

The Dawgmeister's Weekend Forecast
Bowl Game Edition: Liberty's on the March: Bring on Knightro

“[As a quarterback] He always had unbelievable instincts, great athletic feet, the whole skill set. . . He’s an amazing athlete. Quick feet, explosiveness, anticipation. . . . The guy’s work ethic stood out from the jump. He was smart, he was a leader. You could just see he was going to be special. . . . If a father gives his kid [his jersey number] he’s probably never going to have to do any explaining about the guy who wears that jersey. . . . [He] was named the state large-school offensive MVP. But there were issues. He had [badly injured his leg] and he was just barely six feet tall [but] his initial rehab was stunning. ‘The most remarkable of any patient I’ve ever treated’ [said the attending physician]. . . . There’s an It factor in sports. It’s a hard thing to pinpoint. But I’ll tell you what: [He] has it. . . . Just being around that great a player, a guy who works so hard, it makes you feel like you have to raise the level of your game.”

~Statements made about *Sports Illustrated* magazine’s Sportsman of the Year Drew Brees...but could easily be about UGA QB Aaron Murray

A little more on Aaron Murray’s final rank of #9 nationally in QB rating: When I originally posted the national top ten, I observed that “Note that only 5 of the guys with higher ratings played against comparable competition week in and week out. And 3 of those 5 are SEC guys who’ll be gone next year.” I should have further noted that another of the guys ahead of him is the Wisconsin QB Tolzein, and they mostly run the ball, which really amplifies a QB ranking because the throws are so much easier; that we don’t use a shovel pass the way many of the guys ahead of him do which also elevates a rating because it’s always a completion; that 3 were invited to the Heisman Award ceremony as finalists; that 3 are seniors (Tolzein, Dalton, McElroy); that 2 are junior transfers in their 4th year of college ball who will undoubtedly go pro early (Newton, Mallett); and that 2 are juniors who also conceivably go early but I suspect will return (Moore is confirmed to return; no word yet on Luck). That leaves the guys ranked 8 and 9. Both are freshmen, and both will be the QBs in the Liberty Bowl:

RK	PLAYER	TEAM	ATT	COMP	PCT	YDS	YDS/A	LONG	TD	INT	SACK	RAT
8	Jeffrey Godfrey, QB	UCF	190	128	67.4	1875	9.9	60	12	6	14	164.8
9	Aaron Murray, QB	UGA	304	188	61.8	2851	9.4	66	24	6	21	162.7

Now that’s pretty dang cool. Murray’s stats came against much tougher competition (UCF mostly played teams like South Dakota and Tulane) and Godfrey threw far fewer passes with double the INTs per TD pass (I think this listing does not include their game vs. SMU however). Godfrey’s also smaller than Murray, coming in at 5-11, 175 lbs.

So, looking ahead to next year, I think I can say with confidence that Murray will not only be the top returning QB in the SEC, he’ll be one of the top 3 QBs in the country. Much to look forward to in Dawgland, methinks.

Meanwhile, [Tom Savage](#), who was even with Murray on our recruiting board coming out of high school (and higher on some people's boards) is now considering transferring after getting injured and then beaten out by the little guy who QB'd Marcus Lattimore's HS team in SC, 2-star prospect Chas Dodd who is about 6 inches shorter than Savage. In retrospect, would you take any of the guys at

<http://footballrecruiting.rivals.com/quicklist.asp?School=&Sport=1&Position=4&Year=2009&q s=1> over Aaron?

Bobo haters, skip to the next section. I'm a staunch defender of Coach Bobo. People complain about his play calling even though we score a lot of points, which makes no empirical sense to me. What continues to go underappreciated is his ability to develop QBs. To give 2 points of comparison: Tim Tebow had 4 years at Florida and came out with notoriously bad throwing mechanics that had to be corrected after he left. Cam Newton has excellent throwing mechanics, but I've heard Gary Danielson criticize his footwork on occasion. But Bobo's QBs are mechanically sound in every aspect of playing the position. They've all had excellent footwork and throwing motions, all have been outstanding ballhandlers and carry out their fakes effectively, all can manage the game from the line of scrimmage without having to look to the sidelines for decisions, all have used hard counts for easy five-yard gains, and all have been taught to read the field and make good decisions. Joe Cox had less talent than the others but got the most out of what he had. I just don't think you can look at our QBs and say that they haven't been coached about as well as possible; and NFL scouts' remarks about Matthew Stafford's level of preparation support the view that Mike Bobo is one heck of a QB coach.

During Green's four-game NCAA suspension, the Bulldogs averaged 352.3 yards and 24.3 points per game. After the star receiver's return, they averaged 414.5 yards and 39.3 points per game. Bobo's play-calling has also been criticized for not being creative enough, but a couple stats could dispute that:

- The Bulldogs had 63 plays (including special teams) of at least 25 yards this season, compared to 43 for their opponents.

