

COLLEGE FOOTBALL BROADCAST RESEARCH PACKET

FSU@ALA

Florida State Seminoles at Alabama Crimson Tide

Saturday, September 19, 2026

Venue: Bryant-Denny Stadium

REG

Sample broadcast research packet

OPENING WATCH LIST – READ THIS FIRST

Game Thesis

Alabama enters the 2026 opener at Bryant-Denny Stadium seeking to avenge a 31-17 loss to Florida State from last season. The matchup features a stark identity contrast: Alabama’s "Swarm" defense, which allowed a board-best 0.07 defensive PPA and a 37.4% success rate in 2025, against an FSU offense that was the most efficient situational unit in the country. The Seminoles ranked #3 out of 137 FBS teams in third-down PPA (+0.87) last season, a "money-down" proficiency that Mike Norvell must now replicate with a roster featuring 66 newcomers and a rebuilt offensive line.

The game revolves around the protection of two experienced but pressured quarterbacks. Alabama’s Austin Mack enters with a high-efficiency floor (75.0% completion rate in 2025) but operates behind a line that surrendered 27 sacks at a costly -1.496 PPA per dropback. Florida State counters with graduate senior Ashton Daniels, who inherits an attack that leaned heavily on the pass last year (+1.128 PPA on completed throws). With both programs navigating open quarterback competitions and elite secondary play—headlined by Alabama safety Bray Hubbard's 82.9 overall grade—the winner will likely be the side that avoids the drive-killing sack (-1.081 PPA for FSU) in favor of the vertical chunk play.

Core Broadcast Question

Can Florida State’s nation-leading third-down efficiency survive a collision with an Alabama secondary that returns four defenders with coverage grades above 80.0?

All Things to Watch

- **Opening Script:** Look for FSU to test the boundary early with Duce Robinson, the only 1,000-yard receiver in this game, to soften a Tide shell that allowed just 0.07 PPA last season.
- **Early Downs:** Alabama's rushing attack ran at negative value last season (-0.040 PPA);
- **The Trenches:** Alabama returns elite pass-blockers Jaeden Roberts (86.3) and Kam Dewberry (82.3) to shore up a unit that gave up 27 sacks a year ago.
- **Third-and-Long:** FSU was the #3 situational offense in the FBS last season (+0.87 PPA on third down), making them statistically the most dangerous team on the board when the sticks move.
- **Red Zone:** FSU kicker Jake Weinberg and Alabama’s Conor Talty were both 100% on extra points last year but struggled on field goals, both hovering under a 66% conversion rate.
- **Coverage Tell:** Alabama uses a two-deep shell anchored by safeties Bray Hubbard and Keon Sabb, specifically designed to eliminate the deep middle where FSU’s Micahi Danzy (21.1 YPR) thrives.
- **Injuries/Availability:** Both rosters are largely intact for the opener; FSU is integrating 66 newcomers, including portal arrival Gavin Sawchuk in the backfield.
- **Special Teams:** Watch FSU returner Jaylin Lucas, who averaged 24.6 yards per kick return in 2025, against an Alabama coverage unit that must protect a neutral field-position battle.
- **Milestones:** Senior Duce Robinson is the marquee individual name to watch; his 1,081-yard 2025 campaign is the highest-yardage total on either sideline.
- **The Wolf Pressure:** Alabama’s Yhonzae Pierre recorded 8 sacks and 14.5 TFL last season; he is the primary threat to FSU’s 2025 sack-allowance line of 21.

How Tonight Unfolds

- Florida State won the most recent meeting 31-17 on August 30, 2025, but Alabama finished the season with a superior 11-4 record.
- Alabama's defense allowed 0.07 defensive PPA in 2025, the stingiest per-play efficiency mark of any unit in this matchup.
- FSU wideout Duce Robinson enters as the primary vertical threat after averaging 19.3 yards per catch last season.
- Alabama's offensive identity is pass-heavy, posting a +0.938 PPA on completed passes compared to -0.040 on rush attempts.
- FSU safety Earl Little led the Noles with 4 interceptions and 76 tackles in 2025, anchoring the secondary's ball-hawk identity.
- The Crimson Tide's Keelon Russell holds the highest NIL valuation in the building at \$2.0 M, double that of FSU’s top earners.
- FSU's Ousmane Kromah averaged 5.7 yards per carry last year, providing a run-efficiency floor (+0.145 PPA) that exceeds Alabama’s 2025 rushing metrics. Sacks proved catastrophic for both offenses last season: ALA lost -1.496 PPA per sack, while FSU lost -1.081.

Game Keys

Key	Why It Matters
The Hubbard/Sabb Shell	Alabama's safeties (82.7 and 81.5 coverage grades) must neutralize Robinson to maintain their 0.07 Def PPA baseline.
Money-Down Magic	FSU ranked #3 in FBS on 3rd down (+0.87 PPA); staying on schedule is their only path to a road upset.
The Sack Tax	Alabama gave up 27 sacks at -1.496 PPA each; if the FSU front (Desir 6.5 sacks) hits home, the Tide offense stalls.
Robinson vs. Lee	The game's only 1,000-yard WR meets a 5-star corner in Dijon Lee (80.3 coverage) on the boundary.
Negative Run Efficiency	Alabama must improve on -0.040 rush PPA to prevent FSU from sitting in pass-coverage lanes all night.
Kromah’s Creases	FSU’s 5.7 YPC lead back (Kromah) forces ALA's front to commit defenders, opening up the deep play-action.

Broadcast line: Florida State owns the most recent win in this series, but they must overcome the board's stingiest defense (0.07 PPA) to spoil Alabama's home opener.

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1. FSU Program Identity

FSU Identity Tonight

Florida State arrives in Tuscaloosa as a roster in the middle of a deliberate rebuild, and the numbers describe exactly what that rebuild looks like: a money-down offense that was among the best in the country on third down, a ground game that out-produced its record, and a defense that held its own without elite pop. The 2025 regular-season baseline – 5-7 (2-6 ACC), 253 pass yards and 218 rush yards per game across 70 plays – says a club that moved the ball efficiently but could not finish games. The signature is the situational offense: FSU posted a 3rd-down PPA of +0.87, the #3/137 FBS mark in 2025, with a 47.2% offensive success rate and a 1.36 explosiveness figure. That is the identity this staff wants to carry into 2026 – sustain drives, win the down that matters, and lean on the explosive pass.

The roster-building fingerprint is unmistakable: this is a portal-and-recruiting program sewing a new core together. The 2026 live roster lists 40 returning players and 66 newcomers, with 22 transfer-context players on the board – including arrival **Duce Robinson** (SR), who led FSU in 2025 with 56 catches, 1,081 yards and 6 TDs after transferring from USC, and **Gavin Sawchuk** (JR), who slid into the running-back rotation. Departures are just as telling: defensive end **Patrick Payton**, defensive tackle **Marvin Jones Jr.**, and receiver **Malik Benson** all left via the portal, and kickers **Jake Weinberg** and punter **MacChiumiento** are no longer on the roster – meaning the specialist jobs are genuinely open competitions in 2026. Mike Norvell, entering with a **38-34 career record at FSU** after last year's 5-7, has built through the portal before; the question is whether the third-down magic survives a rebuilt offensive line and a reshuffled quarterback room.

The matchup profile is a rush-lean collision. FSU's 2025 run game averaged **218 yards per game** and carried a +0.145 rush PPA on 439 plays with a 16.4% stuff rate, against an Alabama run game that averaged just 104 yards and graded below-neutral (-0.040). Meanwhile Alabama's 2025 defense was the stingiest unit on either sideline – 0.07 Def PPA on a 37.4% success rate – so FSU's signature efficiency will be tested by the best front it will face.

- The through-line:** this team wins by staying on the field and hitting chunk plays, and it loses when the pocket collapses – the 2025 sack line of 21 sacks taken at -1.081 PPA is the vulnerability Alabama's front is built to exploit.

Offense

The 2025 offense was defined by efficiency on money downs and explosive downfield passing, with a backfield that was more reliable than its box score suggested.

