



"It's a wonderful piece of storytelling!"

.....Tony Barnhart



"Fabulous"



"Awesome"

Gus Morris's father told him, at the beginning of his officiating career, that he should "get there a little early and don't be in a hurry to leave." By doing just that, Gus was able to have many incredible experiences while officiating football in the Southeastern Conference.

For thirty-one years, Gus traveled all over the country working with great officials, coaches, and players. He's met famous people, seen historic landmarks, and lived life in a way that few individuals will ever experience.

College football brings people together from all walks of life with a common thread: cheering for their team. Strangers and adversaries become friends for a common purpose. The pageantry and traditions are absolutely amazing. And Gus, an automotive mechanic and small business owner, was thrust right in the middle of it to make sure the games followed the rules and were played fairly.

These stories will pull back the curtain of officiating football in the SEC. Gus introduces you to interesting characters, walks you through unusual situations, and enlightens you about unknown aspects of the game. You'll experience the really good things, the not-so-good things and everything in between.



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G. A. "Gus" Morris III

# Saturdays in the South

A Collection of Stories from My Thirty-One Years of  
Officiating Football in the Southeastern Conference

## WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING



Kent Koehler  
President—Miller-Reid

"If you are a true football fan, this is a "must read" book. I have read the book twice, and I have thoroughly enjoyed every story in the book each time. The stories are short, making it an easy read. Gus is a great story teller, and his many years as a SEC official provides lots of "behind the scenes experiences." He has lived an exciting life in football, and his book is a memorable and entertaining summary."



Pam Carter  
Retired

"Great book! Interesting and fun to view the other side of college football. Everyone needs to read it before Fall football starts. We'll all watch the games with a real respect with what these officials go thru every week. Great fun!"



The Kincaid  
Owner—Healing Waters Studio

"As a football lover, this book captured my interest from the very beginning. It's fascinating to hear the perspectives from a career SEC official!"



Softcover \$19.99 + Softcover/autographed \$24.99 \*\* + Kindle \$9.99

*Saturdays in the South* is available through the following retailers

AMAZON



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THEFOOTBALLBOOK.COM



\*\* Softcover/autographed only available through [www.thefootballbook.com](http://www.thefootballbook.com)

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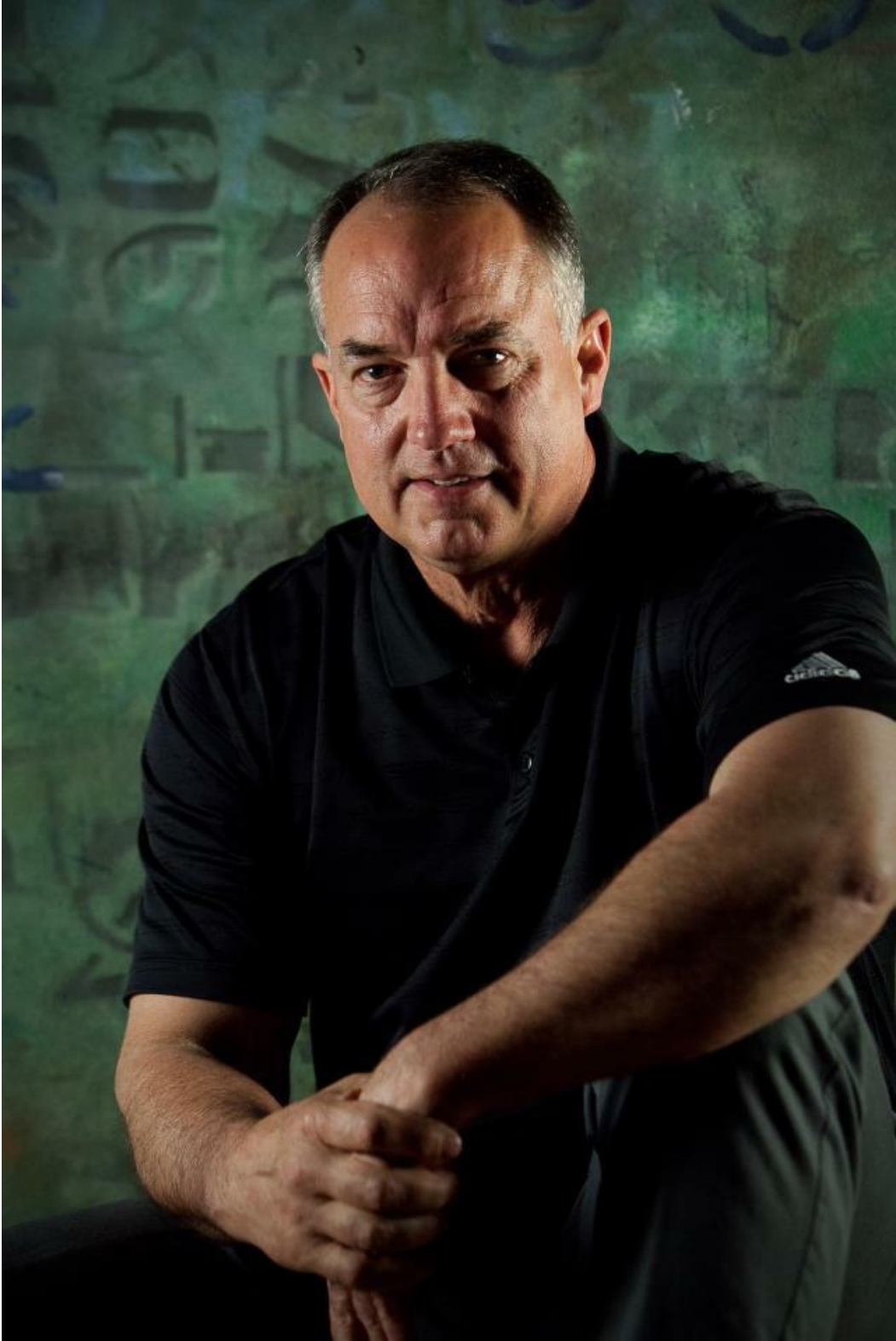
Gus Morris was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia where he played multiple youth sports. After graduating from Millsaps college, he was inducted into their Hall of Fame as a football player. Following his days as a player, Gus used football officiating for recreation and to fill his desire for physical activity. He retired from officiating in 2021 after an incredible 31 year career in the Southeastern Conference that includes 5 SEC Championships, 16 postseason bowl games and 7 Senior Bowls.

