



A Heartfelt Thanks from The Mad Dawg... a brief recap

Back-to-Back Natties, staring a 3peat dead in the face. If I'm dreaming, induce a coma please. Like all of us in the DawgNation, or as I like to call it now The Dawg Planet, we are living in a dreamy new football fantasy. CFP. College Football Porn. And we are the CFP Star. And in this football flick, we are the 800-pound slobbering, snarling Dire Dawg ruling the room. Where our enemies cower in terror knowing they will taste the pain King Kirby now prescribes with brutal regularity wherever he leads his pack of rabid Dawgs on Saturdays in the fall.

And we all have a unique, yet somewhat similar, story to tell in this 2 plus year magic carpet ride of a run. Movie-like moments with family and friends to be relished, savored, and stored away until one day far from now when we're a Grateful BullDawg Dead.

So, here's my story of gratitude to the Dawg Planet. Well, how did I get here?

When Hershel Walker wrecked Rocky Top in 1980, it was over for me. I was going to Athens. There was nothing to debate or even think about. I would apply to no other university, and I didn't. I then gravitated to all thing Athens. First concert? REM at the Omni. First concert as a UGA student? Widespread Panic at the Phi Delt House. It was so deluged with frothy fans that we had to force a window open in the basement to get in. I wish I could remember the rest of that night, but I was already perfecting my social skills, so the details remain fuzzy.

From 1989 to 1993 as I obtained a BBA from the Terry College of Business, I suffered through a dreadful 5 falls of football. Did I still have fun? You know the answer. Would it have been more fun to win a Natty? That's a rhetorical question. Let's face it, we were practically Missouri.

Over the years, through good and bad I have remained a passionate die-hard Dawg. Absorbing grief from Auburn friends, Florida fans (I have no gator friends), LSU friends, and of course my Alabama friends. It kept me humble, but it also kept me bitter as a lime. Not bitter at the program; bitter at Lady Luck. She was a female dog (not an English BullDawg) who not only never smiled on us, she spit in our faces and kicked us in our Dawg Balls.

Then Coach Richt took us up several notches from where Coach Donna left off. We were moving into the mix, but we never quite got over the hump into the elusive land of the elite. While CMR gave us a helluva run that I will always be thankful for, it was decided that the program would turn the page with a home-grown Dawg by the name of Kirby Smart. He needs no introduction.

What he also doesn't need or ask for, yet richly deserves more than arguably any DGD in history, is our highest level of gratitude. Gratitude for his sacrifice. His biggest sacrifice? His time. I recently heard him speak at the Macon Touchdown Club. He mentioned that he was missing his son's baseball game. A game that his son was pitching. Think about that for a minute. Is there anything more special than a father watching his son pitch in a baseball game.... at any level? Was he missing the game to recruit a generational 5-star quarterback? No. He was missing it a Macon Touchdown Club dinner. Now don't get it twisted, I love the Macon Touchdown Club, but if I'm in Kirby's position I'm skipping that quaint little function where the average age is a sporty 77. It's arguably heaven's waiting room but I digress.

And while we are thanking Kirby, we should offer up a standing ovation to his family. They selflessly lend him to us in the pursuit of dreams.... OUR DREAMS! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU TO THE ENTIRE SMART FAMILY!!! I submit to you that the day after every Natty should be a state holiday called SMART DAY. We should all flood their mailboxes with thank you cards, candy, flowers, and stuffed Dawgs.

Now where was I? Oh yeah.... well, how did I get here?

It was the summer of 2021. NOT EVEN TWO YEARS AGO!! A pack of rabid Dawgs had once again gathered for one of our infamous "Dawg Talks". What happens at a Dawg Talk say you? Exactly what you might imagine. We don't get into the weeds of college football. We go from the roots to the leaves at the top of the tree. I'm talking deep roster dives.... of other teams.... that we don't even play. Schedule scrubbing and prognosticating. Predictions. Recruiting class projections for 5 years down the road. You might hear someone say:

There's this 6th grader out of Twiggs County. Already 6'3" and 220 pounds. Runs like a gazelle. He can dunk a basketball already flat footed. He can jump outta the gym. Straight A student with a real mean streak. I heard Coach Cavan is talking to his great Aunt Lassy at a bake sale in Jeffersonville next Tuesday. Ms. Lassy is the key to this whole thing.....

Yeah, healthy banter like that.

Loud grown as men shouting over each other. An interruptathon. These shouts are not in anger. They are in passion. Passion for our Dawgs. The hopes that this might FINALLY be our year.

