

## Auburn Football News: 1-20-2026

**Auburn signs former Chattanooga cornerback out of the transfer portal:**

<https://www.al.com/auburnfootball/2026/01/auburn-signs-former-chattanooga-cornerback-out-of-the-transfer-portal.html>

**Former 5-Star Saftey Returning to Auburn:**

<https://www.si.com/college/auburn/football/former-5-star-saftey-returning-to-auburn>

**Auburn Football Transfer Portal Live Tracker:**

<https://247sports.com/college/auburn/longformarticle/auburn-tigers-football-ncaa-transfer-portal-2026-live-updates-268402525/#2776959>

**Golesh, Auburn land first 2027 commitment from TE Trae Proctor:**

<https://247sports.com/college/auburn/article/trae-proctor-commits-to-auburn-tigers-football-recruiting-271605344/>

**Coffee With Phillip: Tuesday morning musings, links of interest:**

<https://247sports.com/college/auburn/longformarticle/auburn-football-basketball-baseball-indiana-271665504/#2782245>

**One Auburn Alum Could Step in for Another to Keep Broncos Hopes Alive:**

<https://www.si.com/college/auburn/football/one-auburn-alum-could-keep-broncos-hopes-alive>

## **Auburn signs former Chattanooga cornerback out of the transfer portal**

By Peter Rauterkus  
al.com

Despite having already brought in over 30 transfers, Auburn isn't done adding to its 2026 roster.

The latest incoming transfer is former Chattanooga corner Kamari Todd, who signed with the Tigers on Monday, a source confirmed to AL.com. Todd becomes the fifth corner Auburn has signed out of the transfer portal this offseason.

A graduate of in-state Gardendale High School, Todd spent one season at Chattanooga before entering the transfer portal. During his freshman campaign, Todd posted 50 tackles, one and a half tackles for loss and an interception.

He joins a cornerback room at Auburn that had to rebuild following the 2025 season. It lost five players, including two starters, but the Tigers have now signed five replacements out of the transfer portal.

The transfer portal closed for players to enter on Friday, but players already in the portal can still sign with schools after that.

## Former 5-Star Saffey Returning to Auburn

By Micah Farmer

Auburn Tigers safety Jacoby Mathews has withdrawn his name from the transfer portal and will be returning to The Plains for 2026, via 247Sports' Christian Clemente on X. Mathews is a former 5-star recruit who originally transferred to the Tigers from Texas A&M. The safety will be a senior for Auburn next season.

Mathews appeared in just one game for the Tigers in 2025, their Week 13 game against Mercer. He recorded just 10 total snaps in the game and did not record a tackle. While in the portal, the safety was rated as a three-star prospect by On3's Rivals, the No. 79 player in the portal at his position.

However, Mathews does have a high prospect pedigree and significant SEC experience. He was a former 5-star recruit via Rivals, the No. 32 player in the nation and No. 1 player in Louisiana. He committed to Texas A&M out of high school and played 10 games for the Aggies as a true freshman, starting three. The playing time only increased as a sophomore, with Mathews playing in 11 games and starting nine.

Despite that, he left College Station in the spring of 2024, transferring to the junior college level to focus on his academics for a season. Mathews joined Auburn out of the portal before the 2025 season as a high 4-star transfer, choosing to reunite with former defensive coordinator D.J. Durkin, whom he played under while at Texas A&M.

Unfortunately for Mathews, the loaded Auburn safety rotation made it difficult for him to see the field. Sophomore Kaleb Harris took most of the starting minutes at one of the safety spots, and Eric Winters, Jaquez Robinson, Champ Anthony, Kensley Louidor-Faustin, and Sylvester Smith all formed a rotation for other alignments at the position, barring Mathews from finding significant playing time.

All of that group except Robinson and Faustin will return for Auburn in 2026, with Robinson entering the NFL Draft and Faustin transferring to Missouri. Additionally, the Tigers added former South Florida safety Fred Gaskin in the portal, who was a full-time starter for the Bulls in 2025.

So, it's likely that Mathews will once again be buried in the rotation unless he makes a meaningful step forward in the offseason or impresses the new coaching staff. Though it's never a bad thing to have depth in the secondary, especially depth that is as athletic and experienced as Mathews. Should Auburn suffer injuries and attrition in the defensive backfield, the Tigers will be in a good position to play the next man up.

## Auburn Football Transfer Portal Live Tracker

By Christian Clemente

Welcome to the transfer portal palooza: 2026 edition.

