

THE *SOUTHERN SPORTS* EDITION

September 2016 Edition



COLLEGE FOOTBALL PREVIEW



Georgia Preview



Alabama Preview



Florida Preview

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GET TO KNOW THE WRITERS



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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 the voices of the Glynn Academy Red Terrors, Ware County Gators and Camden County Wildcats, to in-depth information on the Brunswick High Pirates, Frederica Academy Knights, the McIntosh County Academy Buccaneers, Brantley County Blue Herons, a beat on the Atlanta Braves, the Georgia Bulldogs, Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets, SEC, ACC, NASCAR and all southern sports with actual southern opinions. The Southern Sports Edition is currently distributed in six counties...Glynn County, Camden County, Brantley County, Ware County, Pierce County and McIntosh County and growing everyday.

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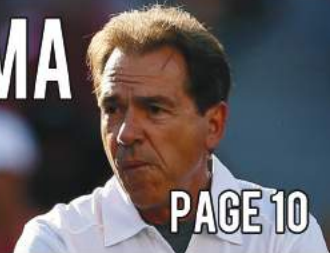
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2016 GEORGIA PREVIEW

The Great Unknown By Drayton Hogarth

The 2016 football season for the Georgia Bulldogs is one that certainly has the Bulldog Nation's full attention and fascination.

There is so much that is unknown heading into the season, which is scary, but also brings even more anticipation to see what the season will bring.

Who are the players that become the new leaders and playmakers? What are the games that can make or break the Bulldogs season?

For the first time in 15 seasons, there will be a new head coach roaming the sidelines of Sanford Stadium. Kirby Smart returns after calling Athens home during his collegiate playing days.

Smart has brought a renewed enthusiasm and energy back to the program. The biggest unknown of the coaching staff will be Kirby Smart himself and how he handles the little things that come with being the top decision maker of a major program.

Things like clock management and when to make decisions that may go against the "book" are just a couple of things that are not made as a coordinator, but the head coach must anticipate the proper timing of how to handle such things.

Or, who to name starter at quarterback, which is the biggest question of discussion of the UGA offseason; Eason, Lambert, or Ramsey? The long money is on freshman Jacob Eason to get the

starting nod, especially if the running backs are back and healthy, which leads us to taking a look at the rest of the roster.

Fortunately for Coach Smart, the cupboard is not bare in Athens. Smart is inheriting a team that is very talented. There are 14 returning starters on both sides of the ball.

Let's start on offense. Nick Chubb is back doing Nick Chubb things despite the horrific knee injury suffered on the pasture otherwise known as Neyland Stadium.

Sony Michel has had the cast removed from his forearm, broken in the offseason. If running back is not one of the best position groups in the country then tight end certainly is, led by Jeb Blazevich and Jackson Harris.

The offensive line returns three starters, plus multiple returning lettermen in the rotation. Terry Godwin leads an underrated wide receiving corp, which will also include returning players Jason Stanley and Michael Chigbu.

Coach Smart has been lauding the play of the incoming freshman class including Elijah Holyfield, who appears to be the real deal (pun intended). As well as, freshmen pass catchers will be Riley Ridley and Tyler Simmons, plus the freshmen tight ends who will boost that position even more as Isaac Nauta and Charlie Woerner will look to have big seasons.

Defensively, the linebacking group led by Lorenzo Carter and Davin Bellamy will look to replace Leonard Floyd and Jordan Jenkins.

The secondary, which led

the nation in passing yards, allowed returns mostly intact, plus the huge addition of graduate transfer from Alabama, Maurice Smith; this should be a very solid group. The defensive line will be led by Trenton Thompson, Daquan Hawkins, and John Atkins. Jonathan Ledbetter and Michael Barnett will take big strides forward under defensive line coach Tracy Rucker.

Again, the freshman class should be major contributors as Michail Carter and David Marshall learn on the job. One wildcard player to keep an eye on is athlete Mecole Hardman, who could play a major role on offense, defense, special teams, or all three.

Schedule wise, the Georgia schedule sets up nicely for the Bulldogs. While it is always a tough row to hoe to play an SEC schedule, a challenging opening matchup with North Carolina, and back to back road games at Missouri and Ole Miss will be tough.

Plus, the home game against east division favorite Tennessee will be pivotal. The season most likely will come down to the three rivalry games, versus Florida in Jacksonville and at home against Auburn and Georgia Tech.

Again, the schedule is tough, but certainly doable. Georgia could win every game or more likely the grind will get to some of the freshmen, and a first year head coach.

A 10-2 record would be a great start to the Smart era, anything over that is icing on the cake.





2016 FLORIDA PREVIEW

Gator Chomp By Kenneth Harrison Jr

Florida had a fairly successful year under new head coach Jim McElwain. The Gators went 10-4 and 7-1 in the SEC. They won the Eastern division and played in the SEC Championship game.

