truss. The setback was a factor in Georgia settling for a field goal when it likely could have otherwise scored a touchdown.

On the next drive, Florida was called for a false start on third-and-1, pushing it back five yards and forcing a punt after failing to convert on the long third-down attempt.



Georgia wide receiver Riley Ridley (8) fights off Florida cornerback C.J. Henderson (5) during the Florida-Georgia game in Jacksonville, Florida, on Saturday, October 28, 2017. FILE/STAFF

If the referees crack down more on extracurricular activity after the whistle this year, penalty yardage could become a major factor, more likely helping Florida pull off an unexpected upset than helping Georgia holding off the underdogs.

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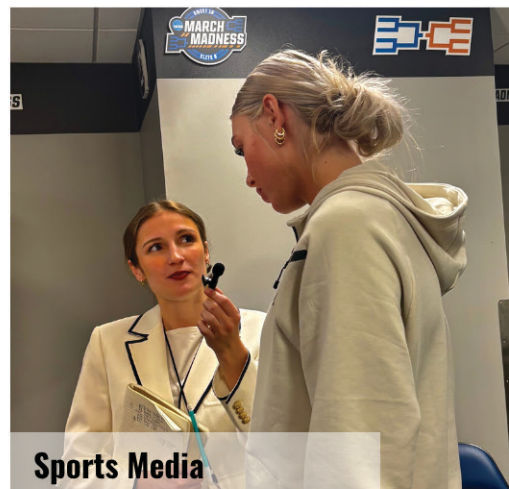
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WATCH HOW

How Florida's loss against UGA powered them to the national championship

FOLLOWING THE UPSET LOSS IN ATHENS, THE GATORS WON 12 GAMES IN A ROW TO A THIRD NATIONAL TITLE

By Jeffrey Serber
Alligator Sports Writer

The Gators men's basketball team, riding a six-game win streak with playoff seeding on the line, seemed to have a walk in the park taking on the Georgia Bulldogs in February.

But at the end of the contest, the only ones walking were the Florida players. They strolled off the court while the rest of Stegeman Coliseum was filled with players, staff and fans running onto the court to celebrate Georgia's biggest win in program history since 2004.

At the time, Florida suffered one of its most heartbreaking losses to one of its biggest rivals. Disappointed and unsure of whether they could still make it to March Madness as a No. 1, the Gators went on to bounce back from the heartbreak.

"It was really tough," said junior guard Urban Klavzar. "The loss ... It was good for us. The talk after the game was that this has to be the last loss of the season."

That upset was Florida's last of the season. The Gators turned things around, becoming comfortable playing from behind. With this mentality, Florida went on to a 12-game win streak en route to its third national championship in program history.

The upset

In January, Florida and Georgia faced off in Gainesville, with the Gators cruising to an 89-59 victory.

In the return matchup, Georgia flipped the script.

With eight minutes to go in the first half, the Bulldogs took a commanding 39-13 lead. During that stretch, Georgia made 15 of their 20 field goal attempts, including seven shots from beyond the arc. But Florida shot 36.4% from the field in the first half.

"We started off too slow," senior guard Will Richard said after the game. "They shot 68% in the first half. You can't let a team do that."

At the start of the second half, Florida regained control of the game. Shooting 45% from the field and draining six threes during the latter 20 minutes, Florida began to cut into Georgia's lead. The Gators cut the deficit to seven with just over six minutes to go.

With just over a minute left in the contest, Florida took its first lead of the game following a 13-0 run. Georgia fought back, hitting a three to start its own run to finish off the Gators at 88-83.

"We put ourselves in too big a hole, and



Noah Lantor // Alligator Staff

Florida Gators guard Walter Clayton Jr. (1) gets handed the trophy after winning the NCAA Men's Basketball National Championship against the Houston Cougars, Monday, April 7, 2025, in San Antonio, Texas.

[that made] us have to play perfect down the stretch," coach Todd Golden said after the game. "We almost did it but fell a little short."

The comeback

Caught up in the frustration of the upset loss, Florida quickly switched gears as it hosted No. 12 Texas A&M in March, with College GameDay coming to campus for the conference matchup.

"We'll respond real good," Richard said after the loss to Georgia. "It was a wake-up call. Won't happen again."

The Gators embraced the challenge and dominated the Aggies. Richard lived up to his promise, leading Florida with 25 points and six three-pointers en route to an 89-70 win.

Just like with the Bulldogs, the Gators started from behind, with the Aggies taking a 16-10 lead. However, unlike last time, Florida stopped the bleeding early with its own 12-3 run in two minutes. The home team never looked back, keeping the lead for the remain-

der of the contest.

The Gators continued their momentum, finishing conference play with a 99-94 win at No. 7 Alabama and a 90-71 victory at home against Ole Miss.

To start the postseason, Florida made quick work of its opponents in the SEC Tournament. Golden's men won their first two games by double digits and took the tournament title game against Tennessee.

Heading into the NCAA Tournament as a No. 1 seed, Florida was a favorite to win in a majority of its matchups, just like in the Georgia game. However, the Gators used the loss in Athens as a lesson on how to stay the course in games that did not go their way down the road.

"That game was super important because it was a reminder ... you have to come prepared to play 40 minutes of basketball," said Neil W. Blackmon, founder of the Florida Basketball Hour podcast.

In the round of 32, Florida faced back-to-

back defending champion Connecticut.

After a tied first half, the Huskies maintained a lead over the Gators until there were three minutes left to play. With a ticket to the Sweet 16 on the line, Florida stayed on course to take a 62-61 lead and eventually took down Dan Hurley's team 77-75.

