

The Dawgmeister's Weekend Forecast
September 3rd Edition: A Bronco Boil Under the Dome

Welcome back for another year of excitement between the edges of the margins of the Dawgbone! Of course, I must start by thanking Deke and the Dawgbones for posting my thoughts, and my writing too, for another year at the best UGA football website in the galaxy. I also thank both of my readers for joining me again, and only hope they brought a couple of friends along this year so the gallery doesn't look quite so empty. For those who are new to this exercise in opinionating: The Dawgmeister loves the Dawgs and doesn't waste precious brain cells from his declining storehouse with negativity or disappointment. Anyone who wears the G on his helmet or who coaches them up is one of Our Guys, and we love them unconditionally for choosing to spend eternity in the Dawg Nation's collective memory and lore. If you want something else, go read Sports and Grits, but be sure to have a venti vomit bag handy. This guy makes Jeff Schultz look like the happiest Munchkin in Oz.

One thing that Granny Butts has always liked about Mark Richt is that he surrounds himself with quality people who share his view that when a young man comes here to play football, he will both become a valuable member of the team and establish the foundation for a path he can follow in his life. When The Coach talks to recruits and their families and coaches before games, he emphasizes that the program builds a football team by building men out of the boys they send him. When Little Woolly develops into a D-1 football stud, I can think of no one I'd rather entrust his future to than Mark Richt.

Now, some folks wish that Coach Richt were a little nastier. But that would undercut the dignity with which he represents the university. Some wish he'd won a national title, as Vince Dooley once did, because finishing #2 four years ago just isn't good enough. To me, the role of UGA as the state of Georgia's representative to the world requires us to shoot a little higher with our hires, to have a coach who understands that the football program is part of the university and not vice-versa, who believes that winning by taking ethical shortcuts isn't really winning at all, who would never sign a kid and then tell him that he was beaten out of his scholarship during summer workouts, and who last summer gave up a \$2 million vacation home so that others less fortunate in this cruel economy might live a little better.

I'll take this guy over anybody, because I know he'll win and win right, and UGA will serve as a shining example to the nation of how to play sports at the highest level at a university where academics lead the way. Just ask the folks at Ohio State, Miami, and North Carolina what I'm talking about. Consider the conclusion of UNC chancellor Holden Thorp when he fired Butch Davis, who'd known John Blake for several decades but was shocked, shocked I say to learn that he was selling players to agents: "What started as a purely athletic issue has begun to chip away at this university's integrity." Well, at least UNC's got some integrity to lose, which is not the case for every program that's felt the NCAA hammer when it loses its way, or when it has no way to lose. In the last 18 months, in addition to UNC, Miami, and OSU, Southern Cal, Auburn, Oregon, Michigan, Georgia Tech, and LSU have been either investigated or sanctioned by the NCAA, and Kiffin's one-and-done stop at Tennessee has brought the investigators up to Knoxville. Kiffin now says it could take USC football seven years to recover from its Carroll-era penalties, which means he must have a seven-year contract.

You know things are bad when cokehead, strip-bar regular, and ESPN announcer (in order of ascending repugnance) Michael Irvin claims to be disgusted by it. UNC, Boise State, and UConn have fired their ADs this summer because they couldn't or wouldn't stop their coaches from cheating, although at Boise and in Storrs there's not enough compromise yet to their institutional integrity to fire the coaches themselves. And yet Mark Richt is the guy people keep claiming is on the hot seat because last year, things didn't go so well on the field.

I'd rather have the occasional dip in winning than have us gravitate to the operational integrity of the universities that are now neck-deep in scandal. To me, that's a university in disarray, not a football team in disarray, as some think UGA was last year. I love football, but not at the expense of our collective honor. I'm proud to support a university that doesn't buy its players, yet still has the capacity to compete at a high level, especially when the conference history and the present center of gravity to the west suggests that cheating is the only way to win. The W-L record of last year's team does not compromise my belief that we are doing things right and that Mark Richt is the major reason that in an era of grotesque excess and corruption, UGA has transcended its own occasionally dubious past and become a model of integrity.

In that spirit, I'll start with a set of Coveted Preseason Dawgmeister Game Balls:

To Dr. Carla Williams, Executive Associate Athletic Director and Senior Woman Administrator, who over the summer assembled a group of ministers, principals, counselors, and athletes to talk about ways to help poor kids find reasons to persist in school, even though just about everything in their lives predicts that they won't.

