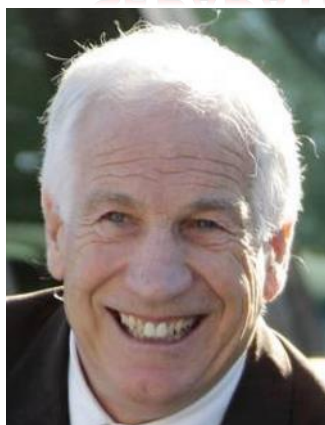


**THE DAWGMEISTER'S WEEKEND FORECAST:  
DAWGS SLAY PENN STATE**

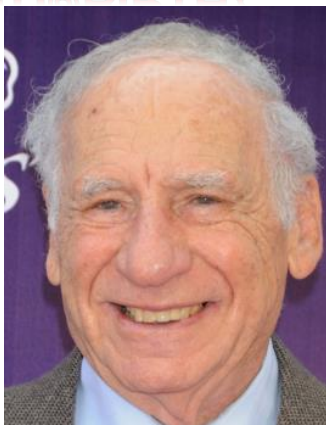
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**SEPARATED@BIRTH? ARCHIVE  
SEPARATED@BIRTH?**



**RAVING, ADDLED & BLAZING SADDLES  
PREDATOR  
JERRY SANDUSKY**



**PRODUCER  
MEL BROOKS**

*“Few have ever represented the University of Georgia more honorably than Mark Richt.” ~Loran Smith*

It's been awhile now since the people in charge decided to change coaches. When The Scowlmeister and I had a Summit Meeting a few weeks later, he asked if I felt crushed by the change, and the fact is that I did not. I think I saw it coming, based on what seemed to be a terrible vibe surrounding the program this season. Or, at least the season as it played out after Nick Chubb went down and our offense became incredibly conservative and bland and ineffective to the point where TDs seemed the exception and either FGs or punts became the expectation. Mark Richt's fault? I don't think so, unless you think he installed Neyland Stadium's notorious turf and ruined Nick Chubb's knee.

The main case against Coach Richt seems to be the Florida game, and it was surely a disheartening episode in the rivalry and in this century of UGA football. Starting and sticking with Bauta appears in hindsight to have been a mistake; but then, at that point, starting Lambert again seemed to be questionable as well. And starting Ramsey never seemed to ever surface as a possibility. Seems there's more to playing this position than having the strongest arm.

But the Florida game seemed to be what broke Coach Richt's coaching career at UGA irrevocably. I hope he finds happiness in Miami, although for the life of me I can't fathom how anyone would have the whole ACC and SEC after him and choose to play for a small school with a small stadium 70 miles from campus that nobody seems up for driving to on game day. Going home can be a complex proposition; just ask Brady Hoke,

the ultimate Michigan Man, and countless others who've tried and tanked. All my best to a great man for being the exception at Miami.

*"I continue to be sad that MR is gone and hope he wins a national championship at Miami. Whatever the merits anyone else may see in MR's firing, it's as clear to me as anything gets these days that it was big boosters with big money (like Fran Tarkenton) that finally got him fired. Mark Richt allowed me to see the good in college athletics. It's awful to be reminded of the truth that we're not much better (from a moral standpoint) than Auburn. And they have a recent national championship to make them feel better about themselves. We just lost the guy who made me stupidly forget (or conveniently ignore) that we were always still living on the plantation. What's even worse is that I will knowingly keep supporting it with my money and my woofing. My soul remains sold (and soiled)." ~Foghorn Bullhorn*

I had some friends on Coach Richt's staff who were holdovers from the original batch who came north with him from Florida State. They always talked about how Nick Saban has built a fortress around the Alabama program, one that only lets in who he wants in, and that lets little out beyond highly controlled information of which the Head Coach approves. They were appalled when Bobby Bowden retired and Jimbo Fisher completely obliterated any shred of Bowden Ball, instead making FSU the same sort of fortress that Saban has constructed around his program.

That was most evident during the Jameis Winston Era, when rather than suspend their star for conduct that would have led to a transfer from UGA, they stonewalled and misdirected and deflected their way around efforts to discipline a very immature player with very mature abilities. If I have a question about Kirby Smart, it's whether he'll run this program The Georgia Way or The Alabama Way. I believe wholeheartedly that a UGA academic degree would be degraded if Smart places winning above all else, although I think that's what a lot of people are hoping he'll do. If we hear Kirby Smart talking about "the process," I'm going to start worrying.

