# MUSIC CITY BOWL ISSUE

# vanderbilthustler

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# 8 IS NOT ENOUGH











How to put the 123rd season of Vanderbilt football into words? There were position battles, old warhorses sharing the stage with up-and-comers and spectacular plays. And there were wins. More wins than anyone this side of age 35 can ever remember. More wins than anyone on the other side of 35 thought would ever come again. Enough wins to give James Franklin a second shot at his first bowl win as a head coach on New Year's Eve. Enough wins to send Vanderbilt into 2013 and beyond with a little more respect from its Southeastern Conference peers.

But first, the 2012 Commodores have one more game to play. For its final issue of the semester, The Hustler looks back on a memorable fall and relives the players, games and stories that made this season special.









THE VANDERBILT HUSTLER • WWW.INSIDEVANDY.COM MONDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2012

# campus

### THE QUOTABLE JAMES FRANKLIN

"This one's going to come down to it. Will it to happen. Will it to happen. Look behind you, everybody stand up and look behind you. We're on the beach right now, and the boats are burning! There's no other option!"

LOCKER ROOM SPEECH, HALFTIME OF VANDERBILT'S 41-18 WIN OVER TENNESSEE



VANDER

### Vanderbilt's season so far

Aug. 30 vs. South Carolina 17-13 L Sept. 8 at Northwestern 23-13 L Sept. 15 vs. Presbyterian 58-0 W Sept. 22 at Georgia 48-3 L Oct. 6 at Missouri 19-15 W Oct. 13 vs. Florida 31-17 L Oct. 20 vs. Auburn 17-13 W Oct. 27 vs. Massachusetts 49-7 W Nov. 3 at Kentucky 40-0 W Nov. 10 at Ole Miss 27-26 W Nov. 17 vs. Tennessee 41-18 W Nov. 24 at Wake Forest 55-21 W

### NC State's season so far

Aug. 31 vs. Tennessee 35-21 L Sept. 8 at Connecticut 10-7 W Sept. 15 vs. South Alabama 31-7 W Sept. 22 vs. The Citadel 52-14 W Sept. 29 at Miami 44-37 L Oct. 6 vs. Florida State 17-16 W Oct. 20 at Maryland 20-18 W Oct. 27 at North Carolina 43-35 L Nov. 3 vs. Virginia 33-6 L Nov. 10 vs. Wake Forest 37-6 W Nov. 17 at Clemson 62-48 L Nov. 24 vs. Boston College 27-10 W

### CHICK-FIL-A BOWL

Clemson vs. LSU Atlanta, Ga. – Georgia Dome

Mon., Dec. 31 – 6:30 p.m.

### TAXSLAYER.COM GATOR BOWL Mississippi State vs. Northwestern

Jacksonville, Fla. – EverBank Field Tues., Jan. 1 – 11 a.m.

### **CAPITAL ONE BOWL**

Georgia vs. Nebraska Orlando, Fla. – Florida Citrus Bowl

Tues., Jan. 1 – 12 p.m. ABC

### **OUTBACK BOWL**

Michigan vs. South Carolina Tampa, Fla. - Raymond James Stadium

Tues., Jan. 1 − 12 p.m. **ESPN** 

Florida vs. Louisville

New Orleans, La. - Mercedes-Benz Superdome Wed., Jan. 2 – 7:30 p.m.

### AT&T COTTON BOWL

Oklahoma vs. Texas A&M

Arlington, Tex. - Cowboys Stadium Fri., Jan. 4 – 7 p.m. FOX

### **BBVA COMPASS BOWL** Ole Miss vs. Pittsburgh

Birmingham, Ala. - Legion Field Sat., Jan. 5 – 12 p.m. **ESPN** 

### **BCS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP**

Alabama vs. Notre Dame Miami Gardens, Fla. – Sun Life Stadium Mon., Jan. 7 – 7:30 p.m. **ESPN** 

### vanderbilthustler

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CHRIS HONIBALL / THE VANDERBILT HUSTLER

Franklin American Mortgage Company Music City Bowl sponsors present head coach James Franklin and Vice Chancellor of Athletics David Williams with a commemorative guitar to celebrate Vanderbilt's acceptance of a bowl invitation on Dec. 2.

### **By EMILY TORRES**

Senior news reporter

In the months leading up to December, board members of the Franklin American Mortgage Company Music City Bowl attended football games, beginning to scout their potential choices for the upcoming bowl game. CEO Scott Ramsey and seven board of directors members attended games in the Southeastern Conference and the Atlantic Coast Conference, both of which are tied to the Music City Bowl, evaluating the performance and attendance of prospective teams.

"We have three main objectives we hope to achieve," Ramsey said. "Firstly, we'd like to attract a team to bring in out-of-town folks to fill up hotels and generate tourism for the city. We'd also like to fill up the stadium and create a great environment for the fans. We want to also create a matchup that elevates television ratings and brings in viewers that impacts the broadcast. Some years you can achieve all three of these goals, but some years you can achieve only achieve one or two at a time."

Committee members look at teams' potential to fulfill the bowl's objectives. In addition, this builds relationships with coaches, athletic directors and teams themselves.

"I think the most important thing is visiting during the season," Ramsey said. "We want to maintain, build or re-engage some of the relationships with athletic directors in preparation that they may be in your game and will have a tight planning period together. Relationships and really knowing each other is really important. We're tied into the SEC and maintain those relationships so that we can be really prepared and can provide instantaneous information."

The committee makes its official selections and invitations after the Gator Bowl participants are selected. Vanderbilt's selection made a majority of the goals seemed achievable, according to Ramsey. The momentum stemming from the team's six-game winning streak to end the season is projected to draw in tourism, a factor that is always among the board's primary concerns.

"As a team that is from Nashville, we will certainly have to work hard to appeal to out-oftown alumni," Ramsay said. "Filling up hotels will be more challenging. It was in 2008 when Vanderbilt played in this game. I'm confident Vanderbilt will do well in our other two (objec-

The Commodores topped Boston College in their first postseason trip across town five years ago, winning by a score of 16-14 in what was then called the Gaylord Hotels Music City Bowl. The attendance for the 2008 game was 54,250, well short of LP Field's capacity, but this year, the bowl and the university expect a stronger, more confident Vanderbilt contingency to show

up.
"Coach Franklin and the team have created a momentum with their season, so we have a great chance on New Year's Eve to fill the stadium," Ramsay said. "We also have a window of broadcast that is not against any teams during the first two hours. Certainly being a team from Nashville, though, we will have to work hard to appeal to out-of-town alumni."

## A 'boost' to bowl attendance



### By TYLER BISHOP

News manager

The bowl selection process goes far beyond just choosing which team has the best record on paper. According to Rod Williamson, associate director and director of communications for Vanderbilt athletics, some Vanderbilt alumni made efforts to secure bowls — particularly in Atlanta for the Chick-fil-A Bowl and Jacksonville for the Taxslayer.com Gator Bowl in addition to those in Nashville for the Franklin American Mortgage Music

'We have very connected alumni even leaders within the cities. They push for us the same way alumni would push for anyone else," Williamson said.

 $However, according \ to \ Williamson,$ there are not as many closed-door conversations as many people think when it comes to the process.

"By and large there is not as much back-room bargaining as it may seem,"

Williamson said a set of circumstances did exist that could have put Vanderbilt in either the Chick-fil-A Bowl or the Gator Bowl.

"We could have been in the Chick-fil-A Bowl or the Gator Bowl had different things happened," Williamson said. "In the case of the Chick-fil-A Bowl, they're on record as saying they like to pick the highest-ranked team. The Gator Bowl has more empty seats to fill — and bowls don't like rematches."

Williamson pointed out that it is important for both the athletics program and alumni to make efforts to show how they will get fans to fill seats at the game.

"The economic impact on the city influences (a bowl selection committee's) choice. They want their hotels booked - restaurants and bars full," Williamson said. "We present what we can to show how we are going to get our fans and alumni there. There are also those who speak as alumni of the university they're not polished presentations and not representing the university officially — but we like that. Particularly in Jacksonville, we had alumni putting tremendous pressure on the head of the bowl."

Some alumni also utilized social media to lobby for bowls this year. According to Katie Scott Perumbeti, copresident of the Atlanta Chapter of the Vanderbilt Alumni Association, several people made use of both Twitter and Facebook to lobby for Vanderbilt's selection.

"One guy mentioned that he tweeted (the) Gator and Chick-fil-A Bowls and posted a couple of pro-Vandy things to their Facebook pages. He said that he knows some other fans and alumni did so as well," Perumbeti said.

The fact that the Music City Bowl will be held just a few miles from the Vanderbilt campus will not stop many fans and alumni from making the trip back to Nashville. Perumbeti said she knows of many alumni preparing trips to go see the game.

"My husband reserved 14 tickets together awhile ago, and the people that each of those are going to are coming from New York, Atlanta, Birmingham, Boston, Dallas and Nashville," Perumbeti said. "We have other friends that have mentioned coming as well, but I'm not sure if they have tickets or travel plans yet."

However, according to Brandon Miller, the other copresident of the Atlanta Chapter, many alumni would still rather see their team play in Atlanta or Jackson-

"I think the general feeling is there is excitement that we are going to back-toback bowls, but a little disappointment we didn't get the Gator or Chick-fil-A," Miller said.

Despite expressed disappointment from some fans and alumni, Williamson said that the Music City Bowl will be good for the Vanderbilt athletics program.

"There was an initial reaction in some circles like, 'Oh, we don't get to travel.' But the Music City Bowl is a very good bowl and renowned across the country. If we lived anywhere else we would think it was the coolest thing to get to come to Nashville," Williamson said. "So we are going to treat this experience as if we're

### Student ticket instructions

By SAM McBRIDE News manager

For the second straight year, the Commodores are going

to a bowl game, and for the second time in five years, they will stay in Nashville for the postseason at the Franklin American Mortgage Music City Bowl. In order to accommodate a student body that hails from all across the country, Vanderbilt has made a handful of preparations to improve its students' bowl game experience.

There will be a special student section at LP Field for those who want to cheer on the team alongside their fellow students within a unique student section.

Tickets are available in person through the Vanderbilt Ticket Office and cost \$60 for students. Those who ask for the "student" ticket option will be placed in the student

While some students may be tempted to buy from secondary ticket sites like StubHub, remember that doing this will cost the Vanderbilt football team in the long run. Bowl games factor in the amount of tickets a university sells when selecting their football team, so every ticket purchased through the Vanderbilt Ticket Office gives the Commodores a better chance of landing in a premier bowl in the future.

Any student going to the game will, of course, need somewhere to stay in Nashville. All students who are in residence on campus for both the fall and spring semesters can register to stay on campus during winter break.

Registration is already open online and must be completed by midnight on Wednesday, Dec. 12. Students who weren't living on campus in the fall or will not be in the spring will not be able to stay on campus over the break.

Those who can't make it to the game but still want to support the athletic department and bump up the sale numbers have also been invited to call the ticket office and donate tickets to young people in Nashville who wouldn't be able to go to the game otherwise.

### **INITIAL ALLOTMENT GONE IN 5 DAYS**

From a Vanderbilt Athletics press release Vanderbilt athletic officials announced Friday afternoon that the university has sold out its initial allotment of 12,000 tickets, along with its additionally requested lower level and club level seats, to the 2012 Franklin American Mortgage Music City Bowl.

The school had made arrangements with bowl officials to procure additional club and lower level tickets, and all of those premium tickets are now exhausted. Commodore fans will now be able to purchase upper level (300 Level) tickets through the Vanderbilt Ticket Office — those tickets will be priced at \$45. The upper level tickets will be on the east side of the stadium, which is the Vanderbilt sideline.

