

## THE DAWGMEISTER'S WEEKEND FORECAST: *DAWGS & HAWGS IN GROUND WAR*

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SEPARATED@BIRTH? ARCHIVE

### SEPARATED@BIRTH?



**BRET BIELEMA & RIA PELL**

“Can you believe it!?! Have you ever been as proud of a Georgia team as you are today? I can't think of a game to match this one in terms of simply stepping up and doing the job. Wonderful, I'm so happy for the guys.” ~The Scowlmeister, Saturday, 3:23PM.

I first heard about Gurley's suspension through a mid-week email from the Scowlmeister. My first fear was that, in spite of his great-guy reputation, he'd beaten up his girlfriend or stolen a teammate's iPad because he had caught a case of *knuckleheaditis*, which seems to be spreading like Ebola among college football players. When I saw that it was from selling autographs for a few hundred bucks, I was somewhat pacified in that it was a victimless crime, albeit one committed for chump change compared to what he'll earn next year in the NFL. When the story began getting filled out, I realized that I might never see Todd Gurley play again in the Red and Black. About that, I hope I'm wrong, very wrong. But Saturday morning, it was on my mind.

Just before we learned of Gurley's situation, Studs McMachoman had sent me this [remarkable statistic](#): Todd Gurley has been averaging 10.58 yards per carry in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter this season. It was 12.1 prior to the Vandy game, where he had 5 carries for 20 yards in the 4<sup>th</sup> to tank his stat line. I don't ever recall a player coming up so big so often at the point in the game when heroes are made.

With Gurley and his presence out of the game, my frame of mind at kickoff on Saturday was somewhere between gloomy and grim. Our great stable of backs was down to Chubb and Douglas, terrific players both, but what were we going to do, run Nick Chubb 40 times or something? With Mitchell and Scott-Wesley now getting into the wideout rotation, surely we'd air it out to balance out Gurley's absence. It might even be time for Brice Ramsey to step into a bigger role, since we could not possibly plug another back into Gurley's carries and expect to succeed without having a downfield passing attack to back off the defense. We all knew that what had worked before was based on Gurley's

magnificent play, not the line or the scheme. We were also going up against a high-octane offense that scored at a high pace, nothing like our Old Man Football, played between the tackles. Could we keep it on the ground and still keep up with them on their torrid pace on the field and scoreboard?

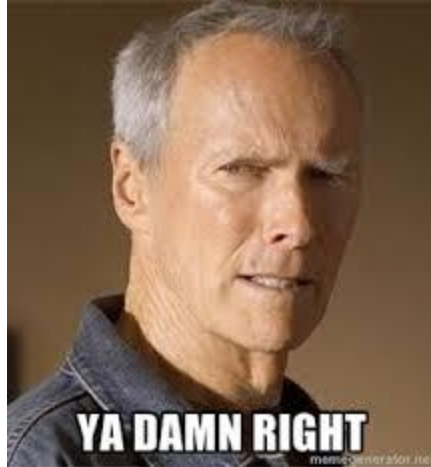
My fears were not alleviated in the game's opening minutes. We began with a late hit that gave them great starting position, fumbled a couple away that we were lucky to recover, and kept running into a wall of defenders when we forced it between the tackles. Starting that way on the road did not bode well for a team trying to stay in the running in the East without its best player in decades, and against the team that entered the weekend in the division's driver's seat.

But as Little Woolly always says, there's a reason they play the games instead of tallying up pregame hype and betting lines. What we witnessed on Saturday was one of the most inspired games I've seen us play this century and well back into the previous one. Most of Sunday's Lamestream Sports Media coverage focused on the one guy who didn't play. Fair enough; Todd Gurley is that good. But pitching a shutout at Missouri? With the defense putting such intense pressure on the Mizzou offense, it was never even a contest. Perhaps it was unfair to expect Jeremy Pruitt to walk in and develop the unit to this level in the first few games of his term. But now? Would you want to face this pass rush, or run on our front seven? Ask Missouri, who never got the ball into the red zone, barely got it past midfield, converted zero third down plays, and turned it over 5 times on Saturday.

