Gator Bait
MAGAZINE



FRANZ BEARD · FROM LEXINGTON

BLACKOUT FUNERAL: PHILO RUNS GATORS PAST KENTUCKY, 21-14

A late-second-quarter swap on the offensive line and Aaron Philo's 102 rushing yards carried Florida past No. 11 Kentucky and made the Gators bowl-eligible.

BUDDY MARTIN • FRANZ BEARD • EDDIE GILLEY • LOREN MEADOWS

Kentucky Postgame · Florida 21, Kentucky 14 · Week 11 · Final · Kroger Field, Lexington, Ky. · Monday, Nov. 16, 2026

Image via All Gators.

THE FINAL

FLORIDA
6-4 · 4-4 SEC

AT

NO. 11
KENTUCKY
7-3 · 5-3 SEC

Final · Saturday, Nov. 14 · ESPN
Kroger Field, Lexington, Ky.

FINAL	HALFTIME	ATTENDANCE
Florida 21, Kentucky 14	Kentucky 7, Florida 2	61,866

ESPN final summary, event 401856884. Kentucky was No. 11 in the College Football Playoff rankings and No. 13 in the AP Top 25.

KEYS

FINAL TEAM STATISTICS

Florida at Kentucky, Nov. 14

	FLORIDA	KENTUCKY
Total yards	330	242
Rushing yards	211	61
Passing yards	119	181
First downs	19	14
Third downs converted	9	5
Turnovers	0	1
Penalty yards	45	23
Possession (minutes)	34.1	25.9

ESPN final summary, event 401856884. Possession is in minutes (Florida 34:07, Kentucky 25:53).

THE SERIES

FLORIDA 10-5 SINCE 2012

Florida has won 10 of the 15 meetings since 2012 and is 5-3 in Lexington over that stretch. Saturday's 21-14 win was the Gators' first at Kentucky since 2019, according to FloridaGators.com.

AVAILABILITY

BY THE NUMBERS

Six figures from Saturday night

21-14

FLORIDA OVER NO. 11 KENTUCKY

Florida outscored Kentucky 19-7 after halftime.

102

AARON PHILO RUSHING YARDS

On 15 carries, plus 16 of 24 passing for 119 yards.

211

FLORIDA RUSHING YARDS

On 48 carries. Kentucky ran for 61 on 27.

0

FLORIDA TURNOVERS

Kentucky lost one fumble, forced by Jayden Woods on a sack.

9:08

LEFT WHEN PHILO SCORED TO GO AHEAD

A 14-play, 67-yard drive that took 7:30.

6-4

FLORIDA'S RECORD

Bowl-eligible and 4-4 in the SEC.

ESPN final summary, event 401856884.

THE GATORBAIT MEDIA TEAM

FRANZ BEARD ◆ BRENDEN MARTIN ◆ BUDDY MARTIN ◆ LOREN MEADOWS

Photography: Chris Spears, GatorBait Media. Independent Florida Gators coverage at www.gatorbaitmedia.com, with The Buddy Martin Show nightly.

FRANZ BEARD · FROM LEXINGTON

BLACKOUT FUNERAL: PHILO RUNS GATORS PAST KENTUCKY, 21-14

BY FRANZ BEARD Nov. 15, 2026



Philo and Wilson celebrate with good reason! (Photo courtesy of UAA)

Contrary to a centuries-old English proverb, it turns out that you can teach an old dog a few new tricks after all.

The trick Saturday night at Kroger Field in Lexington was a position swap. Center Harrison Moore and right guard TJ Shanahan, fixtures in Florida's starting offensive line dating back to game one what seems an eternity ago, subtly swapped positions late in the second quarter. Following a couple of adjustment possessions and beginning with the Gators' first possession of the third quarter, there was a ripple effect to the on-the-fly adjustment. The same Gators whose first possession was plagued by three pre-snap penalties found an offensive rhythm not seen since September. Quarterback Aaron Philo erased memories of that ill-fated underhand heave that was intercepted by Georgia with quick decisions and "feets, don't fail me now" second-half runs that were like stilettos plunged into the heart of the Big Blue Nation. The defense, which gave up one of those here-we-go-again, can't-get-off-the-field scoring drives on Kentucky's first possession, transformed into beast mode.