"Our fans have done a tremendous job in selling out our entire initial allotment along with our additional requests in just five days. It's a clear signal that the Vanderbilt community and college football fans in this market are very excited about Commodore football," Vanderbilt director of sales and marketing Steve Walsh said. "I am very pleased to announce that we have worked with bowl officials to allow us to begin selling upper level tickets through the Vanderbilt Ticket Office so our supporters can be assured of sitting in black and gold sections of LP Field."

Fans who pre-ordered Music City Bowl tickets prior to Sunday's bowl announcement will be charged for the balance of their transaction at the time that seating assignments are processed. That first round of seating assignments took place this weekend, with the initial mailing of tickets to take place early this week.

# opinion

### THE QUOTABLE JAMES FRANKLIN

"I've been saying it for a long time, I will not hire an assistant coach until I've seen his wife. If she looks the part, and she's a D-I recruit, then you got a chance to get hired. That's part of the deal."

MAY 30, IN AN INTERVIEW WITH 104.5 THE ZONE



### James Franklin: A performance review

### **JACKSON MARTIN**

is a junior in the College of Arts and Science. He can be reached for jackson.o.martin@vanderbilt.edu.

We are only one week away from the two-year anniversary of James Franklin's hiring, and the results so far are greater than what anyone could have imagined.

"It was obvious to me right away that this place could be something really special," Franklin said in his introductory press conference. "It was really about the people. I was blown away by the people. Really, I was in a situation where I didn't really have to take a job. I had a pretty good situation. It was going to take something really special to get me to jump on board.'

Whatever it was that Franklin saw in a program that had gone 2-10 for two straight seasons, he has since shown that his words on Dec. 17, 2010 weren't hollow. Franklin has not just found success at Vanderbilt — he has found unprecedented success on West End.

The accolades have been thrown around ad nauseam, but they bear repeating.

In his first two years, James Franklin has taken Vanderbilt to back-to-back bowl games, something never before done at the school. He recruited the highest-ranked incoming class in Vanderbilt history last February and intends to better that mark again this year with a top-20 class. He posted a winning record in the SEC this season, something not done since 1982. His team closed the year on a six-game winning streak, the first time the Commodores have managed that since 1955. His players are breaking Vanderbilt school records on a weekly basis.

The state of the Vanderbilt program is the healthiest it has ever been in the modern era of football. The bowl seasons of 1982 and 2008 were shining, noteworthy campaigns surrounded by the dreariness and futility of what is the rest of Vanderbilt history, with no sustained success to

That has changed. Vanderbilt's star is irrevocably on the rise. Franklin has brought in a winning culture, and everyone has noticed — especially recruits. The 2013 recruiting class currently ranks No. 14 in the country according to the Rivals recruiting network. His last class ranked No. 28 by the same site, which was the highest-rated class in Vanderbilt history by a long shot.

While there have been things to nitpick with during Franklin's tenure (notably offensive playcalling), the results have been so unbelievably successful that a performance review of the head coach two years into his tenure cannot be anything other than glowingly positive.

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### **OPINION POLICY**

The Vanderbilt Hustler opinion page aims to stimulate discussion in the Vanderbilt community. In that spirit, columnists, guest columnists and authors of letters to the editor are expected to provide logical argument to back their views. Unreasonable arguments, arguments in bad faith or arguments in vain between columnists have no place in The Hustler and will not be published. The Hustler welcomes reader viewpoints and offers three methods of expression: letters to the editor, guest columns and feedback on

The views expressed in lead editorials reflect the majority of opinion among The Hustler's editorial board and are not necessarily representative of any individual member.

Letters must be submitted either in person by the author to the Hustler office or via email to opinion@insidevandy. com. Letters via email must come from a Vanderbilt email address where the identity of the sender is clear. With rare exception, all letters must be received by 1 p.m. on Sunday or Wednesday. The editor reserves the right to edit and condense submissions for length as well as clarity.

Lengthy letters that focus on an issue affecting students may be considered for a guest column at the editor's

All submissions become the property of The Hustler and must conform to the legal standards of Vanderbilt Student Communications, of which The Hustler is a division.

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The Vanderbilt Hustler allocates one issue of the newspaper to each student and is available at various points on campus for free. Additional copies are \$.50 each.

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## BCS title faceoff: Why Notre Dame will win

**Notre Dame is not** 

supposed to beat Alabama,

but by game time the Irish

will have had 44 days

to hear that they're not

supposed to beat Alabama.

Don't think the Irish stand a chance against the all-powerful Crimson Tide? Give it time.

**ERIC SINGLE** is a senior in the College of Arts and Science and editor-in-chief of the Vanderbilt Hustler. He can be reached eric.j.single@vanderbilt.edu.

f all the Decembers filled with dismissive analysis from the supporters of the Southeastern Conference ahead of the BCS National Championship Game, this one could top the rest. One-loss Alabama edged one-loss Georgia for the SEC title two Saturdays ago in one of the best games of the year, but long before the game ended, the outpouring of condescending sympathy had begun for poor, undefeated Notre Dame, who regard-

less of their opponent were doomed to a death by a thousand off-tackle runs in Miami. After it officially became defending champs Alabama who would perform the deed, the outcome was even less of a question. But consider the following in defense of the Irish, to whom victory may very well be granted on Jan. 7 from an unknowable power higher than football — namely, the

randomness of the bowl system and the inexplicable power

If there's one team in the country best equipped to play the most important game of the year after a 44-day layoff, it is Notre Dame, who in 2012 added an extra layer of crazy to its traditional slate of cross-country barnstorming by kicking off the season in Ireland. We've seen too many BCS games go haywire because of the strange combination of hyperpreparedness and rust that comes from having a month and a half to get ready for one game: trick plays, new formations, specialized rotations to get the perfect matchups. Notre Dame is not supposed to beat Alabama, but by game time the Irish will have had 44 days to hear that they're not supposed to beat Alabama. The triumphs of Ohio State in 2002 and Florida in 2006 are the most enduring examples of that process at work, but any coach worth his whistle knows how to spin a similar message in front of his players.

The Irish also have an extra 44 days to prepare redshirt

freshman quarterback Everett Golson, who separated himself from Tommy Rees and took control of the starting duties while learning on the job as the season went on, for the toughest test of his young career. Golson is not Johnny Manziel, but he does run with the same patient, searching steps as the Heisman winner and fellow redshirt freshman does. With his help, the Irish are averaging over 200 rushing yards a game.

> In fact, you could go as far as to say the vaunted Crimson Tide defense will be facing an offense the likes of which they haven't seen this season. Notre Dame's leading receiver is tight end Tyler Eifert, a 6-foot-6-inch, 251-pound senior averaging 14.2 yards per catch this year. How many top-flight tight ends has Alabama faced this season? And why is it such an oddity that the

type of pass-catching tight end so coveted at the next level of the game is succeeding so prominently in the college ranks? Whether by design or not, Eifert reeled in more than his fair share of jump balls and wobbly throws into tight windows this season. He may end up as his team's first and last clear schematic advantage.

On the off chance you haven't formed an extreme opinion about Manti Te'o yet, allow Stephon Tuitt, Louis Nix III and Kapron Lewis-Moore to save you some time. The relative merits of the senior linebacker's leadership and giftwrapped interceptions off of tipped passes remain up for debate, but the hulking cogs of the defensive line in front of him will decide the game one way or the other. The success of the defense and of the entire team hinges on that first level — time will tell whether or not Nick Saban decides to test its mettle with a reprisal of the 45-carry, 334-yard performance his top two running backs put on against Georgia.

Come to think of it, though, time will tell everything.

## BCS title faceoff: Why Alabama will win

Too much experience, too much offense, too much everything should help the Tide roll

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n paper, the Notre Dame Fighting Irish and the Alabama Crimson Tide look to be evenly matched as they head to into their national title bout in Miami on Jan. 7. The Irish have the nation's top-ranked defense, with the Tide right behind them in second. Both rank in the top 10 in the BCS in average strength of schedule: the Irish have faced nine bowl teams, the Tide seven. While each team performs at an unmatched level on defense, both of their offenses have been rather pedestrian. With all this taken into consideration, it would appear to the casual observer that these two teams come into the game with an equal shot at hoisting the trophy. But the statistics on paper do not decide championships, and with two teams that have both had stellar seasons set to face each other, it is the intangibles that will give one team — Alabama — the clear advantage.

Notre Dame, despite all its recent success, comes in relatively inexperienced overall. No one on the roster has ever played in a BCS game, and the Irish certainly have not played in any bowl games that come close to the magnitude of this one — last season, they suffered a defeat at the hands of Florida State in the Champs Sports Bowl. Brian Kelly, Notre Dame's fearless leader who resurrected the Irish from the depths of irrelevance under Charlie Weis, has himself only coached in one BCS game: the 2009 Orange Bowl, in which his Cincinnati Bearcats suffered a 20-7 loss at the hands of an unspectacular Virginia Tech team. Certainly sophomore quarterback Everett Golson could be rattled by the pressure of facing an SEC giant, too.

The Crimson Tide, on the other hand, comes into the game looking to defend their dominant performance in last season's national title game. While some key players from that team are gone, their replacements gained vital experience from their championship run and will be all the more prepared to play on the big stage. Some of the team's key seniors are even sporting two national championship rings in their collection. Head coach Nick Saban will be appearing in his sixth BCS game and gunning for his fourth national title as a head coach. He is previously undefeated in the national championship game. The roster also features quarterback A.J. McCarron, who led Alabama to a championship win last year and has only further developed his passing skills since.

Upon deeper investigation of the respective team's offenses, it is also clear that Alabama is much better suited for this matchup in the passing game, both offensively and defensively. With both teams stopping the run effectively, the rushing attacks should be effectively neutralized — the defining plays are going to emerge on third-and-longs. Notre Dame's pass offense has heavily relied on quick, short throws throughout the year, sporting no receivers averaging over 10 yards per target. The two who have averaged over 10 per reception, Tyler Eifert and T.J. Jones, are failing to haul in even 60 percent of passes thrown their way. Golson barely threw for 2,000 yards and found the end zone only 11 times through the air this season. While this short-game strategy might work against some defenses, it will struggle against Alabama's speed and depth, especially at the linebacker position. Yes, Alabama's secondary has been subject to give up the long ball, but Notre Dame has yet to prove throughout the year that they can convert deep passes on a consistent basis.

McCarron, the nation's leader in passing efficiency, threw for 26 touchdowns on the year and earned second team All-SEC honors, and he will likely have a much easier time against Notre Dame's equally questionable secondary. The receiving corps has made big plays all year, none bigger than Amari Cooper's 45-yard touchdown catch to win the SEC championship. McCarron has completed a pass of 30 yards or more in every game this season but one, and the Alabama passing attack has consistently shown the capability to convert big gains. Their pass offense will provide a distinct advantage, especially in crunch time when quick, explosive drives are needed. Alabama's offense ranked seventh in the country in explosive drives — drives that averaged over ten yards per play — while Notre Dame's ranked 76th.

Alabama has a proven propensity to move the ball efficiently and quickly, while the grind-it-out style employed by Notre Dame will likely prove ineffective against the Crimson Tide defense. Indeed, at a glance on paper, this looks to be an even matchup, and theoretically, we should be in store for a January classic in Miami. But Alabama's overwhelming edge in experience and in the matchup of pass offenses and defenses will once again bring the SEC home another resounding victory in the BCS National Championship Game.

## The cardinal issue with Notre Dame and the BCS

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College of Arts and Science. He can be reached for comment at collier.b.bowling@ vanderbilt.edu.

s Notre Dame secured its win against an unranked and Matt Barkley-less USC two weeks ago, I really began to think of the absurdity behind Notre Dame being in the BCS National Championship. The Irish are undefeated and have beaten ranked teams like Oklahoma and Stanford, but the majority of their schedule is weak, and they won two of their games in overtime. While one of the overtime games was against Stanford, the other was against an unranked Pittsburgh team they only beat after triple overtime. In addition, they had near-losses to the likes of mediocre teams such as Purdue and Brigham Young. It also is ridiculous me to think that Notre Dame was allowed to create such a weak schedule due to the lack of limitations not being in a conference affords. Furthermore, I am convinced that the sports media idolizes Notre Dame and is responsible for the darling reputation that Notre Dame has come to receive this season, which is the only reason Notre Dame isn't further criticized by the public.