Alex Golesh and Auburn's new staff are navigating a coaching change in what is a new-look, shortened transfer portal window this January. The transfer portal is open from Jan. 2-16 this year, with that 15-day window being the only time for players to enter the portal — except for teams in the College Football Playoff. Graduate transfers are no longer exempt and the spring window no longer exists, putting the pressure on to make all of your moves during this January cycle.

For Auburn it's a pretty big reset with plenty of players declaring during the pre-portal process that they intend to leave, as Golesh and his crew will be tasked with rebuilding the roster going into Year 1.

Auburn Undercover is tracking all of the updates for Auburn's departures, Auburn's additions and potential Auburn targets. Note: The names we're tracking do not directly reflect Auburn's board.

### LIVE UPDATES

1/19: Auburn has signed Chattanooga CB transfer Kamari Todd.

1/18: UNC DL transfer D'antre Robinson has committed to Oregon over Auburn.

1/18: Arizona DB transfer Jack Luttrell has committed to Auburn.

1/18: Stanford OL transfer Jack Leyrer has signed with Auburn.

1/17: Auburn safety Jacoby Mathews is withdrawing his name from the transfer portal.

1/17: Ole Miss edge Da'Shawn Womack has signed with Auburn.

1/17: Stanford OL transfer Jack Leyrer is currently visiting Auburn.

1/16: Notre Dame CB transfer Scrap Richardson has signed with Auburn.

1/16: LSU WR transfer target Kyle Parker has committed to Ohio State.

1/15: Ole Miss OL transfer TJ Hedrick has signed with Auburn.

1/15: LSU defensive lineman Walter Mathis Jr. has signed with Auburn.

1/15: Oregon State OL transfer Jacob Strand has signed with Auburn.

1/15: Auburn safety Jacoby Mathews is entering the transfer portal.

1/14: UNC DL transfer D'Antre Robinson will visit Auburn on Thursday.

1/12: USF OL transfer Cole Best has signed with Auburn.

1/12: USF OL transfer Cole Skinner has signed with Auburn.

1/12: FSU CB Shamar Arnoux has signed with Auburn.

1/12: Oregon State QB Tristan Ti'a has signed with Auburn.

1/11: Saint Farrow has signed with Auburn.

1/10: Baylor RB transfer Bryson Washington has committed to Auburn.

1/10: UNC tight end Jake Johnson has signed with Auburn.

1/10: SMU offensive line transfer King Large is visiting Auburn today, according to 247Sports' Chris Hummer.

1/10: App State DL Saint Farrow has committed to Auburn, according to 247Sports' Chris Hummer.

1/10: Missouri edge rusher Nate Johnson has signed with Auburn.

1/10: UCLA CB transfer Andre Jordan Jr. has signed with Auburn.

1/10: USF center transfer Cole Best is scheduled to visit Auburn on Saturday.

1/10: Baylor RB transfer Bryson Washington is in Auburn for his visit.

1/9: Auburn OT Tyler Johnson is entering the transfer portal.

1/9: JMU offensive tackle transfer Joseph Simmons has signed with Auburn.

1/9: USF WR Keshawn Singleton has signed with Auburn.

1/9: Oregon State QB transfer Tristan Ti'a arrived last night for his visit.

1/8: Ohio State transfer WR Mylan Graham is in Auburn for his visit.

1/8: Arkansas State DL Cody Sigler has signed with Auburn.

1/8: LSU WR transfer Kyle Parker is in Auburn for a visit.

1/8: UCLA CB transfer Andre Jordan Jr. is scheduled to visit Auburn on Thursday.

1/8: LSU TE transfer Donovan Green has signed with Oklahoma State.

1/8: Oklahoma State OT Grant Seagren has committed to Northwestern.

1/7: Kansas State IOL transfer Devin Vass has committed to West Virginia.

1/7: QB Locklan Hewlett has been announced as an Auburn signee.

1/7: WR Jeremiah Koger has been announced as an Auburn signee.

1/7: TE Xavier Newsom has been announced as an Auburn signee.

1/7: WR Christian Neptune has been announced as an Auburn signee.

1/7: WR Kory Pettigrew has been announced as an Auburn signee.

1/7: Oklahoma State DL De'Marion Thomas has committed to Houston.

1/7: Michigan State OT transfer Stanton Ramil has signed with Auburn.

