

THE DAWGMEISTER'S WEEKEND FORECAST: DAWGS POUND ON COMMODOE DOORS

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SEPARATED AT BIRTH? ARCHIVE SEPARATED AT BIRTH?



JEFF SCHULTZ



& EMPTY CHAIR

“There ain’t no excuses on Saturday. Nobody’s going to feel sorry for us. The other team isn’t, I can promise you that.” ~Mike Bobo before the game

“There are some things we have to fix, and obviously that fumble on that sack is the biggest one for me, because that is completely my fault. It’ll probably keep me up until about Wednesday. I let Aaron down, I let me team down, and that is unacceptable for me as a fifth year senior to do. I cannot have that, and I hope I play better next time.” ~Artie Lynch after the game

“We got ‘em.” ~Foghorn Bullhorn at halftime

In spite of the Dawgs’ sputtering from the opening kickoff on, losing two critical fumbles that produced a 14-point swing, missing tackles that led to huge plays, and seeming to be out of synch all over the field for much of the game, I thought that when we began our drive in the fourth quarter down by 8, Foghorn was right and that we had them right where we wanted them. With Murray under center, with his great record of fourth-quarter drives giving him and his guys confidence that they would score and then get two more to tie it, I felt good about our situation. But for once, Aaron couldn’t do it: We went three-and-out, their backup QB got them into the endzone, and we just couldn’t get past the new deficit. Aaron’s picks after that were not why we lost; they were what happened when he tried to make plays that weren’t there to get us back in the game.

Between them, J. J. Green (3) and Brendan Douglas (2) had five stars coming out of high school from the recruiting gurus. On Saturday they combined for 26 carries for 157 yards and 11 catches for 85 more. That’s a five-star performance.

So, do we miss Gurley and Marshall? Of course we do. On the post-game show, Zeier and company talked about how impressive the two freshmen were, Douglas’s game-changing fumble

notwithstanding. They also talked about Missouri's defense and how much pressure it put on Murray throughout the game, all the while playing a fairly straight-up 4-man rush and Cover 2 to keep the WRs from getting deep, a plan that worked pretty well. Could they have done that with Gurley and Marshall in the backfield? Probably not. If you're not game-planning around Gurley's game-breaking potential on every carry, then you're not paying attention. So, a bit of our success on the ground and with check-down passes followed from what Missouri was willing to give us while protecting against the deep ball, even as we were low on guys who could get free on long routes.

With 5 guys blocking and little additional protection from RBs, who flared out or ducked under coverage in the middle, Aaron was throwing more quickly than usual, and to guys he'd repped with for just a week. He needed more help from his WRs, who needed to catch every ball within their grasp but didn't, which is what happens when 3 of your top 4 WRs are on crutches and walk-ons are getting significant snaps, and your other top-of-rotation guys don't hang onto the ball the way the missing guys tend to do. Being slightly out of synch in the SEC can be hazardous to your W-L record.

Many Dawg followers, well before the game, wanted to throw Coach Grantham under the bus, or under the train, or under a ton of bricks, whichever they can find first. They have concluded that Todd Grantham is the problem on this team; that if he were a better, more flexible, more knowledgeable, less stubborn, and who knows, maybe more jocular and easygoing fellow, we'd be playing better. I don't think that he turned into a bad coach overnight. His guys did underperform in 2012, if the quality of the parts is compared to the quality of the whole. This season, the challenge is quite different, and involves a lot more teaching and what Coach Grantham might call faith in the process.

I just don't know the complexities of the game well enough to say what's going on. Zeier and pals again raved about Ray Drew, and The Pastor of Disaster continues to look like Geno Atkins to me (and if you want to see another guy in this mold, one who's on the way, check out [Lamont Gaillard's highlight video](#)). If not for one fumble inside our own 20 for a scoop-'n'-score, and another inside theirs that cost us a TD we were sure we'd get, the D might have had us in position to win this thing. I do think they're getting better every week, with the rotations settling down and guys emerging: We're seeing lots more Wiggins, lots less Langley; and in perhaps a surprise, lots more of Langley's less heralded HS teammate, Quincy Mauger, and lots less of Connor Norman and others, including other safeties in the recruiting class who got lots more preseason ink that Mauger, who was known mainly as Langley's lesser teammate and a potential engineering major. Some guys are playing terrific football, including Josh Harvey-Clemons, and the front 7 and its many contributors. Tackling in the secondary has improved with Wiggins' increased playing time. But at times we just aren't wrapping up the guy with the ball and ending the play. I'm sure the coaches are aware of this problem and working to fix it, criticism from the stands notwithstanding.

