

The Dawgmeister's Weekend Forecast  
October 9<sup>th</sup> Edition: It's a Long Road Home

Weekend wrap-up:

Marvin Gaye: What's goin' on?

The Who: I can't explain.

The Temptations: It's a ball of confusion.

Sinatra: What a difference A. J. makes.

Honestly, I can't begin to comprehend this losing streak. We seem to be playing well enough to be in every game but end up making critical errors to lose them. On that last drive I felt much as Demarcus Dobbs did, minus the helmet part since I never take mine off: "I thought it was a shoo-in; that's how comfortable I was. I put my helmet down. I was ready to run on the field and celebrate." King was running like a stallion, Green was a threat to make SportsCenter's Top Ten on every snap, Murray was running the team like a veteran, Walsh was ready to deliver us the win, and then the ball popped out and it was over.

We are almost a good team, but not quite, and being the best 1-4 team in the country don't give me no satisfaction. Mike Bobo got a lot smarter this week when the A. J. option entered the playbook, and I don't think playcalling lost this game. And no matter what you think of CMB's playcalling yesterday or at any other time, I think that there's no doubt that he's been an outstanding QB coach for us over the last decade, as evidenced by the way his guys have played, especially the freshmen—Greene, Stafford, and Murray—who have performed above their years.

Of the play on which Caleb fumbled, Richt said, "That's as basic as a play as we've got. You say, 'What's our No. 1 running play?' That was it, we just didn't execute it well. They got penetration, which was obvious, and then we've still got to be able to secure that ball, even if it's a four- or five-yard loss. We've still got to do that and hold onto it, but we didn't." A good call when you're positioning yourself for a game-winning field goal and want to run something safe. That happened too last year when Cox and Ealey mistimed the handoff at the goal line vs. Kentucky: The coaches called a well-repped play, and we fumbled it to cost us the game. The officials also gave Colorado a TD on a play that they could just as easily have ruled a fumble into the endzone. That's been the story of every game: We play a team toe-to-toe only to lose through a combination of our mistakes (key fumbles, blown coverage vs. Arkansas) and bad bounces. It looked for a while as though A.J. could personally lift the team to a new level of performance and neutralize all of these deficiencies, but not on Saturday.

I'm sure that this week will bring out the worst in our fans. One of the bloggers wrote after the Mississippi State game that anyone who still supports Mark Richt is an IDIOT! I just don't think you fire a proven winner when things take a dip. Ole Miss did that with David Cutcliffe, and the program has never recovered. They hired the Hot Assistant, Ed Orgeron, and that didn't work out too well. Here's what somebody considers to be the top 5 possible replacements for CMR <http://www.dawgsports.com/2007/12/22/151952/27> : Gruden, Patterson [TCU], Peterson [Boise], Muschamp, and Smart. Dan Hawkins was the last Boise coach to make the jump to a competitive league, and he has a losing record in a conference that is top-heavy and so includes a lot of beatable teams. Muschamp and Smart have no HC experience and could be the second

coming of Charlie Weiss or Brad Scott or countless other coordinators who flopped as head coaches. Gruden sounds pretty happy to me in the booth yukking it up with Jaws. I suspect that Patterson is content to be unbeaten every year playing teams like the ones Kentucky wiped the floor with before hitting the SEC buzzsaw 2 weeks ago.

Mark Richt is a proven winner in the nation's toughest conference, and I think he's smart enough to recover from this slump. I guess that makes me an IDIOT! I was looking for details on CMR's contract and found the story at <http://www.dawgsports.com/2007/12/22/151952/27> which is designed to pacify fans who feared that Richt would take the FSU job upon Bowden's retirement. I was an IDIOT! then, although I'd heard him say often enough that he would not leave UGA as long as we'd have him that I knew that FSU was never an option; and I'm an IDIOT! now because I still believe that he's a great coach that we're lucky to have. I hope you're one too.

Dawg doots:

- Tony Barnhart before last week's games: "The ACC may be bad, but the Big East is worse: We've been beating up the ACC and its 1-9 record against non-conference BCS opponents in the first three weeks of the season. But the Big East is worse at 1-10 against the BCS and 6-13 against all Division I-A opponents. Pittsburgh, which was supposed to be one of the two best teams in that league just got mauled at home by Miami. West Virginia, the other top team, lost at LSU."
- *The Wall Street Journal* looked into allegations that [Alabama misuses medical hardships](#) to open up scholarships for better players and found some validity to it. Two of the 12 players that have accepted medical hardships under coach Nick Saban said they felt they could still play but were encouraged not to by the head coach. Saban says the medical staff makes all decisions on medical hardships without his input. And this just in: Saban says he doesn't have a reserved parking spot, it's just that nobody else ever happens to park in the one by the entrance and so he uses it.
- I regret to say that I'm short on Dawg doots this week, but Wags is on a diet and Little Woolly is very strict about keeping him to it.

The Forecast: The Dawgs host much-hated Tennessee. They are not as fun to hate as they were last year, but hate is a passion that knows no limits, so I don't care whose son is their coach, they must be hated. As Leo Durocher once said, "What are we at the park for except to win? I'd trip my mother. I'd help her up, brush her off, tell her I'm sorry. But mother don't make it to third." And Derek won't make it out of Athens with a win.

UT has had a tough year, coming in at 2-3 with wins against cupcakes and all losses to top-12 teams. So it's hard to tell just how good or bad they are. I did watch about half of their game vs. LSU, before Mrs. Butts insisted that we honor her interests and watch NASCAR for a while, and think that their QB is very immobile and susceptible to sacks, so I hope that Grantham unleashes the hounds on Saturday and pressures the heck out of him. With a full game out of A. J. and maybe a decision to settle on Caleb King as the primary RB, and with UT playing a QB who can be an easy target for the pass rush, the Dawgs get back on track. Good Guys, 31-24.

National Game of the Week: Two great SEC games (Alabama-S. Carolina, Florida-LSU), plus a surprising matchup of unbeaten when Michigan State plays in Ann Arbor. And what SEC fan, or anyone other than Colin Cowherd, isn't pulling for Stanford to hand Southern Cal its second straight loss? Of these games, Florida-LSU seems the most intriguing, at least in the Southeast, so that's my game. LSU's quarterbacks really stank up the joint on Saturday—both had a whole lot of trouble moving the team. But their defense is, as usual, splendid. Florida's O seems to be having a bit of an identity crisis with two very different QBs, neither giving them the potency that the Leak-Tebow combo provided for them 4 years ago. So I think this one will be low scoring. I think that Les Miles is a deeply underappreciated coach and he needs this win, and I think will get it, although you should not use my prediction as the basis for a cash wager. Bengal Tigers, 20-17.