1/7: USF WR Chas Nimrod has signed with Auburn.

1/6: Baylor running back transfer Bryson Washington is expected to visit this weekend.

1/6: Howard TE Xavier Newsom has committed to Auburn.

1/6: Auburn OT Broderick Shull has entered the transfer portal.

1/6: USF transfer quarterback Byrum Brown has committed to Auburn.

1/5: USF transfer safety Fred Gaskin III has committed to Auburn.

1/5: USF receiver Jeremiah Koger has signed with Auburn.

1/5: Florida transfer running back Ja'Kobi Jackson is visiting Auburn on Monday.

1/5: USF cornerback Gavin Jenkins has signed with Auburn.

1/5: USF running back Nykahi Davenport has signed with Auburn.

1/5: USF tight end Jonathan Echols has signed with Auburn.

1/5: Howard transfer tight Xavier Newsom is visiting Auburn on Monday.

1/4: USF wide receiver Kory Pettigrew has signed with Auburn.

1/4: USF wide receiver Christian Neptune has signed with Auburn.

1/4: Miami-Ohio long snapper Hudson Powell has signed with Auburn. He has one year of eligibility remaining.

1/4: Former Michigan State RB Makhi Frazier has arrived in Auburn for his visit.

1/4: Arkansas DL transfer target Ian Geffrard has committed to Texas.

1/4: Alabama OT transfer Olaus Alinen is scheduled to visit Auburn on Tuesday, per 247Sports' Brian Dohn.

1/4: Cal RB transfer Brandon High Jr. is visiting Auburn on Sunday.

1/4: Iowa State CB Tre Bell is visiting Auburn on Sunday.

1/4: WR Sam Turner is no longer entering the transfer portal.

1/4: USF TE transfer Jonathan Echols is currently visiting Auburn.

1/4: Kansas State OT transfer Devin Vass has arrived.

1/4: QB transfer target Byrum Brown is in Auburn.

1/3: Former JMU OT Joseph Simmons is in Auburn for a visit.

1/3: Michigan State RB transfer Makhi Frazier may visit Auburn. It is "tentatively" set to happen this weekend.

1/3: Auburn RB Durell Robinson has entered the transfer portal.

1/3: Locklan Hewlett has announced his commitment to Auburn.

1/3: Former USF backup QB Locklan Hewlett is a name to know.

1/3: Miami-Ohio long snapper Hudson Powell is visiting Auburn.

1/3: FSU TE transfer Randy Pittman is in Auburn.

1/3: Arkansas State DL transfer Cody Sigler is in Auburn.

1/3: LSU OT transfer Ory Williams will visit Auburn, per 247Sports' Chris Hummer.

1/3: USF quarterback Byrum Brown will visit Auburn this weekend.

1/2: Kansas State OT Devin Vass will visit Auburn on Saturday.

1/2: Former Howard LB Ja'Quavion Smith is scheduled to visit Auburn, per 247Sports' Chris Hummer.

1/2: Former LSU OT Ory Williams is a name to know.

1/2: Auburn has offered former North Texas IOL Braydon Nelson.

1/2: Defensive lineman Cody Sigler is expected to visit Auburn.

1/2: Auburn has offered former Charlotte DB Dwight Bootle II.

1/2: Auburn defensive lineman James Ash has entered the transfer portal.

1/2: Auburn safety Taye Seymore has entered the transfer portal.

1/2: Former Arkansas State DL Cody Sigler has announced an offer from Auburn.

1/2: Colorado edge Alexander McPherson is a name to monitor, per 247Sports' Matt Zenitz.

1/1: Auburn TE Preston Howard has entered the transfer portal.

12/31: Auburn WR Sam Turner is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/30: Auburn QB Deuce Knight is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/30: Auburn IOL Dylan Senda is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/30: Former Oklahoma State OT Grant Seagren is scheduled to visit Auburn this weekend. He is already in the portal and entered after Mike Gundy was fired prior to the rule change.

12/30: Former USF WR Keshawn Singleton is planning to enter the transfer portal. Auburn is expected to pursue him.

12/29: Auburn WR Cam Coleman is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/28: Auburn DB Kensley Louidor-Faustin is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/26: Auburn OT Xavier Chaplin is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/23: Auburn LB Robert Woodyard Jr. is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/23: Auburn CB Donovan Starr is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/22: USF QB Byrum Brown is planning to enter the transfer portal. We expect Auburn to be the heavy favorite.

