Alabama, LSU prepare for final annual meeting, which Kiffin calls 'sad'

BY HENRY SKLAR
ASSOCIATED PRESS



Vasha Hunt/AP photo

Alabama quarterback Keelon Russell (12) looks to throw the ball while on the run against Texas A&M during the second half of an NCAA college football game on Saturday, Oct. 24, in Tuscaloosa, Ala.



Butch Dill/AP photo

LSU head coach Lane Kiffin reacts to a play during the first half of an NCAA college football game against Auburn on Saturday, Oct. 24, in Auburn, Ala.



Butch Dill/AP photo

LSU running back Caden Durham (29) carries the ball as Auburn defensive back Eric Winters (5) defends during the second half of an NCAA college football game on Saturday, Oct. 24, in Auburn, Ala.

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. — Alabama and LSU have spent decades giving college football fans a reason to mark their calendars.

Next year, those fans will have to find another game.

The longtime Southeastern Conference opponents have played every season since 1964, a stretch that will end after No. 9 Alabama visits No. 15 LSU on Saturday. The series will resume in Tuscaloosa in 2028, but its annual place on the schedule is going away.

A matchup that has helped decide national championships didn't make the cut when the SEC selected three annual opponents for each school under its new nine-game conference schedule.

LSU coach Lane Kiffin called the change "sad."

"And I understand, so I'm not being critical," he said Monday. "All the decisions, usually, I think all of them probably really come down to money, whether that's the realignments, whether that's the rivalries. So, I think it's all sad in general in the big picture of things that money drives to make (changes to) such great traditions and rivalries."

There's still plenty riding on this one.

The Crimson Tide and Tigers are both 6-2, with the loser facing a more difficult path to the College Football Playoff. Alabama was fifth in the selection committee's initial rankings Tuesday, while LSU came in 14th.

For LSU quarterback Sam Leavitt, reminders of the game's importance come well before he reaches the practice field. Fans tell him to beat Alabama when he goes to the store or gets food.

He grew up in Oregon, but Alabama-LSU was a game he made time to watch.

"Being from the West Coast and, you know, fantasizing about watching a game down here, not being a part of it, uh, it's a surreal and special experience," Leavitt said Tuesday.

THE SEC'S SCHEDULING CHANGE

The expanded conference schedule gives each school three annual opponents and six rotating matchups. Every team will face each SEC opponent at least once every two years and home and away over four years.

Alabama will play Auburn, Tennessee and Mississippi State annually. LSU's annual opponents are Arkansas, Mississippi and Texas A&M.

The league considered traditional rivalries, competitive fairness and geography, among other factors, in making those matchups. Annual opponents will be evaluated after each four-year cycle.

Alabama-LSU was left among the rotating games.

"And there's really good things that have changed in college football over the years, but there's also a lot that I think myself and a lot of people wish that they were the way that they were, rivalries and conferences the same," Kiffin said. "And so unfortunately it's where we are that really doesn't seem like much is going to be protected when it comes to TV contracts and money and other people's ideas."

Kiffin has experienced the matchup from Alabama's sideline, too. He spent three seasons as the Crimson Tide's offensive coordinator from 2014-16 under Nick Saban.

Saban's connection to both programs helped turn an established conference series into one of the sport's biggest games.

CHAMPIONSHIPS, REMATCHES AND MEMORABLE FINISHES

Saban led LSU to the 2003 national championship before leaving for the NFL. He took over at Alabama in 2007, putting him across the field from the program he had helped build.

By the 2011 season, the teams were competing for more than the SEC West.

No. 1 LSU beat No. 2 Alabama 9-6 in overtime in Tuscaloosa. Two months later, they met again in New Orleans with the national championship on the line. Alabama won 21-0.

The rematch started an eight-game Crimson Tide winning streak in the series, one LSU ended with a 46-41 victory in 2019 on its way to an undefeated national championship season.

The Tigers delivered another memorable finish in 2022, winning 32-31 in overtime in Baton Rouge.

