

The Dawgmeister's Weekend Forecast

Week 2: Dawgs Give Missouri their Welcome to the SEC Moment

On a Saturday at the Sweltering Sanford Sauna and Spa, when even Paul Broun was overheard acknowledging that maybe there's something to this Global Warming thing, the Dawgs got off to a tepid start in their quest for immortality and eternal Dawgnation celebration. Fortunately, my return home from the game was welcomed by one of Mrs. Butts's fine batches of sweet iced tea, which true to her bootlegger roots she prepares in the family bathtub, enabling me to jump in clothes and all for an hour or so to cool myself off.

Meanwhile, on the football field, the Dawg D was inexplicably inefficient in shutting down the Bulls and their key play, the QB scramble; and Aaron Murray was off in his accuracy for much of the first half. Even Dawg Great David Pollack tweeted that the D needed to hunker down and do a better job against BUFFALO. I imagine that Coach Grantham had a few recipes to share with the fellows at halftime, and the second half was much better. Not the greatest performance ever to open a Dawg season, especially compared with Alabama's crushing of an overrated Michigan team or Tennessee's blowout win over what was supposed to be a good NC State team. But, 1-0 is in the books and now we can get serious about this stuff.

Even on a day when things could have gone better, things went pretty well. The Gurley-Man had my gameday companion, Studs McMachoman, salivating for more carries; the WRs looked solid in the absence of Marlon Brown; Murray started slowly but finished strong and productive; and once the D realized that Buffalo had come to play, they locked things down in the second half. Although they're not the most talented guys on earth, I've got to salute the Buffalo QB and RB, who are a couple of tough hombres and competitors. I don't think I'd have lasted 30 carries on noon-kickoff day under hellish conditions the way their RB did. I think that we all went to the stadium assuming that this MAC team was our opening cupcake, but after MAC teams gave Florida, Iowa, and ouch, Penn State some tough games too, maybe it wasn't such a cakewalk after all.

Later in the day I caught the end of the Florida/Bowling Green game, and heard the announcer, former QB Brock Huard, evaluate the Florida QBs as pretty unimpressive, particularly in comparison to Bowling Green QB Matt Schilz. Specifically, Huard rode former National HS Player of the Year Driskell pretty hard, saying that the coaches were giving him a lot longer a leash than Brissett when it came to developing at the position and staying on the field. He kept saying that Driskell's anticipation was very poor, which led him to rely on his physical talent (which is considerable) rather than his decision-making (which is questionable). Yet the coaches keep playing him over the other guy, at least according to Huard, who felt that Brissett wasn't getting as fair a shot at the position. The thousands of empty seats at The Swamp appeared to agree.

My Mark Jones as Tofu Theory further substantiated: As the sidekick of Bob Davie, Mark Jones was almost as insufferable as The Great Disavower of All Cultural Developments After 1964 Himself. On Saturday, Jones was paired with Huard for the Florida game, and I didn't even know he was calling the game until they provided a helpful graphic identifying the broadcasters.

Like tofu, Jones takes on the flavor of what he's served with, and he's far more palatable once he steps outside the unappetizing company of Davie.

A Coveted Dawgmeister Game Ball goes to Connor Norman for playing just about every snap at safety on a day when the starting DBs were in streetclothes watching the guys who didn't screw up in the offseason play their positions. Always great to see a walkon who persists and fights his way into the rotation, although it was pretty surprising that Corey Moore and Josh Harvey-Clemons were behind Norman on the depth chart.

A Coveted Dawgmeister Game Ball goes to that little band of Buffalo fans who came down to Athens in order to experience our humidity, and who were probably pining for a nice snowdrift to dive into after the game.

Dawg Doots:

- The Coveted Dawgmeister Sports Quote of the Week: "I've always felt like to have a successful team you've got to have a few bad citizens on the team. That's how Ohio State used to win all the time. They would have two or three guys that were criminals and that just adds to the chemistry of the team. I think Notre Dame is growing because maybe they have some guys that are doing something worthy of a suspension which creates edge on the football team. You can't have a football team full of choir boys. You get your butt kicked if you've got a team full of choir boys so you've got to have a little bit of edge. But the coach has to be the dictator and the ultimate ruler. Here's my opinion: You don't hand out suspensions unless you know you've got somebody behind that guy that can make plays. The chemistry is so important on a football team. You have to have a couple of bad guys that sort of teeter on that edge to add to the flavor of the guys that are going to always do right because that just adds to the chemistry of the football team. You look at the teams that have won in the past, they have always had a couple of criminals." Alan Pinkett, Notre Dame radio broadcaster and ex-Irish RB who was never confused with Lawrence Phillips, Michael Dyer, or Da'Rick Rogers as a humanitarian. Well, OK, Isaiah Crowell too.
- During the Vandy/S. Carolina game, viewers were treated to "Dr." Lou Holtz's words of wisdom concerning Penn State and its scandalous problems. Dr. Holtz opined that whatever happened at PSU was none of the NCAA's business; it's a criminal matter, not a football matter, said the great coach. Or, at least that's what Little Woolly tells me; I need to call him in to translate since ESPN doesn't provide subtitles. Little Woolly has more experience with people whose lips have been sewn to their tongues, and so can occasionally figure out what the heck Holtz is trying to say. In any case, when I want to know the proper role for the NCAA in scandals, and the moral implications of any human actions, the first guy I call is the fellow who got three different programs put on probation. Thanks for the insight there Lou.
- Speaking of Penn State, what a mess. I've got friends up there who say that the whole university will be taking big hits in status, reputation, and money—it's not just the football program that will suffer. Would you donate to an institution whose president, athletic director, and head ball coach knowingly allowed child rape on its premises, not to mention the facilities where two of these guys spent 18 hours a day? What an indelible