Negatron was at his worst throughout the game, and some of us came close to heaving him off the deck and onto the pavement below, although with his beer belly, that would have taken half of my section. Now, there were some occasions when even those of us who support the team got a bit discouraged. But within the first five minutes of the game, when we'd gotten two drive-

killing sacks that forced punts, he had fired the entire coaching staff and lambasted just about every player wearing Red and Black. He was especially tough on Kolton Houston, even when John Theus was in at right tackle. He reminded everyone often of how much he knew about football, and how much greater his knowledge was than that of anyone wearing a whistle on our sideline. When not screaming his displeasure about our team, he was blaming things on the refs, no matter how often the replay confirmed their calls. Why this guy and others like him think that anyone wants to listen to their incessant personal unhappiness with their own lives for 3-4 hours is something that continues to escape me. Why they call themselves Dawg fans is among the universe's remaining unsolved mysteries. I'm just glad I'm not Negatron's pet dog, who surely got kicked plenty when he finally got home from the game and headed for the beer cooler.

Dawg Doots:

- [Here's how it goes down](#) if you're a sorority gal at Maryland and go to someone else's party after the game. I've spent a lot of my life on playing fields and in locker rooms; I've been around a few drunken sailors; and after clearing the room of women and children, I've even watched UGA football with the Scowlmeister. But this little sweetheart takes her game to a whole new level.
- I've seen Denver on Sundays a couple of times now, and it sure is great to see Knowshon Moreno playing with the style, enthusiasm, effort, and skill that made him such a favorite in Athens.
- Sunday produced some exceptional performances from ex-Dawgs beyond the expected top-of-the-heap days from Stafford and Green, from Kris Durham and Marlon Brown to Alec Ogletree and others I'm sure I missed.
- Last year, Marshall Morgan had the leg but not the accuracy. This year, when he comes in the game, I mentally put up 3 point every time we cross midfield.
- Just in case any NFL General Managers are followers of The Dawgmeister: I watch the Bengals on Sundays because the roster is chock-full of Dawgs. I'm sure you do too. I've concluded that comparing Aaron Murray to Drew Brees, which many of us have done, is probably not fair, because Brees has already played his way into the NFL Hall of Fame and remains one of the game's greatest, most exciting, and most dynamic players. But comparing Murray to Andy Dalton probably makes sense. They're similar in many ways, although I think Aaron's got more snap on his passes. If Dalton stepped in as a first-year NFL starter, then on the right team—Minnesota, Jacksonville, Tampa Bay, and others whose project QBs have struggled or outright failed—Murray can too. I keep hearing about all the taller guys who are higher on draft boards, and even wee Johnny Manziel is projected higher. But let the GMs in Tennessee, Jacksonville, and Minnesota explain why they thought that strapping young prospects Jake Locker, Blaine Gabbert and Christian Ponder provided them with a more beautiful future than Dalton would have, and then over-emphasize Murray's height at your own risk. (Note: Minnesota is now working out Josh Freeman, another fine physical specimen who specializes in getting his passes batted at the line of scrimmage.) Aaron Murray looks like an NFL QB to me, no matter what size the package.
- So, if Murray = Dalton in this year's draft, here are my other comparisons:
Marcus "The Throwin' Samoan" Mariota = Colin Kaepernick (lanky guys with rocket arms and crazy-good running ability; and you young Dawg fans should note that [Jack Thompson was the original Throwin' Samoan](#))

Teddy Bridgewater = Donovan McNabb (smart, athletic, strong-armed guys with poise and charisma)

