

The Dawgmeister's Weekend Forecast: The "N" on their Helmet Stands for "(K)nowledge"

And no, I'm not talking about Knowshon's father. I've hated Nebraska since watching the world's most cynically disingenuous hypocrite, Tom Osborne, play guys like Lawrence Phillips and the curiously named Christian Peter, one a violent felon who beat up women and the other a violent rapist who abused them, because they helped him win football games. Osborne would also keep his starters in deep into the second half, running power sweeps while beating Iowa State 65-0, just to show what a classy guy he was. He's the only guy I know who made Barry Switzer look as cherubic as Little Woolly Butts; and both (Osborne and Switzer, that is) are still beloved by the schools they won football games for, enshrined on campus for their victories on the field, if not for their contributions to the world's moral order.

Bo Pellini still looks like the guy I call to clean my roof gutters, although a lot more angry. I never much liked him either. So I'll be pleased to pick his doom at the hands of the Dawgs, a treat that both of my readers will have to wait for until they meticulously read every word between here and there.

Coveted Dawgmeister Game Balls go to 2012 Dawg graduates Luis Capella, Augusta, Ga., Finance; Sanders Commings, Augusta, Ga., Communication Studies; Terrence Edwards, Sandersville, Ga., Housing; Jonathan Owens, Blountsville, Ala., Housing; Bacarri Rambo, Donalsonville, Ga., Consumer Economics; Christian Robinson, Norcross, Ga., Sport Management; Cornelius Washington, Hephzibah, Ga., Sport Management. Terrence, congratulations on your persistence; and same to Owens, who played OL here, or mostly didn't, yet kept after it for several years after his eligibility ran out and completed his degree. I'm especially impressed with the guys who got it done within their 5-year scholarship windows, while meeting the endless demands of playing D-1 football. Graduating is something that only 59% of students in Georgia universities do in *six* years, and they only have to watch the games and second-guess the coaches, rather than practicing, traveling, studying film, working out all summer and over all other breaks, nursing painful injuries, and committing their weekends in the fall to games. Well done and congratulations men!

Foghorn Bullhorn ought to win this year's Optimist Club's Man of the Year Award for his belief that Coach Fox will turn around the men's basketball program, if we just give him one more year after this one. Now, from what I can tell, Coach Fox is a good man, and he coaches up the kids he's got pretty well. But my sense is that he's coaching UGA as if he's still at a mid-major, rather than in what's become a beastly SEC East with 4 perennial top 25 programs, 2 of which are often in the top 10, and Missouri coming aboard with a strong basketball tradition. In other words, we are a team with one excellent players and a lot of role players and projects, with the goal of having them develop into better role players by the time they're seniors. Meanwhile, our immediate competitors are bringing in NBA first-rounders annually from national and international recruiting bases and playing before cheering crowds in 20,000 seat arenas.

I'm not in the business of hiring and firing coaches, so whatever I think is pretty meaningless, unless Greg McGarity is going to start reading sports blogs for his ideas on how to run the Athletic Association. But Fox is not his guy; he was Damon Evans's hire. We are playing our

games in front of crowds that are down to Foghorn Bullhorn, his lovely wife Mrs. Bullhorn, that guy in the red sweater who does jumping jacks all game, and whatever kids from Clarke County we can round up to fill some seats. The students, upon whose shoulders support of the team ought to fall, seem unaware that we even have a men's basketball team. That's not a great return on the investment to spiff up the Stegasaurus. McGarity came to UGA from Florida, where Billy Donovan took a cruddy program at a football school and turned it into a national power that annually produces NBA talent and competes for league and national champions. I can't believe that the contrast between the two schools has escaped his attention, given their similarities.

If the team finishes at or near the bottom of the SEC East, where their talent would predict they will finish, we might yet again be changing basketball coaches. I'm not saying we should or shouldn't—I hope Foghorn is right and we're on the upswing—but I'm saying that the program's performance and direction may not persuade McGarity that another year is merited. Since Tubby Smith was in town, the program has been a mess, with only Jim Harrick's teams winning much, and then doing so at the expense of UGA's academic reputation and at the peril of its women students. We've tried to promote the assistant (Jirsa), tried to hire a big if questionable name (Harrick) and his son (Harrick Jr.), and tried to hire mid-major winners (Felton and Fox)—after whiffing on “big name” coaches who themselves were fired shortly after we tried to get them to come here—and have gone nowhere. Felton brought in good players, but kicked them all off the team. Fox won with Felton's leftover talent—which at the time seemed glorious but which is either riding the pines (Thompson) or out of the league (Leslie) at the next level after bolting the program early for NBA riches—but is sinking with his own recruits. What will work?