12/22: Auburn CB Kayin Lee is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/21: Auburn QB Ashton Daniels is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/19: Auburn DE Amaris Williams is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/19: Auburn Buck LB Jamonta Waller is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/18: Auburn kicker Towns McGough is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/18: Auburn DT Malik Blocton is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/16: Auburn CB Jay Crawford is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/15: Auburn OL Seth Wilfred is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/14: Auburn OL Favour Ebuka Edwin is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/14: Auburn OL DeAndre Carter is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/13: Auburn WR Malcolm Simmons is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/12: Auburn TE Hollis Davidson III is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/8: Auburn DB A'Mon Lane-Ganus is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/8: Auburn WR Horatio Fields is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/5: Auburn WR Perry Thompson is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/4: Auburn CB Raion Strader is planning to enter the transfer portal.

12/4: Auburn DL Antonio Coleman is planning to enter the transfer portal.

## QUARTERBACK

Transferring out: Jackson Arnold, Ashton Daniels, Deuce Knight

Looking to add: 3

Names we're tracking:

ADDITIONS: Locklan Hewlett (USF), Byrum Brown (USF), Tristan Ti'a (Oregon State)

It will be a full reset at the quarterback position for Golesh and his staff, with last year's two primary starters set to be on the way out along with Knight. Arnold has not announced his plans to transfer, but he is expected to do so — he's not part of the plan. Daniels has announced that he plans to transfer out, as Auburn was looking to go in a different direction. It worked out well that he sat the Mercer game and utilized a redshirt, allowing him to go play elsewhere for one final season. Knight was aggressively pursued to stay by the coaching staff, but declared his intent to leave on Dec. 30.

All eyes are on the former USF signal-caller in Brown, one of the highest-ranked quarterbacks in the portal. Auburn is the heavy favorite in the pre-portal process and it looks likely that he follows his coaching staff to the Plains.

## RUNNING BACK

Transferring out: Damari Alston, Durell Robinson

Looking to add: 2+

Names we're tracking:

ADDITIONS: Nykahi Davenport (USF), Bryson Washington (Baylor)

Depending on what shakes out with the rest of this room and more backups, running back could become more of a priority in the transfer portal. As of right now, it looks likely that Auburn will pursue at least one running back to pair up with Jeremiah Cobb atop the depth

chart and create a one-two punch. Again, if Auburn loses some of its younger players to the transfer portal, adding more pieces via the portal becomes a bigger likelihood.

## WIDE RECEIVER

Transferring out: Cam Coleman, Perry Thompson, Horatio Fields, Malcolm Simmons, Cam'Ron King (walk-on turned scholarship WR), Eric Singleton Jr,

Looking to add: 5+

Names we're tracking:

ADDITIONS: Christian Neptune (USF), Kory Pettigrew (USF), Jeremiah Koger (USF), Chas Nimrod (USF), Keshawn Singleton (USF)

One of the biggest room resets, Auburn has seen three fourths of the former "Freeze Four" announce plans to transfer, along with Fields who was a starter last year before his injury. Auburn fought hard to keep Coleman and put in a ton of effort to try and keep who's now ranked as the No. 1 player in the transfer portal, but ultimately he and his agent decided that going in the portal was the better move.

Look for Auburn to be aggressive here and add multiple starter-level players along with potentially some depth pieces as well. It will be worth keeping an eye on whichever former USF wide receivers go in the portal, along with some other names that start to surface, of course.

## TIGHT END

Transferring out: Hollis Davidson III, Preston Howard

Looking to add: 3+

Names we're tracking:

ADDITIONS: Jonathan Echols (USF), Xavier Newsom (Howard), Jake Johnson (UNC)

As things stand currently Auburn returns just one veteran in Preston Howard, who had a shaky 2025 season. Ryan Ghea is also still on the roster, then signee DJ Broughton Jr. is the third scholarship tight end. You don't realistically need more than five tight ends, but Auburn will still need to be aggressive in adding some high-end talent via the transfer portal to elevate the room and improve it from being one of the weak points of the roster last year.

