

**THE DAWGMEISTER'S WEEKEND FORECAST:
DAWGS A BAD MAMA JAMA FOR BAMA**

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SEPARATED@BIRTH?



**NOT SO FINE
TOMMY REES**

&

**ON THE 9
JOE LO TRUGLIO**

[THE COMPLETE SEPARATED@BIRTH? COLLECTION](#)
[THE ALABAMA COACHES COLLECTION](#)
[THE BROOKLYN 99 COLLECTION](#)

Pretty early in Saturday's game I started to get uncomfortable. The offense was not clicking. The line resembled the OL that couldn't open holes in the first half against Clemson. Everything seemed off. And it was.

It felt as though we were way behind because we just couldn't generate any offense. And then, every so often I'd see the score, and UK only had 3 points. Then 6. Our defense was effectively keeping them from scoring, even as they converted third downs, even as we were not securing tackles, even as Vandagriff seemed to make plays when UK needed them.

I kept thinking, is Kentucky the same team that got hammered by presumed-second-tier S. Carolina a week ago, in Kentucky's own stadium? Earlier in the day I saw S. Carolina barely lose to LSU, mostly because in the second half they had to play their backup QB, who can't throw. They are pretty good. So even before our kickoff, Kentucky's loss a week before wasn't looking so bad, because the opponent had some game in them.

My presumption before kickoff was that if SC's defense could run through their OL and chase Vandagriff all over the backfield, then surely we would do it too, and with gusto. But not really. We kept UK out of the endzone, keeping opponents 0 for 2024 on TDs. That's pretty remarkable, given that one opponent was ranked and another was an SEC team, and that both of those games were away from home. But UK moved the ball, and our defenders weren't in the backfield all that much. It was not a fun and easy game to watch.

Coach Smart praised the team's resilience and toughness after the game, also heaping praise on Stoops and Kentucky, a team he'd been warning everyone about all week. Sure, Kirby. Didn't you see what S. Carolina did to them? Do you really believe that we won't run up and down the field against these losers, and stomp them into Kroger Field when they have the ball?

Well, maybe Coach Smart knows something about football after all.

The game was such a struggle that I can't even generate any trash talk about Florida State, the self-appointed National Champions of 2023 whose opening loss to Georgia Tech has begun a downward spiral that is reaching the earth's substrata with its loss to Mike Norvell's old team, Memphis. I can't even come up with anything noteworthy to characterize the historic, traditional Big 10 rivalry between Indiana and UCLA in which the Hoosiers routed the Bruins in Pasadena after a UCLA bye week. I don't even have any snarky comments about Florida sinking further and further into the pits of Hell, where Billy Napier and Ron Zook are presently toasting marshmallows, with Napier getting his 5th home loss in 2+ years, matching the number of home losses of Steve Spurrier (12 seasons) and Urban Meyer (6 seasons). I'm just not up for schadenfreude today.

For a winner, I'm feeling pretty unenthusiastic about the weekend's competition, as if The Scowlmeister has inhabited my body and soul and transformed my rose-colored glasses to mud.

When we play a noon game, the early start time is often blamed for our sluggishness. We played UK at night, after which Coach Smart said, "The only thing the night thing does is bring the atmosphere up a little higher because the fan base is sometimes inebriated." Maybe that's what I need to get me excited again. It was a sobering night indeed.

Disconcerting Signals

"The trust has always been there. You know, so I think the guys, they trust me. If there's anything that's out there, you can go ask any one of those guys, and they'll give you an honest answer. So, I can't speak for anybody else, but for what the guys been showing me and what they tell me and shake my hand and come to my locker and on the field, dap me up and say to my face, that's what they're saying, that they trust me. When you're around me each and every day, you know my aura, you know my energy, you know my character. I think you'll understand who I really am." ~Deshaun Watson, 2024

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

The Athens Nurses Clinic is a non-profit 501(c)(3) healthcare clinic providing free evaluation, treatment, and education for acute and chronic medical and dental conditions to uninsured low-and-no income residents of Athens-Clarke County and the surrounding communities. It received a 2022 Gold Rating from the National Association Of Free And Charitable Clinics Quality Standards Program.

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SAT PREP SESSION

SAT Question of the Week: Who said, “We have a saying [where I come from]. You have to ‘Embrace the suck’”?

Brian Harsin
Elon Musk
Mother Teresa
The Scowlmeister
Tommy Tuberville
Layla Kiffin
Jimbo Fisher
Urban Meyer
Hunter Biden
Alex Grinch

Answer:

Alabama OL Casey Poe

DAWG DOOTS

- ☞ [Marcus Freeman: Notre Dame lost because Irish believed hype](#)
- ☞ “Marcus, that’s what we call rat poison in the SEC.” ~Little Woolly

