

UFA 9

Interviewee: Galen Hall

Interviewer: Dr. Michael Gannon

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G: I am Mike Gannon [retired Distinguished Service Professor of History, former director of Early Contact Period Studies, CLAS] and this is *Conversation*. Welcome to the eleventh season of our conversations from the campus of the University of Florida. Over the Monday nights to come, and we are repeated several times during the week as well, we will be talking with faculty members of our university, staff members of the university, and interesting and distinguished visitors to our university. In the weeks upcoming, we will be talking with a Nobel Prize winning geneticist, two faculty members who have recently returned from a visit to the Soviet Union, a professor of English who has written an important new book on the art of moviemaking in America, and many others besides.

It has been a tradition on this program to begin the new television series at Channel 5 on *Conversation* with an interview with the head football coach of the University of Florida. I am pleased to say that we continue that tradition tonight.

My guest on this *Conversation* is a man who is unbeaten and untied as head football coach of the Fighting Gators, a man who led the Fighting Gators to their first ever Southeastern Conference Championship (which is somewhat disputed now, but was not at the time), a man who Joe Paterno --his college coach at Penn State - called the smartest football player he has been around in thirty-five years, a man who *Sports Illustrated* called "Mr. Goodwrench." Galen Hall [Florida head football coach, 1984-1989], welcome to *Conversation*.

H: I thank you very much. I just heard that this is your eleventh season. Hopefully, eleven years from now I will still be sitting here.

G: Let's do it again eleven years from now.

H: I would hope so.

G: Galen, everybody says that you are a very relaxed type of person and that shows up in the way you run your football team. The players are relaxed, and they play football for fun. Is there some truth to that?

H: I think everyone has to be their own person. I cannot change my personality; it is something that I have lived with for forty-five years now. I cannot try to be someone I am not. I try not to let things bother me; I try to be relaxed and in control of things. Football is a tough game anyway. It is a demanding game. Our players are required to go on the practice field and have physical contact. And it is very time-consuming, and it is hard work. So I think there has to be some fun in it. There has to be some rewards for working very hard, and if you cannot relax, or maybe laugh at yourself and have a good time, then I am not

sure it is worth it.

- G: A lot of people credit you with instilling that relaxed atmosphere in the team last year, and many have said that was one of the principal ingredients to the Gator's success in 1984.
- H: I thank the people who say that. Hopefully, that had something to do with it. I think our 1984 football team was an extremely talented football team -- it really was. And I think that at the end of the year we were the best team in the nation. But it was a very talented [team], and it was just a matter of everything coming together, and everything worked out all right.
- G: You speak of the difficulties that the players have to undergo on the playing field -- all of the physical drills and contact, which take a lot out of the body. At the same time, they have a mental challenge, not only playing the game, but meeting their classroom responsibilities. I wonder if we can talk just a moment about the student in the student-athlete equation, and what you do to help the players succeed in the classroom.
- H: Just the other night I heard Dr. [John H.] Faricy [Distinguished Service Professor of Marketing, 1966-1997] say to the freshmen that the incoming freshman's [average] high school GPA is 3.4 and the average SAT [score] is 1090 [here at the University of Florida]. That is very high. Florida is a great academic institution, and we have to do everything we can to help our players along. We will try to recruit the good student-athlete. We do not want to bring an athlete into an unfair environment where he cannot survive. So we try to recruit the best student-athlete possible. We have study halls, we have tutors, we have the Office of Student Life which is there to help the student not only with his academics, but also [with] his social development on campus and any needs [he may have] outside of the athletic part of the program. I have been at a couple institutions, and I think that our athletic department tries to do more for their players than a lot of other institutions.
- G: Let's talk about football. I want to begin with a quotation I saw from an interview conducted with you two or three weeks ago in which you said, "There are three phases to the game of football: offense, defense, and the kicking game. And of the three, the kicking game is the most important." Why is that?
- H: Any mistakes in the kicking game are so obvious -- a blocked punt, a fumbled punt, a kick-off return [for a touchdown], a fumbled kick-off. You get the football about thirteen times a game. Any mistake in that kicking game takes one away from you and gives the opposition the added time -- fourteen possessions to twelve, per se. It is not only a loss of possession; it is more like a fifty-yard pass. They fumble a punt, and we recover it -- that is just like us hitting a fifty-yard

pass on someone. The object of offensive football is to score points. If you go down and do not score a touchdown, but kick a field goal, that is still points on the board. You have got to have a very sound kicking game, and I feel we will have a sound kicking game.

