

The Dawgmeister's Weekend Forecast
October 1st Edition: Two Bulldogs, One Neutering

The Recap: I think we're all pretty much agreed on this one: SEC road wins are good, and we got one, and are now up to where the season's looking much more promising than it did at 0-2. We are looking very much like pre-season #5 FSU, except we've won two straight and they've lost two straight. Ole Miss is not a very good team, but they were playing with some desperation at home in a conference game and put up a good fight. We dominated when the offenses and defenses were on the field, but got our booties dominated on special teams, and that's about the last thing I anticipated from our guys (Butler's punting being the notable exception). But I'll take a butt-kicking on the majority of the snaps over good play on the relatively few special teams plays any day. I doubt if Blair Walsh will ever have as bad a day as he had on Saturday (even a kickoff out of bounds), if we'll be so vulnerable to onsides kicks after we've given up a few this season, if Boykin will be bottled up so easily on returns (and I wonder if that early onsides kick threw off our timing on the return scheme because he had nowhere to go on the few chances he got), if Smith will be so indecisive on punt returns, and so on week in and week out, or next week for that matter. We can fix that stuff, and Walsh will bounce back. I read that he thought he might have been lifting his eyes early off the ball on his missed FGs; and I know that in a previous game, his plant foot slipped and the kick went wide left. He's kicking long and the ball's not hooking, so when he adjusts his aim, he'll be fine. Otherwise, we'll have to wait for [Brice Ramsey](#) to show up on campus for those long field goals.

We got a good afternoon out of Richard Samuel and Carlton Thomas, and controlled the ball and clock, with the help of a defense that's really starting to play the 3-4-4 alignment with passionate aggressiveness (now in the national top 20 in total D, with only 1 cupcake on the schedule). Crowell did look fatigued in the fourth quarter, as he said in Sunday's papers—I suspect that he rarely played in the 4th quarter in HS—but at least you can fix conditioning better than bruised ribs, which I thought might be the problem from my seat on the couch.

One thing that's really helped has been the play of the ILBs in the absence of two guys who were considered indispensable, Ogletree and Robinson. Gilliard, Williams, and Herrera are filling those spots without any apparent dropoff, and we should be in great shape in the middle for the stretch run when the starters return and we can rest them with confidence, and move Williams back to safety to complete one heck of a back 4.

One thing I noticed during replays was how well out WRs get position and separation when well-covered. Coach Ball must know something about boxing out in basketball, because our guys really use their hips and arms to get the positional advantage when the ball's in the air.

We've now played 15 Dream Teamers this year. A couple are already stars (Crowell, Mitchell) and others are showing promise. These Dream Teams can be tricky to follow. Remember Notre Dame's great recruiting class, headed by The Emu himself, of 2007? Here's one review of their legacy, and it's by an enthusiastic ND fan who is trying to salvage something from their underwhelming play: <http://bleacherreport.com/articles/583075-notre-dame-football-recruiting-class-of-2007-four-years-later>. Not much to show for all that hype. The new guys are giving us much to look forward to as well as much to enjoy in the present.

Yet, I overheard a conversation between program guys over how ridiculous it is to expect a bunch of freshmen to have an immediate, pervasive impact on the team, which is what they're led to believe during recruiting. In essence, they need to be disabused quickly of the idea that they are program saviors and immediate celebrities (a problem that Florida's had with some of their recent five-star recruits). Guys like Crowell and Mitchell are game-changers and maybe program-changers, but that's when mixed with guys who've been paying their dues for several years of practice, weight-room commitment, and playbook and film study. The real impact of a team comes from its core of veterans, and they are the guys who will set the tone and provide the openings for whichever new guys start to break through.

I watched other games during the afternoon and began to wonder who the top RBs in the SEC (and thus the nation) are. I'd have to say that Richardson and Lattimore are, at least for now, in a separate class. Crowell is in the next group along with Rainey and Dyer. Of those 3, Crowell has the best chance of being in next year's top two.

This weekend is a special one in the Butts family: Brother Willie and his lovely bride, Fanny Butts-Cheeks, make their annual pilgrimage to Athens for a big football weekend. The boys will spend a glorious day at Sanford Stadium, while the ladies are looking forward to an exhilarating day of watching NASCAR on pay-per-view on the Big Screen. The Butts-Cheeks/Butts-Wynd interface always produces a lot of excitement, and we anticipate another memorable weekend this year.

A Coveted Dawgmeister Game Ball to Aron White, named as one of 11 FBS players to the AFCA Good Works Team given to players "committed to making a difference in their communities," based on his work with the Athens Boys & Girls Club along with his volunteering at hospitals and visits to Barrow Elementary School. In his speech upon receiving his Coveted Dawgmeister Game Ball, Aron said, "It's really important to give back when you do have things or when you are blessed with a position where people look up to you. Setting a good example to young people means the world to me." And to me. Thanks for modeling all the qualities that Coach Richt stresses throughout the program and works to instill in everyone he meets.