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

Ladd McConkey is a terrific football player, not that anyone noticed when he was in high school, unless they were among the 4,874 residents of Chatsworth. It turns out that the 165-pound HS quarterback who was too small and too obscure could ball out. Ladd has a combination of good material between the ears, and a body that provides him with lower-body strength powerful enough for high-end speed, small-space quickness, and an ability to break tackles in the open field. Coach Smart described one of his qualities: “He could run himself into the ground because he’ll go as hard as he possibly can, every day.” McConkey’s status on the team was evident when the coaches identified him as the first player to address media following the deadly accident that took the lives of Chandler LeCroy and Devin Willock. He also managed to graduate in three years while working hard enough at football—including learning a new position in the receiver room—to lead the national champions in receptions while battling injuries. All this after playing on the

scout team as a true freshman, and being encouraged by the guys who had to defend him, similar to another little guy who surprised everyone, Stetson Bennett. But there's more to this cat than football. Ladd McConkey was appointed one of 16 members of the 2023 National Football Foundation Scholar-Athlete Award team and a finalist for the William V. Campbell Trophy, presented annually to the college football player who best combines academic success, football performance and exemplary leadership. He also made the Allstate AFCA Good Works Team. Ever modest, Ladd said after a recent honor for off-field excellence, "At the end of the day, we're not just football players. But there's so many other guys that do it with me. We went out to Camp Sunshine and 10 of us went. It's not just me." And that was before he won the 2023 Wuerffel Trophy for being the sport's most impactful community service leader. We are so fortunate that our coaches took an interest in such an overlooked high school prospect and helped him develop in so many ways. He's the kind of guy every program hopes to cultivate, but so few do.



THE FORECAST

DAWGS VS. ALABAMA

We've now got 2 weeks to prepare for a game that will set the table for the rest of the season. OK, you could say that Clemson already did that, but this is the SEC schedule we're talking about. This will be one epic Saturday, and the whole world will be watching. Or at least the whole SEC, which is pretty much what the world amounts to these days. And no doubt a few curious fans from other regions will tune in as well.

I imagine that both teams will be on high alert. With luck we'll have a mostly full roster to take to Tuscaloosa, and having a healthy and deep squad will be critical to our success. The transition to the DeBoer Era has been relatively smooth for Alabama. He's no Billy Napier, but somehow has managed to provide continuity to a program that has been pretty good for some time now.

Alabama blasted Wisconsin on the road last weekend, racing past the Badgers like Daniel Harris driving the Athens Loop. They mostly played against a backup QB who wasn't up to the task. But they had it going, and must be feeling extremely confident given their dominance and Georgia's near-loss in Lexington, in which the stats all favored UK and the scoreboard favored UGA.

I hope that the Kentucky game was our obligatory close road game of the sort we seem to have annually before collecting our sensibilities and playing up to our potential.

Alabama is pretty confident, almost to rat poison levels, and must be licking their chops, or whatever it is that Crimson Tides do, at the prospect of playing a Dawg team that had trouble putting it all together in their first game of 2024 in an opponent's stadium. How about them Dawgs? How will they respond to their near-miss in Lexington? I suspect that the coaches have found some film that will help them diagnose the troubles and help correct them in two weeks of practice. I'm also hoping for a complete 2-deep to compete with intensity and precision.

I saw a bit of Alabama's game through the miracle of the recording function, and they really run their QB a lot. My contention has always been that running QBs inevitably get hit and hurt. Not that I'm hoping for an injury. But it's quite a risk to take with the most important player on the field. Let's assume that Milroe will be healthy and that Beck's shoulder—injured when, of course, he ran the ball—is ready to go. It should be a great game. How great? UGA 23, Tide 16.

WEEK 4

NATIONAL GAME OF THE WEEK: TENNESSEE OVER OKLAHOMA

As a courtesy to my 5 readers, I'll provide both a bye-week forecast and one for the Alabama weekend. This should be a pretty good game. Both teams feature young QBs that their programs believe should be Heisman contenders; neither has been quite good enough lately to be in the old playoff system. The Heupel Hype can be a bit overwrought at times, because UT has really pounded its low-end opponents. I'll still believe he's a great coach when they win something of substance. But they've got enough for the Sooners. UT 38, OU 31.

NATIONAL UPSET OF THE WEEK: S. FLORIDA OVER MIAMI

Is Miami really good, or is Florida just really bad? Hard to say. My take is that Miami is benefitting from their Gator beatdown, but to me that's like Georgia Tech's old wins over Presbyterian, or maybe Florida State. Should they even count? I think that USF will be pretty motivated to rise to being the top program in the state, and will show Miami that they're still a lower-tier program. Bulls over Canes, 35-24.

WEEK 5

NATIONAL GAME OF THE WEEK: KANSAS STATE OVER OKLAHOMA STATE

OK, I'll confess that I never watch these teams, but this game should be one of the better matches between almost-good ranked teams on a weekend when the marquee match is in Tuscaloosa. I really can't stand Mike Gundy, and my hater index is always a factor in my forecasts, which is why they are so accurate. And so I'll look into my dark crystal ball and pick the Wildcats over the Pokes, 41-35.

NATIONAL UPSET OF THE WEEK: KENTUCKY OVER MISSISSIPPI

This game features Smash Mouth over Big Mouth. UK has lost a couple of games this year, and that should make Kiffin even cockier than usual. But like many teams that believe they'll win simply by showing up, they will find that it takes more than a coach with social media accounts to be a factor. So I'll end Mississippi's playoff aspirations with a loss to Kentucky: Wildcats over Rebels, 21-20.