

The Dawgmeister's Weekend Forecast
September 26th Edition: Hosting Arizona State, you Sun Devils you

Disclaimer #1: Please do not confuse any of the following with information that could usefully provide the basis for a wager.

Claimer #1: Some of my readers have asked why I don't have a "comments" section at the end of the weekly forecast, the way Tony Barnhart has in his online comments. I prefer not to include this feature because the first poster would say something insightful like, "I was first!" and then, after a few thoughtful notes of appreciation for my searing analysis, St. Simons would post "[45-42 hahahahahahahahaha]" and from there things would begin to circle the drain and then send spewing back a hateful explosion of bile from deep within the bowels of people's clogged and festering pipes. Not what I do this for.

Claimer #3: Just a word about our beautiful campus before I begin: A number of articles were published, on line and off, following the SC game about the enormous pile of garbage desecrating UGA in the wake of people's tailgating experiences—70 tons' worth, and that's only of the inorganic, collectable variety. Now, I like to have a good time as much as anybody. Possibly more, although not as much as I used to. I also know that many UGA graduates and supporters follow the exemplar of Christ, and when confronted with a dilemma, often ask, "What would Jesus do?" I doubt if Jesus would start drinking Jack Daniels at 8AM and continue through the morning, afternoon, and evening, with some hair of the Dawg to get Him through church on Sunday. But if He did, and I'm not in a position to say, I don't think He'd enter unto other people's tents and turn their water into wine and then drink it, or throw His mighty garbage throughout His glorious kingdom, or cast out visitors from the opposing campus, or unleash His Terrible Sword and defeat drought and pestilence with His mighty flow. Being a Dawg does not suggest that you should emulate our beloved mascot in all matters (that's UGA, not the other Guy).

For those of you unable to locate the Port-a-Potties, you might ask, "Where would Jesus poo?" Probably not where some unload their Great Burdens on Saturdays. I imagine that if Jesus were to show up on a football weekend, He'd say something like, "Cast ye not thy refuse upon these hallowed grounds, but bring with ye hefty bags and place it therein. Relieve thee not upon thy alma mater's lawns, nor in thy neighbor's tent nor upon their barbeque. And assault ye not thine enemy's brethren at their hotel." Or, since He probably didn't speak English, He might say, "הטל השתן בזה זה את והפקד האתה של חזקות שקיות עם הבא אבל, האלה המקודש הבסיס על שלך האשפה לא אתה נ.י.ט לא אתה ומתקיף. האויב מנגל נ.י.ט לע לא וגם שלך השכן באוהל לא וגם, אלוהים של מדשאות הם על לא אתה שלהם במלון האויב אחי." One reason that I don't write this blog using my real name, Wally Butts, is because I don't want people coming over and visiting themselves upon my lawn as a way of showing solidarity, or liquidarity. Please respect our gorgeous campus and the people who come to enjoy it, on Saturdays and during the rest of the week when "classes" are held. I don't mean to be critical y'all; I'm just sayin'.

Claimer #2: The Dawgmeister accepts no advertising revenues for his Weekend Forecast. If you feel moved to contribute financially to this effort, please write a check to your local food bank or homeless shelter, or the battered women's shelter if you have one. There are a lot of folks who are hungry and out of work these days and could use a meal and a cot for the night, or some

relief from that special man in her life. If even one of y'all does that, then all this is worth it to me. But don't assume that my needs will be covered by somebody else; give it a try yourself. Here's where that "What would Jesus do?" question comes in handy.

And now, The Recap: I believe that it was the great Lee Corso who opined that the UGA/SC game would be boring, and for the first time in his career, he was wrong. Anyone who predicted a yawner in Fayetteville must have had a similarly rude awakening. Another terrific game, even if we did yield a lot of points and yards to make it such a thriller. I'll confess that after the OK State game, I began to doubt if Joe Cox was up to this assignment. I'm sure that I'm like just about everybody else in thinking that, after putting up so many points the last 2 weeks against SEC defenses, he's plenty up to it, and I hereby issue my formal apology to Joe for ever questioning him. I'm guessing that he was weak with the flu vs. OSU and after the first drive lacked the precision he needs for his game to go well. He sure brought the Swine flu to the Hogs on Saturday. And this just in: Cox has been named the Walter Camp national offensive player of the week. 'Nuff said.

