

THE SOUTHERN SPORTS EDITION

May 2025 Edition

TRAVIS HUNTER

THE NEWEST JAGUAR



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Georgia Bulldogs 6-Day



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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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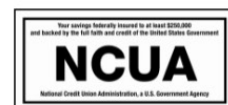
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ROUND 1 | PICK



DRAFT DAY

NFL Draft Recap By Colin Lacy



On April 24th, the NFL world flocked to Lambeau Field where over 100,000 fans from across the 32 NFL teams showed out to see who the newest additions to NFL rosters would be as the home of the Packers hosted the 2025 NFL Draft.

The first couple of picks were as expected in the sense of which players were going with which pick, but there was a little shakeup with who would be taking those players.

The night began with Miami QB Cam Ward going first overall to the Tennessee Titans.

Ward has an incredible story of climbing from FCS Incarnate Word to Washington State before finishing his college career for the Hurricanes in Coral Gables.

Ward took the ACC by storm leading all of FBS with 39 touchdowns, and I think could see even more success in the NFL in a pro system.

Not many were shocked to see Travis Hunter go off the board with the second pick, but there was a "Draft Day"-like trade made as the Jacksonville Jaguars traded up to pick up the second overall selection from the Cleveland Browns.

The Jags and first year Head Coach Liam Coen get what many have called "the Unicorn" of football as Hunter is expected to continue to play both offense as a wide receiver and contribute as a defensive back on the flip side as well like he has for Coach Prime at Colorado and Jackson State.

This can be a franchise changing and possibly league changing selection if it goes how DUVAL expects. Like the way the Shohei Ohtani has changed the

Dodgers and the game of baseball as a two-way player, Hunter can be that for the Jags and the NFL.

The trenches took the show for much of the first round as eight of the next eleven selections (3-13) were a combination of four offensive linemen and four defensive linemen.

The hometown Atlanta Falcons would stay in the state of Georgia and select a Georgia Bulldog from Athens as LB/DE Jalon Walker would become the newest "Dirty Bird."

Rece Davis shocked many by bringing up the fact that the Falcons had never picked a UGA player in the first round in the modern history of the draft, but this selection finally addresses a need that the Falcons have had for a number of years in pass rush.

I think you may see Walker more as a defensive end in the Atlanta version of the red and black, but the versatility of Walker makes him an extremely appealing selection for the Falcons.

Walker was the second Kirby Smart disciple off the board as four picks earlier, the San Francisco 49ers would select Georgia Edge rusher Mykel Williams.

The 49ers have a huge history of developing pass rushers, and Williams becomes a fantastic option to play opposite of Nick Bosa for San Fran.

The Falcons made a late trade for the 26th overall pick from the LA

Rams in order to add another SEC pass-rusher with the selection of Tennessee's James Pearce Jr.

I was concerned when I saw the Falcons give up a 1st rounder for next year's draft as part of the trade, but love where Atlanta goes with this pick.

In the span of about an hour, Atlanta completely changed the outlook of the defensive side of the ball in the Benz.

As Ohio State O-Lineman Josh Simmons was selected by the Chiefs to wrap up the first round, the final tallies have come in.

The trenches continued to run the show as 8 O-Line and 10 D-Line were taken in the first 32 picks.

There were also only 2 QBs (Cam Ward 1st overall and Jaxson Dart 25th overall) and 4 DBs off the board.

Non-surprisingly the SEC led the way with 15 picks hailing from the SouthEastern Conference and the Big Ten setting a conference record with 11 1st round selections.

We mentioned earlier that there was a lot of "chalk" in the first round, but a couple of surprises of names that have to wait for day two would be Will Johnson (Michigan CB) who has been dealing with questions about injuries over the years and Shedeur Sanders (Colorado QB) who, along with his dad, have been vocal about being "picky" of what team to select.





PIRATES KEEP SAILING

Brunswick High Moves On To Sweet 16 By Cameron Miller



The The Brunswick High Pirates Baseball team is moving on to the Sweet 16 in the state playoffs.

The Pirates are the Class AAAAA Region 1, 3 seed, which lead them to taking a trip up to Villa Rica, Ga this past week to face off against the Villa Rica High School Wildcats.