G: It is the job of the offense to score points, and sometimes the team will change its offensive formation as Oklahoma did this year going to the wishbone and as Auburn did going from the wishbone to the "I." Why does a team change its formation? My guess is it does so to accommodate the offense to the skills available. Am I partially right?

H: That is right. You have got to adapt you offense to your personnel. Auburn has a great running back in Bo Jackson and have [Brent] Fullwood behind him. So they have a couple of great running backs. I am sure they look at it [their wishbone formation] and see that Bo Jackson is not touching the football enough. I think that happened last year in the Alabama game where they got on the right hash mark, and they could not get Bo the football. They gave it to Fullwood. But if they were in the "I" formation, they could have given Bo the ball in either direction. I think that [type of limitation] is one of the problems with the wishbone. So you have got to adapt your offense to your personnel or to what your coaches understand. Oklahoma is going back to the wishbone because Barry Switzer [Oklahoma head football coach] knows the wishbone and that is what he feels most comfortable with. Since he is the head coach, I guess he can say what he wants to say. I think the main reason for your offensive change is for personnel.

G: What offensive formation will you use this year and for what reason?

H: We will use the same as we did last year. We will be in the "I" formation or the "pro" formation, and we will use a lot of different formations, probably more than we did last year. We used a lot of formations last year, but I feel our quarterback will be better able to handle all of the formations this year. We will not change our philosophy at all. We might have to do a little bit more of Kerwin Bell on the move. That might be the only change you will see in our offense.

G: Is that because of the offensive line, and the fact that it is not quite as strong as the "Great Wall of Florida" as it was called last year?

H: That is right. We had a great offensive line last year. I think we will have a good offensive line this year. The longer we play, the better we will get. We are so young and inexperienced that we will not play real good the first game, but we will play better the second and better the third. By mid-season, I think, we will have a respectable offensive line. But we have got to keep Kerwin on the move. We cannot let anyone zero-in on Kerwin. Last year we were good

enough that we could say that Kerwin is going to be back there nine yards deep and try to get to him. This year we might have to have him at five yards deep springing out, doing play action passes and bootlegs. We have to disguise where Kerwin is going to be this year.

G: You have two great running backs in Neil Anderson and John L. Williams, about as good a tandem as can be found in the country.

H: That is very true. At Oklahoma I was around some great backs: Joe Washington, Billy Simms, and Marcus Dupree who was there for a little bit. Neil Anderson and John L. Williams are in that same class. When they get into that category, I do not think you can say that one is better than the other; they are all in that class. I feel that they are two of the top running backs in the nation. I read an article the other day where the pros have Neil rated fourth in the nation at running back, and John L. first at full back. I think they are very talented. Hopefully they will stay healthy. That will be a key to our success this season. We will not go to the fifty-fifty rotation that Neil Anderson and Lorenzo Hampton had last year. Neil and John L. will probably play about 75 percent of the time, and we will rest them 25 percent. I think they are that good. They have got to be rested, but they have got to stay in the ballgame.

G: Who will play behind them?

H: Right now, James Massey is behind Neil. James has injured a wrist this fall. Whether he is ready for Miami, I do not know. This seems strange, but a freshman by the name of Wayne Williams from Titusville has had a very good preseason. He looks like he might be able to come up and help us at tailback. There are two players behind John L. Williams: Reggie Corlew, whose hamstring is now hurt, and Anthony Williams. I think they are both capable players to go in and help John out.

G: I was surprised to hear that last year John L. Williams was the leading pass receiver on the team.

