

PREVIEW

5

THINGS

TO WATCH FOR IN GEORGIA SPORTS DURING 2023



BOB ANDRES FOR THE ATLANTA CONSTITUTION

1. Expect more UGA greatness

No team has repeated as national champs during the College Football Playoff era. Georgia, however, set a clear goal to pull off exactly that as fall turned to winter. No team brought a stronger resume to this year's four-team playoff, with the Bulldogs running through the SEC and the regular season undefeated, including a blowout win over LSU at the conference title game in Atlanta. Regardless of the ending for this season, it's clear that high fan expectations have made January the time of year when success is judged in Athens, and Smart's talented players can achieve lofty goals. At some point, though, the conversation will turn to next season's specific questions — including quarterback.



JED JACOBSON/AP

2. Braves' next run

Atlanta's front office clearly isn't sulking about a playoff loss. With new catcher Sean Murphy and several key role players coming aboard, the Braves are building a contender despite losing shortstop Dansby Swanson and closer Kenley Jansen to free agency. Expect pitching to be an important storyline during 2023 despite the notable changes on offense.



JASON GETZ FOR THE AJC

By Bill Zimmerman
For The AJC

3. Ready to contend?

The Falcons, still searching for their first winning season since 2017, will go into 2023 with decisions to make — including whether to keep offensive star Kyle Pitts as quarterback Desmond Ritter develops. The NFC South should be up for grabs again, though.



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4. Hawks' new look

With the all-star break in sight, new guard Dejounte Murray is at the heart of a revitalized Hawks offense and trails only Trae Young in scoring. The next step is to turn those points into wins during the season's second half, in order to make the playoffs for the third straight year.



DANIEL VARNADO/ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION

5. New era for Jackets

New Georgia Tech football coach Brent Key, a protege of former coach George O'Leary, knows his team's rich history. This year, we'll see if his approach — under which the Jackets went 4-4 and he shed his interim tag — can get the program back to its glory of old.