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September 2024 Edition



COLLEGE FOOTBALL PREVIEW

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GET TO KNOW THE WRITERS



KENNETH HARRISON, JR.

Kenneth Harison Jr is a long time Atlanta native and graduated from Kennesaw State University with a Bachelor's Degree in Communications. Kenneth has a pulse on not only the Atlanta sports scene but the entire southern sports scene as well.



COLIN LACY

Colin Lacy currently resides in Statesboro, GA and is the voice of the Southeast Bulloch Yellow Jackets. Colin also works with Westwood One Sports and Bowl Season radio for National College Football and NFL broadcasts across the country. Colin also calls Georgia Tech baseball for the Georgia Tech Sports Network and also works with the ACC Network.



CHARLIE MOON

Charlie Moon currently resides in the Statesboro, GA area and has been the voice for seven highschool football and baseball state championships in South Carolina and Georgia. Charlie has worked with Fox Sports South, SCETV, NFHS and Charlton Sports Network. Charlie is currently the voice of the Richmond Hill Wildcats.



ROBERT CRAFT

Robert Craft attended Valdosta State University and graduated from the University of Central Florida. Robert is an expert on the Florida sports scene. From the Florida Gators to the Orlando Magic, Robert has you covered.



MICHAEL SPIERS

Michael Spiers graduated from Nicholls State University in Louisiana. He is currently the voice of the Camden County Wildcats and has been the Public Address Announcer for the Camden County Wildcats Baseball team for over a decade.



JASON BISHOP

Jason Bishop graduated from Kennesaw State University and formerly worked at CNN Sports and CSS Sports. Jason hosts "The Jason Bishop Show", south Georgia's most listened to sports talk show.

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS: TEDDY BISHOP, JEFF DOKE, JOE DELANEY

The Southern Sports Edition was created to offer sports opinions from a southern perspective. The Southern Sports Edition offers some of the top sports minds and opinions from around the South. From coverage on High School Football to a beat on the Atlanta Braves, the Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets, SEC, ACC and all southern sports with actual southern opinions. The Southern Sports Edition is currently distributed all across Southeast Georgia and growing everyday.

SSE STAFF

Publisher

The Bishop Media Sports Network

Editor

Jason Bishop

Graphic Design

George Alread

Columnists

Kenneth Harrison, Jr

Colin Lacy

Robert Craft

Charlie Moon

Michael Spiers

Jason Bishop

Photographers

Mike Brinson



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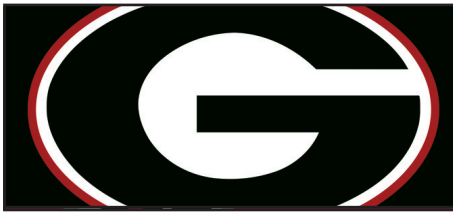
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GEORGIA BULLDOGS

2024 PREVIEW

The Favorites By Joe Delaney



Well, soon we will be back watching our favorite college football teams on the gridiron.

Most everyone is picking the Georgia Bulldogs as the nation's number one team entering the fall. There are a lot of reasons to lean that way. I'll get into them down below.

So, the Dawgs are preseason numero uno. After 2 national championships back-to-back, the Dawgs fumbled against Alabama last year in a 3-point loss.

The result was they were #5 in a 4-team playoff if you get what I mean. Were they one of the top 4 teams at the end of last year? Oh yeah.

But Nick Saban stuck it to Georgia in the SEC Championship one last time so they got what they deserved.

What they deserved was a bowl game with a Florida State University team that pretty much said "we don't wanna play". Well Georgia was pissed and came to play and the result was a 63-3 shellacking. That loss to Alabama cost Georgia a chance to 3-peat. It also showed why Kirby Smart and the Dawgs are so highly thought of going into this year.

They could have had numerous players opt out of the game including Carson Beck, Tate Ratledge, Javon Bullard, Tykee Smith, Kamari Lassiter and on and on. Instead, the Dawgs opted IN.

My point is that these Dawgs are a different breed under Kirby Smart. They try to win every game no matter what. Several of the 2024 Dawgs could have moved on last year but to a man they pretty much felt and said they had unfinished business. That's why they are #1 going into the season.

Offensively this could be the best team of the Kirby Smart era. Back are starters Carson Beck, Dominic Lovett, Dillon Bell, Earnest Green, Dylan Fairchild, Tate Ratledge, Xavier Truss and Oscar Delp.

