

## The Dawgmeister's Weekend Forecast Week 5: No Volunteers



In his headline before the game, Chip Towers wrote: “No. 5 Georgia ready for one of its most anticipated Vandy games ever.” I was among those who thought that James Franklin had recruited better players and gotten his team more fired up than any Vandy coach in memory. I thought that the hype over the Franklin/Grantham confrontation of 2011 was pretty overblown by the Lamestream Sports Media, given that football is a very emotional game and these were emotional, hard-driven competitors going at it in a tight game. I thought we’d win, but would have to work pretty hard and compete to the max to do it. After all, Vandy had played us ferociously last year, had just crushed the mighty Blue Hose of Presbyterian, and had come within a blown interference call of taking down Florida in their first game.

But Vandy didn’t bring this year’s team. At halftime their band treated us to an 80’s-Fest of songs by the pop group Chicago, which was about a decade after Chicago stopped playing gritty songs and had become the last refuge of bubble gum teeny boppers. Vandy brought a football team that was just as quaint as their band’s futile effort to entertain us.

You might have seen last week that at the Bronx Zoo, a guy leaped from an elevated train into a Siberian tiger’s enclosure so that he could “be one with the tiger.” Vandy came to Sanford Stadium with similar intent, and left similarly mauled.

I must say that this Dawg team might have more weapons than any team in quite some time: a terrific QB to start with, along with a deep stable of running backs; and a WR rotation that has game-breakers about 6 deep (Brown, Bennett, King, Conley, Wooten, and Mitchell, with Scott-Wesley still learning the position but already showing a lot of potential). We’ve got good tight ends who rarely get passes because there are so many other guys to distribute the ball to. Guys in the stands were saying we need to get Gurley more carries, but between them Marshall and Malcome are averaging about 6 yards per carry, so they deserve their reps too. Even with Stafford, Moreno, and Green, I don’t think we had this many guys who can go deep; and possibly that famed trio’s singular talents made it hard for anyone else to stand out during their year together in Athens.

A Coveted Dawgmeister Game Ball goes to the Dawg OL. Last year we graduated 4 starters, mostly to the NFL, and the big worry was whether or not a new set of guys in the trenches could protect the passer and blast open holes for the untested running backs, depleted by the departure of Isaiah Crowell and relying on guys who last played against defenders from North Carolina high schools. But Coach Friend has done a magnificent job of taking a group that's considerably smaller than last year's big veterans and getting them to play as though they've been butt-kicking starters for years. Great job of keeping Aaron upright and opening holes for the guys doing the toting. When Stacy Searels left for Texas, a lot of us wondered if a Golden Age of UGA OL had left with him. But if you see any dropoff in technique, effort, or results, please let Kenarious Gates know. In person.

#### Recruiting update:

- Paris Bostick, Tampa-Plant safety and Dawg commit, looked resplendent in a UGA hat with Paris on one side, Bostick on the other. I don't think we need to worry about any wavering from this one.
- I talked for a few minutes with mammoth DL John Atkins, who lacked a test score and is prepping at Hargrave. He's passed the test and will enroll in January.

#### Dawg Doots:

- Chase Vasser had another million-tackle game on Saturday. When he got a 2-game suspension to begin the season, I wondered if he'd ever get back in the rotation with all the guys we have at that position. But it's easy to see why they moved Cornelius Washington inside to DT. Vasser is one fast, athletic, tough kid with impeccable tackling technique whose name gets called a whole lot when we're on D, often behind the line of scrimmage.
- A correction from last week: Rutgers' Jamison is a sophomore, not a freshman. Remember Savon "The Savior" Huggins, whom we recruited along with Crowell but who stayed at home to attend Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey? Turns out he's a benchwarmer behind a guy from the same recruiting class, a bit too easily injured and unproductive, while the little guy gets all the carries, enough to make Arkansas's disaster of a season a bit more hideous yesterday.
- I saw that 5' -11" 160-pound Grayson HS cornerback Kasey Gaines committed to Penn State over Harvard last week. Like many kids, he appears to have decided to attend the university where the depth chart indicates he'd get more playing time. Said Gaines, "It would be awesome to be a part of the Penn State tradition," although it's not sure which tradition he was referring to. PSU Coach O'Brien spoke to the state of Lion football when he told Gaines, "We need football players right now, not superstars." Congratulations on being just the sort of warm body and mirror-fogger that will populate the Penn State roster for the next few years.
- Dawg fans are duly relieved to get Ogletree and Rambo back for next week. A program guy before the game, though, said that we shouldn't expect midseason form, even as midseason is nearly where we are, from guys who've practiced but not played. Sanders Cummings is still getting his game legs back, and these guys will need to adjust as well. Chase Vasser stepped in as though he'd never missed a minute of game time, but 2 games and 4 games are pretty different.