Florida was known for explosive offense under Steve Spurrier and Urban Meyer. After Will Muschamp's first season as head coach in 2011 the offensive production came to a screeching halt. The lack of talent on offense during Muschamp's four years will come back to haunt Florida this season.

Quarterback Will Grier improved and he was playing well in 2015. He led the Gators to a 6-0 start passing for 1,204 yards, 10 touchdowns

and 3 interceptions. He failed a drug test for PED's and got a year-long suspension from the NCAA. He was not projected to return until at least October. Grier transferred to West Virginia.

Treon Harris became the starter after Grier's suspension. He did not play well but that's not the biggest issue. Harris along with wide receiver Antonio Callaway was accused of sexual assault and he's no longer with the team.

Now Luke Del Rio, son of NFL head coach Jack Del Rio is the

starter. This is his third college so we really don't know how good he is. He walked on at Alabama in 2013. He transferred to Oregon State and played briefly as a back up. He completed 8-of-18 passes for 141 yards in 2014. JUCO transfer running back Mark Thompson will be the focal point on offense. Standing 6'2 and 242 pounds he's a big powerful runner.

The defense was 8th in the nation in total defense last season. The secondary did lose Vernon Hargreaves III and Keanu Neal to the NFL. Cornerback Jalen Tabor, Jr is the best player on defense. He had four interceptions in 2015 and returned two for touchdowns. He also had 40 tackles so he can also help stop the run.

streak and live up to preseason hype. I think the home crowd will be the difference maker and Tennessee will win.

They play in the state of Tennessee the following week against Vanderbilt. The Commodores don't stand a chance.

LSU comes to Gainesville for the biggest game of the year. This is the only game I picked the Tigers to lose and I'm sticking with that.

Missouri comes to town November 5th. It's the game before the bye week and Florida will win.

The Georgia game in Jacksonville is next. Florida is 20-6 against the Bulldogs since 1990. They beat them on such a regular basis I never pick against Florida in this game.



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The season begins in The Swamp against U Mass. This will be an easy 40-point win.

Kentucky comes to Gainesville the next week. Florida has beaten the Wildcats 29 consecutive times. This is another easy win.

The Mean Green of North Texas is another glorified preseason game. Hopefully the offense will really start clicking by the third game.

The first road game is at Tennessee. The Gators have a twelve game win streak in the series. All the pressure is on the Vols to break that

The next three games are against Arkansas, South Carolina and FCS Presbyterian College. I think they'll lose on the road against the Razorbacks but win the next two games.

Of course the season ends on the road with arch rival Florida State. I'm not sure about the quarterback for FSU but they have a lot of talent. The Seminoles should win.

I believe Florida will win nine regular season games. I think that will be very good considering it's McElwain's second season.

ROLE OF THE ATHLETIC TRAINER: AN ATHLETE'S BEST FRIEND

By **Beau Sasser, M.D.**, board-certified orthopaedic surgeon, Summit Sports Medicine & Orthopaedic Surgery, and medical director, Sports Medicine, Southeast Georgia Health System

In a report by the National Athletic Trainers' Association, only 55 percent of athletes at public schools have access to a full-time Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC). Most school administrators, especially after the recent recession, cite lack of funding. Yet a 2012 study by the American Academy of Pediatrics makes a good case that student athletes are safer when ATCs are around. At schools without ATCs, recurrent injury rates were 5.7 times higher among soccer players and three times higher among basketball players. High schools with ATCs reported more concussions; that is a good thing because this underdiagnosed condition can lead to more serious injuries. So what are the different hats an athletic trainer must wear?



Beau Sasser, M.D.

Overseeing the general care of student athletes

Even before the school nurse goes home, the athletic trainer arrives on campus to begin the daily routine of injury evaluations and rehabilitation, protective taping, coordinating practice preparation, concussion testing, monitoring weather conditions, instituting return to play protocol, discussing statuses with coaches and covering different athletic events. All of these duties keep the athletic trainer busy long after the sun goes down.

Coordinating care and directing preventative care for injuries

The athletic trainer works with athletes in different stages of recovery. This includes injury prevention workouts, on the field evaluations and return to play protocols to ensure that an athlete has safely recovered before they return to the field of play.

Providing referrals and expediting medical care for injured athletes

Most athletic trainers have developed relationships with community physicians. This is important because it allows the athletic trainer to communicate with the physicians to make sure the student athlete is progressing as expected and following the physician's rehabilitation protocol for safe return to play.

Assisting in the development of an Emergency Action Plan (EAP)

School districts should have an EAP in place for every venue its teams use for practice and play. The athletic trainer is the coordinator of this plan. They have the knowledge of how to plan for and respond to an emergency situation. They work with local Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), paramedics and other first responders as well as school staff, including coaches, to develop a response protocol in the event of an injured athlete, coach or spectator.

Overseeing the athletic department and coaches to ensure compliance with state regulations

A number of states have set forth legislation on many topics for student athlete safety related to issues of sudden cardiac death, heat exposure and concussion. Georgia recently enacted the HB 284 Return to Play Act which states that school systems must institute return to play policies for young athletes who get a concussion and educate parents and coaches on the risks of concussions. It is part of the athletic trainers' job to develop programs to educate students, coaches and parents about different health issues.

