

## My "Freshman Class Reviews"

I have enjoyed following recruiting since 1980. In 1980 I purchased subscriptions for national recruiting publications Joe Terranova and Blue Chips. The information they provided about high school stars all over America really fascinated me. Especially when I could find prospects linked to BAMA in them and learn facts about those prospects you never knew until they signed. When I put those national publications with the good state coverage provided by the B'Ham P-H, plus good Southeastern coverage provided by the Atlanta J-C, I was hooked! I had found a hobby to get me through the off season and satisfy my BAMA football craving.

These reviews include the list of signees and my personal ratings for the signees. The first couple of years, I would average the individual ratings for the entire class and get a class rating. We all do that now, but in those days you didn't see that rating unless you did it yourself. One thing I kept hearing coaches say on signing day was "we'll know how good this class really is in a few years". The more I thought about it, they were right. I needed a rating for the class after it's eligibility was over. What did they accomplish?

So in 1984 when the entire 1980 class had completed their eligibility, I created a rating system for evaluating player's careers and gave the class what I call their "outgoing rating". I call the signing day rating their "incoming rating". I have continued this through the years and it really provides some interesting and solid numbers. As you will see, that favorite statement coaches love to use is pretty accurate. Signing day euphoria does not guarantee the same 4-5 years later.

I believe the format I've decided to use has made the reviews easier to understand and something you can have fun with comparing classes and coaches. I have grouped the classes in chronological order by the Head Coach's era. I will start with (PART 1) Coach Bryant 1980 – 1982, (PART 2) Coach Ray Perkins 1983 - 1986, (PART 3) Coach Bill Curry 1987- 1989, (PART 4) Coach Gene Stallings 1990 – 1996. With the classes grouped like this, you can compare individuals and coaches ratings very easily.

I obtained lists of recruiting classes from 1970 –1979. I got the list at the University archives. While I was there and received the lists, I was disappointed to find no profiles with the list. Well, a good BAMA man over heard me and advised me he had the profiles I desired. I had met fellow TI BamaKen. He has provided me with some great information on 70's signees from his archives. My thanks to BamaKen for his generous help. I will not rate them, just make list with a few tidbits of information.

Thanks to everyone for the nice comments. I know many more people follow recruiting today than when I started in 1980. Many of the younger TI recruiting "junkies" have expressed their thanks for the list from the 80's before they started this "addiction". Well the 70's list will seem ancient to those guys! (G)

I hope you enjoy the list and reviews. Please remember, the ratings are just my personal opinions, so enjoy the list and don't take the ratings too seriously. (G) ROLL TIDE!!!

## Part 1. “Freshman Class Reviews” ... Coach Bryant 1980 –1982

The 1980 – 1982 recruiting classes were Coach Bryant’s final three. They followed consecutive National Championships in 1978 and 1979. Due to the age of Coach Bryant and then health problems at the end of his career, opponents tried to turn the euphoria of back to back National Championships into a negative situation at BAMA with talk of Coach Bryant retiring or stepping down. Talk of a major coaching turn over during the prospects career or the unknown factor of who would be the next coach was used. The true number of prospects this scenario affected has been discussed many times, but IMO, most were out of state kids. BAMA’s tradition and national prominence was strong and solid prospects were still signed. These lists will reflect a smaller number of out of state signees compared to the 70’s list I’ve seen in which BAMA annually signed numerous highly rated out of state prospects.

### Ratings for 1980 – 1982 Recruiting Classes

	INCOMING	OUTGOING
1980	3.8 *Average	2.7 * Poor
1981	3.9 *Average	2.7 * Poor
1982	4.1 *Good	2.9 *Poor

I’m happy to share this information with everyone. These lists are difficult to find from past years. I hope the tidbits (\*BAMA K’s famous word) (G) provided are of interest also. Please remember the ratings are from my personal evaluation and opinion, but you get some idea of how the classes turned out.

\*\*\* I rated these classes each year as they completed their eligibility. I vowed to never change the individual ratings in later years because I felt it would be too easy to keep going back and change them. I have changed a couple of player's ratings after some facts about them were pointed out to me. After researching those facts, I decided to update a couple of players.

\*\*\* The factors and criteria I used for my ratings and rating systems, are at the end of this document. Opinions and comments are welcomed.