Now add in Trevor Etienne, Ben Yurosek and Colbie Young via the portal. This offense is loaded and there is depth all around. The Georgia second string offense is as good as half of the SEC's STARTING offenses. Look for the Dawgs to light up the scoreboard.

Defensively it's the same story. They are loaded. This group will need to play well in order for Georgia to win another Natty. Back are Nazir Stackhouse, Mykel Williams, Chaz Chambliss, C. J. Allen, Smael Mondon, Daylen Everette, Dan Jackson, and Malaki Starks. Add in Warren Brinson, Gabe Harris, Raylen Wilson, Jalon Walker and others and the Red and Black are talented, deep and angry.

And let's not forget the 2023 recruiting class. Another top class that is absolutely loaded on the defensive side of the ball. Many of these pups are making their marks on the practice field as I type this.

Remember the names K.J. Bolden, Nate Frazier, Ellis Robinson IV, and Justin Williams. They will all play vital minutes this fall. And some

of this class may be starting by the end of the year. Like I said, these Dawgs are loaded.

Back to do the punting is the seldom used and always appreciated Brett Thorson. He has been consistent and consistent as a two-year starter. Handling the kicking will be Peyton Woodring, who grew into the role last year as a freshman and is very solid.

The return game will be handled by Dillon Bell and Anthony Evans III. Watch out for Michael Jackson III also. He is a portal addition from Southern Cal.

Finally, the schedule..... Ah yes.....The truth be told this team could lose 2 games and still win the National Championship. Alabama, Texas, Ole Miss ON THE ROAD. Add in the opener with Clemson in Atlanta, and games with Kentucky (Away) Auburn, Tennessee, Florida (Jax) and Tech. It is Brutal.

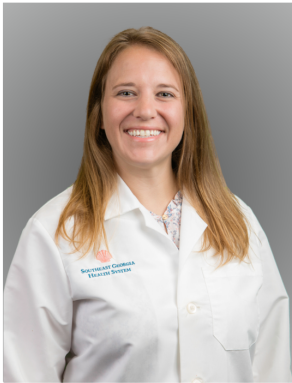
In closing, I don't expect Georgia to go undefeated. I do expect them to win the 2024-25 National Championship. They are physical, fast, deep and well coached.

And above all these Dawgs are HUNGRY. I see them taking out either Ohio State or Texas in the big one. We'll see.





It's Not Just a Bump on the Head: Proper Concussion Care



Lindsay Sweat, MD

Dr. Sweat provides primary care to children and adults, including wellness physicals; non-operative orthopaedic and sports medicine services, osteoarthritis management; treatment for hypertension, diabetes, asthma and depression; and women's health exams and screenings.

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Sweat, call 912-576-6355.



Once upon a time, on a football field not far away, a young athlete took a blow to the head and went back into the game. That was before we knew better, says Lindsay Sweat, MD. A board-certified family and sports medicine physician, Dr. Sweat provides concussion management care at Summit Sports Medicine & Orthopaedic Surgery in St. Marys. "According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), each year, about 200,000 people in the U.S. experience a concussion while playing sports. Though not uncommon, especially in high impact sports, concussions are a mild traumatic brain injury (MTBI). Athletes who return to play too soon after a concussion or those who have repeat head injuries can experience long-term problems," says Dr. Sweat.

That's just one reason why it is critical to recognize and treat concussions. "In young people, the brain is still developing. In fact, under normal circumstances, the brain is not fully developed until around the age of 30," Dr. Sweat explains.

She wants parents, coaches and players to recognize the signs of a concussion:

- Headache
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering
- Dizziness or inability to balance
- Changes in mood or sleeping habits
- Loss of consciousness is uncommon, but can happen

If a concussion is suspected, Dr. Sweat recommends coming to Southeast Georgia Health System for an ImPACT neurocognitive test. "This computerized concussion management tool allows me to assess mental functions affected by an MTBI. We cannot detect these injuries with a blood test. Even CT scans and MRIs don't show bruising from brain damage."

With prompt diagnosis, proper concussion management and patience, most people recover fully. Dr. Sweat says, "I cannot emphasize enough that physical and mental rest is the only way to heal from a concussion. No patient wants to hear this, but I prescribe limiting exposure to all digital devices, social media and video games until the symptoms go away. This includes television and reading. A concussed brain requires calm; too much stimulation slows healing."