Metric	FSU 2025
Off. PPA	0.30
Pass PPA	0.35
Rush PPA	+0.145
3rd-down PPA	+0.87 (#3/137 FBS)
Off. success rate	47.2%
Explosiveness	1.36
Stuff rate	16.4%

- Money-down engine:** FSU climbed from +0.145 PPA on first down to +0.875 on third (184 plays) and +0.631 on fourth (94 plays) in 2025 – a unit built to convert, not to start fast; 47.3% of 131 possessions ended in points.
- Downfield pass:** Robinson's 19.3 yards per catch and Danzy's 21.1 highlighted a completed-pass PPA of **+1.128** across 177 plays – the sharpest passing-efficiency slice on either sideline in this matchup.
- Run reliability:** Ousmane Kromah (SO) turned 72 carries into 408 yards in 2025 (5.7 per carry) with a 555-yard scrimmage line, and Zay Parks added 15 carries, 95 yards and a TD – the ground game beat the 104-yard Alabama run average a year ago.
- Vs tonight's defense:** Alabama's 2025 stop unit posted 0.07 Def PPA on a 37.4% success rate with 27 sacks taken by Alabama's own offense – the Tide front (Roberts 86.3 pass block grade) is the test for FSU's 21-sack 2025 pass-protection line. The third-down edge holds only when the pocket stays clean.

Defense & Matchup

The 2025 FSU defense was solid without being spectacular – a stingy-by-volume unit that kept games close but rarely forced the issue.

- Front pop:** Mandrell Desir (SO) led the 2025 front with 6.5 sacks in 8 games; Daniel Lyons (SR) and Deamontae Diggs (SR) added 2.0 and 1.0, respectively, and are both back on the 2026 line.
- Second-level teeth:** Blake Nicholson (SR) and Justin Cryer posted 6.5 and 5.0 TFL in 2025 – though Cryer is among the departures, leaving Nicholson and a rebuilt linebacker room anchored by Mikes Gbayer (SR) and Omar Graham Jr. (SR).
- Coverage profile:** FSU allowed 0.15 Def PPA on a 40.5% success rate in 2025, with 1.19 explosiveness allowed – mid-tier efficiency against a Tide offense that threw at +0.938 completed-pass PPA a year ago.
- Secondary reset:** The 2026 DB room blends returning seniors (Ashlynd Barker, Quindarrius Jones, Ja Bril Rawls) with transfer adds like Jarvis Boatwright Jr. (from USC) and returning junior K.J. Kirkland – a unit reconfigured for Alabama's pass-lean attack.

Special Teams

The kicking and punting rooms were rebuilt over the offseason, making this a live competition against a top-tier SEC opponent.

- **Kicking:** With 2025 starter Jake Weinberg no longer on the roster, the 2026 job is an open race between transfer Gabe Panikowski (SR) and Conor McAneney (SO) – neither has FBS counting stats in our data, and Weinberg's 2025 line (12/19 FG, 46/46 XP) belongs to the past. No completed 2026 line exists yet.
- **Punting:** MacChiumiento also departed; the available option with verified production is transfer Daniel Hughes (JR), who averaged 45.9 yards gross on 37 punts (1,698 yards) for New Mexico in the 2025 regular season, plus freshman Ethan Post and sophomore Carter Jula on the depth chart.
- **Return game:** Jaylin Lucas averaged 24.6 yards on 9 kick returns in 2025 (221 yards) and is back; transfer Squirrel White (SR) handled 7 punts for 64 yards in 2025 and adds a second live return threat alongside Lucas.

Coaching Staff & Scheme

Name	Title
Mike Norvell	Head Coach

- **Scheme identity:** Norvell's offense is a pass-first attack built on downfield spacing (Robinson 19.3 YPR, Danzy 21.1) and money-down efficiency – the 2025 #3/137 FBS third-down PPA is the on-field signature.
- **Tempo & balance:** FSU ran 70 plays per game in 2025 with a slight pass lean (439 rushes vs 423 pass drops) – the run game's +0.145 PPA was the healthier of the two sides, so the mix is a true balance that tilts to the air on third.
- **Defensive call:** The front won off the edge in 2025 (Desir's 6.5 sacks in 8 games), but the secondary is rebuilt – expect a coverage-first plan built to make Alabama earn yards underneath rather than give up the chunk throws FSU's own offense thrives on.
- **Stakes at the helm:** Norvell's 38-34 career mark at FSU includes last season's 5-7; this is year six of a portal-and-recruiting rebuild that has turned over a third of the roster for 2026.

What's Working / What's Not

- **Working – Money-Down Magic:** FSU's 3rd-down PPA of +0.87 ranked #3/137 FBS in 2025, and 47.3% of possessions ended in points – the offense lived on conversion downs.
- **Working – Ground Efficiency:** The 2025 run game carried a +0.145 rush PPA on 439 plays with a 16.4% stuff rate and 218 yards per game, out-producing Alabama's own ground attack (104).
- **Working – Downfield Threats:** Two returning receivers – Robinson (19.3 YPR) and Danzy (21.1 YPR) – give FSU the best deep-pass combo on either sideline; completed passes generated +1.128 PPA in 2025.
- **Not Working – Pocket Survival:** FSU took 21 sacks in 2025 at a -1.081 PPA each – the single worst possible outcome on the board, and the edge an Alabama front with 27 sacks allowed on its own offense can attack.
- **Not Working – Red-Zone Finish:** FSU finished 5-7 largely because 2025 drives stalled before points; only 15 turn-over drives against 50 touchdown drives still left too many empty trips against a top-tier stop unit.
- **Not Working – Special Teams Reset:** With Weinberg and Chiumento gone, the kicker and punter jobs are open competitions headed into a hostile Week 3 road test.

Clubhouse & Stakes

- **Record & poll:** FSU enters unranked at an AP high of 7 from past seasons; a 5-7 (2-6 ACC) 2025 left the Noles out of the postseason entirely, and a 2026 CFP path runs through a brutal non-conference opener at Alabama in Week 3.
- **Series context:** The last seven meetings between FSU and Alabama split 3-3, with the most recent a 31-17 FSU home win on Aug. 30, 2025 – a game FSU won by out-rushing the Tide and leaning on its own big-play pass.
- **Quarterback question:** The 2026 job is an open competition headlined by senior Ashton Daniels, with Dean DeNobile (SR), Malachi Marshall (JR), Michael Grant (JR) and freshman Kevin Sperry all in the mix – no QB on the roster carries 2026 counting stats, so the opener is a live evaluation.
- **Roster churn:** 66 newcomers on the 2026 board (22 transfer-context) against 40 returning players means this is a significantly new team – and a make-or-break statement for the portal-built core.

Conditions

- **Venue:** FSU plays away at Bryant-Denny Stadium in Tuscaloosa on Saturday, Sept. 19 – Week 3 of the 2026 season, a true road test in one of the SEC's most hostile environments.
- **Surface & rest:** No weather, surface, altitude, or short-week data is printed for the fixture; both clubs enter on normal rest.

Broadcast line: Florida State's 2026 identity is money-down efficiency and downfield explosives behind a rebuilt line and an open quarterback race – but the 5-7 baseline, the portal churn, and Alabama's 0.07 Def PPA make this the truest test of whether Norvell's portal-built core can hang with a College Football Playoff-caliber front.

2. ALA Program Identity

ALA Identity Tonight

Alabama opens 2026 with a pass-first identity and the stingiest returning defense on this board – a profile built for September nights in Bryant-Denny. The Tide's 2025 regular-season baseline (11-4, 7-1 SEC) ran through the air: 263 passing yards vs. 104 rushing per game, a +0.938 PPA on completed passes, and a 1.27 offensive explosiveness rate. That aerial engine pairs with a defense that allowed just 0.07 points-per-play (PPA) at a 37.4% success rate in 2025 – the best per-play mark of any team in this matchup – anchored by a secondary nearly everyone in the NFL covets.

What has worked for this program under Kalen DeBoer is the temp late he now leans on for a reset year: an elite veteran back end carrying an evolving front, a top-tier recruiting haul to feed the pipeline, and an open QB race he has refused to rush. The magazine's 2026 preview slots the Tide's freshmen class No. 1 among FBS and projects a 9-3 (6-3) season behind the second-toughest first-half schedule in the country and the 15th-toughest slate overall. The bet is that the pass game buys time while Adrian Klemm rebuilds a ground attack that ranked 123rd nationally in 2025 and finished at -0.040 rush PPA on 396 carries with a 19.8% stuff rate.

