

THE DAWGMEISTER'S WEEKEND FORECAST: *DAWGS WILT VANDERBILT*

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Myth Busting

Gunner Stockton can't throw deep.

Georgia's defense can't pressure the quarterback.

UGA doesn't have any wide receivers.

UGA starts slow, finishes fast.

The Dawgs are in trouble without Nate Frazier.

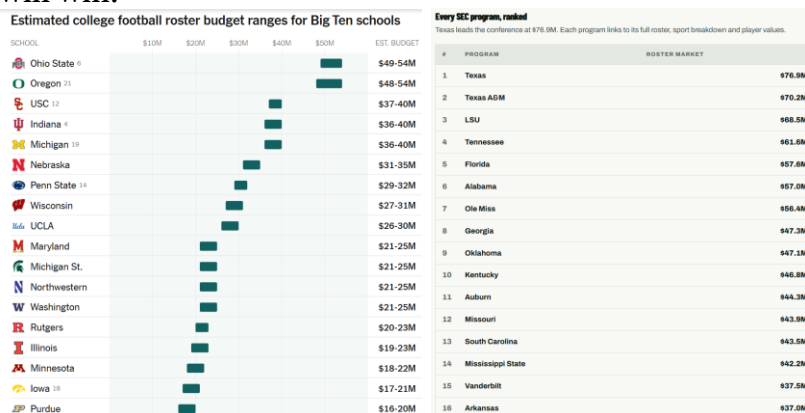
John Mateer and Marcel Reed will be Heisman finalists.

Brent Key has Georgia Tech on the upswing.

Deion Sanders has revolutionized college football.

Kirby Smart is always delighted with a victory.

And, the amount you spend on your roster is a good predictor of how many games you will win.



It was a remarkable day at Sanford Stadium. A top-20 matchup. A fabulously perfect, gorgeous fall afternoon. ESPN on the broadcast. A 3:30 slot. A Rose Bowl rematch, with Sony Michel's great game-winner shown on the Sanford scoreboard a time or two.

Up in the stands, the crowd was ready to go. Everybody out there in media land had been talking up the weakness of our schedule to date, and how what we'd done through the first three games was an illusion. We were confident, but with a nagging doubt that maybe the critics were right, that we'd built our résumé against pushovers. We'd better make some noise to let the team know we were behind them.

I don't think I've ever been as surprised as I was by how the first half played out. After one three-and-out, UGA fired up its offense and took a 2 TD lead. And then Oklahoma finally put a drive together. Just a few yards and they'd be right back in it.

And then lightning struck in the hands of John Mateer, and the wits, talent, and long stride of Chris Cole taking it back to the other endzone. Before long, the half ended with a 28-0 lead over a Sooner team that, before the season, had a Heisman finalist at QB and playoff expectations.

The second half wasn't so dominant, although the last Oklahoma TD came against reserves, and Ryan Puglisi took the last few snaps of the game. I think that with such a commanding halftime lead, UGA came out flat for the second half. Lance Reddick and many others, according to the morning's reports, blamed it on—hold your breath—Mike Bobo's playcalling.

Being at the game can obscure some of what's going on, especially when your seats are on the goal line, and things happen at the other end of the field. So I can't diagnose any technical issues for why the second half was one long anticlimax. But my sense was that the thrill was gone. In the first half the fans were appropriately deafening, forcing a couple of Sooner timeouts and other disturbances. In the second half, we toned it down to pretty loud, then enthusiastic as all doubt left the building and fans started heading to their celebrations early.

My sense was that the team had throttled its emotions down too, and was playing to end the game rather than to pour it on. It probably doesn't ease Kirby Smart's incessant worries about how to make it better even when it's working. But to me, it's a forgivable sin to beat the snot out of a ranked team in one half, lose intensity in the second, and let the reserves finish out the game.

In many ways, in spite of the score, it was a defensive game. A lot of what we got on offense came from defensive pressure. OU has an excellent defense, and a pretty mediocre offense. Per the *New York Times*, "The Sooners have no run game, averaging 1.9 yards per carry on Saturday." To me, the OU running game simply verifies the fact that the Dawgs' DL may approach the historic dominance of the national championship teams. Nobody else has run on UGA either. Before, the interpretation was that the opponents were laughably inferior. Tell that to Brent Venables.

Another limitation of being at the game is that when a team gets stuffed at the line of scrimmage, which describes virtually every running play Oklahoma ran, it looks like a big mess from the stands, and it's hard to tell who did what, who played his assignments to contain the play, and who made the tackle. But if the same thing happens play after play, game after game, those big studs on the DL and the athletes behind them are the reason. It's both talent and coaching, and a lot of film study and intelligence on the part of the players.

