



Fans everywhere remember freshman sensation Herschel Walker leading the 1980 Georgia Bulldogs to a perfect 12-0 record and the undisputed national championship. However, most don't realize that over the more than 100-year history of Georgia football, five Bulldog teams have actually been declared national champions at season's end by at least one of the national polls recognized by the National College Football Hall of Fame and included in the official NCAA Football Record Book.

Two of those, 1980 and 1942, were consensus selections being chosen by at least half of the recognized polls. Three other Georgia teams — 1927, 1946, and 1968, were recognized by polls such as the Williamson, based on a power ratings system, and the Litkenhous, a difference-by-score formula.

The Consensus National Champions

1980 - Vince Dooley's 1980 national championship team was the most compelling after a perfect 12-0 record, including a 17-10 victory over Notre Dame in the Sugar Bowl. Freshman sensation Herschel Walker helped the Bulldogs ascend the polls after being virtually unranked before to the season.

Georgia had moved up to number two after defeating South Carolina, 13-10, in a battle of top 10 teams in the season's eighth game. The next week, it appeared Georgia's run was over when Florida led the 'Dogs, 21-20, with 90 seconds to play and UGA set for a final possession on its own seven yard line. But quarterback Buck Belue, on third down and 10, hit receiver Lindsay Scott on a 93-yard TD pass with 1:04 to play to lift the 'Dogs to a 26-21 victory. The next day, Georgia was elevated to number one in the polls.

After victories over Auburn and Georgia Tech in the final two regular season games, Georgia met perhaps the most storied program in college football history—Notre Dame—in the Sugar Bowl. Led by Walker's two touchdowns, Georgia defeated the Irish, 17-10, to lay claim to its undisputed national crown. Virtually every major poll declared the Bulldogs No. 1 after a season in which Georgia was the only undefeated, untied Division 1-A team in the country.

1942 - In 1942, James Wallace Butts of Milledgeville, Ga., molded what was regarded as the Bulldogs' most powerful team in the first 50 years of Georgia football. Georgia was led by All-Americans Frank Sinkwich, who would win the Heisman Trophy following the season, and end George Poschner, along with a young back named Charley Trippi, who would years later be called perhaps the greatest all-around athlete ever to play for the Bulldogs.

Georgia knocked off nine consecutive opponents and ranked No. 1 in the nation. But Auburn ambushed the 'Dogs in Columbus, 27-13. Georgia, however, came back to win a Rose Bowl bid by blanking previously unbeaten Georgia Tech in Athens, 34-0, in the regular season finale. Georgia then edged UCLA, 9-0, in the Rose Bowl to finish the season 11-1. In the final polls, Georgia was declared national champion in six polls recognized by the NCAA—DeVold, Houlgate, Litkenhous, Williamson, Poling, and Berryman.

The other three....

1927 - Georgia's famous "dream and wonder team" of Coach George "Kid" Woodruff won its first nine games, including the Bulldogs' first win ever over Yale, a college football power of the 1920's, in New Haven, Conn. It ranked No. 1 in the nation with one regular season game remaining. However, Georgia Tech spoiled the perfect season by upsetting the 'Dogs in the rain, 12-0, in Atlanta. But the '27 'Dogs were still voted number one in two final recognized polls — Boand and Poling. This team marked the culmination of five year's work by Woodruff who had brought in several Knute Rockne proteges to install the Notre Dame box formation: line coach Harry Mehre; Jim Crowley, one of the four horsemen; and Frank Thomas. All later became great head coaches (Mehre at Georgia and Ole Miss, Crowley at Fordham, and Thomas at Alabama).

1946 - The 1942 juggernaut was dismantled by the events of World War II. But Charley Trippi and several of his Rose Bowl teammates returned to school in 1946 and led Georgia to a perfect 10-0 regular season and 20-10 victory over North Carolina in the Sugar Bowl. But despite Georgia's perfect record, Notre Dame was declared national champion by the majority of the polls; however, the Bulldogs were voted No. 1 in the final Williamson poll.

1968 - In 1968, another of Vince Dooley's teams went through the regular season undefeated, but tied twice, finishing 8-0-2 and earning an invitation to the Sugar Bowl. Despite suffering a 16-2 loss in the bowl game to Arkansas, Georgia was still voted No. 1 in the Litkenhous poll.

Some that came close....

Several other Georgia teams have flirted with a national title. Following the 1980 national championship season, Georgia had a magnificent run that produced three straight teams that had a shot at winning the national title — 1981, '82, and '83. Two of Mark Richt's teams also came close.

1981 - Despite an early season loss to Clemson, 13-3, in which the 'Dogs had nine turnovers, Georgia fought its way back to a No. 2 national ranking by winning the final eight regular season games. But a loss to Pitt in the Sugar Bowl in the final 20 seconds extinguished any chance at a second consecutive national title.

1982 - Led by Heisman Trophy winner Herschel Walker, Georgia marched through the 11-game regular season undefeated and untied and was ranked No. 1 heading into the bowl games. But second-ranked Penn State upended the Bulldogs, 27-23, in the Sugar Bowl to claim the national crown.

1983 - One of Georgia's favorite teams, the defensive-minded Bulldogs headed into the bowl games with a 9-1-1 record but faced undefeated, untied, and second-ranked Texas in the Cotton Bowl classic at Dallas. Despite being heavy underdogs, Georgia's defense stymied the Longhorns and the opportunistic offense scored a touchdown with 3:22 to play to give the 'Dogs a 10-9 upset. The nation's top-ranked team also lost that day but the final polls ranked Georgia fourth.

2002 - Head coach Mark Richt's second team won more games than any team in UGA history--13--and won Georgia's first SEC championship in 20 years. Only a 7-point loss to Florida in Jacksonville kept the Dogs out of a shot at the national championship game. The 13-1 Bulldogs, after defeating FSU in the Nokia Sugar Bowl, still finished the season ranked No. 3 in all major polls.

2007 - Although not selected for the national championship game, the 'Dawgs finished 11-2 with a No. 2 final national ranking.

And some others that had a shot....

1976 - The SEC champion 'Dogs finished 10-1 in the regular season and went into the bowl games ranked fourth but had a shot by playing No. 1 Pitt in the Sugar Bowl. But the Panthers, led by Heisman Trophy winner Tony Dorsett, defeated Georgia, 27-3, to claim the national crown.

1971 - Sophomore quarterback Andy Johnson led Georgia to nine straight victories before undefeated Auburn ended the 'Dogs hopes of a national title with a 35-20 victory in Athens. Despite the loss, Georgia still finished 11-1 by beating Georgia Tech in the final regular season game and defeating North Carolina in the Gator Bowl.

1966 - Georgia soundly defeated SMU in the Cotton Bowl but could not overcome a single regular season defeat to Miami by a single point as the 'Dogs finished the season 10-1 and ranked No. 4.