The Wildcats were the Class AAAAA Region 5, 2 seed in this year's state playoffs. They made it to the sweet 16 last year but ultimately, due to the great play of the Pirates, fell short of a repeat.

The first round in the bracket for this year had the Pirates scheduled to play games 1 and 2 on Wednesday the 23rd and if needed, game 3 would be played on Thursday the 24th.

The Pirates made the trip up with zero intentions of needing a game 3. They made the trip short and sweet, with a 1-0 win in game 1 and a 7-5

win in game 2, giving them a clean sweep of the series.

In Game 1, Trenton Robinson was on the mound for the Pirates, where he once again had an absolute lights-out performance.

Robinson pitched 7 full shutout innings, in which he struck out 7 batters, didn't walk a single one of them, and only gave up 3 hits the entire game.

Brett Hickson had the game's only RBI, with a groundout in the first inning, it was just enough for Jordan Lodise to be able to make it home to score and give the Pirates an early 1-0 lead that they held onto until the end.

In Game 2, Jordan Lodise made the start for the Pirates. Lodise pitched 4 innings for the Pirates before others such as Brett Hickson, Braxton Johnson, and Hunter Neal took the mound in relief.

Despite giving up 5 runs, the Brunswick bats were hot in this game, scoring 7 runs against the Wildcats.

Jordan Lodise led the Pirates batting going 3 for 4, with one of his hits being a double that scored 2 runs.

Garrison Strickland was also able to bring home 2 runs with a hard-

hit ground ball that got through due to an error by the shortstop.

Another big hitter for the Pirates in this game was Trenton Robinson. Robinson went 1 for 2 with 2 walks, but his only hit came when they seemed to need it the most.

In a close 5-4 ball game in the bottom of the 6th inning, with Dawson Parke standing on 2nd base, he launched a series sealing, 2 run homerun over the left field wall.

Villa Rica tried to mount a comeback in the 7th, but the Pirates held on to close it out with a final score of 7-5.

The Pirates will now have to make the trip up to Warner Robins, Ga on April 29th for their Sweet 16 matchup where they will face off against the Houston County High School Bears.

Houston is the Class AAAAA Region 2, 1 Seed, so I'm sure the Pirates will be tested in this matchup, but if they can continue to stay this hot I have zero doubts in their ability to get the job done and advance to the Elite 8.





10 QUESTIONS

You Should Ask Your Physical Therapist

Physical therapy is a medical specialty that uses specific exercises and non-surgical, medication-free methods. It can successfully treat certain illnesses, injuries and debilitating physical conditions in many patients. It also helps people recover after surgery. “Depending on the patient, most physicians recommend physical therapy before considering surgery. It is better to begin treatment with a conservative effort, such as physical therapy, before attempting more invasive options,” says Nick Rex, DPT, physical therapist at Southeast Georgia Health System Outpatient Rehabilitation Care Center in Brunswick.

If your doctor refers you to physical therapy, Rex recommends asking several questions at your first session. “You’ll work closely with your therapy team over several weeks or months. To get the best results, you need to know what to expect and what is expected of you.” He suggests bringing the following discussion points to your first appointment.