stench ol' Jerry Sandusky has released into the central PA air, and what an unpardonable offense for those higher up the food chain who let it happen.

- Speaking of the SC/Vandy game, I thought that at times, Lattimore looked superhuman. At other times, he looked very human. I imagine that by the time we play them, he'll either be done for the year or back to being the beast.
- And finally, I continue to be amazed at the trouble Spurrier has had recruiting QBs to SC. Now, Connor Shaw has turned out to be much better than his low-key high school hype would suggest, even better than brother Jaybo, who had to leave Tech to find playing time at Georgia Southern. And much better than much-hyped guys like Willie Korn, not to mention Stephen Garcia. But Shaw can't throw passes into tight spots with any velocity, and the guys backing him up looked lost out there when they had a shot. Spurrier rarely had NFL-level QBs at Florida either, but at least they could make rosters occasionally, and Rex Grossman even started for a few teams, although never at the insistence of the team's fans. Nobody even remotely that good has played for Spurrier at SC. Perhaps the state of South Carolina just isn't producing QBs, which has to hurt. But other programs are bringing in competitive players every year without having in-state kids offered by Lane Kiffin at age 12. It's an ongoing mystery why a famed QB taskmaster can't get anybody to come up and pitch it around for him, and why SC under SS has relied on defense and ball control running games instead of that bottomless playbook he filled the air with at Florida.
- Freshman WR Blake Tibbs didn't play, but you've got to admire the chutzpah of any WR who comes to UGA and asks for uniform #8. That's one big uniform to fill.
- One pleasant aspect of the game was the general absence of penalties, which made the game move along at a nice pace and showed good preparation on both sides.
- If ever a college football coach needed a visit from the Fab Five of Queer Eye for the Straight Guy fame for a complete wardrobe makeover, it'd be Al Golden of Miami, whose long-sleeve shirts and tie absolutely billow and sag and make him look like a guy who slept at the bus depot the night before.
- Tray Matthews of "might he decommit?" internet controversy was on the sidelines hobnobbing with the guys in Red and Black, and he was thrilled I'm sure when I accosted him with, "You're All Dawg, right?" Of course, he agreed.
- Also on the sidelines on a day when other games got the visits: Stanley Williams, now suiting up for Walton. He's always seemed like a great kid to me, and is still a junior, even though it seems he committed about 10 years ago. A little guy with a sweet personality, but I suspect one tough S.O.B. once he laces up and takes the field.
- Speaking of Dawg RBs named Williams, Dez Williams and his little son were on the sidelines before the game. Welcome home big guy.
- Wouldn't it be delicious if, after all the Lamestream Media attention to the great QB battle between Tebow and Sanchez for the NY Jets starting job, 7th rounder Greg McElroy ended up being the only guy who can get the team into the endzone this season?
- Of all teams wearing Orange, which I think is generally a bad feature color for a uniform, I think that Clemson's is the most sightly. Others tend to look too pale, or too garish, for my exquisite taste (and apologies to Princeton Man Brother Willie, who I'm sure would make the case for his Tigers' look, if not the actual Tiger football team itself). Anyhow, at halftime I sought out the Scowlmeister for his views on our so-so first half, and after his moan-filled appraisal of the goings-on, we discussed the key question of which team

we'd root for in other games. Now, one thing I've found over the years is that rooting for teams, at least on my part, appears to be disassociated from what actually happens in the games, so this question is only philosophical. To the Scowlmeister, you always root for the league, so he was going to pull for Auburn. I would find it hard to root for Bobby Lowder even if Auburn played Bin Laden Tech, so went with Clemson.

- If I could enact a federal law banning one commercial shown during sporting events, it'd be the series featuring Deion Sanders as Tinkerbell, or maybe that's a mosquito he's impersonating. Just who exactly comprises Sanders's fan base, and how does making him into a little fairy or pest enhance a commercial product's viability in the market???
- I'm starting to find the Lamestream Sports Media's anointment of Matt Barkley as the Heisman Winner and USC as National Champion to be weird, as though somehow the Fates are colluding to produce this inevitable outcome, and as though they achieved all that glory they are destined to reclaim without cheating. Now, Barkley is a handsome, strapping young QB with blond hair and blue eyes, and he's a fine Christian lad as well. It all makes a nice narrative that this young Adonis will lead Troy back to Glory. But it's just a narrative, and every Lamestream Media outlet out there is trumpeting it as though Destiny has spoken. But it's just a Disney story thus far in Barkley's college career. Thank heaven we actually play the games. In the end, I suspect that Barkley will be every bit as great an NFL QB as Matt Leinert or Mark Sanchez.
- Bad sports announcer metaphor alert: I forget which guy said it, but when a team was running the Pistol offense and the play didn't work, he said, "The Pistol misfired on that play." Well, at least Tim McCarver doesn't call football games.
- There appear to be two ways to get featured on the Sanford Stadium Jumbotron during timeouts. For women, it's being Hot 'N Busty and dancing hotly and bustily for the cameras. For men, the key is to come to the games painted and accessorized (faux-hawk, ersatz football uniform parts) and look as though you're auditioning for Dawgs: The Musical.