The secondary appears now to get the schemes and know their assignments. When the replays backed off to show coverage, there was nobody to throw to. The rotation, settling in with guys who want to be here and like to be coached, is playing like a group that can completely shut down a ranked opponent on their field. Mauk didn't do himself any favors, and neither did his receivers, but he wasn't throwing against blocking sleds. The D was in position to nab the loose balls in the air, and our defenders acted as though that's what they're supposed to do.

The biggest hero on Saturday was Hutson Mason. Although Nick Chubb rightly gets credit for his rugged day pounding the ball, Mason ran the show with the maturity you'd hope for in a fifth-year senior and played his best game as a college player. After the game he said, "Nobody gave us a chance, including [The Dawgmeister] and including our fans, you know. A lot of our fans said, 'Oh, the season is over.' That pisses a lot of people off on this team. We just came out here like we had something to prove." You sure as hell did. Mason did more than hand it off to Chubb and hit his receivers in a perimeter game that kept the defense from bunching up the middle. He led this victory, not just with his play, but in the locker room and on the sidelines and in the huddle.

Can UGA win the East without their star runner and with a passing game that it now appears will never get downfield? Can they then take down whoever ends up winning the West, who will surely be favored heavily over the Eastern division champ? With leadership, teamwork, and a fired-up defense,



A Coveted Dawgmeister Game Ball goes to everyone connected with the program. This was a team win in every definition of the term. It's great to be a Georgia Bulldog on days like this. Right you are, Scowlmeister.

## **DAWG DOOTS**

- ☞ "You're not drunk if you can lay on the floor without holding on." ~Joe E. Louis
- ☞ "I'm not drunk yet." ~ Jessica Dorrell
- ☞ One storyline that never developed on Saturday was the possibility that Missouri would bench Mauk and put in their backup, Eddie Printz. How about that, a major SEC showdown with two Lassiter HS QBs duking it out.
- ☞ Another HS teammate storyline that's missing from the narrative is the fact that Quincy Mauger and Brendan Langley are now regulars in our defensive backfield after starring together at Kell HS.
- ☞ Speaking of storylines, the Lamestream Sports Media is just ducky about the Mississippi Revival, and their favorite story concerns Dak Prescott and his relationship with Tim Tebow. We heard about Tebow and Tibeaux *ad nauseum* in their afternoon game and every time Prescott's name came up for the rest of the day. Too bad: He seems like a good guy and worthy Heisman candidate, and now I hate him.
- ☞ "Bielema looks like the alpha Wisconsinite. He's a bulbous, round-shouldered cheese curd of a man, someone who was born to rack hay or to stomp the sidelines at Camp Randall." ~Jordan Conn, Grantland
- ☞ "Bret Bielema's comments about our Ted Agu are misinformed, ill-advised and beyond insensitive. Using the tragic loss of one of our student-athletes as a platform to further a personal agenda in a public setting is beyond inappropriate." ~University of California Athletic Director Sandy Barbour
- ☞ "With Lane Kiffin now muzzled as a member of Nick Saban's staff at Alabama, Bielema is well on his way to replacing him as college football's most reviled figure." ~Stewart Mandel
- ☞ Memo to UGA coaches: Stop recruiting guys named Shaq.
- ☞ Memo to Florida coaches: Stop recruiting quarterbacks.
- ☞ [People are starting to notice](#) that after getting off to a [blazing start](#) under Lane Kiffin, Alabama's offense is regressing under his guidance, and [Nick is not happy](#).