1. **Make sure you understand your diagnosis.** “If you’re unsure, ask your physical therapist to explain it in laymen’s terms, as well as the contributing factors,” Rex says, adding, “We are licensed medical professionals and experts at biomechanics, human anatomy, the musculoskeletal system, and the innervation of the body through the central and peripheral nervous systems.”
2. **What is your experience treating my condition?** “We’re experienced in treating a variety of conditions – from helping people recover from a stroke or surgery to restoring mobility after an accident to relieving pain from overuse or acute injuries. We routinely obtain specialty certifications in certain aspects of rehabilitation to more effectively treat specific patient populations,” Rex says.
3. **What is the success rate for people with my condition?** “Each patient is different, but we can share the average success rates, depending on your age and physical condition. The quicker you begin rehab after an injury or surgery, the better the prognosis for full recovery.”
4. **What is my treatment plan?** “We design treatment plans and prescribe therapeutic interventions and modalities based on your needs, whether that is reclaiming independence, returning to work, or enjoying sports or hobbies,” Rex says. “Our goal is for you to reach your goals as efficiently as possible”.
5. **How many sessions will I need?** “This may be dictated by many factors such as your insurance, diagnosis, your compliance, and your progress. Generally, it can be adjusted, if necessary.”
6. **How long will I take to recover, and how will you measure my progress?** “Generally, chronic conditions will take longer than acute injuries to correct and some surgeries are protocol driven based on your surgeons’ recommendations. Communication between you and your therapist is key to ensure you are on the most effective course of rehab for your condition,” Rex says.
7. **How can I assist my own recovery?** Are there exercises or activities I should do or avoid? “Therapists will teach you what we want you to focus on and certain movements or activities we want you to avoid. ‘No pain no gain’ is not always the case but there are many times at home and during treatment sessions where pain is a necessary part of recovery and patients should be aware of this.”
8. **Should I do home exercises?** According to Rex, “YES! YES! YES! You cannot solely rely on the time you have with your therapist to meet your goals. We will ensure your understanding of what activities we want you to perform independently at home after you are taught the proper form of these interventions with your therapist.”
9. **Ice or heat?** “Ice should be used with active inflammation present such as with acute injuries including surgery. Ice constricts blood vessels reducing swelling and helping to reduce pain. Heat should be used for chronic conditions, muscle spasm, joint stiffness, or conditions with restricted blood flow. Heat helps to dilate blood vessels, relax muscle fibers, and improve the extensibility of soft tissues to improve movement and reduce pain.
10. **What can I do to prevent re-injury and/or maintain mobility after completing physical therapy?** “Throughout the therapy plan of care, patients are educated on lifestyle modifications, exercise techniques and therapeutic aids to maintain their progress. We want to give you tools that you can use throughout the course of life.”

Before scheduling physical therapy, ask your insurer if a doctor’s referral is required. The Health System provides outpatient physical therapy at two Brunswick locations, at St. Simons Island and St. Marys. Pediatric physical therapy is also available in Brunswick. To learn more, call 912-466-5340.





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CHAMPIONSHIP CHOMP

Gators Are National Champs By Michael Spiers



The Florida Gators are national champs, and they absolutely earned it.

This wasn't one of those lucky runs or feel-good Cinderella stories. Florida took the hard road, the kind that leaves no doubt about who deserves the trophy.

They battled through the SEC, the toughest conference college basketball has ever seen, which somehow managed to send 14 teams to the NCAA Tournament.

Then they won the conference tourney. And from there? They tore through a stacked NCAA bracket that saw all four No. 1 seeds make the Final Four. That almost never happens.

To even reach the championship game, the Gators had to take down UConn, a team that had won back-to-back national titles.

Then they found themselves down 12 points in the second half against Houston, a team that led for most of the game. But Florida didn't blink. They chipped away at the lead, made big-time plays down the stretch, and pulled off a gutsy 65-63 win to claim their third national title.

It wasn't always pretty, but it was gritty, and that fits this team perfectly.

Florida didn't get here by stacking up five-star freshmen. They built this roster with savvy transfers—guys who had already proven themselves elsewhere.

Walter Clayton Jr. started at Iona. Alijah Martin played most of his college career at Florida Atlantic. Will Richard came over from Belmont. None of them were top 100 high school

recruits, but together, they formed one of the best and most well-rounded squads in the country.

Clayton was a star all tournament long. Martin brought leadership and toughness from his deep run with FAU last year. Richard, who scored the most in the title game, showed up big when it mattered most. These weren't one-and-done prospects. They were veterans who knew how to win.

Head coach Todd Golden deserves a lot of credit for putting it all together. In just his third year with the Gators, he's built a team that thrives in today's transfer-heavy landscape.

That said, his season wasn't without controversy. Golden was the subject of a Title IX complaint before the season started, involving accusations of stalking and harassment.

The university later said there was no evidence to support the claims and closed the investigation in January. Golden hasn't said much about it, and neither has the school, but after this season it's likely his next big headline will be about a contract extension.

Now, as impressive as Florida's run was, it also says something bigger about where college basketball is heading.

This year's tournament? Not exactly the wild ride we've come to

expect. No buzzer-beater upsets. No Cinderella crashing the party. The lowest seed in the Sweet 16 was a No. 10 from, you guessed it, the SEC. It was a tournament full of top dogs, and Florida, with its battle-hardened group of transfers, came out on top.

