

Story Of A Phone Call: 'College Football Fix Or Fantasy'

Editor's Note: One of the biggest sports controversies since the Chicago Black Sox scandal has swirled over a phone call made by former Georgia athletic director Wallace Butts to Alabama football coach Paul Bryant. A national magazine reported that Butts gave Georgia team secrets to Bryant. Both men denied the report. A team of UPI reporters has been covering the story—Sports Editor Leo H. Petersen, Al Kuetner and Leon Daniel of the Georgia staff and Donald Martin and Paul Phillips of the Alabama staff. In this special dispatch they report on the phone call and other aspects of the case.

A UPI Team Report
ATLANTA (UPI) — On a stormy Friday Sept. 14, 1962, a telephone call was made from Atlanta to Tuscaloosa, Ala., a distance of 180 miles.

The call, at \$1.15 for three minutes, has mushroomed into a major and sticky case which now includes a \$10 million suit for libel.

At the Atlanta end of the line was Wallace Butts, then athletic director at the University of Georgia and formerly its head football coach.

Calling from an Atlanta public relations firm where he was a frequent visitor, Butts talked to Paul (Bear) Bryant, head football coach at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa.

Georgia had a 50-0 team in 1961; Alabama was a Southeastern Conference powerhouse, defending national champion and considered a 17-point favorite in the 1962 season's opening game between the two teams at Birmingham on Sept. 22. In that game Alabama slaughtered Georgia, 55-0, before a crowd of 54,000.

Georgia wound up the 1962 season with three wins, four losses and three ties. Alabama piled up nine victories against an upset defeat to Georgia Tech and then went on to the Orange Bowl to defeat Oklahoma 17-0.

Story Breaks
Most fans thought football was over for another year. Then, during the March sports doldrums, one of the biggest football stories of a generation broke.

The Saturday Evening Post quoted an Atlanta insurance salesman named George Burnett as saying he was accidentally hooked into the Butts-Bryant telephone conversation. The magazine quoted Burnett as saying Butts gave Georgia team secrets to Bryant during the conversation. The listener said he jotted notes on a pad.

The Post story, entitled "The Story of a College Football Fix," touched off several investigations. Butts and Bryant issued denials that they had conspired to rig the ball game. Butts sued the Post for \$10 million.

Georgia Atty. Gen. Eugene Cook opened an investigation. So did an Alabama legislative committee. Investigators from the U.S. Senate racket committee began looking for violations of federal gambling laws.

Was something said during that conversation that gave Alabama, an odds-on favorite, an overwhelming advantage over Georgia?

Butts said no. Bryant said no. Burnett stuck to his story.

Releases Inquiry's Results
Cook Tuesday released the results of an investigation he said showed that Butts did indeed divulge vital team secrets. Cook also reported to Georgia Gov. Carl E. Sanders that Butts was in contact with known gamblers prior to the game he is charged with rigging.

Cook further disclosed that Butts had amassed a net fortune of approximately \$206,000 although his salary was \$16,000 a year.

Cook said that all members of the Georgia coaching staff but one were questioned as to the value of the information Butts allegedly gave Bryant and that six have given signed statements that such information "could have affected the outcome of the game."

William H. Schroder, Butts' attorney, "emphatically denied" the findings of Cook's investigation and said it was "quite obvious" to him the attorney general was determined to find Butts guilty.

Says Report Inaccurate
"The report is replete with inaccuracies and untruths," Schroder said.

Sanders told a news conference following release of Cook's report that there was in the investigation so far "nothing to indicate the violation of any criminal statute" by Butts.

The governor ordered the attorney general's report filed as an official document of the executive department and sent a copy to Southeastern Conference Commissioner Bernie Moore who is conducting his own investigation.

Warns Of Trouble
Butts was in Philadelphia in February on a business trip. He received a telephone call from John Carmichael, a director of Foundation Life Insurance Co. Butts was a director of the firm. Burnett was an employee.

"You might be in trouble when you get back," Carmichael told Butts and then related the conversation Burnett said he overheard.

"I told Mr. Carmichael I hadn't said anything wrong," Butts said. This week Butts said it again. "I'm innocent. I have done nothing wrong."

Butts, Bryant and Burnett took lie detector tests in an effort to prove their versions were correct. All three passed, according to the individuals conducting the tests. Burnett took the test twice. Bryant and Butts, on the advice of their lawyers, quit after the first "clearance." Burnett said he was willing to take a truth serum. For a while the authenticity of lie detector tests—which are not usually allowed into a courtroom—was questioned.

One of the lie detector questions asked Burnett: "Are you trying to frame Wally Butts and Bear Bryant?"