The through-line is contradiction: elite structure around a raw middle. Alabama returns the best defensive backfield on the board (Bray Hubbard 82.9 overall, 88.1 run defense, 4 interceptions in 2025; Keon Sabb; Dijon Lee Jr.; Zabien Brown; Red Morgan all back after some turned down the NFL) while the front seven and offensive line turn over. Yhonzae Pierre's 8 sacks and 14.5 tackles for loss in 2025 give Kane Wommack's 4-2-5 Swarm a genuine Wolf pressure piece, but the line around him was restocked through the portal. At home with a +4.25 HFA edge on grass in front of 101,821, the Tide's identity is a proven pass game + an elite secondary, asked to protect a rebuilding core through the greenest months of the schedule.

Offense

The offense is Ryan Grubb's pass-first Pro Spread – a 49% pass / 51% run split in 2025 – and the market-driver is downfield efficiency, not volume. Alabama posted +0.938 PPA on completed passes and a 1.27 explosiveness rate, but the run game ran below water (-0.040 rush PPA, 19.8% of carries stuffed at the line) and the line surrendered 27 sacks at a weighted -1.496 PPA each. The 2026 line turns over nearly wholesale:

Kadyn Proctor and Parker Brailsford are gone to the NFL, Michael Carroll returns at right tackle, and Cal Poly transfer Racin Delgatty is the projected center as the staff hands Adrian Klemm the revive-the-run mandate.

- **QB race is open:** DeBoer has confirmed the competition extends into fall camp. Senior Austin Mack's 2025 efficiency is the floor – 24 of 32 attempts (75.0%) for 228 yards, 2 TD, 0 INT, a 155.5 passer rating – while sophomore Keelon Russell's A-Day statement (11-of-15, 143 yards, 2 TD) has shifted momentum and keeps it genuine.
- **Depth:** Jett Thomalla, Tayden-Evan Kaawa.
- **Backfield pecking order:** Daniel Hill enters spring as the projected lead after Jam Miller's departure, carrying 75 times for 284 yards and 6 TD in 2025; AK Dear's 7.4 yards-per-carry on 19 attempts is the efficiency outlier; Kevin Riley (59 carries, 224 yards, 2 TD in 2025) backs up. Five-star freshman Ezavier Crowell missed most of spring.
- **Downfield shelf:** Lotzeir Brooks (32 rec, 441 yds, 13.8 YPR, 2 TD in 2025) is the proven slot, with junior Ryan Coleman-Williams the expected top target and Kaleb Edwards the receiving answer at tight end.
- **Why tonight's defense matters:** FSU allowed 0.15 Def PPA at a 40.5% success rate in 2025 – a more permissive per-play profile than Alabama's own 0.07 – but this is still a rebuilt five in front of a new quarterback, so sacks and negative dropbacks are the swing risk.

Defense & Matchup

This is the half that makes Alabama the favorite. The 2025 defense allowed the best per-play number on the board – 0.07 Def PPA at a 37.4% success rate – and Wommack's 4-2-5 Swarm now leans on an elite, intact secondary while the front gets rebuilt through the portal.

- **Elite back end:** Bray Hubbard (82.9 overall, 88.1 run defense, 4 INT in 2025), Keon Sabb, Dijon Lee Jr. (Freshman All-SEC, 2 INT), Zabien Brown and Red Morgan all return, with five-star freshmen Jorden Edmonds (corner) and Jireh Edwards (safety) added.
- **Wolf pressure:** Yhonzae Pierre's 8 sacks and 14.5 tackles for loss in 2025 anchor the pass-rush mandate; Virginia Tech transfer Caleb Woodson was brought in to wear the green dot.
- **Rebuilt front:** Devan Thompkins (Bandit), Terrance Green (nose) and Kedrick Bingley-Jones (run stopper) arrive via the portal around returning interior piece London Simmons – cohesion is the open question Wommack's "violence" mandate targets.
- **Points-allowed profile:** with 0.07 PPA in 2025, the Tide ranked effectively stingiest on a per-play basis in this matchup, and that margin is the setup edge against a pass-heavy FSU attack.

Special Teams

The kicking job is an open spring competition – Marshall transfer Lorcan Quinn holding a slight edge over incumbent Conor Talty – with DeBoer confirming the battle publicly. Talty's 2025 season splits clean: 13/20 on field goals (65.0%) and a perfect 44/44 on extra points (100.0%). Punting upgrades behind FCS All-American Adam Watford, a North Alabama transfer with a year of eligibility who is the clear starter. Return roles are unsettled, though Lotzeir Brooks (13 kickoff returns, 256 yards, 19.7 avg in 2025) and Ryan Coleman-Williams both project to have a hand in them.

Coaching Staff & Scheme

Name	Title
Kalen DeBoer	Head Coach
Ryan Grubb	Offensive Coordinator / Play-Caller
Kane Wommack	Defensive Coordinator
Adrian Klemm	Offensive Line Coach
Jay Nunez	Special Teams Coordinator

- **DeBoer record:** 11-4 (7-1 SEC) in 2025, 20-8 over two seasons at Alabama, and the 2026 preview credits him with 20 wins in 26 career tries against top-25 opponents.
- **Grubb's scheme:** the second year of the DeBoer-Grubb partnership keeps a pass-first Pro Spread built on NFL concepts, with a renewed commitment to the run under Klemm after the 2025 ground game ranked 123rd nationally.
- **Wommack's Swarm:** a 4-2-5 built on secondary range and back-seven coverage, now tasked with generating more pass-rush violence behind a rebuilt front.
- **Klemm's mandate:** brought in fresh off stops at USC and the New England Patriots specifically to revive the running game and settle a line that underachieved with veterans in 2025.

What's Working / What's Not

- **Working – Return-All-Star Secondary:** Bray Hubbard (82.9 overall, 88.1 run defense, 4 INT), Keon Sabb, Dijon Lee Jr., Zabien Brown and Red Morgan all return, with five-star additions behind them.
- **Working – Elite Per-Play Defense:** 0.07 Def PPA at a 37.4% success rate in 2025, the stingiest unit on this board.
- **Working – Downfield Pass Engine:** +0.938 PPA on completed passes and a 1.27 explosiveness rate in 2025, with a proven 1,000-yard-capable receiving shelf returning.
- **Working – Pipeline & Portal:** a No. 1 FBS 2026 recruiting class and a championship-caliber portal haul (Thompkins, Green, Woodson, Watford).
- **Not Working – Ground Game:** -0.040 rush PPA on 396 carries with a 19.8% stuff rate in 2025; 123rd nationally.
- **Not Working – Sack Weight:** 27 sacks allowed at a -1.496 PPA each in 2025, the worst single-play outcome on the offense.
- **Not Working – Field-Goal Consistency:** Talty's 13/20 (65.0%) mark in 2025 left 7 misses – every stalled-red-zone drive is a live swing.
- **Not Working – O-Line Rebuild:** the 2025 veteran line is largely gone (Proctor, Brailsford to the NFL), handing a green unit to a new-line coach.

Clubhouse & Stakes

Alabama enters the opener ranked No. 8 in the AP poll – the profile of a title-contending team carrying a rebuilt core. The storyline is partly revenge: the Tide lost 17-31 at Florida State on Aug. 30, 2025, so this home opener is the rematch of the only slip against a non-SEC power in the 2025 run. Last season closed with a CFP semifinal 3-38 loss to Indiana on Jan. 1, 2026, and the 2026 preseason model sims a 9-3 (6-3) finish with a 4.9% chance to make the CFP and a 0.3% shot at the national title – a standard that makes anything short of a Playoff return a liability in Tuscaloosa.

- **Series context:** the clubs are 3-3 across their last seven meetings, with Alabama winning the 2025-adjacent prior matchup at home (24-7, Sept. 2, 2017).
- **Schedule gauntlet:** the front half ranks second nationally in difficulty through Week 7 – this opener is the earliest edge in a brutal opening run.
- **Polls:** No. 8 AP entering; the preseason model calls the Tide a 32-22 winner with a 74% win probability in the opener.

Conditions

- **Home opener:** Bryant-Denny Stadium, grass surface, 101,821 capacity, with a printed +4.25 home-field edge for the 2026 model.
- **Fresh slate:** full offseason to prepare, no short-week or travel caveats for either side.

- **Familiarity:** the Tide host an FSU club they lost to on the road in the 2025 opener – a motivated, fresh-setting rematch.

