

**The Dawgmeister's Weekend Forecast**  
**October 8th Edition: Knox Back a Few and Enjoy This One**

“Our players thought Mississippi State was disrespecting our 'G.'” ~ Mark Richt

“He disrespected the Bing!” ~ Paulie Walnuts

The Recap: Special thanks to Auburn and Alabama (did I really say that?) for launching the Dawgs into a first-place tie in the SEC East. Florida plays LSU next in one of the toughest stretches of games you'll ever see (Alabama, LSU, Auburn, UGA, revived Vandy, S. Carolina, Furman (whew!), Florida State). No wonder Urban Meyer retired. Meanwhile, S. Carolina has the greatest challenge of any team in the nation: Steve Garcia is their QB, at least for the moment. But the guys behind him have never outplayed him, which has got to keep Steve Spurrier up at night. So Dawg fans, how you feeling about this season now?

Our triumph on Saturday extended Brother Willie's record at UGA games to 4-1, and that one loss deserves an asterisk because it was the infamous LSU loss where A.J. was flagged for unsportsmanlike conduct after his historic game-winning TD catch, and the penalty gave the Tigers a short field with a minute to go, following which we gave up a brilliant TD run to give them the win. So Dawg fans, start sending in your contributions now to fund Brother Willie's trip down next season.

Brother Willie is a great fan of Knowshon Moreno, but thought that #1 on this year's O is one heck of a player too. If you take a stroll through the new Butts-Mehr extension (the mere mention of which makes Brother Willie smile), there's a big panel featuring three RBs: Hershel Walker, Garrison Hearst, and Knowshon Moreno. I've got a feeling they'll need to reserve a spot for Isaiah Crowell before he's done here.

That first half was one heck of a display, and both halves were magnificent for the D. Although we don't seem to inflict pain the way Alabama does, we may indeed playing at the same level as LSU and Alabama at this point. It seems that Brian van Gorder left Athens a million years ago, and he remains the 21<sup>st</sup> Century standard for how to play D in the modern SEC. The Junkyard Dawgs are no doubt the most cherished defense in Dawg lore, and I did have to explain to Brother Willy why our band still plays “Bad, Bad, Leroy Brown” during the games. But they are from a bygone era that cannot be replicated, and so belong in history's Larry Munson corner of cherished calls, even as we hunker down in a new century.

Todd Grantham has really coached these guys up in a big way, and the scheme is finally becoming second nature and enabling our guys to play with aggressive abandon. We are very difficult to run against and not so easy to pass against, although Mississippi State was more a challenge to the former than to the latter, even as they got most of their yards with short throws to the flank, no doubt because the middle of the field was so well secured. But their O just doesn't include a downfield passing game, and when you run the ball primarily, you don't have time to practice and rep a dependable long passing game anyhow. So when they got behind, they had very little in their playbook to help them get back in it.

Some are grumbling about our conservative playcalling in the second half, but a 14-point win over an SEC team that beat us last year has got me smiling, even if we didn't keep the throttle open in the second half. Punting and giving MSU a long field to play when they're behind seems like a good strategy to me, because they're not designed for that sort of game, and making teams play from outside the sweet spot in their playbook is quite an advantage for a D.

The main concern we face in moving forward is the current inaccuracy of two guys we rely on for accuracy: Blair Walsh and Aaron Murray. I know that Blair identified and corrected some mechanical things during the week, and I thought the FG he missed in the second half was good, at least from my angle, but apparently not. But the guy can sure hammer a kickoff into the back hedge, and that remains a constant we can depend on.

I don't know how you fix a QB's accuracy, and it was a pretty windy day which might have been a factor on Saturday. But the stats suggest that he's regressed in terms of ball protection and passing accuracy. We do need to repair that problem as we move into the heart of the East schedule in upcoming weeks, and preparing QBs in terms of mechanics is among Mike Bobo's greatest skills. If you watched Taylor Martinez play in the night game for Nebraska, you surely grew in appreciation for what we've come to expect of our QBs in basic ball release and other aspects of how to master the techniques of the position.

Dawg Doots:

- I talked with a program guy before the game who gave Will Friend high marks for the positive change in tone he's brought to the OL group, which on occasion Coach Searels may have disturbed through his commanding, demanding, and uncompromising nature. I suspect that Coach Searels may have been a bit more advanced in teaching technique than Coach Friend is at this early point in his career, but his style may have been on the threatening style. Coach Friend in contrast is one laid-back country boy who has fit in well on the staff and with the players.
- I also talked with a program guy who recently went to Cincinnati to watch the Bengals, who feature 5 UGA starters (Roland and Boling on the OL, Geathers and Atkins on the DL, Green at WR). In his view, Andy Dalton is an OK QB, but not nearly as good as Kellen Moore, even though Moore is about 5'-11" and weighs as much as Little Woolly after a good colon cleansing. He thinks we've already played the best QB (Moore) and RB (Lattimore) we'll see all year, and I think he's right, especially if Auburn continues to run Michael Dyer 40+ times a game and he's on life support by November. That's got to be a good sign of what's to come this season.
- The Owlmeister is in despair over Temple's crushing loss to Toledo, which handled them far more easily than did Penn State.
- At halftime I visited with my great friend The Scowlmeister, who customarily takes the bleakest imaginable view of any situation and imagines it to be bleaker. The fact that he was simply aglow over our first-half play tells you that we were playing some great football to that point; and the D went on to play 4 great quarters of football. According to ESPN, our O fell into a "malaise" in the second half, but I didn't see Jimmy Carter on the sidelines calling plays.
- Speaking of The Scowlmeister, Granny Butts could hear him all the way down in Butts County yelling for Carlton Thomas to get more carries between the tackles.