## OFFENSIVE TACKLE

Transferring out: Xavier Chaplin, Favour Ebuka Edwin, Broderick Shull, Tyler Johnson

Looking to add: 2+

Names we're tracking:

ADDITIONS: Stanton Ramil (Michigan State), Joseph Simmons (James Madison), Jacob Strand (Oregon State), Jack Leyrer (Stanford)

Auburn is losing both of its starters — and its swing tackle in TooTall Miller — to eligibility and Chaplin transferring, putting offensive tackle right near the top of the portal wishlist. The new staff will be tasked with going out and adding starters at both spots, but also may be forced to try and bring in multiple other offensive tackle transfers behind them to provide depth and competition at a spot that's pretty depleted. The offensive line room as a whole was always going to be a pretty big reset for 2026 given the seniority of it last year. A coaching change only added to the overhaul at the spot.

## INTERIOR OFFENSIVE LINE

Transferring out: DeAndre Carter, Seth Wilfred, Dylan Senda

Looking to add: 2+

Names we're tracking:

ADDITIONS: Cole Skinner (USF), Cole Best (USF), TJ Hedrick (Ole Miss)

Just like over at offensive tackle, this is a spot where Auburn will likely be searching for multiple starters and potentially more behind that to fill out the rooms. The interior offensive line has a few more pieces than offensive tackle with Kail Ellis at center and some other young pieces to build around, but it is still a spot that needs portal work.

Both offensive line spots are a spot where we expect more names to start surfacing soon.

## DEFENSIVE LINE

Transferring out: Malik Blocton, Antonio Coleman, James Ash

Looking to add: 3+

Names we're tracking:

ADDITIONS: Cody Sigler (Arkansas State), Saint Farris (App State), Walter Mathis Jr. (LSU)

Just like the offensive line, Auburn's defensive line room was filled with seniors last year and will now be tasked with replacing them. Defensive line coach Vontrell King-Williams has recruited well and has some talented young pieces who should develop and fill into bigger roles, but it's still a room that needs some veterans in the mix to compete in the SEC. And it's a variety of players that will be needed up front, too, as the Tigers likely need some true help at the true nose tackle spot but also some pieces who can move around some. Blocton was expected to be one of the building blocks of the room, but instead declared his plan to transfer.

#### DEFENSIVE END/BUCK LB

Transferring out: Amaris Williams, Jamonta Waller

Looking to add: 1-2

Names we're tracking:

ADDITIONS: Nate Johnson (Mizzou), Da'Shawn Womack (Ole Miss)

Auburn lost its top defensive end in Keldric Faulk to the NFL, then Williams to the transfer portal. The buck linebacker spot is also losing its top two players with Keyron Crawford and Chris Murray out of eligibility, while a backup in Waller is transferring out. At defensive end you still have a talented young piece in Jared Smith currently, while buck has JJ Faulk and Joe Phillips. All three are talented, but relatively unproven. Adding some veterans at defensive end and buck linebacker will be a priority to bolster the pass-rush.

#### LINEBACKER

Transferring out: Robert Woodyard Jr., Caleb Wheatland

Looking to add: 0-1

Names we're tracking: TBD

ADDITIONS:

Woodyard was a loss, but Auburn had to invest funds smartly in a talented linebacker room with a lot of pieces to retain. Losing him could lead to the Tigers looking at adding one mike linebacker for depth, but it's far from a large priority as Auburn returns a lot and added a lot from the high school ranks in the 2026 class as well.

## CORNERBACK

Transferring out: Jay Crawford, Kayin Lee, Raion Strader, Donovan Starr, A'Mon Lane-Ganus

Looking to add: 3+

Names we're tracking:

ADDITIONS: Gavin Jenkins (USF), Andre Jordan Jr. (UCLA), Shamar Arnoux (FSU), Scrap Richardson (Notre Dame), Kamari Todd (Chattanooga)

Cornerback will be another spot where Auburn is aggressive and adding multiple starter-level pieces and potentially more after losing both starters and multiple backups in the pre-portal process. The Tigers do still have Rayshawn Pleasant who operated as the third cornerback and talented youngster Blake Woodby who got some run last year, but Devin Williams is the only other cornerback in the room and he missed his freshman season with a torn ACL. With just three scholarship cornerbacks currently, it's a spot that will need top-end talent but also depth.

## SAFETY/STAR

Transferring out: Kensley Louidor-Faustin, Taye Seymore

Looking to add: 1+

Names we're tracking:

ADDITIONS: Fred Gaskin (USF), Jack Luttrell (Arizona)

As long as Auburn keeps some of its better young pieces in Eric Winters, AnQuon Fegans and Kaleb Harris, the safety spot is a room that likely won't need a lot of help. There could be some depth additions, but Auburn has plenty already to be able to compete in the SEC at safety.

