

### NO PREDICTIONS IN 2004, ONLY SLAM DUNKS

I don't make predictions anymore. I learned the hard way that while readers never remember anyone else's predictions, they never forget mine. A couple of years ago, when I was feeling wiser than an owl, I said Democratic Gov. Roy Barnes would easily win re-election. Sonny Perdue, Barnes' opponent, was a Democrat-turned-Republican and the author of controversial natural gas deregulation while in the Legislature. No way he would beat the well-financed incumbent governor, I predicted. The fact that everybody else said much the same thing didn't seem to matter. Every Republican in Georgia clipped and saved that column, and when Perdue won, they beat me over the head with it. At that point I swore off predictions.

From here on out, I am sticking to sure things. Slam-dunks. Predictions are out. Slam-dunks are in. For example, one slam-dunk is that Martha Burke will show up again this year in Augusta during Masters Week with a gaggle of supporters and a bunch of national media weenies to protest in righteous indignation the burning nonissue of women members at the private Augusta National Golf Club. Jesse Jackson will refuse to appear unless he is guaranteed his own bullhorn and can think of something that rhymes with "7-iron." The Masters will be a great success, and Martha will crawl back under the rock from whence she came.

The Atlanta newspapers will continue to feign surprise that the city's sewer problems have been worsening right under their noses for the past four decades. The editors will devote most of their efforts this year to beating up on George Bush, including 365 editorial cartoons showing the president with big ears. The editors will have to hold all of their meetings outdoors because they won't be able to flush their toilets.

University of Georgia Athletic Director Vince Dooley will retire in June after 40 years of distinguished service to the university. UGA President Michael Adams will take personal control of athletics and will spend all the athletic department's money playing golf in Scotland and faxing out his resume. The state Board of Regents will awake from their coma and fire Adams, but will give him more money than he was making at UGA. Adams will buy the Old Course at St. Andrews.

Republican Johnny Isakson will be elected to the U.S. Senate this fall by a wide margin. Later, voters will change their minds and demand that Zell Miller be returned to Washington when they realize that Isakson doesn't use words like "turnip head" and "mule brain" to describe his Democratic colleagues.

Georgians will vote overwhelmingly for the new state flag in the March referendum. Flaggers, who wanted the Confederate battle flag on the referendum, will announce they won't support Gov. Sonny Perdue's re-election campaign. The governor will announce that he'd rather have the support of the schoolteachers, because they can read and write. The flaggers will then discover that none of the potential Democratic gubernatorial candidates will have anything to do with them because they have no sense of humor. Having alienated everybody in the state, flaggers will then undertake an effort to draft Stonewall Jackson as their official candidate. Jackson will decline because he is dead.

Gov. Howard Dean of Vermont will win the Democratic Party nomination for president. He will select Martin Sheen as his vice president. George W. Bush will win re-election because only union leaders, gay rights organizations and movie stars will vote for Dean. Dean will get mad and go back to Vermont where he will buy a pickup truck with a Confederate flag in the back window. This will please the flaggers, who will then ask him to run for governor of Georgia.

In football, the Georgia Bulldogs will go undefeated and will win the national championship. Georgia Southern will win the 1-AA title. Georgia Tech will cap off another successful 6-5 season and play Cal Tech in the Plastic Pocket Protector Bowl.

On a personal note, I will continue to honor my longstanding policy of offending no one unless absolutely necessary. Now, that is a slam-dunk you can clip and save.