"Florida felt the pressure," Blackmon said. "But they got it together obviously at the end and made enough plays to win."

In its Elite Eight match against Texas Tech, Florida came back from down nine with less than three minutes to go and prevailed 84-79 over the Red Raiders.

To end the season, the Gators made one last late-game comeback against Houston. Florida was down 12 with 15 minutes left in the second half, but yet again, it fought back to defeat Houston 65-63, crowning the Gators the kings of college basketball.

@JeffreySerber
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Florida softball flipped the Super Regional script in win against Georgia

THE GATORS DEFEATED THE BULLDOGS 2-1 IN MAY, ADVANCING TO THE WOMEN'S COLLEGE WORLD SERIES

By Riley Orovitz

Alligator Sports Writer

The Florida-Georgia rivalry extended from the gridiron to the diamond and from Jacksonville to Gainesville last spring as the Gator softball team squared off against the Bulldogs in a Super Regional showdown.

Over the last three decades, the two teams have faced each other 82 times, with Florida leading the charge with 49 games won compared to Georgia's 33.

"That's always just been a big rivalry in any sport," junior pitcher Ava Brown said. "It's no different for softball than it would be for any other sport at UF."

The teams had faced each other twice in Supers prior to last season, once in 2016 and again in 2021.

The Gators were two-time defending national champions in 2016 when UGA came to Gainesville. The Bulldogs shut down UF's hopes for three consecutive titles with a walk-off home run in the seventh inning.

Then in the 2021 Supers, UGA silenced Florida bats with two wins, both shutouts, 6-0 and 7-0.

But in May, the Gators turned the tide in their favor — with major postseason implications. The Gators were 47-14 heading into the three-game slate, compared to the 34-22 Bulldogs. UF was looking for its seventh World Series appearance in the last decade.

Despite the pressure, veteran left fielder Korbe Otis said the rivalry feels like "any other game." Otis, one of six seniors on the 2024-25 team, said she tried to go into postseason games the same as she would any other matchup.

"Coach Walton says it all the time: 'The team that can make it feel the most normal in [the] postseason is going to go in [as] the most confident and playing their best game,'" Otis said May 22, the day before the series began.

First baseman Reagan Walsh opened up the scoring in Game 1 with a 3-run home run in her first plate appearance of the day. Walsh was brought up due to an intentional walk to sophomore outfielder Taylor Shumaker.

"It definitely puts a fire when they keep walking you to face you, but our lineup one through nine is really scary, so you're going to have to deal with one of us at one point," Walsh said.

Junior pitcher Keagan Rothrock also played a key role, opening each game in the circle. Her dominant showings aided the Florida offense, and the Gators took a 1-0 series lead after beating UGA 6-1.



Noah Lantor // Alligator Staff

Florida Gators outfielder Kendra Falby (27) celebrates as she arrives to home plate after her second home run of the season during a softball game against UCF in Gainesville, Fla., on Wednesday, March 12, 2025.

The next game flipped the script on Florida's success. The Gators struck out eight times and left 13 runners on base. The loss taught the team it needed to swing at better pitches, coach Tim Walton said.

"I don't know if we've had more swings and misses all year," he said.

The stage was set for a winner-takes-all Game 3 of the Super Regional series. Only one team would advance to the Women's College World Series. The Gators delivered, with the seniors stealing the show in their last home

outing.

As the No. 9 hitter, shortstop Rylee Holtorf had a chance to extend the Gators' lead. She had struggled heading into the final game of the series: The shortstop had just one hit over 12 at-bats across the NCAA tournament.

The graduate transfer hit a 2-run homer to left field, scoring two and extending the lead to three runs.

"Going into the at-bat, [it] obviously wasn't the best series, wasn't the best weekend," Holtorf said, "but I think that we have talked all year about the pitch that matters now, is most important."

Florida closed out the contest 5-2, punching its ticket to the Women's College World Series. Coach Walton said the experience solidified how he understood his own role in the team.

"When you try to sit back and think of your purpose," Walton said, "what's my purpose as a coach? What am I doing this for? To play games, to win games? No, it's to really create a great experience."

Despite falling in the World Series to Tennessee, the Gators made their mark in the final series at KSP.

"I wouldn't wanna go out with this being my last ever home game any other way," Falby said.

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Is there hope for Florida's rivalry games? 1986 says yes.

GATORS FOOTBALL TOPPED GEORGIA, FLORIDA STATE AND AUBURN AFTER A 1-4 START 39 YEARS AGO

By Ava DiCecca

Alligator Sports Writer

This season, Florida football is off to its worst start since 1986.

But in Florida's history, a 3-4 start means nothing for rivalry games. The 1986 team finished stronger than it started, coming back from a 1-4 start to take down UF's two biggest rivals, Florida State and Georgia, and defeating conference rival Auburn to finish the season 6-5. This year's team will have the same opportunity in Jacksonville, and again at home against Florida State.

Adrian White, a starting senior for Florida's 1986 team and a seven-year NFL safety, recalled how Florida turned that season around.

"It was the camaraderie of the team," White said. "The players we had and just being together and coming together."

Since then, Florida has only topped all three of those opponents in the same season twice, doing so in 1991 and 1995. It beat both Florida State and Georgia last in 2009. The Gators consistently faced all three teams nearly every year until 2002. Now, they see Georgia and Florida State every season, with Auburn added every few years.

