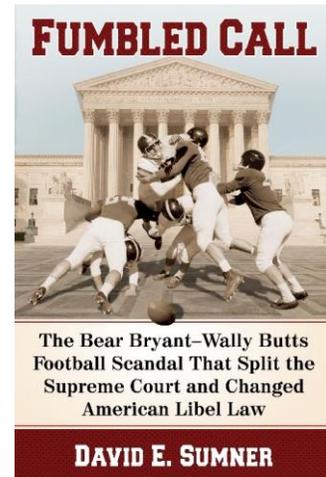


# FUMBLER CALL

**The Bear Bryant-Wally Butts Football Scandal That Split the Supreme Court and Changed American Libel Law**

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The week before the Alabama-Georgia national championship game on January 8, 2018, several sportswriters wrote about the most controversial game in their series that dates back to 1895. A week before the 1962 game, an Atlanta insurance salesman accidentally overheard a telephone conversation and became the center of a scandal that riveted college football. He thought he overheard Wally Butts, the athletic director and ex-football coach of the University of Georgia, give his friend Paul "Bear" Bryant, the legendary University of Alabama coach, play formations and details that helped Alabama romp over Georgia 35-0 in the 1962 season opener. The *Saturday Evening Post* published his story six months later, which led to a libel lawsuit by Butts that went to the U.S. Supreme Court. The court made a historic decision in *Curtis Publishing v. Butts* that changed American libel law. This untold story of events leading up to the case reveals new information about Butts and Bryant never before published.



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David E. Sumner tells this true, dramatic story after he researched more than 3,000 pages of letters, reports, memos, depositions, and trial transcripts from the University of Georgia Archives, Emory University Archives, FBI documents, and the National Archives and Records Administration. Sumner is professor emeritus of journalism at Ball State University in Indiana, where he taught feature and magazine writing for 25 years. A Florida native and SEC fan, he has a B.A. from Stetson University and a Ph.D. from the University of Tennessee. He is the author seven books including *John Thrasher: Georgia Pioneer, Politician, and Philanthropist* and *The Magazine Century: American Magazines Since 1900*.

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