Directing educational and in-service programs for administrators, teachers, coaches and community

School districts are increasingly concerned about a wide range of student health issues, including MRSA, exertional heat illness and concussion. An athletic trainer can help disseminate this information to the community by educating teachers, administrators, coaches and parents. These in-service programs are important to stress the importance of these conditions and how they can be properly prevented and treated.

So the next time you see your school's athletic trainer, please thank him/her for the hard work they do to keep our student athletes safe.

This article and many others written by Dr. Sasser are available online at Dr. Beau Sasser's Sports Medicine Blog. Subscribe at sassermid.wordpress.com.

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2016 ALABAMA PREVIEW

The Bama Destiny By Kipp Branch

The Alabama Crimson Tide come into the 2016 season as the defending national champions, and has become a pipeline to replenish NFL rosters.

The defending champs don't rebuild anymore they just reload. Until someone knocks the king off of the throne then they are my pick to win the SEC.

Offense: Yes the Tide lost quarterback Jake Coker and Heisman winning running back Derrick Henry. So what?

At quarterback it's likely that they'll go with Cooper Bateman or couple of other talented players. The Tide has replaced National Championship QB's before. Remember Greg McElroy, and A. J. McCarron?

Whoever wins the job will have Calvin Ridley to throw to. Ridley may be the best WR in all of college football.

While Alabama is known for defense the offense was a beast in 2015. Bo Scarborough will be the running back, and he is a monster 6-2 and 230 pounds. The Tide has also lost Trent Richardson, TJ Yeldon, Eddie Lacy, and Mark Ingram too under the Saban watch.

Is the reloading theme starting materialize yet?

Offensive line led by Cam Robinson will maul people again in 2016. Lane Kiffin may be the best OC

in all of college football.

Defense: They lost Jarran Reed to Seattle and A'Shawn Robinson to my Detroit Lions on the defensive line.

Jonathan Allen returns and he is better than the two mentioned above. Nobody in college or the NFL is deeper along the DL as Alabama has been. Reuben Foster will be the thumper at LB replacing Reggie Ragland. Reload, reload, reload, and reload.

What Alabama brings to the table that nobody else can is Nick Saban. Saban is the best football coach in the business right now and that includes any NFL coach you want to name.

Saban has .847 winning percentage in Tuscaloosa and 4 National Championships, and Alabama has been ranked number one in the polls at one time or another in every season since 2008. That is a dynasty folks.

The man knows how to coach, recruit, and hire coaching talent, and handle the media better than anyone. I love watching his press conferences where he plays the media like a fiddle at a Bluegrass festival.

2016 Alabama Schedule W/L predictions:

Sept. 3 USC @ Dallas/W

Sept. 10 WKU/W

Sept. 17 at Ole Miss/W. Losing streak to Ole Miss ends.

Sept. 24 Kent State/W

Oct. 1 Kentucky/W

Oct. 8 at Arkansas/L. Alabama has one game every year where they struggle, and Arkansas matches up well with Alabama.

Oct. 15 at Tennessee/W. I'm not sold on Tennessee as a playoff contender.

Oct. 22 Texas A&M/W

Nov. 5 at LSU/W. Alabama is in LSU's head.

Nov. 12 Miss State/W

Nov. 19 UT-Chattanooga/W

Nov. 26 Auburn/W

11-1 regular season and a win over Tennessee in the SEC title game.

Alabama will enter the 4 team playoff and win in the semifinals and lose in a rematch to Clemson for the National Championship to finish 13-2. The arm chair quarterbacks come out in force and question whether the game has passed Saban by.

Alabama starts the season ranked at number 1. The critics will say Alabama lost too much talent to be ranked number one, but nobody manages a roster better than Nick Saban and this team has five-star talent stepping in to take over for departing five star talent.

As long as Nick Saban is at Alabama they will never rebuild the will just reload.

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2016 FSU PREVIEW

Noles A Dominating Force? By JJ Lanier

It's pretty difficult in sports, or really any profession for that matter, to be a dominating force for an extended period of time.

The Boston Celtics nine straight championships will never be duplicated.

North Carolina's men's basketball team made it the Sweet Sixteen for some absurd stretch of time, like 25 years in a row, and I may be actually shortchanging them on that.

If you want to look outside of sports, "All My Children's" Susan Lucci was nominated for an Emmy

besides a few less than stellar season towards the end of Bobby Bowden's career, they are showing no signs of slowing down.

Part of Florida State's continued success is due to the recent struggles of both Miami and Florida in recent years. There's obviously a bevy talent coming from the Sunshine State, and excluding Urban Meyer's short tenure in Gainesville, FSU has been the most prominent program in Florida.

It also doesn't hurt when you make the right hire at head coach. What Jimbo Fisher has been able to do in Tallahassee is one of the more

the time when you start thinking about the fact the 'Noles play in the ACC, and how that plays a part in their success too.

