Tennessee's afternoon in Sanford Stadium began with a 17-point deficit. It ended with turnovers on its last three possessions. But in between, the Vols showed plenty of resolve in pushing No. 5 Georgia to the brink before falling, 51-44, on Saturday. "I am proud of this team for fighting," said head coach Derek Dooley.

"I think we showed that we have some resilience in this ball team, but we a lot of work to do on both sides of the ball. We are leaving here a better team than when we got here."
Georgia scored all of its 51 points in the first three quarters, and 30 of those came in the third quarter. UT's defense, which gave up several big plays on the ground before and allowed the Bulldogs to gain 234 yards of total offense in the first quarter alone, dug in and gave the offense two chances to tie the game in the third quarter.
"We kept hanging in there but couldn't get over the hump and get a stop when we needed it," said Dooley. "We had the ball in the last possession and had an opportunity to score, but we didn't get it done. We haven't been in those situations a lot. We are going to learn from it and next time execute it better."
Taking over at its 28-yard line with 7:31 to go and trailing by seven points, the Vols drove to the Georgia 50 before Sanders Commings intercepted a Tyler Bray at the Bulldogs' 36. Georgia, which had just one first down in the fourth quarter, went three-and-out on its next possession, giving UT the ball at its 26 with 4:06 left. Tennessee moved the ball into Georgia territory and converted a key third down with an 11-yard completion to Cordarrelle Patterson to the Georgia 27. Four plays later, though, Bray fumbled trying to escape pressure and Georgia's John Jenkins fell on the ball, effectively ending UT's upset bid. The Vols had one last-ditch chance to try and tie the game, but Bray's first pass from the UT 35 with 15 seconds left was tipped and intercepted by Commings.
That Tennessee (3-2, 0-2 SEC) would even have a chance to tie the game in the fourth quarter seemed highly unlikely after the way Saturday's game started. The Bulldogs scored on four of their first five possessions -- the lone exception an interception UT safety Byron Moore returned for a touchdown -- and had a 27-10 lead with 11 minutes remaining in the second half. Two lengthy touchdown runs, a 75-yarder by Keith Marshall and a 51-yarder by Todd Gurley, gave Georgia plenty of early momentum. The Vols, though, punched back. On the Bulldogs' next possession following Gurley's long run, the Vols forced a punt.
Then they started forcing turnovers. After a 10-play drive ended with linebacker A.J. Johnson's third rushing touchdown of the season, linebacker Herman Lathers sacked Murray and Johnson scooped up the loose ball at the UGA 18-yard line. Four plays later, tailback Rajion Neal scored from 10 yards on a catch-and-run. That score gave the Vols 20 unanswered points -- and their first lead of the game -- with less than a minute to go before halftime. But those final 42 seconds proved enough time for Georgia to get in range of kicker Marshall Morgan, whose 50-yard field goal made the score 30-30 at halftime. Georgia opened the second half with 14 unanswered points on touchdown passes of 8 and 32 yards from Aaron Murray to Michael Bennett.
The Vols, though, bounced right back again. Patterson broke free for a 46-yard touchdown run thanks to key blocks from Bray and tailback Marlin Lane. Patterson, who looked to pass first, cut

back twice and escaped Georgia's defenders for his second rushing touchdown of the season, which made the score 43-37 with 4:13 remaining in the third quarter. Three plays after that, though, Georgia's Marshall broke free again, going untouched off tackle for 72 yards and what proved to be the deciding score. Marshall finished with a game-high 164 rushing yards, and the Bulldogs ran for 282 yards total. While Georgia's freshmen backs carried the day, Tennessee's running game made a major improvement from where it was the last two games in this series. After rushing for a combined minus-12 yards the last two years against Georgia (a figure that includes negative yardage from quarterback sacks), the Vols ran for 197 on Saturday. Neal had 104 of those rushing yards, and Tennessee's offensive line got more dominant as the game went on. UT's fourth-quarter touchdown drive had eight running plays, including the last six, ending with Neal's 9-yard run.

The loss marked the first time in program history that Tennessee lost when scoring 40 or more points breaking a streak of 177 consecutive wins when it reached that threshold. The Vols have a week to recover from Saturday's game and get ready for a trip to No. 21 Mississippi State (4-0, 1-0 SEC) on Oct. 13. Mississippi State did not play Saturday.