

# THE DAWGMEISTER'S WEEKEND FORECAST: *DAWGS CAP CATS*

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



**RIDES THE BENCH & RIDES THE ICE  
CURRENTLY  
RAJON RONDO**



**RIDES THE ICE  
CURRENTS  
FROZONE**



It happens in just about every area of life: The new guy looks at the mess left behind his predecessor, and shakes his head. The electrician, the plumber, the hairdresser, the website designer, the roofer, the football coach: Each one has an idea of how it's supposed to be done, and can explain to you in detail how the person who did the most recent work did it all wrong. That might take a while, of course, so just be patient. It was such a mess that only a complete teardown will allow a well-built replacement to be possible.

I'll confess that I haven't completely warmed up to the Smart regime, in part because I admired the old staff and the integrity of their program. But, because I've had to adapt, I've accepted the change and support the new leadership, albeit without full commitment to this relationship yet. When Kirby Smart came in with the sort of

arrogance and cock-sureness that follows from winning title after title at Alabama, he raised a lot of expectations that he would improve on what he was replacing. Beginning the moment he was hired, and stoked with yet another championship ring, he arrived in Athens a Winner. With that momentum, he built within the fan base the hubris and imperiousness that he exuded himself. Through winter and spring practice, through summer workouts and on the recruiting trail, we were pumped up with the expectations that last year's meager 10-3 record was the sort of mediocrity that we'd finally seen the last of. There was a new sheriff in town, and he was going to take us right to the top.

But if you come in with that sort of talk, you'd damned well better win once the games begin. Raising expectations with such presumption leaves fans feeling betrayed when the team not only fails to exceed its predecessor, it produces record-setting futility. All that braggadocio sets you up to become the target when you don't begin to satisfy the expectations that come with high-rolling rhetoric. I felt that anger all around me while leaving the stadium after losing Homecoming to Vanderbilt. We didn't just lose to the league's most pathetic doormat at home. We lost the trust that we thought had been built in the preseason, yet that had been slowly leaking away from the Nicholls game on, when we couldn't block guys who were well beneath our recruiting standards at any point in program history.

To say that this year's team is disappointing is an understatement of titanic proportions. I think that the staff's swagger coming in gives the disappointment a bitter edge, a feeling that we got set up for something that was not available from a team with this level of talent. Somehow, the Richt staff squeezed a lot of wins out of essentially the same group, yet the fans yearned for more, for those championships that Alabama, Florida, Auburn, and LSU have managed while we came up a little short. And so we are in the process of tearing down that program and replacing it wholesale, with a lot of promise initially, and now, a lot of disenchantment.

Studs McMachoman sent me the following after the Vanderbilt loss:

Take comfort in two things: I have some friends who are employed by UGA football who arrived in Athens less than a year ago. All of them have said to me that this year's senior class is more or less terrible, that our guys are small, and this is a building project. Give it another season, or two even, and then we'll see how things have changed. Generally year 1 is terrible after replacing a long tenured coach. There is a bunch of data to support this, a bit of which you referenced. As I've said before, there is no sample to determine whether Kirby is actually a top tier HC, but tell the naysayers to be patient. The cupboard was more bare than most around here realize.

I'm down with that. After watching our OL struggle all season to block defenders, I can only agree that we have below-average players at one of the game's critical position groups. Florida was in our backfield virtually every play of the game; only one terrific series by Eason produced a TD, and that came in spite of the OL, not because of it. Size is a problem, but I assume these are our best players, and that the young mammoths on the bench—Cleveland, Madden, Kindley, Barnes, Allen, and others—are not good enough to be on the field yet. Fans are excited about the jumbo-sized high school kids

coming in, but a handful of 18-year-olds are not going to come in and quickly become a dominant OL; just ask Ben Cleveland and his 5 stars. We are at least 2 years from that point.

At the beginning of the season, everyone who follows this program assumed that Chubb and Michel would declare for the draft at season's end. Statistically, however, they have not looked like NFL tailbacks. I always thought that Michel's future was in the slot anyhow, but either way, it's hard to make the case that 2 guys with these stat lines are early-outs:

<a href="#">Nick Chubb</a>	125	606	4.8	55 (TD)	5
<a href="#">Sony Michel</a>	76	360	4.7	22	1
<a href="#">Brian Herrien</a>	54	345	6.4	23	3

Note that they lag well behind Herrien in yards-per-carry, though Herrien didn't have to run into that Florida DL more than once. Now, I love these guys, but can't say I'd rush to draft them based on their junior year productivity. It'll be interesting to see if either one decides to go—and Chubb's knee will come under a lot of scrutiny—and if they return, which I think is inevitable given the OL's inability to block Nicholls, much less Florida, whether we'll see Swift switching to Penn State and Carter jumping ship to a Texas school. It's a long way to signing day, and right now we are looking very shaky.

Yeah, I'm down. I have to assume that Kirby Smart and his assistants want to win, have won before, have evaluated the players on the roster, and know better than people in the stands and on the couch what it'll take to make this team competitive. This season makes two years in a row that outside coordinators with solid resumes came in and called a conservative game plan. Last year, I think, because Lambert was limited. This year, I think, because Eason is inexperienced. But if we could block, or punt such that we flip the field and not begin so many possessions inside our 10 or 15, Eason might not be under such duress. I don't have any answers. I hope the coaches find some soon.