Dr. Sweat's concussion protocol allows patients to gradually return to regular activities over the course of a week or more. "When a person is symptom-free, I allow them to slowly add in physical and mental activity. We stop if symptoms return, and start again as they improve," Dr. Sweat explains. When an athlete can engage in regular activities again, they are cleared to return to sports.

To help prevent brain injuries, Dr. Sweat says athletes should wear protective gear and learn proper athletic techniques. "Concussions are serious enough that Georgia adopted the Return to Play Act. If a concussion is suspected, the act mandates that the athlete refrain from play until cleared by a medical provider."

With prompt evaluation and management, and sufficient time, even a concussion diagnosis can have a happy ending.

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GEORGIA TECH

2024 PREVIEW

Fixed Ramblin' Wreck? By Kenneth Harrison



Georgia Tech's season begins August 24th against #10 Florida State in Dublin, Ireland.

They come into this season with some expectations because they went 7-6 last year and 5 – 3 in the ACC. Tech beat UCF in the Gasparilla Bowl in Tampa, 30-17.

Brent Key is entering his second full season as head coach in Atlanta. They have less than 10 practices remaining until the season opener. They had a scrimmage to wrap up their second week of preseason camp.

Key pointed out how well wide receivers Christian Leary and Leo Blackburn, tight ends Brett Seither, Jackson Hawes and Luke Harpring and quarterbacks Haynes King and Zach Pyron played. Every Yellow Jacket was able to play in the scrimmage.

“Went into this talking, ‘This isn’t a dress rehearsal. This is game day. Prepare yourself going into it as if it’s game day.’ Then we’ll hit a hard reset (Sunday) and go back into camp preparation, building our football team mode,” Key said.

“I think now is the point in camp where the guys know what to do. It comes down to the details, the techniques, the alignments, getting into the proper stances and alignments before the snap, being able to play whether it was a huddle play or a tempo play or whatever it may be.”

The transfer portal is something that all programs have to deal with. They had 32 players enter the portal ahead of the 2024 season. They have also added some transfer talent.

Some of these new additions are tight end Josh Beetham (Michigan), safety Jayden Davis (Cincinnati), defensive lineman Thomas Gore (Miami), defensive end Romello Height (USC), cornerback Zachary Tobe (Illinois), linebacker E.J. Lightsey (Georgia), corner back Warren Burrell (Tennessee), defensive lineman Ayobami Tifase (Florida State) and defensive lineman Jordan van den Berg (Penn State).

The Yellow Jackets ranked 120th in total defense last season out of 130 FBS teams. They should be better since they have added more talent. It’s also very hard to get worse than that.

Quarterback Haynes King transferred in from Texas A&M. He passed for 2,842 yards, 27 touchdowns and he rushed for 737 yards and 10 TD’s. He did lead the ACC with interceptions so he will need to improve his decision making and cut down on his turnovers. He is one of the best quarterbacks in the conference.

Tech has a total of 17 starters returning, which is tied for 7th with Cal. They have eight on offense and seven on defense.

That includes most of their offensive line, leading rusher Jamal Haynes and top-two receivers Malik Rutherford and Eric Singleton Jr.

Haynes rushed for 931 yards, 7 scores and averaged 6 yards per carry. He had 1,129 all-purpose yards. He should be one of the best backs in the nation this season.

I believe the Yellow Jackets are looking to win six games again to become bowl eligible. They have games against five teams that are ranked in the preseason top 25 Coaches Poll. They will need to win against at least one of those teams to make that happen.

- Here is the rest of their schedule:
- 8/31 vs Georgia State
 - 9/7 @ Syracuse
 - 9/14 vs VMI
 - 9/21 @ Louisville
 - 10/5 vs Duke
 - 10/12 @ North Carolina
 - 10/19 vs #7 Notre Dame at Mercedes-Benz Stadium
 - 10/26 at Virginia Tech
 - 11/9 vs #19 Miami
 - 11/21 vs #22 NC State
 - 11/29 at #1 Georgia



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FLORIDA GATORS

2024 PREVIEW

The Florida Heat By Robert Craft



The Florida Gators enter the 2024 season expected to finish 12th out of 16 teams in the SEC, according to their preseason poll.

The expectations for Florida football entering 2024 are not at all high. Billy Napier is heading into his third season as the head coach and Billy is on the hot seat. He has posted a very disappointing 11-14 record across his first two seasons, and Florida will have one of the most brutal schedules and college football in 2024.

Game 1, 8/31. Miami Hurricanes: If you want to talk about the single most important game on the Florida Gator schedule it's absolutely this game.