## 1980 Freshman Class

### INCOMING ANALYSIS AND RATING - 3.8 \*Average

This class was the first group of signees I rated with an incoming grade. This recruiting class followed consecutive National Championship in 1978 and 1979. Coach Bryant and staff did not sign the type class you would expect following consecutive championships. Usually that type success provides a great atmosphere for the recruiting period and great classes are signed. Also, Coach Bryant was closing in on the all-time record for career wins. IMO, this was the first year prospects were reminded that Coach Bryant was near the end of his career. Even in those days, kids didn't cherish a coaching change during their career. Opposing schools finally had a weapon to use against BAMA in the battles for blue chip prospects. IMO, the in-state kids continued to choose the TIDE as most desired to play for the BEAR, the soon to be all-time record holder for career wins. But, the number of highly rated out of state signees starts to drop during the remainder of Coach Bryant's career.

This class had an incoming rating of 3.8 \*(Average). Of the 30 signees, I gave only seven a "5" rating. Only 17 of 30 signees (57%) were rated a "4" or above. A low number for a BAMA recruiting class. A good percentage is considered to be 80% of the class.

The "5" rated signees were led by prize prospect RB Linnie Patrick of Jasper, AL He was regarded by all sources as one of the top 3 players in America. Other "5" rated signees were WR Jesse Bendross from FL, QB Walter Lewis from Brewton, AL, LB Marcus Hill from Dothan, AL, RB Paul Ott Carruth from MS, OL Bruce Davis from LA, and DL Mark Jackson from TX.

## OUTGOING ANALYSIS AND RATING - 2.7 \*Poor

This was also the first group I rated with an outgoing grade. The class produced an outgoing rating of 2.7 \* (Poor). Overall, the class had only 12 of 30 players contribute "3" plus careers. (60% good class contribution). The factor that really hurt the class rating was 8 original signees were rated a "1". (Never arrived, quit, left, etc.)

The only member of this class to earn All-American status was QB Walter Lewis. In 1983 he was both an All-American and All-SEC selection. Other players selected as All-SEC during their career were OL Mike Adcock (1), RB Paul Ott Carruth (1), WR Joey Jones (1), and OL Doug Vickers (1). WR Joey Jones is regarded as one of the most popular players to wear CRIMSON. WR Jesse Bendross contributed an outstanding career and ranks high on many receiving categories. RB Linnie Patrick produced only an average career with only one memorable performance against AUB.

This class was on the 1981 SEC Championship team. They were the upperclassmen on 8-4 teams in 1982 and 1983. The 5<sup>th</sup> year seniors finished their careers on the 5-6 team in 1984.

\*\*\* The factors and criteria I used for my ratings and rating systems, are at the end of this document. Opinions and comments are welcomed.

1980 Class – Bear Bryant						
Name	Pos.	St.	Incoming Rating	Outgoing Rating	Honors	NFL
Mike Adcock	OL	AL	4	5	SEC	
Jesse Bendross	R	FL	5	5		*
Jeff Bohannon	OL	AL	3	1		
Steve Booker	LB	AL	4	3		
Dante Bramlett	LB	GA	4	2		
Paul Ott Carruth	RB	MS	5	5	SEC	*
Joe Carter	RB	MS	4	4		*
Bruce Davis	OL	LA	5	1		
Charles Fields	RB	AL	4	1		
Paul Fields	QB	AL	4	2		
Jay Grogan	RB	AL	3	2		
Marcus Hill	LB	AL	5	1		
Jim Ivy	DL	AL	4	2		
Mark Jackson	DL	AL	5	2		
Joey Jones	W	AL	4	5	SEC	*
Jerry Lambert	LB	FL	3	1		
Walter Lewis	QB	AL	5	6	A-A, SEC	*
Andy Martin	DB	AL	3	1		
Tom McCrary	DL	AL	3	2		
Scott McRae	DB	AL	3	3		
Linnie Patrick	RB	AL	5	4		
Daryl Purvine	LB	GA	3	1		
Mike Rodriguez	TE	FL	3	4		
Kurt Schmissrauter	OL	TN	4	2		
Anthony Smiley	DL	AL	3	3		
Alan Underwood	DL	AL	3	1		
Doug Vickers	OL	AL	4	5	SEC	
Jimmy Watts	DB	FL	3	2		
Mike White	DL	GA	2	2		
Lloyd Wofford	DL	GA	3	2		
Overall			3.8	2.7	A-A (1), SEC (5)	5

## 1981 Freshman Class

### INCOMING ANALYSIS AND RATING - 3.9 \*Average

This class had an incoming rating of 3.9 \*(Average). Like 1980, Coach Bryant had his age and health used as an issue by opposing schools with prospects. The kids were reminded an imminent coaching change would occur during a BAMA career. Many have analyzed this scenario and believe it hurt BAMA's recruiting significantly. When you look at the small number of highly rated players signed in 1980 and again in this class, it was indeed a factor.

