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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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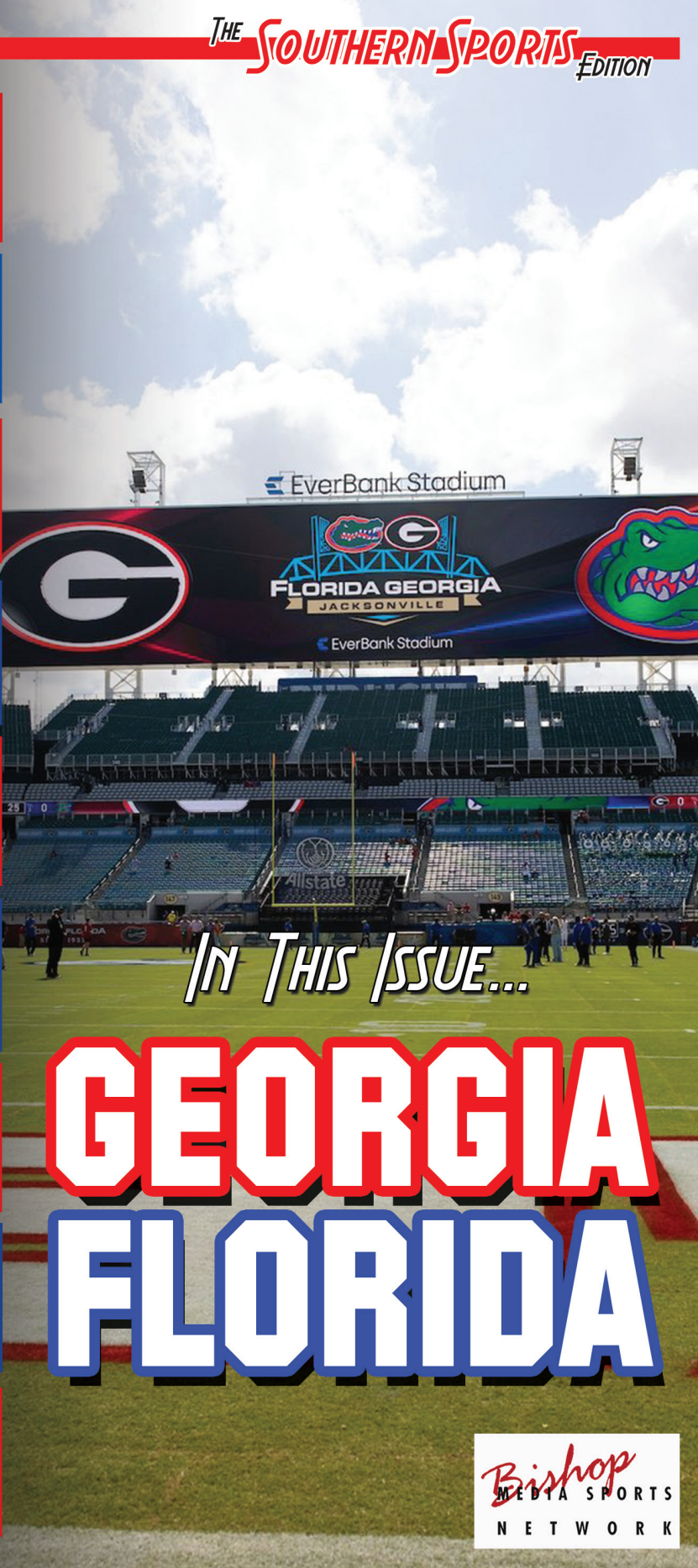
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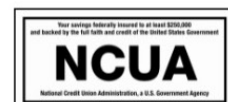


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STARS TO ALIGN?

GAME PREDICTION BY ROBERT CRAFT



Florida head coach Billy Napier probably didn't save his job by drubbing Kentucky.

But maybe he did enough in a must-not-lose game to think maybe, just maybe, there's maybe a path to a fourth season for Billy.

The beatdown provided a dose of optimism that Napier can coach a high caliber team in the future, if not this season.

Injuries to veteran starters Graham Mertz and Montrell Johnson meant Florida had to start true freshmen at quarterback (DJ Lagway) and running back (Jadan Baugh) for the first time in program history. That duo sparked the Gators' best offensive performance in years.

Beating Kentucky is a baseline expectation at Florida. It used to be, at least; the Gators won 31 in a row before Mark Stoops

snapped the streak in 2018.

Stoops won his first two against Napier. No Florida coach has lost three in a row to Kentucky in more than 70 years (Bob Woodruff, 1948-51). Napier, compared to his expectations, merely avoided ignominy with a win Saturday.

Besides, the real tests are still ahead. The 4-3 Gators were off last week before the daunting, season-ending stretch fans have been dreading for months: No. 2 Georgia in Jacksonville, at No. 5 Texas, home against No. 8 LSU and No. 18 Ole Miss and at rival FSU.

In Austin, TX, in front of a stadium-record 105,215 fans, Kirby Smart's Dawgs (6-1, 4-1 SEC) unleashed the most havoc-wreaking defensive performance of the season in a 30-15 win.

It got so bad, so fast for Texas (6-1, 2-1 SEC), trailing 20-0 in the second quarter, that Steve Sarkisian briefly benched starting QB Quinn Ewers for, only to go back to Ewers after two series.

Neither QB had a chance, given the Horns offensive line had

no answers for Georgia pass rushers Jason Walker (three sacks, four QB hurries), Mykel Williams (two sacks) and Damon Wilson (one strip-sack).