That's not necessarily a bad thing. I firmly believe players should have the freedom to move, get paid, and find the best spot for themselves. It's just... different.

The charm of March Madness has always been its unpredictability, the chance to watch tiny schools knock off the giants. But when all the best mid-major talent ends up at places like Florida, those magical moments might become a lot rarer.

Still, none of that is Florida's fault. They just played the hand they were dealt better than anyone else. They didn't just adapt to the new world of college hoops. They owned it. And now they've got another championship banner to show for it.

So, while this year's tournament might've been a little short on the "madness," it was full of high-level basketball.

Florida's path was as tough as it gets, and they passed every test. Like it or not, this is what winning in college basketball looks like now. And Florida? They've set the standard.





G-DAY

Dawgs Continue Spring Tradition By Kenneth Harrison



The Georgia Bulldogs recently played the G-Day Spring game. That is significant because some programs like Nebraska have chosen not to play a spring game.

With the transfer portal some teams say that causes other programs to poach players. That is why the UGA spring game was not televised.

This game featured the Red Team (No. 1 offense/second team defense) against the Black Team (No. 1 Defense/second team offense). The Red Team won 34-17. The announced attendance for the game was 35,003.

The offense had 88 pass attempts and just 44 rushing attempts. Gunner Stockton took every rep with the first-team offense in the first half. Defenders aren't able to hit the quarterback, while it often plays very vanilla coverage and rarely blitzes.

Projected starting quarterback Gunner Stockton passed for 309 yards, 2 touchdowns, 1 interception and he completed 50% of his pass attempts.

Backup QB Ryan Puglisi had 49 pass attempts. He was inconsistent but he did throw a touchdown pass to Colbie Young on his first chance playing with the starting offense. He did throw an interception that was picked off by Dominick Kelly shortly before halftime.

Third-string quarterback Colter Ginn led a touchdown drive to start the second half. He threw a seven-yard TD to London Humphrey's.

"Some good and bad for both, but that's the way spring games go," Kirby Smart said. "We've got to play some loose plays, throw the ball

around, got to do some two-minute.

Excited about the guys that got to play. We've got a lot of work to do in terms of offseason and getting ourselves where we need to be for next year, but a lot of the mid-years got valuable minutes. I can remember when mid-years kind of went with the threes and fours, and now it seems like more of them are going with the twos.

"That's just the way of college football right now."

The defensive backs looked good in this game. Daniel Harris prevented a deep pass to Noah Thomas on the opening drive. He intercepted Stockton in the end zone later in the first quarter.

The leading receiver for the first-team offense was Dillon Bell. He had 5 receptions for 78 yards. He also had a 13-yard rush to showcase how versatile he is. Junior London Humphreys had 4 receptions, 77 yards and 2 touchdowns.

"London's very smart," Smart said of Humphreys after the scrimmage. "He doesn't have a lot of anxiety, he's very mature, and he's good for those kids in that (group) because he works really hard."

Kicker Peyton Woodring made field-goal attempts of 44 and 35 yards. Liam Badger made a 23-yard field goal.

The offensive line was missing Monroe Freeling and Daniel Calhoun, as both recover from injury.

The defensive line is very young and they were in a tough position dealing with 88 pass attempts. They lost a lot of talent to the upcoming 2025 NFL draft so they need to gain more experience.

"We (have) got to get better," said Smart when asked about all the redshirt freshmen playing on the offensive and defensive lines.

The Bulldogs will open the 2025 season August 30th at home against Marshall.

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RUN

Why Ronald Acuña Jr. Was Right By Robert Craft



They all should have known better.

Jarred Kelenic should have ran. Brian Snitker should have benched his talent. And Ronald Acuña Jr. should have addressed the double standard internally rather than taking to X to say, “If it were me, they would take me out of the game.”

Acuña, who is not with the Atlanta Braves while recovering from a torn left ACL, later deleted his controversial post. The problem for Snitker, a Braves lifer, is that his star right fielder essentially stated a fact.

Snitker removed Acuña from a game in August 2019 for the same offense Kelenic committed Saturday night; failing to run hard on a fly ball out of the batter’s box he thought

would be a home run.

