

Week 6

Opponent: Tennessee Volunteers

Kickoff: 3:30 PM

TV: CBS



Well, another week, another classic SEC tilt. Finally we had a week to nurse our wounded back a bit and to try and reassemble the pieces after a horrific collapse on all sides. We get a shot at redemption against a team that's won 3 of 4 against us. A cornered Vol is dangerous and that's what we'll be facing. Hopefully we can man up and get in there and play with the same intensity we saw in the 2nd half two weeks ago.

About the Bama Game

Alright, that debacle of an experience on national TV that was the Bama game has been discussed ad nauseum so I won't say much beyond the fact exactly all of our preseason goals as a team and hopes as fans are still intact. We could most afford a loss on our schedule to either Bama or LSU and still maintain our position in the East and that's just what's happened so far.



Bama played their perfect game and if we're given the good fortune of playing them again I think I speak for all of us when I say we won't likely be down by 31 before we begin our comeback next time.

Occasionally you have those games where you can't do anything right and the opponent can do no wrong. Under Richt we've been on the right side of most of those games but occasionally we've just gotten our tails handed to us. When you play top 10 teams every other week it's going to happen. It was a total team failure...offense, defense and special teams. With a week to lick our wounds and try and refocus, I expect to see a much more motivated team this week taking on a UT team that has flat handled us the last two seasons.

UT Offense

- The UT offense has largely been a train wreck this year. Returning a strong, veteran OL was supposed to ease the transition to new QB starter Jonathan Crompton with Arian Foster being able to rack up yards in his assault on the UT record books. Like what has transpired over in Auburn, UT has brought in an OC with a "spread" background and gotten away from their smashmouth running game roots that have defined them for years. The results have been a series of totally uninspiring performances including Crompton's benching and 3 ugly losses including a crippling two already in the SEC.
- At QB, Nick Stephens will get his 2nd start under center in place of the highly ineffective Jonathan Crompton. Stephens is a big sophomore, somewhat reminiscent of Erik Ainge, who as a freshman walked into Sanford stadium and came out with a win when basically no one gave UT a chance. Stephens had a decent performance in his first start last week, completing 10 of 17 for 152 yards and a TD with several drops. These aren't ideal circumstances for a QB's first playing time on the road but considering how poorly the offense has performed under Crompton's guidance, the staff had little choice but to try something else.
- The RB position is much more settled with Sr. Arian Foster only 346 yards from becoming UT's all-time yardage leader. Foster is a solid back but has a tendency to put the ball on the ground at

the absolute worst times. He's backed by two excellent, experienced options as well in Montario Hardesty and Lennon Creer. Foster has feasted on UGA the last 2 years, racking up 6 rushing TDs in UT's two run-away wins.

- Several guys have provided the receiving threat to this point for UT but the most dangerous playmaker is easily So. Gerald Jones. Jones, who looks far larger than his listed 6', 185 pounds, is a receiving threat, tied for the team lead with 15 catches, but will see a ton of action as a single-wing QB in the "G-gun" formation, basically the same package that Arkansas used for Darren McFadden. Jones is excellent in space and really frustrates a defense coming off the edge with speed behind that big OL. He rarely throws out of that formation (2 passes) but just the threat of it makes for a DC's dilemma. Sr. Lucas Taylor has been effective so far as well and is leading the team in receiving yardage. TE Brandon Warren (an FSU transfer) is a smaller, stretch the field type of TE and has yet to really make an impact but he has the potential to cause some mismatches against LBs. He looks much bigger than his listed height of 6-1.
- The UT OL has 114 career starts between them...I think we have like 4 (not really, just seems that way). Unlike UGA, they've started the same OL in every game this year. This is a big, experienced unit and one that gave us fits last year in Knoxville where they ran all over us and kept Ainge upright for long stretches of time. After only giving up 4 sacks all last year they've given up 7 already but I think that has more to do with the ineffective play of Crompton versus the experienced play of Ainge last year. How experienced is this group? The least experienced one has 11 career starts.
- **Bottom Line:** I would expect UT to try and establish the run early behind their stout OL, especially given their questions at QB. There are rumblings that Fulmer himself started calling plays in the 4th quarter of the NIU game in an effort get back to their traditional identity of running the football. Without Cutcliffe at OC, I'm not sure UT can put the passing attack together for Stephens to really torch our secondary. We've defended the run fairly well this year (4th nationally) and will be looking to bounce back from a shaky defensive performance in our last outing. If Stephens is able to hit some passes early and get in a rhythm, this game could get dicey.
- **Key Matchup to watch when they have the ball:** Can we get some pass rush please? We're currently 4th in the SEC in sacks per game with 2.2 but they've all seemed to come from the LBs. Our DTs have done an excellent job so far of getting a push against the run and largely keeping opponents' ground games in check but we desperately need for one or two DEs to step up and get some pressure to disrupt the passing game. It was about this time last year that Marcus Howard really emerged as a pass rush threat. UT doesn't necessarily have an OL that lends itself to a breakout pass rush game but with a new signal caller back there, who knows what will happen. Stephens got sacked 3 times last week against NIU, so his relative inexperience isn't helping the OL in terms of knowing when to get rid of the ball. Hopefully we can get after him.