### **DAWGMEISTER GOOD WORKS OF THE WEEK**

*The Weekend Forecast is offered as a free service to its readers; neither the Dawgbone nor The Dawgmeister profits financially from its publication. If you read the Forecast and want to contribute something back to our communities, please consider making a donation to this week's featured Good Works service. There are many people living in difficult circumstances, and every dollar helps to support them through another day, week, month, and year. The Dawgmeister himself will pledge \$10 to each organization featured for its Good Works throughout the football season. Please consider doing the same yourself.*

*This week's featured Good Works organization is*

**The Georgia Breast Cancer Coalition Fund**, a non-profit education and advocacy organization founded by breast cancer survivors. GBCC focuses the attention of Georgians on the epidemic proportions of breast cancer, working diligently to bring together individuals and organizations with a commitment to ending this devastating disease. Since 1994, GBCCF has been instrumental in breast cancer education and

advocacy work, remaining dedicated to making a difference for the nearly 9,000 Georgians who are diagnosed with breast cancer each year.

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## DAWG DOOTS

- ☞ I saw Alabama beat TAMU during our off week. Gary Danielson was at his most frustrating: calling as insightful a game as any college broadcaster I've ever heard, and fawning over Nick Saban insufferably throughout the afternoon. Both Danielson's commentary and the camerawork repeatedly focused on Saban and Lane Kiffin, with credit for virtually every successful play going to the men on the sidelines. Meanwhile, the Alabama defense was making plays that our guys can only dream about, dancing on Aggie corpses in the backfield play after play. I listened attentively, and watched closely, and neither the name nor the image of Jeremy Pruitt ever made the broadcast.
- ☞ During our game, Danielson at least mentioned Mel Tucker, but always as "Smart and Tucker." They do have that defensive unit playing good football. Now if only we could block on offense.
- ☞ When Coach Smart decided that internal discipline was appropriate for Roquan Smith and Natrez Patrick when they passed drug tests, if not sniff tests, for doing in their dorm rooms what you can do on your front porch in Colorado, [Jeff Schultz](#) gleefully wrote about how things have changed in Athens. And I had to wonder, is Schultz right for the first time in his life? Are we oozing toward the sort of discipline policies that produce winning teams but degraded values and reputation for the university community as a whole? But then I saw Jonathan Ledbetter on Saturday, returning from a 7-game suspension for alcohol problems, and thought, whatever we're doing is probably fitting for the situation and not just a way of making football more important than personal conduct. Ledbetter played a terrific game, and he's been benched for most of the season to get his life under control. So no, Jeff Schultz's streak of always being wrong remains intact.
- ☞ Colorado's tax revenues from sales of wacky tobacky last year: \$130 million.

## THE COVETED DAWGMEISTER GOOD GUY OF THE WEEK AWARD



**Josh Mallard** came to UGA from [Benedictine Military School](#) in Savannah. In high school he was a 1996 SuperPrep All-American, AJC Super Southern 100, Top 50 in Georgia, First-team AAAA All-Stater, and Savannah Player of the Year while playing on the defensive line. After redshirting, he made a big impact at UGA, finishing at #5 on the

school's all-time sack leaders list. In the classroom, Josh was a two-time recipient of the Joseph F. Espy Endowed Football Scholarship while majoring in Economics, a demanding degree program. Josh was a seventh round pick by Indianapolis in the 2002 NFL Draft, and spent an itinerant career after a year with the Colts, with stops at Cleveland, Miami, the Amsterdam Admirals in NFL Europe, Atlanta, Denver, and Cincinnati, before moving to the Arena League for stints with the Las Vegas Locomotives, Arizona Rattlers, and Orlando Predators, hanging up his cleats for good in 2013. His willingness to persist with his dream of playing pro football in spite of being waived and at times out of football says something about his toughness and commitment to the game. During his career, he also began preparing for life after football. In Las Vegas, he founded [Ioniq Solutions](#), a product development company specializing in surfactants and topical applications for the home and sports-related areas. Now back home in Savannah, Josh is a Regional Sales Manager at Data One Merchant Services LLC, where he has a range of responsibilities, including growing the sales team in order to meet the objectives of the national sales plan, and training and mentoring the sales force. To no one's surprise, Josh took great advantages of the opportunities available from playing big-time football: a chance to play at the professional level, a degree and connections that gave him preparation and entrée into the private sector, and leadership and character qualities that make him a valued corporate player. He's a great model for each successive class of recruits, a classy representative of the Dawg Nation, and this week's Good Guy of the Week.

**GOOD GUY ARCHIVE**

## **THE FORECAST**

### **DAWGS VS. KENTUCKY**

We travel to Commonwealth Stadium and I suspect will be underdogs to Kentucky for the first time since the Woodrow Wilson administration. I wonder how we'll show up for the game. It's hard to be optimistic if we can't block. Our defense is actually playing quite well, especially the young pups in the front seven. So I'll count on them to bring a W back home in this season of disappointment. Dawgs, 16-14.

### **NATIONAL GAME OF THE WEEK: ALABAMA AT LSU**

Can Coach Oeaux bring his Cajun magic to a game with the Tide? I doubt it. Alabama's players are just too damn good. I guess that signing the nation's best players every February, oversigning the class just in case, greyshirting the guys who don't dominate in summer, and ending up with an NFL roster by September is a pretty good blueprint for success. I just don't see LSU beating these guys, or anyone else. Alabama 38, LSU 20.

### **NATIONAL UPSET OF THE WEEK: MARYLAND OVER MICHIGAN**

I saw Michigan's win over MSU before our game on Saturday, and they've got a surplus of talent all over the field. Can they be beaten? Of course. It's unlikely, but I'm going to take the Terps, because I've got to pick an upset. Maryland, 20-17.