He also pulled Ender Inciarte for lack of hustle in July 2018 and Marcell Ozuna for the same misstep in June 2023. Do you sense a pattern?

Snitker defended Acuña when the Miami Marlins repeatedly drilled Acuña in 2018. He continued playing Ozuna when many Braves fans booed him and wanted him released during his slow start to the 2023 season. And those are just two examples.

Still, just as players make mistakes, so do managers. Snitker hardly distinguished himself with his failure to bench Kelenic and his feeble responses to reporters’ questions about the incident the past two days.

Consider what Snitker said after benching Acuña, then the reigning NL Rookie of the Year, in 2019:

“He didn’t run. You’ve got to run. It’s not going to be acceptable here. As a teammate, you’re responsible for 24 other guys. That name on the front is a lot more important than the name on the back of that jersey.

“You can’t do that. We’re trying to accomplish and do something special here, and personal things have to be put on the back burner. You just can’t let your team down like that.”

Snitker should have taken the same stance with Kelenic, a struggling player and easier target than Acuña, a future MVP. Kelenic very well could be the player sent to Triple A when Acuña rejoins the Braves, possibly in early May.

Acuña was 21 then. He is 27 now, married with two sons. The general consensus around the Braves in recent seasons was that he matured, in the way most young players do in the MLB.

His post on X, like many reactions on social media, was made in the heat of the moment. But if there’s one thing players detest in managers, it’s inconsistency. Snitker was inconsistent with Kelenic. Acuña can be forgiven for lodging an objection.

How will this play out?





THE BACK NINE

Rory McIlroy Wins The Masters By Brian Albertson



Wow, what a thrilling Masters this year.

Rory McIlroy finally won a green jacket and became the sixth golfer to win the professional Grand Slam.

On his road to making golf history, Rory set a couple of unique records. He made the most double bogies of any Masters winner. And to offset that he made more threes on his scorecard than any player in the history of the masters.

Rory also avenged his great disappointment from last year's U.S. Open with a short missed putt on number 18 while losing out to Bryson Dechambeau. On this day, the roles were reversed as Bryson struggled for most of the day shooting a 75.

The biggest Sunday charge came from Englishman, Justin Rose. Justin closed with a phenomenal 66 and found himself in a Sudden Death playoff with Rory McIlroy.

The back nine was riveting for everyone watching and gut wrenching for the players.

The shock of the back nine came when Rory dumped a simple short wedge shot into Ray's Creek at number 13.

This led to another double bogey that allowed numerous players back into the competition. Some of the players with late charges included Cory Connors, Ludvig Aberg, Scotty Scheffler, Patrick Reed with an incredible eagle at the 17th hole, and the super-hot Justin Rose.

The huge mistake at 13 served as a wakeup call for Rory. He rallied

with an amazing approach shot to par 5, 15th hole setting up a makeable eagle putt.

He would miss that putt but make an easy tap in birdie followed by birdie at 17.

Needing a four-footer on number 18 to win the masters in regulation, Rory missed a short one similar to last year's at Pinehurst and we all thought "here we go again."

This day would end differently. Rory and Justin would finish 72 holes tied at 11 under Par. Both players returned to 18 to begin a sudden death playoff. Both players hit perfect tee shots in the fairway. The tee shot at 18 is undoubtedly one of the hardest shots in championship golf.

They both followed that with amazing approach shots with Justin, having an 8-foot birdie putt and Rory stuffing a wedge in tight to 3 feet.

Justin's putt barely slipped past the right edge of the hole leaving him with a par four setting up a winning opportunity for Rory.

Rory not so calmly made this nerve-racking 3-foot birdie putt to win his first masters in his 17th try while also completing the career professional Grand Slam of golf.

Something that only five golfers had done before him. Rory now joins golf legends Gene Sarazen, Ben Hogan, Gary Player, Jack Nicklaus, and Tiger Woods as the only other golfers to win the professional Grand Slam.

Of course, Masters founder, lifelong amateur and Georgia native Bobby Jones is still the only golfer to win all four majors in one year, in 1930 Mr. Jones won the US Amateur, the British Amateur, the US open and British Open all in the same year.

The professional Grand Slam came about years later after the Masters quickly became a major championship.

