

Week 5

Opponent: Alabama Crimson Tide

Kickoff: 7:45 PM

TV: ESPN



Well, that was like a trip to the dentist. You dread it because you know you have to go but you know it's going to be uncomfortable and it could end painfully. Well, we got a good checkup and we're now clear for the rest of the season. Not sure how to continue that metaphor really. Anyway, great effort by the team and we've got one more hurdle with a sky-high Bama team before we can take a week off and just watch.

### About the ASU Game

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I honestly don't know how that game could've turned out any better. Yes, we could've punched in a late TD rather than kicking that FG or we could've elected to score in the waning seconds by trying something other than a FB dive with a guy in Chapas who seems destined to never score a TD, but really, that was a solid, solid win. On offense we saw the emergence of a true deep threat in AJ Green, a WR talent the likes of which we might not have ever seen before in red and black. It was a coming out party on a national stage and its effect will be felt all year whether or not we see tangible results in AJ's numbers or not. By having such a defined introduction to the college football world, I think we'll see teams play us more straight up, opening up more holes for Knowshon. Between AJ and Massaquoi we've got two very, very solid options outside and teams will have to really pick their poison.



It's really hard to talk about that game though and not immediately tip your cap to the defense (although I just did). What an effort against a pretty darn good offense. They had some decent pass yardage numbers but nothing like what they are used to seeing from Carpenter and certainly nothing that ever really threatened us seriously. Our defense was ferocious and looked to be correcting some of the mistakes that bit them in recent weeks. While it wasn't a perfect outing by any means, you could see signs of improvement and that's as exciting as anything. When a team this talented is 4-0 and clearly still improving you know things are going well.

### Bama Offense

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- Bama is the first offense that we've played this year that attempts an actual commitment to running the ball. They have a balanced attack but don't really have a deep, deep passing game. They did a good job moving the ball against us last year and are capable of scoring in bunches if they get their ground game going. These guys are physical and will be perfectly content to just pound the ball and play old fashioned SEC football.
- At QB, Sr. John Parker Wilson enters his final season as the starter. He holds several of the Bama passing records, leading in completions, attempts and TD passes and is 190 yards away from taking over the career yardage mark. He's an experienced passer, with 30 career starts (all consecutive). He's got a knack for making clutch plays late as evidenced by his drive to beat Arkansas last year and to tie UGA late. For the season he has 5 TDs and only 1 INT. He's fairly mobile and will scramble if needed.
- At RB, Bama sports a pair of talented guys that are capable of sharing the load in junior Glen Coffee and freshman Mark Ingram. Coffee is a lanky, somewhat upright runner with speed that

will take it the distance if given a hole. He's emerged as a gamebreaker this year. His longest run of the season last year was 20 yards but he's already got runs of 51 and 87 yards this year. His 87-yard scamper against Arkansas last week saw him barely get touched. He's averaging over 8.5 ypc and is a moderate threat in the passing game, with 28 career grabs in his 2.5 seasons. Ingram is a stouter, more traditional Bama RB at 5-10, 215. He's capable of running over or around and, removing Coffee's long runs, has been equally effective in his inaugural season, averaging over 6 ypc and over 65 yards per game to Coffee's 101.

