

The Dawgmeister's Weekend Forecast
November 30th Edition: We Must Protect This Dome-icile!

“Going 10 in a row is nice. You can't go 10 in a row unless you go one in a row. That kind of became our war cry. ‘Let's win one in a row once a week.’ ” ~ Mark Richt



Most remarkable moment of the weekend: The Swine has a hissy fit over LSU scoring at will on his cruddy defense

The Recap: Later in the day, while calling the Auburn-Alabama game, Gary Danielson was moved to say, “Now this is starting to feel like a rivalry game.” The intensity had picked up, and the crowd was jacked and on its feet. The stadium was electric and the hate was on. That's what happens when historical rivals get after it in a game that means something more than just a place in the standings or spot in the rankings.

I never really got that feeling in our annual beatdown of Georgia Tech. Tech's offense was just plug-ugly, from their inability to locate passes anywhere near a guy wearing white to their amazing decision to run their fullback-equivalent up the middle about 10 times in a row when they were behind and needed to catch up. Yet, if I had their quarterbacks, I might not try passing the ball either. But running the ball up the middle over and over when you're desperately behind your hated rival with the clock running down? Against a defense anchored by John Jenkins, who absolutely dominated the middle of the field and is playing lately like a man who will simply not be moved?

If this game didn't reveal the shortcomings of running an option offense in the 21st century, then nothing will. Mickey Mouse cut-blocking might injure an occasional player, as Tech did early to Deangelo Tyson, but a well-coached defense will beat that scheme every time. I wonder how long Tech will go with this approach, which is the only one Paul Johnson knows. They might

bust an occasional play, but once they're behind, game over. That stuff might work in the ACC, but not here.

Maybe when one team wins 10 out of 11, a rivalry game loses some of its steam. Maybe when you play in a high school stadium, it's hard to generate excitement from the stands or feel it on the field. By the 4th quarter, Tech just looked as though they didn't want to be there. Meanwhile, the team that could easily have looked ahead to the following weekend, the one wearing red and black, looked hungry, motivated, and prepared to dominate. We ran our 5th string tailback 9 straight times to deplete the clock and secure the win. But then, when GT was behind and had the ball and kept running the ball up the middle for 3 yard gains, it seemed that they were trying to burn clock and get out of there too with their annual loss.

So, is this thing a rivalry game at this point? Ed Cunningham, Mark Jones's sidekick with Bob Davie now headed to restore the glory to the New Mexico program, seemed to think it was a scrimmage. He kept wondering why we'd play guys in this game instead of saving them for LSU. Why is Murray still in there in the 4th quarter, he wondered, when we could put "Hudson" Mason in and save Aaron for a game that really counts? Why risk getting guys hurt, as Tyson did early, when there's a championship game next weekend?

Now, what I learned from all this commentary is that Ed Cunningham is a knucklehead, or at least a guy who is too lazy to research the games he covers. He played in the PAC-10 (Washington) and then for a couple of western NFL teams (Arizona, Seattle), and so maybe is not acquainted with Southern football rivalries. Maybe he never quite put it together that UGA/GT is one of those games where coaches earn their salaries and reappointments (at least from Georgia's perspective), one of those games that count even when the teams both stink and are playing for pride only (Tech's performance this year notwithstanding). Maybe he thought that the decision to rest Crowell meant that this game was just a nuisance that we had to endure before the real game under the Dome. Or maybe he just wasn't thinking much at all. Maybe Mark Jones just turns the guy in the booth next to him into a blithering idiot; or maybe Mark Jones is just the unluckiest football announcer in history and keeps getting stuck with numbskulls for color men.

One of UGA's major adjustments for 2011 was to change the strength and conditioning regime, including the leadership and personnel and whole approach. It's hard to tell if that change has been a difference-maker, because those effects seem most evident in close games, and we really haven't played too many of them. The one thing that is abundantly clear is that the OL can salt away just about any game where we have the lead. Ken Malcome ran hard and effectively, and it's a tribute to his mindset and preparation that he was able to come back from his early-season depression to serve as the hammer at the end of the Tech game. But the OL, they've provided those openings for everyone we've lined up back there this season when we need to hold onto the ball and secure the win. I could just as easily say that Will Friend has been the difference as I could give that credit to JT3. But something's working, and I'm liking what I see.

I thought that Mike Bobo called a masterful game, and has been calling great games all season. It's common out there to think he's a terrible play-caller, but I don't see any evidence of such a thing. He's gone toe-to-toe with Steve Spurrier, badly out-called Gus Malzahn, called circles

around Paul Johnson, piled it up on Dan Mullen, and has done all this with his best weapons in and out of the lineup, particularly at RB but also including losing Mitchell for a big chunk of the season. He's a terrific coach, and each of the guys he's beaten is thought to be one of the nation's finest and most creative offensive minds. I'm grateful that we have him and can't wait for next year when he helps to put us in the national championship game.