Alabama linebacker Yhonzae Pierre grew up in the state watching those matchups. Asked Tuesday about his memories of LSU games, he pointed to what they mean for the players involved.

"We going to be remembered by it," Pierre said.

ONE MORE GAME WITH POSTSEASON STAKES

Neither team has much room for another loss.

Alabama beat Texas A&M 31-20 before its bye week, ending a two-game skid. The Crimson Tide now head back on the road after losing at Tennessee in its previous trip away from Tuscaloosa.

LSU has its own difficult stretch ahead, with No. 10 Texas and No. 16 Tennessee following Alabama.

Leavitt said Tuesday, before the first CFP rankings were released, that he wasn't concerned with where the Tigers would land.

"Hearing the rankings right now, it doesn't matter," he said.

Winning Saturday would give either team another result to build its postseason case around. It would also give its fans something they've had the chance to claim every season for more than six decades: a win over the other side.

Next year, that opportunity won't be there.

With Congress turning blue, here's what you may see next with Epstein files

BY JULIE K. BROWN AND CLAIRE HEALY
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Jeffrey Epstein may be dead, but his ghost continues to haunt American politics.

In the run-up to the midterms, candidates spent millions on campaign ads that attempted to tie candidates to sexual abuse, pedophilia or Epstein. Epstein's survivors traveled the country with an exhibit containing Department of Justice files bound into thousands of physical volumes on the case. Several of them campaigned against members of Congress who failed, initially, to support the Epstein Files Transparency Act.

Polls, meanwhile, consistently show that roughly three quarters of Americans disapprove of the way the Epstein case is being handled by the Trump administration. Most Americans want all the government files released and believe that there should be accountability for others involved in Epstein's crimes.

Now it's the Democrats' turn.

They have promised to make the Epstein case a major focus of inquiry after winning control of both the House and the Senate on Tuesday.

Rep. Robert Garcia, a California Democrat who will likely become chair of the House Oversight Committee, had two words for Republicans on the eve of the midterm elections — "lawyer up" — a signal that he intends to take on the Trump administration, and ramp up the Epstein investigation.

By winning control of Congress, the Democrats will be able to use their unilateral power to issue subpoenas, hold public hearings and release documents which the Trump administration has sought to keep sealed.

Ten days ago, Democrats on the House Judiciary Committee also formally called for an independent counsel to investigate Trump's involvement with Epstein as well as the administration's "cover up" of the Epstein files. The Committee released a 53-page report titled, "We Have Certain Things in Common, Jeffrey': The Case Against Donald Trump Emerging in the Epstein Files and DOJ's Desperate Efforts to Cover It Up."

For Miami attorney and journalist Katie Phang, who filed a federal lawsuit against U.S. Attorney General Todd Blanche for failing to release all the Justice Department's files in violation of the Epstein Files Transparency Act, the election means that the Epstein investigation has just started.

Up until now, most of the witnesses called before the Republican-led House oversight committee have only sat for transcribed interviews — not sworn testimony. She is hopeful that Democrats will use their subpoena power to force witnesses to testify under oath.

Blanche should also have to comply with the law, and release the rest of the case files, she said.

"He should be held to account for what he has done with these files and what he has done with the Department of Justice," Phang said. "We need more exposure and more justice about the people involved. For those people hiding behind their power and privilege, those days are over."

In Fort Lauderdale on Wednesday, 3.5 million pages of the Epstein files organized into books on shelves sat on display in a food hall alongside a timeline of the deceased sex trafficker's relationship with Donald Trump.

The event, known as "The Donald J. Trump and Jeffrey Epstein Memorial Reading Room and Bookmobile" started in New York, and has traveled to 15 states, receiving tens of thousands of visitors — including some of the candidates who ran in Tuesday's midterms.

Sharlene Rochard — who said she was abused by Epstein as a 17-year-old aspiring model — has given tours of the display to Rep. James Talarico in Texas, Rep. Amy Acton in Ohio and Rep. Bob Brooks in Pennsylvania, all of whom won on Tuesday. She asked them to continue to support Epstein survivors.