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13 CLT 3:05PM	14	15 MEM 7:45PM	16 MEM 7:45PM	17 MEM 7:45PM	18 MEM 4:05PM	19 MEM 4:05PM
20 MEM 2:05PM	21	22 GWN 11:05AM	23 GWN 7:05PM	24 GWN 7:05PM	25 GWN 7:05PM	26 GWN 6:35PM
27 GWN 3:05PM	28	29 DUR 11:05AM	30 DUR 6:35PM			

MAY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
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11 SYR 3:05PM	12	13 NOR 6:35PM	14 NOR 6:35PM	15 NOR 12:05PM	16 NOR 6:35PM	17 NOR 6:35PM
18 NOR 1:05PM	19	20 MEM 7:05PM	21 MEM 7:05PM	22 MEM 7:05PM	23 MEM 7:05PM	24 MEM 6:35PM
25 MEM 6:05PM	26	27 GWN 7:05PM	28 GWN 7:05PM	29 GWN 7:05PM	30 GWN 7:05PM	31 GWN 6:05PM

JUNE

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 GWN 1:05PM	2	3 DUR 7:05PM	4 DUR 7:05PM	5 DUR 7:05PM	6 DUR 7:05PM	7 DUR 6:35PM
8 DUR 3:05PM	9	10 ROC 6:45PM	11 ROC 6:45PM	12 ROC 1:05PM	13 ROC 6:45PM	14 ROC 6:45PM
15 ROC 1:05PM	16	17 SYR 6:35PM	18 SYR 6:35PM	19 SYR 6:35PM	20 SYR 6:35PM	21 SYR 6:35PM
22 SYR 1:05PM	23	24 NAS 7:05PM	25 NAS 12:05PM	26 NAS 7:05PM	27 NAS 7:05PM	28 NAS 6:35PM
29 NAS 3:05PM						

JULY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1 CLT 7:04PM	2 CLT 7:04PM	3 CLT 6:05PM	4 CLT 7:05PM	5 CLT 6:35PM
6 CLT 5:05PM	7	8 NOR 7:05PM	9 NOR 7:05PM	10 NOR 7:05PM	11 NOR 7:05PM	12 NOR 6:35PM
13 NOR 1:05PM	14	15 ALL-STAR BREAK	16 ALL-STAR BREAK	17 ALL-STAR BREAK	18 GWN 7:05PM	19 GWN 6:05PM
20 GWN 1:05PM	21	22 DUR 6:35PM	23 DUR 6:35PM	24 DUR 6:35PM	25 DUR 6:35PM	26 DUR 6:35PM
27 DUR 5:05PM	28	29 COL 7:05PM	30 COL 7:05PM	31 COL 7:05PM		

AUGUST

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1 COL 7:05PM	2 COL 6:35PM
3 COL 5:05PM	4	5 NAS 7:35PM	6 NAS 7:35PM	7 NAS 7:35PM	8 NAS 7:35PM	9 NAS 7:35PM
10 NAS 7:05PM	11	12 NOR 7:05PM	13 NOR 7:05PM	14 NOR 7:05PM	15 NOR 7:05PM	16 NOR 6:35PM
17 NOR 5:05PM	18	19 WOR 6:45PM	20 WOR 6:45PM	21 WOR 6:45PM	22 WOR 6:45PM	23 WOR 4:05PM
24 WOR 1:05PM	25	26 ROC 7:05PM	27 ROC 7:05PM	28 ROC 7:05PM	29 ROC 7:05PM	30 ROC 6:35PM
31 ROC 6:35PM						

SEPTEMBER

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		2 CLT 6:35PM	3 CLT 6:35PM	4 CLT 7:04PM	5 CLT 7:04PM	6 CLT 5:35PM
7 CLT TBD	8	9 MEM 7:05PM	10 MEM 7:05PM	11 MEM 7:05PM	12 MEM 7:05PM	13 MEM 6:35PM
14 MEM 2:05PM	15	16 NOR 6:35PM	17 NOR 6:35PM	18 NOR 12:05PM	19 NOR 6:35PM	20 NOR 6:35PM
21 NOR 1:05PM						

OPPONENTS

CLT — CHARLOTTE KNIGHTS (CWS)
COL — COLUMBUS CLIPPERS (CLE)
DUR — DURHAM BULLS (TB)
GWN — GWINNETT STRIPERS (ATL)
MEM — MEMPHIS REDBIRDS (STL)

NAS — NASHVILLE SOUNDS (MIL)
NOR — NORFOLK TIDES (BAL)
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TAKING OFF THE JERSEY

Nico Iamaleava And The Future of College Football By Robert Craft



Nico Iamaleava's name will go down in college football history as one that created a turning point for players in multiple ways.