While flipping around after our game, I came across the great Mark May, who was opining that UGA hadn't beaten anyone all year. Actually, Mississippi State, Auburn, and GT were all ranked when we played them, which makes our schedule about as tough as that of any team in the country that's not in the SEC West. But you don't hear Mark May talking about the PAC-10 teams and how they beef up their records against the likes of Oregon State, Washington State, etc. (note that an awful UCLA team is playing in the conference championship game next week, and they are close to firing their coach—again). Big XII schools get to play Kansas, Texas Tech (oops, sorry OU), Iowa State (oops, sorry OK State), and other losers. And the Big 10 is loaded with powerhouses like Indiana, Northwestern, Purdue, Illinois, and Minnesota. And we're the ones singled out for not beating anyone? May overlooked the fact that we beat Auburn by roughly the same score that LSU and Alabama did, and have lost only to a couple of top 12 teams a long time ago, before this team came together. Of course, Mark May couldn't say anything positive about Georgia with a gun to his head. Even Lou Holtz contradicted that dumb-ass opinion, or so said Mrs. Butts; I couldn't understand a word he said.

The Coveted Dawgmeister Good Guy of the Week Award goes to Kathy Richt for Standing by Her Man in every way. Coach Richt knows where his source of strength is, and she is the only earthly being who contributes. From helping on the sidelines to providing spiritual support to being one great kisser, Mrs. Richt gets the job done. Well done ma'am, we're lucky to have you in the program.

Dawg Doots:

- Little Woolly, feeling his great entrepreneurial spirit, is working on a Tebow Filter for the TV system. It would enable all Tebow-related content—from visits to orphanages, to slaughtering turkeys for diseased children with errant passes, to being awful for 56 minutes and good for 4, to feeding thousands with just a couple of sardines and 5 Ritz Crackers—to be blocked from viewing by nauseated viewers who must endure the Lamestream Sports Media's obsession with a guy who happens to be on a team with a good defense and weak schedule. We are now open to take your orders.
- Over the weekend I heard about a thousand references to Leon Lett, not for his great career but for his infamous “oops” moment on Thanksgiving day when he tried to recover a blocked field goal in a snowstorm and turned it over to Miami instead. The poor guy is the Bill Buckner of pro football: a distinguished athlete with many great moments who is only remembered for a single, high-visibility blunder.
- When news of Kentucky's win over Tennessee came in, Gary Danielson wondered if there would be “ramifications” at UT, which I took to mean he questioned if Dooley would survive this loss, even though they kicked the sh!t out of Vandy the week before. Ouch. You've got to wonder if they're looking back fondly at Phil Fulmer and wishing they'd hung on to a good thing when they had it.

- Gene Chizik was a much better coach with Cam Newton than he is without him. Last year Danielson observed that other recent SEC champs had much better personnel throughout the roster than Auburn did last year, and that contrast amplified how great a player Newton was. Now we're seeing Chizik coach those other guys, and they're a good, but not highly competitive, team. So it'll be interesting to see how his success plays out at the school that ran off Terry Bowden and Tommy Tuberville, who also had unbeaten seasons but were treated as pariahs the minute things went sour on them.

The Forecast: For at least a month, and probably three, people have been assuming that the SEC West winner would destroy the East winner in Atlanta and go on to the national championship game. Why even bother to play this game? It's another foregone conclusion, just like Oklahoma State over Iowa State.

Here's why: LSU has a tremendous defense, but I can't say that they are better than ours. LSU has a big and tough OL blocking for big and tough RBs; and so do we, even though we've been running over teams without our best back. LSU has several NFL WRs; and if Mitchell, Bennett, and others don't play in the NFL, then I'll eat my hat. We have the advantage at TE. And we also have a better QB, although Jefferson is playing his best ball of his LSU career right now. I think it'll be a great game, down to the wire. LSU's perfect season gets imperfect before their date with national destiny: Dawgs, 17-14.

National Game of the Week (2 ranked teams): Oklahoma at Oklahoma State: Each of these powerhouses has lost to bottom feeders in a weak league, yet remain poll voter favorites above our beloved Dawgs (as does Southern Cal, which hasn't beaten anybody, which Mark May chooses to ignore). I have to go with OU winning this one because, even though Mike Gundy is a Man, he's no Les Miles, and Miles is the only OSU coach to ever really stick it to the Sooners. I imagine that we'll see gobs of points, and that the Lamestream Sports Media will gush over how great the teams are because they can score on one another's defenses. I think the Sooners can outscore them, because I saw Iowa State and their terrible offense zip through them like Navy Seal Team 6 going through Al Qaeda. OU, 45-42.

National Upset of the Week (unranked team over ranked team): There will be no upsets this week.