UT Defense

- Despite the major issues UT has on the offensive side of the football, their defense has been as solid as ever under the guidance of DC John Chavis who has manned that role for as long as I can remember. Look for at least one photo of Chavis' afro this week. They are equally adept against the run as the pass. 13th nationally against the run, 12th against the pass. 5th overall total defense. These guys are good.

- The DL is big and nasty. The Blind Pig Tavern in Athens used to have a burger called the Big Nasty. It was that 1-pound thing. My buddy Shane ordered it and the waitress almost slapped him. Apparently no one ever ordered the thing and she misunderstood him. Seriously. I digress. The interior tandem of Demonte Bolden and Dan Williams might not be as good as the Haynesworth-Henderson DT tandem UT sported a few years back but they're close. Both are big space eaters that are athletic enough to run folks down. Sr. Walter Fisher provides good depth inside. Williams in particular is having an excellent season, currently 4th on the team in tackles with 21 and first in tackles-for-loss with 5. This interior presents a totally different animal than "Mount" Cody did for Bama in that while they are massive in their own right these guys are trying to get penetration rather than just eating up blockers. Outside at DE, a group of DEs led by Wes Brown and Robert Ayers bring good size but have yet to be overly productive in terms of tackles, especially behind the line.
- The UT LBs are paced by MLB Ellix Wilson, an undersized fireball that leads the team in tackles despite missing last week's game with a shoulder issue. He's flanked by two more undersized, safety type LBs that really get after the ball. They don't have the depth here that they usually sport and they should have their hands full against the shifty UGA RBs.
- The strength of the UT D might very well be the secondary. This group is led clearly by Sophomore all-world safety Eric Berry, a GA native that had his heart set on UT, where his father played. Berry is a special player and leads the team in INTs with 3. If a ball stays in the air a fraction of a second too long, Berry will grab it. He reminds me of former Vol Deon Grant (another GA native) in that regard. He's paired with Demetrice "Dee" Morley at safety, a kid that might be his equal in terms of athleticism. After off-field issues upset his early career Morley has finally settled into a solid contributor and started living up to his considerable billing. They are deep at CB, with several talented, athletic guys ready to contribute.
- **Bottom Line:** Don't let the game against UF color your opinion of this UT defense. They had a couple of special teams meltdowns and the UT offense couldn't do anything right, leaving UF with ridiculously short fields all day. As much as their offense has struggled, their defense has largely played well. In fact they haven't surrendered a rushing TD since the opener. The one major blip on their defensive resume right now is the 27 points they gave up in the opener to a UCLA team playing their 3rd string QB...the same UCLA team that didn't score a point against BYU. For all the talk of our struggling pass rush, UT has fewer sacks than us on the season. If their offense can stay out of their way, this unit matches up decently well against us although their lack of a pass rush doesn't set up to exploit our youth issues on the OL. Given some of the issues our WRs have had getting open consistently, I look for UT to stack the box, try and stop our run and make Stafford beat us with his arm. It worked mighty well for them last year. Given the strength of the UT interior, look for lots of off-tackles, sweeps, etc., maybe an occasional end around with Green. Our offensive philosophy will always be to take whatever the defense gives us so don't be surprised if, like against Bama and ASU, we open the game throwing more than expected. We'll always balance back out, and if given the option, would prefer to establish the ground game. With a back like Knowshon, you're willing to do that. UT's dominant passing stats are aided considerably by the fact they've yet to play a decent passing team that had to pass. UF was staked to a big lead early and just ran the ball. UCLA (87th in passing), UAB (62nd), AU (103rd) and NIU (93rd) are all pretty poor passing teams; by comparison



UGA is 23rd in passing yards. I think we can have some success there although UT does have some serious talent in that secondary.

