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October 2024 Edition

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FSU's Bad Start

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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.

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HEISMAN HOPEFULS





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WAY TOO EARLY HEISMAN

Heisman Hopefuls By Joe Delaney



Heisman hopefuls for 2024. As we move forward with the 2024 season let's look at the early hopefuls for the coveted Heisman Trophy as College Football's Most Outstanding Player.

A month into the season; let's look at who's hot and who's not.

We lead off with Quinn Ewers of the now #1 ranked Texas Longhorns. The 6' 2" 210 QB has thrown for around 700 yards. Great numbers but where we go from here remains to be seen.

Ewers sustained an oblique strain in the second quarter of the UTSA game and is now week to week. He better get ready pretty quick for two reasons.

First the meat of the schedule is coming up with Oklahoma and Georgia back-to-back.

Secondly, Ewers has the highest rated backup in football in Arch Manning. If Manning takes off Ewers may have a hard time getting back on the field much less win the Heisman.

I'm thinking Ewers is a lukewarm candidate as of now. And those games with Oklahoma and Georgia will tell us where Ewers and the Longhorns are going.

Next up is Carson Beck of the now #2 Georgia Bulldogs. Both Beck and the Dawgs looked very beatable and average against the Kentucky Wildcats. The good thing is that they still won the game.

The 6'4" 220lb Beck has thrown for 680 yards and 7 TDS and 0 INTs. Beck may be hampered in that he won't lead the nation in passing yards and TDs. But he might lead the Dawgs to the National Championship.

We will see how the next few weeks play out as the Dawgs have to travel to both Alabama and Texas. Get HOT in those two games and Beck has a good shot.

Jalen Milroe of the Alabama Crimson Tide is HOT. That's capital letter HOT. The 6'2" 225 LB QB has thrown for 590 yards in 3 games with

8 TDs and 0 INTs. But wait, Mr. Dual Threat has also rushed for 156 Yds and 6 more TDs.

The guy has a great deep ball and can pull it and make defenses pay when he runs out of the pocket. He is a true Dual Threat QB and is leading an Alabama offense that has scored 63, 42, and 42 points in the first 3 games of the season.

If he leads the Elephants to a win over Georgia on September 28th, he will be your front runner.

Well did you notice the top three? Sure, you did. All high profile SEC guys. Let them take away votes from here and there and you might just have Cam Ward of the Miami Hurricanes hoisting the trophy in New York.

Ward has led the Hurricanes to a top 10 ranking, all the while putting up Heisman type numbers. Try throwing for over 1035 yards and almost 15 TD'. This guy is a real threat. Ward is HOT and if he stays that way he has both the schedule and the team to move his Heisman hopes forward. He's my dark horse of the top 4.

And yes, it's so early in the season that other players may step up. Don't count out Dillon Gabriel of Oregon or Jaxson Dart of Ole Miss. Great players with very good teams behind them.

Add in Shedeur Sanders of Colorado and Nico Iamaleava of Tennessee for a couple of longshots and there you go.

And notice that I haven't had a position player other than QB. Stranger things have happened but I just don't see a running back or receiver stepping up. But it's early.

My way too early pick is Jalen Milroe. This guy is coming into his own and he has a new coach that is going to turn him loose.

Remember, Kalen DeBoer is considered a QB guru. Last year he had Michel Penix Jr. with the Washington Huskies. This year It's Jalen Milroe.

I think Milroe will put up unbelievable numbers that will vault him into the Heisman discussion. And if the Tide play up to their capabilities. He's who I think will be on the podium come December.



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ALARM SOUNDING

FSU's Bad Start By Robert Craft





How does a college football team win 13 games one year and turn into an absolute train wreck the next?

Florida State's Mike Norvell — who signed an \$11 million yearly contract extension in January to — is facing that question.

His Seminoles, picked by the media to repeat as ACC champions, lost to Memphis 20-13, last Saturday to become the ninth preseason AP top-10 team since 1950 to lose its first three games.

If that isn't embarrassing enough, Norvell left Memphis five years ago to coach for FSU. Now, for the second time, the Seminoles have started a season by losing their first three games.