The Florida Gators must absolutely win this game to create momentum for 2024. The Miami Hurricanes are a talented team under second year coach Mario Cristobal. The advantage for Florida is The Swamp. Florida Gators 30 Miami Hurricanes 27.

Game 2, 9/7. Samford Bulldogs: This is the one and only cupcake game on the Florida schedule in 2024. Florida 49 Sanford 10.

Game 3, 9/14 Texas A&M: With new coach Mike Elko and a new quarterback on the Aggies roster, expect turn over in this program. Expect even more turnover than Florida's off-season.

While Texas A&M promises to have plenty of talent. Some of that talent they imported from Gainesville. Can all that talent cohesively come together in time for this game?

Home-field advantage and a returning quarterback will hopefully lead Florida to their third victory of the year. Florida 27 A&M 17.

Game 4, 9/21 @ Mississippi State: This game is tricky. It is on the

road, against new head coach Jeff Libby; and Jeff has a lot of work to do.

To start, a new quarterback is needed after Will Rogers went to the transfer portal. The Bulldogs defense also requires roster retooling.

Coach Napier has a horrible road record. At the end of the day, he must prove that he can win on the road this season and this is a convincing opportunity. Florida 28 Mississippi State 17.

Game 5, 10/5 UCF: This is definitely another game that Billy Napier must win to survive. I know Napier has a problem as an endgame coach, but you have to bet on the Home team. UCF will come into this game with a huge chip on their shoulders. It will be way too close. Florida 38 UCF 35.

Game 6, 10/12 @ Tennessee: Josh Heupel knows how to dump points on teams in bunches.

His easy to run, hard to defend offensive system is a concerning combination.

Also, Nico Iamaleava is an upgrade from Joe Milton. The Gator's defense better be ready. Florida has owned the Vols over the past 20 years, Tennessee won't go easy on them.

Tennessee 49 Florida 27.

Game 7, 10/19 Kentucky: I can't believe I'm saying this, but this is the year Florida finally beats Kentucky!

Oh, if only my 2010 self could hear me talk now. Kentucky is going to play big boy football in the trenches, and Billy Napier must address the need of the O- and D-Line to control the line of scrimmage.

Once again, I give Florida a slight nod because they're playing in the Swamp. Florida 23 Kentucky 20.

Game 8, 11/2 Georgia: November will be the most hellacious month of Florida football in recent memory.

I do not believe Florida has closed the talent gap on Georgia, and this year Georgia will be playing for a top seed in the college football playoffs. Georgia 38 Florida 17.

Game 9, 11/9 @ Texas: The brutal five week stretch to close season continues in Austin, where the Gators will lock horns with Texas for the first time since 1940.

Sounds fun, right? Texas is definitely a more talented team and will also be playing for a playoff spot in 2024. Texas 44 Florida 27.

Game 10, 11/16 LSU: LSU has beaten Florida five in a row.

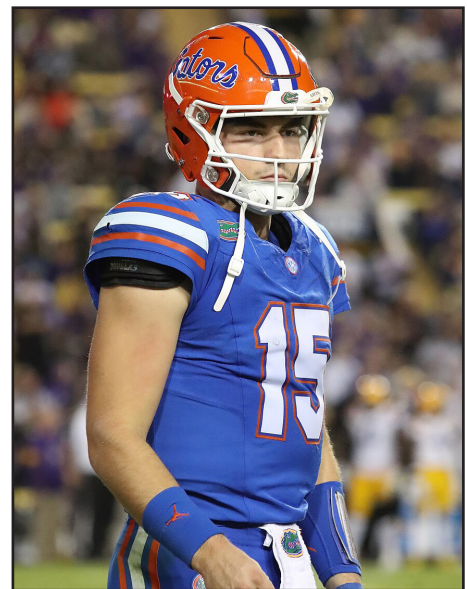
This game will be close because it's played in the Swamp, But LSU will pull it out late on a coaching mistake by Billy Napier. LSU 31 Florida 27.

Game 11, 11/23 Ole Miss: Lane Kippen will return to the swamp. This time as head coach of Ole Miss. The fact that Ole Miss gets one more year out of Jackson Dart could go a long way towards deciding this game. Ole Miss 27 Florida 24.

Game 12, 11/30 @FSU: Mike Norville has proven adept at working the transfer portal, so reloading for another great season isn't out of the realm of possibilities.

It's a rivalry game, which means that even if there are no other emotional components to this game (like the future of Billy Napier), the Florida Gators will have a puncher's chance.