This was a planned Kentucky blackout in which the faithful filled Kroger Field in all-black attire. Appropriate attire, it turns out, for a funeral — in this case, the dying dreams of the Wildcats making the College Football Playoff. The Gators (6-4, 4-4 SEC), who once tormented Kentucky with 31 straight wins, rediscovered the joy of crushing the hopes of the Big Blue Nation with a 21-14 upset of the 11th-ranked Wildcats (7-3, 5-3 SEC).

It took a couple of possessions for the swap on the O-line to trigger a resurgence in Florida's offense, but once a measure of confidence kicked in, the Gators took such control of the game's momentum that what could have turned into a reenactment of Doug Dickey's Fourth and Dumb decision was nothing more than a speed bump.

That came in the third quarter following Florida's touchdown that gave the Gators their first lead in a football game in nearly a month. Jadan Baugh's 1-yard touchdown run gave the Gators a 10-7 lead with 10:06 left in the third quarter, the short drive set up by a Jayden Woods strip sack that gave Florida the football at the UK 30. Sumrall saw something in Kentucky's kick return alignment that triggered the decision to try an onside kick. While the Gators came close to pulling it off, the Wildcats recovered and on the ensuing possession drove 45 yards in six plays to regain the lead at 14-10.

"The touchdown that they got in the second half, that was all me with calling the surprise onside kick," Sumrall said. "I've never seen that good of a look for us to hit that kick, and I had already made up my mind after our first offensive touchdown, we're gonna call it. Gotta get that kick a little bit wider, but I'd already made up my mind, like, if that guy's lined up 20 yards from the kick point, we're gonna call it. We didn't quite make it past the inside guy, but our defense, they rose up."

Yes, the defense rose up. Kentucky mounted only one more threat the rest of the game and that one was snuffed out in the fourth quarter when Aaron Chiles stuck his helmet in Kenny Minchey's chest, creating an incomplete pass on fourth down at the Florida 25.

With the exception of that touchdown, which had more to do with Sumrall's decision than defensive mistakes, Brad White kept dialing up just what the Gators needed to neutralize Kentucky's offense. This was a homecoming event for White, until last year Kentucky's defensive coordinator. Following the opening TD drive, Florida's defense forced three punts, scored on a safety, forced a fumble that led to a touchdown, and got stops on fourth down on UK's final two possessions.

Over on the offensive side of the ball, the change in the O-line started kicking in right after the half. Moore grew comfortable in his new role of blocker without the burden of snapping the ball, and Shanahan played in the middle of the offensive line like he had been there all his life. Just that subtle change had the effect of awakening a dormant running game that had been doing snoozerobics ever since September became a blip in the rearview. The numbers bear it out. The Gators ran for 63 yards in the first half. In the second they ran for 148, eclipsing 200 yards on the ground for the first time since the destruction of then-No. 4 Ole Miss the last Saturday of September.

"Harrison had a snap infraction last week and another one tonight, and just wasn't quite as clean as you need to be," Sumrall explained. "He's played really good football for us a lot of the year. He's probably in a lot of ways been our most consistent lineman in a lot of things that he's done, but after that snap infraction, I just went on the headset. We've worked TJ plenty at center and felt like we needed to settle ourselves in by making that switch. There's some things Harrison actually does better at guard than he does at center."

Perhaps it's a mere coincidence, but the position swap of Moore and Shanahan coincided with a jolt of assertiveness in Aaron Philo, whose second-half play did a fine job of erasing the memory of the Georgia game. Perhaps because Shanahan's snaps were consistent and Moore seemed more comfortable at right guard, Philo went on a proper decision-making roll that resulted in seven of 10 third-down conversions, three very efficient scoring drives and the emergence of a quarterback as a serious running threat.

Philo threw mostly short, easy-to-complete passes that helped move the chains (16-24 for 119 yards), but the major damage was done with his feet. He ran for 102 yards, 47 on eight carries during Florida's grind-it-out, 14-play, 67-yard touchdown drive that gave the Gators a 21-14 lead with 9:08 left in the game.

Although the Gators would give up the football to Kentucky when they fell an inch short on fourth down at the UK 36 with 1:43 left, Philo had a third-down pass for 12 yards to Luke Harpring and three carries for 10 yards that bled the clock for nearly four minutes, forcing Kentucky to use all its timeouts.

This was the Aaron Philo that was expected when he transferred in from Georgia Tech having spent the previous two years backing up dual threat Haynes King. He ran, he threw and, best of all, he made good decisions that kept the offense on the field and the clock moving.

It was a triumphant return after weeks of uncertainty, when he missed the Texas game with an injury and was benched a week ago in favor of Tramell Jones Jr. in the loss to Oklahoma.