"I know what it takes to win games," Norvell said after Memphis outgained the Seminoles 337 yards to 228 inside of Doak Campbell Stadium.

"I know what it takes for a team to go out there and be able to execute and play at a high level. We all have to do a better job of what

we're doing throughout the course of the week and challenge the players, challenge the coaches. Because we can't continue to come into games and see things that absolutely are not a part of what we are and who we are."

On one hand, this might be how good Florida State is without Jordan Travis, Keon Coleman, Johnny Wilson, and Trey Benson. A collection of leaders on both sides of the ball for last year's Florida State team are now NFL players.

It took Travis a couple of years after leaving Louisville to settle into FSU's leading role at quarterback. He earned the respect of his teammates through the struggles of Norvell's first two seasons (3-6 and 5-7) before their success in the last two. Those Seminoles, whether brought in through the portal or homegrown, developed into a championship team and enjoyed playing together.

This collection of transfers and homegrown players do not look like they're having fun, and the culture does not look good.

The offense is just awful. The first half against Memphis was a comedy of errors, and a parody of the program Bobby Bowden built 5000 years ago.

It started with former Alabama running back Roydell Williams

fumbling on the second play and ended with freshman Lawayne McCoy muffing a punt after his teammate Quindarius Jones was blocked into him.

It was one of three turnovers in the half, which included only 67 yards of total offense and three first downs.

You cannot blame Adam Fuller's defense. The Seminoles have given up 24, 28 and 20 points in three losses.

The majority of the issues are on offense. Is it evaluation? Development? Belief in the system? Things are clearly not trending in the right direction.

Recruiting has been good but never great under Norvell. The 2025 class took several hits in recent weeks when two blue-chip defensive linemen decommitted. There could be more defections if the results on the field don't improve.

Norvell's press conference last Saturday ended with a fire alarm going off in the building.

Nobody at FSU is going to fire Norvell anytime soon with the amount of money left on his contract, but it's fair to sound the alarms about FSU's future after smelling smoke early on.





Preventing Stress Fractures in Athletes



Beau Sasser, MD

A board-certified orthopaedic surgeon, Dr. Sasser specializes in sports medicine and also serves as medical director of the Southeast Georgia Health System Sports Medicine Program.

Summit Sports Medicine & Orthopaedic Surgery has offices in Brunswick, St. Simons Island and St. Marys.

To make an appointment with Dr. Sasser, call 912-466-7340.



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With a new school year and the start of sports season upon us, stress fractures are a timely topic. Athletes face a higher risk of overuse injuries than most people. “Unless you stay strong and flexible, your muscles can’t support abrupt increases in the intensity, length or frequency of your workouts. This can overload the bones to the point of creating fractures,” says Beau Sasser, MD, a board-certified orthopaedic surgeon with Summit Sports Medicine & Orthopaedic Surgery and vice chief of surgery at Southeast Georgia Health System, Brunswick Campus. Dr. Sasser also serves as medical director of the Health System’s Sports Medicine Program. “That’s why I advise anyone – regardless of age or athleticism – to ease into workouts and sports season by gradually increasing their walking, running, and aerobic activity.”

This is especially true if your fracture risk is higher due to:

- Gender: females have a higher risk than males, especially female runners and gymnasts.
- Age: the older you are, the greater the chance of developing fractures.
- Race: white people have less bone density and weaker bone structure than other races.

Genetics, previous injuries, and your foot, leg and knee alignment may also increase risk.

Most stress fractures occur in the weight-bearing bones of the lower leg and feet, and symptoms can be elusive at first. “Discomfort or aches might seem normal after activity, especially if it goes away with rest. What’s abnormal is persistent discomfort when playing sports or moving around, limping from pain, aching at rest, bruising or swelling. See a physician if you experience those symptoms,” Dr. Sasser recommends. In the meantime, apply ice to the affected area, take an over-the-counter anti-inflammatory, and rest from activities that aggravate the pain.