It might be prudent to begin with what's not working: our ability to recruit Atlanta. Even Harrick had trouble getting guys from the ATL area to play ball at UGA. Meanwhile, ACC schools routinely come in and beat us for these kids, and a lot of them end up in the NBA. Heck, Auburn and Memphis beat UGA for Atlanta kids. That's got to change.

I see two ways to resolve this problem, if Coach Fox is let go in the spring (and I'm not saying he should be). One would be to hire an ACC assistant coach with a proven track record of recruiting Atlanta. People point to the Duke assistants, but I don't see Duke's success coming from ATL. Rather, they get guys like Jabari Parker from Chicago, or whoever else they feel like getting. So I'm not sure that's the solution. But the ACC is getting these kids, and we're not. That's one avenue I'd pursue, although when I look at the possibilities, I find Duke and UNC having the most high profile assistants but I don't find Atlanta being their primary source of talent. There's nobody from an ACC staff jumping to mind, unless there's somebody at Wake Forest or NC State—teams that recruit Atlanta successfully—that I'm not familiar with.

The other approach is probably low on most people's lists, but it's actually the route I'd go. I'd try to get Sharman White from Miller Grove High School to make the jump to UGA. He's a young African American coach from the ATL metro area who consistently prepares D-1 players and wins state championships. He's connected locally and would have a pipeline from a major powerhouse to feed the program, and if other area high school coaches respect him and want him to succeed (if only to provide the same trajectory for themselves eventually), they might send their studs his way. White is also connected to AAU teams, coaches, and “representatives” from

Atlanta, and many people believe that AAU summer leagues provide at least as strong a pipeline to college programs as high schools.

Hiring a high school coach, you say? Don't you remember Gerry Faust and Notre Dame football? Yes I do. I also remember Gus Malzahn going from an Arkansas HS to the SEC West and running up points on everyone immediately. I also remember Sherri Coale going from Norman HS girls coach to Oklahoma's women's basketball coach and taking teams to the Final Four. Not everyone makes the transition to a higher level well, as Nick Saban and others have shown. It can happen, though, and by all accounts the coaching in all sports at the high school level has gotten advanced to the point where players enter college incredibly well prepared to play immediately, especially with all the off-season coaching they get. Right, Todd Gurley? In basketball you can change a program with a couple of players, or even one, as Georgetown showed in signing Pat Ewing long ago. Atlanta produces guys with NBA talent every year, and almost all go elsewhere. Hiring White couldn't be any worse than what we've tried for the last 15 years or so at UGA.

Today's sports quiz: Under what conditions would you root for Georgia Tech in a Bowl Game?

1. GT vs. Southern Cal
2. GT vs. any team coached by Lane Kiffin
3. GT vs. any team coached by The Swine
4. GT vs. the Al Qaida Training School
5. GT vs. Notre Dame
6. None of the above

Dawg Doots:

- I'm going to miss Coach G, and even though I can hardly wish him the best, given his destination, I can send him my thanks for 15 years of dedicated work on behalf of the Dawgs.
- A high-ranking NFL personnel evaluator said that Tim Tebow "attempts to play quarterback despite poor footwork, throwing platforms, release, timing, efficiency, progression, reads, anticipation, arm strength, accuracy and any other position-specific category you can think of. God bless him for trying, but I wouldn't touch him and would pass on the Jacksonville (Jaguars) job if it forced me to take him." And yet, after he gets released by the Jets, Jacksonville will apparently bring him to camp next year, and the Lamestream Sports Media will follow like lemmings and cover his battle for the backup job as though Lindsey Lohan and Justin Beiber were competing for the position. They will perpetuate the Tebow mythology even though after 7 years of intense coaching at the highest levels of the sport, he still hasn't learned how to throw a football properly, which is something you can teach kids in pee-wee football to do; and even though he's a career backup of no greater achievement than Ricky Stanzi (currently 3rd string on Kansas City).
- In contrast: "Hutson's a great quarterback. He's worked his tail off. He's been here three years; he's learned the playbook, his footwork, his progressions. Obviously he hasn't been able to get the snaps this year, but . . . Hutson is ready to go, and he's a very capable quarterback." ~Aaron Murray on his backup at UGA, who is not the subject of a Lamestream Sports Media preening frenzy

