

GRANDSONS AT TECH AND UGA MAKE FOR SOME HARD CHOICES

I've been a grandfather for more than 19 years, and until now it has been a slam-dunk. Grandparenting is great revenge for those fortunate enough to have survived raising their own kids. Now you get to listen to your children complain about how temperamental their kids are, conveniently forgetting that they were a king-sized horse's rump themselves at the same age.

You also get to hear your grandchildren tell their parents what a kind and caring grandfather you are and have them wonder aloud why Mom and Dad can't be more like Pa, and then have your children try to explain how judgmental, stiff-necked and unreasonable Pa used to be when he was a mere father and didn't walk on water. The grandboys don't buy it for a minute. Tee-hee.

Well, the easy part of being a grandfather is about to come to a screeching halt. Here's my problem: A new football season is upon us, and my oldest grandson, Zack Wansley, is entering his sophomore year at Georgia Tech at the same time that his younger brother, Nicholas, begins his freshman year at my beloved alma mater, the University of Georgia — the oldest state-chartered university in the nation, located in Athens, the Classic City of the South. I have some hard choices ahead of me.

Zack is a Yellow Jacket to the core. Growing up in a house full of Georgia Bulldogs hasn't affected him at all. The rascal has been a Tech fan all his life — he may have been dropped on his head when he was a baby — and is as proud of being a Ramblin' Wreck from Georgia Tech as Nicholas is of being a Bulldog. To my Tech readers, you will be pleased to know that Zack can more than hold his own with woof-woofing Dawgs. He's had a lot of experience in his own household.

Meanwhile Nicholas is a third-generation Wansley at UGA, following in the footsteps of his granddad, Jerry, and his father, Ted. He is also the third generation in my family to attend school in Athens. His momma, Maribeth, and I both got journalism degrees there. Ironically, he is housed in the same dorm on campus where his mom and dad stayed during their college days.

Obviously, I am extremely proud of both these high achievers. (Zack is majoring in civil engineering, and Nicholas plans to be an environmental chemist.) But having a grandson at Tech and one at Georgia puts me on the spot. Who do I support when the season starts?

Do I attempt to change a lifelong behavioral pattern and root for Georgia Tech — except when they play you-know-who — even though I derive much amusement from twitting Techies, most of whom have about as much of a sense of humor as flaggers, liberal weenies and transplanted Yankees? Since it is generally agreed by most relevant theologians that God is a Bulldog, would he strike me dead for my blatant hypocrisy?

Seeing me pull for Tech would thrill Zack, no doubt, but what about Nicholas? How could his grandfather, who has been president of the University of Georgia National Alumni Association and bleeds red and black, go disloyal on him now? How many times has he heard me tell him that Georgia Tech is my third favorite team on earth — UGA being first, anybody playing Tech is second, making the Yellow Jackets a solid third. And now that Nicholas is at Athens like his momma and daddy and both grandfathers before him, Pa starts rooting for Tech? Why not just announce that I am going to streak across the campus at high noon in my birthday suit and really embarrass him?

There is no way that Zack and Nicholas are going to allow me an easy way out of this dilemma. They know that whichever way I go will send a strong signal as to which of the boys I truly favor. So, with one grandboy at Georgia Tech and another one at Georgia, to whom do I give my allegiance this season? Why, to my grandboys, of course. Sometimes I am so brilliant I scare myself.