Zach Mettenberger = Ryan Mallett (towering guys with big arms and slow feet)

Johnny Manziel = Russell Wilson (short, nifty guys with uncanny football smarts)

Tajh Boyd = Alex Smith (run/pass guys who are not necessarily pocket passers)

AJ McCarron = Matt Schaub (tall system QBs in good systems, but limited as playmakers)

Other guys who are highly rated—Derek Carr, Brett Hundley, and Stephen Morris—I haven't seen enough to evaluate, not that I know what I'm talking about even with guys I've seen. Of course, some of these guys will end up being more like Tim Couch, Jamarcus Russell, and Akili Smith than the guys I've compared them too, and that's why I'm not an NFL general manager, and the guys who drafted these guys aren't anymore either.

THE COVETED DAWGMEISTER GOOD GUY OF THE WEEK AWARD **GOOD GUY ARCHIVE**

This week's Good Guy is **Akeem Hebron**. Akeem came to UGA from Maryland as a 4-star recruit and Army All-American, and looked as though he'd be a four-year letterman and NFL prospect. Then classes began, and everything that could go wrong, did. Akeem exercised bad judgment, at least for a guy under Coach Richt's discipline, and got suspended from games, and then the program, for drinking a few beers when and where he shouldn't have. After a year's banishment to Georgia Military College, he could have transferred to another program and gotten a fresh start against thinner competition. But he returned to UGA and the team, with hopes of playing himself onto the field. That dream was shattered with a series of horrific injuries, including an ankle break in practice that remains regarded as the most frightening injury in the program's collective memory. Again, he could have quit college and the team, but persisted through graduation, pulling for his teammates from the sidelines. As an undergraduate student, Akeem was a two-time recipient of the Milton "Red" Leathers Football Scholarship and two-time recipient of the team's Iron Man Award, and also served on the Georgia Football Unity Council. As a UGA degree-holder in Consumer Economics, Akeem has begun fulfilling his potential in his post-football life. In 2009 he served as an Administrative and Research Assistant for the Office of Senator Johnny Isakson, then worked in the Enterprise Rent-a-Car training program. For the last few years has been a Project Manager for Hunt Consulting LLC in Laurel, MD. It's great to see a guy who seemingly had lost it all rebound and succeed in his life beyond the hedges: Great Guy, Great Dawg, Great Future.



THE FORECAST

Vandy began the season with high hopes, but is looking more like Vandy than their aspirant institution, Stanford, in football this season, if you overlook Stanford's weekend loss to Utah. We might have 10 guys on crutches, but that's about 10 too few for us to lose this game. The Commodore Doors will be up for this one because they undoubtedly smell blood, perhaps literally given our injury count. But we've got Aaron Murray and they don't, unless he goes down too, and even then I'm betting on Hutson Mason to finish the drill. And if he goes down, who knows, maybe the Albanian Bane o' Y'all will bring this win home. Dawgs, 34-28.

National Game of the Week: Florida State at Clemson. This is shaping up as a huge game, and a terrific one too. Both teams can score, and probably will. Can the Scrotum Pole work its magic and help Clemson erect a huge victory? Or will the bus ride around stadium blow a tire and deflate their enthusiasm? Will the most exciting 25 second in sports be the home team's best half-minute of the day? This one's about as close as they get, and someone will win it in the last minute. That team will be....Clemson, 48-45.

National Upset of the Week: Indiana over Michigan. Indiana has had one of the most god-awful programs in the nation for about two decades (or five? Who knows? Who pays attention?). They are the team that Elon tries to schedule for Homecoming. But they have shown some signs of life, and I'll be convinced that Michigan is a national power when they beat someone besides, well, Indiana. Will my streak of wrong-on-so-many-levels upset picks finally end, or will I maintain my perfect season? Hoosier Mama? Indiana, 21-20.

Reminder: After picking Arkansas over SC on Saturday, and after SC won 52-7, The Dawgmeister remains 0 for 2013 in upset forecasts, with the cumulative score now Favorites, 254; Predicted winners, 57. These forecasts are not recommended for wagering purposes.