But if you look at Jim Tressel, Jimbo Fisher, Gene Chizik, Urban Meyer, and other championship coaches, they've all done so with key players who embarrassed their university when not playing football. It's to Saban's credit that he has such a tight hold on the city of Tuscaloosa and the Alabama administration that nobody ever knows what his players are doing; but his admission to his program of Jonathan Taylor after UGA booted him for beating up his girlfriend, and after UGA went to "extraordinary measures" to provide Alabama with extensive details about Taylor before he signed with Saban, suggests the sort of values he operates with in order to win, win, win.

He does that for sure. I just don't hear people talking about the University of Alabama as one of the South's top universities, as UGA has become.


*"Academic bonuses are public relations window dressing. Universities like giving some paltry sum because then they can say it is about education. I'm not saying coaches don't care [about the education of players]. But they are not incentivized to the same degree." ~[Richard Southall](#), College Sport Research Institute, in response to Kirby*


*Smart's incentive package in which he will receive \$1,550,000 for achievements related to winning, and \$50,000 if players rank in the top third in the SEC for graduation and eligibility rates.*

Greg McGarity visited the broadcast booth during UGA's blowout basketball win over Clemson last week. He was effusive in his praise for Coach Fox: the team he's assembled, his outstanding recruiting class now suiting up as freshmen, his team's competitiveness, and other areas in which Fox has elevated the program to new heights.

Reality check: The basketball team, now 6-3 on the season, has gotten zero votes of any kind in any Top 25 listing this season. The 2015 recruiting class, widely acknowledged as Fox's best at UGA, was ranked 57<sup>th</sup> nationally and 10<sup>th</sup> in the SEC, according to the 247Sports Composite Ranking; the SEC is annually among the weakest of the major conferences in basketball, and Fox's best class ranked near the bottom of the league. Fox inherited from Dennis Felton 2 sophomores who became second round draft choices, neither of whom stuck in the NBA. He has recruited 1 NBA prospect at UGA; none of this year's seniors is listed on any mock drafts I've seen. Last season was UGA's first under Fox in which it made the NCAA tournament. Coach Fox's record at UGA: 112-92 (.549) overall, 51-51 (.500) in the SEC.

I like Coach Fox and think he's been good for the program. These observations are not designed to undermine the job he's done of reviving interest in basketball, a difficult challenge that I think he's worked hard to meet on and off the court. But I can only conclude that the expectations for the basketball program at UGA are based on different criteria from those used to evaluate the football coach.

 Coveted Dawgmeister Game Balls go to the many December graduates from the football program: Patrick Beless (risk management and insurance), Devin Bowman (housing); Cameron Faulkner (management), Merritt Hall (risk management and insurance), Kennar Johnson (sociology), Hunter Long (sociology, Keith Marshall (finance), Chris Mayes (communication studies), Malcolm Mitchell (communication studies), Jay Rome (communication studies), Ben Souther (management), Justin Scott-Wesley (history), and Rantavious Wooten (housing).

 A Coveted Dawgmeister Game Ball goes to Head Ball Coach Brian McClendon, a guy who's done great things for this program and who I was disappointed to find was not retained. B-Mac can recruit and coach; in NFL's Week 14, the top two RB performances came from Isaiah Crowell and Pro Bowler Todd Gurley. I hope he steps down from his post undefeated and has a great career from here on out.

## **DAWG DOOTS**

- ☞ "We may not make a university student out of him, but if we can teach him to read and write, maybe he can work at the post office rather than as a garbage man when he gets through with his athletic career." ~O. Hale Almand Jr., lawyer for the defense, Jan Kemp trial
- ☞ Light reading for the holidays: [Failing at College Football Reform: The Jan Kemp Trial at the University of Georgia by Michael John Fulford](#)

- ☞ When asked by a member of a legislative appropriation committee, “Why do you need so much money?” former University of Oklahoma President George Lynn Cross once replied, “I would like to build a University of which the football team could be proud.”
- ☞ One bowl forecast had the Dawgs matched up against .....Miami. I’m glad that didn’t happen.
- ☞ Like the rest of the nation, the world of sports celebrities continues to endorse Donald Trump for president: our own Hershel Walker, along with Mike Tyson, Tom Brady (soft commitment), Dennis Rodman, Terrell Owens, Matt Light, Lou Ferrigno, Hulk Hogan, Jesse Ventura, and Mike Ditka, among others I’m sure.
- ☞ Jeb! has been endorsed by Brady Quinn.