- Inside the red zone, the Bulldogs ranked 12th in the nation in converting: They got a touchdown 34 of 54 times, a field goal 14 times, with the six empty chances coming on three turnovers, two missed field goal and failed fourth down attempt.

Richt turned over the play-calling to Bobo late in the 2006 season. Since then, according to UGA historian Patrick Garbin, the Bulldog offense has actually out-produced the team when Richt was calling plays.

"If I had five kids all under the age of (six), and four freshman quarterbacks and no other quarterbacks, I'd lose a couple hairs too. But coach Bobo's a great guy."~ Aaron Murray

I was sorry to see Dave van Hallanger take the fall for the team's 6-6 record this season, but glad to learn that Coach Richt found a new position for him in the program. People have long criticized Coach Richt for being overly loyal to his assistants, but in the last two years he's fired two of his oldest and closest friends in Martinez and van Hallanger. Whatever you say about CMR, you can't accuse him at this point of being overly sentimental in his decision-making.

I heard Coach Van introduced this fall as "250 pounds of caffeinated adrenalin" and although he's in his late 50s, I suspect he could still hold his own if he had to arm-wrestle a grizzly bear. I

doubt if anyone who's trained under him feels as weak as his critics say his players have become. Here's a quote from UGASports: "When he took over the program in 2001, the average back squat for the top 50 players on the team was right at 430 pounds. By 2010 that number had climbed to over 550 pounds. In fact, the offensive line that was turned over to the coaches at the beginning of the 2010 fall camp was the strongest on record." There's never been any empirical evidence that his program wasn't working; all evidence indeed is to the contrary, although Coach Richt's decision seems more based on the conditioning part of the job than the strength aspect. But go 6-6 and somebody's got to go. I wouldn't be surprised if he soon landed a new job as strength and conditioning coach and that he moves from UGA character education director to some fortunate program's weight room, where he thrives, as do his players. A heck of a great guy, a legend in weight rooms around the country, and one of the pioneers in his field of endeavor. How many of us can make that claim?

Dawg Doots:

- A coveted Dawgmeister game ball goes to [Aron White, the sole student speaker at the Fall graduation ceremony](#). Aron was selected by a Student Government Association committee after their review of his application, resume, and speech, followed by an interview with the committee. He will graduate ahead of schedule in Management and play his final year while working on a M.A. in Sports Management with the aspiration of being a university Athletic Director down the road. A Damn Good Dawg and great representative of the program—Well done Aron!
- A coveted Dawgmeister game gall, Senior Edition, goes to 29-year-old Fred Gibson, who took advantage of a UGA program that pays tuition expenses for former Dawg athletes and returned to campus for the last three semesters to complete his degree in housing and consumer economics. "I'm real proud, man," he said. "Where I came from, small town Waycross, Ga., a lot of my family members never graduated from college."
- And a final coveted Dawgmeister game ball to the Athletic Association for providing this support to help our guys complete their degrees.
- Ordinarily, I pull for coaches who look like the guy I call to clean my gutters in the fall. But I have a hard time warming up to Bo Pellini.
- For those who get wrapped up in how many stars that Jamie "Where'd he play?" Newberg awards to high school kids, read [Leather Helmet's archeological work](#) in finding out how many stars were awarded to this year's first-team All America team when they were recruits.
- I think that the [subtegalaneous](#) stadiums in Dallas and Atlanta represent the best and worst of this medium. People go to Cowboys Stadium because it's worth seeing in and of itself; people go to the Georgia Dome because that's where you have to go to watch a Falcons game. I'm not suggesting that the city of Atlanta invest public money in a new stadium instead of in schools and other worthy areas from filling potholes to repairing bridges. I'm just sayin'.
- I think that Josh Freeman's early development as an NFL QB bodes well for Cam Newton, given that Newton has been far more dominant at the college level than Freeman ever was with similar skill sets.
- All good Dawg fans will want to read the content at <http://firepauljohnson.blogspot.com/>
- I've watched some of the *30 For 30* documentaries on ESPN, including *Pony Exce\$\$* on the SMU payola scandal of the 1980s. The parallels between then and now are quite

interesting: charismatic coach (Ron Meyer/Pete Carroll) reviving a down program and then bolting for the NFL (Patriots/Seahawks) just ahead of the investigators; wheeler-dealer booster (Sherwood Blount, Jr./Bobby Lowder) laundering money to feed recruits and players; hotshot recruit (Sean Stopperich/Cam Newton) whose family was able to resolve financial problems coincidental with the player's commitment to the university; etc. Most interesting fact that was overlooked by the program: Pretty much everyone interviewed said that SMU was the norm and not the exception; that they got caught mostly because they were in Dallas during a media war between the two big newspapers and the TV stations when everyone was looking to scoop the competition. But everyone else in the old Southwest conference was cheating at that level without such scrutiny. The coach at league member Arkansas? Lou Holtz, looking quite dapper in bright red pants, no doubt bulging with cash in the pockets.