During one "spirited discussion", someone said:

Ya know, this conversation has to be going on all over the state. We need a way to connect with other sick lunatics just like us. We need a radio show!

This idea was immediately attacked by all simultaneously something like this:

No one listens to the radio anymore you fossil, we need a podcast!

And without thinking, these fateful words escaped my lips:

Yeah, yeah, yeah and I'll call myself the Mad Dawg.

And then everybody laughed and the biggest pot stirrer in the room, Scott Park, said quietly:

Well, I've got a studio and I can do a podcast in my sleep so why don't you put up or shut up?

There was other colorful language in his statement, but my mom might ready this so....

Well, his challenge was like throwing gas on lit dynamite. The room EXPLODED into challenges on my manhood. I was asked if I was a man or a mouse. A Dawg or a.....pussycat.

I had no choice. There was nothing to think about. I had to meet this dare head on. I knew the Dawgs of 2021 were special. I also knew that if I didn't defeat this dare that I would always regret it. What if Lady Luck finally smiled on our Dawgs. We were due. We were way way way overdue. I had no real choice. I had to do it.

So, it was on like Dawgy Kong.

My first call was the BullDawg Illustrated founder, editor and DGD Vance Leavy. Vance and I blazed a wide path of scorched earth in the early 90's in Athens. We had kept up over the years. I held and hold his publication in the highest regard. I look forward to getting my grubby Dawg paws on its colorful pages every week in the fall to devour it as fast as possible always starting with his Letter from the Editor.

As I described the concept to him, I was fully expecting him to tell me the many reasons that it wouldn't work. He did the polar opposite. He loved the idea and encouraged me to chase it like a Junkyard Dawg on an elephant bone. Well, no way to do that better than to buy a full-page ad in BullDawg Illustrated right? So, I did.

Now I had to get in the pod lab with Park to figure out how in the hell we were going to pull this off. A lot was kicked around, and we decided the easiest way was to broadcast it via FaceBook Live. Hindsight being clear like crystal, that was a suicide mission, but ignorance is BullDawg Bliss.

I began amassing content I wanted to discuss. How Georgia is better than not only all other SEC schools, but all other universities period. Talking heads that I wanted to put on blast for disrespecting our Dawgs all these years. Preseason predictions. It didn't long to come up with enough material for an hour.

Slowly word got out and fellow Dawg fans and detractors began to hear about what I was trying to pull off. Pressure was mounting. WHAT IN THE ACTUAL HELL AM I DOING?!?!? WHY AM I TORTURING MYSELF WITH THIS SELF-INFLICTED STRESS?!?!?

The weekend before our first podcast..... LIVE PODCAST.....my wife were having a nice dinner at Grits Café in Forsyth Georgia. My beautiful sweet was talking, and I started having tunnel vision complete with a nasty cold sweat. Finally, I sputtered:

You gotta shut up. I'm having a panic attack. I'm about to fall out.

Her face immediately shifted to concern:

What is it? Work? What's wrong?

Me:

It's this #@@&%@#\$\$% podcast! I bought BullDawg Illustrated ad from Vance today. This \$hit just got real and I gotta pull this off and it's terrifying! I'm going to lay down on that bench over there and try to get my grits in a bowl. <footnote: getting your grits in a bowl is a gentele Southern way of getting your "stuff" together>

I can't describe her look because I don't remember it. I was just trying to stay upright and get to that bench before I passed out.

Startled diners and wait staff cleared the way with GREAT concern. Remember the pandemic wasn't over....at least according to mainstream media.

My wife seeing their concern:

Don't worry he just doesn't feel good.

I watched helplessly from the bench as the onlookers faces morphed to horror. He must be dying from the Rona I'm sure they deduced.

I had to defuse this immediately.

I'm not sick. I'm having a freakin panic attack!

The onlookers faces then morphed from horror to sympathy:

Oh sir we are so sorry. We understand the perils of anxiety.....and words like that.

Me:

It's not like that! I'm not mentally ill....as far as you know.... I have to launch a podcast this week!

Their looks then morphed into bewilderment. Was this dude cracked? Should we call 911?

After about 10 minutes I got those grits in a bowl. I sat down again.

Then I got dizzy again. Went to bench again. Came back to the table. Dizzy. Bench. Table. Repeat.

This went on for 30 minutes and finally we boxed up our food and left. I'll never forget the stares I got from all those poor clueless people. My poor wife drove home. I'm pretty sure I'm losing my marbles.