Answer: No. One of the questions put to Butts in his test:

"In your 35 years of coaching football have you ever 'connived to fix a game'?"

Answer: No.

Confined To Bed
Butts, worn haggard by business reverses, physical illness and emotional weariness, was sent to bed several times in those first days of the investigation.

Was the "little round man" who had produced seven bowl teams and four Southeastern Conference champions in his 22 years at Georgia the tough but honest "Mr. Football" of the Southeast? Or was he an opportunist who gave away his team's plays to help gamblers get ahead?

advance information on what the final score was likely to be?

Was Bryant, a giant in the coaching profession in Dixie, a party to one of the biggest sporting scandals since the Chicago Black Sox affair shook baseball in 1919?

Were these two men—longtime friends as well as rival coaches—simply exchanging chat-chat before a big game, angling for information about the other team? Other coaches in and out of the South profess openly they do this sort of thing all the time and find nothing unethical about it.

One Southeastern Conference coach told UPI: "I am certain that most coaches know more about the opposition, both offensively and defensively, than they know about their own team. This is due to thorough scouting reports and study of game films."

Butts has put it this way: "Recruiting, basic fundamentals, sense of timing and discipline win football games. Actual plays don't make any difference."

Refuses To Talk
Butts, one of the more gregarious SEC coaches, has refused to talk publicly about the conversation he had with Bryant.

This was on the advice of his lawyer, William Schroder, who will not acknowledge there was such a conversation.

It is against federal law for a third person to report the contents of a telephone conversation between two parties. Schroder also is expected to contend in pre-trial conferences over Butts' \$10 million libel suit that testimony about any such conversation would be inadmissible.

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Candid About Call
University of Alabama president Frank Rose is candid about the telephone call.

Rose wrote Dr. O. C. Aderhold, president of the University of Georgia, that Butts called Bryant on the day in question to warn him of a possible rules infraction involving the Alabama defense.

Rose expressed confidence that Bryant "was not involved in any attempt to rig or fix the game."

Calls Are Common
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One of these conversations in 1962, lasting for almost an hour, was with Florida State coach Bill Peterson, who recalled that only routine and official matters were discussed.

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Burnett, according to the Post, was trying to make a local telephone call in Atlanta to a friend named Milton Flack. He became connected by electronic error into the call Butts was making from the office in which Flack was located.

According to Burnett's account in the magazine, Bryant came from the practice field to talk with Butts. Burnett said Butts began giving Bryant information about the Georgia team and that he (Burnett) pulled a note pad to the phone and began taking notes.

Burnett, according to the Post, waited almost four months—until Jan. 4, 1963—to tell the story of the telephone call. This was to a friend, Bob Edwards, who gave it to Georgia's present coach, Johnny Griffith, the Post said. From there it went to Georgia officials.

Severs Career
On Jan. 28 Butts, a member of the Football Hall of Fame, retired as athletic director, severing an illustrious athletic career with the university.

This was the chronology of Butts' leaving Georgia: Jan. 6, 1961—Resigned as coach. Sept. 14, 1962—Alleged Butts-Bryant telephone conversation. Sept. 22, 1962—Georgia-Alabama game.

Jan. 4, 1963—Burnett tells his story to Edwards.

Jan. 28, 1963—Georgia athletic board accepts Butts' resignation as athletic director, effective at the end of the school year.

Pays For Information
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Werbell said Flack is not now in his employ and that he had the locks changed on the office doors at one point to prevent Flack—and "others"—from using the office.

Burnett, in recent years, has worked his way up to a junior executive position with Foundation Life Insurance Co. He has had trouble with his personal finances.

Charges On Record
Criminal court records show he was fined \$100 and put on one year probation for a series of five bad check charges. All the checks were written on accounts that had been closed, court records show.

He had been in similar difficulty in Texas in 1953.

Burnett's troubles with money first came to light in a meeting with University System of Georgia officials investigating the authenticity of his story about Butts.

He told them, according to the Post, that "I got into trouble because I've always had trouble handling my financial affairs and not because I acted with criminal intent."

When Butts' coaching days were over, he had hoped to retire pleasantly into business. But business has gone bad for Butts in recent years and he missed the rough and tumble of the athletic field.

He told an Atlanta group shortly after he was out as coach: "My friends tell me the first year of retirement is the worst. I'm looking forward to getting this one over with."

Much has happened since then.