John Mateer ran 15 times for 7 yards, by far the most totes in the OU backfield, in which I would include jet-sweepers. Many of those "runs" were scrambles when our DL beat their OL and forced a broken play.

Some observers tried, of course, to diminish Gunner Stockton's play. Some described him as "workmanlike." One morning report had the usual "Yeah, but..." by observing that Gunner's numbers were inflated by some long passes. Of course, last year he was faulted for not throwing deep. Now when it does it, they say he actually didn't do much, because the long balls obscured the "real" situation.

Ditto our running game. It was "inflated" by Peanut's 54 yard TD run. Well, nada de caca, Sherlocka. Perhaps the critics should take a Khan Academy course on how to compute an average. Since when is a long TD run a deceptive part of the game stats? Since when is a 2-yard TD run a sign that you're statistically not getting many yards-per-carry? The numbers don't lie? [They lie all the time.](#)

At least our coaches know what to think of stats, which is "not much." Although I suspect that OU's rushing average will help ease some of their concerns. Even if you remove Mateer's totals, they still got under 3 yards per carry from their running backs.

Back in a bar in Norman, Oklahoma, in the second quarter, fans were chanting, "Put in Cooper Rush!"

The initial reports on the re-ranked Heisman finalists have Gunner Stockton at #101, just behind John Mateer.

Disconcerting Signals

The former police chief of New Haven, CT was arrested and accused of embezzling money from city coffers as he placed millions of dollars of bets through two online gambling sites. The former chief, Karl R. Jacobson, was charged with two counts of larceny, accused of embezzling as much as \$85,500. The majority of the money came from a fund to pay confidential informants in drug cases. Between January 2025 and January 2026, Jacobson's accounts on DraftKings and FanDuel show that he wagered about \$4.46 million. Over that period, Jacobson recorded a net loss of \$214,365, saying, "I fixed my alcohol problem. I turned to gambling. I don't know why it just got worse recently."

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

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The Frazer Center fosters inclusive communities where children and adults, with and without disabilities, gather, learn, and flourish. The heart of Frazer's mission is inclusion. We are committed to fostering educational, vocational, and social opportunities for people with developmental disabilities, recognizing the gifts and talents of every individual, nurturing an appreciation for diversity, and creating a stronger, more inclusive community. Our staff is comprised of 100 professionals, all of whom are committed to building more inclusive communities. While the majority of our children live in the immediate neighborhoods (Lake Claire, Druid Hills, Kirkwood, and Decatur), our adults live throughout the five counties of the Metro-Atlanta area (DeKalb, Fulton, Cobb, Clayton, and Gwinnett).

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SAT PREP SESSION

SAT Question of the Week: Who's the odd man out on this list?

Glenn Schumann
Charlie Strong
Todd Grantham
Dan Lanning
Will Muschamp
Willie Martinez
Nick Saban
Burt Jones
Mark Richt
Curt Cignetti
Otto Graham

Answer:

Glenn Schumann is the only one who never played college football.

DAWG DOOTS

- ☞ Pseudonymuncle (soo-duh-NIM-uhnk-uhl) noun: An insignificant person writing under a pseudonym.
- ☞ Hmmmmmmmmmm.....
- ☞ After blowing out the Packers in Green Bay on Thursday night, the Falcons have cancelled the 10,000 unit order they placed with Arkansas for their grocery bag cranial ensconcing headwear.
- ☞ “It is what it is.” ~Insightful AJC analysis after the Falcons’ hideous loss to Carolina.
- ☞ “Iowa’s a good team. We’re a great team.” ~Michigan safety Rod Moore after losing to Iowa.
- ☞ “It seems as though we’re better than our opponents, but the score is just not dictating that.” ~Deion Sanders
- ☞ Asked what his QB Julian Lewis, yanked after a terrible first half, needs to improve on, Sanders said, “I don’t know. You’ve got to ask him that. That’s a good question for him.” Whatever you do, don’t ask his head coach, who is too busy revolutionizing college football and shooting commercials to busy himself with analyzing his team and improving it. If it ain’t broke, find a better way anyhow; and if it is broke, blame the player.
- ☞ “In the playoff era, knee-jerk reactions are the norm, and it would be easy enough to write off the Ducks, Sooners and Aggies as yet another round of preseason darlings that ended up faltering. In simpler times, this was called ‘pulling an Auburn,’ and it foretold certain doom (and some angry Paul Finebaum calls from Bryan Harsin’s dad) but these days, with a 12-team playoff and overstuffed conferences, there’s no reason to abandon all hope.” ~David Hale before Saturday’s games
- ☞ [Oregon State U. Provost Says He Left LSU Over Governor’s Demand for a Live Tiger.](#)
- ☞ “Either that, or because of Lane Kiffin.” ~Little Woolly
- ☞ [‘The Team That Runs the Least’—Does it Matter That Real Madrid Don’t Run?](#) Do it matter if they do?
- ☞ Stop the presses! [Someone donated \\$1 billion to a university](#), and it wasn’t for the football fund.
- ☞ And now, for the Commercial of the Year:



