

**John Dunlap**

**Crimes at the Gator Bowl**

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — On December 30th, between the hours of 9 p.m. and 1 a.m., a number of crimes were committed in the cavernous Gator Bowl stadium in Jacksonville, Fla.

Item one: a felony, about 63,811 people were forced to pay \$8 for the right to see a game that deserved about \$2. Item two: murder one, the Auburn Tigers, or War Eagles, or whatever they are, murdered the Texas Longhorns by a score of 27-3. Item three: murder one, ABC television murdered the fans and the press by extending an already snail-paced game.

Fact is that it is not that bad a place. The city is split by a large river, the St. Johns, which adds beauty to the place and the ocean is about 15 miles from downtown Jax. Live oak trees spread huge limbs over two-lane roads. And the weather is warm most all year (the day of the game it was in the 80s.)

But like any city, Jacksonville has its problems. The people of Jacksonville believe they are truly progressive, calling themselves "The Bold New City of the South." Yet among the city's newcomers, the greatest area of debate is over the idea that Jacksonville is not in Florida at all, but really South Georgia.

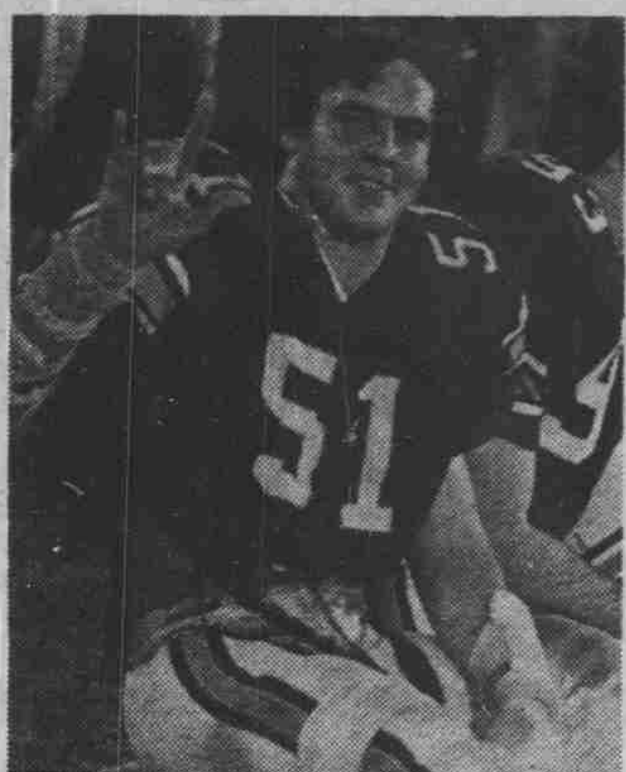
Perhaps the greatest fallacy lies in how Gator Bowl officials view the game and its importance. George Olsen, a chubby man with a butch haircut, feels the game is one of the best.

"The Gator Bowl is the number five bowl (behind the Orange, Rose, Cotton and Sugar) and that is a position we are content with. We will try to maintain the number five position as long as possible," he said. When asked if there is any room for improvement, Olsen said, "We think maybe we could catch the Sugar Bowl. They are moving out of Tulane stadium and into the Superdome, which may hurt the Sugar Bowl game because they will have to compete with the pro leagues."

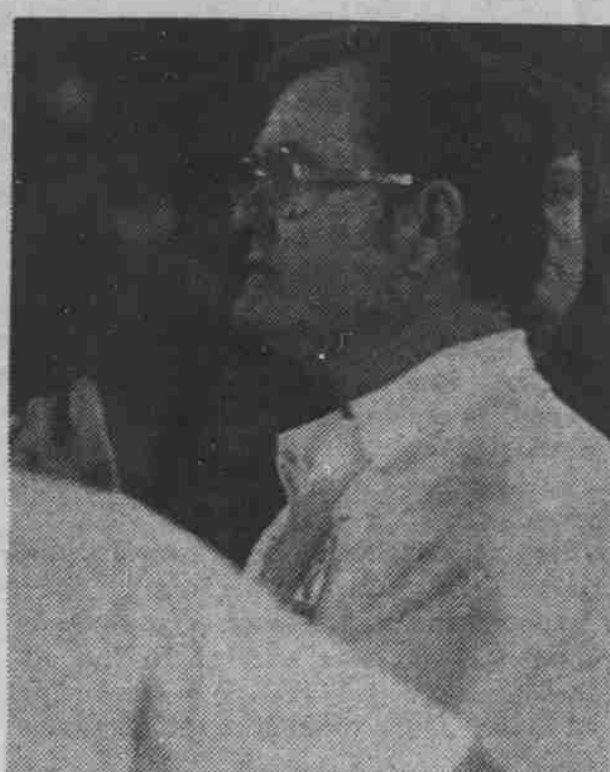
But the plain fact is that the Gator Bowl may be in jeopardy of losing even the number five position if things continue as they are. The game was not sold out for the second year in a row. The single-level stadium holds around 72,000, capacity. The 1973 game between Tennessee and Texas Tech drew the smallest crowd in almost 10 years. This year's game was little improvement.

Auburn and Texas, two biggies in the world of professional big time college football, each sent back a large ticket number (Auburn — 1800, Texas — 1200.)

Still, both schools brought many followers and the motels at Jacksonville Beach were buzzing with pot-bellied and balding men, along with their well-tanned and talkative wives. The weather at the beach was warm, at times almost hot. It can now be revealed that the Texas players were more interested in the beach than the game at Auburn, for the ocean is what they talked most about.



Auburn senior linebacker Mike Flynn flashes the famous "Hook-em-Horns" symbol of Texas, as coach Darrell Royal watches his Longhorns get smashed 27-3 by the SEC Tigers. Auburn and Texas clashed in the Gator Bowl Dec. 30 at Jacksonville, Fla. (Staff photo by John Dunlap)



This infatuation with waves proved fatal as the already mentioned murder became inevitable from the early moments of the game.

Everywhere, even in the men's rooms, one would hear the cry "War damn Eagle." In fact, it even came to be a code that one had to use before he could go on with a normal conversation. There were, of course, a smattering of "Hook em Horns" signs flashed, but they never lasted long.

The game was over by halftime. Auburn came out fired up and took advantage of some Texas turnovers early in the first quarter to hold a 14-0 lead. Quarterback Phil Gargis, the game's most valuable player, ran at will, and passed a great deal more than the Longhorns expected.

Still, the game was not a good one. Twelve times the ball was fumbled, nine times resulting in turnovers. Five times the ball was intercepted, and 11 times penalties were

called. Then, there was the trouble with ABC television. It is hard enough to enjoy a boring TV game at home. Commercials always come along to divert one's attention. But it is next to impossible to get into a game that is both boring and being broadcast on television. Everyone just stared at the official waiting for the commercials to end. Television may be the death of college football.

So what we have is an extra game that was not well-planned for by one team (Texas), not well played by either team, not well attended by spectators, and not meaningful in the least.

And though Jacksonville is a nice spot, and though the Gator Bowl has had good games in the past, did the fact that Auburn beat Texas prove anything? Not a damn thing.

So it goes. Hook em Horns, War Eagle, and good-bye.

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