The 1986 team took down then-No. 5 Auburn first and edged out a one-point win, 18-17, after being down 17-0. Florida, then 4-4, came out on top against Georgia 31-19 to claim a winning record. The Gators fell next to Kentucky but came back to top Florida State 17-13 to end their season and surpass .500.

"To get those wins, to just have some pride that people still had to recognize us," White said.

The rivalry wins, more than any other, propelled the comeback, White added. The second-team All-American knew that, despite feeling the effects of the team's probation, the rivalry games were an opportunity, and they capitalized on it.

The magnitude and uniqueness of the Florida-Georgia rivalry are felt on both sides. Georgia's 1986 head coach, Vince Dooley, was not only at the helm at the time, but stayed around the program and watched the competition evolve.

"I think it's just gotten more intense," Dooley told DawgNation. "It has been unusual in that there's been chunks where teams dominated for periods of time, as opposed to back and forth."

Another player from UF's 1986 team, quarterback Kerwin Bell, is now the head coach at Western Carolina. He fondly remembers his time competing against the Bulldogs.

"It's just a great experience to be able to go through that game and play in it for four years," Bell said. "That was a very big highlight for me in my career."

Bell came to Florida as a walk-on, and by his second year, he became a starter and earned SEC Player of the Year in

1984. He had 7,585 career passing yards and 56 touchdowns and was inducted into the Florida-Georgia Hall of Fame.

After playing and coaching for teams with their own rivalries, Bell confirmed the energy of the Florida-Georgia matchup stands out, with half the crowd wearing red and black and half in orange and blue. Bell was a junior in 1986, but he recalled the nerves and excitement from the first time he played in Jacksonville as a redshirt freshman.

"Some of the veterans said 'Kerwin, this is different now, you're going to be nervous,'" he recalled. "I was like, 'No I'm a veteran, I've already started a few games, I'm ready to go.' When you get out there, even just the warm-ups, my legs were shaking."

The all-time record between Florida and Georgia currently stands at 56-44, with Georgia taking a slight edge. The Bulldogs have secured the last four games, with Florida last winning in 2020, 44-28.

Throughout its history, the rivalry games have served as both a crushing blow and a major confidence boost. This year's team has a similar opportunity to make it a positive and spark a comeback against its rivals.

"You just got to keep your head down," Bell said. "There's always going to be noise in the system, but you've got to believe in each other and understand that if we are going to do this thing, it's going to happen with the men in this room."

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A history of the baseball rivalry that never sleeps

THE GATORS AND BULLDOGS HAVE CLASHED ON THE DIAMOND FOR NEARLY A CENTURY

By Hunter DeLauder
Alligator Sports Writer

For nearly a century, the Gators and Bulldogs have been trading blows on the baseball diamond.

A rivalry that began in 1931, Georgia and Florida have been battling it out each year since 1949. It's a series largely controlled by the Gators, who lead the all-time series 195-119-2.

The past four years' games have been nailbiters, as each team took home two wins of the four matches.

Recent history

In 2023, Florida led the game before Georgia secured a game-tying grand slam in the ninth inning. The Bulldogs tacked on three more in the inning and held on for a 13-11 win. Florida rallied to win the next two games and clinch the series.

Last year, Florida had just dropped its sixth straight SEC series and headed to Athens, Georgia, for its final regular-season series. Already on the edge for the NCAA Tournament, the Gators had to win or risk their season coming to a close. Meanwhile, Georgia was fighting for a top eight national seed after a 9-4 Game 1 win.

With its season on the line and trailing 4-2 in the eighth inning of Game 2, Florida's Cade Kurland came up clutch again with a game-tying two-run home run to tie the game. From there, Florida maintained its momentum, winning the game and securing the 19-11 series-clinching win that helped propel the Gators' run to the College World Series.

"That was honestly one of my favorite series since I've been here," Kurland said. "It's just kind of a matter of bearing down and giving all you got because whatever happens, happens, and if it doesn't go your way, you're done."

Georgia returned the favor in March 2025 with a one-sided sweep over the Gators in Gainesville, outscoring Florida 40-13 and hitting 13 home runs in three games.

"I can't recall a weekend quite like this, to be honest with you, obviously disappointing," said UF head coach Kevin O'Sullivan after a mercy-rule 15-4 loss in Game 3. "I had a team meeting yesterday after the game, pressed on them a little bit, and obviously they did not respond today."

Exhibition game

The historic rivalry also brought a series



Dylan Speicher // Alligator Staff

The Florida Gators and the Georgia Bulldogs have a baseball rivalry stretching back for nearly a century.

of fall games played in Jacksonville the night before the Florida-Georgia football game. From 2019 to 2023 — minus the 2020 game canceled due to COVID-19 — the two teams faced off at VyStar Ballpark in Jacksonville for a 10-inning exhibition game.

The game gave both teams a chance to play against real opponents and assess where they stood.

"Both teams would try not so much win or lose, but use the game as an opportunity to play all the players, get as many pitchers in as possible," said Anthony Dasher, a writer for UGASports.com.

Florida controlled the series, winning three of the four exhibition games. Despite the lopsided overall record, the games were competitive, with the largest margin of victory being four runs (8-4 UF in 2022).

Kurland, now a senior for Florida, is one of the few remaining players from either team to have played in the exhibition more than once. The middle infielder said he's enjoyed playing against an SEC rival like Georgia. One of his fondest memories from his freshman year came in this game, he added.

"I think I went 2-for-4, which is kind of funny, because as a freshman, everything's moving so fast, so you're caught up in the game itself," Kurland said. "But the rivalry

speaks for itself. It's gone on for way longer than I've been here. It's going to continue for way longer or after I leave."