Share your medical history with your health care provider, explain what caused the pain and what makes it worse. “After an exam, your physician may order an X-ray. Since X-rays don’t show swelling, you might also need an MRI or CT scan,” Dr. Sasser explains.

You might need to temporarily switch your regular sports or exercise regimen to low impact, like cycling or swimming, use crutches to remove pressure from the bone or wear a hard-sole boot.

Unless severe, Dr. Sasser recommends a conservative approach. “However, some bones do heal slowly and require internal support hardware such as pins or rods.”

To prevent fractures, “Improve your strength and flexibility so your muscles and joints act as shock absorbers, placing less stress on your bones,” adds Dr. Sasser. Wearing protective gear, breaking in new gear gradually, and replacing worn shoes also helps. Dr. Sasser advocates cross training to avoid overuse injuries, and most importantly, rest between sports seasons. “At minimum, take one or two weeks off between seasons. Aim for seven hours of sleep per night and take a rest day once a week.”

Athletes also need to be aware of biomechanics and energy intake. “A certified athletic trainer can instruct you on proper form and ways to avoid REDS, or relative energy deficiency – insufficient fuel for high intensity sports increases your risk of injury.”

While managing your responsibilities may seem overwhelming, it’s important to remember that stress fractures can sideline athletes for weeks or months. Be good to your bones and you’ll be good to go.



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BRIGHT SPOTS

Takeaway From Jags So Far By Michael Spiers



In a thrilling Week 1 showdown, the Miami Dolphins secured a dramatic 20-17 victory over the Jacksonville Jaguars, thanks to a clutch 52-yard field goal by Jason Sanders as time expired.

The win, which marked Miami's fourth consecutive season-opening triumph, was propelled by quarterback Tua Tagovailoa, who threw for 336 yards and a touchdown.

Tagovailoa also orchestrated a late-game, eight-play drive to set up Sanders' game-winning field goal, showcasing his poise under pressure.

Tyreek Hill emerged as one of the game's key players, despite chaotic hours before kickoff that included being briefly detained by the Miami-Dade Police Department as a result of a driving incident.

He finished the day with seven catches for 129 yards and a touchdown. Hill was a consistent playmaker throughout, moving the chains three times and forcing four missed tackles. His ability to gain big yards after the catch was pivotal, as he hauled in two catches of 15 yards or more, while averaging an impressive 3.58 yards per route run. Hill's efforts were also reflected in the passer rating of 123.3 when Tagovailoa targeted him.

Despite the loss, the Jacksonville Jaguars left the game with some bright spots, particularly from young players and new additions.

Second-year running back Tank Bigsby had a standout performance, showcasing his explosiveness and decisiveness. Bigsby forced four missed tackles, more than any other Jaguars rusher, and hinted at a potential one-two punch with Travis Etienne in the backfield.

Wide receiver Brian Thomas Jr. also made an immediate impact in his NFL debut. The Jags rookie and first-round draft pick, who was covered by Dolphins star cornerback Jalen Ramsey

for much of the game, demonstrated why he's drawing so much attention.

Thomas caught four passes for 47 yards, including a 14-yard touchdown that gave the Jaguars a 14-0 lead in the second quarter. His ability to draw a 40-yard pass interference penalty earlier in the game helped set up Jacksonville's first score.

On the defensive side, linebacker Devin Lloyd was another Jaguar whose stock rose after Week 1. Lloyd displayed improved decision-making and played a critical role in stopping Miami's run game.

Meanwhile, Darnell Savage, in his first start at nickel for Jacksonville, put together a solid performance, allowing just four receiving yards on five targets while forcing two incompletions.

However, not everything went smoothly for the Jaguars. Travis Etienne, the team's top running back, had a tough outing, particularly with a costly third-quarter fumble that significantly shifted momentum.

Although Etienne has been a major contributor to Jacksonville's offense, Bigsby's emergence may lead to a more shared workload in the future.

Defensive struggles also plagued the Jaguars, with Antonio Johnson missing three tackles in his first start of the season.

On the offensive line, the team's top pass blocker from last year, Anton Harrison, gave up four pressures and showed some rust after an injury-limited preseason.