Georgia may well turn around and lay an egg against Florida, but they can afford it. Kirby Smart will not allow the Dawgs to be flat in Jacksonville.

The Dawgs open up as a 17 1/2 point Favorite against the Gators.

Florida hasn't played a team as talented on the roster as Georgia. The Gators will need the stars to align to have a chance at the cocktail party.

If Billy Napier can pull off a miraculous victory over the heavily favored Dawgs, he may be able to save his job for one more season.

Georgia just has way way way too much talent for this game to even be close. Also, this game is personal for Kirby and Georgia starting quarterback Carson Beck.

To quote Clubber Lane from Rocky III my prediction is PAIN!

Georgia 47
Florida 20





Understanding Chronic Ankle Instability



Jason G. Bowman, MD

A board-certified orthopaedic surgeon, Dr. Bowman specializes in foot and ankle surgery.

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

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



Does your ankle “give way” repeatedly? If this happens to you – especially when you are walking or just standing – you may have chronic ankle instability, a condition that can occur after multiple ankle sprains. “Many athletes, especially those who play football, basketball, volleyball, tennis and soccer experience ankle instability because of repeated sprains. These sports involve jumping and rapid direction changes that put them at risk for sprains,” says Jason G. Bowman, MD, a board-certified orthopaedic surgeon specializing in foot and ankle surgery who practices at Summit Sports Medicine & Orthopaedic Surgery. “Chronic ankle instability is more common in female athletes,” he adds.

Instability may also cause pain, tenderness, ongoing discomfort and swelling in the ankle. An unsteady ankle is more likely to turn or give way when playing sports, walking or jogging on uneven surfaces or engaging in everyday activities. Chronic ankle instability can also affect your balance.

“Ankle sprains may seem like a simple injury, but they actually stretch and may even tear ligaments. Repeated sprains weaken the ligaments even more, which leads to instability. The peroneal tendons can also be injured with repeat ankle sprains,” says Dr. Bowman.

When patients come to Dr. Bowman complaining of an unsteady, painful ankle, he asks about prior injuries. “After discussing their medical history and lifestyle – do they play sports, for example – I examine their foot and ankle for tenderness, instability and swelling. I may also order an X-ray or MRI to rule out other issues.”

With timely, accurate diagnosis, the issue may heal well with rest, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication such as ibuprofen, bracing support and physical therapy, or home exercise program. “Physical therapy strengthens the muscles around the ankle, improves balance, proprioception (knowing where ankle is in space) and strengthening the muscles. Therapists and sports medicine specialists also teach athletes sports-specific techniques to reduce the risk of another injury,” Dr. Bowman explains, adding, “Non-athletes also benefit from understanding and using proper body mechanics.”

When the condition does not respond to conservative treatments, if the problem persists or is severe, a patient may want to consider surgery. “An orthopaedic surgeon can repair or reconstruct damaged ligaments and will recommend the procedure best suited to the patient’s lifestyle and degree of instability,” says Dr. Bowman. After surgery, most patients wear a boot or cast before progressing to a brace and physical therapy.

“Chronic ankle instability can be debilitating, and it can affect your balance and mobility. However, there are solutions, and the earlier you seek help, the faster and more completely you will heal,” Dr. Bowman says.

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A LOOK BACK

MEMORABLE GAMES BY KENNETH HARRISON



The Georgia-Florida game is one of the best rivalries in college football. Let's look back over the years at some of the best performances from this rivalry game.

1997 #14 Georgia 37 #6 Florida 17: The defending national champion Gators were on a seven-game win streak against UGA.

The Bulldogs were 20-point underdogs because of this. The Gators had won 52-14, 52-17 and 47-7 the previous three years against the Bulldogs.

Robert Edwards rushed for 124 yards and four touchdowns. He seems to be a forgotten about player but he led Georgia to a major win.

1995 #3 Florida 52 Georgia 17: This was Florida's only trip to Athens since the game was permanently moved to Jacksonville in 1933. This was the first season for the expansion Jacksonville Jaguars and the city had to make renovations to the Gator Bowl. The series was moved to a home-and-home series in 1994 and 1995.

Quarterback Danny Wuerffel threw for 242 yards and 5 touchdowns in just under three quarters. Backup QB Eric Kresser tossed two more touchdowns in the 4th quarter, with the last one with 1:10 left in the game.

"You could always tell there was a little extra pep in [Spurrier's] step when it was Georgia week," wide receiver Chris Doering said. "It was cool being one of the few teams that ever got the chance to play Georgia in Jacksonville, Gainesville and then going up there in '95."

1980 #2 Georgia 26 #20 Florida 21: Freshman tailback Herschel Walker rushed for 238 yards and a touchdown on 37 carries. He's actually an afterthought when people look back at this game though because of how it ended.

UGA trailed 21-20 when they took over the ball at their 8-yard line with 1:35 left in the game. They lost one yard on first down and threw an incomplete pass on second down.

On third-and-eleven QB Buck Belue completed a pass to flanker Lindsay Scott near the UGA 25-yard line. Scott seemed to be surrounded by Gators but he cut towards the Georgia bench and ran down the sideline for a 93-yard touchdown.

2002 Florida 20 #5 Georgia 13: It's tough to view a Gator win as an upset during this time period because they had won 11 of the last 12 meetings before this.

UF had first year head coach Ron Zook and they were struggling, coming into this game 5-3. Georgia, on the other hand was 8-0 under Mark Richt in his second season.