Broadcast line: Alabama's pass-first offense and elite returning secondary make the home Tide the projected favorite, but a rebuilt offensive line and an open quarterback race turn the opener into a proving ground for the 2026 standard.

3. FSU Passing Attack

Ashton Daniels – competition's senior head

Ashton Daniels, the graduate senior atop Florida State's spring quarterback race, enters a 2026 opener in Tuscaloosa with no quarterback on the roster carrying 2025 counting stats on this packet – the game is a projection from personnel and last season's offense, not a finished line. The position battle behind him includes Dean DeNobile (SR), Malachi Marshall (JR), Michael Grant (JR) and freshman Kevin Sperry; the chapter builds from the unit's 2025 efficiency shape rather than any single player's completed season.

Off. PPA	Pass PPA	3rd-Down PPA	3rd-Down Rank	Comp-Pass PPA	Sack PPA
0.30	0.35	0.87	#3/137	1.128	-1.081

- **Money-down profile:** Florida State's offense graded out at a 3rd-down PPA of **+0.87**, the **#3/137 FBS** mark in the country – the unit lived on third down a year ago.
- **Pass-first shape:** the passing game carried an even +0.35 pass PPA against a +0.28 rush PPA, and completed-pass plays generated a **+1.128** PPA (177 plays) versus **-0.754** on incompletions (129 plays).
- **Schemed through the air:** 45.3% of the pass volume came on completed throws, with sacks cratering at **-1.081** PPA on 21 plays – protection and quick release are the difference-makers this fall.

Efficiency & Money Downs

- **Down-by-down climb:** FSU's PPA ascended from **+0.145** on first down (485 plays) to **+0.148** on second, then exploded to **+0.875** on third (184 plays) and **+0.631** on fourth (94 plays) – a profile built to convert, not to start fast.
- **Drives that finish:** on 131 offensive possessions, **47.3% ended in points** with 50 touchdown drives and 28 punts, against 15 turn over drives – the offense's 2025 identity was sustained possession, not splash.
- **What breaks tonight:** the passing PPA and third-down efficiency were both among FSU's best-in-class numbers a year ago, but the sack cost (**-1.081** PPA) is the vulnerability a front like Alabama's can attack – the money-down magic holds only when the pocket stays clean.

Under Pressure

- **Clean-pocket vs blitz:** the 2025 packet shows **21 sacks taken** against the pass game, each worth a **-1.081** PPA – roughly the worst possible single-play outcome on the board.
- **Volume tradeoff:** FSU leaned heavy toward the pass (439 rushes vs 423 pass drops) with completed balls carrying **+1.128** PPA, so the entire efficiency edge is keyed to getting throws off; the short book is one sack-driven negative play erasing a string of wins.
- **Alabama's grass:** Alabama's pass defense posted a **0.07** defensive PPA with a **+1.272** defensive explosiveness – strong evidence of a unit that can tilt a passing game if protection slips, though the matchup knife cuts both ways with FSU's #3/137 third-down rate.

Conditions

- **Venue:** Bryant-Denny Stadium, Tuscaloosa, Ala.
- **Opponent:** FBS – SEC's Alabama, 11-4 (7-1 SEC) last season, a top-shelf defensive matchup for a passing attack in transition.
- **FSU last 2025:** 5-7 (2-6 ACC) – the offense's efficiency profile (0.30 off. PPA) arrived with an inconsistent record, part of why the quarterback job is an open September question.

Broadcast line: Pass-efficiency identity meets elite pass defense – if FSU's protection answers, the #3/137 third-down offense is tailor-made for a Tuscaloosa slugfest.

4. FSU Rushing Attack

Backfield Shares

Returning sophomore Ousmane Kromah handled the heavy lift of the 2025 backfield work, with the carries falling off sharply behind him.

Ousmane Kromah – Lead back, efficient between the tackles

The FSU ground game in 2025 ran through Kromah, who paced the club's running backs in carries and yards while handling receiving work out of the backfield.

CAR	YDS	YPC	TD
72	408	5.7	0

- **Committee split:** Kromah's 72 carries dwarfed the next printed FSU backfield option – Zay Parks logged 15 carries for 95 yards and 1 touchdown in 2025. Parks is back as a sophomore rotation piece rather than a co-lead.
- **Scrimmage reach:** Kromah finished 2025 with 555 total yards and 1 touchdown across rush and reception work, showing pass-game value beyond his carries.
- **Backfield add:** Gavin Sawchuk arrived via the transfer portal this cycle and gives the room an established third option behind Kromah and Parks – a committee that leans on one primary back on paper.

How They Run

The 2025 FSU rush attack graded as a net-positive, efficient unit – modest per-play juice without many negative plays.

- **Positive efficiency:** FSU posted a rush PPA of **+0.145** across 439 rush plays in 2025, with situational rush PPA at **+0.28** – the ground game consistently gained more than it lost.
- **Explosive upside:** The offense carried a 1.36 explosiveness figure on rushing plays (1.356 situational), pairing solid per-play value with chunk-play pop.
- **Avoiding the stuff:** FSU's stuff rate sat at **16.4%**, meaning defenses rarely stopped the run behind the line – a key driver of the positive rush PPA.

Short Yardage & Goal Line

FSU was at its most efficient on money downs in 2025, which is where the ground game's reliability likely matters most.

- **Money-down monster:** FSU ranked **#3 out of 137** in third-down PPA at **+0.87** – a top-tier situational profile that helps keep drive-converting series alive.
- **Low stuff, sustainable drives:** With a 16.4% stuff rate and 47.2% offensive success rate, the rushing attack put the unit in favorable down-and-distance spots more often than not.

Conditions

FSU opens this 2026 matchup on the road at Bryant-Denny Stadium – a true road test against a SEC front, with no rest or weather edge printed either way.

Broadcast line: Backfield runs through Ousmane Kromah, whose 5.7 YPC and 555 scrimmage yards in 2025 anchor a ground game that avoided negative plays and lived on money downs – now tested by an Alabama front at Bryant-Denny.

5. FSU Receiving Corps

Target Hierarchy

Duce Robinson owns the top of the FSU target tree, with a young but defined pecking order behind him.

REC	YDS	YPR	TD
56	1081	19.3	6

- **No. 1 target:** Duce Robinson (SR) led Florida State with 56 receptions, 1,081 receiving yards and 6 receiving TDs in 2025 – the highest-yardage pass-catcher on the roster by a wide margin.
- **No. 2 threat:** Micahi Danzy (SO) added 27 catches for 571 yards and 3 TDs in 2025, posting an even higher yards per catch (21.1) than Robinson.
- **Emerging third:** Jayvan Boggs (SO) sits next at 9 receptions for 103 yards and 1 TD in 2025, with the tight-end room chipping in through Landen Thomas (3 catches, 35 yards, 2 TDs).

Route Diet & Depth

- **Downfield diet:** Robinson (19.3 YPR) and Danzy (21.1 YPR) both live deep, and FSU's completed-pass PPA (1.128) was the sharper of the two clubs on the efficiency board – a pass-leaning attack.
- **Young bench:** Behind the top two, the WR room is almost entirely freshmen – Brandon Bennett, Tony Bland, Devin Carter and Tae'S haun Gelsey – with transfer arrival Squirrel White providing a veteran add to the rotation.
- **Tight-end rotation:** Landen Thomas (2 TDs on just 3 catches in 2025) and senior Greyson Labiad anchor the room, with freshmen Chase Loftin, Corbyn Fordham and Drew Hardwick as the developing depth.

Against Tonight's Coverage

- **Pass-lean matchup:** FSU's completed-pass PPA (1.128) edged Alabama's (0.938); the Tide answer with a secondary headlined by returning coverage grades from Bray Hubbard (82.7) and Keon Sabb (81.5).
- **Chunk-play profile:** Robinson's 19.3 yards per catch downfield production is the club's most efficient route to explosive plays, and the strongest single receiving slice on either sideline.

Conditions

- **Road test:** Florida State plays this one away from home at Bryant-Denny Stadium in Tuscaloosa on Saturday, Sept. 19 in Week 3 of the 2026 season.

Broadcast line: Duce Robinson is the only 1,000-yard receiver on the field – FSU's downfield answer rides his 19.3 yards per catch.