- When Urban Meyer resigned, I was really hoping that they'd hire Bobby Petrino, which would have enabled me to consolidate my hatreds into one program. Now I've been assured of hating Arkansas for 7 more years, unless something better comes along. I'll have to learn to hate Muschamp, even though he was a Dawg long before I became a fan and so perhaps easier for me to hate than it will be for seriously deep Dawg fans.
- "Cheaters never win." It's hard to say that this one's a lock.
- "Cheaters never prosper." It depends on the ability of the lead prosecutor.
- [Mark Bradley has declared that Mark Richt should be fired if he doesn't win the SEC East next year.](#) I think that Mark Bradley should be fired if he writes one more dumbass column, or if he doesn't win a Georgia Sports Writers Association Award (any category), or if he *does* win the coveted Dawgmeister Jeff Schultz Award for Really Terrible Sports Writing, which he is presently excellently positioned to take home in 2011.
- If it pleases you to hear people referred to as "faggots" over and over, then [this is the dawg blog for you](#) and other really angry, profane people who coincidentally support the same football program, even if they do not spell or punctuate so well when expressing their violent opinions, making me wonder if they actually attended UGA or any other university, or whether they just have a whole lot to say about its football team, in whatever unfiltered language goes between their heads and their fingertips as they type. I guess there's a reason that they show those ["Go Long with ExtenZe" ads by Jimmy Johnson](#) during football broadcasts.
- [The Athens Banner-Herald ran a story on Michael Bennett, redshirting this year as a WR, as a contributor for 2011.](#) My under-the-radar guy to watch: Jeremy Longo, who's been injured since arriving several years ago and will be a RS-Jr. next season at DE. People have told me he's finally getting healthy and has been a scout team terror this season, so look for him to be in the rotation next season.
- The coaches ignored my suggestion to play Artie Lynch at fullback next year, going with Bruce Figgins instead. Missed it by that much.
- When I was watching the Chicago Bears play the New England Patriots during a blizzard, and they had to keep shoveling snow off the field the whole game, the absurdity of using chains to measure for first downs really hit home to me. Ever since I was Little Woolly's age, I've wondered how they could eyeball the placement of both the ball and the chains, and then get the measurement down to the last blade of grass. It seems that they could do at least as good a job using the yellow lines from the broadcasts to do the measurement, as they do with calls in tennis, and as they could do with balls and strikes

in baseball. Right now the football markers on TV are fairly crude, but I suspect that someone could ramp up the quality so they'd provide us with accurate measurements immediately so as not to interrupt the flow of the game or having refs make arbitrary decisions as though they're definitive. Or, [maybe they'll just use this option](#).

The Forecast: First, I must apologize for this rather early forecast. But Mrs. Butts, in an egregious oversight, did not consult the bowl schedule before planning a holiday trip to Mexico that will take me off the grid for the week following Christmas Day. I had to put her through a series of gassers up the big hill so she understands not to make this mistake again. Little Woolly wonders why Mrs. Butts is allowed gassers but we discourage his, but that's a topic for [John Rosemond](#) to settle. Maybe I can watch the game on a computer or my cell phone screen, who knows. But I guess I'd rather be sunning on the beach in December than chilling in Memphis, all things considered.

Coach Richt has prepared the team extremely well for bowl games and I think will do the same this time to push us to a winning record yet again. I think that we should score plenty and hold them down to something closer to the 17 they hung on SMU than the 61 they managed vs. Tulane. So we send the seniors off with a W. Good Guys, 38-20.

National Championship Game: Finally, a game we can all look forward to without wondering why a better team was not selected. Everyone is expecting points left and right, and I do too. I will pick the SEC team until someone from the league finally fails to deliver, and I don't see Auburn losing to anyone as long as Newton is taking the snaps: When Newton starts playing downhill, the game's over. On the other side of the ball, Fairley might kill their little RB with the big stats—and although people have mocked Auburn's D this season, I don't think Steve Spurrier is. Auburn continues the SEC streak of champions, 48-38. And then in a couple of years, they give the trophy back and recalibrate the season at 0-14.

OK, I think that's it for the 2010 season, since by the time I get back, the bowl game will have been covered comprehensively and there'll be no need for me to add anything. On behalf of Mrs. Butts, Little Woolly, Wags, Brother Willy, his lovely wife Fanny Butts-Cheeks, and all of our friends in the family seat of [Butts County](#), I'd like to thank all 4 of my readers for following my "drivel" (as my one Auburn reader described my writing this year, before swearing off) this season, and Deke and the Dawgbones for hosting me once again. I hope to see y'all in 2011 as I chronicle our historic championship run.