Honestly, I can't really argue with that either. I can't say they would've had the same success had they played in the SEC, but it would be disrespectful to take too much away from they've accomplished just because of conference affiliation.

Florida State has a pretty difficult schedule this year, relatively speaking, with Ole Miss, Clemson, and Florida on their slate. (You could even include UNC if you want to go by rankings).



over 30 straight years. Of course, it took her that long to actually win an Emmy, but that's ok, I was more of a "One Life to Live" fan anyway.

I mention all this because what Florida State has done over the past 30 or so years makes it all the more easy to take their success for granted.

Since 1987 the Seminoles have finished in the AP's Top 25 poll every year, except for three. From 1987-2000 they finished in the Top 5 every single season.

Just think about that for a second; their string of consecutive Top 5 finishes is basically the length of Michael Phelps' Olympic career. And for those of you that aren't FSU fans,

impressive coaching jobs, outside of Tuscaloosa.

It's extremely difficult to follow a coaching legend, just ask Bob Davie or Matt Doherty, but it's even more challenging when that coach is leaving after the worst four year stretch of his career.

When Bowden left the Seminoles, Florida State was struggling and it would have been easy for the program to have nosedived completely when Fisher took over.

Six years in, with one national title and a winning percentage of .829, I'd say Fisher has more than kept the ship afloat.

Now, this is probably around

The one positive though is that all those games will be in Tallahassee, except for the Ole Miss game, which might as well be a de facto home game since it's being played in Orlando.

Florida State could easily lose any of those four games mentioned above, and more than likely they'll lose at least one of them.

I would be surprised though if they're not in the playoff mix at the end of the season, which is more or less where they've been for the past 30 years. That's the type of run that most programs can only dream about. I bet you even Susan Lucci would be impressed.

2016



LSU

PREVIEW

Resurgence Year? By Kenneth Harrison Jr



LSU experienced extreme highs and lows last season. The only program I can compare it too is Texas A&M the past two years. The Aggies started 5-0 before the wheels fell off in 2014 and 2015.

The Tigers got off to a 7-0 start before losing three consecutive games. They were ranked as high as 5th in the nation and finished the season 16th in the AP Poll. A 9-3 season is good at most programs but not in Baton Rouge.

Coach Les Miles was nearly fired at the end of the season. I think it was crazy that it was even discussed or considered but that goes to show the boosters have almost unrealistic expectations.

The Tigers are led by superstar running back Leonard Fournette. He combines the rare combination of size and speed at 6'1 and 230 pounds. He was named the 2013 USA Today High School Football Offensive Player of the Year. Fournette was the No. 1 overall recruit in the 2014 according to 247sport.com, ESPN and CBS Sports.

Last season he lived up to the hype as a true sophomore rushing

for 1,953 yards, 22 touchdowns and averaged 6.5 yards per carry. The season opener against McNeese State was cancelled so Fournette would have definitely rushed for over 2,000 yards if he played in 12 regular season games.

He was the frontrunner to win the Heisman Trophy until the Alabama game. The Crimson Tide held him to just 31 yards on 19 carries to begin the losing streak.

The Tigers biggest weak link was at quarterback, which seems to always be the case. I've never seen a major program consistently struggle at the most important position on the field. Brandon Harris passed for just 2,165 yards, 13 TD's, 6 interceptions and completed 53.8% of his passes.

Coming into the season as a junior I think he should be drastically better. He has a year of experience and should develop confidence. He's the key to having a special year so the Bayou Bengals need him to step up.

LSU has new defensive coordinator Dave Aranda and he wants to use the 3-4 alignment as much as possible. With the great athletes they have I think this is a smart move. They have some stars that will make

an impact like safety Jamal Adams, Jr., LB Kendall Beckwith and DT Christian LaCouture.

The season kicks off against Wisconsin at Lambeau Field. This is easily the toughest non-conference game on the schedule and even though it's considered a neutral site Wisconsin has home field advantage.

The next tough game is October 8th at Florida. They will struggle playing at The Swamp in a hostile environment. I predict the Gators to win this game.

The most important game is November 5th at home against Alabama. The Tigers have lost their last five games against Bama; starting with the 2012 BCS Championship. Miles has to show he can beat Nick Saban again in order to keep his job. I expect LSU to win this game.

Ole Miss will take a step back this year so I don't think the division is as tough as it has been the past 2-3 years.

LSU should finish the regular season 11-1 and play in the SEC Championship game. I think the Tigers are the best team in the nation and I think they'll be playing for a national championship.



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2016 CLEMSON PREVIEW

Hear Them Roar! By Kipp Branch

Two words. Deshaun Watson. If the record setting quarterback remains healthy then the Tiger offense has all of the pieces in place to be one of the most dynamic offenses in ACC history. The Tigers averaged 38.5 points a game in 2015, and the 2016 unit looks to be even better.