To Aron White, 2010 undergraduate commencement speaker last December, who has earned his degree in management and begun his master's in sport management during his final scholarship year.

To Ted White, Rhonda Kilpatrick, Wally Richardson, Eric Beverly, and Wendy LeBlanc of the Rankin Smith Center for supporting all of our players as they work toward the destination of graduation so admirably achieved by our next Game Ball recipients:

To Thomas Davis (Consumer Economics), Darryl Gamble (Housing), Israel Troupe (Housing) from football, and Gerald Robinson (Speech Communication), for graduating in summer 2011. Darryl graduated following his 5th year in the program (including his redshirt year), while Israel and Gerald have a year remaining of eligibility and presumably will be working on graduate degrees this year. Congratulations on doing such a terrific job of managing responsibilities, taking advantage of the scholarship, and representing the university so impressively.

And by the way, Darryl went from undrafted free agent to OLB for the San Diego Chargers, last seen starting vs. Dallas. Nice work there big guy.

Note: Troupe possibly compromised his status as Game Ball recipient when he was arrested for public urination. Full disclosure: As an errant youth, your own Dawgmeister was once urinating in public when an officer of the law appeared unannounced to suggest that the al fresco approach

to bladder relief be abandoned. For some reason, he was pacified by my claim that I was “saving a flush” by using the local shrubbery instead of availing myself of the more discreet privacies afforded by indoor venues, as I now advise Little Woolly to do, in spite of his environmentalist spirit. So I’m a bit sympathetic to young people who do dumb things, given I’ve done most of them myself in my youthful adventures. Indeed, let me congratulate young Mr. Troupe for his outstanding efforts at water conservation, and even water replenishment, as Lake Lanier evaporates down to a mud pie this summer.

Yes, this is a football column, and so let’s talk about them Dawgs! The Will Friend Era got jump-started when he inherited a set of jumbo OL of the sort he prefers and has begun signing. Here’s the preseason Depth Chart with sizes:

OT	71 Cordy Glenn 6-5, 338, Sr.
	72 Kenarious Gates 6-5, 328, So.
	78 Watts Dantzler 6-7, 310, Fr.,
OG	72 Kenarious Gates 6-5, 328 So.
	64 Dallas Lee 6-4, 300, So.
	75 Kolton Houston 6-5, 291, Fr., RS
C	60 Ben Jones 6-3, 316, Sr.
	64 Dallas Lee 6-4, 300, So.
	61 David Andrews 6-2, 280, Fr., HS
OG	68 Chris Burnette 6-2, 313, So.
	64 Dallas Lee 6-4, 300, So.
	75 Kolton Houston 6-5, 291, Fr., RS
OT	79 Justin Anderson 6-5, 342, Sr.
	74 Austin Long 6-5, 304, So., RS
	67 Hugh Williams 6-5, 254, Fr., RS

That’s a nice-sized group, even though the young pups barely register on Friend OL scale that doesn’t start counting till you put a load of 300 lbs on it. Perhaps a wee bit undersized in the middle by Friend’s standards, but plenty of beef up front to set the tone for the offensive snap. Behind them we have Bruce Figgins playing fullback at 6’4”, 275 lbs with excellent hands and route-running skills, also able to shift up to the line to play TE. Just for fun can add Artie Lynch at 275 as a TE and 350 lbs of John Jenkins at fullback. Heck, Mrs. Butts could run behind those guys and pick up a first down or two. But Samuel, Malcome, and Crowell are all big guys themselves. Malcome is 225, and he gives up 20 lbs to Samuel. Crowell comes in at a relatively svelte 210. So we should have a punishing ground game this year, with a little Carleton Thomas thrown in along with a bit of Branden Smith and maybe a whiff of Nick Marshall to make things interesting.

People have wondered if Richard Samuel wasn’t adjusting well to ILB, making his move to RB easier to make; and have also wondered if Alec Ogletree were struggling at safety, thus facilitating his move to ILB. I don’t think either is true. We needed an experienced RB and so Samuel took one for the team. Richard’s a really bright guy (remember, he was 16 when he enrolled) whose head is screwed on straight. I think that his move back to RB was pretty pragmatic and shows what a team player Richard is. He gets the Coveted Dawgmeister

Preseason “What A Guy!” Award for moving back to a position he was once thought not suited for due to his patented “run to obstacles” approach to open-field running. I hope he makes every adjustment necessary and gives us a jackhammer to rotate with that shifter fellow wearing #1.