6. FSU Offensive Line & Defensive Front

FSU Offensive Line & Defensive Front

FSU's identity last season lived through the air – a +1.128 completed-pass PPA on a pass-leaning attack – while the line held up modestly and the front found its pop at the edge. This chapter reads both units off the 2025 baseline, with portal reinforcements already in place for 2026.

Offensive Line

- **Pressure accounting:** FSU allowed **21 sacks** in the 2025 regular season; they hold up best on the move, but clean pockets were a visible need against pressure-heavy fronts.
- **Run efficiency:** FSU posted a +0.145 rush PPA on 439 rush plays last season – a healthier ground-efficiency mark than the box score line suggested.
- **Backfield payout:** **Ousmane Kromah** turned **72 carries into 408 yards** by season's end in 2025 (no touchdowns) – the crease production was there; the finish inside the red zone was not.
- **Front refresh:** Portal additions **Micah Pettus** and **Luke Petitbon** join the offensive front depth this cycle, returning-established bodies who factor into the rotation.

Defensive Front

- **Pass-rush pop:** **Mandrell Desir** (DL) led the FSU front with **6.5 sacks in 8 games** last season; **Daniel Lyons** (DL) added **2.0**.
- **Backfield disruption:** **Blake Nichelson** (LB) and **Justin Cryer** (LB) combined for **11.5 tackles for loss** in 2025 (6.5 and 5.0, respectively), giving the front second-level teeth.
- **Depth adds:** **Deamontae Diggs** (DL) logged 1.0 sack in 2 games and Jayson Jenkins (DL) **1.0 in 9** – both on the 2026 roster.

2025 Regular Season – FSU defensive front leaders

Player	Pos	Sacks	TFL	Games
Mandrell Desir	DL	6.5	6.5	8
Stefon Thompson	LB	3.5	5.0	10
Daniel Lyons	DL	2.0	3.5	11
Blake Nichelson	LB	1.0	6.5	12
Justin Cryer	LB	1.0	5.0	12

The Edge That Matters

- **Pass-lean chess match:** Alabama leaned pass last season – a **+0.938 completed-pass PPA** against a **-0.040 rush PPA** – while FSU's front proved it can win off the edge (Desir's 6.5 sacks in 2025). The single line to win tonight is FSU's pass rush against Alabama's passing game.
- **Opponent anchor:** Alabama's **Jaeden Roberts** carries the highest pass-block grade on the other side (**86.3**), the man FSU's edge rushers must work around first.

Conditions

- **Venue:** FSU opens the road trip at **Bryant-Denny Stadium** in Tuscaloosa.

Broadcast line: FSU's 2025 front found its sacks (Desir, 6.5 in 8 games) against a pass-hungry Alabama offense that leans on its air game – the pressure matchup the Seminoles must win in Tuscaloosa.

7. FSU Secondary & Linebackers

Coverage Identity

FSU's 2025 pass defense leaned on a takeaway-hungry back end: it finished the year at 0.15 PPA allowed, a 40.5% opponent success rate and 1.19 opponent explosiveness per play – a bend-with-the-ball-hawk profile rather than a pure shell-closing unit. The secondary manufactured its own stops without an elite front, and the returns (Earl Little 4 INTs, Edwin Joseph 3, Jeremiah Wilson 3) made it the most bankable part of a 5-7 defense.

- **Ball Production:** FSU defenders combined for 12 interceptions and 14 pass breakups across the 2025 regular season.
- **Splash Plays Out of Coverage:** Edwin Joseph turned 10 games into 3 picks and a team-high 5 pass breakups; Earl Little led all FSU defenders with 4 interceptions on 12 games.

Who Covers Whom

The returning safety spine is the hub of this unit. Earl Little posted a team-leading 76 tackles with 4 interceptions and 2 pass breakups in 12 games, and Shyheim Brown's 32 tackles in 8 games make him the physical run-support safety patch when the FSU back end drops into two-deep looks. Behind them, the cornerback room is the younger, thinner half of the equation.

Player	Pos	G	Tackles	TFL	INT	PD
Earl Little	S	12	76	2.0	4	2
Jeremiah Wilson	DB	12	42	1.0	3	3
Edwin Joseph	DB	10	37	3.5	3	5
Blake Nicholson	LB	12	43	6.5	0	1
Omar Graham	LB	12	38	0.0	0	1

- **Coverage Linebacker Duo:** Blake Nicholson and Omar Graham give Mike Norvell's defense its coverage backs at the second level – Nicholson a 43-tackle, 6.5-TFL patroller, Graham a 38-tackle eraser who rarely bled explosive catches underneath.
- **Corner Depth is the Watch:** Shamar Arnoux (26 tackles, 1 PD in 10 games) and KJ Kirkland (31 tackles, 1 PD) are the experienced boundary options, with Quindarius Jones the young rotation piece behind them.

What They Allow

The leak is the middle of the field more than the perimeter: FSU's 40.5% opponent success rate and 1.19 explosiveness were mid-pack numbers, and the unit gave up its chunk plays between the numbers where the coverage backers and a thin corner group meet. Alabama's downfield passing game – the opponent's most efficient calling card – attacks exactly that seam, and FSU's run-support safeties are the ones who have to hold the space.

- **Linebacker Run Support:** Ashlynd Barker (48 tackles, 3.5 sacks) and Stefon Thompson (37 tackles, 3.5 sacks) both blitzed and set the edge a year ago, helping the FSU front hold the box.
- **Safeties in the Alley:** Earl Little's 76 tackles and Shyheim Brown's physical 8-game presence are the primary run-support bridges when Alabama tests the 6-7 box.

Conditions

FSU is the road club at Bryant-Denny Stadium, going into a hostile SEC environment with a secondary that was built on takeaways but relies on a thinner corner rotation. No reportable injury rows are on the board for these clubs, so the coverage spine is intact for the opener.

- **Road Context:** This is FSU's first road test of the 2026 season, in front of one of college football's loudest venues – a spot where the young corners' communication under crowd noise becomes a live variable.

Broadcast line: Earl Little is the ball-hawk anchor of an FSU secondary that gave up 0.15 PPA last year but will be tested in the seam by Alabama's vertical passing game at Bryant-Denny.

8. FSU Special Teams

FSU Special Teams

Florida State's kicking game carries last season's efficiency split into a 2026 opener: the field-goal unit was a liability, the point-after unit was flawless. Against Alabama in Tuscaloosa, the difference between those two phases could decide how many points FSU keeps off the board.

Kicking

- **Field goals:** Jake Weinberg hit 12/19 in 2025 regular season – 63.2% – with no distance printed beyond the season total.
- **Extra points:** Weinberg was perfect on point-afters in 2025, going 46/46 – 100%.
- **Role note:** Weinberg is listed on the 2025 roster board as a freshman, with Brunno Reus (FR) also on the specialist depth chart, so the kicker job is a live competition heading into 2026; Weinberg's 2025 counting line is the only completed sample to project from.

Punting & Coverage

- **Punting:** MacChiumiento averaged 44.2 yards on 24 punts in 2025 regular season.
- **Coverage:** No net-punting, inside-20, or return-yards-allowed figures are printed for Chiumiento's coverage unit – the punt team's season profile is limited to that gross average.
- **Depth:** Ethan Post (FR) and Peyton Naylor (SO, long snapper) join Chiumiento and senior long snapper Mason Arnold on the roster specialist board.

Return Game

- **Kick returns:** Jaylin Lucas averaged 24.6 yards on 9 kick returns in 2025 (221 yards).
- **Punt returns:** Squirrel White fielded 7 punts for 64 yards in 2025 (9.1-yard average); Lucas added 3 returns for 18 yards.
- **Incoming boost:** White arrives via the transfer portal after the 2025 cycle, giving FSU a second live punt-return threat alongside Lucas to pair with the kickoff coverage set.

Conditions

- **Venue:** Bryant-Denny Stadium (Tuscaloosa, AL) – no weather, surface, or altitude data printed for the September 19 fixture, so no kicking-condition edge is quotable.

Broadcast line: Weinberg's near-perfect extra-point game (46/46) contrasts with a shaky 63.2% field-goal campaign – the 2026 kicking job, and the distance trust on 40-plus attempts, is the open question for FSU's special teams.

9. ALA Passing Attack

The ALA starting QB

Alabama opens the 2026 season with an open quarterback competition, and the senior front-runner is Austin Mack – the experienced arm from the 2025 room who spells starter Ty Simpson, who is no longer on the roster.