- I've filled the void in my life while waiting for the bowl game by watching NFL games, and it's great to see so many ex-Dawgs on Sundays and all the various days they play on at this time of year. I watched Geno Atkins and A.J. Green dominate the Steelers (along with Gaithers, Boling, Roland, and Charles), Drew Butler booming punts, Matt Stafford throwing heroically on an understaffed team (now including Kris Durham and Shawn Chappas), Blair Walsh named NFL special teams player of the week, Danelle Ellerbe making plays for the Ravens, Kregg Lumpkin getting into the rotation with the Giants, Thomas Davis earning the consensus defensive comeback player of the year and Charles Johnson creaming people on the Panthers' D, Akeem Dent holding down the middle for the dominating Falcons, Tim Jennings playing huge for the Bears, Knowshon Moreno finally healthy and running hard for the Broncos, Champ Bailey still among the best in the league for Denver, Ben Jones starting for the mighty Texans, Ben Watson and MoMass hauling in passes for the Browns, and others listed at <http://pro-dawg.blogspot.com/p/nfl-team.html>. Great job by the coaches for bringing these guys to Athens and coaching 'em up real good; and next year there'll be about a dozen more to brag about.
- Many Dawg fans are no doubt celebrating the retirement of Michael Adams from the UGA presidency, dating back to his decision not to re-up Vince Dooley as Athletic Director. In retrospect, as personnel moves go, moving past Dooley wasn't so bad an idea, given that he was an old coach and not a finance guy, which is what 21st century Athletic Association leadership calls for. But in terms of style points, most might assign a zero to the good doctor in that decision. People who believe that UGA is a football program that enrolls students in order to provide athletes and fill Sanford Stadium seats may view Adams's departure as a welcome Festivus Miracle. I think this one might fall into the category of "Beware of what you wish for; you might just get it." Or "The Devil you know is better than the Devil you don't." On the whole, on Adams's watch, UGA has become a better university than it was when he arrived in Athens. He's made his mistakes, but you can't oversee a large and complex institution like UGA for 15 years without making enemies or wishing you had a few do-overs. I imagine that his recruitment of ex-Pepperdine colleague Jim Harrick remains among his greatest regrets. But UGA's ascendance from a regional university to an international community of scholars has gotten quite a boost from Adams. I have no idea of who will replace him. We could do a whole lot worse than what we've had, and even if some might do so grudgingly or not at all, I think we owe him thanks for his time in Athens.

The Dawg Good Guy of the Week goes to D.J. Shockley, the guy who waited his turn at UGA and then led them to the SEC championship as a senior. D.J. showed that loyalty is indeed a quality, even in the selfish world of competitive sports. Shock had his shot at the NFL but wasn't quite there, and since has gone into broadcasting. I saw him do some of the high school championship games in the Dome and he was pretty good. I hope it's a springboard to more extensive gigs higher up the broadcasting food chain; he's got the smarts, football knowledge, and personality to make it in the booth. He's a hell of a lot better than Bob Davie and countless other slugs who've had long careers calling games at the college level. Hang in there, D.J. Some guys get the faster track (Dave Pollack); others have to work their way up. With your work ethic and talent, you should be there before long, representing UGA with distinction and honor as you did on the field, in the locker room, and in the classroom.

The Forecast: Nebraska got creamed by Wisconsin, whose coach thought so highly of the Big 10 that he left to finish in 3rd or 4th place annually in the SEC West until they fire him and bring back The Swine, still a popular man in town because, well, he won football games, not to mention the hearts and charms of the young swinettes in Fayetteville. I don't think that Wisconsin has nearly the weapons that UGA has, yet they put up 70 points and 539 yards rushing (including 8 TDs) on Brent Musburger's favorite nickname, the famed and feared Black Shirts of Nebraska. So I'm not expecting a defensive battle. Nebraska still runs the ball, although not quite the way they used to, and running teams have given us more trouble than passing teams. Taylor Martinez has allegedly improved his hideous throwing motion, but he's still closer to Tebow than to Murray. I think the Dawgs will win going away and set the stage for next year with a whoop-ass offense leading the way, convincing Aaron Murray that this thing is just too good to walk away from and into an uncertain NFL future. Dawgs, 45-21.

National Game of the Week: Well, that's the National Championship Game. As an SEC fan and longtime hater of Notre Dame, not to mention Lou Holtz, my forecast is easy. Notre Dame will show that they'd be a middling SEC team, and Alabama will make this one look easy. Tide, 28-10.