

**THE DAWGMEISTER'S WEEKEND FORECAST:
DAWGS MAUL BEARS**

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SEPARATED@BIRTH?



**DEFENDED BRILES & RESPLENDENT STYLES
PHIL BENNETT UNKNOWN HINSON**

SEPARATED@BIRTH? ARCHIVE

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. I think you know which team got the best and worst of it in the SEC Championship game.

If the motto is *Crush it and flush it*, 10-15 times just wouldn't be enough to send the LSU game to the filtration plant. With the top of the receiver rotation down or out, we just couldn't produce a passing game that LSU had to cover. And with Swift neutered with a bad shoulder, we didn't have enough of a run game to offset the lack of reliable receivers. It was a sobering sight to see, even as it drove me to drink. LSU was great, easily the best team on the field, and deserved the win and a shot at even greater conquests.

And.....it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way.

Oceans of ink and gigabytes of text have been produced in the wake of the SEC championship game. I conclude from my reading that an 11-2 season, a 3rd-straight divisional championship, and wins over Notre Dame, Florida, Auburn, Georgia Tech, and everybody else not named South Carolina was a harbinger of a winter of despair. According to the critics, the title game demonstrated how our foolishness had left us heading the other way from Heaven, that we have nothing before us, that we are doomed to an era of Darkness from which we might never emerge. Playing with an

offense that had at least one hand tied behind its back because the medical tent was overcrowded with our best weapons, we surely got our butts kicked in Atlanta by a superb team operating at a high level, not to mention full strength.

And as a consequence, the program, say the Lamestream Sports Media pundits and chat room dwellers, is in a crisis and needs a major overhaul. Alabama 2.0 just won't work here. We put our confidence in the wrong QB running the wrong system. We lack imagination and explosiveness. We rely too much on an antiquated ball-control ground game in an era where you've got to spread it out, play fast, and throw like crazy to win big games. Alabama 2.0? Try Vandy 2.0, if the theater critics on the couch and in the press box are sizing this season up properly.

But I'm not part of the Lamestream Sports Media. I'm an uncertified amateur Fake Sports News blogger with a total of 6 readers and nearly half that many Twitter followers. Who you gonna believe, me or this guy?



According to literary giant Octavio Paz, "If it is true that man invents gods in his own image, it is also true that he sees his own image in the images that the sky and earth offer him." And according to Little Woolly, "It is further true that fans see their own image in the image of football teams they follow." A great win makes them feel strong, powerful, and dominant. A loss produces feelings of personal diminishment. And a bad loss can make a lot of wins, along with the manhood of many in the fanbase, seem small.

Nobody had won three straight SEC East championships since Spurrier stormed the sidelines in the mid-90s. Two years ago Kirby Smart's program came within one busted coverage of beating Alabama 1.0 and hoisting the trophy. Yet the Lamestream Sports Media is convinced that the program has now cratered. Does one loss to a great team, when your offense is playing guys way down the WR depth chart and absent its bell cow in the backfield, mean you are running a failed, obsolete approach and need to change your whole philosophy? Apparently so to many from outside the locker room, in the stands, on the couch, and behind the keyboards. And that doesn't even count the doomsday scenarios I've heard from The Scowlmeister.

I was deflated by the loss to LSU, but also know how often I heard beforehand that we needed D'Andre Swift to have a big game to win, and he barely played. If the motto is "players, not plays," then we were a few players short of a load to beat a team that loaded.

Even before the injuries set in, the team's offense raised a lot of questions, especially with LSU shifting gears and becoming so explosive with both great players and great plays in great schemes. They've always had the players; the plays made the difference. There seems a broad consensus that we need to do something similar to compete in the current era of high-octane offense.

If it's players that matter, then the players who return next season are going to face a lot of scrutiny. Many people wonder, assuming that Fromm returns, will he fix his mechanics before next fall, and will he need a summer with a QB guru to do so? Or is that Coley's job? If so, is he up to it, given that Fromm's footwork deficiencies were noted by every broadcaster who called our games this season? Will Zamir White be the next Richard Samuel and blast straight ahead into defenders; or the next Nick Chubb with all of Samuel's power, and vision and moves to match? Do we have any returning WRs after Blaylock, Pickens, Jackson, and Robertson who can reliably run routes and catch passes? Was Robertson hamstrung in 2019 by an injury, or is he still struggling to get open against physical SEC defenders?