"They stood with us hoping they stand with us in January when they take office."

Other survivors also expressed hope that Epstein's crimes will be re-examined and that others involved will be held accountable, no matter what political party they are affiliated with.

"Clearly people are fed up, for whatever reason, and we saw Americans speak out and take power back," said Epstein survivor Liz Stein. "We have that power back that we haven't had in two years. This is an issue Americans really care about no matter what side of the aisle they are on."

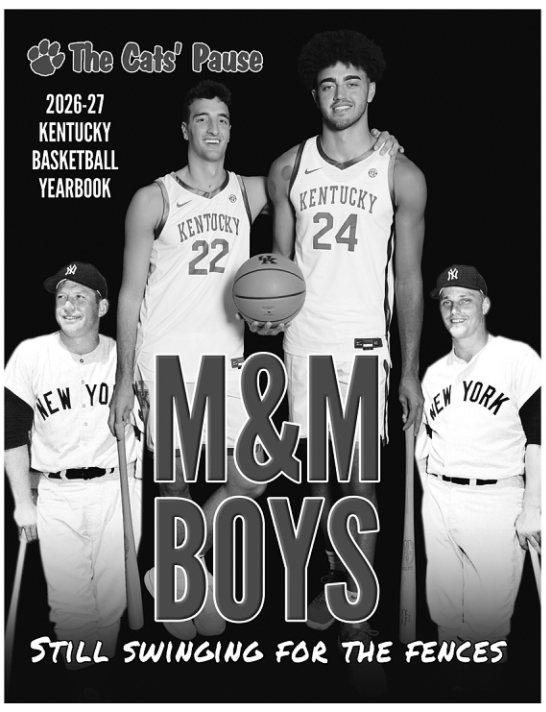
Sen. Ron Wyden, the Oregon Democrat who will chair the Senate Finance Committee, intends to "follow the money" that was part of Epstein's sex trafficking crimes. Wyden has claimed there is a "big" file of data about Epstein's suspicious bank transactions sitting in the Treasury Department.

He has previously urged the feds to scrutinize some 4,700 wire transfers totaling about $1.1 billion to and from an account the convicted sex trafficker kept with JP Morgan.

"I have a list of Wall Street bankers who need to answer questions about why they looked the other way while Epstein and his cronies sent millions of

SEE EPSTEIN/PAGE B6

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NELSON COUNTY
EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE (LEPC)

Pursuant to Section 324, Title III of the Federal Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) of 1986 (PL 99-499), the following information is provided in compliance with the Community Right to-Know requirements of the SARA Law, and the open meetings and open records provisions of Kentucky Revised Statutes. Members of the public may contact the Nelson County Emergency Planning Committee by writing to: Tommie Wolf – Nelson County LEPC Chairman, Nelson County EMS Training Room, 1301 Atkinson Hill Ave., Bardstown, Kentucky, 40004 or by calling (502) 348-4929 (leave a call-back number). The Nelson County Emergency Planning Committee normally conducts their meetings at Nelson County EMS Training Room, 1301 Atkinson Hill Ave., Bardstown, Kentucky, 40004, or at other locations as announced and in accordance with the Kentucky Open Meetings Law. Members of the public may request to be notified of regular or special meetings as provided in KRS 61.820 and KRS 61.825. Records of the Planning Committee, including the County Emergency Response Plans (EHS), Safety Data Sheets (SDS), and Tier II Inventory forms or any follow-up emergency notices as may subsequently be issued. These records are open for inspection by members of the public. If you wish to review these records you may do so, 8:00 AM-4:00 PM eastern standard time, Monday through Friday at the Nelson County EMA/ LEPC Office, as required by the Kentucky Open Records Law (We ask an appointment be made by contacting the Chairman in order to answer any questions you may have). The local 24-hour telephone number for purposes of an emergency notification is (502-348-3600), as required by the SARA Act. Meetings will be announced at a later date.