Although the schools agreed to play the exhibition until 2025, Georgia backed out of the deal after the 2023 game.

The biggest reason the game wasn't played in 2024 was that Georgia's home venue, Foley Field, was under renovation, forcing the Bulldogs to practice at various high schools around Athens. It was difficult for Georgia to prepare, and UGA head coach Wes Johnson did not want to play a game he did not feel comfortable in, according to Dasher.

When the fall series began in 2019, Georgia was led by a different coaching staff. So when Johnson took over in the summer of 2023, he felt the game was unnecessary, and it would be more convenient for his team to play and host local schools.

"It's a hassle to pack up the whole team and drive down to Jacksonville for a game, then to turn around and come back," Dasher said. "I know a couple of times they would stay over and watch the football game, I don't think Wes (Johnson) really wanted to do that. They really didn't get a ton out of it, anything more than what they would normally get in just a regular scrimmage here in Athens."

Once Georgia backed out, Florida instead played the 2024 game against the hometown Jacksonville University Dolphins. While it lacks Georgia's name recognition, JU is still a solid mid-major opponent that has held its own against the Gators in recent years.

"The bottom line is that I think Georgia just decided not to play in the game," O'Sullivan said on WRUF's SportsScene with Steve Russell in November 2024. "But we're excited about playing JU."

Florida played two six-inning exhibition games against the Dolphins last season, winning both 2-1 and 7-6. The Gators will take on JU again this year on Oct. 31 at 6:30 p.m.

Looking forward

While Florida is not scheduled to play Georgia for another six months, Florida junior outfielder Kyle Jones said his excitement for the game is off the charts. Jones, an Athens native and a lifelong Georgia Bulldog fan, grew up dreaming of playing for his hometown team.

But Georgia didn't recruit him out of high school, and Jones wound up at Stetson, where he was named ASUN Freshman of the Year. He hit the portal after the 2024 season, with Florida and Georgia competing for his commitment. The Gators ultimately prevailed, picking up one of the top outfielders in the portal.

Today, Jones said he's happy with his decision and would not change it for anything.

"My whole life, my grandparents from way back, we were all Georgia fans," Jones said. "People ask me that all the time, 'Why did you go to Florida?' I was like, 'Well, I'm supposed to be at Florida.'"

While he wears the orange and blue now, his blood still runs Bulldog red and black, especially during football season, when he has to keep a low profile around Gainesville. But in the spring, his allegiance with the Bulldogs washes away, and it's all business for Jones and the Gators.

Jones will make his return to where it all started April 10-12, when Florida will visit the Classic City, looking to avenge last season's sweep. Jones has had this series marked on his calendar since the schedule was released and expects his family and friends to be at the ballpark cheering him on.

"I'm super excited to go back," Jones said. "I knew they came to us last year, so I was like, 'Oh, that means next year we're gonna be in Georgia.' So I've been planning for a long time."

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Noah Lantor // Alligator Staff

Florida Gators quarterback DJ Lagway (2) throws the ball during a NCAA football game, Saturday, Sept. 20, 2025, at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens, Fla.



Bayden Armstrong // Alligator Staff

Florida Gators defensive specialist Bella Lee (21) dives for the ball in a match against the Auburn Tigers, Friday, Oct. 3, 2025, at the O'Connell Center in Gainesville, Fla.



Ryan Friedenbergg // Alligator Staff

Florida Gators outfielder Townsen Thomas (44) watches a pitch during a game against the UCF Knights, Sunday, Oct. 19, 2025.



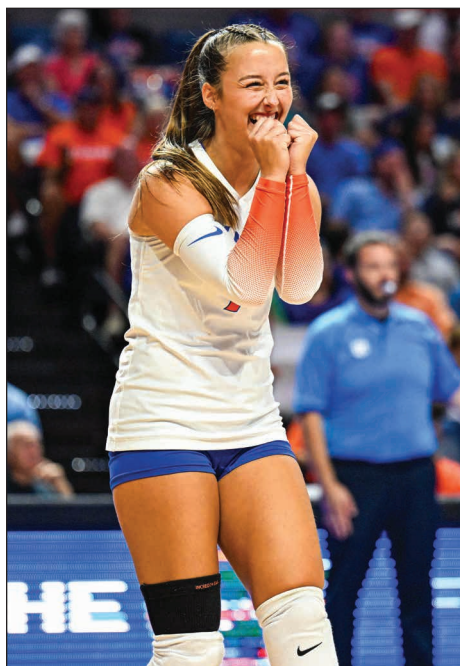
Bayden Armstrong // Alligator Staff

Florida Gators midfielder Charlotte McClure (8) fights two defenders for the ball in a match against the Kentucky Wildcats on Oct. 2, 2025, at Donald Dizney Stadium in Gainesville, Fla.



Noah Lantor // Alligator Staff

The Florida Gators celebrate a win in a football game, Saturday, Oct. 4, 2025, at Ben Hill Griffin Stadium in Gainesville, Fla.



Noah Lantor // Alligator Staff

Florida Gators defensive specialist Emily Canaan (7) celebrates a point during a volleyball match against the Norfolk State Spartans on Sunday, Aug. 31, 2025, at the O'Connell Center in Gainesville, Fla.

Florida and Georgia volleyball trade wins after years of Gators' dominance

THE PAIR SPLIT ITS LAST SIX MATCHES

By Ava DiCecca

Alligator Sports Writer

Until recent years, Florida and Georgia volleyball wasn't much of an exciting rivalry.