With that being said, Billy is a putrid 2-10 on the road. FSU 31 Florida 17.



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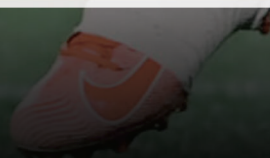
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CLEMSON TIGERS

2024 PREVIEW

Life In Death Valley By Colin Lacy





People have seen the Clemson Tigers coming back down to earth after their historic run with Head Coach Dabo Swinney the last few years. The Tigers have had at least three losses in each of the last three years.

Swinney has been extremely vocal about his opposition to the current state of college football with the transfer portal and NIL running rampant, but at the end of the day, Clemson keeps winning!

Last season, the Tigers began the 2023 season 4-4 with losses to Duke, Florida State, Miami, and NC State. It was at that point that Dabo Swinney said that if Clemson was a stock, you should buy big. Boy was he right.

The Tigers rattled off five straight victories including a victory over Kentucky in the Gator Bowl to finish 9-4. While that mark still is sub-par in Clemson, the impressive finish to 2023 cannot be overlooked.

Swinney, again, has been against the evolution of the transfer portal and had dug his heels in the sand with the lack of transfers that Clemson has brought in the last half-decade.

That being said, this year Clemson may not need a ton of new talent into South Carolina with the Tigers returning 14 starters from last year's squad.

One of the most impactful returners for the Tigers is quarterback Cade Klubnik. Klubnik took the full reigns of the offense last year after three impressive games as a true freshman in 2022.

Last year, Klubnik threw for over 2,800 yards, but did make some critical mistakes in the first half of the

season leading to the 4-4 start. That being said, Klubnik grew up in front of Tiger fans' eyes taking control and led the team to the aforementioned five game season-ending winning streak.

The offense seems to be in a good place with Offensive Coordinator Garrett Riley and Klubnik both in year two as the "full-go" along with an upgraded receivers room and a heavily experienced offensive line.

The Tigers defense took a hit in the offseason with five NFL Draft picks and losing all four starting D-Linemen. Swinney and 3rd year Defensive Coordinator Wes Goodwin dove deep into the recruiting trail to bring in pass rushers and return two Freshman All-Americans in TJ Parker and Peter Woods.

While last year's 9-4 mark snapped the streak of 12 consecutive seasons of 10+ wins, folks around the Tiger program believe this could just be a bump in the road and the Tigers continue to help lead the ACC.

The Tigers have won the ACC in seven of the last nine seasons, and look to continue that trend in 2024, but it will be a tough road to do so.

Clemson will have to come out of the gate swinging with the 2024 season opener coming in Atlanta for the Chic-Fil-A Kickoff against the Georgia Bulldogs. In addition to the Bulldogs in a "neutral" site game, the Tigers track to an ACC Title is a tough one.

Clemson draws NC State, Florida State, Virginia Tech on their league schedule with the matchup against the Seminoles and Hokies coming on the road.

While the schedule isn't necessarily in favor of Clemson, I think this is a year that is manageable for the Tigers to get back into prominence in the ACC, and into the expanded College Football Playoff.

And who knows, even if the Tigers don't take home the ACC crown, maybe a first-round playoff game finds its way to Death Valley and Memorial Stadium.

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FLORIDA STATE

2024 PREVIEW

War Path By Robert Craft



Mike Norvell had a busy offseason with the transfer portal. Now that Jordan Travis is in the NFL, Norvell signed DJ Uiagalelei to run the Seminoles' offense.

Behind Uiagalelei at the helm will be former Alabama running back Roydell Williams, another portal acquisition for the Seminoles.

There has been a lot of action in Tallahassee in 2024 and the season hasn't started yet. Here's my game-by-game prediction of Florida State's 2024 season .

Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets (Aug. 24): Florida State will make the trip to Dublin, Ireland for Week 0, the Seminoles will want to make a statement. I think that Florida State will win this one easily. FSU 38 GT 10.

Boston College Eagles (Sep. 2): Florida State's home opener will be on a Monday night against Boston College. This will be the Eagles' first game of the season. Under the new direction of Bill O'Brien, Boston College will likely still be ironing out

the details, allowing the Seminoles to cruise into a W. FSU 49 BC 17.

Memphis Tigers (Sep. 14): I think Memphis will have a successful season in the AAC. However, I do not think that the Tigers will be a match for Norvell's veteran Seminoles. Should be another home win and a 3-game streak. FSU 42 Memphis 21.

