

The Dawgmeister's Weekend Forecast

November 14th Edition: Auburn between the Hedges (not painted black for the occasion)

Support your Community: Members of the Athens Area Association of Realtors are collecting infant care products through Nov. 13 for the Athens Area Homeless Shelter, the Athens Battered Women's Shelter and the Clarke County Department of Family and Children Services. Members are collecting disposable diapers, baby wipes, baby wash and baby lotion; money donations also will be accepted. Donations may be taken to association headquarters at 1720 Meriweather Drive, Bogart, or in Athens to Athens Classic Properties, 1690 S. Lumpkin St.; Century 21 Ivey & Co., 1867 W. Broad St.; Coldwell Banker Upchurch Realty, 2405 W. Broad St.; Prudential Blanton Properties, 524 Hill St.; Re/Max Associates-Athens, 1055 Baxter St.; or Synovus Mortgage, 150 W. Hancock Ave.

The Recap: [((((((((38-0 hahahahahaha)))))))]

The Dawgs snacked on their homecoming cupcake. Mission accomplished.

The one thing that nags about the game is the penalties. Interesting thing about the penalties. Most interpretations I read lay the blame for penalties on the coaching staff for their failure to institute appropriate discipline. Against Tennessee Tech, it seemed that most penalties came against the OL, and Richt confirmed afterwards that the offending OL player came out of the game after moving before the snap as a new way to try to reduce that particular penalty. OK then, the conventional wisdom is that the problem must lie in Coach Stacy Searels for being such a softie when it comes to discipline. Anyone want to tell that to Mr. Searels's face? I don't think there's a more demanding position coach anywhere in the country, so the logic seems to be a bit off here. I'll hazard a guess that some of our guys just aren't as focused as our coaches would hope, no matter how many stadium steps they run or up-downs they do. On the OL, I think we're still paying for that sequence of years where we whiffed during recruiting. I'm hoping that when Coach Searels's own recruits are ready to play, they make fewer mental errors than we're presently seeing.

Today's history lesson:

The consensus from what I've read online throughout the season is that the great UGA football tradition is being tarnished by this bunch of coaches and players. After this season, when Richt gets fired for leading the program down the path of mediocrity, he should be replaced by Rich Rodriguez (after Michigan fires him for his 8-14 record as head coach at UM—good karma there), Turner Gill (presently leading Buffalo to a 3-6 record in the MAC—this year's Gene Chizik?), Charlie Strong (the nation's most eligible assistant coach, but a guaranteed improvement over Mark Richt?), and other candidates. I am here to offer a different perspective on the program.

Before I moved to Athens a dozen or so years ago, I was not aware that Georgia had such a great football tradition, or that the "Spell Georgia Cheer" executed (correctly) at the end of the weekly Redcoat Marching Band's halftime performance is "one of the greatest traditions in all of college football." At the time I moved here, UGA hadn't won the SEC East in about 20 years, and indeed, one friend kept saying that if only we could win the SEC East one time, he'd die a happy man. (He presently is alive, and is not happy about UGA's football fortunes, and has compared the present state of affairs to the lowest point of the Ray Goff era.) In the late 1990s, it was

common for guys like Deon Grant to be a Georgia high school star and commit to Tennessee and say he made the decision to be a Vol because he wanted to compete for a national championship, which wasn't going to happen at UGA but would in Knoxville. Tennessee, Florida State, and others would routinely cherry-pick the best GA high school kids and win with them, and UGA would settle for 3rd or 4th in the SEC East. Remember P.K. Sam? He initially committed to UGA, but switched to FSU the second they offered him a scholarship. UGA was his safety school all along, not his destination of choice. In 2000, UGA beat Tennessee for the first time in forever, and the fans stormed the field and tore down the goalposts (and desecrated the hedges for souvenirs) because it was such an emotional, long-overdue win.

That all changed when Richt came to UGA. It's no surprise that both FSU and UT went into declines after Coach Richt arrived in Athens, in large part I believe because they lost a good region of their talent base to UGA, which suddenly went from annual Citrus Bowl contenders to a program routinely referred to as an "SEC powerhouse" playing in January bowl games.

But the collective memory seems a bit amnesic these days, what with all the hand-wringing about how the glorious football tradition of yore has been besmeared by Richt and Co. this year and last (10-3 record with 20+ players out with season-ending injuries). So I thought that I'd use my space this week to walk all 5 of my readers through the actual history of UGA football, undistorted by the rose-tinted glasses through which so many recall it. Please pardon my Hale-esque detail in presenting this overview.