- **Key matchup to watch when we have the ball:** Given the potential reshifting of our OL to move Glenn over to LG in place of the possibly banged-up Chris Davis, watch how those guys, especially true freshman Ben Jones, handle this considerable UT interior. Another matchup to watch is Eric Berry vs. Stafford but frankly that's a hard one to watch...just hold your breath on deep passes over the middle.

The UT Game Overall

I'm sure most of you have seen the spread for this one sitting at a whopping -13. That's about the same spread UT got when they came here obviously undermanned to face us in 2004. Yeah, we lost that one. In fact, our last win over UT in Sanford was 2002, and that was a sloppy one. We've had some convincing wins over UT in Knoxville (of all places) but our home wins (only 2 of them) in the Fulmer era haven't been pretty. In 2000, Donnan broke through to finally win one but the 21-10 score wasn't really sealed until late. 2002 was the only other win and it was that ugly 18-13 thing where we hit the late pitch on 4th and 2 to Milton. You may recall that as the game that Clausen didn't play in but made the classic comment that he would've won the game with one arm tied behind his back...he actually played with both arms the next year...and lost...41-14. Anyway, my point is that we've rarely played our best against UT at home. For that matter, this season really parallels last year pretty well from a UT standpoint, as they were limping in and largely unexpected to compete with us. You may recall how that turned out. We got housed. In fact, in our last two matchups with the Vols we've averaged giving up 43 points and a margin of defeat of over 20 points.



With that in mind, we shouldn't have any issues getting motivated for this one. We know exactly what UT has done to us (more importantly what they've taken away from us) these past two years. Last year, that ugly loss in Knoxville certainly cost us a shot at the SEC title and might well have cost us a shot at the national title. Considering the rate at which top teams are losing this season, there's no reason not to expect that a one-loss UGA team can't get right back in the thick of the title talk.

Of course in the end none of that matters. All that matters is that we'll face a UT team that has simply wanted it more the last two times we've faced them. A lot more. Fulmer came into last year's game under some serious heat and found a way to refocus his team and get their absolute best. We'll have to return the favor. Fulmer always does his best when his considerable back is against the wall. It's firmly there right now. A UGA win certainly wouldn't be the nail in his coffin but a UGA loss would once again quiet the rumblings from the UT faithful. He knows that better than anyone. Given how tough Richt took the loss to UT on a personal level last season, feeling he had let the team down by not having them emotionally prepared, I fully expect to see a fired up UGA squad. Hopefully it won't be the fired up squad that insists on making drive-altering penalties seemingly every other play, but you can't ask for everything right?

Positional Notes

- Aron White got some considerable playing time last week against Bama with the injury to Chandler, who is out for a while. Figgins is banged up behind him but looks like he might can go. Even if Figgins can go, I think White could have in impact. He's considerably different from our other TE options and should be able to really stretch the field. Given the off week, I'd expect him to be ready to go. Having Kiante Tripp out there at TE (for now) should really help the running game.
- Speaking of helping the running game, Chapas has done an admirable job but this week Southerland returns and personally I can't wait. He might very well be the best FB in the country. If he can play up to his potential, Knowshon might be the happiest of all about his return.
- It doesn't look like Ellerbe can go and that's tough. He went down in the opening series against Bama and his absence was really felt. In his place, Gamble will get the nod in the middle, and he's shown he can play well when asked. With 2 weeks to get ready after moving over from SLB, I think Gamble could really play well.
- The OL will largely be unchanged from last week with the possible exception of Glenn going for Davis at LG. Hard to believe we'll be going in with two true frosh, a RS-Fr and a true sophomore after seemingly doing the same last year but it is what is when injuries mount like this. All I can say is our OL should be loaded in 2 years...heck even next year for that matter.
- Tavares King is questionable for this one but I really expect him to have a big breakout game at some point. He's an excellent compliment to Green as a guy who can really put a safety in a bind by stretching the field.
- Speaking of breakout games, yes Michael Moore had a few drops against Bama, but almost all were in traffic and difficult grabs. He also made some serious catches that might bring him into considerable PT as the #3 WR, especially with Durham's injury situation. Moore looks much more confident and Stafford certainly seems willing to go to him.
- Moreno's elbow injury might limit some of his patented stiff-arms but I expect him to go and go hard...as always. UT has had some tremendous success holding runners down but with Southerland coming back, you know Knowshon is ready to get out there and show that the Bama game was a fluke.
- Injuries are really starting to mount and now we add in a few "kicked off the team" guys in WR Walter Hill and S Donovan Baldwin. Neither had played this year and neither ever saw significant PT. Whatever Hill did must've been bad because the reaction was swift. His departure, coupled with season ending surgery to Tony Wilson and the injuries to Durham and King, means our WR ranks are thinning a bit. We've still got a solid core left but it's getting a bit silly. This will open up a spot for another WR in the recruiting class.