Given the way the offense has played the last two games, I have a request for a moratorium against complaining about the QB play, the OL, the RBs, the play-calling, the substitute patterns, the under-use of this guy or that, the game preparation, and anything else related to the offense except maybe the penalties, and OK, the turnovers. Roger Clarkson said that "the offense had some issues with eight 5-yarders that can be partially explained by the noisy, hostile crowd." I assume he was there and could judge crowd effects better than I could from the couch at home, so let's not expect these kids to do their jobs better than we would with 80,000 people screaming in order to confuse and disrupt us as we work.

People have griped that Wooten and Brown are not getting enough reps, but my sense is that they have been limited because other guys are more ready to make plays than they are and the established players are getting the snaps over the new guys. What should we do, sit Green for a quarter so that the fans can get a look at Wooten? AJ might have created the false impression last year that stepping in and being a star immediately is really easy. But simply learning the O is hard, and few great WRs have been called on to block in HS, which they've got to do here. Green got away with it because he is a truly transcendent talent. Having 3 scary WRs, as we do right now, is something I'm happy about; if other guys want to get on the field and advance in the progression, they've got to play their way past Green, Moore, and King, and best of luck with that. Throw in some outstanding young talent at TE and the passing game is something to behold.

Please raise your hand if you found anything not to like about Caleb King, who for some reason has never gotten much love from the Nation. For some reason, his inability to beat out Knowshon Moreno has been viewed by many to indicate a lack of talent, attitude, character, etc. (And the same standard is being unfairly applied to Marlon Brown vis-à-vis AJ Green.) Aside from his 80-yarder, Samuel got 1 yard per carry; King got about 5.5. He had several pancake blocks on blitzing linebackers while in max protect and ran with authority, and I can't wait to see more of him the rest of the season. I like Samuel too, of course, whom I'm not so much dumping on here as making the case that, all things considered King ought to get quite a few carries this season and needs us fans behind him. I think all 3 of our backs would have scored on the big run,

given the size of the hole and the way Arkansas was bunched at the line of scrimmage. Again, this is not a knock on Samuel, who is a beast running inside and will have great value for UGA in the next few years.

And who could talk about Saturday without talking about Butler and Walsh? Blair had some bad late kickoffs—I figure his leg was fatigued after kicking so many extra points, and also wonder about the directional kicking strategy—but would you trade these two for anybody else's kickers? It's nice to know that the kicking game will be in such good feet for this season and two more.

The D is getting some pretty bad reviews after the last couple of weeks' difficulties in holding down the score. I don't know enough about football to know how the Hog receivers were getting so open—it looked like Spurrier circa 1995 out there all night. Part of the problem on Saturday was that, in spite of how odious a human being he is, Petrino does have a creative and aggressive offensive mind, and we'll have to tip our hat to him for using all summer and the last two weeks to plan a good game and put in some impressive plays. And Mallett is every bit the 5-star QB he has always been touted to be and looks like an NFL first-round lock. He even showed some excellent balance and agility and some good footwork—not the plodder that some had characterized him as. So when ripping Coach Martinez for his shortcomings, keep in mind that the other guys are recruiting, scheming, practicing, and coaching too, and some of them are pretty good at it.

According to Clarkson: "Linebacker Rennie Curran summed up Georgia's all-or-nothing defensive execution Saturday. 'There were a lot of times we could have started pointing fingers and turning our backs on each other,' Curran said. 'At the end of the game, we got the stops that we needed but we've got a long way to go. We can't continue to give teams the long balls and the busted coverages.'" I'll go with Rennie's assessment on both team unity and what the team needs to do better. Also from Coach Richt: "If we continue to improve, that number of points is going to come down. Probably the first thing we need to improve is our turnover ratio. We've put our defense in some very short-field situations over eight times in three ballgames. That's way too many." So, the D and O shared responsibility for the points that Arkansas put up, and it'll take a team effort to hold opponents' scoring down.

The good news from the D is that once again they were near-impossible to run on. I've read complaints from even the estimable David Hale that the DL must not be living up to its billing because we don't hear their names called enough. But defensive linemen, especially the tackles, are not necessarily the guys who make the tackles—just about every guy who gets tons of tackles is a linebacker or safety. And when DTs do get the tackles it's often in a big pile of guys so they aren't announced as the tackler. The DTs are supposed to take out blockers primarily and get tackles only after they manhandle 300-600 pounds of guys trying to clear them out and then grab the little fast guy jetting through all the commotion. The fact is that through 3 games, we are holding opposing runners to about 3 yards per carry. Hunter and Smith are all-conference RBs so these are not stiffs we're shutting down. That's all I need to know about Geno, Jeff, and Kade, plus Deangelo and Abry and others who are in the mix.

