

The Dawgmeister's Weekend Forecast October 22nd Edition: Bye Bye for a Fortnight

“I just don't know if we're ready to continue on top of the Eastern Division the way we played tonight. We've got to get better in a lot of areas.” ~ Mark Richt

The Recap: I was talking with one of my three readers late in the week, and he mentioned that Aaron Rodgers' younger brother was on the Vandy depth chart at QB so we'd better be on our toes. Posh, said I. If he hasn't beaten out Larry Smith by this point, how good could he possibly be? I mean, do you think Brother Willy could actually write a sports blog, just because I do? This job requires incredibly high levels of expertise and ability, as you no doubt know from reading the Internet. Just being related to somebody doesn't guarantee a similar skill set.

Well, I've had to revisit that theory. I suspect that Steve Spurrier would kill for a guy like Jordan Rodgers right now. He pretty much single-handedly kept Vandy in this one right up through the last play. That guy is an athlete. I'm happy to get this one behind us and enter the bye week 5-2. You might scoff at the quality of the teams we've beaten during the winning streak, but 4 of them have been SEC competitors, and 3 of those 4 league wins have come on the road. I'm not complaining much, no matter how much others are griping about whatever they are griping about after Saturday night. And Scowlmeister, I'm talking to you.

We seemed to sputter in a number of areas until Aaron Murray got in his groove. The last two weeks I think that he's really carried the offense. After one of our scores the cameras panned to the sideline and Aaron was slapping palms with every guy who'd been on the field during the drive and giving him a boost for his contributions. That's pretty normal for this sophomore who was born to lead.

A Coveted Dawgmeister Game Ball goes to Richard Samuel. Richard's been the consummate team player as things have changed around him, causing him to adapt to the team's greatest need. On Saturday he finally looked comfortable at RB and toted the ball with authority. In the fourth quarter, when they knew we were running to burn clock, his yards-per-carry fell off. But he manned the position for most of the evening like the 4-star RB we recruited a few years back.

It was great to see Marlon Brown come up big in Nashville. People have been down on him because he had an AJ Green profile coming in, but wasn't an immediate star. Part of the reason was that he had two NFL WRs ahead of him, one of whom was Green, who may well make the Pro Bowl in his rookie year. Marlon, to my knowledge, hasn't dropped a pass since he's been here; he just hasn't gotten thrown to a whole lot, and he's been in and out this season with ankle injuries. I'm hoping that the pathway has finally cleared for him to star and use that size, speed, and ability to become a major threat.

I think that he and Michael Bennett are really getting Aaron's confidence. When Mitchell returns, we'll have a terrific rotation at WR. That Michael Bennett is one tough kid. Tim Couch called him a “possession receiver,” which is usually what they call the white guy with good hands. But Tim, you forgot to say that he's “intelligent” and “works hard” and “is always in the film room,” plus he “always hustles” and “gets the most out of his ability.” Anyhow, Bennett is a

mighty tough kid who's dependable over the middle when he knows he'll get hit right after the catch. He's normally in the slot but on Saturday was splitting out and catching passes over cornerbacks instead of working against linebackers. He's a rugged kid with a good frame who should become an important player for us over his career.

Of course we missed Mitchell, but the passing game pretty much kept us in this one. Murray focused on Brown, Bennett, and King for all WR receptions (plus one to Branden Smith on a special set), and was generally on target and in command. It's good to see that Marlon Brown can outrun an SEC cornerback on a bad ankle, which bodes well for the rotation when Mitchell returns.

I haven't seen anyone run a comparison between Malcolm Mitchell and that other M&M we had, Mohamed Jah Massaquoi. They're different kinds of players who get similar results. MoMass was longer and lankier, Mitchell more compact and I think faster. We seem to run Mitchell more over the middle while MoMass worked the sidelines, although Mitchell can do that too. Mo's turned out to be a pretty solid NFL WR, and I see the same in Mitchell's future.

Dawg Doots:

- If South Carolina wins the SEC East this year, they'll have earned it. They've got a tougher league schedule than we do, and if Lattimore's out for any length of time, they'll have their work cut out for them. I'm sure that Connor Shaw brings stability to the QB position that they lacked with Garcia, but there was a reason that Spurrier kept Garcia around and didn't discover his alcohol violations until he started throwing interceptions. If they can win out, Spurrier might be the national coach of the year, even if you hate him, and even if you have doubts about his management of Stephen Garcia, who has all the signs of being the second coming of [Art Schlichter](#), although with a different kind of addiction.
- Ray Drew is getting more snaps every game; seemed he got the majority at the rush OLB position on Saturday. We do need Washington back for his experience and motor, but Preacher Ray seems to be getting the hang of things and starting to contribute.
- The next time you think that professional athletes are overpaid, consider this: [Johnny Depp's salary for Pirates of the Carribean 4 was \\$55 million](#).
- Jay Rome and Nick Marshall are now slated to play basketball in January with Coach Richt's blessing. I wonder if, in part, CMR is sending a message to [Shaq Goodwin](#) in hopes of landing the 6'-8" wide receiver/power forward for a combo package with Coach Fox. Sometimes these 6'-8" basketball stars are better off pursuing football than basketball, because they have 'tweener size for basketball but are huge football players. Ryan Humphrey was a dual-sport guy in high school at 6'-8" who played basketball at Oklahoma, then transferred to Notre Dame because he thought they weren't running enough plays to showcase his skills for the NBA career he'd been told was guaranteed from about age 10. Turned out that they were running the right number of plays for him at OU; he just ran out of skills and ended up being a marginal NBA player. He might have been much better off going the route of Jimmy Graham, who focused on hoops at Miami and is now approaching Pro Bowl form early in his career as a tight end with the Saints.