In this wonderful piece of storytelling, Gus shares his experiences that will make you laugh, cry, and realize what it takes to be an official at the highest levels.

His time away from the gridiron is now filled with running multiple businesses, serving on the boards of non-profit organizations, mentoring young officials and spending time in the outdoors with his Vizslas, Reagan and Eunice.

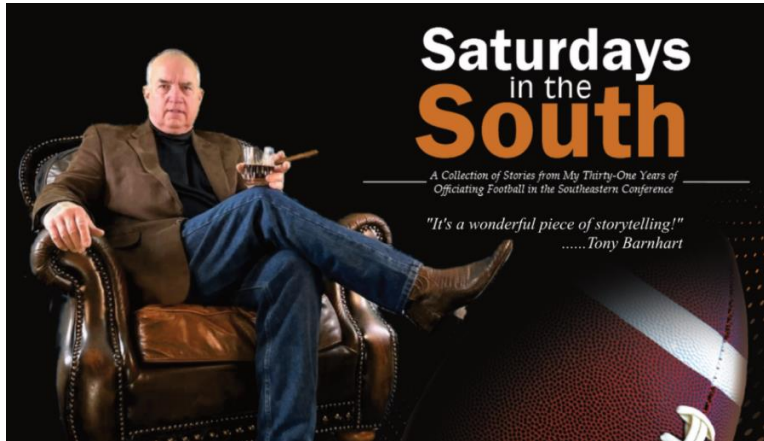
Saturdays in the South is Mr. Morris's first book.

Author Headshot:

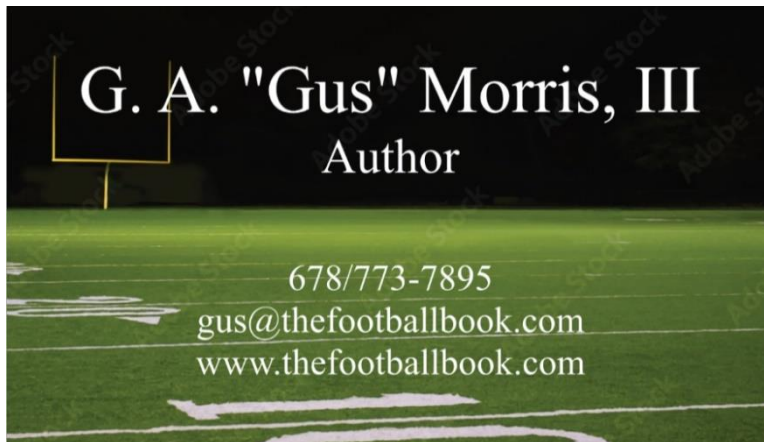


Business Card:

Front:



Back:



## MEDIA KIT – ENDORSEMENTS

“There are hundreds of books about football! Books about the players, books about the games, books about the coaches, books about the fans.

Ever read a book about officials? I thought so. We moan, complain, criticize, and scream...about what?

About officials! That’s what! And we know nothing about them.

Ever wonder what they’re thinking? I certainly have, and now we can know for sure. Gus Morris has written a delightful book about the challenging, disturbing, sad, hilarious world of football officiating. If you love football, read this book-at last you will understand the strange world of officials, and you might even come to like them.

One thing is certain: you will love Gus Morris!”