First, I ripped the following chart off of a website out there. It lists each UGA football coach and his W-L record. Take a look:

COACHES

COACH	YEARS	# YEARS	GAMES	WON	LOST	TIED	PCT.
Dr. Charles Herty	1891	1	2	1	1	0	.500
Ernest Brown	1893	1	5	2	2	1	.500
Robert Winston	1894	1	6	5	1	0	.833
Glenn "Pop" Warner	1895-1896	2	11	7	4	0	.636
Charles McCarthy	1897-1898	2	9	6	3	0	.667
Gordon Saussy	1899	1	6	2	3	1	.417
E.E. Jones	1900	1	6	2	4	0	.333
Billy Reynolds	1901-1902	2	15	5	7	3	.433
M.M. Dickinson	1903, 1905	2	13	4	9	0	.308
Charles A. Barnard	1904	1	6	1	5	0	.167
W.S. Whitney	1906-1907	2	15	6	7	2	.467
Branch Bocock	1908	1	8	5	2	1	.688
J. Coulter	1909	1	7	1	4	2	.286
W.A. Cunningham	1910-1919	8	70	43	18	9	.679
H.J. Stegeman	1920-1922	3	29	20	6	3	.741
George Woodruff	1923-1927	5	47	30	16	1	.649
Harry Mehre	1928-1937	10	99	59	34	6	.626
Joel Hunt	1938	1	10	5	4	1	.550
Wallace Butts	1939-1960	22	235	140	86	9	.615
Johnny Griffith	1961-1963	3	30	10	16	4	.400
Vince Dooley	1964-1988	25	288	201	77	10	.715
Ray Goff	1989-1995	7	81	46	34	1	.574
Jim Donnan	1996-2000	5	59	40	19	0	.678
Mark Richt	2001-Current	8	104	82	22	0	.788

Total (24 coaches)	115	1162	724	384	54	.646
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Aside from Robert Winston's one-year stint in 1894, when the players were stuffing newspapers into their britches to protect their *cojones* and Grover Cleveland was the U.S. President, Mark Richt has the highest winning percentage of any coach in the program's history. Even adding this year's 5-4 record, it's .770, highest on the list after Winston. My namesake, Wally Butts, can't even come close, nor could Harry Mehre, both immortalized on campus with the weirdest sounding Heritage Hall name on earth. (Also note that Jim Donnan had a higher winning percentage than either Butts or Mehre.)

So, if Richt and Co. are ruining the great tradition of Glory Glory, which tradition would that be? He's third in longevity following Dooley and the husband of the first Mrs. Butts, so this is no statistical anomaly, and he's coaching in an era of scholarship limits, which never were a problem for most of his immortal predecessors. He also has not had the scandals that his most illustrious forefather, Vince Dooley, had on his watch, e.g., the Jan Kemp affair, which somehow managed to occur without the head football coach being considered part of the problem. As noted in Wikipedia, "During Dooley's tenure as UGA athletics director, his administration was marred by numerous investigations and sanctions for NCAA violations." I realize I may be offending Coach Dooley's staunch supporters in making this point, but it's mighty hard to overlook that he exhibited strong Teflon tendencies in the midst of the several scandals that took place during his coaching and athletic-directing tenure.

Interesting point on Coach Dooley, or more to the point, AD Dooley (on whose watch the Jim Harrick debacle also took place): When I arrived here in the late 1990s, I was pretty surprised at the way in which Dooley was spoken of with such disrespect on web boards and letters to the editor. I knew that UGA had won a national title with Hershel Walker while Dooley was coach, so was taken aback at how people were treating him as though he was the village idiot when referring to his hires, etc. And then Michael Adams came to the rescue and chose not to renew him, and his martyrdom in the Adams/Dooley, Academics/Athletics battle was on (actually it was a battle between two gigantic egos that had little to do with athletics or academics). It reminded me then, and still does today, of the amazing reconstruction that Rudy Giuliani effected following 9-11. Before the planes hit the towers, he was universally regarded as a bum throughout NYC for his marital infidelities, his selling of the city to corporations at the expense of NYC's traditional family-owned businesses, his cross-dressing, and his general poor job as mayor. But after the attack, he appeared leaderly for the cameras, and suddenly was revived and even presidential. Funny how these things can work to one's advantage.

Anyhow, it's pretty clear from the W-L records that Richt has brought unprecedented success to the UGA program, in spite of this year's difficulties, which I still maintain would look less like a failure if a delusional official hadn't flagged A.J. Green for acting like the kid he is following his tremendous game-winning catch vs. LSU. But that's a different topic. As I understand it from the traditionalists who voice their anger on the Internet, UGA has never had losing seasons before in their glorious history of countless league and national championships. But take a look at http://www.georgiadogs.com/pdf5/643316.pdf?DB_OEM_ID=8800, where every game in the program's history is listed. Here are some season records and the head coach; I'll stick mainly to the coaching immortals and the schmucks who coached between them.