Ultimately, the Jaguars' inability to capitalize on a 17-7 lead and their lack of offensive rhythm in the second half contributed to the loss.

After producing 162 yards and 17 points in the first half, Jacksonville failed to score after halftime and managed just six second-half first downs.

QB Trevor Lawrence, in his first regular season game since signing a five year, \$275M contract extension, acknowledged the missed opportunities, citing the need for more consistent execution, particularly in critical moments.

In the end, the Dolphins' defense stood tall in the second half and was too much for Jacksonville to overcome.

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THE HARD TRUTH

Smart Tells It Like It Is By Charlie Moon



I still remember the day my father saying, "Son, always tell the truth." I was a young boy. I barely remember it, but what I do have is a vision of us riding in the car, and him saying that.

Who knows? I probably told some white lies about eating the last piece of left-over pizza, when it was earmarked for mom.

He's telling a truth this season. But what truth?

It tells a hard truth of how Kirby Smart and the Dawgs take a lot of pride in its' roster and how Kirby is simply not afraid of watching players walk out the door to the NCAA transfer portal.

Back to Vandagriff. Kirby Smart tells hard truths and he had to tell one to his former QB Vandagriff. In December of last year, Smart had his annual meetings with players to tell them where they stood for the upcoming offseason. It's something many coaches do a version of, but often can't tell the hard truths.

Smart, he walked back into Smart's office and told him he was entering the transfer portal.

This was tough for Vandagriff, and Smart as well. No one knows exactly what Smart said to Vandagriff, but judging by what Vandagriff's dad said in a September 8 Courier Journal (Lexington, KY) column, it was a respectfully mutual conversation between Brock and Kirby.

"Kirby called me and said, 'I don't know if I've ever coached a finer kid in my life than your son.'"

Greg Vandagriff knows the deal, having been a High School Head Coach in Georgia for 28 years.



What does that have to do with the Dawgs?

Former Dawg Brock Vandagriff now quarterbacks at Kentucky. Vandagriff was out of Athens, GA's Prince Avenue Christian in 2020 as one of the nation's top QB recruits, he was expected to run the QB room within a couple years.

Because of some dude named "The Mailman," and the emergence of Carson Beck, that never happened.

In this meeting, Kirby told Vandagriff that Carson Beck was the clear #1. In the new age of the transfer portal, this has been difficult for many coaches.

Why? Well, what do ya do? You get honest with a kid that adds depth to your team and they bolt. You lie and you become the coach with the reputation of telling players what they want to hear.

So, what did Vandagriff do? Just 5 minutes after meeting with

He's 97-12 at Prince Avenue with back-to-back state titles.

Let's be real. There are many coaches that tell players what they want to hear, to keep them from the portal. Smart has never even been rumored to do that.

Even when Dylan Raiola, the 2024 #1 rated QB prospect, decided to transfer to Nebraska, Kirby did absolutely nothing to entice him to stay. He wished Raiola well.

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GATORS QB1?

Florida's QB Situation By Colin Lacy



Turmoil has been a consistent descriptor for the Florida Gators the last couple of seasons and the start of 2024 has been no different.

Florida felt a little bit of confidence and optimism entering the season but was quickly squashed with the season-opening loss against rival Miami 41-17.

In that lid-lifting loss, Gator quarterback Graham Mertz took a tough hit in the fourth quarter and was diagnosed with a concussion. True freshman phenom D.J. Lagway took over for Mertz to finish off the Miami game then started and played the majority of the Gators 45-7 victory over FCS Samford.

Now the questions of “who is QB1 for the Gators” have caught fire. So, who are these two and where does the toasted rear’ of Billy Napier go for the season?

Graham Mertz is the experienced sixth year signal caller who transferred into the Florida program

after four years at Wisconsin.

In his debut season with the Gators, Mertz was on track with his best statistical season of his career with 20 touchdowns to just 3 interceptions while racking up 264 yards per game on average through the first 11 games of the season before fracturing his collarbone in the week eleven loss to Missouri and missing the finale against Florida State.