The Gators and the Bulldogs have met 79 times since their first match in 1985, playing one another every season as many as three times. Florida has taken all but 10 of the matches.

Georgia dominated at the start, winning the first four consecutive matches against the Gators and six of the first 10. However, the period of success for the Bulldogs was short-lived, as Florida went on to command the matchup for 28 years.

In 1991, former Florida head coach Mary Wise took over the program and captained the Gators to 66 wins over Georgia across over three decades. Wise also recorded some of her biggest accomplishments against UGA, charting her 400th SEC win in a sweep over the Bulldogs in 2016 and her 700th career win against them in 2010.

From Oct. 26, 1990, until 2019, Georgia only pulled off one win, edging out a five-

setter in 2008. To further the drought of competitiveness between the pair, Florida pulled off 12 consecutive sweeps over the Bulldogs from 2010 to 2017.

Starting in 2020, the Gators' dominance wavered, falling at home 3-1 for the first time since 2008. Florida redeemed itself the next day, returning the favor and besting the Bulldogs 3-1. In 2021, UF faced Georgia again only once and confirmed the 2020 loss as a misstep, sweeping its opponent on the road.

However, in 2022, the unranked Bulldogs stormed into Gainesville to secure a sweep of their own, upsetting then-No. 18 Florida. These marked the last of the 3-0 results, as the next meeting in 2023 went to five sets — one of only seven times in rivalry history Florida and Georgia have gone to set five.

"It is hard to come up with new adjectives to describe this team and how they play against one of the best teams in the league with one of the best players in the league," Wise said after her team pulled off the five-set win.

When the two met again in 2024, Georgia took its third win in six years 3-1 at home.

For those in the Georgia program, last year's win was special.

"I think it's just incredible," said senior

setter Clara Brower. "I'm really proud of our team coming together. Florida's a great team, and they had a great game. But I'm just really proud of our fight and our grit through that match."

With first-year head coach Ryan Theis now at the helm, Florida will look to reestablish its dominance over Georgia and avenge its 3-1 loss last season. Florida sits at 11-7 and 6-3 in conference with Georgia just ahead of them 13-5 and 5-3 in conference, both unranked.

The Gators are eyeing redemption after last season's loss.

"I'm honestly just excited to get a new chance to kind of rewrite my performance story," senior defensive specialist Emily Canaan said.

Unhappy with her performance against the Bulldogs last season, she hopes to lead the charge in avenging last year's result.

The Gators will be on the road against UGA for the second straight year since 2015 as part of a three-game road stretch. The Gators currently have a 3-5 away record and will look to improve it at the Stegeman Coliseum on Oct. 31 at 7 p.m.

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Jaden Rashada's career from Gator to Bulldog to benchwarmer

THE FORMER FLORIDA AND GEORGIA QUARTERBACK HAS BEEN COMMITTED TO FIVE DIFFERENT SCHOOLS

By Max Bernstein

Alligator Sports Writer

In the over four years since its establishment, Name, Image and Likeness has changed how college athletes are recruited, their time at schools and their post-sports lives.

However, NIL has also led to financial fiascos, mismanaged deals and, in extreme cases, lawsuits. One example who stands out above them all is Jaden Rashada.

As Florida and Georgia face off again in one of the ugliest rivalries in college football, their teams have one thing in common: Rashada transferred out of them.

A prestigious high school quarterback at IMG Academy in Bradenton, Florida, Rashada was a highly sought-after recruit in the 2023 cycle. He received offers from 32 different programs across the country. Former head coach Billy Napier and the Florida Gators pursued him aggressively.

At first, Rashada went in a different direction. He verbally committed to Miami on June 26, 2022. The quarterback had received a \$9.5 million NIL deal, ESPN reports said, a claim he disputed.

The Gators, who viewed Rashada as their quarterback of the future, ramped up the pressure. With the financial backing of booster Hugh Hathcock, they pieced together an offer Rashada ultimately couldn't refuse: \$13.85 million over four years, including \$5.35 million directly from Hathcock and the remainder paid through NIL collective Gator Guard.

On Nov. 10, 2022, Rashada decommitted from the Hurri-

canes and verbally committed to Florida, announcing his commitment on X. He signed his letter of intent about six weeks later.

Over the next month, however, reports emerged that parts of his contract with Florida had been breached. There were allegations that Napier promised Rashada's father a \$1 million "partial payment" that day upon signing. According to ESPN, Rashada and his lawyers said they never received that payment, or any of the other money promised to the quarterback.

After a month, Rashada decommitted from Florida on Jan. 20, 2023. He later committed to Arizona State for the 2023 season. He began the year as the Sun Devils' starter but was knocked out of the season early in ASU's loss to Oklahoma State on Sept. 9.

In spring 2024, ASU head coach Kenny Dillingham added Michigan State transfer Sam Leavitt through the transfer portal, and he quickly became the favorite for the starting job.

Looking for a better fit, Rashada entered the transfer portal on April 18, 2024, and committed to Georgia one week later.

On May 21 of the same year, Rashada and his lawyers filed a lawsuit against Napier, Hathcock and former UF staffer Marcus Castro-Walker, claiming that they "defrauded" him out of money he had on the table. He became the first college athlete to sue his coach or a booster due to a dispute over a NIL deal.

"I think it's important for everybody to understand that I can't comment due to the litigation," Napier said at 2024 SEC spring meetings. "But I do have confidence in our legal team. I am comfortable with my actions. And I'm thankful for the university's support. We're gonna keep it at that and kind of let the process take its course."

On April 8, U.S. Northern District of Florida judge M. Casey Rodgers ruled Rashada's case against the Florida football recruitment staff and donors could enter the first stage of trial.