My issues were not politics, religion, nor matters of public health. My issues were far more important than all 3 of those put together.

Our Dawgs had a legit shot to go the distance in the year 2 thousand and 21 DAMMIT!

And if my part was doing 1 little podcast to win a dare then failure is not an option.

So, on that fateful Tuesday of game week, Scott Park and I sequestered ourselves in his studio at The Park Group. And we went for it.

The words vomited from my belly like stale keg beer after a good Saturday night at The Georgia Theatre in 1991. I went into the spirit world. It was contemporaneous. It was cathartic. I had no control. The rhetoric flowed like the Broad River in a Hurricane.

There was but 1 rule. No profanity. I have a mom, wife, daughter, & a real job to keep for goodness sake.

After what seemed like 2 minutes, we were done over an hour later.

I looked at Park. He stared back poker faced.

Well? I said.

Well we'll see. He said.

The FaceBook comments were nothing but positive. I felt good. Mission accomplished.

It's over. I can go back to my quiet semi-normal life. My day job will never feel so solid and stress free.

In the parking lot, my phone rang. It was the wife.

I smiled knowing I was about to get showered with praise and compliments.

Except the exact opposite happened.

Now keep in mind, the worst nightmare of most wives is their husband on an open mic to the world uncensored, unfiltered and in my case arguably unhinged.

In short, I should've known better. My wife is the sweetest, kindest Southern lady that you will ever meet. The LAST thing she would ever do is be offensive. I don't know how she puts up with me. Pray for her.

At any rate being offensive comes naturally to me. I'm fluent.

So, she proceeded to chew me about 7 new..... belly buttons. I mean she tore into so much that I was absolutely terrified to go home. According to her I had offended the whole world, fans of friends' teams, towns, bands, mascots, preachers, politicians, and faculty, and all their ancestors.

Worst of all their mominem.

All I can think is that I had accomplished EXACTLY what I intended to. I pulled it off. No profanity.

Then a funny few things happened.

She said:

Next time you're going to apologize....to everyone.

I said:

Well, that's a problem because there isn't going to be a next time. It's one and done. It's over.

She said:

You and I both know that's not going to happen. You were decent.

Me:

Decent, eh? How about this, IF.... IF...I do it again.... which I seriously doubt....you just don't listen.

This isn't your world. You are not my audience. This is edgy, way outside of the mainstream talk for maniacs just like me who want to rant and rave about the Dawgs. I am channeling the thoughts and feelings of other anguished Dawg fans just like me.

Her:

Silence.

Her silence meant she was complicit....

The next funny thing that happened:

Stebin Horne called me. Stebin is a fellow Dawg. We've been friends since about 1983. He is an attorney and highly successful business owner of Kudu Grills & Classic Overland Defenders. Over the years he has orchestrated some epic tailgates.

Stebin:

Dude. That was insane! I laughed my ass off! Look, clearly this is your passion project. I want to be your first advertiser.

Me: Long silence followed by:

Are you serious?!?!

Him:

Hell yeah. This is DFC of your wheelhouse. The first sponsor is the hardest to land and now you got one....

And just like that this joke that grew into a dare blossomed into a side hustle of a passion project.

And all the feedback was positive. The initial reviews indicated we had amassed a small cult following of like-minded Dawgs who were pickin up what we were putting down so to speak.

Armed with a thimble full of confidence, I ran this insane concept, by another long time dear DGD BFF, John Neel.

John is the owner of The Sanford Company, a boutique insurance agency in Macon. John offered much more than money. He is the most connected Dawg I know. He knows everyone.

John:

Here's what I'm gonna do. I'll get Hershel Walker, Governor Kemp, and Catfish on the show for starters. After that it'd be great to get Lindsay Scott on there for the Georgia Florida game whaddy think?

Me:

Blinking with a blank stare.

Are you freakin serious right now?!?

Him:

Hell yeah I'm serious. You need good guests and a way to meet more of them. I'll introduce you to all of them from the comfy confines of my Sky Suite.

The Sky Suite that he shares with? BullDawg Illustrated. Because of course he does.

From there the sponsors started snowballing:

Sellers Construction

The Butler Auto Group

Macon Monogramming

Progressive Communications

Cherokee Brick

Fincher's BBQ

Davis and Sons

Pellicano Construction

Bibb Distributing

Jag's Pizza.... add more

BullDawg Illustrated

Ortho Georgia.... they do our injury report with Dr. Ryan Schnetzer. Former UGA O-lineman

Jay Lee & Associates

DawgBone.... yeah so, a funny thing about The DawgDone...