The Florida defense did not

allow a single third down conversion on the day, the Bulldogs were 0-for-13.

Florida QB Rex Grossman completed 36 of his 46 pass attempts for 339 yards, two scores and two interceptions.

2007 #20 Georgia 42 #9 Florida 30: Florida won the national championship the year before. Head coach Urban Meyer was doing a great job bringing talent to Gainesville, which included quarterback Tim Tebow. He would become the first sophomore to win the Heisman Trophy in 2007 but he was not the star of this game.

Bulldog running back Knowshon Moreno rushed for 188 yards and 3 TD's. QB Matt Stafford passed for 217 yards, 3 scores and 1 interception.

The coolest thing about this game was after Moreno scored a 1-yard touchdown in the first quarter. The entire Georgia team ran into the end zone to celebrate.

It would later be known as the 'Gator Stomp' and it is one of the best images in college football history.



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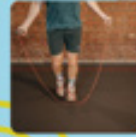


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IS YELLOW HANKIES

WHEN THE RIVALRY TURNED BY CHARLIE MOON



Every time she sees Mark Richt on TV, my mom says, "Ain't he so cute." My dad would have no choice but to just laugh it off.

One of the greatest shots of Richt's famous dimpled smile, was in 2007 against Florida. Knowshon Moreno had just opened the scoring in the 1st quarter. Then, came one of the most iconic rivalry moments..

CBS's Verne Lundquist: "Moreno. Did he break the plane? Yes! Touchdown! The entire team is coming out! We may have 15 yellow hankies!"

Then, a perfect example of why I always say TV production crews for college football run circles around NFL.

Perfection. Video went to a high overhead shot, a perfect storm of red, white and silver, storming the end zone.

Some demean color analyst Gary Danielson. I say they're crazy. Perfect example? Danielson follows during this overhead shot; "This was all absolutely planned. Mark Richt has decided he is tired of the Florida Gators having the psychological advantage over UGA."

As Danielson was saying that, video went to UGA senior defensive end Marcus Howard. He was banging his chest with both fists. His 27 2-foot-long dreads were bouncing. Dude looked like a crazed madman! The Dawgs had psychologically released.

Then, the video got Tim Tebow and two teammates on the Gator sideline. Everybody remembers how animated Tebow was.

Not this time. You'd think

Tebow would be gathering his guys in their own sideline huddled mass and doing that thing where he looked in their eyes and pointed to the heavens.

But this time, he just stood there, with his eyes and mouth wide open. Kind of like Quinn Ewers and Arch Manning looked like against Georgia, in that iconic ESPN shot of both on the bench, stunned.

Tebow was stunned. The Gators were stunned. This was the moment the rivalry turned.

That's right. The majority of the Dawgs team had stormed the end zone and was dancing like it was 1999. At first, I was like "What in the world are we doing!"

Then my brother Chad started getting jacked up! "This is a message! We're not taking it anymore! Let's go. Go Dawgs!"

The cameras panned to the normally reverent and serene Mark Richt on the sideline. He was clapping and had this sly grin on his face. There wasn't a single UGA coach scurrying out to pull players back. Normally, you'd see that in a situation like this, right? Not this time!

Danielson was right. It was planned. UGA initially denied it, but everyone knew. And I don't care what

Richt said after the game, we all knew.

In the following off-season, Richt pretty much admitted, players pitched it during the annual pre-Florida game off week. Richt initially said no way. But he eventually ruled in favor of the players, with a few restrictions.

It had to be with the Dawgs in an early lead or tying situation. No celebrations, down 21 in the 4th quarter. No direct taunting of Florida players in the end zone, or toward their sidelines.

To their credit, players did follow these guidelines. But the funniest shot was of 320-pound OL Trinton Sturdivant breaking out in what can only be described as his own "Big Boy" version of River Dance.

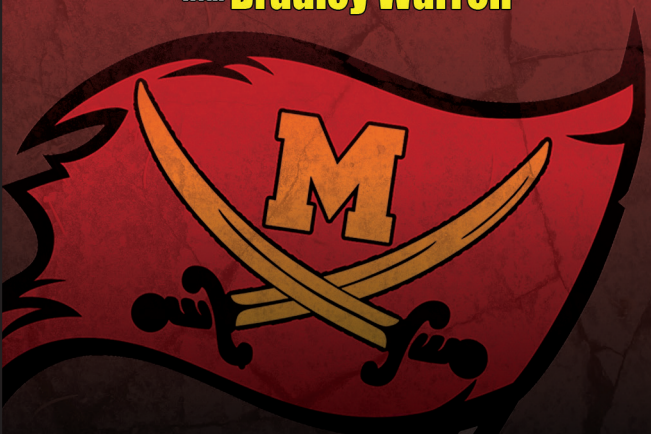
The Dawgs went on to win 42-30, but it really wasn't that close.


Under Spurrier and Meyer, the Gators dominated the series, 15-2. So often, though, it wasn't because of dominating rosters. The Gators simply were in the Dawgs' head. Annually, tight games would turn on a dime with one UGA mistake. Then the wheels would come off.

But the Dawgs have gone 10-6 against the Gators since then. This was the day the series turned.





