

THE DAWGMEISTER'S WEEKEND FORECAST: *DAWGS OK, OUKO'D*

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**SAUCY SOONER
BAKER MAYFIELD**



**BOSSY CROONER
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN**

SEPARATED@BIRTH? ARCHIVE

Kirby Smart has emphasized two mental factors that make us winners: **composure** and **physicality**.

According to Terry Godwin, UGA's 2017 turnaround can be credited to "Coach Smart bringing that **grudge** and **physicality**. It just went with our **swagger**."

And to Lorenzo Carter, "Coach does a good job on keeping us **locked in and focusing** on getting better. . . . he just wants us to make sure we are **focused on ourselves** and do what we need to do."

Sports Illustrated writes that Coach Smart has brought four critical elements to our program: **management** (establishing everyone's role and holding everyone accountable—see Tracy Rucker, canned for not delivering his recruiting territory after Y1); **scheming flexibility** (adapting to players' strengths and opponents' schemes; see Chaney's accommodations to this year's talent); **recruiting** ('nuff said; and see what competition did for Roddy Scholarship this year); and **inspired hiring** (identifying coaching talent when assistants from successful programs get hired into bigger jobs elsewhere; we'll see about this one when Shearer and others get replaced).

I'd have to add **adjustments**, after watching us get blown out by Auburn and then administering a total beatdown of the same team, which was intoxicated by home wins over UGA and Alabama and emerging as a national darling, in the SEC championship game.

My view has always been that **the games begin in the trenches**, with the recruitment and coaching up of offensive and defensive lines. Have you ever noticed that pretty much every championship contender is described as having one of the best offensive lines in the league? Ever wonder why Ezekiel Elliott played so well while Todd Gurley struggled in 2016? Jared Goff and Rams' coach Sean McVay get a lot of well-earned media credit for the Rams' turnaround, but the hidden figure in their revival is their rebuilt OL.

Sam Pittman has been magnificent in taking what appeared to be a ragtag group of converted defensive linemen, freshmen, and undersized seniors and, with the exception of the first Auburn game when they truly got manhandled, turning them into the road-clearing crew that allowed us to rush the ball with dominance. Of course, it helped to have SoNick the Hedge Dawg in the backfield to take advantage of those openings. But as Auburn I showed, even two of the greatest rushers in program history can't run without space. The hogs up front made it all possible. Imagine how we'll perform with guys who come in with size and ability, recruited to play the positions they occupy, and ramped up in performance by the competition provided by what appears to be a raft of deep talent across the 2-3 deep moving into 2018. Having Swift, Herrien, Holyfield, White, and Cook in the backfield sure won't hurt, and I can't wait to see them in action. I also am stoked to see how Jake "Le Grande Frommage" Fromm continues to master his position and develop the passing game so that nobody can load the box on us. But it's the boys up front who make it all possible.

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, to which I am contributing \$10 to get the ball rolling:

Camp DIVE (Discover, Inquire, Voice, Explore) is a partnership between the Clarke County School District, the UGA College of Education, and the Athens-Clarke County community. The purpose of Camp DIVE is to provide an engaging and enriching summer experience for students in grades K-8, while also giving UGA students the opportunity to work with children and youth from the Athens community. Students at Camp DIVE: Discover their potential, Inquire about the world, Voice their ideas, and Explore their community. Camp DIVE is offered to students at no charge and runs for 4 weeks during the summer, Monday-Thursday. Daily programming is provided by UGA faculty and students, CCSD teachers, and special guest instructors.

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DAWG DOOTS

- ☛ I think that Mecole Hardman has probably demonstrated the greatest within-season improvement of any player I've seen between the hedges. He went from high school wunderkind QB, to first-year first-time reserve DB, to second-year

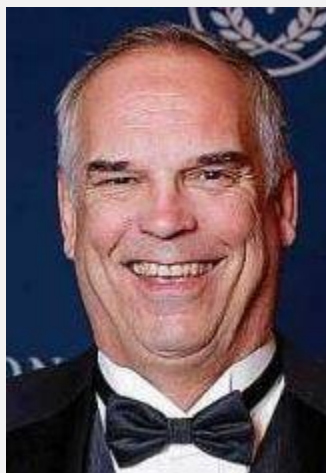
first-time WR with fast feet and shaky hands. He's now become one of our most reliable receivers, as well as one of our most explosive players. He deserves major credit for putting in the hours of practice to make that transformation, and you've got to credit his coaches as well for being patient and teaching him how to do it.