CMP%	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	Y/A	RTG
75.0	32	228	2	0	7.1	155.5

- **High-efficiency sample:** Mack completed 24 of his 32 attempts for 228 yards, 2 touchdowns and no interceptions in limited 2025 reps – a clean 75.0% clip that earned a 155.5 passer rating, the highest of any Tide quarterback with meaningful attempts.
- **Young challenger:** sophomore Keelon Russell flashed explosiveness in his own 15-attempt sample, going 11-for-15 for 143 yards, 2 TD and a 197.4 rating – a 9.5 yards-per-attempt mark that makes the competition genuine heading into the opener.

Efficiency & Money Downs

- **Money-down profile:** Alabama posted a third-down PPA of +0.55 on 239 third-down plays (2025 REG), with completed passes carrying a PPA of +0.938 – the passing game is the engine on conversion downs.
- **Best down is No. 4:** the Tide logged their highest play-level PPA on fourth down at +0.960 across 133 plays, ahead of second down (+0.180) and first down (+0.041).

Under Pressure

- **Sack weight:** Alabama absorbed 27 sacks with a sack PPA of -1.496 (2025 REG) – the single worst play outcome in the offense and the main pressure cost to mitigate for whoever starts.
- **Protection grade:** the front returns elite pass-block anchors, led by Jaeden Roberts at 86.3 and Kam Dewberry at 82.3, with Kadyn Proctor at 81.8 on the blind side – a group that held up well enough to let the Tide push completed-pass PPA to +0.938.

Conditions

- **Home opener setting:** this is a home game at Bryant-Denny Stadium for Alabama, with the Senior-heavy QB room on its own grass.
- **Rest slate:** the Tide come off a full 2025 season (11-4, 7-1 SEC) into the fresh 2026 opener, no short-week or travel caveats on the board.

Broadcast line: Austin Mack's clean 75.0% efficiency and the FBS-tier protection grade give the Tide a steady passing floor in a genuinely open QB race.

10. ALA Rushing Attack

Backfield Shares

Daniel Hill is the featured back in a three-man rotation, carrying 75 times last season – nearly half of the committee's attempts. He graded 71.9 in run offense by PFF while posting the group's best touchdown output.

CAR	YDS	YPC	TD
75	284	3.8	6

- **Committee split:** Hill took 75 of 153 carries (49%) among the returnees, with Kevin Riley at 59 (39%) and AK Dear at 19 (12%).
- **Efficiency pecking order:** Dear averaged 7.4 yards per carry (140 yards on 19 attempts) against 3.8 for both Hill and Riley – Dear graded 84.0 in run offense, the top mark of the backfield.
- **Pass-down note:** Hill's total line was 487 yards and 7 touchdowns last season, but his 38.0 pass-block grade and Riley's 51.1 are the low bars on a team that leans pass (ALA completed-pass PPA +0.938).

How They Run

- **Negative efficiency anchor:** Alabama's rushing attack posted a per-play PPA of -0.040 last season, and the situational rush PPA sat at just 0.05 – the ground game ran below neutral value.
- **Stuffed at the line:** 19.8% of ALA rush attempts were stuffed at or behind the line of scrimmage, the drag on a 3.8 YPC baseline for the two lead runners.
- **Explosives were scarce:** the offense produced a 1.272 explosiveness rate, with the run game lacking the chunk-play spike that could balance the pass-first identity.

Short Yardage & Goal Line

- **Touchdown conversion:** Hill scored 6 times on his 75 carries, while Dear turned 19 attempts into 3 scores – a 15.8% per-carry rate that was the backfield's best.
- **The stuff rate cuts both ways:** with 19.8% of runs stopped behind the chain, Alabama's short-yardage identity leans on the line's pass-block strength – Jaeden Roberts led the unit at 86.3, with Kam Dewberry at 82.3 and Kadyn Proctor at 81.8.

Broadcast line: Alabama's ground game is a Daniel Hill-led committee that ran at negative value last season – this is a pass-first attack (ALA pass PPA +0.938) where the line's 80+ pass-protection grades set up the run, not the other way around.

11. ALA Receiving Corps

Target Hierarchy

Lotzeir Brooks closed 2025 as Alabama's No. 1 target and the most proven receiver still in the room, with the tight end group providing the only other returning volume catcher.

REC	YDS	YPR	TD
32	441	13.8	2

- **Top target:** Brooks' 441 receiving yards led the team in 2025, and his 13.8 yards-per-catch rate fit a downfield profile on an offense that averaged **+0.938 PPA on completed passes**.
- **Complementary TE:** Kaleb Edwards was the second-most targeted catcher (11 rec, 150 yds, 1 TD), giving the pass game a proven valve behind Brooks.
- **Efficient flanker:** Rico Scott turned his 11 catches into 98 yards with a team-tying 2 touchdowns, the most efficient scorer of the group.

Route Diet & Depth

- **Vertical lean:** Alabama's 2025 passing profile graded as a downfield-leaning operation – +0.938 PPA on completed passes and a 1.27 offensive explosiveness rate – with Brooks as the primary threat stretching the field.
- **Returning WR shelf:** Brooks (SO) anchors a group that brings back veterans MJ Chirgwin (SR) and Ryan Coleman-Williams (JR) around him.
- **TE-flex room:** Kaleb Edwards (SO), Josh Ford (JR) and Peyton Fox (SR) give the two-tight end look returning snaps, with Edwards the proven receiver of that trio.

Against Tonight's Coverage

- FSU's defensive shell was more permissive than Alabama's defense on a per-play basis in 2025, allowing **0.15 PPA** (vs ALA's 0.07) at a 40.5% success rate.
- The 1 v1 cornerback history belongs to the WR/CB chapter; the receiving group's context here is that the matchup projects as more catch-and-run space than the Alabama pass defense allowed all last season.

Conditions

- Alabama is the home side at Bryant-Denny Stadium; no weather, surface, or rest notes are printed for this one.

Broadcast line: Lotzeir Brooks is the proven downfield hub of Alabama's passing game, with Kaleb Edwards giving the offense a reliable middle-of-field valve behind him.

12. ALA Offensive Line & Defensive Front

Offensive Line

Protection was the sore spot on this unit a year ago. Alabama surrendered **27 sacks** in the 2025 season, and those sacks cost a chunk of efficiency – each one landed at **-1.496 PPA**, the worst play-type number on the board. That pressure profile stacks up as the single line-most concern heading into a 2026 opener, especially with the quarterback room still being sorted out among six names.

- **Anchor right guard:** Jaeden Roberts is the surest thing up front, posting the team's top **Pass Blk grade at 86.3** – the anchor the rest of the five rides on.
- **Bookend tackles:** Kadyn Proctor (**Pass Blk 81.8**) and Wilkin Formby (**Pass Blk 80.3**) give the edge both a veteran blindside and a solid right side; Kam Dewberry's **82.3 Pass Blk** grade fills out the interior with Roberts.
- **Run-block reality:** the same front that protected adequately mostly bled on the ground – Alabama finished the 2025 season at **-0.040 rush PPA** on 396 rush plays, a below-water number that points the offense toward the pass game.

Defensive Front

This is a run-stopping front that has to prove it can get home against a pass-heavy attack. Alabama's 2025 defense was anchored by its run defense and coverage – overall grades led by safety Bray Hubbard (**82.9** overall, **88.1** run defense), with Deontae Lawson (**85.3** run defense, **78.3** overall) and Zabien Brown (**86.7** run defense) each flashing, but the front's pass-rush grades skew mid-tier up front.

- **Edge identity:** Zabien Brown (Pass Rush **70.6**) and Keon Sabb (Pass Rush **69.9**) lead the pressure production, while Dijon Lee chips in a clean **79.0** overall grade on the outside.
- **Interior run anchors:** Deontae Lawson's **85.3** run-defense grade and Bray Hubbard's **88.1** mark show Alabama can wreck the ground game – the challenge is translating that into consistent negative plays against the pass.
- **The pressure question:** up-front pass-rush grades (LT Overton **64.8**, Yhonzae Pierre **65.9**, Tim Keenan **62.9**) sit mid-tier – this front will need secondary pressure and coverage to compensate if the pass rush stays quiet.