- The same program guy said that wherever Ogletree plays, it probably won't be ahead of Amarlo Herrera, who has taken over one of the ILB spots and is playing at an incredibly high level. That's one outstanding set of ILBs we've got to rotate.
- And one more thing from this program guy: If you were grumbling about the D against Buffalo and Florida Whatever, he said that Grantham revealed as little as possible of what we do on D in those games, which made us seem vulnerable. As we demonstrated yesterday, we have every bit as much defensive potential as we showed last year when we finished #5 nationally. As teams get past their cupcakes and into conference play, expect things to shake out.
- Speaking of things shaking out, another false Heisman campaign went down with Landry Jones yesterday. People are hyping Geno Smith after he destroyed teams of the caliber of James Madison and Marshall, and now Maryland, but really, are people serious about deciding the Heisman on the basis of how much a guy can rip up the equivalent of scout teams? And can people really rip our schedule after looking at those of most other teams? And when will Aaron Murray start getting more Heisman attention? Maybe after the Florida game? I see no separation between the preseason favorites and our guy.
- I suspect that I'm not the only one who thought, when we signed Keith Marshall, that we were getting a scatback. After seeing him run between the tackles, especially on his short TD run yesterday, I think we've got a hoss back there.
- Speaking of equines, Todd Gurley is a stallion. He just sheds tackles, especially on this run: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KeVdHV5dFno>. Guys in the stands were wondering when we had a guy who could break tackles like this and also run with high-end speed, and they were going way back to Rodney Hampton. Some have invoked the H-word (for that other H-back), but let's go undefeated and have him win a Heisman before we go there.
- And speaking of stallions, call it The Rafalca Effect: The UGA equestrian team will start the regular season co-ranked #1 nationally with Texas A&M.
- Scientists from the Primate Research Institute at Japan's Kyoto University reported that they had given helium gas to gibbons such that they shout like Munchkins instead of with their customary more sonorous bellowing. The scientists hoped to determine whether the participating gibbons could make as much noise under the influence as they could under normal conditions. The gibbons succeeded, demonstrating a capability similar to that of the world's greatest human sopranos, who maintain their booming amplitude by altering the shape of their vocal tract, including their mouth and tongue. That helps explain Fohorn Bullhorn.

The Dawgmeister's Sanford Stadium Jackass of the Week Award has notably been absent Coach Knute "Bear" Lombardi, The Guy Who Sits Behind Me, and I feared that he indeed had been Raptured at halftime of last year's Auburn game. But lo, on Saturday he returnethed, and was in fine form, providing his sagacious commentary from his lofty mount, unaccompanied by human companions and thus with no conversational partner of a specific nature. On one of our many TD drives in the first half, he informed those in his vicinity following a running play on second and long, "We're just playing for field goals out there!"—an observation that took on additional salience when the run cut the distance to a manageable amount that enabled a first down on third and medium which in turn produced a touchdown one play later. After a two-yard pickup by Vandy, he shared with our section his view that "We can't be giving up that much every play!"

After Vandy completed a pass, he reached deep into his book-bag of football knowledge to inform Coach Grantham that “You can’t cover a wide receiver in this league with a linebacker!” who turned out to be Shawn Williams, who is a safety, which is exactly who covers the slower receivers in multiple receiver sets. When we started a drive deep in our territory, he came up with the brilliant idea that “We need an 88-yard touchdown pass!” But lots of people in the stands say these things. Coach Lombardi iced his status with his remarkable inquiry of a 5-year-old kid who was dancing to the music during a timeout with some fancy hip swivels reminiscent of Elvis himself, “Hey little fella, is your mama a black lady?” Congratulations Coach, and welcome back.

Dawg Good Guy of the Week: Back in 2003, the Dawgs signed a 4-star linebacker from Dacula named Des Williams. Des came in and found himself in quite a crowd at linebacker in the old 4-3 system, and ended up switching to offense and becoming a pretty good fullback for us. He was light compared to recent behemoths at the position in Bruce Figgins and Quayvon Hicks, but played on some strong teams as a key player. Des was a team player of the sort we now find in RS4, willing to switch positions to meet the team’s needs. He’s now running his own landscape design and maintenance company with a specialization in lighting, Outdoor Advantage, out of Dacula; see [www.outdooradvantagellc.com](http://www.outdooradvantagellc.com). He’s even built a replica of Sanford Stadium in his yard so his little son can soak up the Dawgmosphere every day. That’s one D.G.D. we can be proud of, and a great example to the current players of how to manage your life if the NFL (Not For Long) doesn’t provide lifetime employment.