**FIRST CHOICE
JARED GOFF**



**&
WORST VOICE
BIGGUS DICKUS**

THE COVETED DAWGMEISTER GOOD GUY OF THE WEEK AWARD

GOOD GUY ARCHIVE

Chris Gaunder was a Dawg linebacker from 2004-2007, although never very high up the depth chart. But sometimes, just being in the program is an end in itself. It can also provide the foundation for what follows. Dr. Chris Gaunder is now an orthopedic surgeon with Piedmont Healthcare, specializing in sports injuries, with an emphasis on hip and knee replacements. It helps that he played the game himself and understands an athlete's mentality. As one source says, "Dr. Chris Gaunder's path to becoming a leading orthopedic surgeon for Piedmont is a story of discipline, service, and a deep commitment to improving lives." Chris didn't go straight from the locker room to the operating room. He went to med school, and also did a stint in the Air Force, retiring from the military in 2022. His residency at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio was formative, requiring him to treat soldiers with battlefield injuries. With a background in team-oriented work, Chris made a smooth transition to a surgical team where everyone has to know and carry out their roles cooperatively and with precision. His patients' gratitude makes up for any touchdowns he didn't score as a player: "I've held the SEC championship trophy and served under pressure in the military. Now, I find the greatest joy in sharing everyday moments with my children—whether it's at the stadium or cheering from the couch." His potential was noticed early by Dr. Robert Hancock of the UGA Athletic Association: "Watching Chris grow from a determined student-athlete into a compassionate and highly skilled orthopedic surgeon has been one of the most rewarding parts of my career. From the moment I met Chris as a player at the University of Georgia, I saw his potential—not just in medicine, but in leadership and service. His dedication to his patients, his team, and his craft is unmatched. I'm proud to have played a role in his journey and even prouder to now call him a colleague." Chris has been fortunate to have had injuries that, to this point, have not come back to haunt him. He says, "As a kid who played high school sports, who played high school football, played college football, I've had many concussions. Many. As an orthopedic surgeon in my 40s, I see little to no effect from any of that now. Will time tell? Will I see it when I'm 50 or 60? I don't know." He now gives advice on how to avoid catastrophic injuries. [On his professional web page](#), well over a thousand patients have rated him an aggregate 4.9 out of 5. That sounds like some good medical care to me. Thanks, Chris, for doing your alma mater proud, and doing your patients so much good.



THE FORECAST

DAWGS VS. VANDERBILT

This game's got some juice, well beyond what we've come to expect with a visit from the Commodores. The Curtis drama will surely add to the buildup. The NC State game produced the most extraordinary play of a young season that already has produced a season's worth of amazement. Vandy thinks they can beat anybody, no matter what has happened in the past, including Saturday at Auburn. Nobody will take these guys for granted, so I'm prepared for a locked-and-loaded Dawg team to take the field and take care of business. Vandy averaged 2.7 yards-per-carry at Auburn, and to me that stat isn't going to lie about what they will do against our DL, which will be nothing, which will put a lot of pressure on Curtis and, I think, force some mistakes and turnovers. We'll see a team in Red and Black that's fired up, annoyed at their second-half letdown on Saturday, and ready to pave the way for an SEC championship. Dawgs over Dores, 35-10.

NATIONAL GAME OF THE WEEK: OHIO STATE OVER IOWA

Iowa remains in always-a-bridesmaid mode as OSU, UM, and IU have rotated the league's championship trophy among them. I can't remember Iowa ever really breaking through the talent difference, and they are going to stick with Ferentz no matter how tedious his game plan is, year after year. They took out Michigan on Saturday to stay unbeaten, but that's not what you'd call a statement win this season. I think the Buckeyes will coast. OSU 48, Iowa 21.

NATIONAL UPSET OF THE WEEK: CLEMSON OVER MIAMI

Clemson is turning into such a fascinating team. Sometimes they stink, sometimes they beat a ranked team. Miami is mighty confident that they've got another Heisman QB, and he's good. This game's going to influence the rankings as the season unfolds, and I'm taking the Tigers over the Hurricanes to mess it all up. Clemson 28, Miami 27.