Will the elite WR class heading to town make the same impact as Blaylock and Pickens? Have we ever brought in 16 stars' worth of WRs in one day, and will they play up to the standards of their highlight reels by next fall? Will Tongue, Bush, and others elevate their games enough to break into the rotation and do better than the ones left standing at the end of the LSU game? Did the OL really struggle, as is often asserted? Or were they overmatched at the line of scrimmage by defenses that didn't fear the downfield pass and had too many players in the box to block? Will Matt Luke recruit and coach at Pittman's level and continue to build the Great Wall of Georgia? Are we choosing to ignore tight ends, or did the staff and Fromm lose confidence in their receiving ability? And can we recruit tight ends if we don't throw to them?

These are not unique questions. They've been asked in the media and on the talk shows and discussion boards by thousands of others. I assume that the coaches are asking them too. I trust Kirby Smart's judgment of the status and needs of the program better than that of people who don't watch film, sit in the meeting rooms, inhabit the locker room, evaluate the practices, study the competition, and make real, hard decisions about how to win all of the games, rather than just most of them.

Kirby was at Alabama when Saban let his OC open things up, and good lord, that was Lane Kiffin, as he will be happy to tell you. Kirby has learned every year on the job, is too young to be cemented in his ways, and is determined to win games and championships. I suspect he'll do some personal reckoning between now and the Virginia kickoff and make adjustments that he believes will best serve the interests of winning. Kirby, I'm sure, has been attentive to the wisdom of literary giant Charlie Sheen, who astutely said, when asked what motivated him in life: "Winning, duh!"

Meanwhile, the defense has been all we could hope for, and played greater than the sum of its imposing parts in 2019. I was impressed with how much the players communicated after the huddle broke, got in synch with the coaches, diagnosed the formations, got into position, and followed their assignments. We'll miss the players who will move on. But I'm looking forward to seeing how the ones who backed them up and the ones who are on the way give us a shot at a 4th straight SEC East, and beyond.

We've got much to be thankful for, no matter how poorly the fanbase has appreciated the program of late. Although I'd rather be in the playoff than out, I'm on board with this program and look forward to seeing how the coaches take stock and address what we need to do to keep playing past January 1.

- 🏈 Coveted Dawgmeister Game Balls go to this semester's new UGA graduates: Tae Crowder, Prather Hudson, Samuel Madden, Josh Moran, Steven Nixon, Antonio Poole, Charlie Woerner, and Justin Young; and to Rodrigo Blankenship for his recognition as NFF National Scholar-Athlete and SEC's Scholar-Athlete of the Year.



Dr. Manhattan takes break from Watchmen, goes from blue to red to root for Hoop Dawgs

SAT PREP SESSION

SAT Question of the Week: Which of the following does Nick Saban consider to be unfair?

- A. He occasionally has to play opponents on their own fields.
- B. Some stadiums have invisible barriers that they erect when Alabama attempts a field goal.
- C. Some coaches use trick plays and formations that violate Saban's sense of order and his entitlement to control all aspects of life on earth.
- D. Some years when Alabama finishes second in its own division of the SEC, the Tide is denied its birthright of making the 4-team playoff.
- E. Occasionally, a 5-star recruit signs with a team other than Alabama.
- F. In some broadcasts this season, Gary Danielson went at least 5 minutes without mentioning Alabama.
- G. The Alabama Board of Regents has dragged its feet on erecting a gigantic statue of Touchdown Nick in each endzone of Bryant–Denny Stadium.

Answer: Pretty much everything pisses off Nick Saban.

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 needy circumstances, and every dollar helps to support them through another day, week, month, and year. This week's featured Good Works organization is

Tapestry Public Charter School offers an inclusive, individualized learning environment that is academically engaging, both for neuro-typical students and those on the autism spectrum, and to create a positive school culture that empowers all students to take possession of their innate talents and become creative builders of their own futures. Tapestry provides a rigorous and enriching education for a neurodiverse student body in grades 6-12, thereby creating an inclusive, innovative, and replicable academic model.