Bill Curry

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“Several years ago, a young man came to one of our football clinics with the desire to be a Southeastern Conference Football Official. He exhibited many of the qualities we sought in an official from the physical appearance to his knowledge of the game. Those qualities alone were not enough to make him eligible for our Conference. We always look for the type of personal walk he might exhibit, is he active in his community, perhaps an affiliation with a church, his involvement in his family life and the ability to commit to the needed travel schedule of a game.

Gus Morris had so many of the qualities we chose to seek out when considering a new official. Personal recommendations for a new official also play a significant role in the decision making process. Gus did not lack for those at all. Many people close and not so close to him were very encouraging toward bringing him into the fold.

During the evaluation process, there were multiple positive comments to consider; however, perhaps the most important word that was repeated in reference to Gus was Integrity. Every official knows the broad and all-encompassing meaning of the word. Without Integrity, you cannot be of the quality a Southeastern Conference Official is required to be.

Time after time, Gus has performed on and off the field in the manner befitting an SEC Football Official and with tremendous pride in his work. What he has and continues to bring to the world of officiating through his work with young guys wanting to be a part of the SEC family will contribute to a great group of officials.”

Bobby Gaston  
Coordinator of SEC Football Officials  
(Retired)

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“After reading Gus’s book on life from an official’s perspective I was taken back to the mid 80’s when Gus came into our High School association as green as green could be. Ron Goings and I were the training officers and were responsible for all the newbies. There was something about Gus, he just picked it up faster and had a drive that we had not seen before. By the middle of that year, we worked a varsity game together and he never slowed down until a few years ago when he retired from the Southeastern Conference Association as one of the best college officials around. Funny thing was, Gus’s dad was a great SEC official, and he never mentioned it and you never knew it, Gus did it all on his own.

What sets Gus’s book apart is it is a day in the life of a great college official. It is not only about sports, it is about life, Gus’s life and it has something for everyone.

If you only buy one book this year, this is the one you will enjoy most, from getting up four hours early to go to a clinic, to stories that just happened to be told during the football season, you can’t make this stuff up.

Again, I highly recommend this as a great gift and a great read.”

Dr. Jack Kelly

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“Having worked with Gus on the field in the SEC for several years, we can tell you that it was never boring with Gus Morris! His ability to work with coaches on the sideline was second to none. The Line of scrimmage guys always get the brunt of the coaches’ wrath when the calls do not go their way. Gus was a master at this. We can all remember several times where a coach is in the middle of a tirade and Gus was totally stoic, with no emotion whatsoever. And then on the next time-out, you would look over at him and he’d give you that smile, like “I got this handled over here, no worries”. And when a coach crossed the line, he would always make sure he would gently throw that flag directly between the feet of the coach. No emotion, no excitement. Gus always liked to keep a list of all the coaches he had worked in front of. And the list would get longer and longer every year. He took a lot of joy in that and rightfully so.

As most officials will tell you, the games themselves are a small part of what we call the football officiating life. Three – four hours out of the weekend. During these football weekends, you learn so much of what your crewmates are all about. Gus was a great crewmate. He was always quick to inject some humor into our meetings. Always offering up a funny picture or video to any prospective victims we had on the crew that week. And when he was called upon to help, the meals he provided the crew on Friday nights were always incredible! That guy is quite the grill and fry cook!

Gus has a long history of involvement with the SEC through his years of service and of course being the son of an SEC official. Officiating over that last several years has evolved. It is a thankless job, and the scrutiny is endless. Some officials struggle with this. Gus was truly an “old school” official who never let things on the field take the enjoyment out of the avocation. Good or Bad, Gus was always smiling.

“It was our privilege to know and work with Gus Morris.””

*Former Crewmates: Jesse Dupuy, Matt Loeffler, Mike Shirey, Stan Weihe, Bobby Ables*

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“When someone finds out that you are an SEC football official the questions begin to flow. What’s your favorite stadium, what’ the loudest stadium, where is your favorite place to go, which coach screams the most, what’s the most exciting game you have worked.....on and on they go. All great questions, however, any official will tell you the most important and greatest thing about SEC officiating are the lifetime friendships that are formed by being a part of the third team on the field and part of a big family off the field. When it’s eight “zebras” against 100,000 screaming fanatics in the stadium the friendships are really important. BUT, when you spend hours of rule study, film study, working scrimmages, and attending clinics you really want to be the “best team” on the field. Gus Morris has captured and opened a picture of how these friendships create the “best team” on the field! Gus in a series of short stories shows you how hard we work, laugh, hug, and often anguish, hurt, and cry.

Gus has been the ultimate teammate and friend to hundreds of officials at all levels of officiating. After reading this book you will understand why he is a great ambassador for football officiating and why he is loved by all. I am proud to call him my lifetime friend and teammate!

This is a story about life in the SEC!

Please buy this book so all of his officiating friends don’t have to buy them all!!!”