## SPECIAL TEAMS

Transferring out: Towns McGough (kicker)

Looking to add:

Names we're tracking:

ADDITIONS: Hudson Powell (Miami-Ohio / Long Snapper)

It's entirely possible that Auburn could look for a young kicker in the portal with Alex McPherson approaching the end of his eligibility, but it could also depend on what happens with Connor Gibbs and whether or not he stays. Punter has Hudson Kaak and John Alan McGuire still, meaning it's pretty solidified as well on paper. Long snapper could potentially be a spot where Auburn looks for help after Reed Hughes graduated.

## **Golesh, Auburn land first 2027 commitment from TE Trae Proctor**

By Christian Clemente

Auburn has its first 2027 commitment under Alex Golesh, with tight end Trae Proctor hopping on board.

Listed at 6-foot-4.5 and 213 pounds, Proctor is from American Heritage (Fla.). He's ranked in the industry-generated 247Sports Composite as the No. 586 player, No. 30 tight end and No. 60 player from Florida in the 2027 class.

"It's a great environment and it feels like family there," Proctor told 247Sports national analyst Tom Loy. "Coach Scott, Coach Golesh, and Coach (Jack) Taylor's experience with producing NFL ready tight ends made the difference. I felt at home since I was offered from last year. I am truly blessed and grateful to be joining the Auburn family."

Playing at Miami Southridge (Fla.) as a junior, Proctor caught 30 passes for 604 yards and 11 touchdowns. He recently went out to San Antonio for the Navy All-American Bowl Combine and was named the Alpha Dog of the Combine event for his performance.

Proctor was a priority target for new tight ends coach Larry Scott and assistant tight ends coach Jack Taylor after getting hired by Golesh, quickly going to work and now landing his commitment to kickstart the 2027 class.

247Sports' Andrew Ivins wrote about Proctor's Alpha Dog performance:

"Never before have we seen a tight end projection steal the show inside the Alamodome like Trae Proctor did Friday. By our count, Proctor scored nearly two dozen touchdowns during an extended 1-on-1 session as he proved to be a matchup nightmare for both linebackers and defensive backs. There were no shortage of highlights for Proctor, but the moment of the day for him came when he casually snagged a back-shoulder throw with one hand in the corner of the end zone."

Proctor, who earned an invite to the 2027 Navy All-American Bowl with his performance, is coming off a junior campaign at Miami Southridge where he averaged 20.1 yards per catch on 30 receptions. He recently transferred into Plantation (Fla.) American Heritage for his senior year. Proctor will need to add some bulk to his 6-foot-3.5, 213-pound frame if he's going to handle in-line work at the Power Four level, but he's a true move tight end with length that can challenge the seam."

## **Coffee With Phillip: Tuesday morning musings, links of interest**

By Phillip Marshall

Indiana proves that most talented doesn't mean best

national landscape Indiana wrote the final chapter Monday night in one of the more remarkable stories in the history of college football, winning the national championship with a tense and dramatic 27-21 victory over Miami.

The Hoosiers romped through their first two games, crushing Alabama and Oregon. But Monday's game on Miami's Hard Rock Stadium was different. The Hoosiers had to fight for their lives. When it was over they were the first college football team to go 16-0 since Yale did it in 1894. A program that, going into the season, had more losses than any program in the history of the game won its first national championship.

And in the process, the Hoosiers forced a change in the way so many have come to view college football in the day information age. They won it all without a single player who was a 5-star recruit and only a handful who were 4-star recruits.

Quarterback Fernando Mendez, the Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback, was a 2-star recruit who went 9-10 as the starter at Cal before transferring to Indiana after last season. Five defensive starters followed now-famous head coach Curt Cignetti from James Madison.

No longer is it safe to used subjective star rankings or analytics or number of players chosen in the NFL draft to evaluate and compare teams. It's always been true that the best team isn't always the most talented team. And now it has been certified.

Indiana, according to the methods so many have believed in so fervently, isn't close to being the most talented team in college football. Yet, it is without question the best team in college football.

That doesn't mean that we won't see two more traditional programs play for the championship next season. But if there is one thing positive about the chaos that has involved college football, it is that the door has been opened wide. And it didn't happen exactly like so many will believe.

"I want to say, our NIL is nowhere what people think it is," Cignetti said after the game. "So you can throw that out."

Dallas Mavericks' owner Mark Cuban, Indiana football's main benefactor, agreed in an interview Monday.