Harry Mehre

1928: 4-5 (forgivable in his first year on the job)

1932: 2-5-2

1936: 5-4-1

Wally Butts

1939: 5-6 (first year on the job)

1940: 5-4-1

1949: 4-6-1

1951: 5-5

1953: 3-8

1955: 4-6

1956: 3-6-1

1957: 3-7

1958: 4-6

Johnny Griffith

10-16-4 over 3 years

Vince Dooley

1969: 5-5-1 (not his first year)

1970: 5-5

1974: 6-6

1977: 5-6

1979: 6-5

Interestingly, I found these seasons for Ray “The Much-Maligned” Goff:

1991: 9-3

1992: 10-2

And after a 5-6 record in his first year, Jim Donnan went on to win a greater percentage of his games than Wally Butts or Harry Mehre, before Adams decided that wasn’t good enough and cut him loose, and he and Dooley brought in Richt.

Richt has won SEC championships at the following rate compared to his predecessors. Let’s assume that the SEC has been equally competitive across the decades (although Florida was a doormat until Spurrier came along—hard to believe these days). After the coach’s name, I’ll give the percentage for seasons-coached/titles-won, including this season in which Florida has already clinched the SEC East. Here’s the breakdown:

Mark Richt 22%

- **2005** - Southeastern Conference Champions
- **2002** - Southeastern Conference Champions

Vince Dooley 24% (counts co-championships as championships; 12% for outright championships)

- **1982** - Southeastern Conference Champions

- **1981** - Southeastern Conference Co-Champions
- **1980** - Southeastern Conference Champions
- **1976** - Southeastern Conference Co-Champions
- **1968** - Southeastern Conference Champions
- **1966** - Southeastern Conference Co-Champions

Wally Butts 19%

- **1959** - Southeastern Conference Champions
- **1948** - Southeastern Conference Champions
- **1946** - Southeastern Conference Co-Champions
- **1942** - Southeastern Conference Champions

H. J. Stegeman 33% (1 championship in 3 years)

- **1920** - Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association Co-Champions

Glen "Pop" Warner 50% (1 championship in 2 years; won championship with a 4-0 record)

- **1896** - Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association Co-Champions

These are the only coaches who have won league championships in UGA football history, and Richt looks pretty good in this regard, assuming that Stegeman and Warner coached too long ago and for too short a tenure to really count in this comparison. Let's also recognize that Richt is the only one to deal with the playoff system between East and West champs (launched in 1992), which reduces his chances of winning the league. He's also had one loss in the championship game. Prorated for equivalency with the conditions under which Dooley coached, he'd then have won championships in 33% of his years (including 2009). Computing it from Dooley's perspective, let's say he'd have won the championship game at Richt's rate (2 of 3), which then would give him a 20% rating for winning the SEC. No matter how you add it up, Richt's record is equivalent to or better than that of any coach in program history.

Bowl game records:

Dooley: 8-10-2

Richt: 6-2

Butts: 5-2-1

And finally, here's the record for national championships:

Vince Dooley

- **1980 (12-0-0)** [UGA's only consensus national champions, accomplished with the greatest player in college football history in the backfield]
- **1968 (8-1-2)** – Litkenhous ranking champs [Ohio State and Texas also claim to be national champs in 1968]
- **1966 (10-1-0)** - Massey Ratings champs [Alabama, Michigan State, and Notre Dame also claim to be national champs in 1966]

Wally Butts

- **1946 (11-0-0)** - Williamson System champs [Army and Notre Dame also claim to be national champs in 1946]
- **1942 (11-1-0)** - Berryman; DeVold; Houlgate System; Litkenhous; Polling System; Williamson System champs [Wisconsin and Ohio State also claim to be national champs in 1942]

George Woodruff

- **1927 (9-1-0)** - Boand System; Polling System champs [Illinois, Notre Dame, Yale, and Texas A&M also claim to be national champs in 1927]

I don't know what to make of the years before 1970 or so when the system wasn't as clear as it is today, and many teams laid claim to the title. Of course, today's system hardly works to everyone's satisfaction either. In any case, it appears to me that the greatest, most memorialized, most feted, and most celebrated coaches in UGA's storied history have had some pretty bad seasons, contrary to what I would glean from reading about the disappointment over this season. Richt's main shortcoming seems to be the lack of a national championship. But consider that guys like Tom Osborne (Nebraska), Joe Paterno, Mack Brown, good ol' Bobby Bowden, Dean Smith, Roy Williams, and many other Hall of Famers in several sports took a good 20 years or so of being labeled "can't win the big one" before winning the big one and having their careers validated by the Great Fan Opinionator. Richt still has over a decade for the final judgment to be rendered, and I think that UGA will win a national championship before then, and think we'll do it in the next 5 years. Richt has run a very clean program (with occasional player arrests, few for anything greater than a misdemeanor), i.e., no scandals, relatively high GPAs and graduation rates, and outstanding mentoring for young men in how to manage their lives outside football. He suspends kids for driving violations while Mike Gundy lets guys play until they are actually sitting in a jail cell and can't make bond. Richt is the guy I want coaching my university's football team, and I hope he stays until he drops, even if in hindsight some of his decisions could have been better. But Richt doesn't have the luxury of making decisions in hindsight like the rest of us. He's the guy whose ass is on the line and makes the calls that seem right to him at the time, and does so admirably, with integrity, and with outstanding judgment. There's a better chance of David Hale buying [J.J. Redick's forthcoming rap CD](#) than there is of UGA finding a better football coach than Mark Richt. Just look at the record and see if anyone's done any better in the history of the program.

