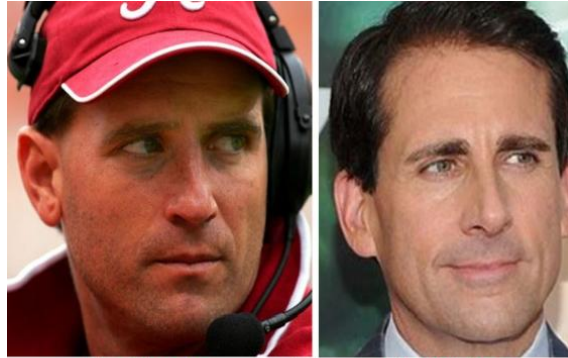


THE DAWGMEISTER'S WEEKEND FORECAST:
DAWGS GO TO THE BENZ AND COME HOME CHAMPIONS

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SEPARATED@BIRTH?



**THE AWFUL
MIKE SHULA**

&

**THE OFFICE
STEVE CARELL**

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Beginning at noon on Friday, ABC ran a 3+ hour special, The Decision: Day 1, a program speculating on where Lane Kiffin might take his talents in 2026. As a courtesy, there was a football game being played in the background, although most of the camera's attention was on Coach Kiffin, no doubt much to his chagrin as a humble, media-averse man of simple means. A man utterly devoid of hubris and entitlement, one who steadfastly eschews the spotlight. There was a rumor that the other team had a coach too, but there was no evidence of it during the broadcast. The only breaks the broadcasters took during The Decision: Day 1 came when they reminded us that Arch Manning would be on later in the evening. When interviewed by sideline reporter Taylor McGregor at intervals sometimes as long as ten minutes apart, Kiffin modestly declined to discuss The Decision: Day 1 and commented on the game taking place off camera. According to insider sources, Kiffin was surprised to learn of the interest in his future coaching home, given his distaste for crass media attention.

I haven't seen such drama since Lincoln Riley left Oklahoma to lead USC to multiple championships. They say that Riley, too, has a tarmac in his future.

Then at 3:30, the Invesco QQQ Gridiron Classic began. According to the AJC's Gabriel Burns on Sunday morning, "The encore to perhaps the greatest edition of Clean Old Fashioned Hate wound up a bit dull." Because there weren't 80+ points on the board like last year. As we all know, defense is a bit tedious for spectators, leaving Mr. Burns with a hankering for some real action.

Meanwhile, Tech's AJC writer, Ken Sugiura, wrote that "If the Jackets defense had played closer to its potential than it did in the losses to N.C. State and Pitt . . . Tech

would be looking forward to playing for the ACC title. . . . Win there and move on to the CFP. And if the Jackets had found a way Friday to hit more big plays against the Bulldogs and make the plays necessary to keep drives going . . . they would be delirious over the end of their losing streak to Georgia.” If only. But they didn’t.

This was not the game I expected. Within a few hours of UGA’s breezy win over Charlotte, The Scowlmeister wrote expressing his concern over the Tech game. I was a bit more confident. I knew that Tech couldn’t stop anyone, and believed that our defense was developing into a stone wall blocking opponents’ offenses from forward motion. I was right about our defense, wrong about theirs. Tech had struggled to stop anyone throughout November, and our offense was hitting its groove. But on Friday, the gears of the Tech defense meshed, the game was on, and our offense struggled for 60 minutes.

Early in the broadcast, Joe Tessatore came up with the broadcasters’ latest damn-with-faint-praise adjective for Gunner Stockton. A week ago it was “sneaky athletic.” On Saturday it was “gutsy.” Not talented. Just a scrapper. Meanwhile, every time Arch Manning completes a pass, the broadcasters become giddy with his incredible abilities and first-round potential. Quoth The Rock Man in [The Point](#): “You see what you want to see, and you hear what you want to hear.”

But on Sunday, Gunner had to rely more on gutsiness, given that he didn’t bring his A game. Maybe it was the artificial turf under the dome in the Benz. As we all know, Gunner likes to keep it real, and how could his cows graze on that stuff? I couldn’t easily diagnose our offensive difficulties from the couch. Gunner’s afternoon may have knocked him off the Heisman lists, and I suspect that nobody cares less about that than he does.

It seemed that Gunner was having trouble finding open receivers, either because they weren’t open or he wasn’t seeing the field well. Either way, he had an off-game, which was evident to anyone with eyeballs. Maybe the injury to Bobo was more consequential than it appeared. Gunner’s self-appraisal was all about his accountability and team spirit: “We didn’t execute as good as we wanted to. I didn’t play as good as I wanted to today, but as long as the Dawgs win, it’s always a good day. . . . Any win is a great win, especially against your in-state rival, and it was a great game.”

