

2002 Freshmen Class

INCOMING ANALYSIS AND RATING – 4.0* Good

Coach Dennis Franchione entered his second recruiting season with the unknown still paralyzing the football program. One year ago Coach Fran and his staff started recruiting only weeks before signing day. They quickly discovered rival schools had made sure the prospect's mind were cluttered with negative information about the outcome of the ongoing NCAA investigations and possible sanctions. Again this year the "unknown" was a major obstacle in the staff's efforts to secure prime prospects. Negative recruiting tactics were common place and the staff spent valuable time clearing any concerns prospects and their parents had with the university.

Coach Fran and staff went about the job being honest and straight with the kids that the outcome would be known soon and BAMA would handle it properly and move on. Finally in December word was received the details of the infraction committee decision would be known before signing day. Most insiders hinted the sanctions would be basically the self-imposed penalty of reduced scholarships submitted by the university. With that the commitments started to increase and things look to be much better. By mid January only a few scholarships were available and then the "letter" arrived and we got a big surprise.

The sanctions stated were far beyond anything expected as the self-imposed amount of 15 scholarships was upped to 21 and a two-year bowl ban was included. Shocking was the word to describe the feelings of most BAMA fans. With the decision to appeal the sanctions by the university, the job now was to hold on to our commitments. The high school commitments quickly reaffirmed their desire to attend BAMA. The JC commitments had a tough decision with the rulings. If the two-year bowl ban were upheld in the appeal process they would never be able to play in a bowl or championship game. All four were keys to the class and all but one signed. LB Derrick Pope spent a week looking at other options but signed and is headed to T-Town.

As in past years, the NCAA's timing when announcing their decision seemed to be orchestrated to put as much damage as possible on BAMA's recruiting class. It didn't work as all but a couple of the prospects BAMA really wanted signed and stated they were happy to be in T-Town. Coach Fran handled the situation flawlessly and continues his amazing ability to face dilemmas and adverse situations with class in both words and actions.

The incoming rating for this class is very impressive under the circumstances. The 4.0* (Good) is a good barometer of the job Coach Fran and staff have done with all the odds against them. After two years it's becoming very clear Coach Fran's recruiting plan is to sign the best prospects in-state and if a kid loves BAMA and has ability he will be provided an opportunity at BAMA. Coach Fran that would not have even been looked at by the previous staff has signed several kids. The long list of "5" rated signees from the Coach Mike Dubose era we come to expect on signing day have been replaced by kids who have been evaluated by the staff and offered based on their ability and potential instead of their recruiting rating. Time will tell if this kid's success rate is as good as the blue chip prospects Coach Mike Dubose signed the past three years.

This class does include several highly rated signees. As mentioned earlier LB Derrick Pope was key signee for this class with the departure Saleem Rasheed. Pope is the top LB prospect from the JC ranks and should provide immediate playing time and afford RS Freshman Freddie Roach time to slowly develop. JC help was a priority for several positions and another JC star should help the cornerback position. DB David Scott should help at a position that will have two returning senior starters but he could claim a starting role with his size and speed. The defensive line will hopefully get a "large" contribution from JC DL Ahmad Childress. This huge DL signee could hook up with Sophomore DL Anthony Bryant and give BAMA a pair of 330-pound defensive tackles. He also has 3 years of eligibility left. The last JC signee is the big WR BAMA has needed for several years. WR Zach Fletcher is the tall receiver with leaping ability that will provide an added dimension in the red zone for BAMA. Playing at BAMA is his dream come true.

Two in state RB's are both "5" rated and big- time prospects. Kenneth Darby comes to BAMA with a love for the school and great potential. The other RB signee is working hard to be eligible but may start in JC. Titus Ryan has size and speed and is a possible WR or DB with his 6'2" height. Both these RBs could end up an another position but their potential is unlimited whatever position they play. LB Demeco Ryans is a highly rated LB prospect who will need to add bulk but like so many signees in this class talks of his love for BAMA and desire to wear Crimson. The defensive line not only got JC help from Childress, but also added 3 signees from high school. "5" rated DE Kyle Tatum is one of the state's top prospects and has tremendous size. Two other DL signees were Jeremy Clark and Henry Smith as 4 DL was signed. Smith will possibly start his career in JC. Some feel every class needs a QB and BAMA added a very athletic and talented QB in this class with Brandon Avalos. He has super physical ability and along with RS Freshmen Brodie Croyle and Spencer Pennington gives BAMA a trio of potentially outstanding QBs for the future.

In my analysis of last year's class I mentioned that Coach Fran's first class was a special group. They signed with BAMA at a time when the NCAA was investigating the program. Many of those kids stated their love for BAMA and were happy to be in T-Town even if some things were uncertain. This 2002 class found out what the unknown was with the NCAA announcing BAMA'S sanctions from the investigation before signing day. As with last year's class the majority of this class stated their love for

BAMA and all signed. Only a couple of prospects were lost after the announcement. These classes were both potential disasters under the conditions but both include some outstanding and gifted athletes. Though their ratings are not what we've come to expect after Coach Dubose's banner 1998-2000 classes full of "5" rated prospects, it's great to hear so many signees making statements about their love and their dream to play for the Crimson Tide!!! At a time when so many negative items about BAMA were being printed and things look bleak, Coach Fran and staff find plenty of great prospects that love the TIDE and desire to be in T-Town. The appeal to the NCAA to soften its severe sanctions on BAMA is ahead. If they can get the 2-year bowl ban dropped and scholarship total dropped back to 15 from 21, then things will get better a lot quicker. These classes will be interesting to watch over the next 4-5 years as they seem to be special and have a great attitude and love for the TIDE!!!

See the class list on the following page

| 2002 Class - Coach Francione | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|--------|-----|
| Name | Pos. | St. | Incoming Rating | Outgoing Rating | Honors | NFL |
| Brandon Avalos | QB | AL | 4 | | | |
| Chris Browder | LB | AL | 4 | | | |
| Ahamad Childress JC | DL | KS | 4 | | | |
| Jeremy Clark | DL | AL | 4 | | | |
| Kenneth Darby | RB | AL | 5 | | | |
| Grant Dickey | OL | TX | 4 | | | |
| Zach Fletcher | WR | AL | 4 | | | |
| Juwan Garth | LB | AL | 3 | | | |
| Chris Harris | DE | AL | 4 | | | |
| Nic Luke | RB | AL | 3 | | | |
| Chauncey Malone | DB | AL | 3 | | | |
| Greg McLain | FB | AL | 3 | | | |
| Earnest Nance | LB | AL | 3 | | | |
| Derrick Pope JC | LB | KS | 5 | | | |
| Ramzee Robinson | DB | AL | 3 | | | |
| Titus Ryan | RB | AL | 5 | | | |
| Demeco Ryans | LB | AL | 5 | | | |
| David Scott JC | DB | MS | 4 | | | |
| Henry Smith | DL | AL | 4 | | | |
| Kyle Tatum | DL | AL | 5 | | | |
| Overall | | | 4.0 | | | |

Incoming class rating system

3.6 – LessPoor

3.7 – 3.9Average

4.0 – 4.1 Good

4.2 – Above..... Excellent

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