Only five "5" rated prospects were signed, a very low number for BAMA. One of the prize prospects was QB Perry Cuda from South Carolina. He was regarded as one of the top QB prospects in America. Other key signees were DE Emanuel King from Leroy, AL, OL Brent Sowell from FL, and Huntsville stars RB Ricky Moore and National recruit OL Hardy Lee Walker.

### OUTGOING ANALYSIS AND RATING - 2.7 \*Poor

This class had an outgoing rating of 2.7 \*(Poor). Of the five incoming "5" rated signees, only two produced outstanding careers. These two were the only players in the entire class to achieve all-star status. RB Ricky Moore had an outstanding career. He was an All-American and All-SEC player in 1983. He ranks high on several career rushing categories. DE Emanuel King was a 2-time All-SEC selection. Prize QB prospect Perry Cuda never developed or contributed at BAMA. Highly rated OL Hardy Lee Walker produced only an average career.

This class was freshmen on the 1981 SEC Championship team. They were the upperclassmen on the 8-4 team in 1983 and 5-6 team in 1984. Only 5 players in this class were multiple year starters during their career. It would seem very few members of this class progressed significantly during their years at BAMA.

\*\*\* The factors and criteria I used for my ratings and rating systems, are at the end of this document. Opinions and comments are welcomed.

1981 Class – Bear Bryant						
Name	Pos.	St.	Incoming Rating	Outgoing Rating	Honors	NFL
Ricky Colbert	DB	AL	4	1		
Rocky Colburn	DB	FL	3	3		
Perry Cuda	QB	SC	5	1		
Joe Dismuke	OL	AL	4	3		
Craig Florence	WR	AL	4	2		
Tommy Gibson	DL	AL	3	1		
David Gilmer	OL	GA	4	3		
Mickey Guinyard	RB	GA	4	2		
Sammy Hood	QB	AL	3	3		
Don Horstead	RB	AL	4	3		
Emanuel King	DL	AL	5	5	SEC (2)	*
Chuck McCall	OL	AL	4	1		
John McIntosh	OL	GA	3	3		
Ricky Moore	RB	AL	5	6	A-A, SEC	*
Greg Peeples	DL	AL	3	1		
Todd Roper	DL	GA	4	3		
Terry Sanders	PK	AL	4	4		
Willard Scissum	OL	AL	3	4		
Brent Sowell	OL	AL	5	3		
Craig Turner	RB	MD	4	4		
Hardy Lee Walker	OL	AL	5	3		
Jon Williams	OL	AL	3	1		
Overall			3.9	2.7	A-A (1), SEC (2)	2

## 1982 Freshman Class

### INCOMING ANALYSIS AND RATING - 4.1 \* Good

This class had an incoming rating of 4.1 \* (Good). This was Coach Bryant's last recruiting class at BAMA. After average classes in 1980 and 1981, this 1982 class rated a "good" 4.1. With the imminent fact of Coach Bryant's career ending soon and a major coaching change, opposing teams had success luring out of state prospects away from BAMA that probably would have signed otherwise. But, thanks to a strong in-state group of signees, a good class rating was achieved. I rated 7 of the 20 signees as a "5". A very good 14 of 20 signees rated "4" plus.

Of the seven "5" rated signees, five were from Alabama. DL Jon Hand from Sylacauga, was a Parade All-American and rated high on most national recruiting list. LB Wes Neighbors from Huntsville was generally considered the top prospect in the state. He was on all national recruiting lists as one of the top LBS in America. The other prize in-state signees were OL David "Hoss" Johnson from Huntsville, DE Larry Roberts from Dothan, and LB Derrick Slaughter from Birmingham. The two out of state blue chip signees were DL Cliff Thomas from MS and ATH Todd Wilkins from FL.

### OUTGOING ANALYSIS AND RATING - 2.9 \* Poor

This class had an outgoing rating of 2.9 \* (Poor). Overall, this class had 12 of 20 signees contribute "3" plus career ratings which I rate as good class contribution. But, six signees rated a "1" (never arrived, quit, left, etc), too many for a class of 20 signees. Also, only 3 players earned all-star status.

Wes Neighbors, a LB signee, made the switch to center and was a 2-time All-American and 3-time All-SEC selection. DL Jon Hand was an All-American in 1985 and a 2-time All-SEC selection. DB Freddie Robinson was a 2-time All-SEC selection and solid 4-year contributor. OL Hoss Johnson and DL Larry Roberts also contributed solid careers. Roberts played TE, OL, and finally DL before settling on a position. Many believe he would have earned all-star status if he had stayed at one position for his career.

