Let’s Play the Devil’s Advocate

by RG

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Now that the game is over, I decided to take the past couple of days to digest all the stats that were accumulated during the game. Being somewhat of an analytical person, I have reviewed the Bulldogs performance of their first game with others in the conference and have produced some interesting tidbits. The football pool that I am an active participant member of has a tool resource one can use to see how they would fare against the other participants in the pool by adjusting some of the parameters playing out in different scenarios. This category is called, ‘What if’ and looking at the results of the Bulldogs first game 10 to 3 victory over Clemson from Saturday, I decided to compare Georgia to other teams that the Dawgs will and might be playing this year. I came up with some interesting results that potentially shine a light on where the Bulldogs can have some problems.

By all practical means and purposes, the overall assumption is that Georgia is slated to win the SEC East this year which means the Bulldogs will more than likely be playing against Alabama, who will be the winner of the SEC West, for the SEC Championship come December. In this hypothetical scenario and if you accept that this will be the logical outcome of the season reviewing Georgia’s first game performance, one must think how Georgia would have fared against say if their opening game was played against Miami instead of Clemson. Keeping the same stats compiled for each team in their opening week some insights are highlighted. So, let us play and compare.

First, if Georgia opened their season against Alabama looking at how Bama came out and played against Miami, the results for Georgia would be in the ‘L’ column and not in the ‘W.’ Bama’s Offense accumulated some 501 total yards to Georgia’s meager 256 yards, which is more than double. In addition, the average number of yards compiled per passing for Bama was 9.1, whereas the Dawg’s had a trifling average of 4.5. So, for now, let us not even think about the Tide.

Looking at Miami, they had total yards of 266, yards passing was 178, their completion-attempt ratio was 23 for 32, yards per passing was 5.1, total yards rushing was only 88 with an overall average of yards per carry of 2.8 and Miami threw two interceptions. Conversely, Georgia’s stats on the field were total yards of 256, yards passing of 135, a completion-attempt ratio of 22 for 30, total yards per passing of 4.5, total yards rushing of 121 with an average yards per carry of 3.9. Miami had a total number of 18 first downs to Georgia’s 15. Third down conversions were 6 of 14 attempts made by Miami and 7 of 15 for Georgia. The initial cursory review exhibits equality of the two teams, but the scoring is how the two differ.

As I mentioned, Miami threw two interceptions which using the stats Georgia would have run one back 74 yards for a touchdown in the second the quarter the only scoring for the Dawgs in the first half. Georgia threw only one interception, but it would not have led to a score by the Canes. Georgia went 1 for 2 on field goals whereas the Miami results were 2 for 2. This is the difference maker in favor for Miami for the Canes would have out scored Georgia in the second half of the game. Georgia only scoring a total of 3 points, but Miami scored 10 points in the second half. Neither team scored in the fourth quarter, so the final score would have been Georgia 10 and Miami 13.

Now here is where things get more interesting for the Bulldogs. Seeing how Georgia’s outcome might have been against the 14th ranked Miami Hurricanes instead of the third rank Clemson Tigers, lets apply the same logic to Georgia’s other big contenders in a normal season. The constants to whom I refer to that Georgia faces yearly is Florida, Auburn, and Tennessee. Not necessarily in order of difficulty but it is for this year. Regrettably, if Georgia had opened against any one of these three, the outcome would not have been any different as with Miami. The major difference in all these comparisons is the offense. As stated, Georgia’s offense only had a total of 256 yards of which 135 was passing and 121 was rushing. For Florida, Auburn, and Tennessee, you have totals of 553, 153, 400; 612, 297, 315; and 471, 145, 326 respectfully. In the other categories relating to the average yards per passing and rushing, Georgia again would fall short by having only 4.5 yards per passing and 3.9 yards per carry. Looking at the Gators, Tigers, and Volunteers you respectfully have 4.4 and 8.7, 11.0 and 10.2, and then 6.0 and 5.1. Not being able to move the ball down the field either by passing or by running for any substantial number of yards, for Georgia it will be the greatest challenge to overcome for this season especially when playing teams like Florida, Auburn, and Tennessee.

Of course, this comparison does not include comparisons of the Defense but as shown in the Clemson game Georgia came away with one interception for a TD, caused Clemson’s offense to have 5 - 3 and outs on third downs conversions and 7 sacks of the quarterback. The Georgia Defense appears to be premier for this season alluding back to the days of old under Urk Russell and the ‘Junkyard Dawgs.’ However, a strong defense can keep a team in the game and at times win a game, but it is the offense that is the scoring machine of any team. Without an offense that can move the ball and score, chances of coming away with a victory in any game is very slight. Also, another reality to consider for this year is this comparison does not include the others of the SEC that pose an additional threat to Georgia in the likes of South Carolina, Arkansas, and Missouri. Any of whom can upset the proverbial ‘apple cart’ as my mother use to say.

Knocking off the number 3 ranked team to open your season for Georgia truly establishes them as a team to be reckoned with and provides them a level of respectable presence within the SEC if not within college football arena in general. However, with that win the challenge and true test of one’s resolve has only just begun. Of course, many things can happen that can impact a season performance. Alabama could have some major offensive setbacks that can affect their scoring capability as Georgia already has had one with the season ending injury to their four-star recruit Tate Ratledge, Georgia’s right guard of the offensive line. His season ending foot injury occurred just seconds into Georgia’s opening first offensive drive. Injuries can occur at any time and without a moments notice. Football is a collision sport and as it is said, ‘that’s why girls don’t play the game.’

Keeping a positive mental focus, the area needing the most attention then for Georgia is the offense. Moving the ball and scoring is the prime directive. J.T. Daniels has an arm, and he has the ware do all to keep his focus when on the field. The question then is the ‘big uglies’ of the offensive line when it comes to pass blocking and opening up holes in the line of scrimmage for the likes of Zamir White, Kendall Milton, Kenny McIntosh, James Cook, and Daijurn Edwards to run through.

The game has only just started and to all my long time Bulldog brethren and sisters who might read this let it be understood that this is just a ‘What if’ scenario and not what I predict will happen. So, let us play some football!!!