The Edge That Matters

Alabama's offensive line, surrendered **27 sacks** in 2025, and those sacks cost a chunk of efficiency – each one landed at **-1.496 PPA**, the worst play-by-play number on the board. That pressure profile is the No. 1 lineup concern heading into the opener against a Florida State pass rush that, per the 2025 numbers, lived on completed passes at **+1.128 PPA** but only tallied 21 sacks of its own – neither unit moves the needle much off the edge.

Broadcast line: This game turns on Alabama's ability to stay clean in the pocket against a Florida State defense that thrives off created pressure – a mismatch that will expose whichever quarterback linemen the Crimson Tide ultimately trust in Week 1.

13. ALA Secondary & Linebackers

Coverage Identity

Alabama's 2025 defense was the stingiest unit on this board by per-play efficiency, allowing **0.07 Def. PPA** on a **37.4% defensive success rate**, and the back seven carried that load – the top four coverage grades on the club all belong to safeties and backers. The identity is a two-deep shell anchored by range, not pressure: Bray Hubbard (82.7 coverage) and Keon Sabb (81.5 coverage) patrol the middle with **Nikhai Hill Green (84.0 coverage)** underneath, letting DeBoer's crew squat on the slot and seam without selling out deep.

- **Safety spine:** Hubbard graded **82.9 overall** – the best defensive grade of any player in this matchup – while Sabb adds a **79.4 overall** with elite range behind the corners.
- **Coverage-first backers:** Deontae Lawson (**78.3 overall**) and Nikhai Hill Green (**74.1 overall**) both grade higher in coverage than in run support, an unusual tilt for an SEC front seven.

- **Run-support teeth:** the coverage grades are paired with real physicality – Hubbard's **88.1 run-defense** grade and Lawson's **85.3 run-defense** make the secondary a tackling unit, not a finesse shell.

Who Covers Whom

Player	Pos	Coverage	Overall	Run Def
Bray Hubbard	S	82.7	82.9	88.1
Keon Sabb	S	81.5	79.4	69.0
Dijon Lee	CB	80.3	79.0	63.1
Nikhai Hill Green	LB	84.0	74.1	65.6
Zabien Brown	CB	70.7	74.9	86.7

- **Ball-hawking safety:** Hubbard led ALA with 4 interceptions in 2025 regular season, matching his top coverage grade with production.
- **Big corner:** Dijon Lee added 2 interceptions and 4.5 tackles for loss in 2025, a physical boundary presence who wins at the catch point.
- **Hybrid backer:** Nikhai Hill Green (**84.0 coverage**, 55.3 pass-rush) is the passing-down answer to a slot or seam back, best-in-unit coverage from the box.
- **Press-man corner:** Zabien Brown pairs a **70.7 coverage** grade with an **86.7 run-defense** – sticky in coverage and willing in support.
- **Spin-down corners:** Justin Jefferson (**72.2 coverage**) and Domani Jackson (**68.9 coverage**) round out a rotation that grades better in space than versus the run.

What They Allow

The printed leak for this group is the checkdown-and-seam layer underneath the safeties – the 84.0-coverage Hill Green and 4-INT Hubbard are the counter, but the empty middle behind aggressive backers is the zone FSU's quick game can attack. FSU graded out as a **47.3% drive-finishing offense** last season, best on third down (+0.875 PPA across 184 plays), so the down-to-down test is whether the seam and slot routes beat the coverage backers before they can widen.

- **Third-down stress:** FSU's best down last season was third (+0.875 PPA on 184 plays) – the exact scenario where Hill Green and Sabb, not the line, are the primary coverage.
- **Downfield patience under the shell:** Alabama plays disciplined enough on early downs (0.041 PPA on first down, 2025) to force the FSU passing game into the intermediate windows the safeties own.
- **Run-support wrap:** when FSU does attack the numbers, ALA's secondary closes as an 11-man run unit – the back seven's top run-defense grades (Hubbard **88.1**, Lawson **85.3**, Brown **86.7**) hold the edge.

Broadcast line: Alabama's coverage identity runs through its safeties – Hubbard (82.9 overall) and Sabb (81.5 coverage) are the anchor, and the 84.0-coverage Hill Green underneath is the reason this unit allowed just 0.07 Def. PPA last season.

14. ALA Special Teams

Kicking

Conor Talty (so.) returns as Alabama's placekicker after a 2025 season defined by two very different rates: 13/20 on field goals (65.0%) and a perfect 44/44 on extra points (100.0%).

- **Field-goal volatility:** Talty's 65.0% clip on 20 attempts was the ragged end of his workload – he missed 7 of 20, with no printed long to lean on as a counter.
- **Extra-point reliability:** The clean 44-for-44 (100.0%) XP mark matters in a game where FSU's own kicking unit (12/19 FG, 46/46 XP in 2025) also protects points on PATs – a red-zone trip that stalls short of the end zone is the swing risk on the Alabama side.
- **Depth board:** Peter Notaro (fr.), Reid Schuback (sr.) and Tucker Cornelius (so.) round out the kicker group as healthy alternatives if the job opens.

Punting & Coverage

Blake Doud (sr.) handled Alabama's punting in 2025, finishing with 41 punts and a 42.9-yard average.

- **Consistent stick:** Doud's 42.9-yard average on 41 boots makes every FSU drive start from a decided field position; net average and inside-20 counts are not listed.
- **Backup options:** Anderson Green (so.) and Alex Asparuhov (fr.) are the other punters on the roster, giving the Tide two healthy fallbacks behind the senior.

Return Game

Alabama's 2025 return game was built on two names – wideout Cole Adams on punts and Lotzeir Brooks on kickoffs.

- **Punt returns:** Cole Adams handled 16 punts for 133 yards, an 8.3-yard average that keeps the Tide offense on schedule without a printed return touchdown.
- **Kick returns:** Lotzeir Brooks took 13 kickoffs for 256 yards (19.7 avg), with Rico Scott chipping in 3 returns for 35 yards (11.7 avg) behind him.
- **Field-position thread:** Brooks' 19.7-yard kick-return average and Adams' 8.3-yard punt-return number are the two printed engines the coverage groups protect when Alabama is pinned deep.

Broadcast line: Alabama's kicking game in 2026 hinges on Talty's 65.0% field-goal rate from 2025 – his perfect 44/44 extra-point mark keeps PATs safe, but every stalled red-zone drive turns into a coin flip.

15. Unit-by-Unit Comparison & Takeaways

Unit-by-Unit Comparison – FSU at ALA

Every number below is Florida State's and Alabama's 2025 regular season baseline – the projection platform for a Sept. 19, 2026 opener neither side has played yet. The profile is a pass-lean collision: both offenses graded sharper through the air than on the ground, both fronts leaked sacks last season (FSU 21, ALA 27), and both clubs enter with open quarterback races. The unit that stays out of negative passing plays – and keeps its money-down magic intact – holds the efficiency edge.

Unit Edges At A Glance

Unit	FSU	ALA	Edge
Passing	3rd-down PPA +0.87 (2025, #3/137 FBS)	Pass PPA +0.35 (2025)	FSU

Unit	FSU	ALA	Edge
Rushing	Rush PPA +0.145 (439 plays, 2025)	Rush PPA -0.040 (396 plays, 2025)	FSU
Receiving	1,081 rec yds (Robinson, 19.3 YPR, 2025)	441 rec yds (Brooks, 13.8 YPR, 2025)	FSU
Trenches	6.5 sacks in 8 G (Desir, 2025)	Pass Blk 86.3 (Roberts, 2025)	ALA
Secondary	Def PPA 0.15 (40.5% success, 2025)	Def PPA 0.07 (37.4% success, 2025)	ALA
Special Teams	FG 12/19 (63.2%), XP 46/46 (2025)	FG 13/20 (65.0%), XP 44/44 (2025)	Even

- **Passing:** Florida State's third-down efficiency was the elite breakdown of the matchup – **+0.87 PPA, #3/137 FBS** in 2025 – against Alabama's +0.55 on the same down. Both clubs carried a **+0.35** pass PPA, so the separation lives specifically on money downs.
- **Rushing:** The cleanest single edge on the board. FSU ran at **+0.145 rush PPA** on 439 plays with a 16.4% stuff rate and a 1.36 explosive figure; Alabama ran at **-0.040** on 396 plays with a 19.8% stuff rate – below-neutral value.
- **Receiving:** FSU fields the only 1,000-yard receiver in the building – Robinson, 56 catches, 1,081 yards, 19.3 YPR, 6 TDs in 2025 – and a second 20-plus-yards-per-catch threat in Danzy (21.1 YPR). Alabama's top return is Brooks at 441 yards and a 13.8 YPR.
- **Trenches:** Alabama owns the pass-protection grades that decide quarterback comfort – **Roberts 86.3**, Dewberry 82.3, Proctor 81.8 – while FSU brings the edge-bend with Desir's **6.5 sacks in 8 games** in 2025. Protect-the-quarterback edge tilts Tide; pass-rush pop tilts Noles.
- **Secondary:** Alabama's 2025 defense was the stingiest unit on either side – 0.07 Def PPA on a 37.4% success rate – against FSU's 0.15 / 40.5%. Hubbard (82.9 overall, 88.1 run defense, 4 INT) is the best defensive grade in the matchup.
- **Special Teams:** The mirror-image backend – each kicker sat around 63–65% on field goals while going perfect on extra points (FSU 46/46, ALA 44/44, 2025). The punt edge is muted (FSU 44.2 on 24 punts vs ALA 42.9 on 41).

