



AUBURN'S 1913 UNDEFEATED TEAM

One hundred years ago, Alabama Polytechnic Institute football coach Mike Donahue watched his Tigers defeat Georgia 21-7 at Piedmont Park in Atlanta.

The win sealed a championship title in the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association and gave Donahue his second of three undefeated seasons as head coach. The team was also recognized as the national champion by six different polls, the largest being the Billingsley Report.

Even more impressive than the undefeated season and debated national title was how the team dominated its competition. Finishing with an 8-0 record, Auburn defeated its opponents with an unbelievable scoring margin of 223-13.

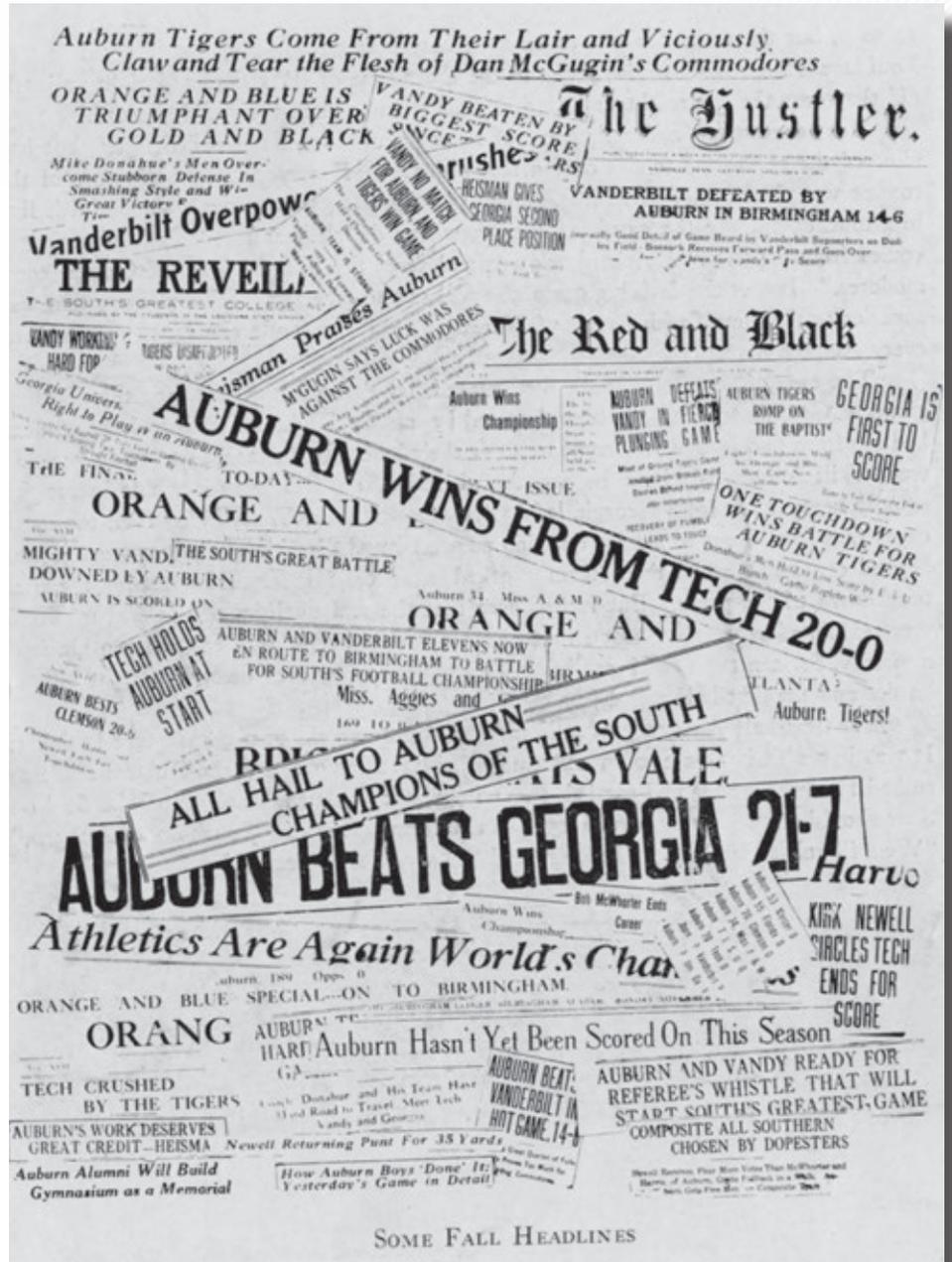
"Iron Mike" Donahue and his stingy defense shut out their first six opponents, outscoring them 189-0. Those six opponents included five future SEC members: Florida, Mississippi State, Clemson, LSU and Georgia Tech.

"The 1913 team is arguably the best, and I mean best, football team in Auburn history," said David Housel, Director of Athletics Emeritus at Auburn. "An Atlanta reporter once said back then, 'You were nobody in Southern Football until you had beaten Auburn.'"

On Oct. 4, 1913, A.P.I. began its season with a 53-0 blowout against visiting Mercer at home on Drake Field. The win would be the first in a 23-game unbeaten streak that ran throughout much of the 1915 season. It was also the first of only two home games for the Tigers that year.

Donahue, in his ninth season as head coach at A.P.I., was the centerpiece of the 1913 team's success. Born in Ireland in 1876, Donahue became Auburn's 10th head coach in 1904 at the age of 28.

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"He was tough and disciplined," Housel said. "A short Irish man, but boy was he tough."

His intensity on the practice field led to the Tigers' strong defense and power running offense. Aside from football, Donahue coached basketball, baseball, track and soccer. He is also believed to be the first coach to institute the forward pass in Southern Football against Sewanee on Oct. 26, 1906.

To this day, Auburn does not recognize the 1913 team as a national champion because the NCAA formally recognizes Harvard as the sole champion for that season. Many people believe Auburn should claim the 1913 team as a national champion.

"Auburn is listed as sharing the 1913 national championship with Harvard University and the University of Chicago," said Michael Scotnicki in his book, *Auburn's Unclaimed National Championships*. "The undefeated 1913 Auburn team, SIAA champion, is deserving of the title of national champion and that championship should be claimed with a banner in Jordan-Hare Stadium."

Whether the championship should be claimed or not, the 1913 team was as talented as any in Auburn history and featured some of the school's best players.

Senior captain Kirk Newell accounted for 46 percent of the Tigers' offense with 1,707 yards in just eight games. Originally a quarterback his freshman year in 1910, Newell became the feature halfback for the team the next three seasons.

Following his Auburn football career, Newell became a World War I hero after throwing himself onto a live hand grenade to save his fellow soldiers, greatly wounding himself in the process.

"When you talk about Auburn's greatest football player, you have to include Kirk Newell," Housel said. "He learned to run and cut by

chasing rabbits as a kid. After Newell graduated, Coach Donahue would invite him to the team's conditioning practices. He'd give Newell a 10-yard head start and say to the team, 'Go catch him,' and that's how they trained."

Newell and five other Auburn players, Frank Harris, John E. "Boozer" Pitts, Jim Thigpen, F.W. Lockwood and Henry Robinson earned All-Southern Team recognition for their play in the 1913 season. A freshman center that year, Pitts later replaced Donahue as head coach in 1923.

The year following the 1913 SIAA title, Auburn had an undefeated 8-0-1 season. The 1914 Tigers did not allow a point in nine games, their only tie coming in a 0-0 effort against Georgia.

"Auburn had a lot of great football teams, but

there may not have been one greater than the 1913-1914 team," Housel said. "It's difficult to compare teams in different eras, but no team has ever dominated like that."