H: We tried to take advantage of the coverages we were getting. They [UF's opponents] were trying to play a lot of man-to-man coverages against us which meant their linebackers were on our backs. We used a lot of play action to freeze the linebackers and try to slip John L. out. I would hope that we can continue to do that this year. I look for our backs to catch more passes this year than they did last year.

G: Let's talk about the defense. You return a lot of starters from the defensive line, do you not?

H: We are very solid on our defense; in fact, that has to be the strength of this

football team. And our players understand this. They [know] that they have got to help the offense early. Up-front, I think Alonzo Mitz and Keith Williams are two very fine down people. They are down tackles, and I think they are very good players. We have four inside linebackers who I think are quality players: Scott Armstrong, Arthur White, **Leo Penict**, and Gerold Dickens. At outside linebacker, I know we have probably the outstanding player at his position in college football in Alonzo Johnson who will be the all-time sack leader breaking Wilber Marshall's record maybe in the Miami game, if I understand right. So Alonzo Johnson along with Pat Miller and **Ronnie Moten** give us very good strength at that outside linebacker position. The problem we have on defense is at the noseguard position up-front. Henry Brown and **Jeff Froth** are two redshirt freshmen who are back, [but] who have not played. But anytime you get someone young who has some pretty good players around him I think it excites him, and I think they will go about 110 percent and play very good up-front.

G: That was Tim Newton's position last year.

H: Tim Newton and Ricky Williams both graduated.

G: Do you not have a few weaknesses in the defensive secondary? Ricky Mulberry has been hurt. Is he going to be able to play this Saturday?

H: Hopefully Ricky will be there. He is back at practice. This spring Ricky Mulberry was playing very well at corner, and then he got hurt the third week of spring. If Ricky had not have been hurt, we could have probably moved Jarvis Williams to strong safety. I think Jarvis understands that when he goes to the pros, he is going to be a strong safety, and we would like to move him in there, but we cannot. He is a corner, and he is probably the most dependable person in our secondary. Jarvis Williams and **Curtis Stacy** are our corners and are pretty good players. We lost **Ricky Easton** from last year who, I guess, is still hanging on with the Dallas Cowboys. Hopefully he can make it. We lost **Roger Civil** at strong safety, and Ricky Knight is there now. I think Ricky will play pretty well. Adrian White and **Brunell Brown** are at our safety position. Brunell Brown will play against Miami. I think we have some players there that are pretty sound and have played a little bit. We have got to stay healthy. Hopefully Ricky Mulberry will be back for Miami.

G: Let's talk about the kicking game. In Ray Criswell, you probably have the premier punter in the United States, and I understand that there is still a contest to see who is going to be your place kicker. Can you give us any clues there?

H: I think that Ray Criswell is the top punter in the nation. I feel very comfortable with Ray. Mike, maybe by the time this is aired on Monday, we will have an answer. Right now we do not have an answer. I told a group in Jacksonville

last night that last spring I said it was between Jeff Dawson and **Ron Finger**. Then I said in early fall that it was between Jeff Dawson, Ron Finger, and Chuck Nero. Now I am saying that it is between Jeff Dawson, Ron Finger, Chuck Nero, and John David Francis the freshman from Starke. We just do not know. They have all kicked about the same. I feel comfortable that whichever one we pick will do it. It is just a shame. They are all pretty good kickers. You expect someone to come to the front. But if one of them is kicking good that day, it seems they all kick good, and if one of them is kicking bad, they all kick bad. We have not decided yet.

G: One of that foursome kicked better than Bobby Raymond in the preseason last year, and then Raymond went on to be the one you selected and led the conference in scoring.

H: Two years ago when they were deciding on a kicker, it was between Bobby Raymond and Jeff Dawson. Supposedly they were equal or one had a slight edge. But then Jeff Dawson hurt his hamstring, and they selected Bobby Raymond who became the great kicker that he is. From what I hear, I do not know whether he is kicking that good. I was not here, so I do not know. No one has jumped to the lead, and I wish someone would hurry up and get to the lead and start to take some pressure off of me.

G: Can you keep all four of those [kickers] that you named on the team?