Random Thoughts

- You've gotta feel good for Vandy. At least for one more week. Then we start pulling against them. Everyone loves a Cinderella until she starts taking your spot at the ball. One more win and they're bowl eligible for the first time since before any of their players were born. After watching Vandy flirt with this for years I'm not sure how much faith I have in them actually getting this done. Remember that one year where they only had to beat MTSU at home to be on track? Yeah, they lost.
- I don't know if you watched any of the Missouri-Nebraska game Saturday night or not, but Missouri's offense is good...really good. You might have heard this already.



Yes, I know the blackshirts of Nebraska aren't as scary defensively as they used to be, but Missouri scored 52 in 3 quarters of play. And it looked really, really easy. I was flipping between that and other games so I didn't see every series but I'm pretty sure they still have yet to go 3-and-out once. That's simply unbelievable.

- Ohio State won a game (against a team that woeful Michigan beat) and you've already started hearing how this team is totally different now that Pryor has some experience and Beanie Wells is healthy. Right. They could've started Troy Smith and some love child of Archie Griffin and Eddie George and USC would've still rolled them by 3 TDs. As for the Big 10, Penn State does look pretty good though and they haven't wet the bed on national TV 3 straight years. I wonder if the rest of the Big 10 hates OSU as much as the rest of the country does.
- Don't look now but the ACC is actually getting better. No one wants to play GT right now (and not just because of the garish uniforms). UNC is playing like the Mack Brown Tar Heels of old. Heck, FSU even started scoring points offensively. Well that's about it, but it's a start.
- I'm honestly very excited about watching the LSU-UF game Saturday night. I still don't know what to make of either of those teams. I still don't think UF has developed much of a defense and I'm not even remotely convinced their offense is going to do move the ball consistently against a top shelf defense (they didn't have to against UT). LSU seemed to find a QB against Auburn but with each passing week that win looks less and less impressive. Their D gets a lot of credit, but AU had more success against them than they have anyone else this year and that's saying something.
- I've been a pretty big proponent of College Football Now and I still am, but I caught College Football Live on ESPN Sunday and it was actually really good. Completely different panel though. Rece Davis wasn't on it. They had some other host and they had three new guys in studio including Bruce Feldman and that new, younger Kiper guy that covers the NFL draft, Todd McShay? They were actually pretty good and developed their opinions with clear, coherent points. I think it made me realize that as much as I used to enjoy Rece Davis (as seemingly the token SEC fan on the staff), his recent mocking antics of Coach Richt have opened my eyes to the fact that the grouping of him, Holtz, May, etc. has gotten to be pretty darn unprofessional. Just gimmicky. I guess the average fan is in to that but watching more of a traditional show was nice.
- So Tuberville fired Tony Franklin already. I mean, nobody saw that coming. Seriously, Tuberville goes through coordinators as often as Spurrier goes through QBs. You can't help but think that Tubs knew that the offense (regardless of coordinator) was going to struggle pretty mightily this year and hired Franklin as the sacrificial lamb. I mean, anyone watching those two QBs in spring ball had to think this was going to be dicey. They never came close to committing to the offense Franklin actually knows how to run so it's no wonder they failed. If the rumors are true about boosters forcing the move I can't say I'm all that surprised either. More than any other SEC school, save possibly Arkansas, boosters really seem to run things on the plains.
- We picked up another commitment yesterday from a big, athletic instate DT. Another need position, another really talented kid stepping in to fill it. If you haven't been following recruiting to this point, let me sum it up by saying we're loading up yet again and seem to have someone nailed down already for every need spot (except WR) and are just polishing the class now.
- At some point during this writeup the "y" button on my laptop started sticking. Do you know how annoying that is? It works but you have to really step on it. Basically that's my way of saying there might be a few more typos than usual this week.



Have a safe weekend,
Jody

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