"I think after the Georgia game, the way that Georgia game started with him on his first interception, I think he was frustrated with himself," Sumrall said. "I've got a lot of belief in him, and I got a lot of belief in our quarterback room but for him to just lay on the line the way he did tonight – he put his body on the line for this football team. More than anybody else tonight, he freaking laid on the line. He made a decision, like, 'I'm going to put this game on my back.' … He carried the ball 15 times and took some shots from that defense, and found a way to help us stay ahead of schedule in down-and-distance a lot of times … I just want him to build upon it and be himself. He doesn't have to try to be Superman. He just needs to be the best version of Aaron Philo."

The best version of Aaron Philo had plenty to do with the change in the offensive line. The Gators still have issues at the tackles, who committed five of the six penalties assessed against Florida, but the change in the middle revitalized the running game and helped the Gators go turnover-free. In the second half, the Gators ran 43 plays. They had only 47 for the entire game against Oklahoma a week ago.

It was an impressive win, one that probably wouldn't have happened without the willingness to make in-game adjustments. The sixth win makes the Gators bowl eligible for just the second time in the last four years and leaves the door wide open for finishing the regular season with eight wins, which would double last year's total.

"We're still a long way away from the finished product," Sumrall explained. "The win makes a lot of that feel better, but we have so much to improve upon. But [I'm] really grateful for our guys' effort all night, and it makes all the work feel a lot more worthwhile when you were able to get a W. Credit to our guys for finding a way tonight."

SATURDAY IN THE SEC

No. 1 Georgia (9-1, 7-1 SEC) 48, No. 22 Missouri (6-5, 3-4 SEC) 21: The Bulldogs are playing like a team destined to win a national championship and quarterback Gunner Stockton might be picking off Heisman voters each week with his consistency. Against Missouri, Stockton completed 18-24 passes for 252 yards and a TD while running for one more score. He isn't flashy but no quarterback in the country is playing with such efficiency.

No. 3 Alabama (8-2, 6-2 SEC) 21, Vanderbilt (4-6, 1-6 SEC) 6: Alabama had a grind-it-out effort against Vanderbilt. Keelon Russell dinked and dunked his way to three touchdown passes and the Alabama defense did the rest of the damage, holding Vandy without a touchdown and just 12 rushing yards. Bama sacked Vandy quarterback Jared Curtis five times.

No. 6 Texas (8-2, 5-2 SEC) 22, No. 21 LSU (6-4, 3-4 SEC) 21: Arch Manning, who had thrown three interceptions, threw a 4-yard touchdown pass to Raleek Brown with three seconds remaining to rally Texas to a come-from-behind win over LSU.

No. 8 Tennessee (8-2, 5-2 SEC) 22, Texas A&M (4-6, 1-6 SEC) 7: The story of the game was the Tennessee defense, which intercepted two passes and held the Aggies to 179 yards of offense. The Vols went 12 plays for 56 yards in the final 2:19 to secure the win and stay prominent in the College Football Playoff hunt. The Vols struggled in the red zone but compensated with five field goals by Cooper Ranvier.

Arkansas (4-6, 2-5 SEC) 34, No. 17 South Carolina (6-4, 4-4 SEC) 6: South Carolina's four-game winning streak came to a halt as the offense sputtered without quarterback LaNorris Sellers, who injured his ankle in last week's win over Texas A&M. Replacement QB Cutter Woods threw three interceptions against an Arkansas defense that also forced a fumble. KJ Jackson threw for 188 yards and two touchdowns for Arkansas, which kept its bowl eligibility hopes alive.

Auburn (6-4, 4-4 SEC) 41, Mississippi State (4-6, 2-6 SEC) 9: Auburn became bowl eligible as Byrum Brown threw for three touchdowns and ran for another. Auburn's defense sacked Mississippi State quarterbacks seven times.

SUNDAY'S GAME

No. 19 Ole Miss (6-3, 4-3 SEC) at Oklahoma (5-4, 3-3 SEC)

THE GAME STORY · BRENDEN MARTIN

FLORIDA 21, NO. 11 KENTUCKY 14: PHILO RUNS FOR 102 YARDS AND THE GATORS' DEFENSE CLOSES IT OUT

BY BRENDEN MARTIN Nov. 15, 2026



Florida quarterback Aaron Philo carries the ball. (Image via All Gators)

LEXINGTON, Ky. — Florida did not score an offensive point in the first half. It left Kroger Field with a win over the No. 11 team in the country.