"It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand how a purportedly fraudulent NIL deal initially valued north of \$13 million could induce a teenager to choose a university he otherwise would not have," Rodgers said.

Rashada's agent, Rusty Hardin, said he and his client "look forward to discovery fully exposing the defendants' conduct for all to see." Legal analyst Mitch Gilfillan reported on his X account the trial would take place July 20, 2026.

Since filing the lawsuit, Rashada has barely seen the field, and when he has, the results have been sub-standard.

He never saw the field at Georgia, leading him to transfer once again, this time to Division I Sacramento State on April 25.

"It was a lot to figure out, honestly," Rashada told CBS Sports in May. "This move had to be pretty critical and intentional. ... I was more picky this time around. I had more pure intentions of what I wanted to get out of it."

He started the opening game of the 2025 season for the Hornets but struggled immensely, quickly being benched. He has appeared as a relief quarterback since.

Miami, Florida, Arizona State and Georgia all have quarterbacks they believe in, all of whom were chosen over Rashada at some point in time.

Current Miami quarterback Carson Beck, along with current UGA starter Gunner Stockton, were both ahead of Rashada on the 2024 Georgia depth chart. Meanwhile, Leavitt led ASU to a playoff berth in 2024 and remains the team's quarterback this season. In Gainesville, 2024 five-star recruit DJ Lagway has emerged as Florida's quarterback of the future.

In his collegiate career, Rashada has thrown 124 passes to date, completing only 61 of them. He's thrown for 749 yards, five touchdowns and four interceptions.

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Next year, Jacksonville won't host the rivalry game. What does that mean for the city?

CONSTRUCTION AT THE EVERBANK STADIUM MOVES GAME TO ATLANTA AND TAMPA

By Curan Ahern

Alligator Sports Writer

Barking Bulldog fans, slow-roasted gators, painted faces, liquor-filled solo cups and orange-and-blue pinstriped overalls are all staples at Florida and Georgia's annual rivalry game, hosted in Jacksonville.

The universities of Florida and Georgia have faced off in Duval County every year since 1933 (except in 1943 due to World War II and 1994-1995 due to renovations) at EverBank Stadium. But now, more renovations to the venue will change to the rivalry game.

Construction to EverBank Stadium began in February 2025 after a deal for \$1.4 billion in renovations was approved in June 2024. The NFL stadium, home to the Jacksonville Jaguars, plans to add a transparent canopy roof, new seating and wider concourses.

The renovated stadium plans to seat 63,000, with an ability to expand to over 70,000 to accommodate large events like concerts, international sporting events and, of course, the annual Florida-Georgia football game.

Although construction is already underway, the Jaguars will continue to play at their home stadium through 2025 and 2026, with a reduced seating capacity of 43,500 next year.

While the Florida-Georgia game is set to take place in Jacksonville this year, the 2026 and 2027 matchups will be played outside of Jacksonville.

In 2026, the game will be held at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta. The year after, it'll take place at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa.

Sometimes called "The World's Largest Outdoor Cocktail Party," the Florida-Georgia game rarely disappoints, bringing thousands of fans from each university for one of college football's most iconic neutral-site rivalry games.

With looming renovations forcing the rivalry to vacate Jacksonville, some fans believe it'll be difficult to replicate the city's gameday atmosphere elsewhere.

Romell Williams, the football beat writer for UGA's student newspaper, the Red & Black, believes Florida's 2026 clash with Georgia in Atlanta will be much like a home game for the Bulldogs because of the proximity to Athens.

The neutral game in Jacksonville adds a unique experience for fans and players alike, he said, with the stark contrast of a split crowd. He added he hopes the Florida-Georgia game remains at a neutral site in the future.

"One side has Georgia, one side has Florida, and it's just a fierce rivalry even for the football players but also for the fans," Williams said. "That makes it very, very different from other rivalries, and it makes it more



Photo courtesy of the Associate Press

TIAA Bank Field, the home stadium of the NFL's Jacksonville Jaguars, also serves as host for the annual Florida-Georgia game.

impactful."

Williams added there will always be a fire in the Florida-Georgia game because of the storied history and playoff implications that come with the midseason matchup.

The annual game also brings in a load of revenue for the city -- roughly \$30 million in total economic impact each year.

Sharon Kates, general manager of the Hampton Inn in downtown Jacksonville, said the Florida-Georgia game is the biggest event of the year for the hotel. She added the location begins preparing two months in advance by doubling or tripling its inventory to accommodate the high volume of guests.

"The buildup starts that Monday, and then it continues and gradually gets higher and higher and higher and higher — the revenues do," Kates said. In response, the hotel doubles its active staff and ensures no one has a day off over the weekend, she said. No vacations, requests for days off or paid time off are allowed the week of the game.

Kates, who has lived in Jacksonville for 25 years, also said the amount of visitors who travel to Jacksonville for the Florida-Georgia game has grown in recent years. After COVID-19, fans came back even stronger, bolstered by the large number of Florida and Georgia fans housed in Jacksonville, she said.

Revenue from the one week is sometimes triple what the hotel makes in a month, Kates added.

"We, as hoteliers in Jacksonville, we look forward to that because it never really wavers," Kates said. "You can almost bet your bottom dollar that you're going to sell out."

Looking forward, the game's move to Atlanta and Tampa means Jacksonville will have to make up for a two-year loss in revenue.

Kates said the hospitality industry would

be greatly impacted by the loss of the game in any facet and it would be a "gut punch," to the city.