Random thoughts and factoids:

Oklahoma, coached by "Big Game" Bob Stoops, generally regarded as one of the top 5 coaches in the nation, is, like UGA, now 5-4 after hanging 3 points on Nebraska. Both OU and UGA will be back soon, under their current head coaches.

Temple is now 7-2, same as Southern Cal, and don't tell me that the Pac-10 schedule is so much more challenging that the MAC's that the comparison is irrelevant. And I have it on good authority from an old Penn State player (where Al Golden played) that Golden is a great guy who knows what he's doing. Temple got the 34th most votes in this week's AP poll, more than UGA, Oklahoma, Notre Dame (somehow still getting votes), Florida State, and just about everybody else.

Of course, USC is ranked ahead of all other 2-loss teams (except LSU and OSU) and ahead of several 1-loss teams—including Oregon, which beat the snot out of them one week ago—because all USC losses are flukes and don't really count, because they are so good.

The ages of some well-known athletes:

Michael Moore: 23
Darius Dewberry: 23
Rod Battle: 23
Dwight Howard: 23
LeBron James: 24

A Look at 3 True Freshmen:

Washaun Ealey: I was talking to some program people before the game and they got to chuckling about Ealey and his background and mindset. Apparently he comes from so far out in the middle of nowhere that Google Earth hasn't found it yet, and was, to say the least, unsupervised as a high school kid. He's also what you'd call "chippy": He talks trash constantly and without remorse. They marveled at how a true freshman could get under the skin of a wizened senior like Brandon Spikes to the point that he'd try to gouge out Ealey's eyeballs on camera, and from what I gather, it won't be the last time that Ealey's Dennis Rodman qualities produce a similar effect. Afterwards Ealey thought nothing of the eye-gouging and thought it didn't merit a suspension for Spikes, and the guys I talked with said that his comments weren't offered as jock modesties for the benefit of reporters; where Ealey's from, gouging out people's eyeballs isn't so unusual. One tough kid.

Mettenberger and Murray: I watched them warm up and here offer a few observations, based on limited exposure and with the belief that the QB job will be wide open next year: Mettenberger is a really big guy, a true 6-5 (most guys' heights come down a few inches at the combine, but his won't), and indeed has a rocket of an arm. He was warming up in the 60-70 yard range. I know he got sacked a lot in HS behind a weak OL, and isn't as nimble as Murray. Murray also has a lot of zip on the ball, although not in Mettenberger's league in terms of here-to-there speed or distance, but plenty enough to play QB in this league. Both can hum it with more giddyap than can Joe Cox. Murray also has a genuine "It-factor" quality about him with a very outgoing personality and great charisma, while Mettenberger's a relatively quiet guy. It should be interesting to see what happens in spring and fall 2010 when they go head-to-head vs. Gray for the starting job. In his limited chances thus far, Gray has run better than he's thrown. But as coaches love to say, what goes on between the ears counts for more than arm-strength or foot-speed in earning the starting QB job.

The Forecast: Auburn vs. UGA: A really big game for both teams. My sense from the coaches is that they're viewing the rest of the season as a new season, in which they're now 1-0 with 3 tough games ahead. I have sort of a soft spot for Auburn because my son and I went to a game on The Plains back when Donnan was coach. My son was competing in a tae kwon do tournament in Montgomery, and we caught the game on the way home. I ended up short of cash at the stadium and my son was really hungry (he was about 10 years old at the time), and an Auburn fan heard us talking and bought him a hotdog and a drink. All in all the fans were genuinely nice to us throughout our visit, even as we were conspicuous in our UGA gear. I hope that UGA fans understand that when people come to Athens from other communities, those little gestures really make lasting impressions on visitors about the whole university. Anyhow, while you're hosting our visitors graciously, you'll also get a really competitive game. I think our kickers will be the difference along with our revived running game, with Ealey and King doing the dirty work and Green returning to tip the scales the Dawgs' way. Good guys, 31-28.

National Game of the Week: Iowa at Ohio State: Iowa's now on its heels after losing to Northwestern, and Ohio State is in "control-their-destiny" mode. Bucks, 34-17.