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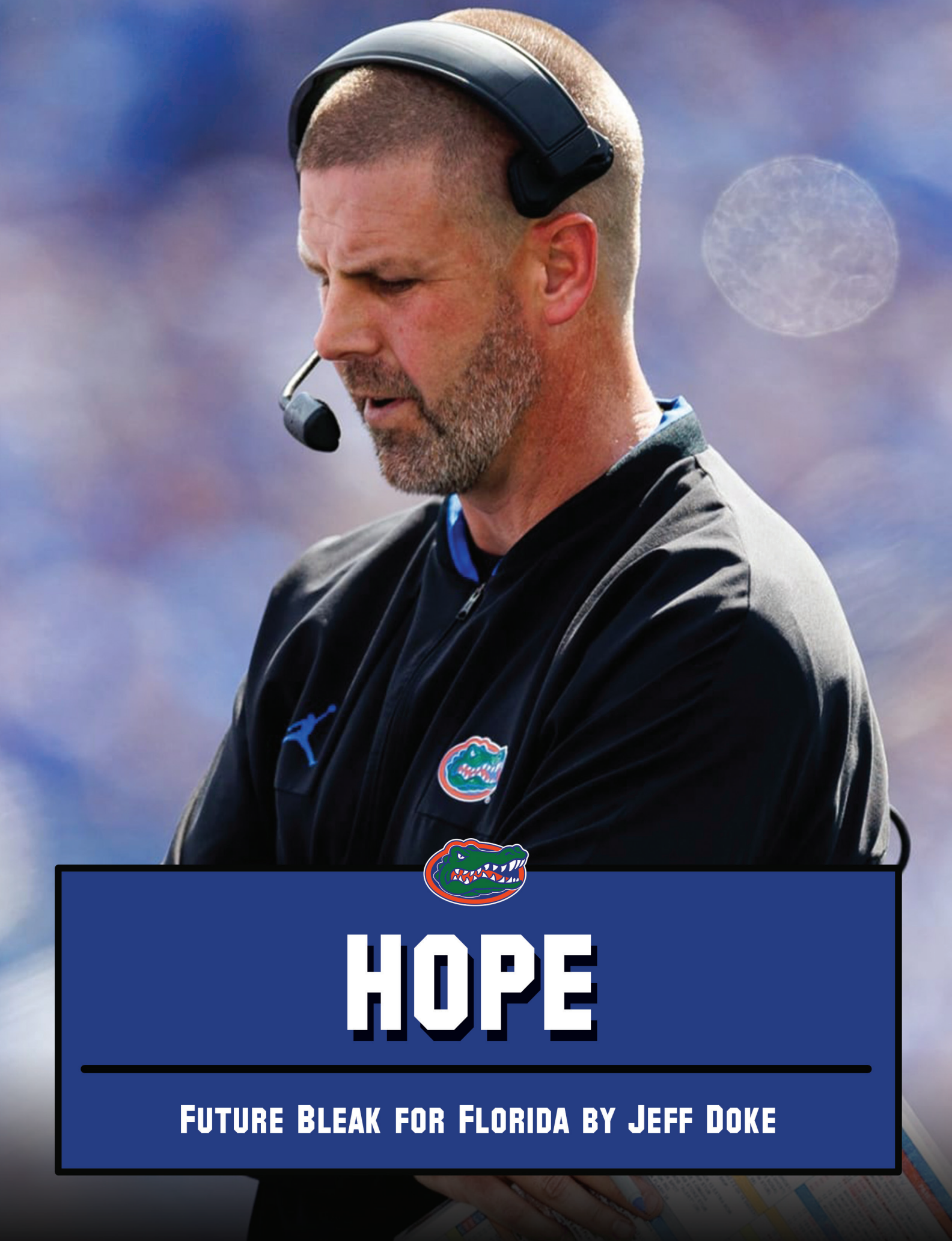
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HOPE

FUTURE BLEAK FOR FLORIDA BY JEFF DOKE



Hope springs eternal in the human breast." "An Essay On Man", Alexander Pope, 1732.

There's a fun little recurring character in the "SEC Shorts" video series named Hope. She premiered before the 2021 Georgia championship season and spent most of the season hyping up the Dawgs' national championship aspirations.

While it eventually turned out that those hopes were well-founded, Hope left at the end of the season for Texas A&M. While that seemed like the most likely fanbase in need of some hopefulness, there were several other destinations she could have landed - Tennessee, Kentucky, or Missouri for example.

Florida, however, was firmly not on that list.

Hope hasn't dared to set foot in Gainesville for a while now. The Gators have not had bonafied National Championship aspirations since Urban Meyer's alleged "cardiac incident."

While Muschamp, McElwain, and Mullen managed to have more wins than losses in their alliterative runs in the swamp, Florida now finds Billy Napier at the helm.

O Hope, where art thou?

Not in Gainesville, that's for sure. Although the 2024 Gators go into the WLOCP with a surprising 4-2 record (3 more wins at this point than I predicted in the preseason), the high point of the season may have already passed them by.

Consecutive matchups against UGA, Texas, LSU, and Ole Miss await the Gators in the month of November.

Granted their regular season wraps up against the even-bigger-dumpster-fire that is the 2024 FSU Seminoles, but it looks like once again

the 2024 Florida gators Bowl Game t-shirts are gonna be plain white Fruit Of The Looms, straight out of the cellophane wrapper.

The future isn't looking much brighter. The 2025 Gators recruiting class sits at 33rd in the nation, 15th in the SEC.

The 2026 class is better, clocking in at 11th nationally and 7th in the conference, but if Billy Napier somehow manages to avoid the axe this postseason, expect some of those commits to bail and those rankings to take a tumble.