Fortunately, even without workhorse Chauncey Bowens available, the Frazier/McCray battering ram was effective at grinding out yards and moving the chains, if not moving the ball into the endzone. Our passing game floundered a bit, but the backs played with fire, passion, and energy, leading to a point in the third quarter when, between mouths of popcorn, my playcalling secret sauce, I was yelling, “Run the damn ball!” because that was our most reliable play.

I’m happy for Frazier, and of course for the team. Nate got benched for fumbling early on, got focused, and now is a workhorse back for us. He’s a beast between the tackles, and who wants to get in front of McCray when he’s pounding the rock? The improvement of many players bodes well for a rematch with Alabama and a run in the playoff. Ellis Robinson was getting burned early on, now is a guy a QB would be wise to

avoid when reading the field. Demelo Jones is a terror. Those DL dudes are becoming a force. I'm feeling good about the player development that's taken place, and do prefer a team of warriors working as a unit to a team of mercenaries playing for paychecks.

And the running game often worked because of the play of the freshman-heavy OL. They didn't have their greatest game in pass pro, but won the trenches over an inspired Tech defense that was playing to salvage their dreadful month of November and claim to run this state.

But that defense, my oh my. Tech had 78 yards of offense in the first half, including 2-for-6 on third down and 15 yards on running plays. Said Quintavious Johnson, another guy who's used his practices and game reps to become the edge defender we need, "Everybody's just buying into stopping the run day in and day out at practice, and we get our results by what we do during the week." Against a team that had been thriving on the run, the Dawgs stopped it cold while also running wild in the Tech backfield. An early concern this season was the lack of pressure. Not anymore. This week, it was the anaconda defense that squeeze the life out of Tech.

I loved the way Kirby spoke to the sideline reporter on his way off the field. He said the quality of the game was a testament to the great high school coaches in Georgia who provided both rosters with so many of their players. After seeing the circus at Ole Miss and flailing of so many programs trying to get a coaching hire right, I'm ever more grateful for the stability Kirby has brought to UGA, not to mention the winning, for a decade of dominance.

Disconcerting Signals

On Saturday, Nov. 15, around 10 p.m., UGAPD officers responded to a report of a fight near one of the 100 sections of Sanford Stadium during the UGA vs. Texas football game. The aggressor in the fight threatened to kill multiple people in the stadium, according to the UGAPD report. While trying to escort the aggressor out of the stadium, he "got in" one of the officers' faces. The aggressor denied making threats to kill anyone and told officers that he got into the fight because the other person involved pushed his son, with whom he was at the game. The son confirmed the father's story.

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 mission of **Save the Horses** is to improve the quality of life for all horses, thereby improving the lives of people through their bond with the horses. We are committed to the rescue and rehabilitation of equines suffering from abuse, as well as the successful retirement of working equines. We strive to improve public awareness and knowledge regarding the standards of care necessary to insure the health and safety of all equines.

Thanks to your generous donations, we have been able to help rescue over 1000 needy horses since 1998. We are funded totally by donations and fund raising. We receive no government assistance. You are the angels who help us Save The Horses. Horses are therapists, hundreds of humans have been touched by these wonderful animals every day.

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SAT PREP SESSION

SAT Question of the Week: Who, pray tell, are these guys?

Calvin Johnson
Hobie Holiday
Tae Harris
Brandon Sumner
Derrick Morgan
Jahmyr Gibbs
Josh Petty
Morgan Burnett
Jonathan Dwyer
Derrik Allen

- A. Each was an usher at Geoff Collins' wedding.
- B. This is Brent Key's Saturday Night Poker gang.
- C. All have an enduring love for The University of Georgia.
- D. These are the coauthors of the Georgia Tech anthem "Praise Reggie Ball!"
- E. After getting scholarship offers from Georgia State and Georgia Southern, each became a preferred walkon at Georgia Tech.

Answer: They are, in ranked order, the top ten all-time highest rated recruits ever to commit to Georgia Tech.

DAWG DOOTS

- ☞ I have gotten my Heisman ballot, being the at-large pseudonymous blogger serving the committee. My vote goes to Diego Pavia. Vandy has had a lot of contributors in becoming a nationally competitive program after a century or so of awfulness, including their remarkable coach. But Pavia is the straw that stirs the drink. Blowing out Tennessee in Knoxville, that's hard to do, and this cat gets it done every week.
- ☞ There is one thing I like about the ACC: the broadcast of the deliberations over a play review. At least we know how they made their decision. Bring it to the SEC!