California Golden Bears (Sep. 21): This will be Cal's first season in the ACC. Having to travel cross-country and take on a red-hot Seminoles team might not bode well for the Golden Bears. FSU 27 Cal 10

@ SMU Mustangs (Sep. 28): SMU will be another team that Florida State will introduce to the ACC. The Mustangs are known for their high-powered offense. I think that this one will be a shootout. FSU 45 SMU 41.

Clemson Tigers (Oct. 5): Clemson will be Florida State's first true test of the season. The Tiger's are looking to reclaim their dominance in the ACC. Home field advantage will propel the Noles. FSU 30 Clemson 24.

@ Duke Blue Devils (Oct. 18): Duke has spent the last few seasons establishing itself as more than just a basketball school. With that being said, I do not believe Duke will be a match for this year's Seminoles in Football. FSU 35 Duke 20.

@ Miami Hurricanes (Oct.

26): This will be a road game for FSU, but playing in an NFL stadium that the Hurricanes fail to fill up is not daunting. Florida State should take this one and make it four in a row against an in-state rival. FSU 30 Miami 17.

North Carolina Tar Heels (Nov. 2): Playing this one at Doak Campbell will be a large advantage for the Seminoles, who I think will take this one by a decent margin due to the difference in talent and firepower in the Seminole's offense. FSU 35 UNC 13.

@ Notre Dame Fighting Irish (Nov. 9): The Fighting Irish are a talented team, and I think playing in South Bend will make this one even harder. I fear that Florida State will keep this one close, but fall at the end. ND 31 FSU 21.

Charleston Southern Buccaneers (Nov. 23): FSU 49 CSU 6.

Florida Gators (Nov. 30): I expect FSU to show out against The Gators. Previous matchups mean nothing in a rivalry game, but I think that the Seminoles make it three in a row in this one. FSU 31 UF 17.

With a healthy roster and no major emergencies for the program, The Seminole should have consistent success and earn themselves a trip to the College Football Playoff.





GEORGIA SOUTHERN

2024 PREVIEW

Eagles To Soar In 24? By Colin Lacy



Year two for Clay Helton at the helm in Statesboro started out with a bang in 2023.

The Eagles jumped out to a 4-1 start and improved to 6-2 after a Thursday night matchup with in-state rivals Georgia State in which Southern obliterated State 44-27 on ESPN2.

Then...it wasn't so good. The blue and white finished the 2023 campaign losing their last five games including 41-21 to Ohio in the Myrtle Beach Bowl.

Although Eagle Nation is hoping for a different ending to 2024, to me "more of the same" is what could be a huge key to the GS success. Coach Helton has brought it up a couple of times leading into the 2024 season the consistency in the leadership for Georgia Southern Football.

That extends not only on the field with names like Jalen White and Marques Watson-Trent, but also to the coaching staff. Not only do the Eagles have Clay Helton continuing to build in year number three, but defensive coordinator Brandon Bailey returns for year two; as well as special teams coordinator Turner West back for year three manning the specialists.

The only coordinator change is the departure of former offensive coordinator Bryan Ellis, who is now on staff at Alabama under first year Head Coach Kalen DeBoer in Tuscaloosa.

While a new offensive coordinator slides into the office, Coach Helton promoted from within and elevated Ryan Aplin to the role of OC. With the stability, virtually all the schemes and language will be the same within the Ted Smith Family Football Operations Building and keep some consistency that frankly hasn't been there for one reason or another in about a decade.

While the scheme is the same, some new names will be flocking at Allen

E. Paulson Stadium and the most notable will be who takes over as the signal caller for the 2024 season.

At Sun Belt Conference Media Day in mid-July, Coach Helton confirmed that the quarterback spot is at least a three-way competition.

The first candidate is a newcomer to the program in Indiana transfer Dexter Williams II. Williams spent four years in Bloomington, but only saw action in four games which all came in 2022 earning two starts for the Hoosiers.

The Macon native from Mount de Sales Academy only tallied 225 passing yards, two touchdowns, and four interceptions in the 2022 season with Indiana.

The other two would-be signal callers were already on the roster for GSU. David Dallas has been on the Eagles roster since January 2022 out of Trinity Christian, but the Sharpsburg native has yet to take a snap.

The final option for the blue and white got a baptism by fire last season as JC French was thrown into 10 games last season with injuries and lack of production at times from Davis Brinn.

French only took 48 snaps on the year but accounted for 122 yards through the air and a touchdown after redshirting at Memphis in 2022.