For the moment, let's look at the here and now. In this, the greatest of all border war matchup in CFB, it is well known that the records do not matter.

Upsets aplenty when these two teams mix it up on the banks of the St. John's; Florida costing the Dawgs a shot at the National Championship in 2002, UGA knocking off #1 Florida in 1985, and the "unsportsmanlike conduct on the entire team" game all come to mind but what about 2024?

Let's be honest. This is a weird season. Army & Navy are both undefeated. Alabama has two losses. *Vanderbilt made an appearance in the Top 25, for crying out loud.* Would a Napier defeat of Kirby be too far out of the question?

To be blunt, yes.

The Dawgs are on the hunt after the Alabama loss. The defeat of top-ranked Texas shows that they are still an elite program. Above everything else, Kirby Smart's hatred of all things blue & orange is well documented. I'm not a betting man, but if I were, I'd be selling off a few semi-vital organs on the black market just to put more down on the Dawgs to walk away from EverBank Stadium with the W.

Yes, hope springs eternal, but if you're looking for Hope in Florida this weekend, I'd try Mons Venus in Tampa, maybe the pickleball courts in The Villages.

Not Jacksonville, though. Hope doesn't live there for the Gators.



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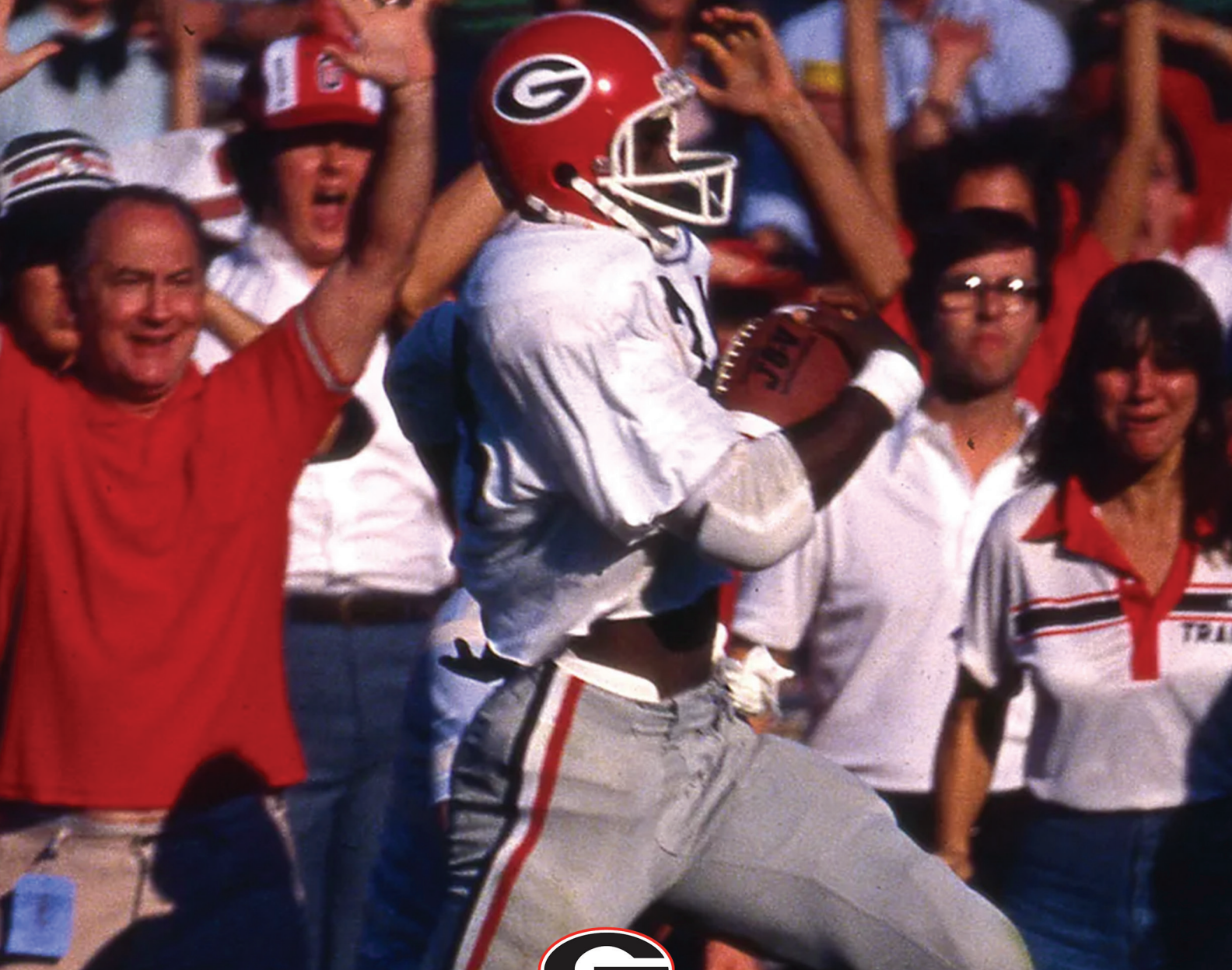
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GREATEST PLAY EVER

BELUE TO SCOTT BY JOE DELANEY



In 1980 the Georgia Bulldogs had a very good football team. They also had an emerging superstar in Hershel Walker.

Who can forget the Georgia Tennessee game to open the 1980 season. Georgia trailed 15-0 when Vince Dooley decided it was time to see what the big freshman running back could do. The rest is history.