Chris Conley





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## Saturdays in the South: Local Author Chronicles His Time Memoirs of a Football Official

BY GUS MORRIS | PHOTOS BY GUS MORRIS



Football officials are the least understood, among necessities of the game, ensuring fairness and upholding the game's integrity, even amid a downpour of vitriol heaped their way. I spent an incredible 31 years as a Head Linesman in the Southeastern Conference, unquestionably the most prestigious and dominant league in the country. My journey as a football official was a rollercoaster of great moments, challenges, and unforgettable experiences. In my book,

"Saturdays in the South", I pull back the curtains on the lesser-known aspects of the game that most people don't understand.

My officiating career began as a casual endeavor in 1986, working middle and high school football to stay active, remaining involved in the sport, and to have fun. As a former player, through college, my background provided a solid foundation of the game, but I knew I needed to master the rules and subsequent penalty enforcement, so I devoted endless hours to studying. The opportunity to officiate lower division college football came knocking, and with the encouragement and mentorship of seasoned officials, I found myself progressing steadily.

Then, in the lead-up to the 1990 football season, a call came that changed everything - an invitation to join the Southeastern Conference Football Officials Association. Stepping into the SEC was a big leap, but with the guidance of veteran officials, I adapted to the increased player size and speed. The magnificence of SEC football was awe-inspiring - from colossal stadiums, roaring crowds to marching bands that painted a vibrant backdrop to the game.

Officiating football extends far beyond game day itself. Groundless hours of rules study, attendance at clinics, and maintaining physical fitness were crucial elements of the job. Balancing officiating with family life and other commitments demanded attention to detail, ensuring that my focus remained unwavering on game day. The experience as an official also honed my people skills, enriching my everyday interactions.

During my time as an official, my experiences spread beyond the confines of game day. The demanding schedule involved flying, driving, dealing with rental cars, restaurants and staying in hotels, all of which left a lasting impact and deserve mentioning. Along the journey, I formed close bonds with some fellow officials, leading to



the creation of unique and memorable moments together. As my children grew older, they had the opportunity to accompany me on some trips, witnessing the action firsthand. Throughout it all, family and friends played a significant role, their support and presence becoming an integral part of my journey as an official. Regardless of the topic, officiating served as the common thread that bound all my experiences together.

Originally, I began writing my stories as a legacy for my children and grandchildren, sharing the diverse experiences I had as an official. The moments I cherished, the individuals I met, the esteemed coaches I worked with, and the extraordinary players I encountered - all of these I wanted to immortalize on paper. Encouraged by others who read my tales, I ventured into the realm of writing a book, "Saturdays in the South". It became a reality 24 months later, thanks to the support of my publisher, BookLogic.

Two vital pieces of advice guided me throughout my career. First, arrive a little early and try not to be in a rush to leave. Second, selectively filter the feedback you receive and dismiss criticism from those you wouldn't seek advice from. These principles kept me grounded, allowed me to cherish each experience, and enabled me to lead a life enriched by officiating.

If you're a college football enthusiast, I invite you to read "Saturdays in the South". While I may not alter your perception of officials, the book will provide a fascinating insight into the hidden facets of the game. As officials, we live amongst the fans, sharing our passion for football and striving to contribute to the sport we love.

[www.thefootballbook.com](http://www.thefootballbook.com)



## MEDIA KIT – RECENT SPEECHES

Below is a link to a speech given to the Leland Mississippi Chamber of Commerce during their annual member banquet on 3-19-2024.

<https://youtu.be/XzGY5eLHDQ8?si=X40T6UaVXCue5HDi>



## MEDIA KIT – PRESS MENTIONS

Below is a link to the website where TV, Radio, and Podcasts interviews can be heard.



[Interviews → THEFOOTBALLBOOK.COM → Gus Morris](#)


Cumming Cigar Company  
203 East Main Street  
Cumming, Georgia 30040


“We are so excited to announce Gus Morris will be signing his beloved book *Saturdays in the South* at our shop Friday April 7th, from 4\_6pm.”


**BOOK SIGNING**

**LIVE**

 **FRIDAY,  
7 APRIL 2023**

 **4:00 - 6:00 PM**

 **GUS MORRIS**

**G. A. "Gus" Morris III**

**Saturdays  
in the  
South**

*A Collection of Stories from My Thirty-One Years of  
Officiating Football in the Southeastern Conference*

**"SATURDAYS IN THE SOUTH"  
CHRONICLES MY JOURNEY OF  
OFFICIATING IN THE GREATEST  
LEAGUE IN THE COUNTRY. YOU'RE  
IN FOR AN INTERESTING GLIMPSE  
OF WHAT GOES ON BEHIND THE  
SCENES OF EVERY GAME YOU  
WATCH.**

# MEDIA KIT – BOOK EXCERPTS

## Foreword:

For the past 46 years it has been my good fortune to cover college football for newspapers, radio, television and the internet. It has been an incredible journey that has allowed me to make friends that will last a lifetime and stay close to a game that I fell in love with when I was 13 years old.

And here's what I know: College football officials are the least understood and least appreciated people who work in the game.

