

All-Time SEC AP Pre-Season No.1's
By Tex Noel, SEC StatHistorian and Executive Director of the
Intercollegiate Football Researchers Association

When a SEC team has been predicted No. 1 in the annual Pre-Season AP Poll is it a cause for celebration or concerned?

Alabama has been picked to finish first in the 61st annual AP Pre-Season College Football poll. This was just the second time for school to sit on top the rankings.

AP gave Alabama the early nod as the nation's top team was in 1978.

Should the Crimson Tide claim the 2010 title, it would join two other back-to-back teams from the school.

The first was 1964-65 and then again in 1978-79; both under the career of legendary coach, Paul "Bear" Bryant see his team win it twice in succession.

In fact, Alabama is the only SEC school to win back-to-back championships during the AP era, 1936-forward—and one of two schools to have accomplished the feat twice (Nebraska 1970-71 and 1994-95.)

The *AP Pre-Season Poll* began in 1950 and since that time, seven SEC teams – in 11 total accomplishments—have been voted to be the nation's top team.

Back in 1951, Tennessee under another legendary mentor, Gen. Robert Neyland, was the AP's choice for the top team at season's end; thus becoming the first of 10 teams have been Pre-Season and eventual National Champions. (Only two teams from the SEC were picked #1 and would eventually be

National Champion. Bryant's 1978 unit was the only other SEC team.)

Three times has a SEC team win the national crown and was not ranked in the Top 10. The 1957 Auburn eleven was predicted as the poll's 15th best team; a year later, LSU was first of three champions (over a five-year period) to claim an AP Championship and was **NOT** ranked in the Pre-Season survey; while Vince Dooley's Georgia team rose from 16th to the title in 1980.

Other National Champions that were not ranked in the Pre-Season, yet advance through the weekly polls were: 1960 Minnesota and USC's first title in its first title season, 1962.

Ole Miss was predicted to be the AP's National Champion in the 1964 Pre-Season selections; but not only failed to win-it-all, but the Rebels weren't even in the final polls of just 10 teams. (From 1962-67 the final poll included just 10 teams.)

Florida has won three titles—but none when it was predicted to do so; or with a spotless slate.

But in the previous 60 *AP Pre-Season* polls, just 10 predicted #1 sat atop the poll when the final poll was released.

Alabama will open its defense of its title against San Jose State. This will be the second time that the Spartans against a Pre-Season #1. It lost in 2000 to Nebraska, 49-13.

AP's Pre-Season #1 and National Champion in the same season

1951	Tennessee	1	1978	Alabama	1
1952	Michigan State	1	1985	Oklahoma	1
1956	Oklahoma	1	1993	Florida State	1
1974	Oklahoma	1	1999	Florida State	1
1975	Oklahoma	1	2004	USC	1

SEC's Pre-Season No. 1 teams—and final ranking

Season	Pre-Season #1	Final Rank
1951	Tennessee	1
1959	LSU	3
1964	Mississippi	<i>NR</i>
1966	Alabama	3
1978	Alabama	1
1984	Auburn	14
1994	Florida	7
2001	Florida	3
2008	Georgia	13
2009	Florida	3
2010	Alabama	TBD

SEC's National Champions—and Pre-Season AP ranking

Season	Pre-Season #1	Rank	Season	Pre-Season #1	Rank
1951	Tennessee	1	1992	Alabama	9
1957	Auburn	15	1996	Florida	4
1958	LSU	NR	1998	Tennessee	10
1961	Alabama	3	2006	Florida	7
1964	Alabama	6	2007	LSU	2
1965	Alabama	5	2008	Florida	5
1978	Alabama	1	2009	Alabama	5
1979	Alabama	2			
1980	Georgia	16			