The only reason I am at all eased by Notre Dame's bowl berth is the fact that they will have to play the winner of the SEC championship game, Alabama, in the national championship. That game will be Notre Dame's first real challenge; however, that challenge unfortunately and unfairly comes not until the last game of this season of college football. Anyone reading out this scenario should already see the ridiculousness in this matchup. The fact that Notre Dame will play the winner of a playoff system in the best conference (the SEC, of course) in college football should cause anyone to begin questioning the current BCS system.

Thankfully, the gods of college football (read: university presidents and conference officials) see this problem and have implemented a system with a four-team playoff rotating among six bowl games, with two sites each year holding

playoff games and the other four continuing to offer major bowl games. Of course, there is also a national title game that is bid out among the bowls. Of the six bowl games, three are contract bowls that are reserved for the Power 5 conferences (ACC, Big 12, Big Ten, Pac-12 and the SEC) and three are host bowls that will not have conference contracts. The fact that this playoff system will soon exist and that the teams selected for the playoffs are selected not only off their records but also largely off the strength of their schedule should cause scenarios such as this year's Notre Dame one to not exist. Teams like Notre Dame will be forced to schedule games against harder teams and will have records that better match their talent.

As a result of this new system only guaranteeing one bowl game to the highest-ranked team of the "Group of 5" (the Big East and non-automatically qualifying conferences), Notre Dame might finally be forced to align themselves with a conference. I am aware that under the playoff system Notre Dame is in contention for one of the contract bowls; however, I do not think that Notre Dame will be able to hold this privileged position for long, as the Big East and other non-automatic qualifiers will protest. In addition, this playoff system will enormously help out conferences like the SEC who suffer in their access of BCS bowls due to their schedules already being filled with top-tier teams. The strength of their schedules will finally be rewarded and they will be better represented in bowl games as they deserve to be.

If Notre Dame manages to beat Alabama in the national championship, I'll be one of the first people to admit that I was wrong in thinking of Notre Dame as unworthy. However, I do not see this scenario happening. I see Notre Dame being beat by Alabama — possibly in a blowout — and the public begging for the playoff system to arrive already. Let's see reality do its share and set things right.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2012



### YEAR'S CELEBRATIONS

### It's definitely a Nashville party

**By KELLY HALOM** Life editor

To celebrate the big game no matter what the result, check out these New Year's Eve events happening around Nashville.

### **MUSIC CITY NEW YEAR'S EVE BASH**

The New Year's Eve Bash on Broadway is one of the biggest events in Nashville. This party in Music City is showcasing some of today's hottest acts. This year, the headliner is The Fray, who will be supported by opening acts by Sixpence None the Richer, Love and Theft and Striking Machines. Staying with the theme of music, a 15-foot tall red music note will drop at midnight. The bash will also kick off the new year with fireworks to give a more traditional sentiment to the night. This New Year's Eve party on lower Broadway is sure to be packed, providing a memorable way to celebrate with the city following the bowl win.

### **NEW YEAR'S EVE AT BRIDGESTONE ARENA**

If you want to ring in the New Year in an only slightly less claustrophobic space, head to Bridgestone Arena for the Bassnectar concert. Bassnectar, an electronic band based out of California, is known for intense light shows and riveting live performances. Working to help produce his incredible live act, the arena has announced that it is setting up an entirely new stage for the event, one that will be in the center of the crowd and rotate 360 degrees throughout the performance.

### **NEW YEAR'S EVE DELTA ISLAND FAMILY PARTY**

If you travel with family down to the bowl game, stay in the Gaylord at Opryland in order to enjoy their annual New Year's party. The event will include a DJ, dancers and tons of food and drinks. Though it may not be the typical Vandy party, it is a great way to ring in the New Year with family and a beautiful spot to do it in. Watch out for the midnight countdown and confetti explosions.

### FRANKLIN NEW YEAR'S EVE

If you're looking to escape Nashville, head to the town square at Franklin, a quaint locale that is sure to put you in the spirit for the new year. The Tommy Dorsey Orchestra will be playing at the Franklin Theatre, ringing in the year with big band swing and dance tunes. Doors open at 5 p.m. for the first show with cocktails at 6 p.m. and the performance at 7:30 p.m. This classy event will surely put you in a perfect mood for potential after-parties.

### **GET PUMPED FOR THE GAME**

### The Hustler's playlist for the Music City Bowl

By BRITTANY MATTHEWS

Assistant life editor

It's time for the big game, and you need some tunes to get you geared up for the game. The Hustler gives you 11 songs — from classic football anthems to Billboard hits – to keep your energy high on the

### "HALFTIME (STAND UP AND GET CRUNK!)" - YING **YANG TWINS**

Simple, instructive, timeless, crunk. A Vanderbilt Stadium staple during timeouts and before kickoffs, this Ying Yang Twins classic gets the sidelines going without fail, and the fans typically follow suit. Okay, okay, okay, okay.

### "HERE COMES THE BOOM" - NELLY

This has overthrown the "Conquer and Prevail" call-and-response led by the marching band as the standard soundtrack when Vanderbilt's looking for a third-down stop.

### "SAIL" - AWOLNATION

This new arrival to the Vanderbilt Stadium playlist has become the go-to song over the speakers during the commercial break between the third and fourth quarter. The marine imagery almost fits too

### "I AIN'T NEVER SCARED" - BONE CRUSHER FEAT. **KILLER MIKE AND T.I.**

Warning: Clean version only - think of the kids!

### "REQUIEM FOR A TOWER" - SIMONE BENYACAR, **DANIEL NIELSEN AND VEIGAR MARGEIRSSON**

You may recognize this repurposing of Clint Mansell's "Lux Aeterna" from the theatrical trailers of "Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers" and every single action movie created since. It's the background music for the fan-favorite "Commodore Creed" video that often plays on the video board once per game, and it never fails to be awesome.

### "BLACK AND YELLOW" - WIZ KHALIFA

Sorry, Nick Wells, we're letting Wiz pull rank here with the more generalist version. Remember, it's only overplayed and annoying when the Pittsburgh Steelers use it.

### "RUN THIS TOWN" - JAY-Z, RIHANNA

Last year's intro music endures because we're much closer to actually running this town.

### "LOSE YOURSELF" - EMINEM

Another cliche football song, but for good reason. It's a steady buildup to losing yourself just in time for the game.

### "FEEL SO CLOSE" — CALVIN HARRIS

We weren't sold on it as a stadium song until the Vaught-Hemingway Stadium sound guys played it late in Vanderbilt's comeback win over Ole Miss and the Rebels fans went nuts. It has just the right amount of premature celebration to get everyone going.

### "LEVELS" - AVICII

Speaking of electronic music, why not listen to the most-played track on Greek Row?

### "I FEEL GOOD" – JAMES BROWN

The fans who stay to the end of the game know this classic well. It'd be an absolute disservice for LP Field not to play it if Vanderbilt fans are fortunate enough to file out in celebration of victory on Dec. 31.

### **FIGHT SONG FACEOFF**

### **NC STATE**

The Wolfpack's fight song is sung to the sped-up tune of the "Caisson Song", which is also the official song of the U.S. Army. The NC State-centric lyrics were written by 1926 alum Hardy Ray.

"Shout aloud to the men who will play the We're behind you, keep fighting for State – Hold that line, hold 'em fast,

We'll reach victory at last We're behind you, keep fighting for State -Rise up to the fray and let your colors wave, Shout out for dear old N.C. State - GO STATE! And where-e'er we go,

we'll let the whole world know, We're behind you, keep fighting for State."

### **VANDERBILT**

In the summer of James Franklin's first season in Nashville, the head coach brought in Spirt of Gold Director Dwayne Sagen to teach the team the fight song, only with one important edit made to the lyrics. Instead of the traditional lines "But, win or lose,/The Fates will choose," the team now sings "But, win not lose,/It's ours to choose."

"Dynamite, Dynamite When Vandy starts to fight. Down the field with blood to yield, If need be, save the shield. If vict'ry's won, when battle's done. Then Vandy's name will rise in fame. But, win not lose, It's ours to choose, And Vandy's game will be the same. Dynamite, Dynamite

When VANDY starts to fight!"

# ULTIMATE **TAILGATE**

Vanderbilt's **final game of the year** will be played in an NFL stadium – a venue that demands an **NFL-level tailgate.** Ditch the Natty for some next-level pre-game noshing.

### By KELLY HALOM

Life editor

### **Irish Coffee**

Makes one serving. Ingredients

1.5 oz Irish Whiskey 1 tsp brown sugar

6 oz. hot coffee

Heavy cream

Directions

Combine whiskey, sugar and coffee in a mug and stir to dissolve. Float cold cream gently on top. Do not mix.

### **Breakfast Hot Dogs**

Makes four servings.

Ingredients 4 all-beef hot dogs

4 strips bacon

4 hot dog buns 4 large eggs, over-easy

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

Optional Toppings: red onion slices, mixed greens, hot sauce, ketchup

Directions

1. Take each hot dog and wrap it in a strip of thick bacon, stretching each slice in a tight, overlapping spiral around the dog. The bacon will cling without any further help, especially as it shrinks over the heat of the grill.

- 2. Grill over direct heat on a medium-hot fire. Turn and move the hot dogs frequently to prevent flare-ups as the bacon fat drips.
- 3. Cook until the bacon is crisp and golden, not charred.
- 4. While the hot dog is cooking, create four small tinfoil trays for each egg you want to cook. Make sure to curve up the edge of the foil so that when you put the eggs on the tray, they don't spill over the edges.
- 5. Once you have the trays prepped and on the grill, coat them with the butter.
- 6. After the tinfoil heats up for about 45 seconds to a minute, crack each egg and place the contents of each egg on their individual trays.

7. Cook eggs for two minutes on the first side

- until the whites are mostly cooked. 8. Carefully flip eggs and cook for just 15 seconds
- on the second side. Remove eggs from heat. 9. While cooking the eggs, lay the buns open and face down on the grill rack over direct heat to
- toast the surface to a golden crust. 10. Add an egg to each hot dog bun along with a bacon wrapped hot dog. Top with lettuce, red, onions, hot sauce or other preferred toppings. Serve immediately!



### THE BEST GRILLS FOR TAILGATING

**Best Charcoal Option** — Weber Smokey Joe Silver Grill

Weber Smokey Joe Grills are perfect for cookouts and tailgates. This grill is the classic portable grill, with a 14.5-inch diameter grate that easily cooks up to six burgers at a time. Additionally, the grill is known for its quality in delivering even heat. Best of all, this is one of the cheaper portable grill options, selling as cheap as \$30 on Amazon. If looking for a higherquality option, Weber has a range of high-rated charcoal grills.

### **Best Propane Option** — *Coleman Road*

If you want to get a slightly higher-quality grill that you plan on using again, check out the Coleman Road Trip Grill. This portable gas grill is lightweight, with a scissor-style collapsible stand that makes the grill virtually flat. The grill is a robust 285 square inches, making sure you can make all the food you'll want. The grill can be bought for \$145.09 at www.target.com. If looking for a slightly cheaper option, Bond and Uniflame both sell cheaper propane options at Target as well.

## **FAN 101:** How to be an (appropriately) obnoxious fan

bring your hand down. (This motion is very

### By MICHAEL HOGUE

Is this your first Music City Bowl? Heck, is this

Life reporter

foothall game? Never fear — we're not here to judge. Reference these tips for the bowl experience you've always dreamed of. Well, we've been dreaming of it. We're just happy you showed up.