"The minute you start chasing the most expensive people coming out of the portal," Cuban said, "you lose your identity."

### Saban ridicules star rankings

Retired Alabama coach Nick Saban probably signed more 5-stars than any coach in the modern era, but even he recognizes those star rankings are losing their shine.

"As a coach, why would you depend on someone who is not a coach on evaluating players?" Saban said Monday. "They don't know their a-- from their hand when it comes to what a football player is. Josh Jacobs had no stars. Damien Harris was a 5-star. They were both really good players, don't get me wrong. Josh Jacobs is still playing. Damien Harris is not."

### Can Indiana's success be duplicated?

Can any program, including Auburn, duplicate what Indiana has done? If that means going from 3-9 to 11-2 to 16-0, probably not. But fighting back from hard times might not be as complicated or take as long as it once did. It's a matter of evaluating players in the portal and finding players that can help win games, players that will buy in, work hard and believe.

Maybe first-year coach Alex Gorlesh will get it done in a hurry at Auburn. Maybe it'll take some time. Either way, there is no reason in the world to believe that Auburn can't soon be out of malaise of the past five seasons.

### Big game for Auburn basketball team

By the end of this week, Auburn's basketball team could be in a much better position than it is today. Or it could go in the opposite direction.

The Tigers play at Ole Miss tonight and at Florida on Saturday. Winning at Ole Miss should be doable. Auburn, even in Bruce Pearl's years, rarely fared well at Florida. And the Gators, with their inside size and power, are not a good matchup for Auburn.

That makes tonight's game at Ole Miss all the more important.

### CFP's future format remains uncertain

The future format of the College Football Playoff remains uncertain. If there is no decision by Friday, the field will remain at 12 teams for at least another year. Maybe that's what should happen, but nobody involved in the process wants that to happen.

Every Power 4 conference but the Big Ten wants to expand to 16. The problem is that nothing can happen unless the SEC and Big Ten agree. Big Ten commissioner Tony Petite wants is clinging to the ridiculous idea of going to 24 teams. He's tried without success to convince others. SEC commissioner Greg Sankey, the one who matters, wants no part of a 24-team playoff.

I feel safe in saying that Sankey will not change his mind. So, unless Petite changes his mind, the field will remain at 12.

#### LINKS OF INTEREST

'Great' Tiger Day visit the next big Thompson safety

One of the better high school programs in Alabama and in the nation, Thompson continues to churn out top recruits — but maybe none more so than the safety position. Auburn has taken advantage of that three years in a row now, signing Kaleb Harris in the 2024 class, Newboy Fegans in the 2025 class and making a late move for Damonte Tabb in the 2026 class and adding him during the early signing period.

The next big safety set to come through Thompson is already well known in the recruiting scene: Junior James. James may be unranked currently, but holds offers from Alabama, Auburn, Florida, Georgia, Ole Miss, Oregon and quite a few other powerhouse programs.

He was on Auburn's campus with his family over the weekend for Tiger Day, the first Junior Day of the Alex Golesh era.

Golesh, Auburn land first 2027 commitment

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producing NFL ready tight ends made the difference. I felt at home since I was offered from last year. I am truly blessed and grateful to be joining the Auburn family."

Playing at Miami Southridge (Fla.) as a junior, Proctor caught 30 passes for 604 yards and 11 touchdowns. He recently went out to San Antonio for the Navy All-American Bowl Combine and was named the Alpha Dog of the Combine event for his performance.

#### Auburn signs Chattanooga CB transfer

Auburn has a young cornerback on the way for its room next year. Kamari Todd, who spent one season at Chattanooga, has signed with Auburn. The Gardendale (Ala.) native arrives back in his home state with three years of eligibility remaining for the Tigers.

At 6-foot-1 and 170 pounds, Todd played a major role during his true freshman season for Chattanooga. Todd finished the year with 50 tackles, 1.5 tackles for loss and an interception after signing in February prior to his freshman season.

#### Auburn signs Arizona transfer

Jack Luttrell, who played one season at Tennessee and then the last two at Arizona, has announced his commitment to Auburn out of the transfer portal. He has two years of eligibility remaining for the Tigers and is listed at 6 feet, 188 pounds.

A Colquitt County (Ga.) native, Luttrell redshirted during his lone season at Tennessee where he worked under Tim Banks — Auburn's new safeties coach. Luttrell opted to transfer to Arizona and immediately played a big role, finishing the 2024 season with 39 tackles, three interceptions, four pass deflections and a forced fumble. Luttrell only appeared in three games last season, finishing with three tackles, an interception and a pass deflection.