More on Watson. Going into his junior season, Watson has all of the tools. He is mobile, strong armed, accurate, and demands respect in the huddle. This kid is the unquestioned leader of this offense and face of Clemson athletics.

Watson has the attention of every General Manager in the NFL as he is a once in a decade talent. Look for him to be the number 1 pick in the 2017 NFL draft. Watson is surrounded by absolutely sick skill people on offense.

Running back Wayne Gallman returns after quietly rushing for 1500 yards in 2015. How do you quietly accumulate that many yards? You do in an offense led by Deshaun Watson.

The receiving corps are the best in college football. Artavis Scott, Hunter Renfrow, Deon Cain, Mike Williams and tight end Jordan Leggett all return. Clemson is Wide Receiver U.

Clemson will insert Taylor Hearn and Jake Fruhmorgen as new starters on the OL, but the unit will still be solid. Depth is a concern if some injuries occur.

Defensive Coordinator Brent Venables is one of the best in college football and has some nice pieces returning in 2016.

It seems as if Clemson has a defensive end selected in the first round every year, and Venables has some young talent ready to become the next wave of great pass rushers like Austin Bryant and Richard Yeargin.

The defense will be led by LB Ben Boulware and CB Cordrea Tankersley. Tankersley is an elite corner and has NFL scouts drooling. Clemson is blessed with a 4-man DT rotation in Carlos Watkins, Christian Wilkins, Scott Pagano, and 5-star incoming freshman DT Dexter Lawrence who will be a monster presence with this unit.

Head Coach Dabo Swinney and his awesome "Bring your own guts" slogan has become one of the best coaches in all of college football.

Dabo took over midway through the 2008 season from Tommy Bowden and had to rebuild the program. The Tigers took off under Swinney in 2011 and have had five straight 10 win seasons and finished

14-1 in 2015 just narrowly losing to Alabama in the NC game.

The Bring Your Own Guts slogan has galvanized the Tiger Nation and optimism is at an all-time high in upper South Carolina.

Outlook for the 2016 season:

Key games: @ Auburn in season opener. I expect Clemson to dominate Auburn, but the media wants to make this into a hyped event. Auburn has major QB issues. Clemson has an NFL QB playing college football.

October 29th @ FSU. The FSU game in Tallahassee will be a regular season playoff game. Winner of this game probably makes the final 4.

Final Prediction: 15-0 and a National Championship. This is the best Clemson football team this writer has ever seen. Fertile recruiting grounds, rabid fan base, and young HC makes this program one that will be on top for the next 5-10 years.

Clemson is on solid ground and you better bring your own guts when you oppose these Tigers.

Deshaun Watson will win the Heisman Trophy in 2016 and grew up 30 minutes from the UGA campus, and was never seriously recruited by UGA under the former coaching staff there. Ouch!





2016

KENNESAW STATE

PREVIEW

Owls Opening Eyes By TJ Hartnett

After years of rumors and false starts (pun intended), Kennesaw State University finally began its long-awaited football program last year.

First year football programs tend to be a struggle, but the 2015 Owls proved to be anything but, raging forward with a ferocious offense that scored more than 50 points several times and leading the team to a record of 6-5 on the year.

They lacked that kind of success within the Big South conference to be sure, managing only two wins in six games, but while they lost the games that they were destined to lose, they won essentially every game that was borderline and went undefeated against clearly lesser teams. Success is really the only word that can be used to describe Kennesaw State's inaugural season

Time to turn the page. The Owls will return to the gridiron for their second-ever season of football in 2016, with Brian Bohannon looking to build on the school's respectable start.

KSU won their first three games, and their first six-of-eight last season, giving fans a lot to be proud of for a first-year program.

I think the team will continue to prove that they are far from being just any upstart football squad.

Familiar faces will help. One positive to starting a football

team from scratch is that you get most of your players back for the second season, due to the lack of upperclassmen.

On that note, perhaps the biggest key to the offense this season will be redshirt senior Trey White at quarterback, who was just 36 rushing yards shy of reaching the coveted 1,000 rushing/1,000 passing yards for an option field general.

He was a breakout star in 2015, and Bohannon will capitalize on that talent and experience (one year, sure) to gather a few more blowout wins.

The Owls also get back senior running back Chaston Bennett, who started all 11 games, and averaged 9.3 yards-per-carry. Look for Trey Chivers and Micah Reed to make a name for themselves this season as well as Jake McKenzie.

On the less celebrated but still solid defense, the Owls will see the return of defensive back Chance McNulty who had 43 tackles and returned a 42-yard fumble for a touchdown last season. Fans should also be excited about getting back second-team All-Big South Derrick Farrow, who had 63 tackles in 2015. Don't sleep on Izzy Sam for the upcoming season either.

The schedule in 2015 was admittedly back-loaded, lending to that aforementioned excellent start.