### **MAKE JOYFUL NOISE**

The most basic rule of fandom is to make noise. Lots of it. When the Wolfpack is on offense, scream and shout as loud as possible. The total noise put out by the crowd will make it difficult for the NC State players to hear the plays being called out by their coaches and quarterback.

Organized cheers are a bit more difficult, but they amplify the volume and make being at the game even more fun. Here are some Vanderbilt staples that are easy to do:

Have your loudest friend (Pro Tip: Football games are a great place to make friends with loud people) call out "Who ya' with?" Everyone around you will answer "VU!" As the cheer progresses, more and more people will hear you, and the "VU!" response will get louder and

Make the VU hand sign, raise your hand in the air, and shake it as you shout "Ahhhhh!" Then bring your hand down as you shout "AN-CHOR. DOWN." This cheer, while new this year, is already a crowd favorite. Let's help it catch on. Bonus cheer: After every Vanderbilt first down,

look for the student waving a

white towel or shirt above

his head. Make the

your right hand.

and wave it in the

air in rhythm with

the towel until the

towel-waver finally

brings the towel

down towards

the ground, at

which point you

"VU" hand sign with

similar to the "Anchor Down" arm motion, for reference.) Bounce your "VU" sign six times in rhythm with the following chant, one phrase for each hand motion: "First down! First down! First down! Who's your daddy! First down! Woo!" (Editor's note: This is not only the most obnoxious Vandy-related cheer there is — it's also the least publicized. The complexity of the call-outs never quite makes it farther than 30 rows or so up the student section. We know we're throwing a lot at you, but try to keep up.) Feel free to yell and shout if you're watching

from home, but you'll bother your family more than the other team.

### **REP THAT VANDY SWAG**

The dress code of the obnoxious fan is simple: school colors. So wear black and gold from head to toe. The Barnes & Noble at Vanderbilt is chock-full of Vandy gear of all sorts. Since you'll be making a trip there to buy presents for your relatives anyway, make sure to Dore-ify your game-day wardrobe.

Vanderbilt t-shirts, sweatshirts, jackets and caps are just the basics. Being New Year's Eve, it will be cold outside, so consider getting a VU blanket. Accessorize with black and gold beads, gloves and lucky VU knee socks. For the ladies. black and gold hair bows. For the gentlemen, Vandy foam fingers.

### **GO TO THE GAME**

The Commodores are playing in the postseason, and they need the support of the Vanderbilt community. You can send them all the positive vibes you want, but there's nothing more important than going to the game - especially if you're interested in watching the team play in a more exotic bowl destination in the future. Student tickets are \$60 and can be purchased through the athletics website.

If you're travelling by air, make sure to wear your VU apparel for the plane ride. Tell the TSA workers, the person sitting next to you, and all other total strangers you encounter that you're going to watch Vanderbilt kick the snot out of the Wolfpack at the Music City Bowl.

If you're travelling by road, let your fellow drivers know your destination by decking your car out with window paint (Music City Bowl Bound!), window stickers and/or window flags, which can all be purchased at the bookstore.

### TAILGATE THE GAME

Tailgating is a long-held game-day tradition. No, we don't mean drinking Natty and dancing to "Where Them Girls At" on a raised surface. We mean a real cookout and the tailgate of a real car or truck, with burgers and brats and the whole nine yards. Libations, of course, are optional.

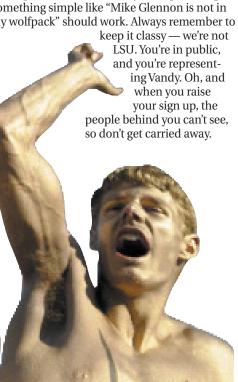
Tailgates usually take place in the stadium parking lot, so be sure to get to LP Field early, as kickoff is at 11 a.m. You can bring food and drinks that are already prepared or a portable grill to cook there. And don't forget the folding lawn chairs.

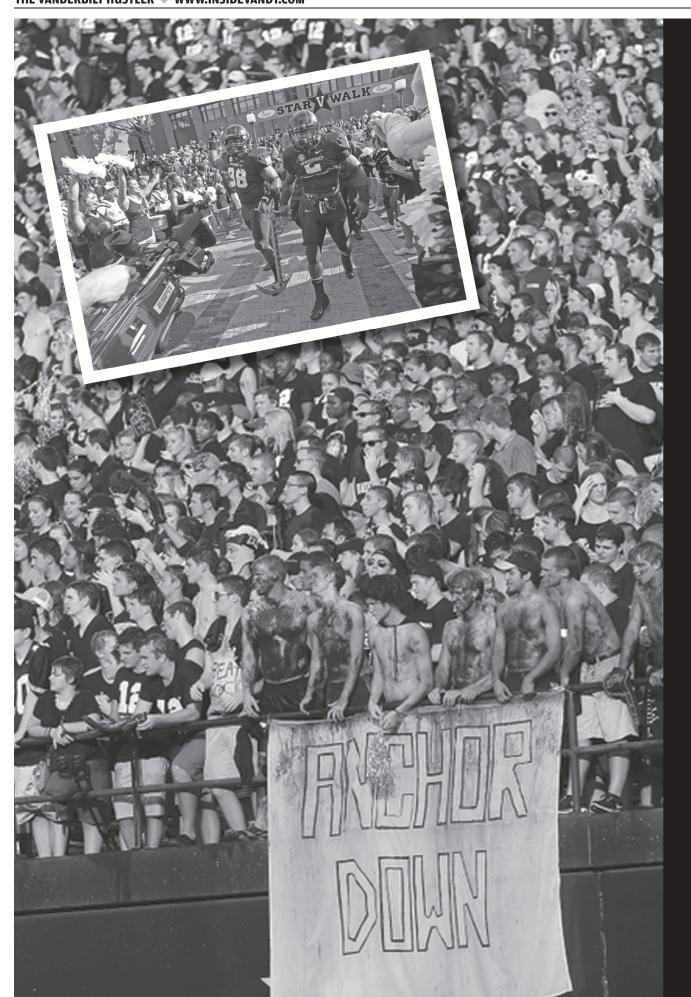
### MAKE JOKES AT THE OTHER TEAM'S EX-PENSE

The main point of being a fan is sending positive vibes to your team, but that doesn't mean you can't rag on the opponents.

Chant "You can't do that," followed by five claps when the other team gets a penalty.

Make a sign. Target the opposing coach, mascot or quarterback. Or target the ESPN cameras that will inevitably scan the crowd for fans capable of coming up with an acronym that incorporates the network's logo. (Example: Even Spurrier resPects vaNdy. Just spitballing.) Something simple like "Mike Glennon is not in my wolfpack" should work. Always remember to





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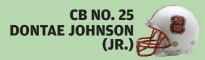
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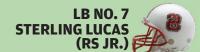
### NORTH CAROLINA STATE DEFENSE





















**DT NO. 75** T.Y. MCGILL (SO.) **5** 









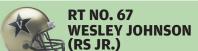




C NO. 57 **JOE TOWNSEND** (50.)











**QB NO. 11 JORDAN RODGERS** (RS SR.)





K NO. 39 **CAREY SPEAR** 



RB NO. 2 **ZAC STACY** (SR.)





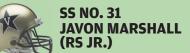
## **VANDERBILT OFFENSE**

# THE MATCHUP

### **VANDERBILT DEFENSE**









P NO. 94 RICHARD KENT







**MLB NO. 36 CHASE GARNHAM** (JR.)





WALKER MAY (RS

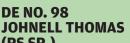












**OT NO. 74 TYSON CHANDLER** (RS SO.)



**OG NO. 64** ANDREW WALLACE



C NO. 53 **CAMDEN WENTZ** (SR.)







**TOBIAS PALMER** 

**WR NO. 4** 

(RS SR.)



(RS SR.) **RB NO. 10** 

**SHADRACK THORNTON** 

(FR.)

**QB NO. 8** 

**MIKE GLENNON** 









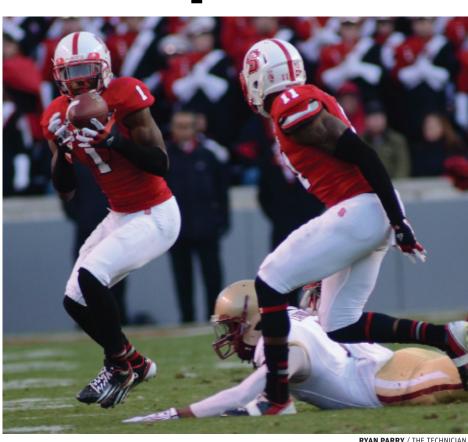
## **Reeling Pack still pack threat**

By DAN MARKS Sports reporter

While losing to Vanderbilt is no longer something to be embarrassed about, a loss to the Commodores is certainly not something that will help a coach on the hot seat keep his job. Three SEC coaches who lost to the Commodores this season were fired in November, and while losing to Vanderbilt wasn't the only reason for their dismissal, the 40-0 and 41-18 losses certainly didn't help Joker Phillips or Derek Dooley keep their respective jobs with the Commodores' division rivals. However, in the case of Vanderbilt's bowl opponent, North Carolina State, job security will not be an issue as coach Tom O'Brien was fired after the regular season and recently replaced with Northern Illinois coach Dave Doeren, who will not coach the team in the bowl game.

The Wolfpack, infamous for their mediocrity during O'Brien's 5-year tenure, are putting a bow on another inconsistent showing in 2012. NC State finished 4-4 in the Atlantic Coast Conference but did hand then-No. 3 Florida State its only inconference loss of the season in dramatic fashion. However, there were few other positives to take from the season, with the lowlights being a 35-21 loss to Tennessee in the season-opener and a 33-6 loss on Homecoming to a Virginia team that finished with only one other conference win.

On New Years' Eve, Commodore fans should expect NC State to throw the football. Under center, the Wolfpack are led by gunslinging quarterback Mike Glennon. In his redshirt senior season, Glennon has thrown for 3,648 yards to go along with 30 touchdowns and 14 interceptions. While Glennon has shown a knack to drive his team down the field, his 57.7-percent completion percentage raises some questions about his accuracy. Down the field, Glennon's favorite target is sophomore wide receiver Bryan Underwood, who has caught 10 touchdowns out of just 43 receptions. When the Wolfpack run the football, true freshman Shadrach Thornton comes out of the backfield. In his first



RYAN PARRY / THE TECHNICIAN

Junior cornerback David Amerson (1) hauls in an interception against Boston College on Nov. 24. The nation's interceptions leader in 2011, Amerson's encore performance has disappointed at times as he and the rest of the defense have struggled to stop anyone in the latter half of the 2012 season.

season, Thornton has run for 655 yards and three touchdowns with an average of 4.3 yards per carry.

Defensively, NC State allows nearly 25 points per game, which puts the Wolfpack 45th nationally. However, had NC State played teams other than South Alabama and The Citadel in back-to-back games, this statistic would be much worse. Overall, the Wolfpack allow nearly 420 yards per game, the majority of which come at the expense of a weak secondary that surrenders just under 262 yards per contest. Look for Jordan Rodgers to attack NC State's porous defense both on the ground and through the air.

Between NC State's coaching transition and the slew of defensive implosions that

haunted the end of the regular season, the Wolfpack may indeed be facing long odds against a team riding a six-game winning streak. But one of the most glaring remaining marks against this year's Vanderbilt team is that it has not beaten a team with a winning record all season, with 6-6 Ole Miss being the only bowl-eligible team Vanderbilt has defeated.

Had the Commodores been selected to a bowl higher up on the bowl hierarchy, they could have had an opportunity to turn heads against a team like Clemson or Nebraska — teams with a bit more cache than North Carolina State. But that doesn't mean a win on Dec. 31 won't do a world of good for a program searching for as much national exposure as it can get.