Since 2007, the DawgBone had been my go-to source for online BullDawg information. It's a news aggregator. It's like the Drudge Report for BullDawg Sports news. I mean I was on it daily. From BullDawg Illustrated articles, Loran Smith articles, Mark Schlabach, & of course GTP. I loved every bit of clickbait they could offer up.

Turns out that DawgDone was the brainchild of Burt Hodges, Charles Jones, Deke Wiggins, and Stephen Hamm.....4 or my fraternity brothers! How in the wide world of sports were my 4 brothers running my favorite site for all these years without me knowing!?!?

Fortunately for me, they really dug what I was doing. Burt and Deke became regular contributors specializing in obscure stats like Net Yards Per Play.... the most telling indicator of who will win the national championship.

Things like this kept falling effortlessly into place. Another fraternity friend emerged. Buffaloe. We reconnected. He had always wanted to do a podcast. Now Buffaloe is just that guy who is funny without trying. His off-beat sense of humor just resonates with everyone who hears him pontificate about anything and everything. He also does a Harry Caray imitation that is the stuff of legend. Buffaloe is like Eminem or Duane or Jerry in that he only needs 1 name. Buffaloe.... also, a fraternity brother.

Then we added a gambling segment because I've been told every once in a while, people like to place friendly wagers on football games. But gambling is illegal in the state of Georgia. We had located our expert, but we had to keep him anonymous. We came up with a plan, he would go by the obscure moniker of DAWGER, and we would never show his face. DAWGER.... also, a fraternity brother.

So, with this basic framework in place, we started networking our way into more and more legitimate Star Power guests starting with Kevin Jackson aka Catfish. So named by Erk Rusell because he fought like a cat and drank like a fish.

So, the sponsors snowballed and so did the guests:

Knowshon Moreno.....3 times.

Hershel Walker

Lindsay Scott

Governor Kemp

Tavarres King

Jake Fromm

David Green

Tim Worley

Loran Smith

Mark Schlabach

Dari Knowkah

Malcolm Mitchell

Amarlo Herrera

Lewis Cine

So HOW IN THE HELL IS THIS HAPPENING?!?!?

I don't know either.

Oh yeah, and all the while Kirby is cracking the whip on his Dawg sled. Careening down the trail to a destiny. A National Championship led by an historic defense and a former walk on QB that no one, including until very recently, believed in.

I gotta say this. I jumped on the Mailman Bandwagon FROM THE VERY BEGINNING! Fortunately, I am on record with my opinion thanks to the podcast. I love to remind the haters how wrong they were.

John Neel led the charge from the Macon for every home game including flying us the World's Largest Outdoor Cocktail Party.

I suffered through the SECCG loss to Bama. As deflating as it was, I reminded my podcast family that was the game to lose. If you are gonna play Bama twice, lose the first one.

I couldn't pull off the semifinal monetarily. I had to save my coin for the Natty. Even if that meant driving to Indy, which I did.

I was frail as a newborn kitten for that game. Not due to nerves. Food Poisoning. I was in bed all day. Fever dreams. Finally came to when I heard my wife say:

I'm about to hit the Stub Hub submit button.

Me:

What are you talking about?

Her:

You told me to sell your ticket because you're too sick to go.

Me:

That was the fever talking!!! Hand me the Advil bottle.

I took 6 and chugged about 64 ounces of water. I bundled up like an eskimo and stumbled into the stadium too weak to do anything but sit in my seat for most of the game as I watched it on the jumbotron or whatever they call it these days.

You know what happened next. Other than the birth of my children.... the happiest day of my life.

The day I got married? It's tied with that Natty. Sorry dear, you know it's true.

So, what do you do for an encore after going 14 & 1 with the first Natty in 41 years? Well, I tell you what you don't do..... stop.

Year 2 we changed the format to a true podcast format on Spotify and Apple Music. We bought an ASCAP license so we can play whatever music we want. We teamed up with Microsoft and Colony Bank to put on a charity event with Malcolm Mitchell for his foundation Read with Malcolm. Locally we distributed almost 1000 books to promote youth literacy.

Oh yeah, Kirby's Dawgs ran the table going 15 and 0. Dem Dawgs gave us a 4-hour panic attack in the semi final followed by a coronation in Las Angeles in possibly the most relaxing game I have ever watched.

So that's been my 2-year ride. The short version.

3 Peat Time.