Until now.

When Gus Morris shared with me his notes for this book I knew exactly what it was going to be. Like the man who wrote it, the book would be an inside look at college football officiating that pulled no punches. Gus was going to give it to us straight because that's the only way he knows how to do it.

As he pulls back the curtain and lets us into his world, we learn that college football officiating isn't a part-time job or a hobby. It is a lifestyle. And you choose this lifestyle knowing there will be good times, not-so-good times and, yes, painful times along the way. The buy-in has to be complete.

This book will make you laugh:

\*\*--Like the time a Coach from UT-Chattanooga pleaded for help when he was getting his brains kicked in by Auburn. Gus responded: "Coach, I'm helping you all I can but I need a little more effort from your guys." Auburn won 62-24

\*\*--Or the time that the head coach from Northeast Louisiana gave him a tip right before the opening kickoff.

"We're going to onside kick."

Gus made sure he was in perfect position for the onside kick, which was recovered by Northeast Louisiana. Gus was right on top of the call and made it with enthusiasm. There was only one problem.

He pointed the wrong way.

\*\*--Or the time that a smart-aleck lower-level assistant from LSU kept giving Gus a hard time. Gus asked for the guy's name, explaining that when he threw the unsportsmanlike conduct flag, that was surely coming, he would be able to give head coach Les Miles the fellow's name. Gus didn't hear a peep from the guy the rest of the game.

But there are also moments in the book that pull on your heart strings:

\*\*--Gus is the son of the late George Morris, a Hall of Fame football player at Georgia Tech and himself a long-time college official. George did a lot of traveling when Gus was a boy so they didn't spend a lot of time together. When Gus made it as an official in the SEC, the two had lunch. George gave Gus his SEC officiating ring and insisted that he wear it now.

"You've earned it," said George.

When George Morris died on Dec. 10, 2007, Gus attended two funeral services—one in Atlanta and another in George’s native Vicksburg, Mississippi, where he was laid to rest. Gus held it together emotionally until he arrived back at his home in Cumming, Ga. There near the driveway was a neat pile of firewood given to him by Chris Conley, one of his best friends in officiating. Attached was a note: “Careful. Wood soaked in kerosene. Love Santa.”

That’s when he lost it.

\*\*--At the Alabama-Auburn game in 1996 in Tuscaloosa, Gus and Coach Gene Stallings attended to a member of the Alabama drill team who was accidentally knocked to the ground by a member of the band. Coach Stallings held the girl’s hand, brushed away her tears, and assured her it was going to be okay. He and Gus did not allow the game to start until she was able to walk off the field.

“Gus, do you know how lucky we are to be doing this?” Coach Stallings asked.

As the final seconds of the game wound down, Gus passed by Coach Stallings one last time. The Alabama coach stuck out his hand.

“I’m done,” he said.

After the game—a 24-23 win by Alabama--Gene Stallings resigned as Alabama’s head coach after seven seasons.”

\*\*--There is some pain. One night in Columbia, S.C., he took a direct hit from two players at once. He had to be removed from the field. He had suffered a severe concussion. It took him nine months to fully recover. More than once he found it difficult to get out of bed on Sunday morning because of a hit he took the day before. It comes with the job.

And he had to be flexible. Once during a game fellow official Steve Shaw had the pocket ripped off of his officiating shirt after an on-field collision. At halftime Gus managed to get his hands on a needle and some black thread. His great aunt taught him to sew as a boy. Problem solved.

There is so much more to be found within the covers of this book.

And when you finish I’ll make this one promise: You will never look at college football officials the same way again.

Will you still cuss their names when a call goes against your favorite team?

Of course.

Gus Morris wouldn’t have it any other way.

Tony Barnhart  
Atlanta, GA.  
Dec. 11, 2022

## Sample Stories:

### IT WAS LIKE “THE WIZARD OF OZ”

I drew Vanderbilt at South Carolina during week three of the 2013 season. I’ve taken hits in games before but none like the one I took that night.

Under Armour had begun providing us with our uniforms right around this time. I decided to wear a pair of shoes with fairly long cleats, since we were going to be playing on natural grass. They were like old school shoes.

With 3 minutes left in the second quarter, South Carolina was up 24 to 7 over Vanderbilt. The Gamecocks had the ball on their own 20 yard line with 2<sup>nd</sup> down and 3 yards to go. They threw a swing pass into the flats in front of me. I was moving down the sideline as the ball was caught by the Carolina receiver. Just after he caught it, a Vanderbilt defensive back hit him and drove him back towards me. My first thought was “Oh, shit. Move back!” As I planted my right foot for leverage, a player stepped on my foot, driving my new cleats into the ground preventing me from getting out of the way. To make matters worse, one of the chain crew members didn’t move out of the way, as they are always instructed to do.