- ☞ [True Story](#): A Michigan player tried to sell autographed memorabilia, but nobody would buy it, so he's not suspended.
- ☞ "It was a very taxing week, a trying week for him. I was proud of the way him and his mom, Trenice, handled it ... everyone is a victim in this case." ~Will Muschamp after Saturday's game, speaking of accused rapist Treon Harris
- ☞ But [nothing is wrong at FSU](#), nothing at all. Please keep moving along, nothing happening here for you to see. Keep it moving.
- ☞ The Owlmeister would stop reading if I didn't mention Temple's 4-1 opening, and I can't afford to lose any of my four followers. Owls on the move.

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

A couple of defensive coordinators ago, I talked with one of the assistant coaches, Jon Fabris, who worked with the DEs and special teams. Fab was one intense guy, and liked other intense guys. David Pollack, he said, was the best player he'd ever coached. Of players on the roster at the time we spoke, he said that running back **Thomas Brown** was the best player on the team, and had been the best player since the minute he set foot on campus. Thomas was intelligent, was early to every meeting, volunteered for special teams work, always listened, and [could tote the rock](#), as we all remember. For Brown to be the best running back on that team would have been quite an achievement, given that the 2007 roster alone included Kregg Lumpkin, Knowshon Moreno, and Caleb King. To be the best player on that team, he'd have exceeded Matthew Stafford, Geno Atkins, Dannelle Ellerbe, Justin Houston, and a few other pretty good players who ended up cashing NFL paychecks. Not bad for the smallest guy on the team. Thomas was drafted by the Falcons but he was the victim of a horse collar tackle during the preseason that sidelined him, leading ultimately to his release. After a brief term of service with Cleveland, he retired from the game and went into coaching—not a surprise given that as a player, he was among the most coachable players we've had in Red and Black. Thomas has had a series of coaching positions since 2010: assistant strength coach at UGA, assistant coach at UT-Chattanooga, and running backs coach at Georgia State, Marshall, and since February, at a school known for its ground game, Wisconsin. The only bad news in his home state: Thomas is already highly regarded as a recruiter, and the Tucker grad's territory is the metro Atlanta area. His résumé resembles that of a lot of young men who go into coaching and do a good job, with near-annual moves to increasingly high profile positions. Perhaps he'll find a home in Wisconsin; or perhaps he'll take the next steps up to coordinator and head coach. Nothing would surprise me, given the manner in which he's impressed everyone he's met on the way up. Great job Thomas: a DGD who continues to bring honor to his alma mater.



## **THE FORECAST**

### **DAWGS VS. ARKANSAS**

My original thoughts about facing Arkansas concerned their downhill running game and the prospect of this one taking place entirely between the tackles. Either they went out of character against Alabama, or I had them wrong all along. They threw 40 passes and ran the ball 39 times on Saturday. They also held Alabama's All Star backfield to 66 yards on 32 carries, 2.1 per play, and that's without sacks deflating the stats, although it is with Lane Kiffin running the offense. So this game will look different from the one I thought we'd see next weekend in Fayetteville, at least from them. For us: I think that the D has found its groove, and that we will continue to follow the game plan of running hard and throwing short. We have put up a lot of points with this approach, although if Saturday was an indication, we might be facing the best defense we've played this year. I think that Douglas earned more early carries, which will be good Chubb, who can then finish the way we've had Gurley do without starting the fourth quarter with 30 carries. This should be some great football. Dawgs, 27-21.

### **NATIONAL GAME OF THE WEEK: NOTRE DAME AT FLORIDA STATE**

Separation Saturday again, already? What a great slate of games out there. Notre Dame at FSU appears to be the best matchup, and given that I never pull for either team, it's hard to pick a winner here, just on the basis of my hatred of both. But I've hated Notre Dame for much, much longer, even if Jameis Winston remains on FSU after doing everything wrong off the field that you can possibly do without being behind bars, and not the ones he usually inhabits. Noles, 31-21.

### **NATIONAL UPSET OF THE WEEK: NEBRASKA AT NORTHWESTERN**

Northwestern took a surprising loss on Saturday after a nice series of upsets. Which team will show up in Evanston? Bo Pellini cusses up a storm as the Wildcats give him plenty to be apoplectic about. Northwestern, 28-21.