The Forecast: Yes, this week brings about one of the greatest traditions in all of college football, the annual visit to Dawgtown of Brother Willie and his lovely bride, Fanny Butts-Cheeks. Brother Willie and I will be at the game while Mrs. Butts-Wynde and the equally lovely Mrs. Butts-Cheeks will have their annual weekend of NASCAR watching at home on the Big Screen. So, if you want a Slim Jim this weekend, better buy it now before the ladies clean out all the beef jerky and pork rinds from the local stores, which is their meal of choice during their big weekend of good clean American fun and gasoline conservation. As you undoubtedly remember, Brother Willie is a good luck charm, with a 4-1 record during his visits Down South, the only loss being the infamous LSU game where A.J. Green caught a brilliant TD pass with about a minute to go, only to get flagged for being an excited teenager and giving LSU enough field position on the kickoff to score their gamewinner as the clock ran down. So, aside from a horrendous call from an official that denied us a major win, Brother Willie is good karma for the Good Guys.

And now, for the game. I try not to get too influenced by one week’s game when anticipating the next, so our near-perfect execution against Vandy, and UT’s near-loss to Akron, need to be set aside, lest I pick us 85-0. We will undoubtedly win, but not with that degree of dominance. I see us continuing to fine-tune our game in all regards. Our special teams have been pretty good this season, with both Morgan and Barber stepping in almost seamlessly for the NFL-bound duo they replaced, and our return game plenty strong. I think that as the competition gets tougher, we’ll see new wrinkles in the O and we’ll see the freshman RBs get stronger and more confident. I really like the adjustments that Mike Bobo’s made by using more pistol formations and using the toss instead of the handoff, which apparently causes hesitation on the D because they’re accustomed to a toss going wide rather than inside—a feature we’ve borrowed from LSU, along with our development of a similarly deep rotation of RBs. And with Mitchell moving

increasingly into the offensive game plan, we will be mighty hard to stop. We'll also see the D adding more deception and finishing even stronger as Tree and Rambo get their snaps. Really, the upside of this year's team is unlimited, and Tennessee is just the next team to understand how good we really are. Dawgs take it to the Vols, 31-14.

National Game of the Week: Ohio State at Michigan State. I'll go with continuity over change. That is, Ohio State is still learning the spread option, Meyer style, while MSU has been under the same management and system for some time now. Some of the studio announcers during the late games, which I caught a bit of after returning home on Saturday, were commenting on how terrible the Big 10 is these days, and it seems that Urban Meyer has timed his arrival quite nicely to make OSU competitive so soon after last year's disaster. But I think the Spartans will get an edge from program continuity over the course of the game: MSU, 24-21.

Upset of the Week (in which a ranked team loses to an unranked team): Before proceeding, I should note that I've picked three consecutive upsets, including UCLA's loss on Saturday to Oregon State. The Scowlmeister chided me about the absurdity of my pick of Stanford over Southern Cal, and it cost him a second mortgage's worth of wagers to ignore my wisdom. This week's upset: Wisconsin over Nebraska. Nebraska is in the top 25 mainly on historical reputation and beating the snot out of teams like Idaho State, which is just as worthy an opponent as the Presbyterian Blue Hose, which Vandy stomped by a score of 58-0 before losing 48-3 to UGA in a game where we had the reserves in for a quarter of the game to save James Franklin yet further embarrassment and get a few uniforms dirty from the end of the depth chart and walkon list. I can't believe Wisconsin has gone from scoring-at-will to a single-digit scoring team in just one year, and think they'll get after it finally against NU, even with Montee Ball questionable. As an aside, all y'all who were angry with Knowshon Moreno for going pro early, ask Montee Ball if he made a good choice in returning for his senior year to play for a team going nowhere and having his bell rung to the tune of multiple head injuries. Wisconsin has had one strange year. After losing their fabled OL coach to Pitt as offensive coordinator, where he has helped them lose to Youngstown State, they fired their new guy after 2 games, to replace him with their offensive quality control coordinator. That's a mighty great comedown for a team whose OL has been offered as the national model by the Lamestream Sports Media for years now. Even with Ball questionable and a desperation hire as OL coach for a unit that got depleted as much as UGA's did after last season, Badgers, 20-17. Why do you think they call them "upsets"?

*Note: The Dawgmeister's Forecasts should not be used as the basis of actual cash wagers.*