#### Auburn signs Stanford transfer offensive lineman

Jack Leyrer, a multi-year contributor at Stanford, has signed with Auburn, Auburn Undercover has learned. Listed at 6-foot-7 and 285 pounds, Leyrer has one year of eligibility remaining after getting a medical waiver for missing the 2025 season.

Leyrer redshirted in 2021, started in three games in 2022, started three games in 2023 and appeared in 10 games total and took on a bigger role in 2024 when he appeared in all 12 games and started 10 of them. His starts came at left tackle and left guard for the Cardinal.

Alex Golesh and offensive line coach Tyler Hudanick now add Leyrer to a group that's already added Stanton Ramil (Michigan State), Jo Simmons (James Madison), TJ Hedrick (Ole Miss), Jacon Strand (Oregon State), Cole Skinner (USF) and Cole Best (USF).

Auburn searches for first hoops road win

Every game and week in the SEC gauntlet is important, but the Tigers know they need to fare respectably in their next two games need to keep their heads above water.

Auburn made progress in the SEC win column by defeating South Carolina 71-67 and improving to 2-3 in the league, but two straight road games await this week: at Ole Miss on Tuesday and at Florida on Saturday. And Steven Pearl's ball club would find itself in quite a nasty hole in the conference standings if Auburn can't come up with its first road win of the season.

Thompson looks for more consistency

One week into full squad practices, the Auburn baseball Tigers have hit the ground running with three intra-squad scrimmages giving coach Butch Thompson and the coaching staff a very early idea of where things stand for the preseason Top 10 team. While there have been some positives, Thompson said he hasn't seen the consistency he's looking for from his team to this point.

## One Auburn Alum Could Step in for Another to Keep Broncos Hopes Alive

By Dre Gaines  
Auburn Daily

Former Auburn Tigers quarterback Bo Nix led the Denver Broncos to its first AFC Championship appearance since 2016. However, for Nix, his season is now done when the Broncos needed him the most, as he suffered a broken ankle in the overtime period of the AFC Divisional Round playoff game versus the Buffalo Bills.

The Broncos won 33-30, but with the win, the Broncos will advance to the AFC Championship game, with an ace up their sleeve as another former Auburn quarterback, Jarrett Stidham, will be the man to step in place for Nix.

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Nix and the Broncos have had a stellar season thus far. Clinching the No.1 seed for the AFC in the playoffs and finishing the regular season with a 14-3 record. Nix finished the season with 3,931 passing yards, 25 passing touchdowns to only 11 interceptions.

At Auburn, Nix played three seasons for the Tigers under two different head coaches. His final season on the plains came to an abrupt ending when Nix suffered a broken ankle in November of 2021 against the Mississippi State Bulldogs. After that season, Nix transferred to Oregon where his career took off.

What happens next for the Auburn Tigers? Don't miss out on any news and analysis! Take a second, sign up for our free newsletter, and get breaking Auburn Tigers news delivered to your inbox daily!

Now, Stidham will likely step up to take his place for the Broncos, as they make a push for the Super Bowl. Stidham spent two seasons at Auburn, and he was a stellar quarterback for the Tigers. In 2017, he led Auburn to its first SEC Championship appearance since the 2013 season. It's also the last time the Tigers made an appearance in the conference championship game.

Stidham finished his career at Auburn with 5,952 passing yards, 36 touchdowns and 11 interceptions. Stidham was originally drafted to the New England Patriots in the fourth round of the 2019 NFL Draft. He spent two seasons in New England, but his career did not go as planned. He then signed with the Las Vegas Raiders, where he spent a lone year.

Now, he is in his third season with the Denver Broncos, with a chance to play on one of the biggest stages in the world.

Stidham however, has not thrown a pass a game since the 2023 season. It will take a quick knocking out of the rust, if he is to lead the Broncos into the AFC Championship, and possibly into the Super Bowl, should the Broncos secure a victory next weekend. This Auburn to Auburn quarterback transition for the Broncos is unfamiliar, but could be beneficial for the Broncos if Stidham performs the way he did when he was in Auburn.

Nix was given the keys to Auburn right after Stidham went to the NFL, and now Nix gives the keys back to Stidham, but this time in Denver with a Super Bowl berth on the line.