I took a direct hit from both players. When I came to, I had 4 or 5 trainers leaning over me, calling my name. I had no idea where I was, only that I was lying on grass. I remember them having a hard time removing the earpiece of our communication system. About 9 minutes later, they wheeled me off the field to the locker room. Mike Shirey took my place and Marc Curles came off the clock and worked the Line Judge position. I have no idea who worked the clock.

Things were so confusing. It turns out I had suffered a severe concussion. To this day, it all seems like snapshots. One moment, I was getting loaded on the cart to take me off the field. The next, I’m wondering why the assistant commissioner of the SEC, Greg Sankey, is standing in room with us. Over the next couple of days, I was able to piece together what had happened.

I remember just prior to getting hit. The trainers got to me in unbelievably quick time. James Franklin, the Vanderbilt head coach, cleared the team area around me. Clint Haggard, the head athletic trainer for South Carolina took control of the situation and coordinated the care I received.

They put me through the concussion protocol tests. I failed miserably. At one point, they had me close my eyes while I was standing up. They caught me before I hit the floor. I remember telling everyone that I’ve got to get word to my mom that I’m OK. All I had to do was give them a number to call. I couldn’t recall any numbers. They handed me a cell phone anyway. Out of habit, I was able to press the right sequence of numbers that belonged to my daughter, Susan. When the phone began to ring, I handed it back to Greg Sankey. He assured my daughter that I was OK, and he was counting on her to let the rest of the family know. My daughter now had the commissioner of the SEC’s personal mobile number.

I was kept in a dark room. They were always assessing my condition. Holly Rowe came in to check on me. She let the world know that I was going to be OK, but that I had a severe concussion.

There was a TV in the training room with the game on. I kept looking at it thinking, if I'm not in the van when the game is over, I won't get back to the hotel. A decision was made that instead of going to the hospital, I was to be taken back to the hotel where someone would stay with me through the night. These decisions were not mine.

With about 5 minutes remaining in the game, they began taking me back to the van. I got there just before the game was over. When the clock hit zero, within seconds the other officials, one by one, began piling into the van. After everyone was accounted for, we rolled out of the parking lot under police escort with blue lights flashing. I had to close my eyes as these lights were making me extremely nauseous.

I don't remember the postgame meeting. I don't remember talking on the phone that evening to anyone. Mike Shirey agreed to stay in my room during the night. There was no way I could drive. How was I going to get home.

The next morning, Clint Haggard and the team doctor showed up at my room. They put me through more tests and told me the concussion was bad. Unknown to me, my brother-in-law, Tom Meyer, was on his way to Columbia from Atlanta to drive me home. He's a retired Delta pilot so he was able to make a flight into Columbia.

I ate some breakfast and saw a few of my other crewmates as they departed to go home. When Tom landed, he called to say he was going to get a taxi and come to the hotel. Clint told him to wait there, and he would come and get him.

I don't remember much of the drive from Columbia, South Carolina, to Cumming, Georgia. I do remember how glad I was to be home. I don't remember if the lady I was dating at the time came over to check on me. For some reason, I don't think she did.

Early in the afternoon, Steve Shaw called to check on me. He was the coordinator of football officials. Not long into our conversation, he said "You don't remember taking to me last night, do you?" "No" is all I said.

I called my primary physician, Dr. Thomas Tucker, and told him what happened. He already knew. I was instructed on things I could and could not do. How was I going to run my business? Thankfully, Lana Greene Hughes was working for me then and she took care of everything.

Two weeks later, I worked the LSU at Georgia game. I almost got hit on the opening kickoff. I never should have worked that game. Somehow, I made it through without really messing up. During the game, however, the referee, Matt Loeffler, had to shut the game down and make an announcement that they had to restart the play because "The Head Linesman was not in position." I was doing the best I could.

So, here's the weirdest thing about the whole situation. When I was knocked unconscious, I had a very vivid dream. I dreamt that I was weed-eating in my front yard back home. I then started hearing voices and I began looking around to see if I could locate who was yelling at me. I was walking around and then just sat down on the lawn. It was at this point that I came to and saw all the people standing over me back in Columbia, South Carolina. I felt like Dorothy at the end of "The Wizard of Oz." It couldn't have been a dream 'cause you were there, and you were there, etc.

It took about 9 months for me to fully recover.

## THE DAY MY DAUGHTER WAS BORN

On February 27, 1993, I had a scrimmage in Athens. Ray Goff was the coach of the Bulldogs at that time. He held spring practice early with the thought being that if any player got injured, he had a little extra time to recover before summer practice started. Made sense to me, but it didn't make the weather any warmer. Georgia had no indoor practice facility then.

My children's mother, Joan, was very pregnant with our second child. We had just gotten our first cell phone the previous Christmas. As I was packing my bag for the practice, I made sure the phone was fully charged. This model was referred to as a compact unit. However, it was still the size of about two decks of playing cards.

Before I left, Joan told me she felt OK but not like usual. "I can call you if anything happens." Out the door I went for the hour and fifteen minute drive from Sugar Hill to Athens. Her mother had also come over from Woodville, Mississippi, to help.