Aaron Philo ran for 102 yards and the go-ahead touchdown, Florida's defense stopped Kentucky on fourth down twice in the final six minutes, and the Gators beat the Wildcats 21-14 on Saturday night before an announced crowd of 61,866.

Florida (6-4, 4-4 SEC) outscored Kentucky 19-7 after halftime. Kentucky (7-3, 5-3) did not score in the fourth quarter.

The win made Florida bowl-eligible and was the Gators' first at Kentucky since 2019. Florida had lost three straight at Kroger Field, including a 31-point loss last season, according to FloridaGators.com.

Philo, who returned to the starting lineup this week, is the first Florida quarterback to rush for 100 yards in a game since Anthony Richardson did it at LSU in 2022, according to FloridaGators.com.

Philo's 2-yard touchdown run with 9:08 left put Florida ahead for good. It finished a 14-play, 67-yard drive that took 7:30 off the clock. Kahleil Jackson threw to Dallas Wilson for the two-point conversion to make it 21-14.

Kentucky had two chances to tie. The Wildcats drove 50 yards to the Florida 25, but Kenny Minchey's fourth-down pass fell incomplete with 5:29 left under pressure from Aaron Chiles. Florida ran 3:46 off the clock before it was stopped on fourth down at the Kentucky 36 with 1:43 to play. Kentucky then threw four straight incompletions. Jayden Woods broke up the third-down pass and Ben Hanks III broke up the fourth-down throw with 1:28 left, and Florida knelt out the clock.

Philo finished with 102 rushing yards on 15 carries, with a long of 28, and completed 16 of 24 passes for 119 yards with no interceptions. Jadan Baugh ran 18 times for 69 yards and a touchdown, and Duke Clark added 42 yards on eight carries. Florida ran for 211 yards on 48 attempts and did not turn the ball over.

It did not look like that kind of night early. Kentucky took the opening lead with a 15-play, 86-yard drive that lasted 8:20, and Minchey hit CJ Baxter for a 5-yard touchdown with 1:32 left in the first quarter. Florida punted on all five of its first-half possessions and had 121 yards at halftime. No Florida drive in the half covered more than 28 yards.

The defense kept it close. Florida's only first-half points came on a safety with 2:06 left in the second quarter, when Kentucky was called for holding in its own end zone on a drive that started at the Kentucky 4-yard line. Alec Clark punted five times for a 43.6-yard average and put three inside the 20. Kentucky led 7-2 at the break.

The game turned on the second play of the third quarter. Woods sacked Minchey for a 7-yard loss and forced a fumble, and Brendan Bett recovered at the Kentucky 30. Seven plays later Baugh scored from the 1, and Philo ran in the two-point conversion for a 10-7 lead with 10:06 left in the quarter.

Kentucky answered with a six-play, 45-yard drive, and Minchey scored from the 1 with 7:20 left in the third to put the Wildcats back in front 14-10. Patrick Durkin's 37-yard field goal with 3:16 left in the quarter cut it to 14-13 and set up Philo's winning drive.

Florida finished with 330 total yards to Kentucky's 242 and held the Wildcats to 61 rushing yards on 27 carries, 2.3 per attempt. Florida was 9 of 17 on third down and held the ball for 34:07. Kentucky was 0 for 2 on fourth down.

Woods had 1.5 sacks, two tackles for loss, a pass breakup and the forced fumble. Hanks and Chiles led Florida with seven tackles each, and Myles Graham had six tackles and half a sack.

Minchey was 15 of 26 for 181 yards and a touchdown for Kentucky. DJ Miller caught four passes for 80 yards and Willie Rodriguez had five catches for 62. Grant Godfrey led the Wildcats with 13 tackles.

Bailey Stockton led Florida's receivers with four catches for 34 yards.

Florida is 6-0 under first-year coach Jon Sumrall when it scores at least 20 points, according to FloridaGators.com. The Gators finished 4-8 last season.

Kentucky came in ranked No. 11 in the College Football Playoff rankings and No. 13 in the AP Top 25.

Florida plays its final SEC game Saturday at home against Vanderbilt (4-6, 1-6 SEC). Kickoff at Ben Hill Griffin Stadium is set for noon.

Statistics and play-by-play are from ESPN. Series history and program notes are from FloridaGators.com.