- And speaking of Carlton, the little guy has played pretty dang well and earned his scholarship this season. It took him a few years and a couple of defections to get into the rotation, but I don't see him getting out any time soon. He's repaired the major gap in his performance, which was ball security, and now has become a dependable second back. I don't see us running Crowell 30+ times a game, and watching Michael Dyer wear down as he topped 40 carries vs. S. Carolina reinforces the need for dependable alternative RBs, especially with the proliferating plays that follow from a no-huddle offense.
- Speaking of dependable second backs, I wouldn't be surprised to see Richard Samuel and Ken Malcome playing fullback next year, especially if Keith Marshall decides to pursue an undergraduate degree at UGA and join the RB rotation.
- Speaking of fullbacks, Brother Willie got a good close-up view of Bruce Figgins and was so awed that went and hid behind Kwame Geathers. Big Bruce is one specimen, and he sure looks like an NFL fullback to me.
- Speaking of Brother Willie: He had heard a great deal about The Guy Who Sits Behind Me, and hoped that he would return on Saturday for another historic afternoon of commentary at Sanford Stadium. Brother Willie's wishes were fulfilled, and he was so taken by the outpouring of wisdom from on high that he began recording the sagacious observations that The Guy Who Sits Behind Me provided for our section's immense edification. Here are some of the memorable pearls of insight that he shared with those fortunate to be in His Presence on Saturday:

~ [Every time the refs huddled before announcing a penalty]: "Why do they need to discuss every call? JUST MAKE THE CALL!"

~ [After Brandon Boykin whiffed on an open-field tackle]: "Boykin is just not big enough to play cornerback in the SEC."

~ "Who's the backup quarterback? Get Murray out of there and put him in!"

~ [Before every Mississippi State play]: "Watch this, they're gonna run the quarterback draw."

~ [During the first half when we were up 21-3]: "We just cannot put teams away."

~ [Also during the first half, said of UGA]: "These guys couldn't beat Cedar Shoals High School today."

~ [When a MSU player was injured and surrounded by trainers]: "Just drag him off by his heels and RUN THE PLAY."

~ "What's Bozo gonna call now?"

Whew! Calling Mike Bobo "Bozo." How does he come up with these zingers? Mrs. Butts now wants me to pipe her the commentary via my cellphone so that she can elevate her knowledge of the game to new levels.

The Forecast: Dawgs go to Tennessee. The last time we went up there, our D made Jonathan Crompton look like Peyton Manning, and that game may have been the turning point in Coach Richt's evaluation of Willie Martinez as defensive coordinator. It was one lousy day in Dawgland, especially given that it gave Lane Kiffin a win over us.

This week we make amends. I saw Derek Dooley do TV studio work on UT's off-weekend, and he came across very well, even though he does wear those orange pants on game days. It's easy to see why he was the tonic to cure the many Kiffin ills that he visited upon Knoxville during his brief stay, at least in terms of DD's non-coaching capacity of being a good-will ambassador for the university. I talked to a program guy before the game who was discussing the Richt Hot Seat situation and pointed to UT as the reason you don't get rid of a successful coach to placate restless fans who believe that their team should win the SEC East, SEC, and national championship ever year, as UT seemed to do with Fulmer. Fire Fulmer and staff, and you're out \$15 million in paying off old contracts while assuming new ones. Fire Kiffin one year later and you're out another \$15 million and start over once again, except with \$30 million less to spend on Lacey Pearl Earps and her recruiting efforts. And you've got quite a hole to dig yourself out of following the disastrous interim hire if you whiff on that one (see, e.g., Howard Schnellenberger and then John Blake at Oklahoma after the firing of Gary Gibbs, who was the good-guy replacement after Barry Switzer disgraced the university in countless ways, before they built a monument to him as an extension of their stadium because he was such a winner).