The offseason and preseason leading into the 2024 season was filled with optimism around Mertz but the Miami game suggests it may be a bit premature. Mertz, before leaving the game with the concussion in the fourth quarter, went 11-20 passing with only 91 yards through the air. Mertz didn’t record a score while throwing an interception and was sacked three times.

D.J. Lagway was a highly sought-after recruit out of Willis, Texas (just north of Houston) after totaling over 5,500 all-purpose yards and 73 touchdowns as a senior in high school in route to winning the 2023 Gatorade National Player of the Year.

Lagway essentially had his pick of the litter where to take his talents in the collegiate ranks but saw the vision of Napier and the Gators.

In his Gator debut, Lagway connected on 3 of 6 of the passes for

31 yards and added 20 rushing yards and his first career touchdown on the ground in less than a quarter in the Miami matchup.

Lagway followed that up with his first career start for the Gators against Samford (again because of Mertz’ concussion holding him out). Against the FCS’ Bulldogs, Lagway impressed with 456 yards through the air and 3 scores while completing 18 of 25 passes including an 85-yard reception to Eugene Wilson III.

Now the question goes to “what happens now?”

Most are expecting Napier and company to play Graham Mertz as QB1, but many in Gator Nation are wanting to turn the page and see what D.J. Lagway does with the full keys to the program.

Personally, I think (at least for the time being), Mertz has earned the right to get the opportunity to lose his job as QB1.

In his 6-year career, Mertz has amassed over 8,300 career passing yards and 58 touchdowns.

The experience factor plays a huge role in this decision. Mertz should be the guy. That being said, I think it’s only a question of “IF” not “WHEN” D.J. Lagway takes the reigns and runs with it.



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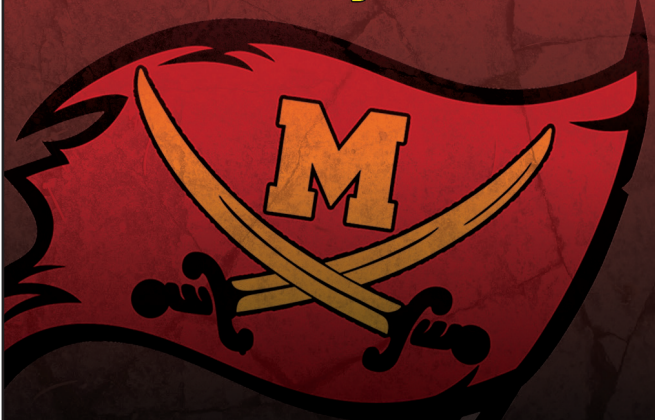
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AGGRESSIVE FORCE?

The Tyreek Hill Traffic Stop By Robert Craft



Dade Police and their conduct was “overly aggressive and violent” during a traffic stop with wide receiver Tyreek Hill on Sunday.

The Miami Dolphins’ statement Monday followed the release of body-camera footage of Hill being forced out of his vehicle and on the ground by police officers. Police stopped Hill minutes away from Hard Rock Stadium.

Hill was en route to the Dolphins’ game against the Jacksonville Jaguars when police pulled him over and ticketed Hill for a traffic violation.

Following the stop, police approached Hill’s car and after a brief interaction, Hill rolled his window up. The police told Hill to keep his window down, and after he did not fully roll it back down, one of the four Miami-Dade police officers opened his car door and pulled him out of the vehicle by the back of his neck. One officer put Hill face-down on the

street to handcuff him.

During the detainment, Dolphins defensive tackle Calais Campbell and tight end Jonny Smith drove by and pulled over to the side of the road. Campbell was detained and cited for disobeying a direct order. He saw Hill in handcuffs and said it was “excessive force.”

Dolphins coach Mike McDaniel said in a news conference Monday afternoon that he was “very happy a guy in a situation like that didn’t feel alone.”

“It’s what you hope your team is comprised of,” McDaniel said about Campbell and Smith’s attempt to help Hill. “I’m very proud that they see each other as teammates and hold that in regard the way they do.”