## Five Music City Bowl matchups to watch

By MATT CITAK Sports reporter

### 1. WR JORDAN MATTHEWS VS. CB DAVID AMERSON

Matthews and Amerson are the highest-profile playmakers on their respective teams. Matthews has been wire-to-wire dominant in 2012, garnering All-SEC first team honors from the Associated Press after finishing with the school record for receiving yards in a season. Meanwhile, Amerson is wrapping up a somewhat disappointing season following a stellar 2011 campaign in which he pulled in 13 interceptions, far and away the most in the nation. If the two juniors happen to enter this year's NFL Draft after they meet on the field on Dec. 31, don't be surprised to hear both their names called during the first two days.

### 2. CB ANDRE HAL VS. WR TOBIAS PALMER

Hal was third in the SEC in passes defended on the way to All-SEC second team honors. Palmer was second for the Wolfpack in receptions (46), yards (670) and touchdowns (6), and the shifty senior finished off the season with a flurry of big games, headlined by 219 yards and three touchdowns against Clemson. With this game being the last of Palmer's college career, Hal will have to bring his A-game in order to stop this talented receiver.

### 3. VANDERBILT PASS DEFENSE VS. QB MIKE GLENNON

Standing at 6 feet 5 inches, Glennon is not only one of the tallest quarterbacks in the country but also one of the most talented. However, he will have his hands full against the Commodores and their 10thbest pass defense in the country, which has surrendered only 176 yards through the air per game. Safeties Kenny Ladler and Javon Marshall will be tasked with making sure Vanderbilt doesn't get beat deep by Glennon's next-level arm.

### 4. LB CHASE GARNHAM VS. NC STATE OFFENSIVE LINE

Garnham has been one of the best players on defense for the Commodores in 2012, showing an aptitude for fearlessly filling holes in the run defense. He leads the team in sacks (5.5), tackles for losses (11.5) and is third in total tackles (77). While NC State's offensive line has been hit with the injury bug all season long, they appear to be healed and ready to go. Facing four linemen over 6 feet 5 inches, Garnham will have to find a way to penetrate to put some pressure on Glennon.

### 5. HEAD COACH JAMES FRANKLIN VS. INTERIM HEAD COACH DANA

Franklin is leading his team to a second straight bowl appearance for the first time in school history, but equally important are the extra weeks of practice to give him time to assess his team for the future. The same luxury was not afforded NC State's head coach. After a disappointing 7-5 season, Tom O'Brien was fired as head coach after five years in Raleigh, with offensive coordinator Dana Bible taking over responsibilities as head coach for the bowl game. While Bible has been coaching for over 30 years, he has never been the head coach for a team before now.



**Kris Kentera** is learning that the road from spindly quarterback to bruising tight end takes hours of hard work ... and protein shakes

size having to stick your nose

in the trenches with 280-pound

guys, but I enjoy the fight."

KRIS KENTERA,

### By STEVE SCHINDLER

Sports reporter

Kris Kentera arrived in Nashville from Colorado Springs, Colo., as a raw, 6-foot-4-inch, 195-pound quarterback. A part of James Franklin's first recruiting class, the Pine Creek High School alum led his team to three consecutive league championships. His senior campaign saw him throw for over 1,600 yards, run for over 600 yards and score 23 total touchdowns.

The Colorado All-State quarterback was redshirted his first year on campus, spending time learning the Commodores'

playbook, getting used to the speed of the college game and increasing his overall strength. Despite aspirations of being a quarterback, Kentera was asked to change positions for the good of the team.

This spring, Franklin announced that Kentera would make the move time, until finally, things began clicking. to tight end/H-back after impressing the coaching staff on the scout team with his excellent athleticism — an athleticism that certainly runs in Kentera's blood, given that his grandfather played linebacker and fullback at Arizona State and his father played receiver at Georgia Tech.

The position change prevented him from being buried behind Jordan Rodgers and Austyn Carta-Samuels on the quarterback depth chart and threw him into an open competition for playing time with his fellow tight ends after All-SEC tight end Brandon Barden's departure. With a gaping hole at the tight end position, a starting gig was left up in the air. His competitors included the team's elder statesman in sixth-year senior Austin Monahan, along with highly touted youngsters Steven Scheu and Dillon van der Wal. Monahan had the wide advantage in experience, and Scheu and van der Wal were considered to be the team's future at the position. In addition, Kentera came in as the runt of the tight end litter with Scheu (6 feet 6 inches, 250 pounds), van der Wal (6 feet 7 inches, 255 pounds) and Monahan (6 feet  $6\,$ inches, 252 pounds) displaying more prototypical size for the position.

Perhaps the biggest challenge for Kentera was adding bulk to his lanky 6-foot-4-inch frame. Through a steady diet and multiple protein shakes a day over the offseason, he was able to get himself up to 230 pounds. While still small for a tight end, the gain gave him a chance to see the field.

Kentera was impressive in preseason practices and scrimmages, utilizing his in-depth knowledge of the Vanderbilt playbook and high football IQ to flash his immense playmaking abilities. Kentera credits the coaching staff and roommate Steven Scheu with accelerating his

development at the position.

He earned praise in preseason camp thanks to his soft hands and athleticism, putting him in line to see action next to Monahan in the opener against South Carolina. The former quarterback received a harrowing first assignment: to block the nation's best passer rusher, Jadeveon Clowney.

While Clowney only registered one sack, he was disruptive all night as South Carolina abused the Commodores up front with 11 tackles for loss and five sacks.

Kentera continued to endure ups and downs early in the season, going without a catch in his

first four games and adjust-"It's been a little rough with the ing to the physicality of SEC defensive linemen.

"It's been a little rough with the size having to stick your nose in the trenches with 280-pound guys, but I

enjoy the fight," he said. As the season wore on, Kentera began to see more

Over Vanderbilt's six-game winning streak, the redshirt freshman has caught eight balls for 92 yards and two touchdowns, including a clutch 21-yard grab on third down against Ole Miss that set up the winning touchdown one

While Kentera's statistics won't blow anyone away, he is the team's third leading receiver behind Jordan Matthews and Chris Boyd.

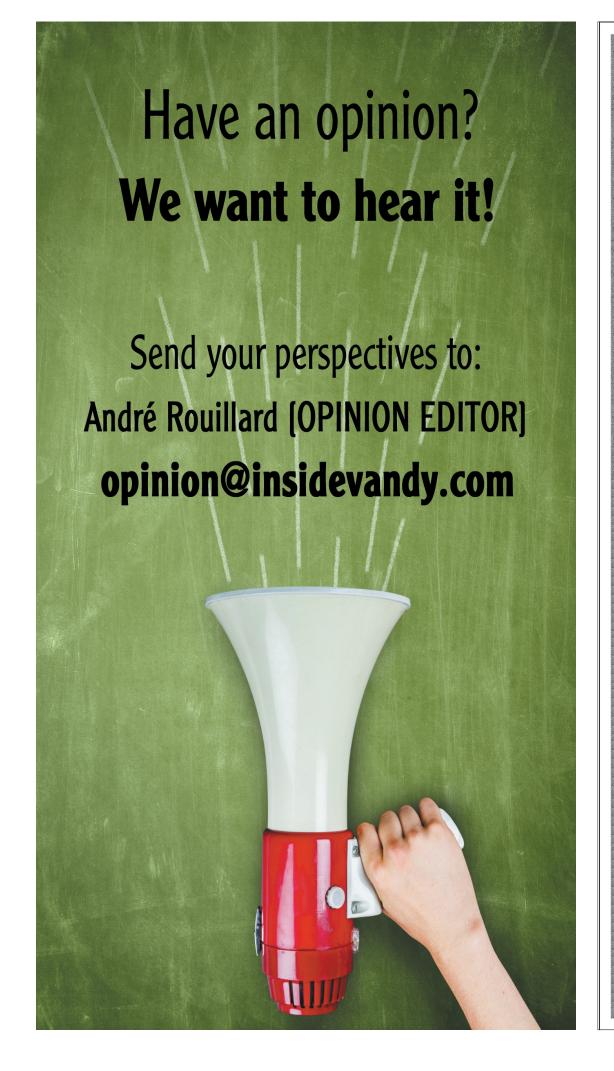
"As tight ends, we don't have to catch balls to be productive," Kentera said, "We're out there blocking every play for guys like Zac (Stacy), opening up things that go unnoticed. Production isn't necessarily getting balls, but just making the team better any way I can."

Kentera has improved immensely as a blocker after a baptism by fire, against such players as Clowney, Jarvis Jones and the myriad of talented defenders on Will Muschamp's Florida team.

"I enjoy going in there and fighting and proving I can hang in there with anyone in the country, whether that's Jadeveon Clowney or even Walker May in practice," Kentera said.

He also understands the progress he's made from the season opener to now. "Game One was a blur to me. It was kind of breathtaking going out there in front of all those people. Coming from Colorado, I don't think I've played in front of more than 2,000 people, and we had a sellout in the opener. It was a bit overwhelming, but now it's second nature and I feel much more comfortable and relaxed out on the field."

With roughly three weeks until the Music City Bowl, Kentera has officially ascended to the top of the tight end depth chart for the Commodores. Expect the young tight end to continue his improvement, taking on all comers and continuing to enjoy the fight.







### By JESSE GOLOMB

Sports reporter

Around the corner from Vanderbilt Stadium, just a short walk away from a field that now appears greener with each passing game, Jordan Rodgers prepares for another unlikely celebration. For the moment, he stands off to stage left, hidden amidst a group of much larger teammates, shrouded in his older brother's shadow. All of a sudden, a young fan and his father, football and pen in hand, find him. A year ago, Jordan would have been able to remain anonymous. Not anymore. The floodgates open. He is exposed.

Thankfully, before the hordes can come out of the woodwork and descend on Rodgers' location, the party begins, and Chancellor Zeppos is introduced. The Chancellor gives way to the athletic director, and then to the bowl game's corporate sponsor, and finally to the beloved head coach. Each has a few words to say about this glorious night, one of the greatest in the history of a traditionally sorry Southeastern Conference football program. Then, they cede the podium, and the microphone, to a former junior college quarterback.

"I only got here three years ago," says Jordan Rodgers, confidence spilling off the stage. "I thought it would be great to get a chance to play in the SEC, and compete against some of the best. But I never thought we would be one of the best.

The crowd roars. In this light, he looks more like Aaron than ever.

"We're going to be one of the best."

### **JOURNEY TO THE SEC**

It's been almost three years since Jordan Rodgers left Butte Community College in his native Chico, Calif., and exactly two days since he stood on stage at Vanderbilt's Bowl Announcement Ceremony. Today, the rain is coming down in sheets, so the Commodores have been released from practice early. Rodgers enters the team facility and begins bouncing down the hallway, a sopping wet bandana holding back his dirty blonde hair, obscuring the most obvious sign of his California roots. Someone asks Rodgers if he should take a shower.

"Why would I want to do that?" he calls out, continuing to skip down the hall before landing right in front of me. He extends his right hand. and I shake it. It is as in need of a shower as the rest of him.

Just now, I begin to understand why one of Rodgers' receivers, Jordan Matthews, describes his quarterback as "extremely loose."

"It's almost crazy," Matthews says. "You expect your quarterback to be really uptight, especially in the huddle. J-Rod is one of the most positive, confident guys I've ever played with. He adds that swagger to our offense."

With that swagger under center, Vanderbilt has gone 10-8, which doesn't sound like much until you consider the team was 7-23 in the 30 games prior. Even more impressive, Rodgers has led the school to its second consecutive bowl berth, a feat no other Commodore quarterback before him was able to accomplish.

Arguably, no one — with the exception of head coach James Franklin — has played a bigger role in the success of Vanderbilt football over the last two seasons than Jordan Rodgers. Yet, what's more startling is just how close Rodgers came to never playing a down at Vanderbilt.

Jordan led the Butte Community College Roadrunners to the 2008 NJCAA National Championship, the first in school history. A year later, he was recruited to play at Kansas. But when head coach Mark Mangino resigned following allegations of misconduct, Rodgers' scholarship was revoked.