- At WR, like UGA, Bama is paced early in the season by a dynamic freshman talent that has them buzzing. For Bama it's Julio Jones, the highest ranked WR recruit in the country by nearly every publication last year. At 6-4, 220 he's a thicker, more physical AJ Green. He's a specimen and, like AJ, has already made his impact, leading the WRs with 11 catches, including 3 for TDs. The WRs surrounding him have produced almost nothing as none of the returners have stepped it up really. The next WR threat is either Mike McCoy or So. Earl Alexander, another large bodied WR. Both have a mere 5 grabs on the season. Alexander has an impressive 17.6 ypc but with so few catches it's hard to say how legitimate a threat he is. Bama is still waiting for the development of another WR threat to take some of the pressure off Jones, who is especially dangerous in the redzone given his significant size advantage. At TE, Bama has a couple of viable options. Travis McCall has been the starter in each game this year but he's more of a blocker with only 2 catches on the year. Fellow senior Nick Walker actually leads the team in receptions despite technically being a backup TE. You may recall Walker as the guy who lit up Clemson with 7 catches for 67 yards and a TD. Since then he's only managed 5 grabs, but that Clemson game was enough to consider this guy a true threat.
- The Bama OL is the best we've faced so far and I think it's probably pretty safe to say that LT Andre Smith is the best lineman we'll face all year, seeing as how he's probably the best OL in college football. The former top recruit in the country is a massive 6-4, 330-pounder that flat dominates people. Even with his size he can move around really well although he's been banged up a bit this year, missing the Tulane game. This is a seasoned line, with OC Antoine Caldwell also being an All-SEC type player. They're big, and the only starter with fewer than 16 career starts is RT Drew Davis, a junior in his first year of starting.
- **Bottom Line:** This is the most physical offense we've faced. They've got a big, mauling OL and they'll come out and try to establish that ground game. Nothing fancy, just old school football. Our stoutness against the run (#3 nationally) is somewhat inflated due to playing several teams that weren't exactly stout on the ground. Even with that said, we're still a very solid defense, especially against the run, even moreso against more traditional offenses like Bama where we can get three LBs on the field in our base 4-3 and get after the ball. Rennie is really developing into an All-American level player and is the type that just shows up time and again in the ground game. Seriously, every running play that ASU attempted seemed to result in contact behind the line from #35. Bama will still have to throw some to keep our safeties pulled back, but unlike UGA they haven't shown anything resembling a vertical, stretch-the-field element yet. Julio Jones has that capability but he's yet to show it and Wilson doesn't have the arm to burn folks consistently.
- **Key Matchup to watch when they have the ball:** I know I said this earlier this season, but with Bama's commitment to the ground game I think the key could very well be how well Curran and the other LBs can get to the ballcarriers without getting handled by this daunting OL. Another key will be how well Dent/Gamble can cover Walker at TE, but watching Rennie will be a blast. The level of play he was producing in the desert was really impressive. If he keeps that level up



he'll be a lock for All-SEC and maybe All-American, especially if he keeps doing it on nationally televised games.

## Bama Defense

- Alabama has a stout defense on paper, outstanding against the run and decent against the pass, with a better secondary than the stats show. They operate Saban's preferred 3-4 defense and have the absolute perfect single player to make that scheme work (more on that later). This defense is probably playing a little better than expected but hasn't really faced an offense as balanced as UGA yet. Yes, I know Clemson was supposed to be a balanced, dangerous offense, but if you watched that game you know that they got behind early and often and were totally out of sorts.
- The buzz of the Bama DL is NG Terrence "Mount" Cody, a mammoth 6-5, 365 pound NG that is the classic space eater that the 3-4 requires. In the 3-4 scheme the role of the DL is to occupy blockers, allowing the LBs to move around behind them and make plays unhindered. Cody moves incredibly well for a man of his size and he's certainly shown an excellent ability to clog the middle so far, but remember that Cody is a JUCO transfer who's played very little football and by no means will be on the field for every Bama defensive snap, he'll rotate heavily (no pun intended). He's got an excellent backup in freshman Josh Chapman. The DEs in a 3-4 aren't going to have the stats of their 4-3 counterparts and that's true of these guys. Their DEs have some serious bulk and experience though, averaging over 280 on the 2-deep.
- With the 3-4, Bama of course brings 4 LBs in their base set. Like their DL counterparts, the Bama LB corps is oversized, with 3 of the 4 starters being 250 or more. MLB Rolando McClain is the best of the group. At 6-4, 250, the sophomore leads the team in tackles with 29 and already has 3 sacks on the year. He's a fast, physical kid that played really well as a true freshman last year. He is one of 3 Bama LBs to already have 3 sacks on the season, joining the lanky Cory Reamer and Brandon Fanney. That should tell you a bit about their pressure packages, as the 3-4 lends itself to bringing different LBs in blitzes from different spots so as not to be predictable. Look for pressure from anywhere on the line with this bunch.
- The Bama secondary has played decently this year. The star of the back 4 is FS Rashad Johnson, who has started for parts of 3 years now. He's got good speed and his 5 pass breakups this season say he's got a nose for the ball. He's flanked by Justin Woodall, a 1<sup>st</sup> year starter who has been solid. An aggressive and fairly deep CB corps will try to match up with the deep UGA receiving unit. CB Kareem Jackson is the most experienced of the group and has played well, expected of a two-year starter. Opposite him will be Javier Arenas, one of the most dangerous return men in the country.
- **Bottom Line:** You'll hear a lot this week about how dominant Bama's DL has been and how they'll control the line. Most of that will be from Bama fans trying to convince themselves that's true. They have a solid defense and Cody is certainly a concern inside but the beauty of UGA's offense is its balance. We can attack a defense in a lot of different ways and I think you'll see some of that Saturday. We've shown a TON of different formations and motions recently and I fully expect to see us play off those this week. Moreno direct-snaps, Tony Wilson crashing down from motion, multiple RB sets, etc. Look for us to try and run off tackle, using our athletic pulling OL to get in space and put pressure on their LBs, who haven't faced a running attack like ours. This will also allow us to try and avoid Cody a bit, as if we go straight at him we'll have to double for sure. Sweeps and counters should allow us to chip him and not completely commit two guys.