- ☞ Baker Mayfield is a terrific player and a model for what Jake Fromm can become. But when I got my Heisman Trophy ballot as the Unsponsored Home-Team Blogger with 3 or More Readers, I didn't vote for him. The best player I've seen this year is Roquan "The Monte Zoomer" Smith, and he got my vote.
- ☞ "[I will] make [LaMelo] the best basketball player ever. I can get him the best game every day. I just gotta go down to the hood and say, 'Who wanna ball with my son?'" ~LaVar Ball
- ☞ "He's not on any of our scouting lists. Even the extended lists." ~NBA GM on LiAngelo Ball, former UCLA basketball reserve & Chinese guest of honor
- ☞ "They said it was, I didn't know that's what it was, but it is what it is." ~Jimbo Fisher, making an observation about.....something
- ☞ Florida is considered one of the winners of the early signing period, in large part because they landed Emory Jones, a Heard County (Ga.) QB who flipped from Ohio State and was a late priority for FSU; and Trey Dean, a safety from Dutchtown (Ga.), who chose UF over Alabama and Kentucky. Yes, the Gators' prize recruits, thrusting them into the national spotlight, are Georgia kids that UGA didn't recruit.
- ☞ [In this mock draft](#), 10 of the 32 first round predictions are from Final Four teams. Half of those 10 are from Alabama. One (Smith) is from UGA. More confirmation that our program's best days are ahead of us, and that this year is foundational but lacking the high-end talent of the other teams in the playoff. On this list Ohio State has 3 first-rounders, and Notre Dame has those two OL who couldn't block us in September. No respect: Time to earn some.

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

Scott Woerner was an All-American defensive back and kick returner for UGA back when they won the 1980 national championship, and is now a College Football Hall of Famer. The Baytown, Texas native came to UGA after a great career at Jonesboro HS, primarily as a QB/RB combo player. In the offseason, he starred in basketball and track. At UGA, he worked his way up from special teams to fulltime starter as cornerback and safety, also putting in time as one of the SEC's top punt returners. He was a 3rd round pick by the Falcons upon graduation, but only lasted a year. He sat out a year, then caught on with the Philadelphia Stars in the newly-launched United States Football League, where he was a top DB on 2 league championships in 3 years, at which point the league folded. After a brief shot back in the NFL, he moved to Georgia to try his hand at real estate and finish his UGA degree. Scott and wife Marianne live outside Helen with about a dozen animals. He currently teaches at Habersham County Middle School. Scott recently said: *People will say to me now, "I sure enjoyed watching you play." Well, let me tell you, there was no greater thrill for me than playing in front of the home crowd at Sanford Stadium. I felt and played like a fourth grader at recess. It provided me with so many wonderful memories and opportunities. It is a great game and it still is*

just a game. Saturday, after witnessing a devastating loss, we need to remember that we have a great team full of hard-working young men. We have a great coaching staff that is laying the groundwork for success in the future. And, above all else, I know we absolutely have the greatest fans in college football. And some of the greatest guys in our program. Thanks to Scott for representing his alma mater so well.



THE FORECAST

DAWGS VS. OKLAHOMA

"You forgot who Daddy is. I'm going to have to spank you today."

~Baker Mayfield, pregame message to Baylor, which in turn spanked OU's porous defense to the tune of 41 points on its way to a 1-11 season, including losses to Liberty, UT-San Antonio (where they managed 10 points), and everyone in the Big 12 except 1-11 Kansas, whose only win was over 3-8 Southeast Missouri State

David Pollack has opined that Baker Mayfield will put up at least 30 points on UGA's defense, and it'll be up to our offense to top it if we are to win. Polly knows more about football than a stadium full of fans like me, and watches football for a living. I haven't played since high school awhile back, have never coached football, and watch selectively on Saturdays without studying film or otherwise boning up to inform my opinion other than to check in on my Dawgs online.

But I've also watched UGA shut down other offenses who've run it up on other teams, yet produced single digits on us. I suspect that Roquan Smith will be better than the five top defenders from OU's league rolled into one, and that he'll be quite attentive to Mayfield. Now, Baker Mayfield moves as well in the pocket as any QB I can recall in the college game, and rushing him ain't easy. I've also seen our coaches adjust from Auburn I to Auburn II, and I'm confident that we do know how to defend good mobile QBs, even the occasional great one like Mayfield. I think that although we may not hold him to 7 points the way we did in Auburn II, we will make his day pretty difficult for him. Especially compared to the flag football league he plays in, where tackling isn't allowed.