I was most disappointed to find that Saturday's game was not attended by Coach Knute "Bear" Lombardi, The Guy Who Sits Behind Me, who I can only conclude is a dedicated reader of the Dawgmeister's Weekend Forecast, has recognized the bad example he sets for the Sanford Stadium Youth, and has decided to stay home until he can attend the games more appreciatively. His place was apparently taken by a number of others hoping to get recognition as Sanford Stadium Jackass of the Week, and there were many worthy candidates. I'm awarding this coveted prize to Gate Guy, who wanted to enter the stadium early, harassed the poor gatekeepers as though they were the ones making the rules instead of guys trying to earn a few extra bucks so their kids could have some milk money next week, became increasingly profane when they gatekeepers would not let him in ahead of everyone else waiting for the signal from above, made a number of racist comments to the mostly-black personnel who were keeping the gates, and then pulled the ultimate Vet Card when some old geezer asked him to shut up and he replied that he (the Jackass) had fought in Vietnam and Iraq so that he (the geezer) could have the freedom to think his liberty-loving thoughts. Now, I appreciate what our Vets have done, but don't think it gives them a lifetime of free passes for being as obnoxious as a drunken Tennessee fan after a tough loss. So congratulations Sir, for this well-earned and most coveted award.

The Coveted Dawgmeister Good Guy of the Week award goes to David Pollack, former Dawg great and Cincinnati Bengal before suffering a catastrophic neck injury at the beginning of his career. Polly has rebounded from what must have been his greatest disappointment in life to become one of ESPN's best announcers. OK, so being the biggest flea in the flea circus might not be the most extraordinary achievement on earth. But it's great to see him moving up in the ranks and displacing the odious Craig James, freeing the Pony Excess to focus on his budding political career as a Texas Tea man. Anyhow, #47 helps to extend the UGA brand into the ESPN market, offsetting their announcers' tendency to hate everything Georgia (see Holtz, L., & May, M.). Thanks to one DGD for all he did between the hedges and for extending his career into the broadcasting arena, for which he seems perfectly suited.

The Forecast: Dawgs at Missouri: I don't think that any refugee from the Big 12 has seen anything like UGA's defense. I'm assuming, of course, that our real defense will show up next week and have some of their suspended guys back, especially in the secondary. If not assuming, then really, really hoping. Missouri might be able to throw the ball at will against teams that can't pressure the QB, but they'll face a ton of pressure against the Dawgs, at least if the coaches get their attention in the film room and on the practice field. Mizzou has played against good offenses, but have gotten shredded by them because that league emphasizes offense over defense. But SEC teams always hammer them when they square off. Welcome to the SEC Tigers: Good Guys win, 27-17.

National Game of the Week: This is possibly the least interesting week of the season, with no top-25 matchups anywhere. So here you go Owlmeister, Maryland at Temple. I take the Owls simply on the basis of the fact that they are not wearing Maryland's uniforms. They've done a nice job of rebuilding from the nation's laughingstock to become a bowl contender, while Maryland has gotten as much traction as a football school as UGA has as a basketball school. Temple actually has had guys drafted of late, including their excellent RB Bernard Pierce, whom the Ravens traded up to pick on Day 1 of last year's draft. That's a big hole to fill, but whoever replaces him will, and I guarantee this, not be wearing one of Maryland's ugly uniforms. Owls, 17-14.

Upset of the Week (in which a ranked team loses to an unranked team): Arizona over Oklahoma State. It'll be interesting to see how OSU competes with a QB younger than Aaron Rodgers. I think they will experience a drop-off, even though T. Boone Pickens has shown that if you give a university enough money, they can compete at just about anything, even if it's located in Stillwater, OK. If Pickens's \$\$ can get Robert Sternberg to leave Tufts for the provost's job at T. Boone Pickens University, then just think how easily it can bring an impressionable young athlete to play between the cowpies at T. Boone Pickens Stadium. Meanwhile, Arizona begins the RichRod era with as much fanfare as Michigan did a few years ago, after the Wildcats ran off Mike Stoops, who did a better job than the guy he replaced in Tucson, but not good enough. So, this is looking like a stupid pick for me, in that learning RichRod's offense takes a couple of years and getting used to RichRod himself can take awhile too, or so they tell me in Ann Arbor. But that won't stop me; what part of "upset" don't you understand?? Cats over Pokes, 28-27.

Note: The Dawgmeister's Forecasts are for entertainment purposes only and should not form the basis for an actual wager.