Outside of the quarterback for Georgia Southern, there is plenty of production returning for the Eagles as Jalen White looks to build off of last year that was injury riddled but still put up almost 900 rushing yards and nine touchdowns

on the ground.

The Eagles return all three backs that accounted for more than 100 yards rushing (White-889, OJ Arnold-411, and David Mbadanga-112) from a running back room that was disguised as a MASH unit last year.

Receiving wise, the Eagles lose their leading receiver from a year ago, but the core of Derwin Burgess Jr (74 rec., 813yds, 6 TDs), and Dalen Cobb (40 rec., 601yds, 2 TDs) return for another year in the blue and white.

Along with that dynamic duo, some familiar names look to take a big leap forward with Josh Dallas (Brother to QB option David Dallas), Josh Thompson, and Freshman Carmelo Mays could make a splash in his first season in the Boro.

On defense, the Eagles look to take a huge step forward behind one of the best defenders in the league with Marques Watson-Trent who has taken an incredible leadership role within the entire team but is a dramatic difference maker on the field as well.

This was another unit last year that was a revolving door because of injuries down the stretch, but the experience for young guys that were thrust into the fire out of necessity (probably before they were fully ready), will pay off huge dividends in 2024.

To me, 2023 showed what Georgia Southern could be when at it's best (when it was 6-2). 2024 will show that next step and I think year three under Helton could be big things for Eagle Nation and plenty of times, in the words of Danny Reed, it will be "well with my soul at Paulson Stadium."



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ALABAMA CRIMSON TIDE

2024 PREVIEW

Tide Continue To Roll? By Joe Delaney



Well, it had to eventually happen. Nobody coaches forever. Not even Nick Saban.

Yes, the GOAT of college football has cashed in his big pile of chips and moved on to the announcers booth and the beach in Florida. He leaves behind a legacy like no other.

In steps Kalen DeBoer with the biggest shoes to fill in college football history. DeBoer is a great young coach with a winning pedigree, and a hell of a lot of guts and grapefruit. That's what it is going to take to follow Nick.

DeBoer took Washington to the final four last year and brings in a nine-year head coaching record of 104-12. He is really the best coach Alabama could have gone out and got.

The only problem is that the Bama faithful look at that and think of Bear Bryant, Nick Saban and the old Shania Twain song....."that don't impress me much!" Everyone in Tuscaloosa will give DeBoer the benefit of the doubt. Until he loses a game.

The good thing for DeBoer and the Crimson Tide is that through all the upheaval and portal transfers in and out, the Tide has one of the best rosters in the country. Couple that with what many say was the best recruiting class in the nation in 23-24. And don't forget that DeBoer's 2024 recruiting class is currently ranked in the top 3. The pieces are falling into place. Don't underestimate this guy.

One of the best things for Alabama is the return of Jalen Milroe. The Tide QB came into his own later in the '23 season and is very very good. Don't agree? Ask the Georgia Bulldogs.

Kalen DeBoer made Michael Penix Jr. a first-round pick last year at Washington. Jalen Milroe has the potential to be much better.

Surrounding Milroe will be a

solid and huge offensive line with a lot of experience. Counting Parker Brailsford, who transferred in, the Tide return 4 starters and the TE. Tyler Booker the 6'5" 350 guard could be one of the first linemen off the board in next year's draft.

Running back will be rock solid with Jam Miller and Justice Haynes. Watch out for the former 5-star Haynes. He could break out this year.

The wide outs are solid and will be bolstered by transfer Germie Bernard. Remember that name. All in all, this offense has greatness written all over it. We will know pretty quickly as the Tide have South Florida, Wisconsin and Georgia in 3 of the first 4 games.

Defensively the Tide have some holes to fill. Returning are Backers Jihaad Campbell and Deontae Lawson. They form one of the best duos in the SEC and maybe the country.

Couple them with a defensive line that has experience and talent and the front 6 in DeBoer's 4-2-5 could be very good. Watch out for LT Overton the transfer from Texas A&M. He's a former 5 star and should get on the field immediately.

The secondary is led by Malachi Moore, a returning captain and ALL-SEC caliber player. Throw in 3 transfers in Domani Jackson, Keon Sabb, and DeShawn Jones and the secondary should be very good. Jackson and Sabb are potential all stars.

This group has all the talent they need. We will know how well they have jelled together in the last week of

September when Carson Beck and the Georgia Bulldogs come to town.