As I'm getting dressed with the other officials, I'm telling them that we are just about at our due date and that Joan was feeling a little bit different that morning. Jimmy Harper tells me to just go on back home. They could work the scrimmage without me. No problem.

I showed them the cell phone and that I would have it on the field with me. Cell phones were not all that prevalent in 1993. Particularly among young couples starting out.

About 45 minutes into the scrimmage, the phone rings. Fortunately, we were in a break during the practice. When I answered, the person on the other end was my mother. "Joan's water broke, we're on our way to Northside Hospital. We'll see you when you get here." Northside was the baby factory in Atlanta. They were following the plans that had put in place over the last couple of months.

I told Jimmy Harper that "It was time." My car was parked under the east end of the stadium. I took off my striped shirt and jumped in for the drive to the hospital. It's about noon.

Speaking of east end of the stadium, Sanford Stadium is the only one in the conference that is lined up east to west. All the other stadiums are north and south.

When I parked at the hospital, I grabbed my bag and went inside. Other than a solid black shirt, I'm in my full blown SEC officiating uniform. I was hard not to notice. The receptionist directed me to the room where Joan and my mom were. After I took a quick shower and dressed, my mom wished us well and went home. She only had a ten minute drive through Sandy Springs.

At this point, her water had broken but there were no contractions. A couple of hours later, the contractions started. Things were beginning to happen. When they got more intense, the epidural was administered. That's a big, friggin' needle.

Once that procedure was completed, the pain Joan had been experiencing diminished. But so did the rate of her dilation. Things began moving at a snail's pace. It's now about 10:30. There's a lot of activity due to the labor and delivery nurses coming in on a regular basis checking on her progress.

I'm starving. I hadn't had anything to eat in over fourteen hours. I found a snack machine, and the nurses brought some drinks from their breakroom. We're just waiting. Things are not moving along very fast.



Around four o'clock the following morning, things went from around ten miles an hour to a hundred. Two nurses came in the room. "We got to go. Here, put this on. Place your personal items under the gurney and follow us." They handed me a yellow, paper jump suit with matching shoe and head covers. I ended up putting on the jump suit backwards. I've been up for almost twenty four hours and suffering from malnutrition.

We were in the operating room very quickly. I was an observer, at this point. Joan was being prepped for surgery. It was amazing to watch how everyone functioned as a team. I was asked about watching the surgical procedure. I'm sure they didn't want to be picking me up of the floor in case I fainted. I went back and forth from talking with Joan to watching the surgeons. It was an amazing experience. When they began to reach in and pull the baby out, Joan asks me, "Are they touching me? I feel pressure." Uh, yeah. The epidural was doing it's thing.

"It's a girl!" exclaimed the doctor. We had chosen not to know what the sex of the baby was. Our son had been born almost six years before. Having a daughter wonderful. We had already picked out her name, Susan Elizabeth.

Two other medical people were brought in right after the delivery. They were respiratory therapists. Susan was not getting the oxygen she needed. We were reassured that everything would be OK. At that moment, she went from blue to pink. They finished cleaning Susan and were taking care of Joan. The two individuals who had worked on Susan told me to come with them. "You can go up to your wife's room after she leaves the recovery room." It's now about five o'clock Sunday morning.

As I am walking with the two people pushing this incubator contraption, the male person asks, "You don't know who I am, do you?" I'm thinking to myself, "Well hell no. I've been up for 24 hours, I'm starving, y'all just saved my daughter's life, and all I can see are your eyes. I simply replied "No."

He pulls down his mask and it's Rusty Warren. I had gotten to know him through my roommate at Millsaps College. He and Jody, my roommate, grew up in the same Mississippi gulf coast town, Long Beach. Rusty was going to school at the Mississippi Medical College. I almost panicked. This guy was an absolute party animal in college. He stayed stoned all the time. After witnessing his lifesaving work and combining that with my memories of him, I was very confused. How could somebody make that kind of progress in life. Yes, there's always hope.

We couldn't visit much at all. They were immediately called to another operating room. I thanked them and said "Goodbye." I've never seen him since.

Susan was taken into the nursery and checked out. A nurse picked her up and draped her across her left arm. She then took what looked like a rubber spoon and began to beat the snot out of her, literally. She must have sensed my alarm. She pressed a button by her station and over this little speaker tells me "She'll be fine in just a minute. Don't worry."

Everything was fine. I visited with Joan and we both needed sleep. They were going to keep Susan in the nursery for a while. I went home and slept like a baby, myself. Around four o'clock Sunday afternoon, my mother-in-law woke me up so I could drive back down to the hospital. It took me a few minutes to realize that it was still the afternoon and not the next morning.

They brought Susan into the room shortly after I got there. I held Susan for a while and then laid her in my lap where she fell sound asleep. The nurse commented on how calm Joan, and I were with the new baby. We were. Susan slept through every night after that.