Which part fans remember might depend on how the rest of Iamaleava's football career plays out.

As he prepares to enter the transfer portal amid a public breakup with Tennessee about name, image and likeness re-negotiations, this first-of-its-kind NFL-style holdout situation was possible only because of what had come before it.

Iamaleava once again has brought college football a lot closer to ... whatever its future will be. His NIL deal going public before enrolling at Tennessee and the legal defense of it led to more money for players. Iamaleava gave a lot more leverage to the players by knowing the value of college athletes.

On the other hand, his public breakup with Tennessee gave leverage to the universities. Had Tennessee and its collective balked or hesitated, more stars might've started public holdouts. Instead, Vols fans backed coach Josh Heupel, and players are anticipating that fans won't be on their side.

It started in 2022, an \$8 million multiyear for Iamaleava while he was still in high school.

It was one of the first sets of public NIL numbers, and this caught more attention from the public because Iamaleava hadn't played a single down of college football.

When the NCAA looked into

it, the state of Tennessee's attorney general sued the Tennessee collective, leading to a settlement that allows boosters to negotiate NIL with athletes and their agents before players enroll.

Both of those situations will likely lead to more millions going to players. The public contract leak in 2022 reset the market for active players and recruits and has removed the possibility of universities underpaying athletes who are inexperienced in negotiation.

The AG's lawsuit opened the door to more direct NIL conversations with recruits. Cracking the NIL and creating a more lucrative space for athletes is part of Iamaleava's legacy.

That is why the whole idea of calling this "NIL" remains farcical. The millions and millions spent on players for NIL come from boosters, local business owners, and rich alumni who want these players to represent their business the same way they represent their university.

This has created tension between regular fans, who don't care about any individual's success, they just want to see their team win...

College football is a transient sport; because of that fans root for a team more than a player because the players are only there for 4 years MAX.

The NCAA was able to keep up amateurism and cheat athletes for

so long. The NCAA has purposely made the unionization of players hard on the principle that fans, more often than not, will show up on Saturdays no matter who's on the field, even if they're showing up with paper bags on their heads.

That reminder is the message coming out of Iamaleava's impending divorce from Tennessee. Tennessee was one of the only states in America that never outlawed sharecropping, and their slave-owner mentality with college athletes is what bit them in the ass financially and on the field.

There is no college football without college athletes, and there is no excellence in college football without excellent college athletes.

The story is far from over. Perhaps Iamaleava finds a new home, continues to succeed, and earns whatever amount of money he's worth.

Perhaps Tennessee can't find an adequate replacement internally or in the portal and struggles in 2025.

The Vols appear willing to live with the potential consequences of fumbling a world class athlete, and the fans support being a worse team in 2025.

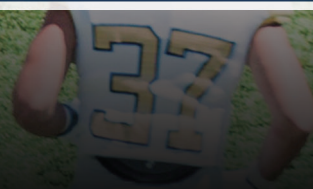
Players are worth what organizations are willing to pay them. That's basic business. This breakup is a reminder that it only goes so far.





SPRING BUZZ

Georgia Tech Spring Game By Kenneth Harrison





Georgia Tech played their spring game and Team Wreck 'Em beat Swarm 20-19 in the White and Gold game.

Starting quarterback Haynes King played limited snaps in this game. I'm sure they wanted to make sure he stays healthy. King went 5-7 for 31 yards on the first drive for Team Swarm. The drive stalled so they had to punt.

Aidan Birr made a 47-yard field goal with 7:23 left in the first quarter to give Team Wreck 'Em a 3-0 lead.

Wide receiver Zion Taylor had seven catches for 107 yards and 2 touchdowns. Bailey Stockton had six receptions for 107 yards.