SATURDAY IN THE SEC

TIME (ET)	GAME	TV	LINE

HOW TO WATCH

FRANZ BEARD · COLUMN

THE GATORS, FOOTBALL, SUMRALL AND NEWTON'S THEORY

BY FRANZ BEARD Nov. 16, 2026



Photo courtesy of the University of Florida (UAA).

Many years ago, some southern football fan with a habit of simplifying complex issues and statements read Sir Isaac Newton's theory that for every action there is an equal or greater reaction. He concluded that if Sir Isaac had been a southerner with a passion for college football he would have understood how one coaching hire can have a ripple effect throughout the Southeastern Conference.

So when Florida hired Jon Sumrall to succeed Billy Napier as the head football coach it created a reaction that is being felt throughout the SEC even today. Four games this past weekend show how Florida's hiring of Sumrall has an ongoing effect on football in the SEC.

1. Florida 21, Kentucky 14: Jon Sumrall, the Florida head coach, former Kentucky linebacker and later on defensive coordinator, got his sixth win of the season, making Florida bowl eligible while removing Kentucky from the chaotic ranks of the College Football Playoff contenders. The Gators, who begin the week as 13.5-point favorites to get their seventh win of the season Saturday against Vanderbilt, have already eclipsed last year's win total and have a legitimate shot at eight regular season wins. That is something that hasn't happened since 2020 and only six times since 2011. With its third loss, Kentucky will lose so much ground in the College Football Playoff poll that even wins over Missouri and Louisville in its last two games cannot transform the pumpkin back into a carriage.

Full story: gatorbaitmedia.com/post/the-gators-football-sumrall-and-newton-s-theory

BUDDY MARTIN · COLUMN

DID GATOR FOOTBALL JUST TURN THE CORNER WITH SUMRALL'S STATEMENT WIN?

BY BUDDY MARTIN Nov. 15, 2026

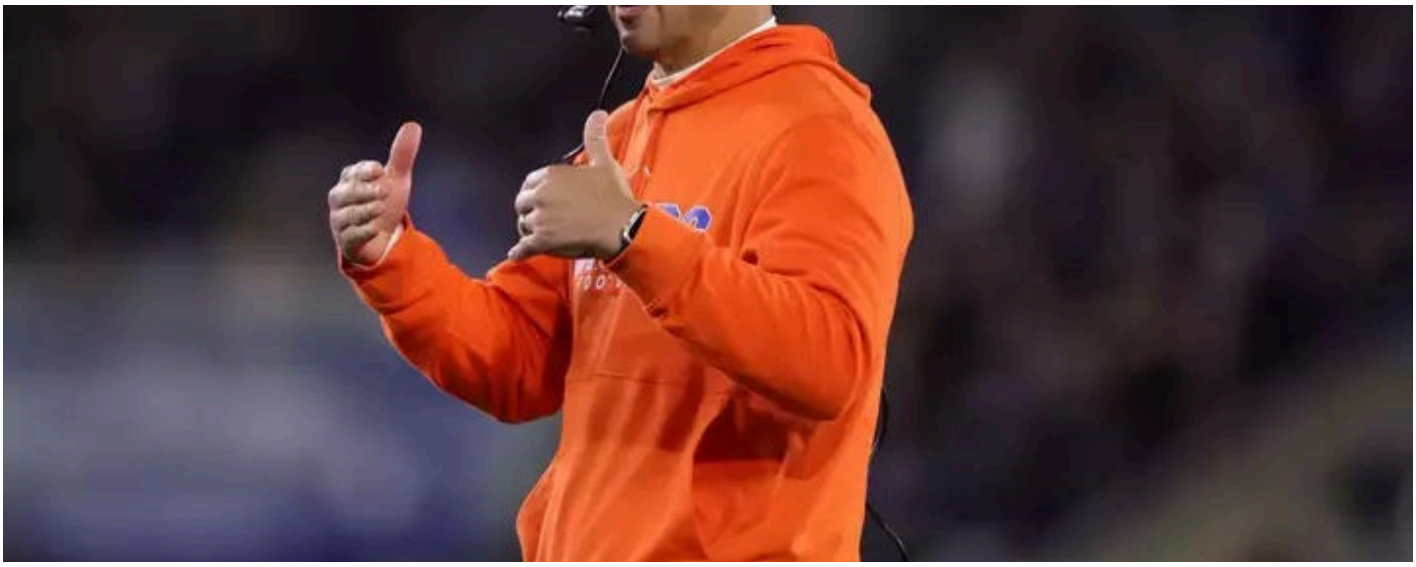


Photo courtesy of UAA.