2016 Schedule:
9/03 – East Tennessee State

9/10 – Point
9/24 – at Duquesne
10/1 – at Furman
10/8 – Missouri S&T
10/15 – Liberty
10/22 – at Gardner-Webb
10/29 – at Monmouth
11/5 – Clark Atlanta
11/12 – Presbyterian
11/19 – at Charleston Southern

Here we see a mix of good and bad, same at last season. The Owls start the season off against Tennessee State again, which ought to give Kennesaw fans butterflies in their stomachs after the 56-16 thrashing the Owls put on in the first game of 2015.

They also put up 50 plus points against Point, who they play second in 2016. All signs point to a good start yet again.

However, Liberty, Charleston Southern and Presbyterian all wait for them later in the season. Gardner-Webb and Monmouth dropped games to the Owls last year as well, so there are winnable games throughout the schedule.

All in all, if the Owls can stay the course and continue to play as they had, with one year's experience under their belt, there's no reason year number two won't be just as good if not better for Kennesaw State's sophomore program.



2016



PREVIEW

Eagles' New Nest By Drayton Hogarth

The Georgia Southern Eagles are coming off of a great 2015 season, but even still, left a lot on the table. A devastating loss to in-state rival Georgia State was one of the most shocking losses in the country last year when considering how dominantly the Panthers defeated the Eagles in Paulson Stadium.

However, the Eagles bounced back and won their first bowl game as a member of the football bowl subdivision of the NCAA. Things seemed to continue on an upward trajectory, but in the offseason head coach Willie Fritz suddenly left Statesboro for Tulane to avoid the ire of the NCAA as Georgia Southern had a reduction in scholarships and forced to vacate three wins that ineligible players were allowed to participate.

Enter new head coach Tyson Summers, who looks to continue the winning ways of the Eagles. Coach Summers inherits a team that is heavy on talent and experience.

The big question every Georgia Southern fan wondered with the introduction of Coach Summers, what kind of offense are we going to run? Coach Summers answered quickly that the option would remain the foundation in Statesboro.

Summers made a decision to go with co-offensive coordinators of

David Dean and Rance Gillespie, and with their background look for Southern to put the ball in the air more than most Eagles fans may be accustomed to seeing.

The new offensive coaching staff will have plenty of weapons to work with two capable quarterbacks, a bevy of running backs to use, and some freshmen wide receivers to help stretch the field.

Every team needs a good quarterback, and the Eagles will have two that can win games in Kevin Ellison and Fabian Upshaw.

Ellison is a steady hand, but Upshaw is electric on the field—look for both to play, but Upshaw to slowly get more of the snaps.

Georgia Southern, of course, has a long history of dominating teams on the ground, and this year looks to be no different with LA Ramsby, Matt Breida, and Wesley Fields.

In order to prevent opposing defenses from loading the box, the Eagles will need a pair of freshmen receivers to step up quickly. Darion Anderson and Michael Jackson could very well fit nicely in that role. Anderson was a one-time University of Georgia commit before an injury limited him his senior season, and the two had a mutual parting of ways before signing day.

Tyson Summers' pedigree is

on the defensive side of the ball. As defensive coordinator under George O'Leary at UCF, Summers catapulted his name into the national spotlight designing a defense that allows the Knights to win the Fiesta Bowl. Summers' first Eagle defense, like the offense, has a solid core to build upon.

Led by linebacker Ironhead Gallon, along with an experienced defensive line consisting of Darius Sapp, Jon Battle, and Bernard Dawson, the front seven will be as good as any in the Sun Belt.

The secondary has some game-experienced players returning, but none as starters in their current position. Given Tyson Summers' abilities as a coordinator and the players' athleticism, the Eagles will be solid on the defensive side of the ball, regardless of experience.

Georgia Southern should challenge for the Sun Belt championship once again, but it will be tough given Appalachian State and Arkansas State looking to notch championships as well.

The Eagles' schedule will provide opportunities to build a bigger rep now that they are on the big stage of college football, with games at Ole Miss, Georgia Tech, and Western Michigan.

The Eagles will go bowling once again this season, and look to continue to make major steps forward in the FBS. These Eagles should fly high with a 9-3 regular season.





2016
GEORGIA TECH
PREVIEW

Still Have Sting Left? By Kenneth Harrison Jr

Paul Johnson has proven his teams have trouble handling success. After an 11-3 record and Orange Bowl victory in 2014 the bottom fell out in 2015. They finished 3-9 and won just one conference game.

The defense has always struggled in the CPJ era and last season was no exception. They finished 43rd in total defense giving up 368 yards per game. The unit also finished 121st in sacks with just 14.

The offense typically is one of the best in the nation in rushing. In 2014 they led the nation. In 2015 they fell all the way to 16th averaging just 256.2 ypg. The passing game is basically nonexistent so they have to have a strong running game.

Senior quarterback Justin Thomas is an explosive dual threat QB. In 2014 he passed for 1,719 yards, 18 touchdowns and completed 51.3% of his passes. He also rushed for 1,086 and 8 rushing td's. Last year his passing yardage dropped to 1,345 and completion percentage to 41.7. He ran for 488 yards.