Oh, and what do you do when you lose your kicker who was the leading scorer in NCAA Division 1 history. Well, if you're Alabama, you go get the Lou Groza award winner from last year. Graham Nicholson was 27 of 28 on field goals and should fit in nicely. Add in 3-year starter James Burnip, a second team ALL-SEC selection with a 47.6 yd average and things are good in Tuscaloosa.

The schedule is a tough but manageable one. It sets up very well in September. A USF team that surprisingly gave Bama a tough game last year comes to Tuscaloosa on September 7.

Follow that the next week with a trip to Wisconsin that will be a true test.

Start 3-0 and the nation will have all eyes on the September 28th matchup with the Georgia Bulldogs in Tuscaloosa.

It will be one the most anticipated games of the year. If that secondary plays lights out, Bama will give the Dawgs all the want and maybe more.

From there the usual culprits arise. South Carolina, Missouri, and the Iron Bowl all at home with big road games at Tennessee, LSU, and Oklahoma.

Beat Georgia at home and barring a collapse, the Crimson Tide will be in the 12-team party at the end of the year.

Undefeated? I don't think so. But a one or two loss Alabama team will be very dangerous when the playoff comes around. VERY dangerous.





AUBURN TIGERS

2024 PREVIEW

Improvement On The Plains? By Jeff Duke



There's an old adage in the SEC that talks about head coach expectations and the overabundance of patience granted to new coaches in their first year or so.

That leeway can be limited however when the new hire is a marquee name, and the school underperforms fan expectations in the first year and postseason.

Thus, we find Hugh Freeze in his second year at Auburn.

After taking the Head Coach position from fan-favorite Interim boss Cadillac Williams, many of the Plainsmen faithful were already looking sideways at the former Ole Miss coach.

Losing to New Mexico State in the final weeks of the season as well as a loss in the Music City Bowl to a thoroughly mid Maryland squad didn't win any favors, either.

Combine that with the retirement of the legendary Nick Saban and expectations are for a vastly improved record from the 6-7 totals that were put up in his first year.

This might be the year that happens.

The Tigers offense looks to be speedy to say the least.

Fourth-year RB Jarquez Hunter looks to improve his numbers and a pair of transfer WRs, Robert Lewis (Georgia State) and KeAndre Lambert-Smith (Penn State), should pair well with incoming true freshman WR Cam Coleman and TE Rivaldo Fairweather in his final year of eligibility.

Their only limitation could prove to be returning signal caller Payton Thorne. While the fifth-year QB looked pretty nimble running the ball last year, he didn't have nearly the vertical game that he did while at Michigan State. He'll need to improve on his 2023 ranking of 101st in the nation if Auburn plans to make any noise on offense.

The offensive line should give them plenty of time to cook. Tackle Percy Lewis comes to the squad from Mississippi State, and should pair well with returning Center Connor Lew. Some speculation coming into camp suggests that Tackle Dillon Wade might be better suited as a guard, but regardless they, along with 300lb+ Guard Jeremiah Wright should gel as a unit, if not in fall camp then definitely during the five-game home stand that Auburn starts the season with in 2024.

The bellwether of this year's team may prove to be the defense.

DJ Durkin makes a lateral move in the SEC, coming into the same position he held at Texas A&M last year.

The biggest concern is the interior, where the loss to the draft of notable pass rusher Marcus Harris and 350lb DT Justin Rogers could prove to be significant, considering transfer replacements Trill Carter (Texas) and Gage Keys (Kansas) aren't quite in their league.

The secondary gives pause as well. They're an inexperienced squad, which is understandable considering the loss of Nehemiah Pritchett, DJ James, and Frederica Academy alum Jaylin Simpson.

True, Jerrin Thompson should be a more-than-workable starter at Safety after jumping from the Longhorns, and Keionte Scott should be as serviceable at CB as he was at Safety last year. All in all, this particular room on the team will need to grow up quickly if it wants to avoid being the weak link.

Linebackers should be the strong point of this year's defensive squad. Don't be surprised if Jalen McLeod doesn't lead the league in several statistical categories, and DO be surprised if Eugene Asante doesn't make his presence known after taking the portal from the Tarheels. He's quick, nimble, and (as one scout praised him) "disruptive."

All-in-all, this season could really go either way. The first five games of the season should set them up well for the tough middle stretch of @Georgia, @Mizzou, and @Kentucky.

Once the Iron Bowl concludes on November 30th, expect this squad to be either 9-3 or 5-7. Neither outcome would be surprising.



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