H: Yes. They are all walk-ons; they are not countable scholarships, which is now limited to eighty-five. The problem is that I do not know whether we can keep all of them happy, because we cannot travel all of them. Hopefully they will all stay out, because you never know what is going to happen. They are all quality young men, and I am just happy that they are there. And when this [program] is shown, maybe we will know who it is.

G: Galen, the team taken as a whole is faster, stronger, and bigger than any team in the history of Florida football judging from height, weight, leg press, bench press, vertical jump, and the thirty-yard dash. How do you account for this? Is this something that is unique to Florida or do we see this same pattern in college football generally across the country?

H: I think you are seeing it in college football. Pro football for some reason or another sets a trend in college football. It has in the passing game. Everyone sees [the wide open passing game] on Sunday and gets excited, so they want to see your colleges throw the ball more. Also the rule changes in the pros affects college football. The use of hands on offense allows you to be able to throw the football a little easier. As an offensive coach, I wish they would start bringing the hash marks in like they are in the pros, which would give our offense a little more

of an advantage. Fifteen or twenty years ago, the pros started [to emphasize] weightlifting and the very rigorous conditioning that has passed down to the colleges. Now every major college has a strength coach or a person in charge of their weight program. I think that Rich Tuten [strength coach, 1981-1989] is the finest one in the nation, and the fact that we are bigger, faster, and stronger can be attributed to him. Now if he can make them more experienced in the playing, I think that we would be a pretty good football team. But Rich Tuten does a great job with them.

G: Let's talk about next Saturday's game against the Miami Hurricanes. You are going up against a very classy program, and one that has been highly successful over the last three or four years with two great running backs in Highsmith and Bratton, and with apparently a very fine, but untested quarterback in Vinny Testaverde. Miami has an excellent coach who has directed a program that has a winning momentum. What kind of a game do you see?

H: I look at Miami as being in about the same situation that we are in. I think that their strength lies in defense. They have seven starters on their defensive unit. I think that last year Coach [Jimmy] Johnson did not coach his style of defense. He came in there after spring practice and had to go with the staff that was there, which I think was a very good staff. But he did not put his defensive philosophy into Miami's defense. With some coaches there leaving and going to Louisville this past season, he has hired his own people. He brought **Paul Jed** in, who was under him [Coach Johnson] at Oklahoma State when he was there, to coach his defense. I am familiar with the Oklahoma State defense, because of playing them when I was at Oklahoma all of those years. I think they will have a very aggressive and stunting defense. They do not like to sit still; they like to be on the move and blitz their secondary. I look for them to be a very aggressive defensive football team which hopefully we are. I think we will be fairly similar on that side of the ball. Offensively, I think they are going through the same problems we are. They lost four or five starters on their offensive line, as we did. They have two fine running backs, as we do. Kerwin Bell and Vinny Testaverde are probably very similar quarterbacks. I talked to Coach Johnson before the game last year in Tampa -- Jimmy and I coached together for four years at Oklahoma. I asked him about [Bernie] Kosar -- I had not seen him before, and I had heard so much about him. He said, Kosar is our quarterback, but Testaverde is not that far behind him. And this was before the season last year. Vinny took all of the snaps in the spring and fall, and I expect him to be a very capable quarterback. So I think the teams are very similar. I think it will be a tight football game; it will be a tough, physical football game; and I guess the old cliché is that the one who makes the least amount of mistakes is going to win. I look for it to be that type of football game.

G: Rutgers will be the first home game for Florida. What kind of team might we

expect to see on that day?

H: I think Rutgers is going to surprise the fans. They are not going to surprise the football team and the coaches, because we know what type of a program they have. Dick Anderson, who I played with at Penn State, is their coach. He was there just this last year, and they had a seven and four record at the end of their season. The thing about Rutgers is that they have played against Tennessee. I was leaving Birmingham and talking to Johnny Majors [Tennessee head football coach] about who we had to play. I said, we have to play Rutgers, and I think they play them this year too. He said, they came to Knoxville two years ago, and we beat the heck out of them six to nothing. [laughter] He said, then we went up [to New Jersey] and really put it to them in the Meadowlands [football stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey] with a thirteen to seven victory. They are the type of football team that will not be in awe of coming to Florida Field and playing the Florida Gators, because they have played teams like Alabama, Tennessee, and Penn State. Last year, they beat Syracuse nineteen to nothing. We beat Syracuse sixteen to nothing, and we had a very fine football team. They are a very capable, sound, and well-coached team, and they are going to be a lot better than what our fans are going to give them credit for.