This class was never a part of a championship team. The members of this class carry a very special memory, the last class to be recruited by Coach Bryant.

\*\*\* The factors and criteria I used for my ratings and rating systems, are at the end of this document. Opinions and comments are welcomed.

1982 Class – Bear Bryant						
Name	Pos.	St.	Incoming Rating	Outgoing Rating	Honors	NFL
Chester Braggs	OL	AL	3	3		
Venson Elder	WR	FL	4	1		
Joe Godwin	OL	AL	4	3		
Jon Hand	LB	AL	5	6	A-A, SEC (2)	*
Desmond Holomon	LB	GA	4	2		
Rodney Jarmon	RB	MS	4	1		
David Johnson	RB	MS	5	4		
Shon Lee	OL	LA	3	3		
Wes Neighbors	RB	AL	5	6	A-A (2), SEC (3)	
Gary Otten	QB	AL	3	3		
John Pemberton	RB	AL	4	1		
Larry Roberts	LB	AL	5	4		*
Freddie Robinson	DL	AL	4	6	SEC (2)	*
Derrick Slaughter	DL	AL	5	3		
Joe Smith	WR	AL	3	3		
Mike Spencer	LB	FL	4	1		
Cliff Thomas	QB	AL	5	2		
Kevin Welniak	DB	AL	2	1		
Todd Wilkins	DL	AL	5	1		
Vernon Wilkerson	DB	AL	4	3		
Overall			4.1	2.9	A-A (1), SEC (5)	3

## RATING FACTORS

### INCOMING RATING

In the early 80's, there were very few recruiting publications available. I ordered Joe Terranova in 1980 because he was generally regarded as the National expert. Blue Chips out of California was also a National publication I ordered. I used newspapers like the Atlanta J-C and B'Ham P-H for the Southeastern list and ratings. In the following years, I subscribed to Max Emfinger for a National list. In the South, Forrest Davis came on the scene and finally in the late 80's numerous publications became available. The best of which IMO was and still is Pigskin Preps. Barry Holland and I are from North Alabama and learned of each other's interest in recruiting. We shared information and many phone calls for years. Then Barry and Freddie Kirby started Pigskin Preps, a very accurate recruiting publication was created. Freddie is a "walking computer" full of recruiting information. Many of you know him and will agree. These guys got me started going to T-Town to observe prospects on their official visits and it remains an annual ritual.

My incoming ratings are based on a 1 to 5 scale with a "5" rating the highest. A "5" rated player is basically a top 75 prospect in the Southeast or a top 200 player in the nation. Each year I get several different lists of ratings for high school prospects, then give each signee an incoming rating based on those sources. I then take those individual ratings and average them for a "class incoming rating". I consider a class incoming rating of 4.0 to 4.1 as good. It requires 80% of the total class to be rated a "4" or above to achieve that number.

### CLASS RATING SCALE

3.6 – less ..... Poor  
3.7 – 3.9 .....Average  
4.0 – 4.1 .....Good  
4.2 – above ...Excellent

### OUTGOING RATING

I created my own rating system based on factors I personally believe distinguish a career. Positive factors would be fulfilling 4-5 year commitment, contributing with significant playing time for multiple years, starter multiple years, and of course achieving all-star status. Negative

factors would be not staying with the program for a full 4-5 years and no significant playing time during entire career.

My outgoing ratings are based on a 1 to 6 scale with a “6” rating the highest. A “6” rated player is your All-American or multiple All-SEC selections. After giving each original class member an outgoing career rating, I average the individual ratings for a “class outgoing rating”. I consider a 3.2 to 3.3 to be a good class rating. It requires approximately 60% of the entire class to contribute a “3” rated career or above. Even today, most coaches consider that to be good overall contribution from a recruiting class.

#### RATING SCALE – PLAYER

- “1” .... Never reported, quit, didn’t complete full 4-5 year commitment
- “2” .... On squad, limited playing contribution
- “3” .... Part-time starter, backup on 2-deep depth chart
- “4” .... Starter multiple years, significant contribution
- “5” .... All-SEC one year, Impact player
- “6” .... All-American or multiple All-SEC selection

#### CLASS RATING SCALE

- 2.8 – less .... Poor
- 2.9 – 3.1 ..... Average
- 3.2 – 3.3 .... Good
- 3.4 - above .. Excellent