"I really had no options," Jordan says, reminiscing on days spent flipping through Division-I depth charts, desperately seeking a team that could use the assistance of a junior college quarterback. As he outlines his process — "Who had a graduating senior? Who had a bunch of young quarterbacks?" — his mood darkens. The West Coast smile disappears, and the swagger dissipates for the first time all day.

ening up, "I got a call from Vanderbilt." Rodgers was initially surprised by the school's

"Then," the 24-year old remembers, bright-

interest. With a quarterback depth chart stocked with two seniors, a freshman and a sophomore, the Commo-

"At the time, I told him (the

call from Vanderbilt) was

probably the best thing that

could have happened to him."

**AARON RODGERS.** 

Brother of Jordan Rodgers, quarterback for NFL's

Green Bay Packers

dores didn't seem to fit the mold of a team in need of a junior college quarterback.

Besides, where the hell was Vanderbilt?

"I probably couldn't have told you that Vanderbilt was in the SEC," Rodgers admits. "I probably couldn't have told you that

it was in Nashville. It wasn't even on my radar." "At the time, I told him it was the best thing that could have happened to him," says Aaron Rodgers, Jordan's Super Bowl MVP-winning big brother and a fellow JUCO transfer from Butte. "I've been to Nashville a few times. Love the city. I just thought it would be a really good fit — a great university academically, and then to be a part of a program that we both thought was on the rise.'

Out of options, it didn't take long for Jordan to be convinced. But it wasn't the city or the

studies or his brother's advice that eventually lured him to Nashville. He wanted to play among giants.

"I loved the opportunity to play in the SEC. I wanted to play against the best."

### **INJURY AND TURNOVER**

For a long time, it didn't seem like he would play at

Rodgers arrived on Vanderbilt's campus in the early spring of 2010, three weeks after his official visit. When spring practice rolled around, he found himself locked in a quarterback battle with more than one competitor, including incumbent starter Larry

Smith. Rodgers was still gunning for the job in the fall when he took a hit in practice and his shoulder gave out. Suddenly, there was no zip on his throws. Onto the shelf he went, redshirt in tow.

At this point in the recounting, the sullenness returns.

"That was a rough season for me. I had never had an injury that bothered me before that, never missed a game for anything."

Rodgers was disappointed he couldn't compete right away, but moreso that he couldn't help a team that was getting smacked around on the field. In 2010, the Commodores lost 10 games, nine of them by double-digit margins.

"I'm from a winning program," he says. "I'm used to winning in high school. I won in junior college, won the national championship. I only lost a few games in my career at junior college. 2-and-10 was tough."

Indeed it was. Head coach Bobby Johnson the man who had recruited Aaron's little brother in the first place — retired just weeks before the start of the 2010 season. Interim head coach Robbie Caldwell was shown the door on the morning of the final game of the season, and a year after transferring, Jordan Rodgers was preparing to prove himself to a third head coach.

Part of the new staff was quarterbacks coach Ricky Rahne, who, along with head coach James Franklin, had helped former Kansas State quarterback Josh Freeman blossom into a first round NFL draft pick. Rahne had seen Rodgers play when he was a freshman at Butte.

A lot of time had passed since then. "I didn't really have a concept of his game," says Rahne. "I knew he worked really hard, and I knew he took it very seriously based on the film study and the questions he was asked. But he was still coming back from a surgery, and he wasn't really able to throw. To be honest, he wasn't really able to do a whole lot."

Nobody knew what Jordan Rodgers was capable of — even Rodgers himself, who was stressed out by the prospect of being overlooked by the new regime.

"I've never played a game here yet," he remembers thinking. "I'm not able to throw the football in spring ball. I'm supposed to still be competing for the job, but I'm not able to show the coaches anything."

"I'm not able to throw the football for the first three-and-a-half, four months that they're on

### **SUDDENLY THE STARTER**

It was a long road back for Rodgers, but eventually, he would return. After losing out on the starting gig — "I don't feel like I deserved the job, Game One" — at the beginning of the 2011 campaign, he appeared in each of the Commodores' first five contests.

"It's a testament to J-Rod that he didn't just get complacent in his role, that he was still in there watching film," Matthews says. "And when the opportunity came, he was ready."

Opportunity reared its head in the fifth week of the season, when the Commodores traveled to Tuscaloosa to play the No. 1 Alabama Crimson Tide. Early on, Larry Smith suffered a lower leg injury, and Rodgers replaced him. Vanderbilt would end up being blown out 34-0, but both coaches and players agreed that Rodgers had displayed poise against the nation's top team.

"That was when I really started to think about it," Rahne says.

The next week, Smith threw two head-scratching interceptions in the first half of a home game against Georgia, and the staff turned to Rodgers once more. In the process of leading the Commodores to a near-upset of the Bulldogs, he racked up 80 yards on the ground and impressed his coaches yet again.

positive than ever.

going to happen."

"Before, he put a lot of pressure on himself,"

Rahne says. "Sometimes his mistakes would

bother him. Now, he understands mistakes are

"He got into the Georgia game and sparked us, mostly with his legs," recalls Rahne.

Save for a one-game respite against Presbyterian College this season, Jordan Rodgers has not relinquished his hold on the starting job since.

"I knew my shot would come," says Rodgers, now brimming with confidence. "When it came, it wasn't pretty at times. But we found a way to move the ball, and we found a way to make plays and we came really close to winning that game. We felt like we really should have won that game."

Jordan is talking about playing Georgia last season, but he could just as well be referencing any game he has started. There's been a pattern to his tenure as Vanderbilt's quarterback, a constant sense of ordered chaos that surrounds the offense. As field general, Rodgers is at the center

> of it all, looking alternatively professional and semi-pro.

In other words, the Commodores rarely make it easy. They march the ball down the field, picking up first down after first down, and end up stalling and settling for a field goal. They move the ball on the first drive of the game, and go three-and-out on the next four. Most frustratingly, they

play up to superior competition, yet inevitably fall just short of the signature win Franklin and Rodgers have yet to add to their ever-expanding resumes.

### **BROTHERLY LOVE**

"I thought it would be great

to get a chance to play in the

SEC and compete against

some of the best. But I never

thought we would be one of

the best."

JORDAN RODGERS.

"I wish I had his athleticism," Aaron Rodgers says of his little brother. "He's going to run probably in the 4.5 range, I'd guess, at his pro day. I busted my butt to be around 4.7."

During the offseason, the Rodgers brothers sometimes retreat back to Chico, where they lift weights, work on footwork, and trade tips — though, both brothers will not hesitate to remind you most of the advice flows in one direction.

"I like to think I'm more of the teacher in this relationship," says the older Rodgers with

Jordan agrees. "I feel like we are very similar players, but mostly because I'm trying to mirror my game after his," he says. "Of course,

"If he just goes out there and does the exact same thing he's done for the last six weeks, he's going to like the way his career ends."

### WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

On New Year's Eve, nine days after the threeyear anniversary of his transfer, Jordan Rodgers will play in the Music City Bowl against North Carolina State. The game, which takes place just down the road from Vanderbilt Stadium, will be the final appearance of his college career and his final crack at the big win that has eluded his team up to this point. The drubbing of Tennessee was a landmark win for the program, but a win over NC State would be his first against a team with a winning record.

As Jordan prepares for one last unlikely moment in the spotlight, his big brother hopes to offer guidance in person. The Packers are playing the Vikings in Minnesota the previous afternoon, so Aaron — who's only started one game at LP Field — is not yet sure if he will be able to make it to Nashville in time for kickoff. But he's going to do his best.

"Family first, right?" Aaron says. "I need to get down there and watch my little brother."

No matter the outcome, and no matter what advice Aaron imparts, Jordan has taken his last final exam. He is ready to graduate. The Music City Bowl will be his final game as a Commodore, and perhaps his last on the big stage he has come to savor.

After following Aaron's path to stardom stepby-step, Jordan knows he is not his brother. After winning at every level thus far, he has no allusions about the difficulty of playing at the next one.

"I love playing football, so I look forward to the opportunity to play, continuing to play, whatever that looks like," he says. "It might not be the NFL, it might be somewhere else. I'm going to continue to exhaust my options."

For three years, Jordan Rodgers has chased his childhood dream, from one coast almost all the way to the other. He has played at some of the most storied stadiums in the SEC, won more games than anybody could have

## **JORDAN** RODGERS

### **PASSING STATS:**

Starts as Vanderbilt guarterback

Percentage of passes completed

Number of passing

Passing touchdownd

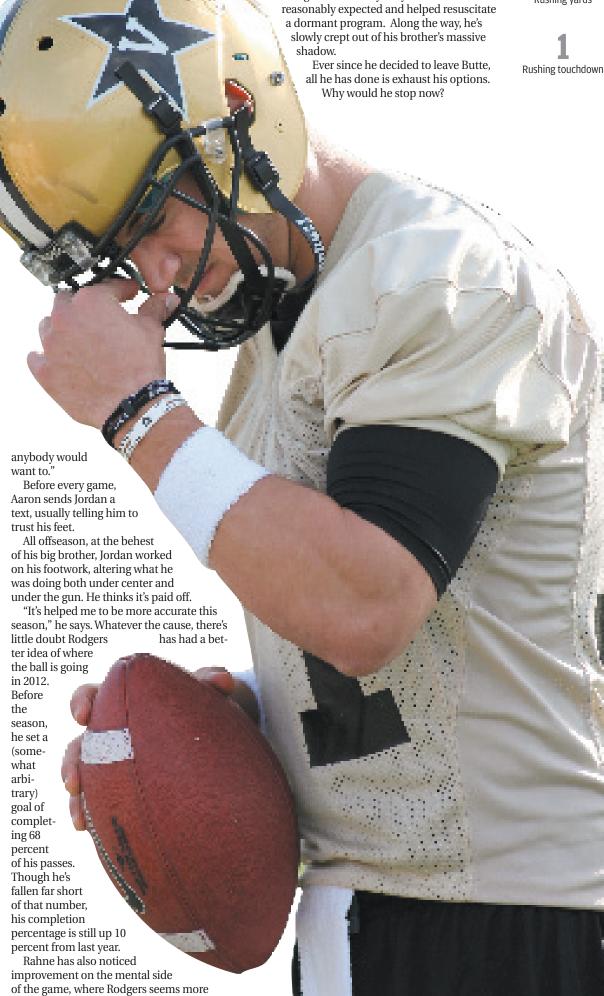
Interceptions thrown

### **RUSHING STATS:**

Carries

Rushing yards

MICHAEL FRASCELLA / THE VANDERBILT HUSTLER



### MONDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2012

# LINING ITALL

Senior defensive tackles **Rob Lohr** and **Colt Nichter** look to leave an impact in Nashville heading into their final bowl game

**By GEORGE BARCLAY** 

Assistant sports editor

Four years ago, Vanderbilt football was in an entirely different world. Bobby Johnson was the head coach. There were still students on campus who witnessed the days of Cutler-to-Bennett. The University of Tennessee was the dominant in-state program. Sellouts at Vanderbilt Stadium were a

In 2012, times have changed. Now James Franklin emerges from the locker room every game to address the media. The Rodgers-to-Matthews hookups are a common sight on Saturdays. The enemy in orange has not reached a bowl game for two straight seasons and faces lingering NCAA sanctions. Vanderbilt Stadium is becoming a sea of black and gold.

While these changes have been drastic, two constants remain in Vanderbilt's football program in senior defensive tackles Rob Lohr and Colt Nichter. Starting out as redshirt freshmen in 2008, both Lohr and Nichter have taken advantage of their time under the new coaching staff and have benefitted from James Franklin's psychological approach to the game.