But back to Ogletree and the defense. Grantham said that he was so good that he wanted him closer to the line of scrimmage where he’d be more involved with more plays. That makes sense to me. Thomas Davis (UGA Class of 2011) has turned into an outstanding NFL LB. Jumpstarting that process for Tree this year makes sense in every way.

On the whole: We’re picked by the Lamestream Sports Media to finish second in the East behind S. Carolina, with Holtz and May picking us to finish last in the Athens Youth Organization standings. I like our chances with Murray directing a versatile offense and a D that should take a big step forward this year because of familiarity with the system and some great athletes to run it. Throw in special teams dominance, and the Dawgs play for the SEC championship in December.

Dawg Doots:

- All the best to fellow Dawgbone correspondent Darrell Huckaby in his fight against prostate cancer.
- Today’s vocabulary lesson: It’s pronounced Crow-ELL. First syllable sounds like the well-known black-feathered, winged, bipedal, endothermic, egg-laying vertebrate; accent on the second syllable.
- Not everyone arrives on campus as a true freshman ready to dominate, as A.J. Green, Matt Stafford, and the occasional other guy have done (some RB from the 80s, I think). Every year a guy in the upper classes finally breaks through, often accompanied by the phrase, “The light went on” for him. This year it’s Shawn Williams, Mike Gilliard, Marlon Brown, and Rantavious Wooten who seem to have seen the light. So the next time you are about to say what a bust Marlon Brown has been, remember Mikey Henderson, who was in his RS-Senior year before breaking out.
- Dawg recruiting target Keith Marshall may well be the only guy in the country whose 40-yd-dash time is lower than his GPA (4.22:4.3).
- My favorites in the Dawgosphere: Brandon Pledger over at Bleacher Report and the whole crew at Leather Helmet, for their unrelenting love of UGA and the program; and of course Deke and the Dawgbones for serving as Info HQ for Dawg fans.
- In 2010, Georgia Tech finished with a 6-7 record, the Pests’ first losing season since 1996. It lost five of its last six games in 2010 and has lost its last six bowl games (the last three under Paul Johnson). In those losses, Tech has averaged 8 points and 263 yards. In 2010 GT QBs connected on 38% of their passes. It’ll be interesting to see how Johnson’s run at Historical Bobby Dodds Field at the Historic Flats Bier plays out if the Pests’ greatest fear materializes: that after a few years, high-level coaches and players figure out his system and begin stopping it; and that because his offense prepares so few players for NFL positions, elite prospects will tune out their recruiting.
- The preseason college football issue from *Sports Illustrated* listed the top 10 traditions in college football, and I regret to report that the “Spell Georgia Cheer” at halftime is not among them, the Sanford Stadium announcer’s claims to the contrary notwithstanding. However, the Scrotum Pole that Clemson players fondle on their way to the field did

make the list. Even the Ramblin' Wreck from Georgia Tech made their list, and I wouldn't ride in that thing for all the cow pies in Starkville.