QB Aaron Philo completed a 58-yard pass to Taylor and a 17-yard touchdown pass to Luke Harpring to put Swarm within one point. Philo's game winning two-point conversion pass attempt was incomplete.

"It's really about just staying patient, trusting the process and now I got the opportunity to go show my abilities and what I can do," Taylor said of his day. "I just gotta make the most of it every time I get the chance."

QB Graham Knowles threw a 34-yard touchdown pass to Taylor with 1:40 left in the game. That turned out to be the game winner.

King completed 9 of 12 passes for 66 yards. Philo was 19 of 34 passing for 275 yards, 1 touchdown and 2 interceptions. Knowles completed 11 of 20 passes for 133 yards, a touchdown and a pick.

"Today was a perfect example of why I think it's important to play

spring games," Tech coach Brent Key said. "There's a lot of reasons behind it from external, fans and student body and people around, but the importance is when you go out and scrimmage and you have people in the stands, it's a different environment. You don't know how you're gonna scrimmage by the way you practice, necessarily. You hope you do."

"Then you don't know how you're gonna scrimmage in a stadium with people in it as opposed to a stadium that is empty. Everything we're doing trying to shrink that gap between our preparation and playing in a game. This is another step toward that."

Freshman running back J.P. Powell scored a 1-yard touchdown early in the second quarter to give Team Wreck 'Em a 10-0 lead. That capped of an 11-play drive.

Junior running back Jamal Haynes only had one carry but he did throw a touchdown pass. Haynes led the Yellow Jackets in rushing last season with 944 yards, 9 TD's and he

averaged 5.6 yards per carry. In 2023 he had 1,059 yards and 7 scores.

King threw a pass to Haynes in the right flat and Haynes caught it on the 45 and tossed a pass to Taylor who caught it at the 10. He dragged a defender into the end zone.

"We're trying to build depth at quarterback," Key joked during the ESPN livestream after the play.

Said Haynes postgame: "We put it in (Friday). We just wanted to bring a little fun to the game. Luckily, I had a great receiver to track down the ball because that (throw) was a little duck."

"This is a reward for the players, too," Key added. "You go through 14 days of practice, and I promise you our practices are real practice now. That's the thing about spring; you go through all those practices and there's no real reward other than the spring game. The reward is you're getting better. So, give them an opportunity to go out there and play and you wanna see guys have fun, too."



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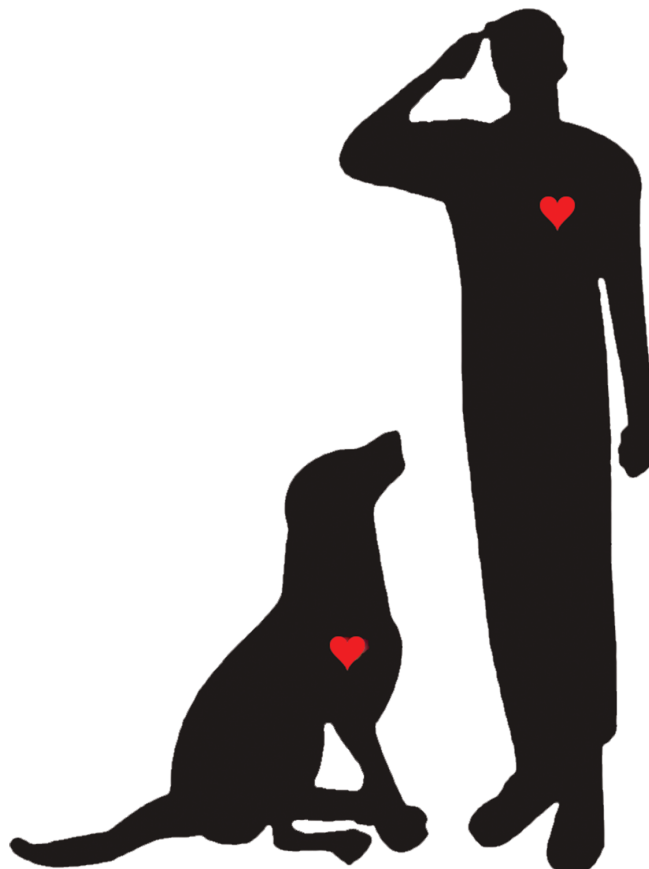


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