*Note to readers: Both [Mark](#) and [Kathy Richt](#) have previously been awarded the Coveted Dawgmeister Good Guy of the Week Award.*

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



**Faton Bauta**, better known to both Dawgmeister readers as The Albanian Bane O’ Y’all, came to UGA from West Palm Beach, Florida, as a 3-star prospect at the QB position during a period when Aaron Murry’s hold on the position made it difficult to bring in a string of top national recruits. For much of his career, the only press he got concerned whether he’d be converted to a tight end or linebacker. But quarterbacks are hard to disabuse of the notion that they are quarterbacks, and Faton is no exception. His dedicated film study and leadership qualities kept him in contention for playing time, with the main drawback being a throwing motion that took a little too long to unwind, giving defenders the fraction of a second they needed to jump the route, a problem that became evident during his one shot at leading the team in its rivalry game against Florida in 2015. In spite of being a reputedly tough runner, Faton never quite got past his throwing limitations and, with the coach who recruited him concluding his UGA career in November, decided to head off for one final shot at leading a team on the field, Colorado State, with eligibility available immediately given that he studied in the classroom just as diligently as he did in the filmroom and graduated in under four years. At UGA Faton excelled in the classroom, majoring in Sport Management. He is a three-time recipient of the John A. Addison Jr. Family Football Scholarship, a two-time Carl E. Sanders Football Scholarship winner, three-time SEC Academic Honor Roll member, and UGA J. Reid Parker Director of Athletics Honor Roll awardee. Faton was universally regarded as an exemplary citizen throughout his term as a Dawg, always winning admiration and respect from coaches and teammates for his determination and preparation and commitment to the team. After losing the starting QB job, he

volunteered to play safety on the scout squad, an indication of resilience that should serve him well in his life beyond his playing days. I think he'll make one hell of a coach once he hangs up his cleats and moves forward into adulthood. Although he never made a great impact on the field, he elevated the quality of the QB competition by outworking everyone and earning notice from his coaches as a "preparation machine." He's a great example of how being a star isn't the only way to contribute to a program's success. Thanks for your time with the program, and all the best in what I hope is a successful final season on the field and long and prosperous career in whatever you undertake from here on out.

**GOOD GUY ARCHIVE**

## **THE FORECAST**

### **TAXSLAYER BOWL: DAWGS SLAY PENN STATE**

The season concludes with our Bowl game, and at least it's in January and not the third week of December. Out in the Nation, I think it's viewed as a necessary chore to get through before Kirby Smart comes to town for his own homecoming effort. But I don't think the players see it that way. They are ballers and playing football is what they do. Several have said that they want this one badly for Brian McClendon, the first African American head coach in program history. The seniors have a 10-win season in their sights and I can't imagine that they're just going through the motions as they close down their careers and end the Richt Era, which has provided one of the greatest extended runs in program history. I'll be watching and pulling for the Good Guys, same as always. I'm taking the Dawgs to make us smile going into the Smartball Era: UGA 16, Penn State 14.

### **NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES**

#### **SEMIFINALS**

##### **CLEMSON OVER OKLAHOMA**

Quite a great matchup. Both teams can put up points, and occasionally stop their opponents from scoring as well. I think it'll be a close, see-saw, high scoring game with lots of action and excitement. Last team with the ball wins. Last team with the ball: Clemson. Tigers, 44-41.

##### **ALABAMA OVER MICHIGAN STATE**

This game will be the opposite of the first matchup, with trench-heavy battles winning the day. Both teams are tough and mean and grudging to yield points, except when they turn over the ball. Not on this day. Alabama wins a squeaker, 17-14.

##### **FINALS: ALABAMA OVER CLEMSON**

Usually when an offensive juggernaut meets a defensive stone wall, the wall wins. At least, that's been the history when SEC teams have matched up against Westerly teams in the national finals. This time, it's an All-Southeast affair, but I see the same result. Alabama sends Kirby Smart off to Athens with another ring: Tide, 24-21.

*Note to all three readers: The Dawgmeister's forecasts are guaranteed to be gluten-free.*