The Dolphins expressed support for their players in their statement Monday while also calling on the MDPD to take action.

Following Hill’s detainment, Miami-Dade Police Department director Stephanie Daniels said in separate statements Sunday that she had requested a review of the incident and that one of the officers involved had been placed on administrative duties amid an investigation.

Following the release of the bodycam footage Monday, Daniels said

the police department “is committed to conducting a thorough, objective investigation into this matter, and we will continue to update the public on the outcome of that process.”

Monday, the South Florida Police Benevolent Association, a union for police officers, said it “(stands) with the actions of our officers” involved in the incident:

“We have worked hard across all communities to bridge the gap between what people believe law enforcement should and can do,” the association said in a statement. “While we wait for the investigation to run its course, based on what we know, we stand with the actions of our officers but look forward to further open communication moving forward.”

McDaniel, who spoke Monday before the public release of the bodycam footage, said of Hill’s detainment: “It’s been hard for me not to find myself more upset the more I think about it. Trying to put myself in that emotion or that situation that they described emotionally and then knowing more than that. The thing that f— me up, honestly, to be quite frank, is knowing that I don’t know what that feels like.”



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PROBLEMS IN ATHENS?

UGA's Signs Of Weakness By Charlie Moon



My friends in South Carolina are going to be mighty shocked when I say this.

The Dawgs have problems.

Growing up in South Carolina a Dawg fan and being in sports journalism for 2.5 decades, I hear it when I say something about the Dawgs they don't agree with.

Last year, I said the Dawgs were one of the best four and should have been in the playoff - regardless of the SEC Title loss to Bama. Dawg fan or not, it was what it was. The committee's goal was to get the best four. The Dawgs belonged - period. Point blank. So many became "Over-reaction guy."

"How could the Dawgs be in? They just lost to someone outside the top 4.

Or the.... "We don't want to see Bama and the Dawgs rematch."

The bottom line was, the Dawgs AND Bama were 2 of the best 4 - if not the best 2. And don't call me crazy because Bama lost to Michigan. Going into the playoffs, how many of you had Bama beating Michigan?

Once the playoffs were done, experts came out of the woodwork. It was what it was.

But after last Saturday's field goal fest in Lexington, I'm wondering if

the Dawgs will have to be a benefactor of the new 12-team playoff format. I know some of my good ole friends will balk at this, too, but let's be real.

In the 2- and 4-team format of the last 30 years, there should have been many more SEC squads in, even if it meant as many as 3 of the 4 were SEC squads.

I try not to be hyperbole and/or "overreaction guy." Y'all know. It's like "over-reaction guy's" brother or "backwards hat guy." You know that one guy that yells at every play, but probably couldn't even tell you one offensive line starter. Or they always boo at every flag - even before the ref makes the call.

Well, "over-reaction" guy has it easy this week, saying things like: "Man, the Dawgs stink" or "I told y'all about Carson Beck!"

Then, there's the elephant in the room. "I told y'all Mike Bobo ain't no offensive coordinator." Ahhhh boy, Dawg Nation has argued that since Bobo's first OC stint between the hedges, 2007-2014. Deep dive time. Chew on these factoids. In the Dawgs' 8 quarters against Power 5 teams (Clemson, Kentucky), they've tallied just 5 TDs.

In fact, four of the 5 came only in the 2nd half against Clemson alone. It took an entire 3rd quarters and 3:00 for UGA to get in the endzone against the Cats.

Maybe the Cats had more brawn than our experts believed, or maybe there's something amiss in Athens.

Yes, UGA lost guys like McConkey and Bowers from last year, but the cupboard in Athens is supposed to be filled to the brim.

Trevor Etienne ran it for 79

yards on 19 carries. Of those 19 carries, 12, count them, 12 were against 7 men in the box playing the run.

A 6-man line can't account for 7. Well, sometimes they can. But you can't expect them to do it all night wrong.

What's the point here? Either one of two things are happening here.

#1 The OC is not getting the offense into the best fits, which is the job of a coordinator.

#2 The QB is not recognizing and audibling at the line.