Speaking of Coach Richt, these same program guys were noting that Mark's record before the game was as follows:

Career Record: 11 Years, 98-36, .731 W-L%

Bowl Record: 10 Bowls, 7-3, .700 W-L%

OK, so I actually added the Bowl game record because it was on the website where I got the career record info. Anyhow, make that 99-36 with Saturday's win. Next week (as I forecast shortly) we get Coach Richt win #100, with many more to go this season. Those who are screaming Hot Seat and Fire the Coach need to settle down and chew on that coaching record along with your Red Man. 100-36 in the SEC, with the rest of the schedule often competitive (always GT and often additional nonconference games against the likes of Clemson, Boise, Colorado, Arizona State, Oklahoma State, etc.) and you want someone else? Really?

These same guys were also noting how much tougher a league the SEC is now than it was during, say, Vince Dooley's era before everyone was this good (for you young tarts, Florida stank before Steve Spurrier got the head ball coaching job). Dooley went 201-77-10 in 25 years (playing shorter seasons) which is a .723 winning percentage (viewing the ties as neutral in the calculation). And it's much tougher than it was during the era of my namesake Wally Butts and other UGA coaching legends of yore. Wally went 140-86-9 for a percentage of 62% and he's among the greatest legends in program history. So watch what you wish for; you may just get it, and we may then be as bad as Mississippi or as deep in debt as Tennessee.

Little Woolly is the family genealogist, and he came up with the following info from the New Georgia Encyclopedia:

Butts resigned as head coach after a disappointing six-and-four season in 1960. He remained UGA's athletic director, but his tenure was marred by scandal. In March 1963 the *Saturday Evening Post* published a story that accused Butts and Alabama head coach Paul "Bear" Bryant of fixing the 1962 Georgia-Alabama game, which the Crimson Tide won thirty-five to nothing. Butts and Bryant sued the *Post* for libel. In the ensuing trial Butts was awarded \$3.06 million, at the time the largest amount ever awarded to a libel plaintiff. (The amount was later reduced to \$460,000.) Though Butts won the trial, his reputation had been severely damaged, and he was forced to resign as athletic director.

It's hard to say that Coach Richt falls short of the Butts legacy, all things considered. A few other records to ponder:

### **RIGHT IN THE "90 IN 9" CLUB**

<i>Coach</i>	<i>School, First 9 Seasons</i>
George Woodruff (1892-00)	Pennsylvania, 114-7-2
Pete Carroll (2001-09)	Southern Cal., 97-19
Bob Stoops (1999-2007)	Oklahoma, 97-22
Urban Meyer (2001-current)	B. Green, Utah, Fla., 96-18
Amos Alonzo Stagg (1890-98)	Springfield, Chic., 94-35-8
Barry Switzer (1973-81)	Oklahoma, 90-13-3
Mark Richt (2001-2009)	Georgia, 90-27

### **Only Coaches To Win Two SEC Titles In First Five Years**

Frank Thomas, Alabama (1933, '34)  
Bernie Moore, LSU (1935, '36)  
Vince Dooley, Georgia (1966, '68)  
Steve Spurrier, Florida (1991, '93)  
Nick Saban, LSU (2001, '03)  
Mark Richt, Georgia (2002, '05)  
Urban Meyer, Florida (2006, 2008)

### **Only SEC Coaches To Record Four Straight 10-Win Seasons**

Paul "Bear" Bryant, Alabama (1971-74, 1977-80)  
Vince Dooley, Georgia (1980-83)  
Phillip Fulmer, Tennessee (1995-98)  
Mark Richt, Georgia (2002-05)  
Steve Spurrier, Florida (1993-98)

My feeling is that sports people tend to overlook the big picture and focus only on what's happening today. In the long run, we've got one of the greatest coaches ever to put the whistle around his neck, and he's done so in a far more upright and reputable manner than others in his company, and most of them who aren't. You just don't run off a guy this good because of a dip that I am confident will prove to be temporary and forgettable in the long run.

Anyhow, back to the forecast. I've got to think that our D will continue to shut down opponents, and UT doesn't quite scare me with the O it's putting on the field this season. Our O did not have a highly productive second half on Saturday, but the conservative game management contributed, which I think followed from Aaron's turnovers and our confidence that they couldn't come back running up the middle or reverting to their weak passing game that's primarily designed as a diversion rather than as the primary means of scoring points. I do hope that the O continues to make adjustments and get the right players in the right position for the right plays; at the same time, when you have an overwhelming D, you don't need to have a risk-oriented offensive game plan. I think we go up there and take care of business and get the Head Coach #100. Dawgs, 27-17.

National Game of the Week (involving 2 ranked teams): OU/Texas in Dallas: Traditionally, among the Southwest's greatest rivalries, and the highlight of the Texas State Fair. Lots of meat on the hoof all over town. UT is still where OU was a couple of years ago: trying to replace the legendary QB and get it going again. Not this year. Sooners, 31-21.

Upset of the Week (unranked team over a ranked team): Utah over Arizona State. ASU jumped into the top 25 by beating S. Cal, which is not much of a credential. I'm not banking on them to stay in the top 25, even with a Pac-10 schedule. Utes get their first Pac 10 traction in this one: 38-35.