BOWLING SCORES

NITE OWL LEAGUE		W	L
Sweepers	43/91	40/91	31
Panhandlers	42/42	42/42	31
AD's	43/91	43/91	31
Mustangs	53/91	49/91	31
H-Zums	51/91	52/91	31
Hottelingers	47/47	47/47	31
4-Danatics	40/91	42/91	31
The Blind Four	37/91	42/91	31
Results: 4-Danatics 4, Mustangs 0, H-Zums 0, A & O's 4, The Blind Four 0, Cotton Pickers 4, Sweepers 4, Panhandlers 4.			
High team game, 4-Danatics 824; high ind. game, Cotton Pickers 234; high ind. series (men), Howard Russell 518; high ind. game (women), Zelma Wilcher 190; high ind. series (women), Zelma Wilcher 523.			

BOOSTER LEAGUE		W	L
Duffs Heating	79/33	42/91	31
Heater Steel	44/44	42/91	31
Pelican Mobil	42/30	42/91	31
Jack's Color Chip	55/37	42/91	31
Kimball Glass	55/37	42/91	31
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Swift & Co.	40/42	42/91	31
Swartz Brothers	40/42	42/91	31
Nelson TV	47/45	42/91	31
Unique Market	47/45	42/91	31
Results: Kimball Glass 3, Swift & Co. 1, Duffs Heating 2, Pelican Mobil 3, Heater Steel 4, Heater Steel 0, Pelican Bros. 3, Nelson TV 1, Duffs Heating 1, Unique Market 1, Pelican Mobil 3, Andersons 1.			
High team game, Unique Market 1062; high team series, Duffs Heating 2999; high ind. game, Heater Steel 221; high ind. series, Leonard Heston 564.			

RAISIN LIONS LEAGUE		W	L
Dorris Lions	77/91	52/91	31
Boomers	75/35	52/91	31
Jungle Kings	71/59	52/91	31
Lions	49/41	52/91	31
Gents	47/41	52/91	31
The Butlers	40/42	52/91	31
Results: The Butlers 4, Dorris Lions 1, Tail Twisters 3, Gents 2, Boomers 2, Jungle Kings 2, Lions 3, Boomers 2, High team game, Boomers 712; high team series, The Butlers 253; high ind. game, H. B. Dexter 212; high ind. series, Jim Mosley 714.			

WOMEN'S CLASSIC LEAGUE		W	L
Suburban Finance	73/35	43/91	31
Beach Jewellers	44/43	43/91	31
Crafter Lake Creamery	57/31	43/91	31
Trophy House	54/31	43/91	31
Hatters Furniture	55/33	43/91	31
Holiday Bowl	50/34	43/91	31
One Hour Martinizing	48/42	43/91	31
Browns Plumbing	50/38	43/91	31
Results: One Hour Martinizing 3, Browns Plumbing 1, Suburban Finance 4, Hatters Furniture 4, Crafter Lake Creamery 1, Trophy House 3, Beach Jewellers 4, Holiday Bowl 0.			
High team game, Trophy House 724; high team series, Beach Jewellers 2040; high ind. game, Eole Tomlin 230; high ind. series, Eole Tomlin 528.			

LIONS AUXILIARY LEAGUE		W	L
Tail Twisters	42/38	43/91	31
Merrill	42/38	43/91	31
Jolly Jits	45/35	43/91	31
Results: Tail Twisters 4, Jolly Jits 0, Merrill 4, Jolly Jits 0.			
High team game, Tail Twisters 584; high team series, Tail Twisters 1734; high ind. game, Marge Mosley 147; high ind. series, Marge Mosley 523.			

HOLIDAY MASTERS LEAGUE		W	L
Crafter Enterprises	481/44	43/91	31
Hawley Blasting Service	474/41	43/91	31
Lewis Chevrolet	474/41	43/91	31
The Trophy House	474/41	43/91	31
Results: Tail Twisters 4, Jolly Jits 0, Merrill 4, Jolly Jits 0.			
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MOOSE PA'S LEAGUE		W	L
Lucky Lanes	474/41	43/91	31
Morgue Plumbing	474/41	43/91	31
C.P. & W.W. Ward	474/41	43/91	31
Aluminum Grocery	474/41	43/91	31
Results: Tail Twisters 4, Jolly Jits 0, Merrill 4, Jolly Jits 0.			
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JOLLY JINK LEAGUE		W	L
Klamath Brick & Tile	71/41	43/91	31
Tack Room	71/41	43/91	31
Les Huback	474/41	43/91	31
House of Shoes	474/41	43/91	31
Freemans Sashery	474/41	43/91	31
Winema Hotel	474/41	43/91	31
Klamath Lumber & Box	474/41	43/91	31
Bobs Flying A	474/41	43/91	31
Cloves Market	474/41	43/91	31
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