Look, no OC is going to have the perfect call and no QB is going to always notice. But to have it happen 12 out of your top RB's carries, is unacceptable.

Yes, there are times when an OC mandates the call stick and doesn't give the QB an option to change the call at the line. And of course, there's this, this is the first year of the helmet earphones allowed for one player. They have the option to communicate with Beck at the line.

And who knows, maybe I'm overreacting. This was not the biggest issue Saturday night, but it was the most glaring to me.

Sure, there could be issues that the UGA coaching staff are not going to discuss with the press. Maybe the receiver core wasn't ready for the bigtime. Maybe there's an undisclosed nagging injury to Beck.

Whatever it is I'll only say this.

If the Dawgs don't figure this out by September 28, Bama is going Roll our Tide right out the Dawg Pen and they won't even have to pull an "Al from Dadeville." Because the whole country will see it.





BREAKOUT STARS

CFB's Players To Watch By Kenneth Harrison Jr



We are less than one week away from start of the 2024 college football season. Let's take a look at some of the preseason All-American players that are expected to have breakout seasons.

QB Carson Beck, Georgia: He's the quarterback on the #1 team in the country. Last season was his first as the starter and he made it look easy. He led the SEC and ranked third nationally in passing with 3,941 yards. Star tight end Brock Bowers is in the NFL but UGA still has playmakers on the roster. He completed 72.4% of his passes with 24 touchdowns and 6 interceptions.

RB Omarion Hampton, North Carolina: He was a true sophomore in 2023 and he finished fifth nationally in rushing with 1,504 yards. He led all FBS players in yards after contact with 1,072 yards. He scored 16 TD's (15 rushing & 1 receiving) and he averaged 5.9 yards per carry with 254 attempts.

OT Will Campbell, LSU:

The 6'6, 323 lb. junior might be the first lineman drafted in the 2025 draft. He was First-Team All-SEC and SEC Academic Honor Roll in 2023. He's started 26 straight games and he's a great pass protector. He didn't give up a sack last season in 491 pass attempts.

OG Tate Ratledge, Georgia: Not to be confused with original gangster, Ratledge is a right guard. The senior is 6'6, 310 lbs. and one of the leaders on the offensive line. He was named Second Team AP All-American in 2023. He is on the preseason Outland Trophy watch list and the Lombardi Award watch list.

C Parker Brailsford, Alabama: Head coach Kalen DeBoer is now the head ball coach in Tuscaloosa. He got his center to transfer with him. Brailsford was a Freshman All-American last season with the Huskies. He started 13 games at center and 2 at right guard. He was also All-Pac-12 Second Team. He had an 80.7 run-blocking grade that ranked second among Power Five centers.

OG Tyler Booker, Alabama: He was First-Team All-SEC last season as a true sophomore. He only missed the USF game last season with back spasms. Booker had 41 knockdown blocks in 2023, which led the team with an average of 3.4 per game. He's

6'5, 325 lbs. and he's good at pass and run blocking. The Crimson Tide should excel at running between the tackles.

DE James Pearce Jr., Tennessee: He is one of the best pass rushers in the country. He tied for the SEC lead with 10 sacks last year and fifth nationally with 38 pressures. He also had 14.5 tackles for loss, 2 forced fumbles and 1 interception. He's 6'5, 243 lbs. so he looks like the prototypical defensive end. He could be the first defensive player drafted in 2025.

DT Deone Walker, Kentucky: He was Third Team All-American and First Team All-SEC in 2023. He led the Wildcats with 12.5 TFL and he had 7.5 sacks. Walker is 6'6, 348 lbs. so he eats up space in the middle of the defensive line.

LB Barrett Carter, Clemson: He's a versatile player that has played several positions along the back seven. Carter has been described by his head coach Dabo Swinney as "one of the best pure football players I've had in 20 years". He had 62 total tackles, 9.5 TFL, 3.5 sacks and an interception.

S Malaki Starks, Georgia: He was fourth on the team last year with 52 total tackles and he had 3 interceptions. He was a consensus All-American in 2023 and First-Team All-SEC.





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