The offensive line needs to improve to get the offense back on track. Center Freddie Burden is the

best of the bunch. If they can play consistently B back Marcus Marshall and A backs Isiah Willis and Clinton Lynch can run wild.

Senior linebacker PJ Davis is the best defensive player. USC transfer Lamont Simmons should become one of the starting cornerbacks. The Yellow Jackets also have a JUCO transfer Desmond Branch who should strengthen the pass rush.

The season kicks off in Dublin, Ireland against Boston College. This should be an easy win. The next week is at home against an FCS team, Mercer. This will be a 50-point blowout.

Vanderbilt comes to Atlanta September 17th. The Ramblin Wreck will dominate the Commodores. The last game of the month is a Thursday night home versus Clemson. This will be the first loss of the season.

October 1st is at home against Miami. The Hurricanes have more talent and new head coach Mark Richt owned CPJ when he was at Georgia. I expect that trend to continue.

The following week is at Pitt. I expect this to be a win but this was the most difficult game to predict. The Yellow Jackets return home to

face Georgia Southern. On paper this sounds easy but the Eagles are a good team. They came very close to beating Tech in 2014. I still like Ga Tech in this game going into the bye week.

October 29th is home against Duke. The Blue Devils have won the last two meetings. I expect Tech to win this game. They travel to Chapel Hill to face UNC after that. This Tar Heels might be the most talented team in the Coastal so they should win.

The following game is at Virginia Tech. The Hokies struggled last year and have a new head coach but I think they will win. The closest to a sure thing in the ACC is Virginia. This will be an easy win against the Cavaliers.

The season finale is in Athens against Georgia. The Bulldogs have dominated the series since 2000 and they have superior athletes. UGA will win again for state bragging rights.

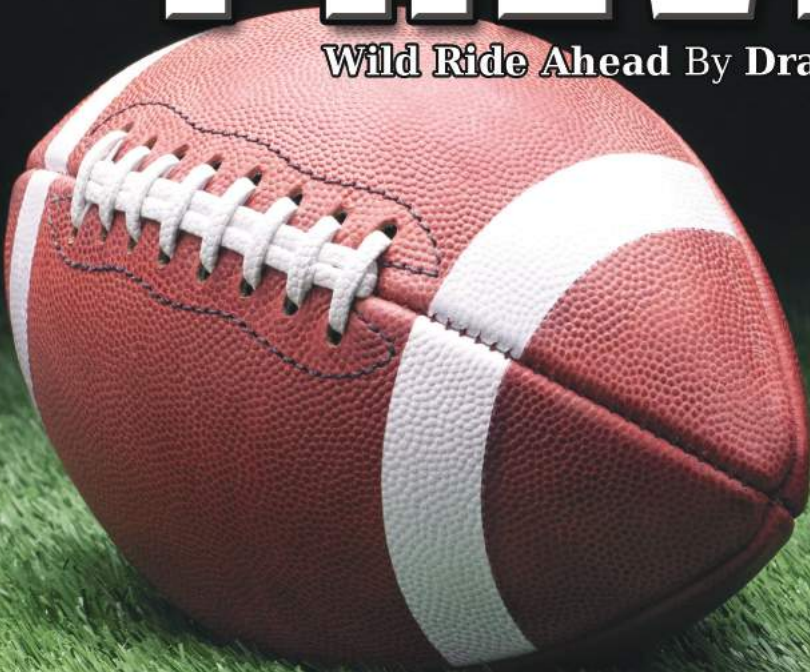
Tech should win seven games and get back to a bowl. This performance will be good enough to keep Paul Johnson as head coach for another year.





EAST PREVIEW

Wild Ride Ahead By Drayton Hogarth



The SEC East has fallen from its' former glory.

Just as the SEC West has dominated the league, as well as college football, the same used to be true for the SEC East.

However, the arms race was amped up when Nick Saban arrived in Baton Rouge, and then exploded after his failed run in the NFL with the Miami Dolphins, and he returned this time with Alabama.

The East has been making somewhat of a resurgence, but was down enough that newcomer Missouri Tigers were able to make back to back appearances in the SEC title game in the Georgia Dome.

This season there appear to be three teams who will contend to be the East champions. Let's take a look at the Tennessee Volunteer, the Florida Gators, and the Georgia Bulldogs.

Tennessee is the prohibitive favorite to complete their return to glory, and challenge for the SEC crown, and as well a shot at the college football playoff.

The Vols were able to convince the majority of their underclassmen to return for this final run. The offense will be led by a strong running game consisting of the one-two punch of the burly Jalen Hurd and the shifty Alvin Kamara.

The rushing attack gets a boost from athletic quarterback Josh Dobbs. Dobbs gives coach Butch Jones' offense

enough through the air to keep defenses honest and from loading the box.

The Volunteers defense will now be coached by long time collegiate defensive coordinator Bob Shoop. Shoop should be a solid upgrade over Jon Jancek.