"My God, a freshman!" was the legendary Larry Munson's call on Walker's first touchdown run in which he ran completely over Bill Bates the Vols safety and scored.

The Dawgs would go on to win 16-15 and a legend was born. Vince had said a few weeks before that he felt Herschel was just a big stiff back. Never was he so wrong.

Fast forward two months and the Dawgs sat at 8-0 with scintillating wins over Clemson and South Carolina. They also held the #2 ranking in the nation. Next up

were the hated Gators. The Gators were 6-1 and nationally ranked.

Georgia had run the table with a ground-oriented attack featuring Walker. They did however have a very good offense with Buck Belue, Norris Brown, Nat Hudson, Lindsay Scott and others.

Defensively they were stout with Tim Parks, Eddie "Meat Cleaver" Weaver, Jeff Hipp, Scott "Woerner the returner", and others.

The kicking game boasted probably the best kicker in the country in Rex Robinson. All the parts were there.

On a sun-drenched Autumn Day in Jacksonville the Dawgs struck first with Walker taking a pitch and blasting 72 yards for the score. He would go on to rush for 238 yards on 37 carries for the day.

Georgia led 20-10 well into the second half when the Gators came back with two scores to take a 21-20 lead with time running out. With little more than a minute to play the Dawgs found themselves 93 yards from the endzone. What happened next was probably the greatest play in Georgia football history and the greatest call by the legendary Larry Munson.

Buck Belue was chased out of the pocket and threw on the run to Lindsay Scott at the 25-yard line. From there Lindsay took it the 75 yards for the touchdown and the lead.

The Gator Bowl went crazy. I can remember Lindsay running down to the corner of the endzone where I was 25 rows up and it was pandemonium. It literally began raining as people threw their cocktails up in the air.

On the Florida sideline there was stunned silence where the Florida players had been dancing the "funky chicken" a minute before.

Munson's call on the play started with "Buck back.third down on the eight." "In trouble, got a block behind him." "Gonna throw on the run."

It ended with."26-21 DAWGS on top!" "We were gone, I gave up, you did too!" "We were out of it and goneMIRACLE!"

Georgia would go on to win the National Championship taking out Notre Dame 17-10 in the Sugar Bowl.

But the greatest play and call came on that wonderful November day by the St Johns River.





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WHERE'S THE GAME?

EVERBANK STADIUM'S FUTURE BY COLIN LACY



The "World's Largest Cocktail Party" has become a staple in college football and the sports world for the game, the atmosphere, and the pageantry around one of (if not the single) best rivalries in College Football. Each year half of EverBank Stadium, Home to the NFL's Jacksonville Jaguars is filled with red and black while half is filled with blue and orange.

Since 1933, all but two Georgia/Florida (or Florida/Georgia depending on which side you sit) matchups have taken place in Jacksonville. But the question raises Why Jacksonville?

The only matchups since 1933 that haven't taken place in Jacksonville were in 1994 & 1995 because the Gator Bowl had been demolished, and the (then) Jacksonville Municipal Stadium construction was still in progress as the '94 meeting moved to Gainesville & '95 called Athens home.

1933 wasn't the first time the

two met in Jacksonville, as a matter of fact just the second all-time meeting came in Duval County in 1915.

Leading into the 1933 season, administrators from both schools had talked about moving the game to a neutral site, but where?

Florida Historian Norm Carlson said in an interview with Florida Football that transportation was the reason

"They moved that game to Jacksonville in 1933 because fans of both schools could easily get there by train," said Carlson in a 2016 interview. "It turned out right. The game was sold out the first year and from then on that was held in Jacksonville."

That's one reason, but if you ask ten historians, you may get ten different answers. So why else has this 80-year tradition stood?

You have to remember back in the early 1900s college football stadiums weren't the cathedrals they are today, so it wasn't out of the ordinary for rivalry games across the country to be held at a neutral site to allow for a larger crowd.

Georgia historian Loran Smith said in a 2023 interview with 11Alive in Atlanta, "Georgia had a rickety old baseball field which served as the