- **Key matchup to watch when we have the ball:** Everyone will of course be watching Cody going up against true freshman (and Alabama native) Ben Jones but I think the more intriguing matchup will be in the secondary where it should be interesting to see how Bama plans to defend AJ Green. If they play soft and give him a cushion like ASU did we'll go to him until they change coverage. If we can exploit that matchup early and they have to commit a safety over him it'll really open up the running game, not to mention the other WRs.



## **The Bama Game Overall**

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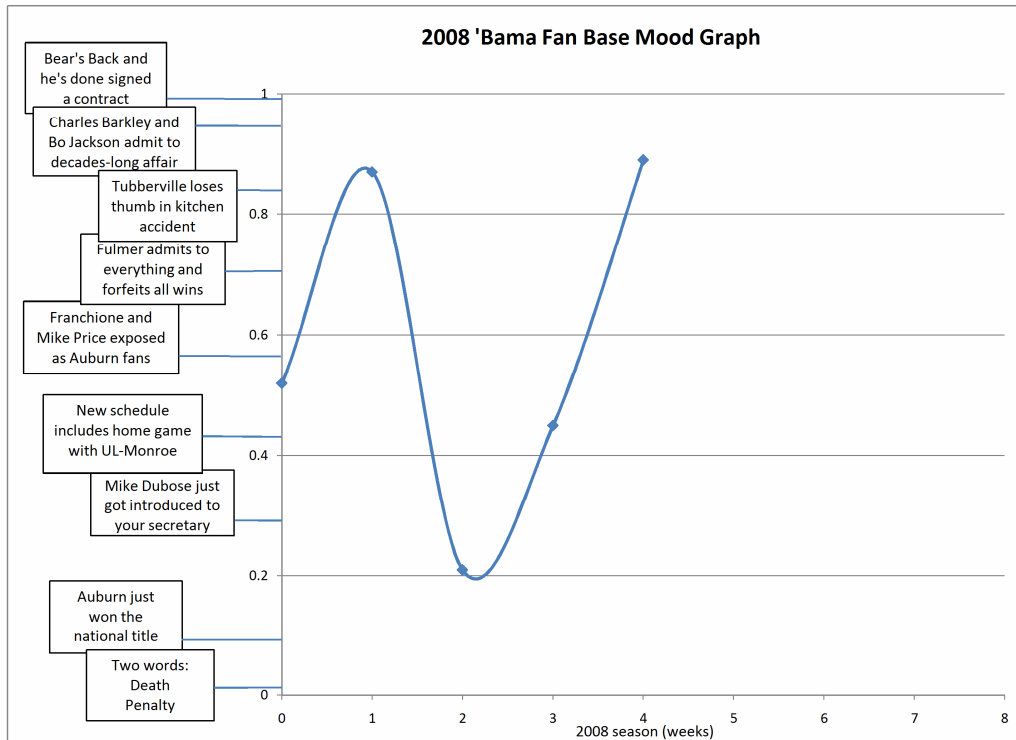
I'm almost compelled to say leave the women and kids behind for this one, as it's going to be a nasty, raucous war. Of course that's when I realize that women in the SEC would likely slit someone's throats if it was implied they shouldn't attend a game. SEC women scare me more than the men. The more I think about it the more I realize kids need to be at games like this too. This is going to be one of those games you remember, one of those you talk about for years. There's just so much going on. Munson, blackout, top 10 matchup, Gameday, etc. It's just going to be special. Of course all that hinges on a win. I'm convinced that last year's Blackout was one of the more memorable experiences of my life and a lot had to do with just the buzz around campus and the energy in the stadium that everyone felt a part of. Ask any Auburn fan in attendance that night and they'll tell you it was intimidating.