"Jacksonville will definitely not go down without a fight," she said. "We have a dog in this fight."

Kates also wished luck to other cities that may host the game in the future, harping on the need to be prepared for the surge of customers Jacksonville has faced each year.

"You need to be proactive, because Florida and Georgia fans are nothing to play with, especially their football," she said. "We have everything set, we know what to expect, we know, so it's kind of like a polished machine."

Michael Rinner, owner of Sound of Spirits Distillery in Jacksonville, shared a similar sentiment. He said the game has a huge impact on small businesses like his. The distillery increases its inventory in anticipation of the surge in customers.

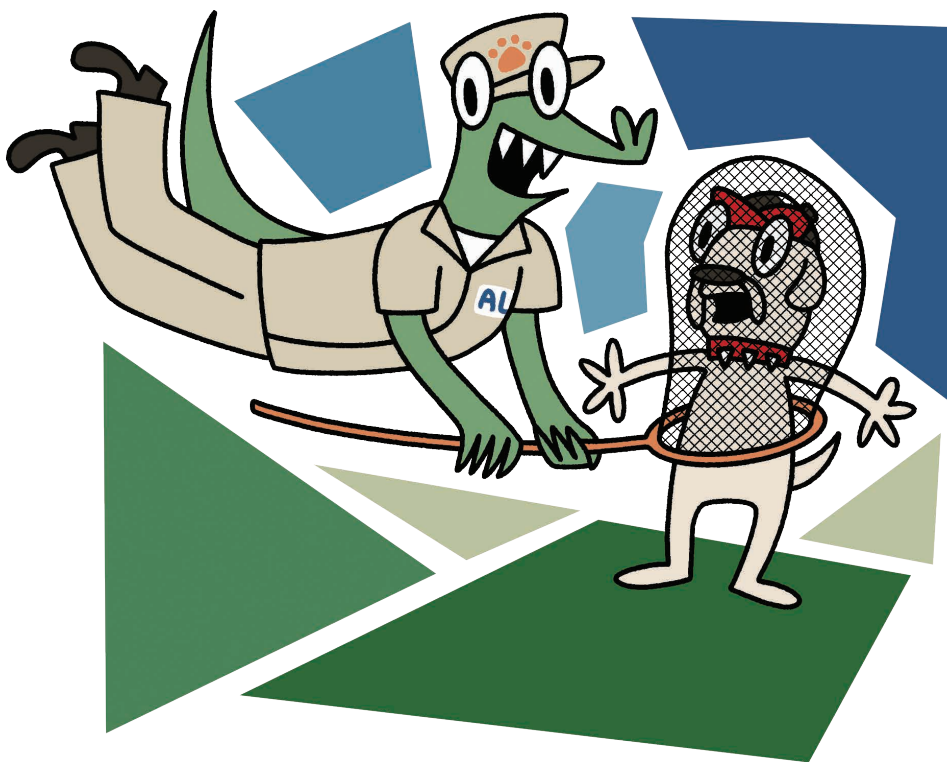
"There's a reason they call it the biggest cocktail party in Florida," Rinner said. "Everybody's coming down, tailgating, having a good time, and so they will stop at the distillery and try our products so we can spread the word a little bit."

The gameday carries a vibrant atmosphere, unique to the neutral site of Jacksonville, Rinner said. Nobody is angry, nobody is fighting and the whole week is "awesome," he said.

When asked how he'd respond to those calling for the game to be moved outside of Jacksonville, Rinner yelled, "Don't do it!"

"It's a big booster for every small business in this area, so when they leave for two years, it will hurt," he said. "As a small business, you depend on every dollar you make."

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Henry A. Moore // Alligator Staff

Notable Florida head coach records against the Georgia Bulldogs

**THE GATORS ARE 22-13
AGAINST THE BULLDOGS SINCE 1990,
WITH GEORGIA WINNING THE LAST FOUR**

By Adrian Carmona
Alligator Sports Writer

With the firing of head coach Billy Napier on Oct. 19, interim coach Billy Gonzales, former wide receiver coach, will have the chance to claim his first win next week against one of Florida's biggest rivals: the Georgia Bulldogs.

Since the reign of Bulldogs coach Vince Dooley from the '60s to the '80s, Florida head coaches have seen varying degrees of success in what is known as the "World's Largest Outdoor Cocktail Party."

Steve Spurrier

Florida's most dominant stretch of the rivalry came in the 1990s, when head coach Steve Spurrier held the reins.

In 12 years, Spurrier racked up an 11-1 record over the Bulldogs with an average margin of victory of 23.4. The most dominant win came in 1996, when Florida won 47-7 in Jacksonville, marking the Gators' biggest win in rivalry history. UF quarterback Danny Wuerffel threw four touchdown passes, and the Gators' defense forced three turnovers.

"It still kind of bothered him that in the 1960s, his team kind of fell short to Georgia as a player," Kevin Brockway, Florida beat reporter for the Gainesville Sun, said of Spurrier. "He always kind of liked to stick it to him in the '90s."

Spurrier's only loss came just a year later in 1997. No. 6 Florida, coming off four straight SEC titles, lost to No. 12 Georgia 37-17 despite being 20-point favorites.

Florida quarterbacks Doug Johnson, Noah Brindise and Jesse Palmer combined for four interceptions, with Kirby Smart, former Georgia safety and current Bulldogs head coach, snagging two of them.

Urban Meyer

Between Spurrier's and Urban Meyer's tenures, from 2002 to 2004, Florida was led by Ron Zook, who finished 2-1 against the Bulldogs during his three-year tenure.