"Coach Franklin gets here, and he changes everything," said Lohr. "The whole culture changes, the mindset of the team changes and it's just been a tremendous difference. It's a much better feeling going out on Saturdays and knowing you can win games. It's really changed our perception as a team and the perception from when we came in



CHRIS HONIBALL/ THE VANDERBILT HUSTLER

Lohr (left) and Nichter (right) have helped anchor a defensive line that finished the regular season with 20 sacks and 52 tackles for loss. The Commodores may be deeper on the D-line than at any other position, and in the final game of their Vanderbilt careers, the two seniors will be looking to set the tone for a bright future in the trenches.

here. We have a winner's mentality as opposed to a loser's mentality."

Similarly, Nichter has been impressed by the work ethic Franklin has instilled in the team.

"We really hadn't worked hard until Franklin got here," he said. "A big part of it is (Director of Performance Enhancement Dwight) Galt and the strength and training we do in the offseason. We really honestly have no

And to the delight of Commodore fans, the hard work has paid off. In their senior seasons, Lohr and Nichter have totaled 28 tackles and 15 tackles, respectively, with a forced fumble from Nichter. The duo has also helped bring pressure on quarterbacks and contain

the running game, giving Vanderbilt 18.3 points allowed per game, good for 15th in the nation.

"(It's been) just executing at all levels," said Nichter of the team's defense. "We all work together as interchangeable parts. We just execute, pursue and have a black death mentality."

On Dec. 17 against Tennessee, the black death mentality was in full effect in a 41-18 Commodore victory. With both Lohr and Nichter grinding in the trenches, Vanderbilt held the Volunteers' explosive offense to under 200 yards in both the passing and the running game. Yet, despite the emotions of a victory against a hated rival, the linemen saw the game simply as another "W."

"Obviously it was a good win for us, a big win for us because we hadn't beaten them (at home) since 1982," said Lohr. "But personally, it just felt like another win for us. That's a credit to Coach Franklin and how he's set the one-game-at-a-time mentality."

Heading into their final game as Vanderbilt players in the Music City Bowl on New Year's Eve, Lohr and Nichter hope to end their last year in Nashville like their first, with a bowl victory.

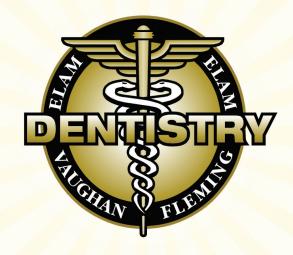
"We want to leave 9-4 as Music City Bowl champions," said Lohr. "Our freshman year, we came in and both redshirted, but we were Music City Bowl champions that year."

You may not see them on ESPN

analyst Mel Kiper Jr.'s draft board, but Rob Lohr and Colt Nichter have played a crucial role in Vanderbilt's football renaissance. For the past two seasons, the duo has started in every game for the Commodores. Needing a group of upperclassmen to buy in, Franklin's success in Nashville would not have been possible had players like Lohr and Nichter remained aloof. And now that they see their college careers ending, both remain proud of their involvement.

"You can just tell by how the stadium fills up now and how people talk about Vandy," said Lohr. "It's not 'same old Vandy.' Now it's 'new Vanderbilt.' It's the Vanderbilt Commodores. Anchor Down. I feel like we helped build that."

# Go 'Dores! **Beat NC State!**

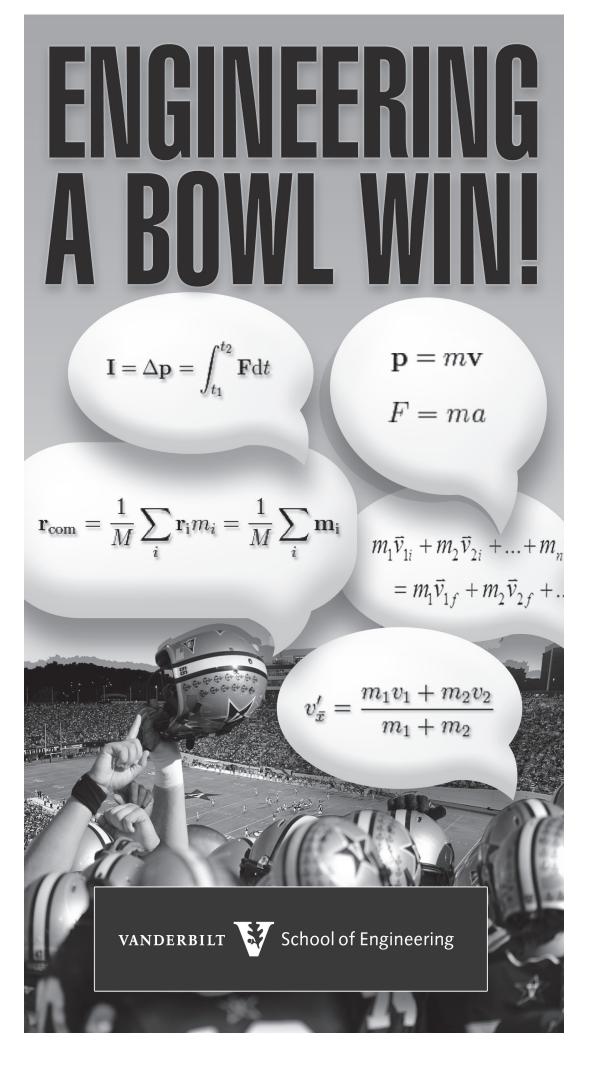


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10 MONDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2012 THE VANDERBILT HUSTLER ♦ WWW.INSIDEVANDY.COM



**James Franklin doesn't like to focus on the history of Vanderbilt football, so we'll do it for him.** The Hustler rounded up the most impressive achievements from a football season filled with **shattered records, individual accomplishments and milestone victories.** Read the CliffsNotes on the side of the page, or soak in the full extent of Vandy's unprecedented success below. Are we overdoing it? . . . Nah.

By ALLISON MAST
Sports reporter
W
AUG. 30 SOUTH CAROLINA

• Largest crowd for a home opener since Aug. 30, 2001, versus Middle Tennessee State

Jordan Rodgers' 78-yard touchdown pass to Jordan Matthews was
the longest since Mackenzie
Adams threw a 79-yard pass
to Sean Walker in 2008 versus

**SEPT. 15 PRESBYTERIAN** 

• The 58-point shutout victory matches the largest margin of victory in a shutout since 1999 against The Citadel.

• Trey Wilson became the second Commodore to return an interception 100 yards for a touchdown, matching Archibald Barnes' effort against Tennessee last season. The score was Wilson's third career pick-six and sets the new school record for interceptions returned for a score.

• Brian Kimbrow and Stacy became the first VU duo to each rush for 100plus yards since 2009 when Stacy and Warren Norman each rushed for over 100 yards against Western Carolina.

• Carey Spear kicked a career-high three field goals with his 42-yard field goal in the fourth quarter. Spear is the first VU kicker to kick three field goals in a game since Ryan Fowler did it on Nov. 21, 2009, at Tennessee.

• The Commodores' 605 total yards is the most since the Army game last season when Vanderbilt gained 530 yards.

• Vanderbilt rushed for 410 yards, marking the first time the Commodores topped 400 yards in a game since they ran for 433 yards against Western Carolina in 2009.

SEPT. 22 GEORGIA

• Matthews and Chris Boyd each going over 100 yards receiving marked the first time a Vanderbilt receiving duo had 100yard receiving games since 2006 when Earl Bennett (157) and Marlon White (121) accomplished the feat against Florida.

OCT. 6 MISSOURI

• The SEC road win was Vanderbilt's first since winning at Ole Miss in 2010.

OCT. 20 AUBURN

• Vanderbilt Stadium
was sold out for the
second consecutive
game for the first
time since 1996.
• Stacy broke

the Vanderbilt

school rushing record with a 27-yard run late in the fourth quarter, finishing the day with 169 yards and giving him 2,670 yards on 500 carries for his career. Stacy broke the previous mark of Frank Mordica, who ran for 2,632 yards on 546 carries in his career.

### OCT. 27 UMASS

• Jonathan Krause's punt return touchdown in the third quarter was the first for a Vanderbilt player since Jimmy Williams versus Northern Illinois in 1999.

• Matthews' 10 receptions made him the first Commodore to have at least 10 catches in a game since Earl Bennett had 11 against Ole Miss in 2007.

• Trey Wilson's interception return for a touchdown in the third quarter was the fourth pick-six of his career and second this season. The four career interception returns for touchdowns are a Vanderbilt record and are second all-time in the Southeastern Conference (Tennessee's Jackie Walker had five from 1969-71).

### NOV. 3 KENTUCKY

 The Commodores' 27-0 halftime lead was VU's largest halftime lead over an SEC opponent since a 35-0 lead over Kentucky in 1969.

• The 40-point win is the largest margin of victory for Vanderbilt in an SEC game since the Commodores beat LSU 48-7 in 1948 and the largest margin of victory in an SEC road game since a 47-0 win over Auburn in 1948.

• The shutout was Vanderbilt's first SEC shutout since blanking Kentucky 6-0 in 1968.

• The shutout victory marked the first time since 1964 Vanderbilt had two shutouts in the same season (against George Washington and Tennessee).

### NOV. 10 OLE MISS

• Vanderbilt notched its third SEC road wins for the first time in school history.

• The Commodores' rally from 17 points down marks the largest deficit Vanderbilt has come from behind to win in over 30 years.

• The win marked the third straight Vanderbilt win in Oxford for the first time in the series' history and the program's first three-game win streak over Ole Miss since 1949-51.

### NOV. 17 TENNESSEE

• Zac Stacy's 10-yard rushing touchdown was the 27th of his career, setting the school career record.

• The win tied the school record for most SEC wins with five trying the 1935 team

SEC wins with five, tying the 1935 team.
• The win marked the Commodores' first

• Vanderbilt's 23-point win was the largest margin of victory over Tennessee since a

seven-win regular season since 1982.

26-0 win in 1954.

• The victory over the Volunteers was the first home win over UT since 1982.

• Carey Spear's field goal in the second quarter set a new school record for field goals in a single season with 17 made field goals.

### **NOV. 24 WAKE FOREST**

• Vanderbilt topped 40 points for the fifth time this year. The last season Vanderbilt scored over 40 points in five games came in 1915.

• The victory was the sixth straight for the Commodores, their first six-game win streak since 1955 and the first six-game win streak to conclude the regular season since 1948.

• Vanderbilt finished the regular season 8-4 overall, the most regular season wins since the 1982 season. Only twice in team history have the Commodores reached nine wins: 9-0 in 1904 and 9-1 in 1915.

• With his six catches in the first quarter, Jordan Matthews passed Earl Bennett for second on Vanderbilt's single-season receptions list with 83 catches this season.

• Jordan Matthews' 64-yard touchdown reception set the school record for receiving yards in a single season with 1,262 yards this year.

• Carey Spear's extra point in the third quarter gave him 74 points this season, setting the new school record previously held by Ricky Anderson (1982).

• Carey Spear's career-high 52-yard field goal in the third quarter was the Commodores first 50-yard field goal since 2006, when Bryant Hahnfeldt booted a 51-yard field goal at Duke, and longest since Steve Yenner's 55-yarder in 1995. The field goal was the sixth longest in school history.

• Jonathan Krause's two punt returns for touchdowns this season mark the first time since 1968 that a Commodore returned two punts for scores in a single season.

• Zac Stacy's 90-yard touchdown run in the fourth quarter broke his own school record for the longest run in school history and was the second-longest run ever allowed by Wake Forest.

• Zac Stacy became the first player in school history to produce back-to-back 1,000-yard seasons with 1,034 yards this regular season and pushed him over 3,000 career yards with 3,036 yards in his VU

### DEC. 2 BOWL ANNOUNCEMENT

• Vanderbilt accepted an invitation to the Franklin American Mortgage Music City Bowl, marking the first time in school history the team has made it to a bowl in back-to-back seasons.

Information from Vanderbilt Athletics was used in compiling these records.