- Shame on the University of Virginia for scheduling a cupcake like Georgia Tech for its homecoming game. Some places will go to any lengths to get a W on homecoming.
- I was pretty irritated by Mississippi State in their loss to S. Carolina. Dan Mullen was brought in as an offensive mastermind, but all I saw was a guy who knows 50 different ways of running the ball between the guards. Wags, the family bulldog, was so disgusted after they let S. Carolina off the hook that he went outside and took a giant, steaming Kiffin right on the sidewalk, followed by a Petrino that nearly floated away our neighbor's Winnebago, a spectacle that Little Woolly always enjoys. Mullen was the flavor-of-the-month hot coaching prospect last season after leading a brief MSU revival, and was on the tongue of many fire-Coach-Richt experts among the non-faithful. But I haven't seen much this fall to make me wish he were coaching in Athens, and people I know who know him say we wouldn't want him here even if he could outcoach Knute "Bear" Lombardi, The Guy Who Sits Behind Me, who was surely heard saying on Saturday, "We couldn't beat Hilsman Middle School today."
- I watched parts of the Michigan/Michigan State game. Michigan's throwback uniforms lost to MSU's Nike Combat outfits, and both apparel choices were about as ugly as the Grantham/Franklin recipe exchange following our game. I really think that any team that wears an ugly throwback uniform needs to go whole hog and wear a leather helmet with no face mask, the way Grandpappy Butts did in his heyday back in the family seat of Butts County. Otherwise, all you're doing is wearing an ugly uniform.
- I saw a commercial for Dick's Sporting Goods, and wondered why they would hire Fabio to promote their brand. But then I realized it was Clay Matthews.
- When ESPN cut to the studio and Robert Smith was there to report instead of Holtz and May, I wept tears of thanks and praised The Almighty for intervening on my behalf.
- If you saw the Auburn-Florida game, you probably noticed that Auburn used big pictures of George Bush and Barack Obama to signal plays from the sideline. I'm not sure what they meant, but I'm guessing "Mission Accomplished" and "Yes We Can," respectively.
- Todd Grantham reminds me a bit of Buddy Ryan in terms of ability and intensity. I just hope he doesn't blow himself up the way Buddy eventually did.
- I don't know about you, but I wouldn't trade our safeties for anybody's. Those are some pretty tough hombres back there. Sure wish we'd had Rambo for the Boise State game. That guy plays with fury.
- Mrs. Butts dropped down during the Falcons' game on Sunday and wondered who the aging porn star on the Falcons' sideline was. I checked, and it turned out to be Brian Van Gorder.

The Forecast: The Dawgs get their bye week, and with luck take on Florida with Ogletree, Crowell, Mitchell, Washington, and everyone else back healthy and ready to rumble. Florida's transition to the Muschamp era is off to a rocky start, even though all day the broadcasters were suggesting that they had the inside track in the SEC East because they control their own destiny. All that, of course, before they lost to Auburn. I don't know what their QB situation will be in two weeks, or whether or not they'll have Demps to spell Rainey, or whether they are getting better on offense or are having trouble juggling injured QBs and getting into any kind of rhythm. They just don't seem to be gelling at this point, and it's a good time for UGA to step it up and win this game. I like the bye week's timing and the opportunity it'll afford to add some new

wrinkles, get the starters repped and ready, and get in the right frame of mind to turn this series around. I'm taking the Good Guys: Dawgs, 23-21.

National Game of the Week (2 ranked teams): Best matchups appear to be Auburn at LSU and Wisconsin at Michigan State. Of course I'll take the SEC game, even though it doesn't affect our season. Auburn is playing pretty well for a team that lost its best players and didn't seem to have any stars in reserve to replace them. But I don't see them taking down LSU in Baton Rouge. You never know, but my money (which of course I don't actually bet) is on the Geaux Tigers over the War Eagle Tigers: LSU, 24-17.

National Upset of the Week (unranked team over ranked team): Miami over Georgia Tech. The Pests have mostly beaten cruddy teams to run their record to 6-1, until they ran into the juggernaut in Charlottesville that is the University of Virginia. I can't say I'm an expert on either Tech or Miami, because I rarely stoop to watching an ACC game, since I prefer major conference football. The Canes, I think, will give the Pests two straight losses and bring a smile to even the Scowlmeister's face as we get our hate on for the Florida game. Miami, 38-35.

This is my bye week as well. It's been a grueling season, and I've got writer's cramp, writer's block, carpal tunnel syndrome, an ingrown fingernail, hairy knuckles, and other midseason maladies that I need to heal up and get ready for the stretch run. I shall return for the post-Florida celebration, ready to run the table on our way to the SEC Championship Game.