We went home on a Tuesday, 3 March. Four days later, the blizzard of 1993 hit. We knew it was coming. I had stacked all the firewood on the deck by the back door. Propane cookers were set up in the garage. We had plenty of water and food. We were ready.

It started on Saturday morning, 7 March. I had never experienced thunder snow. Fifteen inches later, it quit. We only lost power for about thirty minutes. Joan's father had driven over from Mississippi. Her mom had already been there for three weeks. Our little three bedroom house was getting small. Her parents were a big help, but it was nice to be home with just the four of us. August was as good a big brother as any sister could have. And still is!

### FAN HURLING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Transporting the SEC officials to and from the stadium is taken very seriously. Generally, the crowds around the venues are enjoying the atmosphere of game day and having a great time. Still, you must be careful and prepared for what could happen.

The officials leave the hotel for the stadium, fully dressed in uniform, around 2 ½ hours prior to the scheduled kickoff time. This can vary depending on the distance to the stadium and anticipated traffic in the area. We were encouraged to travel lite and fast. Get in the van, no talking, all business.

The van driver is usually the same person, week after week, year after year. In some instances, the chain crews meet up at the hotels and everyone goes together. The caravan is escorted under police protection from the time we leave the hotel until we reach the stadium. LSU and South Carolina games provide the most intense rolling roadblocks through traffic. There is no mistake on what is happening as the officials make their approach. The drop off point is inside the secure gates, close to our designated room.

Mississippi State's van driver is a legend when it comes to this position. Everett Kennard was the transportation manager for the university. He drove teams everywhere. He knows where all the skeletons are buried.

Shortly after leaving the Holiday Inn Express in Starkville to journey over to Davis-Wade Stadium, he goes into his well-rehearsed diatribe about crazy fan behavior, getting your ass in the van immediately after the game, etc. First year officials sometimes question their sanity of officiating when they hear Everett explain what could happen.

One particular weekend in Starkville, I had been assigned as an Alternate Official for the Arkansas vs Mississippi State game. It was a miserable day, weatherwise. It was overcast and cold. When it was all said and done, we experienced rain, sleet, and snow with some minor accumulation. As an AO official, you don't get to move around much to help stay warm. My hands and feet were numb. Plus, the game went into overtime. Life, at that moment, was miserable.

As soon as the game was over, we hightailed it to the van. Everett was there with the van warmed up and doors open. It takes a couple of minutes for the referee to remove the stadium microphone system and return it to the person responsible for it's safe keeping until the following game. .

Arkansas prevailed that afternoon in what was a very competitive game. Saying the Mississippi State fans were not happy would be an understatement. Everett never let that effect the way he performed his duties in transporting the officials.

There were a couple of State fans near the van who were berating us mercilessly. We were threatened and called about every name in the book. Most of the time, this is harmless.

One guy kept moving closer to us. Everett first told him to get back. It escalated quickly, so he yelled at him to move away. I think alcohol had impaired the fan's ability to hear. When he got closer than he should have, Everett grabbed him by the back of the collar and belt, spun him around and hurled him liked a Frisbee. It was a feat of beauty. After flying through the air, he landed square on his ass. Not really sure what just happened, he began to start running his mouth again. Everett took one step towards him, and the words never materialized.

The officials gave Everett a 9.8. The Alternate gave him a perfect 10.

## INTERVIEW – POTENTIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did you decide to write your book?

First, I never would have written a book as long as I was still officiating. However, after I retired, it was suggested that I begin accumulating a list of topics that would remind me stories if I should ever decide to write one. I accumulated about 350 bullet points. Thought I could pass it down to my children and grandchildren. I got some positive feedback from Tony Barnhart and he encouraged me to continue writing. There is no retirement package from officiating so this might take it's place.

2. Who was your favorite and least favorite coach?

Favorites: Danny Ford, Les Miles, Bobby Johnson, Hal Mummy

Least Favorites: Carl Pelini Florida Atlantic

3. What was the best stadium to officiate in?

It really depends on a number of factors. Time of year, what's at stake, rivalry game, etc.

4. Of all the traditions in the SEC, what was your most inspiring?

5. What was a typical weekend like?

6. How many SEC championship games did you work?

I worked a total of 5 games; 2002, 2003, 2006, 2008 and 2017. The crews that I worked with were assigned the game two additional times but since there was a change due to me residing in the state of Georgia, I was pulled from those games because the University of Georgia was playing in the game.

7. Did you ever get hurt during a game?

Yes! I took five big hits during my career. Four of which caused me to be removed from the game.

8. What was the worst weather game you ever had?

9. What was the longest game you ever worked?

4 hours and 20 minutes. LSU at Alabama. It was a CBS game. 2007

10. Describe your worst travel experience to a game.

Hitting a horse drawn wagon with my car in Pontotoc, Mississippi on my way to Oxford for the Ole Miss spring game.

11. Did you have any routines that you followed?

12. What did you learn from writing your book?