Meyer maintained UF's dominance throughout his tenure from 2005-2010, going 5-1 against the Bulldogs.

"For Urban to get that first Georgia win in 2005, I think that



Alan Alvarez // Alligator Staff

Jim McElwain walks off the field after Florida's 42-7 loss to Georgia on Saturday, Oct. 28, 2017, at EverBank Field in Jacksonville.



Samantha Harrison // Alligator Staff

Former Florida head coach Dan Mullen during warmups at TIAA Bank Field in Jacksonville on Oct. 30, 2021.

kind of legitimized him within the fan base," Brockway said. "It was a very important win."

Meyer's only loss came in 2007, and it marked one of the most iconic moments in the history of the rivalry — the "Gator Stomp."

After UGA running back Knowshon Moreno scored the game's first touchdown in the first quarter, the entire Georgia roster ran to the endzone to celebrate, resulting in two unsportsmanlike conduct penalties.

Georgia head coach Mark Richt acknowledged he encouraged his players to excessively celebrate after the score, but did not anticipate the whole team celebrating.

The celebration fired up the Bulldogs, sacking UF quarterback Tim Tebow six times en route to a 42-30 victory. It was the first game since 1994 in which both teams scored over 30 points. The last time it had happened was 2010, when Florida defeated Georgia 34-31 in overtime.

A year later, both Meyer and Richt ensured the 2007 Gator Stomp wouldn't happen again.

It was one of the most significant matchups in rivalry history, as both teams were ranked in the AP Top 10, with the winner having the edge in the SEC East Division race.

Meyer and the Gators responded, as they forced four turnovers in the second half to defeat the Bulldogs 49-10, marking Georgia's second-worst loss in rivalry history.

"[Urban] used to refer to them as 'the school up North,'" Brockway said. "[He] definitely was a guy who took it very seriously."

Despite Meyer stating the past year's celebration had no impact on the game, his actions in the final minutes told a different story. He used both of his remaining timeouts with under a minute left to give his team and Gators fans more time to celebrate the victory before the final whistle.

Will Muschamp

However, the tide turned on the rivalry as the Bulldogs won the next three matchups against the Gators under Will Muschamp, who took over after Meyer.

One of the most heartbreaking Gators losses in Muschamp's 2011-14 tenure came in 2012. Florida walked into the game ranked No. 3 with a 7-0 record, while Georgia came in 6-1 ranked No. 12, marking another pivotal game for their conference and national championship aspirations.

With just over two minutes remaining, down 17-9, UF quarterback Jeff Driskel found tight end Jordan Reed, who headed to the end zone for a touchdown. But UGA linebacker

Jarvis Jones punched the ball out, and Georgia recovered the ball for a touchback — giving them the victory.

Georgia's win gave them the tiebreaker over Florida in the SEC East, sending them to the conference championship game.

Modern era: McElwain, Mullen and Napier

Since the Bulldogs hired head coach Smart in December 2015, Georgia has dominated the rivalry. Heading into 2025's matchup, Smart has a 7-2 record against the Orange and Blue.

While Jim McElwain (2015-2017) and Dan Mullen (2018-2021) picked up one win each against Georgia, Napier failed to do the same.

McElwain outscored the Bulldogs in his first two matchups but lost 42-7 in his final year. Meanwhile, Mullen's one win came in 2020, when the Gators emerged victorious 44-28 behind quarterback Kyle Trask's four touchdown passes.

The Smart versus Napier era of the rivalry had history behind it, as both coaches were part of Nick Saban's coaching staff at Alabama during the 2015 season. Smart was Saban's defensive coordinator, while Napier was the wide receivers coach.

Smart showed no mercy against his former colleague. Napier went 0-3 against the Bulldogs, with each loss being decided by double-digits.

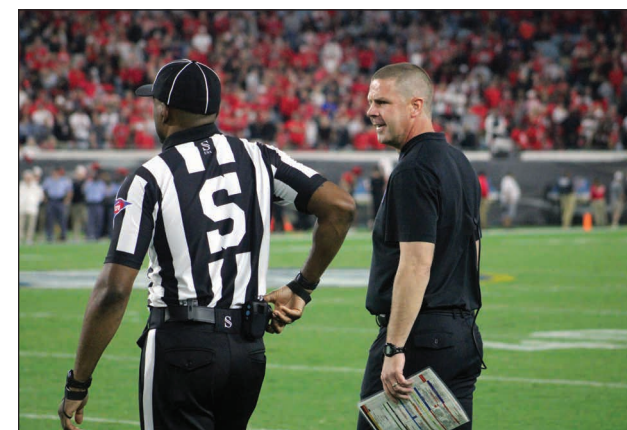
The closest Napier came to topping Smart was in 2024. Leading 10-3 with five minutes left in the half, the Gators looked to have all the momentum heading into halftime.

Then, freshman quarterback DJ Lagway went down and was carted off with a hamstring injury. The Florida offense took a major hit, and the Gators were outscored 28-7 in the second half. The Bulldogs held on for a 34-20 victory despite Florida's defense picking off UGA quarterback Carson Beck three times.

The Gators now head into the bye week before their yearly rivalry matchup against the Bulldogs. With Gonzales as interim, Florida has a chance to kick off a new era with a win against arguably its biggest rival.

"Maybe we can surprise them," Brockway said of Georgia. "There's hope that a change might be for the good for Florida."

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Ashleigh Lucas // Alligator Staff

Florida head coach Billy Napier argues with an official during the Gators' loss to Georgia, Saturday, Oct. 29, 2022.

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