Going back to last year's matchup with Bama it's important to remember that the main issue we're worried about now, OL, was a big concern then too and we pulled out a win. Our OL was still a major question mark at the time and we just didn't know how they would respond on the road. Here we are a year removed and we've got an OL that's probably in about the same spot (only deeper) but we're at home. That juggernaut of a team that rolled everyone they played by double digits after the Vandy game last year had some pretty meager beginnings as we were coming off a home loss to SC and had only managed a sloppy win over Western Carolina in between.

The emotion of this game will be through the roof for all the reasons mentioned. Given that we've struggled mightily with penalties this year I think we need to really be careful that we try and keep that emotion in check somewhat and use it to our advantage without getting too caught up. I have no idea how you do that, I'll leave that to Coach Richt. We're averaging over 10 penalties a game for over 100 yards per game (I think). Yes, some of those calls were bogus but we've been WAY too careless in that regard. Playing with emotion in a high emotion game is a tough line to toe but we'll need to find a way to get it done. Bama isn't a team that makes a ton of penalties, just a solid, fundamental football team.

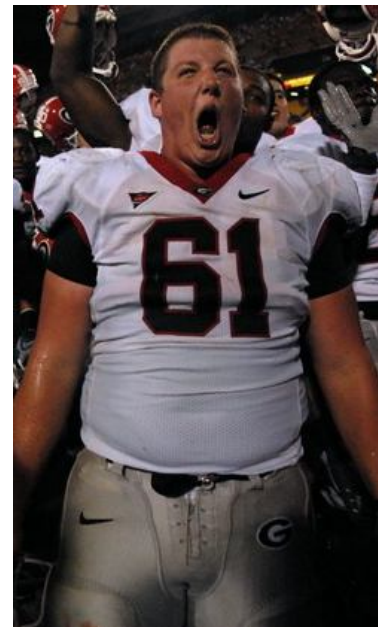
Lastly, I feel the need to say this. I've never had a particular problem with Alabama. We don't play them often enough to really develop a true issue with them, like we do Auburn, Florida or GT. I'm always told by my Auburn friends that Bama fans are simply intolerable and that any attempt at intelligent conversation with them will eventually lead to them telling you Bama's the cradle of football and their 12 national titles has immediate relevance to whatever point they're trying to make. This past week I've gotten a glimpse of that moreso than in recent years. With the exception of the 2003 matchup, each of the last 4 times we've played Bama (counting this year) they are chirping about how they are "back" and how all is right with the football world. This year it's even more pronounced, in the magical 2<sup>nd</sup> year of coaching, a year that saw great success for Richt, Meyer, Tressel, Stoops (I think) and now (potentially), Saban. I think Bama fans, moreso than any other fanbase in the SEC (and that's saying something) are prone to incredible mood swings based on their

team's play on the field and who they've hired and/or fired...it's pretty dang close to a sine wave. Considering the fact we've beaten them 3 straight times, those trips in with a sky high fanbase have resulted in rapid devastation. Can we expect more of the same after this week? Lord I hope so. It'll be fun and you know those Auburn fans need something to cheer them up right about now 'cause that offense certainly ain't firin' anybody up.



## Positional Notes

- I'd be more concerned about the announcement of Roderick Battle missing this game if he hadn't missed the last two with that strained neck. Battle is excellent against the run and will be missed this week but we've played well without him and Houston really seems to be emerging. We still have a solid rotation with Lomax, Houston, Wynn and Dobbs and the cool weather should help keep everyone fresh.
- Looks like we'll go with the same OL lineup this week, which is fine by me. They came out a little shaky early but really settled down and played pretty well. Several guys will get playing time so the starters aren't overly important anyway. Jones at OC will certainly need help but the kid is clearly a staff favorite. I mean, just look at him...I mean was there ever any doubt with the name Ben Jones that "Cooter" would end up his nickname?
- WR is quite possibly the deepest spot on the team but losing Tavares King is tough for his development. He had an awesome catch and run late and was a kid I had tabbed as being a legit help because of his deep speed and solid hands. Hopefully that high ankle sprain will get healed up over the off week.