### HIGHLIGHTS

### AUG. 30

Largest crowd for a home opener since Aug. 30, 2001, versus Middle Tennessee State

### SEPT. 15

Trey Wilson became the second Commodore to return an interception 100 yards for a touchdown.

### **OCT.** 6

SEC road win was Vanderbilt's first since winning at Ole Miss in 2010.

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### **NOV. 17** The win tied the

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Vanderbilt's 23-point

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### NOV. 24

Jordan Matthews' 64-yard TD reception set the school record for receiving yards in a single season with 1,262 yards this year. Carey Spear's extra point in the third quarter gave him 74 points this season, setting the new school record.



## Sports reporter Anthony Tripodoro takes

on Vanderbilt football's top 5 performances of the season

For every team accomplishment, there are countless individual efforts that go underpublicized. Here are the five performances that stood above the rest this season.

### CAREY SPEAR vs. Wake Forest

As the football saying goes, no one cares about the kicker until you need him. In Vanderbilt's 55-21 pummeling of Wake Forest to close the season, the Commodores clicked on all cylinders offensively and did not need their placekicker Carey Spear to win the game. That did not stop Spear from turning in a stellar afternoon to earn him the honor of SEC Special Teams Player of the Week. Spear split the uprights six times, twice on field goals and four times on extra points on his way to breaking two school records: one for most points by a kicker in a season, the other for most field goals made in a single season. In addition, his 52-yard field goal was a career-best.

### ZAC STACY vs. Auburn

Zac Stacy made history in a tight game against Auburn in late October. In just another one of his many outstanding performances over the last four years, the senior running back ran for 169 yards on 27 carries and punched in a touchdown to help Vanderbilt pull out a 17-13 victory over the Tigers. Along the way, he became the school's all-time leader in rushing yards with a 27-yard run late in the fourth quarter to push him ahead of Frank Mordica. Stacy proved throughout his senior season that he deserved to graduate as one of the most decorated players in school history.

### ANDRE HAL vs. Tennesse

What ended up as a one-sided blowout in the biggest rivalry game of the year could have been much more in doubt if not for the critical performance of defensive back Andre Hal. Tasked with marking receivers Cordarrelle Patterson and Justin Hunter, Hal had two interceptions and put up 68 yards on interception returns to set up two Vanderbilt touchdowns. In the second quarter, he returned an interception to the Tennessee 17-yard line, and in the third quarter, he ran his second pick back all the way down to Tennessee's 4-yard line to set up an touchdown run by quarterback Jordan Rodgers. Hal came up big to help Vanderbilt win at home against the Volunteers for the first time in 30 years.

### JORDAN MATTHEWS vs. South Carolina

Jordan Matthews had his best performance of the season in Vanderbilt's season-opening loss against South Carolina. Matthews seemed to be the only receiver open for quarterback Jordan Rodgers to throw to all night and burned the Gamecock secondary on several plays, including a 78-yard touchdown catch, on his way to an 8-reception, 147-yard performance. Perhaps the most memorable play of the night, however, was Matthews's final one. On fourth down, with the Commodores down 17-13 with under two minutes remaining in the game, Rodgers targeted Matthews, who appeared to be the victim of a missed pass interference call as he could not

bring the ball in. Had that penalty been called, the game might have ended differently, and Matthews' game might have been the best performance by a Vanderbilt player this season.

### JORDAN RODGERS vs. Ole Miss

Vanderbilt quarterback Jordan Rodgers is often inevitably compared to his older brother, the Green Bay Packers' NFL MVP and Super Bowl champion quarterback Aaron Rodgers. But, on a night where big brother was in the stands to watch the Commodores take on Ole Miss on the road, it was Jordan who played like a champion. Nothing went the Commodores' way early on in Oxford. Zac Stacy was injured on his second carry of the game, and Ole Miss promptly jumped out to a double-digit lead. With Vanderbilt trailing by 17 in the third quarter, Rodgers hit wide receiver Jordan Matthews for a 52-yard touchdown to spark the offense. On a day where he threw for 267 yards on 21-of-36 passing, Rodgers led the Commodores' second-half rally to make the game close in the fourth quarter. Down 26-20 with 2:43 remaining, Rodgers marched the team downfield and connected with wide receiver Chris Boyd with under a minute remaining to put his team ahead for the first time all game en route to a 27-26 Vanderbilt victory that clinched a bowl berth and was, without a doubt, the best game of Jordan Rodgers' college career and the best individual performance by a Vanderbilt player this

# @JSTATX7 HAS HANDLE ON TWITTER #ANCHORDOWN



Redshirt freshman wide receiver Josh Grady is not afraid to engage the entirety of the Twitterverse when he signs on. From opposing fans to Vanderbilt diehards, on topics as diverse as politics, girls, school and sometimes even football, Grady keeps the conversation going.

**By DAN MARKS** Sports reporter

Ever since his introduction as Vanderbilt's head coach on Dec. 17, 2010, James Franklin has promised to sell the program. He stated a belief in what Vanderbilt had to offer: a top-tier education and the opportunity to compete in the best football conference in America, the SEC. He laid out his mission for the university, outlining how he wanted to change the culture and how everyone needed to be "all in" with the program, and then he went about promoting the hell out of his message.

THE STATS

12.7: yards per catch

**3.8:** yards per rush

1: career start (vs. Tennessee)

1.563: Number of Twitter followers

11,573: Number of tweets as of press time

While Franklin followed through on his promise to change the culture and promote the program, redshirt freshman wide receiver Josh Grady set about doing the same. In the process, he has become

one of the most visible Commodores.

Before Franklin arrived in Nashville, Grady was an unrecruited high school quarterback in Tampa, Fla. Two weeks after he was hired, Coach Franklin visited Grady's high school to introduce himself. Grady was immediately impressed with Franklin's outgoing nature and the passion he had for the program, so on the night before signing day in 2011, Grady decided to commit to Franklin and Vanderbilt.

"I was struggling that night about deciding where I wanted to go, and my parents and I sat down and talked for a while about it and it just clicked that I wanted to go to Vanderbilt," Grady said about his decision. "So then I called Coach Franklin, and he was really excited about it and we made it official the next day."

While Grady was not the most highly touted recruit in Franklin's 2011 class, it soon became obvious that he was the most outgoing. He slowly built up a reputation on Twitter as the team's biggest ambassador, tweeting about the program nonstop. Grady was doing exactly what Franklin was doing, but what made his endeavors so impressive was that he was promoting before he even arrived on campus. By the time he arrived in Nashville in August, Grady had already made quite a name for himself among

the Vanderbilt faithful.

"I've always been a really outgoing person, but ever since I signed with Vandy I just wanted to do what I could to sell the program," he said about why he became such an advocate for the team and university. "Coach Franklin and all the assistants were already doing all they could to sell the school and program, so I just wanted get in on the action and be a part of it, and other people started getting involved and everything went from there."

The next step in Grady's ascension among Commodore Nation came when he started using the term "Anchor Down"

in his tweets. While Coach Franklin is quick to give Grady credit for coming up with that slogan, Grady says that the slogan resulted from a tweet in which he asked fans what the Vanderbilt equivalent to "Roll Tide" was,

and one fan messaged back "Anchor Down." Grady started using it, and now the phrase has become synonymous with the program, inscribed on the field, made into cheers and easily the most used hashtag relating to Vanderbilt in social media.

"Anchor Down" has become a phenomenon on campus, and Grady has played a huge part in ensuring the mantra's prevalence. For a fan base and a university with a historic inferiority complex when it comes to athletics, people have embraced Grady for his unabashed love and pride in playing for this university. It is almost certain that tweets like this one, which was retweeted 45 times and favorited 22 more after Vanderbilt's win over Tennessee, will be seen by any Commodore fan on Twitter: "WE ARE THE NEW UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE ! PAINT THE STATE BLACK AND GOLD & ANCHOR TF DOWN!"

Through a lot of down years and embarrassing times, it has not always been easy to take pride in being a Vanderbilt fan or Vanderbilt player, but Grady embodies the Brand New Vanderbilt. He is bold, brash and brimming with excitement for the future, but most of all he makes Vandy fans feel good about themselves and the school for which they root, and that is why he is so beloved by the Vanderbilt faithful.

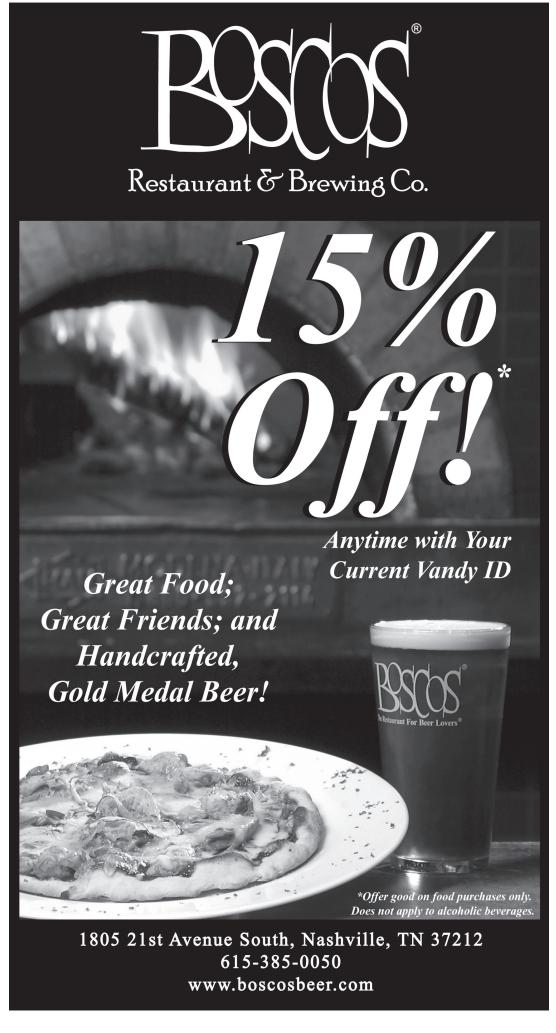
# Congratulations

Coach Franklin and the Vanderbilt Football Team on a great season!

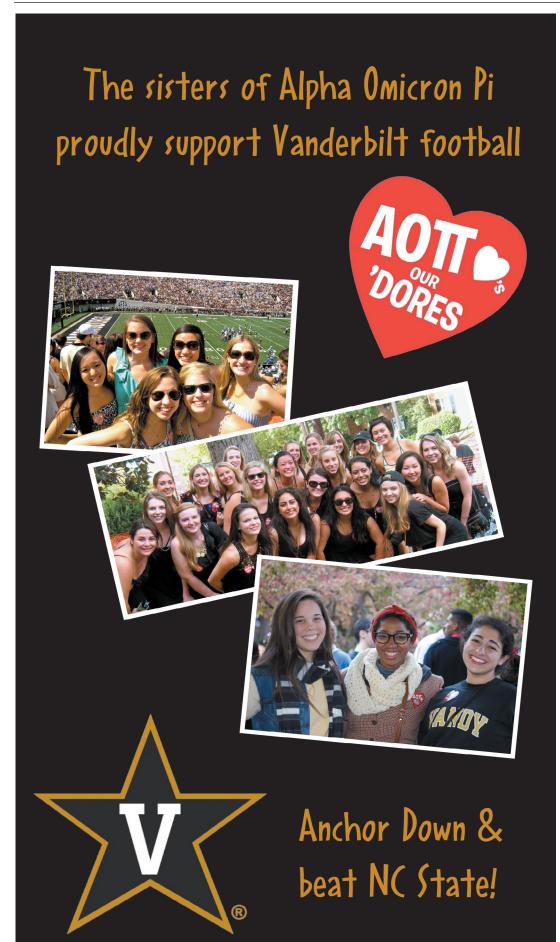
Best of luck at the Music City Bowl.

Go 'Dores!





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## \* ANCHORING DOWN AT THE \*

# MUSIC CITY BOWL!



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