But our best defense against Mayfield, I think, will be our running game against their defense, which gave up 41 points to Baylor, 38 to Iowa State, 52 to Oklahoma State, and a lot more points to the rest of their schedule. All that with league's Defensive Player of the year, Ogbornia Okoronkwo. If he's that good, the rest of their defense must be pretty weak to let their endzone get trampled to that extent; and you can take one guy out if the other players aren't threats. I see us alternating between our stable of thoroughbreds, and Jake "Le Grande Frommage" Fromm and his uncanny ability to throw passes to the outside, especially a sharp and accurate deep out, the toughest throw for a QB and one he throws masterfully, something I've noted all season and that Gary Danielson emphasized in Auburn II.

I also think it's time for the Gods to note that Oklahoma's recent history of running backs includes Joe Mixon, who is on film crushing the face of a young woman in a Norman eatery with his fist. Current leading rusher's Rodney Anderson's recently resolved rape accusation apparently means because he's not actually behind jail bars, he's eligible to play. Over here, Natrez Patrick is headed for the sidelines and rehab after being caught sitting on a single wacky tobacky bud in someone else's car.

What's a guy got to do to get disciplined by the OU program, regardless of who's coaching, especially if he's really, really good? Kirby Smart terminated major OL commit D'Ante Demery before he ever got to campus because he decked his girlfriend. That's what a real man does: He takes a stand on domestic violence and assaults on women. I lost respect for Oklahoma as an institution for their refusal to send Mixon packing, letting every other guy in their program know that it's OK to beat up and rape women, as long as they can score touchdowns. Not in my house.

And so, all things considered, this game goes to the Dawgs based on OU's terrible defense, UGA's coaching of defense and ability to scheme Mayfield well, our RBs' ability to control the clock and score TDs, Roddy Scholarship's dependability if we get close but can't crack the endzone against OU's generous D, Jake Fromm's poise and ballhandling and passing, and the karma we accrue by running a program that does not allow players to beat up and assault women, just because they can really play. I'll even give Mayfield his 30 Polly points. But I'm taking my Dawgs to play in the Finals: Good Guys 41, Terrible Humans 30.

ALABAMA VS. CLEMSON

I am firmly of the belief that if you finish second in your league division, you are not in the final four. I hated Ohio State getting the position over Penn State last year. So to me, Alabama lost its way into the general field. This game should be Ohio State vs. Clemson, just as last year OSU should NOT have been in the Final Four.

The program with the No. 1 ranked recruiting class in five of past six years? Alabama. The last 6 national champions, in chronological order? Alabama, Alabama, Florida State, Ohio State, Alabama, Clemson. Note who is trending away from converting the best players into the best team.

Jeremy Pruitt will soon be taking his charms to Knoxville, but is coaching through the playoff. Coordinators who have already taken new, demanding jobs rarely have great bowl games, it seems. Mark Richt's FSU lost to Oklahoma while he was trying to coordinate and reconstruct a program in Athens at the same time; Kirby Smart's last Alabama defense got torched by Clemson while he was in transit to UGA. And Lane Kiffin, well, Saban fired him after he took the FAU job, leading to conclusions such as "Kiffin is about the only coach who could be fired from a job that he'd already quit." But in terms of Alabama's preparation for the playoff, it's hard to say that Steve Sarkisian had time to step into the job with much investment, given that he was headed to the Falcons soon himself and was not in this thing for the long run.

So don't be surprised to learn that Pruitt's attention is divided in ways that will not benefit Alabama. The jury is out on whether or not he'll benefit Tennessee, which after the early signing period had the nation's composite #26 recruiting class to add to this year's losers.

And so I am taking the Tigers from up the road over the elephants from the West. I hope they win 85-0 and end the myth that Saban's recruiting makes his team a finalist no matter what they do during the season, such as finish second in their own division and then jump the team that has just whopped them to make the finals. But that seems like a bit too much. Clemson earns its way back to the finals, and we learn why you can't spell Valero Alamo Bowl without Alabamo. Alabama once again gets mauled by big cats, and sent back to the Ti-De Bowl: Tigers 31, Tide 30.