I should also point out that when the game was on the line, the defense got the job done. Mallett did all his damage in the first three quarters, but the D stiffened up on the 4th. The announcers (who called a fine game, I thought) wondered if last week's epic game vs. SC, plus the two road trips we've taken, compared with how relatively well-rested and prepared Arkansas might be, would work against us in the fourth quarter, but the guys took the FINISH THE DRILL mantra to heart and protected the lead.

Still, we are yielding points and yards. Some of them came on really outstanding plays by both Mallett and his impressive and tall WRs—some of their catches were ridiculous—but that doesn't explain how open their WRs were at other times. I hope that Vance Cuff rebounds and gives us the depth we need in the backfield, and that the coaches identify and correct the problems. I also hope that Reshad Jones—another guy the Nation has never really embraced—keeps hammering guys who come into his zone and living up to the level of intimidation we've gotten from that position in the past from Phillips, Jones, Davis, Blue, etc. The shootouts are thrilling and all that, and Cox is showing tremendous leadership and ability in viewing deficits as problems to overcome. When Arkansas took the big early lead I wondered if this might not be our night. But champions are resilient, and if you're looking for a signature win with a signature style for the Year of Cox, perhaps that's something we can come away with from this exciting game in which we kept coming back and then kept going.

The Forecast: The Dawgs host ASU. This is the university that accepts 130% of its applicants, yet whose students recently felt that the body of work of the President of the United States was not sufficiently impressive for him to speak on campus. Also, the government of their state is so broke that it's put its Soviet-era-architecture government buildings up for sale to raise short-term funds, with the intention of paying the new owners exorbitant rent for the next few decades so they can have a place to sit while raising funds for re-election, hiking the Appalachian Trail, and whatever else it is they do in there to make Arizona such a prosperous state.

I don't know a ton about their football team, other than that they have destroyed Idaho State ("The Bengals") and Louisiana-Monroe ("The Warhawks"), both at home. They also have an effective coach in Dennis Erickson, that is, when he's not getting his programs on probation and then fleeing town in the night *a la* that other great Pac-10 wunderkind Rick Neuheisel. From their team website: "Playing in a half-empty Sun Devil Stadium, Arizona State (2-0) turned in another strong defensive performance. . . . The Sun Devils have limited teams from the Big Sky and Sun Belt Conferences to a total of 17 points." If they don't travel to their own stadium for games, I think we can expect some extra tickets from their allotment to be available for Dawg fans.

The wild card for Saturday will be the condition of the field. I don't remember this much September rain in my dozen or so years of Athens, and don't know how well the field drains or how much more rain will get by the weekend. I'm happy for Lake Lanier, the Chattahoochee, and all of our lawns—put that sprinkler away till next summer. But it could affect the game conditions, and I hope to our advantage. They say a bad field benefits the offense, although it usually hurts the kicking game. We'll see on Saturday.

According to <http://www.bustersports.com/blog/pac-10-news/2009/08/24/pac-10-the-top-10-coaches/>, Erickson is the third-best coach in the Pac-10 (but then, according to this list, Pete Carroll is #1 and Steve Sarkisian is #10). It's just hard to say how good his team is this year when they've opened with two scrimmages against the JV. Normally I'd say, Well, he ran up 52 points on Idaho State but he'll never do that vs. a SEC defense, but I'm holding off judgment for a few games before I go there. On the other hand, given what I've seen the last few weeks, 40-50-60 points from UGA isn't hard to imagine at all. So I think that the Good Guys are going to keep plucking that chicken and win, 45-28. But don't employ my point spread if you elect to place a friendly wager.

National Game of the Week: Another week with an absence of great matchups, even though there might be some great games. The biggest matchups seem to be out of the ACC: UNC at GT and Miami at VT. I end up watching some ACC games just because they're on, and think that the second of these two should be a good game (maybe the first also). That Miami QB is pretty good and I'm not betting against him till he loses, so I'll go with the Canes, 28-24.