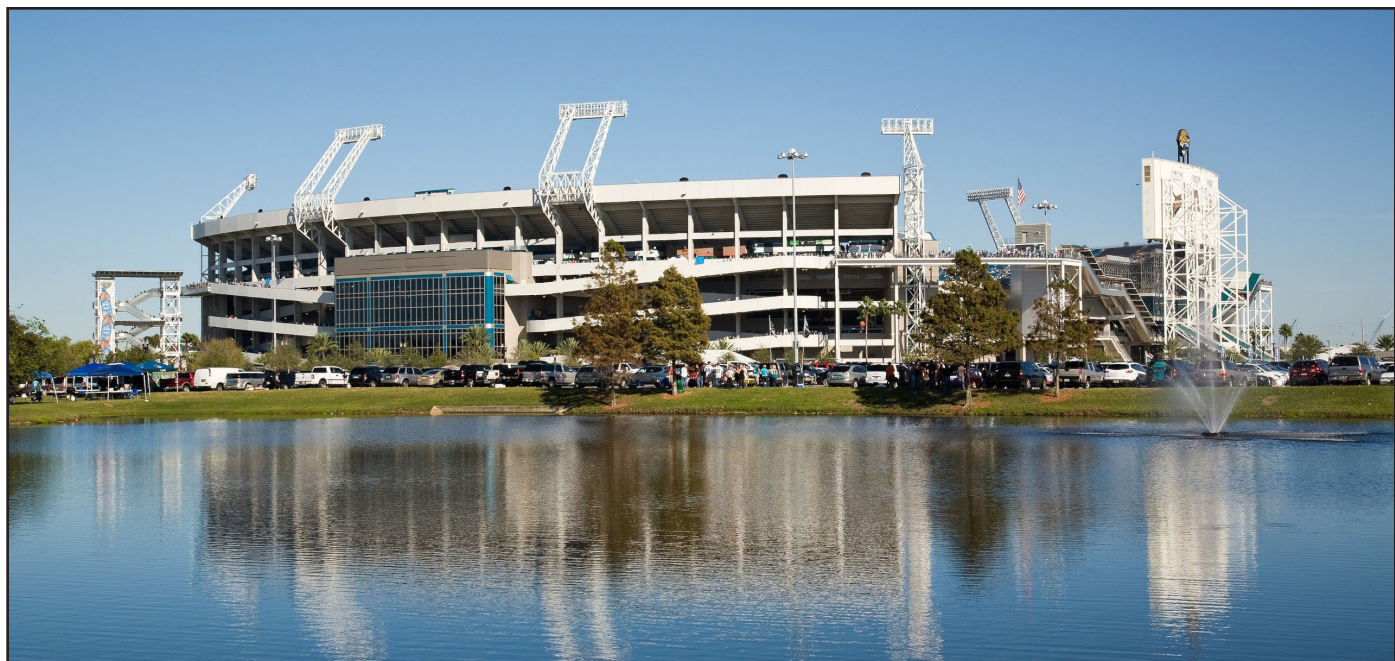
football field. We played Georgia Tech in Atlanta every year for a number of years."

There have been many conversations about moving this game over the years, but administrators from both sides still see the value of playing in the bigger city.

Jacksonville wasn't the only neutral site for this game. The first ever meeting between the two took place in Macon while also seeing stops in Tampa (1919) and Savannah (1928 & 1930). Athens has hosted the game five times while Gainesville has only seen this matchup inside the city limits twice (1931 & 1994).

In recent years there has been some questions surrounding the Jaguars rebuilding EverBank Stadium and what would happen to this game, but all parties have an agreed to extend the option in the current contract and keep the game in Jacksonville until at least 2025.

While Georgia is still trying to prove it's at the elite level in the game, and Florida is trying to get their program right, you can throw it all out the window. The World's Largest Cocktail Party will be rocking in Duval County!





HALL OF FAME

NEW INDUCTEES BY ROBERT CRAFT



The city of Jacksonville announced on Tuesday that Bill Goldberg, the former University of Georgia defensive tackle who helped the Bulldogs win three of four games against the Gators, will be among the 2024 inductees into the game's Hall of Fame.

Goldberg will be inducted with Florida cornerback Fred Weary, a Mandarin High graduate, former Jacksonville Jaguars linebacker Mike Peterson, and UGA cornerback Mike Fischer of Jacksonville, a Bolles graduate.

Goldberg was a two-time All-SEC player and lettered four years for the Dawgs from 1986-1989. He's still ninth in Georgia history with 348 tackles.

But when injuries curtailed his NFL career after stops with the Los Angeles Rams and Atlanta Falcons, Goldberg dropped his first name and became one of the dominant professional wrestlers with a career of more than two decades that culminated with his induction into the WWE Hall of Fame in 2018.

Using moves such as "The Spear" and "The Jackhammer," Goldberg was a five-time world champion in World Championship Wrestling and World Wrestling Entertainment and at one point was reputed to have gone on a 173-0 streak.

He wrestled competitively off and on from 1997-2018 and also has dabbled in mixed martial

arts and acting. He appeared in Adam Sandler's remake of "The Longest Yard" and was a contestant on "Celebrity Apprentice."

Fisher, who began his college career at Furman, transferred to Georgia as a walk-on and earned a scholarship in 1978. He played on three Georgia teams that went 3-0 against the Gators from 1978-1980 and had an interception against the Gators in the 1979 and two in 1980.

Fred Weary played for the Gators from 1994-1997 and was on three winning teams against Georgia, including the two games that were played on the campuses in 1994-1995 when UF won by combined scores of 104-31.

Weary had 15 career interceptions to lead Florida, six in his senior season. He was first-team All-SEC.

Weary played six years in the NFL, for New Orleans, Atlanta and the St. Louis Rams. He had seven interceptions as a pro.

Mike Peterson, a Gainesville native who played high school football at Alachua Santa Fe, stayed home to play for the Gators and was on three teams that beat the Bulldogs in four years from 1995-1998. Peterson had 249 tackles in four seasons and also was first-team All-SEC.

Weary and Peterson both started for the Gators' first national championship team under Steve Spurrier in 1996.

Peterson played in the NFL for 14 years, with Indianapolis, the Jaguars and Atlanta. He had 883 tackles and 19 interceptions. He is currently on the Florida coaching staff.

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WHAT'S IN A NAME?

“WORLD'S LARGEST OUTDOOR COCKTAIL PARTY” BY COLIN LACY



Depending on the colors you wear on gameday determines what you call this game.

For a game that has taken on many different names, at its core its either the Georgia-Florida game or the Florida-Georgia game.

This game has been well documented since the 1930's, but what folks call the game has changed many times throughout the years.

"World's Largest Outdoor Cocktail Party": This is the name I've known the game as the most, but come to find out, that name has become taboo in the past few years.