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

Troy Sadowski is one of those bloodlines guys, his father Bob having played major league baseball from 1958-1967. His dad impressed on him the adage, "Pain is temporary. Championships last a lifetime." Troy was a multiple-sport star at Chamblee HS, and received college scholarship offers in football, baseball, and basketball. He

picked football for college, and from about 50 scholarship offers, committed to the G for the 1985 season. UGA had some clear advantages for him: It was his home state university and his mother's alma mater. One of his Chamblee coaches was Jim Cagle, a former Dawg defender. The program was coming off the Hershel Walker years and was a national brand. Ultimately, his mother's cancer diagnosis kept him close to home; she ended up passing away early in Troy's enrollment. So it was off to Athens. Troy originally intended to play on the Junkyard Dawg defense, but Coach Dooley shifted him to offense. Said Troy, "We were there to play a role: being a blocker first and foremost, and a receiver second. And, of course, we were expected to play special teams." Troy was a Dawg when the running game ruled the playbook, and so was not as prolific as some more recent tight ends in the program. Yet he was a fierce blocker, still considered one of the best blocking TEs in program history and the rare first-team All American for the Dawgs at the position. In retrospect, Troy became a bit misty when talking about the end of his college career: "After beating Tech [24-3], giving Coach Dooley his 200th career victory, my late teammate, Scott Adams (a senior offensive lineman in 1988), and I wanted to go sit down on the 50-yard line and just look up into the stands because we never really had a chance to do that in our four years and 20-something home games at Georgia. With junior Bill Goldberg escorting us off, and while people were screaming, cheering us on, we walked off the field for the last time at Sanford Stadium as winners—and against our rival, Georgia Tech. Wow, that's a special moment with my teammates I'll always cherish." At a time when tight ends were rarely high draft picks, he went in the sixth round of the 1989 NFL Draft to the Falcons, before journeying through the Chiefs, Jets, Bengals, Steelers, and Jaguars. After a decade in the league, said Troy, "At age 31, I had a radical transformation in my life. I got saved. I realized that I had a big problem in my life and that big problem was me—and I needed to make some changes. A lot of that, I learned through my divorce. After my divorce, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I'm a much different person now as I sit here. You know, it can be embarrassing when I run into someone I knew at UGA, and all that I'm remembered for revolves around drinking and partying. That's sad, you know—that my life then revolved around partying—and those aren't the kind of stories I wanted to leave behind for my family to remember me. I had to do a 180-degree turn in the opposite direction because I was on the fast track to disaster." He turned it around and began to walk the straight and narrow path. Professionally, he said, "After I took a little bit of time off to gather my thoughts and figure out what I wanted to do, I got involved in investment real estate. I opened up All-American Mortgage Brokers and did that for about 10 years. I then had the opportunity to get involved in estate planning, which is what I still do. I'm part owner of Cornerstone Planning and I've been doing that for over eight years." Troy and his second wife Beth have settled in Woodstock, GA, where they prosper with their blended family. Troy is a great example of how a wasted youth does not portend a troubled future. He found the right path and has walked it righteously.



THE FORECAST

DAWGS VS. ALABAMA

Here we go again. I'm very happy with our team's development over the course of the season, especially the young guys who've played past some of the upperclassmen, showing that those recruiting stars were well awarded. The defense is approaching the standard of the championship teams, and is showing that the team is going to compete for new titles for at least the rest of the decade. I'm hoping that the offensive struggles are going to be addressed in practice this week and fixed for the game. Tech's heretofore cruddy defensive showing, which held Georgia to season lows on offense, was likely a rivalry game aberration, but Alabama struggled with coach-less, floundering Auburn too. That's just how these games go. When I look back to our loss to Alabama earlier in the season, I keep thinking of how one perfectly thrown, dropped pass took 7 points off the board for us, it also contributed to the impression that Gunner doesn't throw a deep ball. I'm looking for vengeance on Saturday and another championship banner on the wall. Dawgs 30, Tide 27.

INDIANA VS. OHIO STATE

The noon slot on Saturday went to Ohio State vs. Michigan, and hoo-boy were Joel Klatt and Gus Johnson, the most hyperbolic pair of clowns on TV, excited. The game is "one of the greatest rivalries in the history of American sports." They reported how Ohio State has the best player in the country (Jeremiah Smith), the best defense, the best quarterback, and the best linebacker, and is the "best third-down team in America." And for good measure, Caleb Downs is the "Swiss army knife of college football." OSU finally won the rivalry game and now plays the still-shocking Indiana Hoosiers for the Big 10 championship. My aversion to broadcasters' bloviations leads me to conclude that Indiana will win the game, and I hope that the histrionic Klatt-Johnson duo calls the game and follows this week's wild turkey with a healthy serving of roadkill crow. Indy 27, Buckeyes 24.

VIRGINIA VS. DUKE

Who cares?