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DAWG DOOTS

- ☞ [According to this mock NFL draft](#), Alabama (second-place in their division again) will have 8 players selected in the first round of the 2020 draft. Georgia will have 2 (Thomas, Swift), LSU 3, Ohio State 2, Oklahoma 2, Iowa 2, Clemson 2, Auburn 1. Are the theater critics in the stands and press box saying that Alabama 1.0 is better at getting players than getting results?
- ☞ Of course, mock drafts can be questionable, such as the [2014 mock](#) with the headline, **2014 NFL Mock Draft 3.0: Johnny Manziel shoots to No. 1 after impressive pro day**
- ☞ Projected to go at #3 in 2014: Blake Bortles, where he was in fact taken. Bringing me to my annual question: Why do crappy teams invest a high #1 in a QB instead of providing an OL first? It's the sort of thing that leads teams to put a high first

rounder into Christian Ponder, Blaine Gabbert, and many others who were drafted because of the position they played more than their potential for stardom.

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

“Yessir!!!” That expression of joy from **Sam Pittman** has brought a smile to the face of every Dawg fan who likes a mammoth offensive line commitment. Sam has been a beloved coach every place he’s been in his career coaching the big boys up front. At UGA he’s been given a lot of credit for lassoing just about every lineman he’s set his sights on, and for making our ground game the centerpiece of our attack. But the Good Guy Award isn’t about recruiting acumen. It’s about being an exceptional citizen, someone who brings honor to the program. He’s the kind of coach I often admire: He was a small-school player at Pittsburg State in Kansas after playing his high school ball for the Grove Ridgerunners in Oklahoma, a school enrolling under 700 students, and probably a whole lot fewer in Sam’s day. Sam made the Pittsburg Hall of Fame after his stellar career there. He started out as a high school coach in Missouri, then worked his way up through a junior college position and then churned through a number of positions, staying 2-4 years at each before moving on and up. His move back to Arkansas to run the program is the culmination of a lot of positioning and outstanding work, not only in recruiting and teaching technique but in bringing *esprit de corps* to every unit he’s worked with. His former players and coaching staff colleagues universally praise his ability to build strong relationships that last well beyond graduation and coaching moves. He’s a terrific guy we’ll miss in Athens, but I can’t help but feel good about his future in Arkansas. “Yessir!!!” That’s one damn good Hawg.



THE FORECAST
DAWGS VS. BAYLOR

Our flat game against Texas last year was attributed to the team’s disappointment in not making the playoff. Our loss to South Carolina made the LSU game an elimination game, so there’s no sense of being robbed this season. I’m hoping that the team is ready to play ball in New Orleans. I’m pretty confident in the defense, and share everyone’s reservations about a Swift-less offense that’s down a bunch of WRs as well, and James Cook too, not to mention 3 OL starters. Welcome to the big time, Kenny McIntosh, and

maybe Xavier Truss too. There's a reason we gave y'all scholarships. Is there a way we can suit up the incoming wide receivers for this game and play them too?

Charlie Brewer apparently is OK to play for Baylor at QB. His backup was shaky vs. Oklahoma, but their #3 guy looked pretty good when he got his shot. Let's assume that Brewer will play, though. He's a good mobile guy with moxie, although mobile QBs with moxie often get knocked out of games, as Brewer has. But Baylor looks like us: Good enough on offense, damn good on defense. I think that will lead to a low-scoring game, especially with Swift and Blaylock watching from the sidelines and the remaining backs running behind a patchwork OL.

Of course, I still like the Dawgs here, but not by much. I'll take the good guys in a hard-fought, tight game decided by Rod Blankenship's final game in Red and Black: UGA 19, Baylor 17.

PLAYOFF LSU OVER OKLAHOMA

I'm going with the league here. LSU's wins over UGA, Auburn, Alabama, Florida, and others is more impressive than OU's wins over Iowa State, Texas Tech, etc. OU's defense is better than it was under the Stoops regime, but not good enough to stop these guys. I'll go with the guys who stomped us, even if Edwards-Helaire is sidelined and former Dawg commit John Emery carries his load. LSU 48, OU 28.

CLEMSON OVER OHIO STATE

Everyone's snickered at Clemson's weak ACC schedule, but they can't control the quality of their league's competition. The Big 10 has a lot of cruddy teams too. People wrote off Jacob Lawrence after a slow start, but he played like Jacob Lawrence down the stretch. I'll pick the Tigers over the Buckeyes, 41-38.

LSU OVER CLEMSON

Tiger on Tiger. This should be a terrific game. The whole Final Four has great QBing, and these teams have among the best. Although Clemson destroyed Alabama last year, I don't see them doing it again in the finals. Another SEC team takes the title, and all those teams that passed on Ed Orgeron are wondering what happened. LSU 35, Clemson 34.

And that's all I got for 2019. See y'all next fall. Both of you.