Dawg Doots:

- How can Mississippi play in a stadium named after Hemingway, when William Faulkner was the Bard of Oxford?
- While switching channels I had the misfortune of jumping to the GT game and finding Bob Davie doing the call, so switched to the Home Shopping Network for relief. GT is one thing; Bob Davie, now that's unacceptable.
- Best thing about watching the game on The Big Screen from the couch: There's no guy sitting behind me.
- Little Woolly, preparing for a career as a sports statistician, has tracked the number of occasions when Carlton Thomas loses a piece of equipment on the field (helmet, shoes), and now lists him as the nation's leader in dis-apparel-per-carry.
- Saturday, November 5, The Day the Earth Will Shake: LSU at Alabama. I've seen both teams play, and they play defense as well as it can be played. Every guy on Alabama hits

like Thomas Davis on steroids, and LSU just mauls people. They'd better have a lot of medics on hand for this one.

- Great football name: Alonzo Highsmith, Arkansas LB. What else could this guy do but play football?
- If you watched one of the early-slot NFL games on Sunday, you might have had as much fun as I did watching the scroll and following the Lions' game progress: down by 20 at the half, catching up and going ahead in the fourth quarter, getting tied, then winning in OT. Matthew Stafford is one of my favorite Dawgs of my time at UGA, which dates back to the Quincy Carter Era. But I thought he never got as much love from the fans as he should have gotten, perhaps because he came here to develop his game for the NFL and left early as the top pick in the draft and \$72 million, which is roughly \$72 million more than I got on my first job following college with my degree as an English major. We are all put on this earth for a reason. I am here to write the Dawgmeister column. Sports & Grits is here to keep Georgia's cockroach population in check. Stafford walks among us in order to play QB in the NFL. I don't begrudge him that opportunity one bit and am glad that he came here for his college ball. See you in the Pro Bowl Matt as the Lions take off on their best season since Calvin Coolidge was president.
- Let's assume that this is Houston Nutt's last season in Oxford. If I were their AD, I'd go after Kirby Smart. But the question is, would Kirby Smart take that job? Ole Miss will have a lot of trouble winning the West or finishing higher than fourth (although that's what we were saying about S. Carolina a few years ago). Does he take the offer, or does he do as Mark Richt did and be patient and wait for the right job for him, one at a place with a strong recruiting base and big-time facilities, plus a tradition worth building on? I really wonder if you can compete in the SEC with an ACC stadium, as Ole Miss does. At least S. Carolina's got a big stadium and fills it, while Ole Miss has a small one and doesn't. Much like Georgia Tech.
- The Owlmeister is turning cartwheels over Temple's trouncing of Maryland—and if you know the Owlmeister, that's some impressive gymnastics. I tried to watch a little of that game during commercials, but Maryland's uniforms were too hideous for my delicate eyeballs, and I flipped back to our channel to get the latest erectile dysfunction updates.

The Forecast: I don't quite know what to make of Mississippi State. Last week they ended up pulling Chris Relf from behind center and replacing him with some other guy, and Relf was supposed to be their Mr. Dependable. On Saturday they needed OT at home vs. Louisiana Tech to go to 2-2. I think the Dawgs see what this season might hold for them and continue their dominance on both sides of the ball. I see higher levels of execution on special teams, all the way up to "Rick Perry," which is the top ranking on Little Woolly's execution achievement stat sheet, and go to 3-2: Good Guys, 31-21.

National Game of the Week: Nebraska at Wisconsin (sorry Alabama and Florida fans, I had to find a non-SEC game to satisfy my national audience). I haven't seen either team play, but as everyone knows, Russell Wilson is tearing up the Big 10 as though it's the ACC. I'm usually sympathetic to a coach who looks like the guy I call to clean my gutters (Bo Pellini), but have never warmed up to him, possibly because he's such a rage machine (my gutter guy is Mr. Congeniality in contrast). I'll take the Badgers at home in what should be a pretty good game, 28-24.

Upset of the Week: I write these on Sunday, before the new rankings come out, so have to assume that some things will change (e.g., S. Cal will no doubt drop from the top 25 by Monday after getting thumped by Arizona State). About the only Top 25 upset I see by an unranked team would be Auburn over S. Carolina, which is conceivable because I've seen Stephen Garcia do too many dumb things for even Marcus Lattimore to bail him out every week. Got to hope that Chizik is a real coach and not some guy who happened to have Cam Newton last year, albeit for a hefty price. So, Garcia keeps throwing passes to defenders, Dyer plays as well as Lattimore, and the Tigers even up the SEC East with an upset win, 24-21.