- “Doing things the Georgia way” seems to be the catchphrase for the team this year, apparently something that the recently departed players had trouble doing.
- “I’m sure he will make some plays out there. He may have to fight some double teams. But his hands are so, so big, and so strong. I don’t know what it is with these Statesboro guys and their large appendages.” Aron White on Deangelo Tyson
- Maybe it’s time to stop being critical of our occasional “buddy” signings. CMR on Zander Ogletree during camp: He’s “delivering physical shots” all over the place and his ability to execute the isolation block is unmatched. So let’s not be too cynical about Quintavious Harrow, Nathan Theus, and others who seem to have gotten scholarships in order to attract someone else. These guys often contribute far more than guys with gobs of stars and recruiting hype, as Theus will show during his outstanding career as our long snapper.
- Jay Rome might be the best tight end prospect from the state of Georgia since Cam Newton.
- Anyone who thinks Coach Richt is too nice a guy to fire his buddies needs to understand that Willie Martinez and Dave van Halanger were two of his best friends.
- Speaking of van Halanger, when he played at West Virginia in the 1970s, he was the beast of the OL at 6’6”, 260 pounds; the other guys were all under 250 lbs. Coach Richt appears to have a preference for guys who come in at 330+, which is a departure from the kind of athlete Coach Searels recruited, who needed something inside the helmet in order to get on the field. As I understand it, we’re also shifting from zone blocking to more of a man-man scheme. I think guys like Justin Anderson will benefit from the change, and I hope the RBs do too.
- Speaking of OL, it’s always interesting to see who ends up playing. Clint Boling came in as a skinny guy better known for basketball than football, and was a 4-year starter and NFL draft pick. And now David Andrews is probably going to play this year, and he was the smallest of the OL signees in this year’s freshman class. Nice, quiet kid, comfortable wearing camouflage gear, who apparently becomes a beast when he straps on the pads.
- As both of my readers surely know, I was a big backer of Dave van Halanger, who was one of my favorite guys on the coaching staff. Couldn’t ask for a greater guy, and how many of us are members of a Hall of Fame, as Big Dave is? At the same time, I support Coach T-2 and his new approach, which is more oriented to conditioning than was Dave’s orientation to lifting and strength. Back when Jon Fabris was coaching the DEs, I talked to him about guys on the team he really loved. Two guys he always mentioned among the select few were Thomas Brown and Tony Gilbert, now on T-2’s S&C staff. Fab, who could be a little crazy but who was a terrific position coach, loved guys who got the most out of their abilities through mental preparation. He said that Thomas Brown was the best player on the team from the minute he stepped on campus, and was one of the best leaders and role models for other players he’d ever known. He admired Tony Gilbert just as much, right up there with his greatest player, David Pollack. I think Brown and Gilbert will be tremendous additions to the weight room, the locker room, and the program in general.
- “The thing I like about [Malcolm Mitchell] most is he works harder than anyone. I would say he knows already 70 to 80 percent of the playbook. Every day after pass drills he’ll

get with me and we'll work on routes a half-hour or 45 minutes. That's every day."~Aaron Murray at SEC Media Days

- Guy I'll really be pulling for this year: Brandon Burrows, who redshirted last year and then had shoulder surgery over the summer and will sit out this year. Great kid, with the smarts to be a UGA student with or without football. All the best to BB for a complete recovery and chance to play ILB for the Dawgs after he works his way back following surgery.

The Forecast: I'm glad to see that the pundits are picking Boise, same as they did Boise the last time we played, and same as they did before we destroyed Hawaii. I remember Jimmy Johnson coming up to the booth right after Holtz and May had picked Hawaii to beat us in 2008 Sugar Bowl, and saying, "Man, those Georgia players are a whole lot bigger than Hawaii's!" The same will be true on Saturday when we play Boise, who would have been good sized in 1973 but would have trouble matching up with Stevenson HS these days. Our DL will average about 320, and our OLBs aren't much smaller than Boise's OL. Assuming that size matters, we'll have quite an advantage. If you didn't like the combat uniforms when they were unveiled, I suspect you'll start liking them when our guys put them in motion and beat a path to the endzone. Boise apparently runs an O predicated on misdirection, which is what undermanned teams often do; but if you get Jenkins and Geathers going the wrong way, they'll still be in front of you. Boise might even score some, but not enough. And did I mention that we've got the best punter and kicker in the nation, both playing indoors where the weather's always fair? Dawgs start their title run with a big win in ATL, or my name's not Wally Butts: Good Guys 41, Blue Boys 24.

National Game of the Week: A neutral field classic between Oregon and LSU, which for some reason runs at the same time as our game, which deserves a showcase rather than serving as the other game on most people's remote return button. The last time Oregon brought its high-octane, unstoppable offense to a SEC opponent, they scored 19 points, and that in a game where Cam Newton clearly was not playing at full speed which gave the Ducks more chances than I think they would ordinarily have had. And Auburn was reputed to have a vulnerable defense, at least by SEC standards. So what will Oregon do against a team that's built from a defensive foundation? And what will they do if their QB Darron Thomas keeps riding in cars where drivers go 118 MPH and somebody else is smoking wacky tobacky, all unbeknownst to him because he's always napping while riding shotgun? I think this game will be fairly close, like the championship game, even though we now know that Les Miles will actually suspend a quarterback if he gets arrested the week before the season opens, even if Kelly won't suspend a guy unless he's arrested, convicted, and behind bars (rather than just frequenting them). Heck, even Houston "Mr. Oversigning" Nutt has suspended his QB after getting into a bar fight during fall camp. Anyhow, SEC gets the season off to another championship-level start, making Oregon look even uglier than their uniforms. Bengal Tigers, 21-17.