Tennessee's defense has a solid core of starters returning, especially along the defensive front and secondary. One concern is how will the Vols respond to being the hunted instead of the hunter, and the draining sexual assault case that plagued the program all offseason.

Defending SEC East champions, the Florida Gators look to make a return to Atlanta this season, and may well have the defense to do just that.

Camden County's own, linebacker Jarad Davis, will lead a hard hitting defense this season. As well, defensive back Jalen Tabor could very well be the best corner back in the country.

Florida head coach Jim McElwain will earn his keep this season. McElwain will need to find a quarterback to replace departed Treon Harris, who replaced the also departed Will Grier.

Luke Del Rio looks to be the lead candidate to land the job. Like Tennessee, off the field controversy may play a huge role in who are the playmakers for Florida as Antonio Callaway has been suspended all offseason, and just recently the reason

was exposed to be sexual assault.

The Georgia Bulldogs will have a new coach leading the program for the first time in fifteen years.

Kirby Smart is now at the helm, and will have many difficult decisions to make right off the bat. Quarterback will be the most prominent among them, as freshman Jacob Eason will challenge the returning lettermen Greyson Lambert and Brice Ramsey.

Smart will also have to determine how to use stud running back, Nick Chubb; who is returning from a terrible knee injury.

The key to the offense will be playmakers on the outside, Terry Godwin and freshman Riley Ridley will need to step up. The rest of the offense looks to be in good shape.

Defensively is where Coach Smart has made his living the past nine years. The Georgia secondary will need to continue its' stellar play, and linebackers Lorenzo Carter and Davin Bellamy must step up to replace NFL draft picks Leonard Floyd and Jordan Jenkins. Trenton Thompson must anchor the defensive line, and be a disruptor in the opponent's backfield.

So, on paper, Tennessee should be considered the favorite in the SEC East, but do not be surprised when another team takes the title. Especially when you consider the media has picked the correct SEC champion five times since 1992. Buckle up football fans, it's going to be a fun ride!



WANTED



WEST

PREVIEW

The Wild West By Drayton Hogarth

When anyone begins to preview college football, the best place to start is the strongest division in the country which would be the SEC West.

The West has earned its reputation valiantly by winning 8 of the last 10 BCS or college football championships.

The upcoming 2016 season will very likely end up with the Southeastern Conference champion representing the conference in the college football playoff, and the odds are that program will come from the SEC West. Let's take a look at which teams will challenge for the division title and predict who will come out on top.

There are three teams that are a tier above the rest of the division, Alabama, LSU, and Ole Miss.

The Alabama Crimson Tide is coming off their third national title in five years and have earned the honor of being the standard to which other teams compare themselves.

Coach Nick Saban has a proven process, but that process will be tested this season. There are definite viable reasons why the Tide should have a slight slide in this 2016 season.

Saban will have to replace his Heisman trophy winning workhorse at running back in Derrick Henry. Massive sophomore Bo Scarborough looks to step up in the Bama backfield.

The team's signal caller, Jacob

Coker has graduated and, yet again, a new field general must be found; that replacement may very well be Cooper Bateman. Bateman enters the season as the only quarterback to have actually taken a live snap in college.

While there were losses on the defensive side of the ball, the talent on that side is still better than anyone else in the country.

However, Saban's long time right hand and defensive coordinator, Kirby Smart, is now the head coach of the Georgia Bulldogs. Jeremy Pruitt is the new defensive coordinator, and while Pruitt is very good in his own right, it remains to be seen if he can maintain the level of excellence that Smart demanded from his defense.

The rejuvenation of the Ole Miss Rebels has been well underway since the hiring of Hugh Freeze.

The Rebels have recruited as well as anyone in the country and are the only team that can say they have beaten the mighty Alabama two consecutive seasons.

Chad Kelly is the top returning quarterback in the conference and will look to build his legacy in Oxford.

The Rebels will have to replace their deepest draft class in the school's history, they but were able to replace the outgoing Laremy Tunsil, Robery Nkemdiche, and Laquon Treadwell with names such as Greg Little, Benito Jones, and AJ Brown.

Not to mention, they now have the next quarterback on campus in Shae Patterson to take over for Kelly when he moves on to the next level. The Rebels may be just too young to overcome a brutal schedule, in particular early on in the season.

However, by the end of the season they may set up very nicely for the following two seasons.

This season's SEC West champions will be the LSU Tigers.

The Tigers bring back the most dominant player in the country in running back, Leonard Fournette. Wideouts Malachai Dupre and Travin Dural lead the playmaking corps on the outside, and look for 6'6" freshman Stephen Sullivan to contribute in the red zone as well.

Quarterback Brandon Harris has to step up his play on the field, and he has all of the weapons to do so.

The defense should take drastic improvements this season as former Wisconsin coordinator Dave Aranda takes over. Aranda inherits ten returning starters on his defense.

The way Miles survived a mutinous attempt by the LSU boosters to remove him as head coach actually will be the inspiration that his players need heading into the season; that, along with the Aranda hire, is what will take the Tigers over the top.



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