The name originated in 1958 when sports editor for the Florida Times-Union, Bull Kastelz, coined the phrase in his writeup of the game after, as legend tells it, he saw a drunk fan offer a uniformed police officer a drink.

When asked by other reporters why he called it that, Kastelz simply responded, "because it's true." The name would stick for over three decades before the beginning of the end of the name.

In 1988, the City of Jacksonville was the first to abandon the name although both schools and the media continued to.

Jacksonville City officials were trying to crackdown on the excessive drinking after the 1984 Gator victory and the 1985 Bulldog victory sparked fans to storm the field after the game and each fanbase left with the goalposts.

Each of these years, according to multiple outlets, there were over 65 arrests and sparked a conversation

between both schools to potentially take the game to campus sites (which was quickly squashed).

Both teams along with the SEC kept the widely accepted name until 2006 when the conference and schools asked CBS (who had the broadcast rights for many years) to stop using the name.

While many fans still refer to it as the "World's Largest Outdoor Cocktail Party" the name was officially abandoned in 2006 because the schools and SEC said the term "Cocktail Party" suggested excessive alcohol consumption and led to safety and image concerns.

While the game now doesn't have an official name, or really even widely used and accepted nickname like many rivalries do like the Egg Bowl (Mississippi State vs Ole Miss) or Iron Bowl (Auburn vs Alabama), there have been a couple to arise in the last almost twenty years.

River City Showdown: This one was well we'll say short lived. In

2016, game officials tried to deem the game the "River City Showdown". Although it's not often that you'll find common ground between the Gators and Bulldogs, both fanbases thought the new name was horrendous, and it only lasted one year.

War for the Oar: The name that has been the closest to sticking since the axe-ing of the Cocktail Party is the "War for the Oar." Beginning in 2009, the winning team takes home the Okefenokee Oar. This oar is a two-foot boat oar carved from the remains of a 1,000-year-old cypress tree that was taken out of the Okefenokee Swamp. The Okefenokee is an over 400,000-mile wetland area that spans over both home states.

While the game has been officially name-less since 2006, the Georgia-Florida (or Florida-Georgia) game has continued to be one of the premier rivalries in college football, and some (like myself) will always know it as the "World's Largest Outdoor Cocktail Party".





THE HISTORY

A UNIQUE RIVALRY BY MICHAEL SPIERS



The Georgia-Florida rivalry is one of the oldest and most exciting matchups in all of college football.

Every year, when the University of Georgia Bulldogs are scheduled to face off against the University of Florida Gators, it's a game both fanbases circle on their calendars.

The two teams have been meeting for over a century, and while Georgia claims the rivalry started in 1904, Florida doesn't count that game.

That's because the 1904 Florida team wasn't from the university as we know it today; it was from a predecessor school, Florida Agricultural College. The official start, according to both schools, was in 1915 when Georgia shut out Florida 37-0.

The game has almost always been played in Jacksonville, Florida, since the 1930s, and it's become a huge part of the River City's culture.

Jacksonville was originally picked as a neutral site because it's between the two schools, and before Interstate 95, it was easier to get to with the modes of transportation available at the time.

Now, it's an annual event that draws thousands of fans to the city, with plenty of tailgating and partying that turns the weekend into a big celebration. The game itself brings in millions of dollars to Jacksonville's economy, making it a win for the city as well.

What makes this rivalry unique is that there isn't a traditional trophy like in other famous matchups. Instead, the winning team takes home a staff made from a tree in the Okefenokee Swamp, which is on the Georgia-Florida border. Right now, that staff is in Georgia's possession.

Over the years, the game has

seen some wild moments. It's even earned the nickname "The World's Largest Outdoor Cocktail Party" because of how rowdy the tailgates and celebrations can get.

Fans have been known to party hard, and in the past, things got a little too crazy. In the 1980s, after some alcohol-fueled incidents, including fans tearing down goalposts, Jacksonville had to crack down on the party atmosphere to keep things under control.

They even stopped using the "Cocktail Party" nickname officially, but the fun hasn't really gone away.

On the field, Georgia dominated the early years, winning most of the games up until the 1950s. Florida didn't start to gain ground until the '50s, and the rivalry really heated up when Steve Spurrier became Florida's head coach in 1990.

Under Spurrier and his successors, Florida went on a tear, winning most of the games in the '90s and early 2000s. In the last 15 years, though Georgia has won the last three years in a row, the two teams have been more evenly matched.

This game often plays a big role in determining who comes out on top in the SEC East.

Both Georgia and Florida have historically been strong contenders in their division of the conference, so the winner has commonly had a better shot

at making it to the SEC Championship.

The rivalry isn't just a big deal for the teams and their fans; it's huge for Jacksonville.

The city goes all out to make the weekend special, and it's a major boost to the local economy.

The game has been played at EverBank Field, home of the Jacksonville Jaguars, since the old Gator Bowl stadium was torn down in the '90s.

EverBank offers a modern, NFL-style experience for the thousands of fans who pack it every year.

Despite occasional talk about moving the game to the teams' home stadiums, it has remained in Jacksonville.

Both schools seem happy to keep it that way, but planned renovations to EverBank Stadium starting in 2026 will force a relocation for at least a couple of years, before a hopeful return to Jacksonville in 2028.

The city offers a big payout to the teams, and the fans love the neutral site tradition.

In the end, Georgia-Florida isn't just a football game; it's a massive event that people from all over look forward to every year.

Whether you're a diehard fan or just there for the tailgate, it's a rivalry that holds a special place in college football.





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