- It likely won't get much press but the return of Quintin Banks is huge. That's a thin position and he was ready for a breakout. He'll likely take some time to get into peak playing shape but as he is he'll probably be the top backup.
- Yes, Southerland only returns to personal protector duties on punts but after the debacle that was our punt attempts in Tempe, I think it's safe to say we can use him there before he returns to his role of "best fullback on the planet not getting paid to play" for the UT game. That reminds me...
- I dropped the ball in a bad way last week by not praising Brain Mimbs for his mammoth flip-the-field punt in Columbia. I mean, a 70+ yard punt in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of a close game on the road...it's like a punter's dream. You could make a serious case for that being the play of the year to date. You don't see many punts that have that type of effect on the outcome. Just clutch. Which also reminds me...
- What the &#% is going on with our special teams? Yes we got a punt block but I think we've called more timeouts trying to attempt or field a punt than we have on offense all year. Seriously. Not sure what's going on there but Richt didn't seem to be happy in at least a couple of games this year with our lack of organization on that, and if Richt ain't happy, I ain't happy.

### Random Thoughts

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- Ah, Munson. I know this has been coming for a long time but it's still tough. For the entirety of my life Munson has been the constant in UGA football. He was the soundtrack to every fall Saturday of import for me for as long as I can remember. I'll miss him but I'm glad he's going on his own terms. I hope he's able to go see as many movies and catch as many fish as he can for as long as he's able to. He's certainly earned it. Thanks Larry.
- With the complete collapse of the conference that was the Pac10, it's obvious that of the top 3 teams in the country USC has the easiest road to the title game. That's a double edged sword as it's entirely possible that they could easily get leaped by another team, especially in the computer polls, as they start to play patsy after patsy. It wouldn't surprise me to see USC drop behind a BYU or a 1-loss team from the SEC or Big XII in the computers if Ohio State continues their plummet. It will be interesting to watch that play out. USC knows that they can't let up on anyone, if they win a few games ugly against perceived weaker opponents they'll start to drop.
- Staying on USC, a lot was made about the fact that they are the only school in the country to play 12 BCS conference schools. Are they really counting Washington, Washington State, etc. in that group? Those two teams are among the worst in the country and there's no doubt in my mind CMU would trounce them. Especially WSU. Notre Dame isn't much better. They benefited from like 12 Michigan turnovers in their "statement" win.
- Alright UGA fans, I'm all for some good-natured ribbing of the ESPN crew but let's not show our collective asses this week when they are on campus. Show up (in your black) and just be supportive of our program. Gameday is basically a commercial for your school that'll be on for 4 hours or so throughout the day Saturday. Embrace it. Don't act like a bunch of morons or they really will hate us.
- I'm going to assume that Blackledge will be eating at Weaver D's this week. It's right up his alley for out of the way eateries that have a unique flavor to them. You don't get much more unique than that place. I'd venture to say it's the smallest place he's been to. I'll be disappointed if he goes to the Varsity.
- I'm sure you'll hear more than a few "black" themed tailgate playlists Saturday to go along with the Blackout. You'll hear the standard "**Black Dog**" by Zeppelin, "**Back in Black**" by AC/DC and "**Black Betty**" by Ram Jam or maybe reaching a little farther you might hear a "I Love Rock n' Roll by Joan Jett and the **Blackhearts**. Let me make a few recommendations of some more obscure "black" songs that might work...





- The **Black** Angels – Bloodhounds on my Trail
- The **Black** Keys – Your Touch or Set You Free
- **Black** Rebel Motorcycle Club – Shuffle Your Feet
- Blue Mountain – **Black** Dog (not a cover of Zeppelin)

Then of course you have my personal favorite and probably the most appropriate given the artist's longstanding association with UGA, James Brown's "Say it Loud (I'm Black and I'm Proud)."

Yes we are James, yes we are.

- That picture is the mental image I want the student section to have for the blackout. I'm not even close to sure what the heck this thing is but suffice to say it's weird, it's intense and it's black...which should also describe our student section Saturday...I don't think we need the chains, just the attitude.
- Lastly, on the blackout, is there any doubt that when they queue "Back in Black" right before kickoff that the place will come unglued? Saturday can't get here fast enough.



Have a safe weekend,  
Jody

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