There were a lot of people limping around Gainesville last week with broken ankles — all that jumping off the Gator bandwagon in a single afternoon. It was quite a crowd, and getting uglier by the day.

Even Tim Tebow declined to pick Florida to win for the first time I can ever remember, which in this state is roughly the equivalent of refusing to say the Pledge of Allegiance.

Paul Finebaum even said Tebow's defection influenced him to do the same, so he went with Kentucky, too. When Tim Tebow and Paul Finebaum agree on anything, you know the sky is officially falling.

Now, I'm not very good at picking football games. One thing I've been fairly accurate at over the years, though, is discerning how a key Gator game might come out — I even picked the famous Florida–FSU tie (I swear!). At the same time, I generally finish last in office pools. So there's your scouting report on me.

I was asked to be a guest picker last week with my friends out in West Florida and reluctantly did so, warning them that "I couldn't pick my grandmother out of a three-piece jazz band." They aired my picks anyway. There's no accounting for taste.

Full story: gatorbaitmedia.com/post/did-gator-football-just-turn-the-corner-with-sumrall-s-statement-win

BUDDY MARTIN · COLUMN

LET'S GO BOWLING BABY! AFTER FALLING SHORT BY INCHES, THE GATORS MADE A MILE-LONG QUANTUM LEAP

BY BUDDY MARTIN Nov. 15, 2026



Photo courtesy University of Florida (UAA).

What a night, and oh, what a way to get there — a freezing night in the Bluegrass, a third win over a top-11 ranked team this season.

Florida 21, No. 11 Kentucky 14. Six wins. Bowl eligible. And the quarterback did it with his legs!

Florida became bowl-eligible with its sixth win, also ensuring at least a .500 regular-season record with two games remaining. Coming off a 4-8 season, the Gators have improved by two wins in Sumrall's first season and can double their regular-season wins from a year ago if they can beat Vanderbilt at home and Florida State on the road.

Let's go bowling, baby! The Gators are going bowling after a remarkable victory in Orange and bluegrass country. Yes, that's what we'll call it now!

Aaron Philo ran — RAN! — for 102 yards on 15 carries, scored the go-ahead touchdown, threw for 119. First Gator quarterback to run for 100 yards since Anthony Richardson in 2022. The passing game sputtered, so Philo tucked it and ran. And ran.

Florida had scored 15 points — total — in its last two games, losses to Georgia and Oklahoma, and dropped four of five since a 4-0 start. They had managed one play longer than 20 yards in those two losses. Sumrall said it himself after the game: "We're a long way away from a finished product. We're still a long way away from the finished product. The win makes a lot of that feel better, but we have so much to improve upon."

Full story: gatorbaitmedia.com/post/let-s-go-bowling-baby-after-falling-short-by-inches-the-gators-made-a-mile-long-quantum-leap

LOREN MEADOWS · POSTGAME THOUGHTS

FLORIDA REDEFINES ITS IDENTITY AS PHILO'S LEGS PULL OFF THE UPSET IN LEXINGTON

BY LOREN MEADOWS Nov. 15, 2026



Graphic: GatorBait Media.

WHAT WE THOUGHT

After a lackluster performance a week ago against Oklahoma, there was little reason to think Florida would make the trip to Lexington and do much to stop Kenny Minchey and a Kentucky offense that had been very effective, averaging close to 385 yards and almost 30 points per game. On top of that, Minchey had been so efficient that he was on pace to break the Kentucky completion percentage record held by Wildcats legend Tim Couch. While Florida was playing better on defense, Oklahoma used a very vanilla, quarterback-driven offense to the tune of 305 yards and a 21-of-33 performance by John Mateer, who had struggled against most of the SEC this season.

Florida would turn the page back to the beginning of the season and go with original starter Aaron Philo after Tramell Jones Jr. had struggled last week. Unfortunately, no matter who was at quarterback, the offensive line had been so porous that there was little reason to believe the offense would get the jolt needed to score enough points to keep pace with Minchey and company. Maybe the fact that Jon Sumrall and Brad White had Kentucky ties, and that former Gators Jordan Castell and Aaron Gates were now in Big Blue, would inspire their former teammates to bring one home for their coach.

Full story: gatorbaitmedia.com/post/florida-redefines-its-identity-as-philo-s-legs-pull-off-the-upset-in-lexington

Next up: Vanderbilt at Florida, Saturday, Nov. 21, noon ET, Ben Hill Griffin Stadium.

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