G: Auburn has been placed alongside Florida as the class of the SEC this year and perhaps winner of the national championship. You have seen their films, and you have gone over their personnel. What kind of a team do you expect to see in them when you play them this time at Auburn?

H: Auburn probably should be rated the number one team in our league just from who they have returning. They lost one starter off of their offensive unit last year, who was their split receiver and was not even their leading pass receiver. Their offensive line along with Bo Jackson in the backfield has to make them a very solid offensive football team. Defensively, they have a lot of good players back. I feel that they might be the class of the league, and hopefully we will go up there and play a good game. I do not think they will take us for being easy. They will be ready to play, and we will be ready to play. I look for it to be a very good football game.

G: Later this evening we will see Georgia and its game against Alabama. So we will know a lot more about Vince Dooley's [Georgia head football coach] team after this evening. But as a preview, what kind of a team do you think he has and is he really weeping with good reason about his quarterback troubles?

H: I do not feel sorry for anyone who has quarterback troubles unless they are ours. We went through it last year and came out in pretty good shape. With a program like his, he is going to come up with a quarterback. He has so many players there. He is going to come up with a very good football team, because I

think the thing that Georgia does is always play good defense. Any team that plays good defense will be in the football game no matter what happens. I do not feel sorry for Georgia. Hell, I have only been here for eighteen months, and I do not feel sorry for Georgia any. I learn pretty fast. I hear that Alabama is supposed to have a good football team. I do not know anything about Alabama since we have not played them. We get them next year. I look forward to it being a very good football game, and I do not think that any team will score a lot of points.

G: FSU lost running backs Greg Allen and Roosevelt Snipes very recently, but they have a very exciting recruit in Sammy Smith, somebody you went after yourself.

G: We tried very hard to get Sammy Smith. For whatever reasons, he went to Florida State. He is an outstanding football player. They open against Tulane. I do not think they will start Sammy Smith. I think he will get in the game early, and I feel that he is a quality player.

G: Looking down the line of the 1985 season, obviously the Florida football team is going to acquit itself well and will have a great number of successes. What is the thing that worries you most about the schedule and the team?

H: The difficult parts of our schedule. I think we will be ready to play Miami and Rutgers. We have very tough back to back road games against Mississippi State and LSU. Then [we have] the road game at Auburn.

G: Auburn and Georgia are back to back again.

H: Yes. I think it is the toughest schedule that anyone has in the nation. It is very demanding. For us to be successful, we are going to have to eliminate mistakes on offense, we cannot beat ourselves, and we are going to have to stay injury-free. The twenty-two [players] that we are going to put out on the field are going to be as good as or comparable to the other team's twenty-two. I think that we will be in the games, and if we can stay injury-free, I think we will have a good year.

G: And a last word about fans. What is fan support like at Florida compared with your experiences at Oklahoma? Do we compare well?

H: The Florida fans do not have to take a back seat to anyone. I was amazed, and I have told this story. Last year at Tampa, I could not even talk to Kerwin on the field during the pre-game because the crowd was so noisy. We went to the press box, and it was so noisy up there that I turned to one of the coaches and said, are the fans like this at every game? They said, no, they are louder at Florida State, Auburn, and Georgia. It just amazed me that they could be any louder. I think that the fan support here is as good as it is anywhere in the

nation.

G: Galen, on that note, lots of success to you personally and to your other coaches and to the players in the 1985 season. Good luck to you this Saturday at Miami against the Hurricanes. I appreciate very much your helping get my season off to a start. And remember that date -- eleven years from now.

H: We will be here.

G: That is right. Thanks very much.

H: Thank you, Mike. I appreciate it.