Where FSU Wins

- **Money-down passing:** FSU graded at a 3rd-down PPA of +0.87 – the #3/137 FBS mark in 2025 – and finished 47.3% of its drives in points (50 TD drives on 131 possessions). If the opener becomes a conversion-drive contest, that is the sharpest single number on the field.
- **The ground edge:** FSU's run game produced +0.145 rush PPA on 439 plays against Alabama's **-0.040** – a positive-to-negative gap that flips expected drive math. The backfield leans on Kromah (72 carries, 5.7 YPC, 408 yards and 555 scrimmage yards in 2025), with transfer Sawchuk adding established depth.
- **Downfield receiving:** Robinson is the only **1,000-yard receiver in the building** (1,081 in 2025), and his 19.3 YPR plus Danzy's 21.1 give FSU the chunk-play floor against an Alabama secondary that anchors its coverage in the box.

Where ALA Wins

- **The stingiest defense on the board:** Alabama allowed 0.07 Def PPA on a 37.4% success rate in 2025 – roughly half FSU's 0.15 – with Hubbard's 82.9 overall / 88.1 run-defense / 4-INT season as the anchor. This is the edge that projects to cap FSU's drives.
- **Pass protection:** Alabama returns a pocket built to keep an open QB race clean – **Roberts at 86.3**, Dewberry 82.3, Proctor 81.8 on pass block. That 80-plus interior is the counter to FSU's edge rush.
- **Run-stopping teeth:** the Tide's coverage grades come packaged with physicality – **Lawson 85.3 run defense**, Brown 86.7 – against a FSU ground game that must convert its positive PPA against a front that wrecked the run last year.

Swing Units

- **FSU's front vs ALA's protection:** the Noles' edge-pop (Desir 6.5 sacks in 8 games, 2025) works directly against an Alabama line that surrendered 27 sacks at a -1.496 sack PPA – the worst play-type number on the board. Watch whether the Tide keep the pocket clean enough for whichever quarterback wins the six-man race to push a **+0.938 completed-pass PPA**.
- **ALA's pass rush vs FSU's line:** the inverse is the genuine risk on the other side. FSU allowed 21 sacks at -1.081 sack PPA in 2025, and the Tide's up-front pass-rush grades (Overton 64.8, Pierre 65.9, Keenan 62.9) are the counterweight – if that mid-tier rush gets home, FSU's **+1.128 completed-pass PPA** engine stalls, and the **#3/137 third-down** magic dies with it.

Takeaways

- **Protection feeds both passing games:** ALA gave up 27 sacks, FSU 21 in 2025; both offenses grade best on completed passes (FSU +1.128, ALA +0.938 PPA). The unit that answers the blitz first gains the efficiency edge.
- **FSU's offense vs ALA's defense:** the #3/137 third-down PPA and +0.145 rush PPA meet the board's stingiest unit (0.07 Def PPA) – the clearest stop-the-strong story of the night.
- **Rush-lean field position:** FSU's positive rush PPA and 16.4% stuff rate vs ALA's -0.040 and 19.8% stuff rate project the Noles to win the down-and-distance fight, which feeds their money-down profile.
- **Red-zone finish over red-zone kicks:** both kickers were perfect on extra points (FSU 46/46, ALA 44/44) and both shaky on field goals (63.2% / 65.0%) in 2025 – every stalled drive near the end zone is a coin flip, so touchdown-or-not decides the closing margin.
- **Open QB races are the shared variable:** FSU's senior front-runner Daniels is contested by DeNobile, Marshall, Grant and freshman Sperry; ALA's is a six-man race led by senior Mack and sophomore Russell. Both benches are unproven against pressure – the line play above sets the floor.
- **Secondary range is Alabama's safety net:** with Hubbard 81.5–82.9 coverage grades and Hill Green's 84.0 coverage mark underneath, the Tide can defend the deep ball (Robinson, Danzy) while the front sorts out the pass rush – FSU's chunk-play route runs through that shell.

Broadcast line: Two pass-lean offenses steered by open quarterback races, two lines that leaked 21 and 27 sacks last season – the team that keeps its quarterback clean on money downs, and keeps its kicker off the field for long field goals, wins the collision tonight.

Rushing Core (2025 season)

Team	Player	Pos	Car	Yds	TD
ALA	Daniel Hill	RB	75	284	6
ALA	Kevin Riley	RB	59	224	2
ALA	AK Dear	RB	19	140	3
FSU	Ousmane Kromah	RB	72	408	0
FSU	Zay Parks	RB	15	95	1

Play-Type PPA Splits

Rush vs Pass Efficiency

Team	Play Type	Plays	Avg PPA
Florida State (FSU)	Rush	439	0.145

Team	Play Type	Plays	Avg PPA
Florida State (FSU)	Pass Comp	177	1.128
Florida State (FSU)	Pass Inc	129	-0.754
Florida State (FSU)	Penalty	53	–
Florida State (FSU)	Sack	21	-1.081
Alabama (ALA)	Rush	396	-0.040
Alabama (ALA)	Pass Comp	287	0.938
Alabama (ALA)	Pass Inc	166	-0.692
Alabama (ALA)	Penalty	58	–
Alabama (ALA)	Sack	27	-1.496

16. WR / CB Coverage Matchups

Career / Season Coverage History

Duce Robinson is the one true No. 1 on this field – a 1,081-yard, 6-TD 2025 receiving season – and he meets an Alabama secondary built around coverage from the back end, not the boundary. The Tide's top four coverage grades all belong to safeties and backers: Bray Hubbard (82.7 coverage), Keon Sabb (81.5), Nikhai Hill Green (84.0) and Dijon Lee (80.3) form the core that allowed just **0.07 Def. PPA** on a **37.4% defensive success rate** in 2025.

- **No. 1 vs the unit:** Robinson's 56 catches, 1,081 yards, 6 TDs (2025) is the highest-yardage receiving line on either roster; the closest Alabama returner is Lotzeir Brooks at 441 yards.
- **Coverage spine:** Hubbard graded **82.9 overall with 4 interceptions** in 2025 – the best defensive grade in this matchup – and his **88.1 run-defense** tag makes him a tackling safety, not just a range player.
- **Big boundary corner:** Dijon Lee graded **79.0 overall / 80.3 coverage** with 2 interceptions and 4.5 tackles for loss in 2025, the Tide's top corner of the returning group.
- **Underneath specialist:** Nikhai Hill Green's **84.0 coverage** grade – best of any backer in the matchup – is the printed answer to a slot or seam target, grading higher in coverage than in run support.
- **Press-man tag:** Zabien Brown pairs a **70.7 coverage** grade with an **86.7 run-defense** – sticky at the line and willing in support, the physical boundary complement to the rangy safety spine.

Broadcast line: The matchup's best 1-v-1 history is the Alabama back seven vs Robinson's downfield volume – a 1,081-yard edge against a coverage unit that allowed 0.07 PPA a season ago.

Route Tree Collisions

Both passing attacks tilt vertical, and both top catchers live downfield – which pushes the collision point to the outside at Bryant-Denny, where the range of Hubbard and Sabb over the top meets two deep-ball receivers.

- **FSU's deep pair:** Robinson posted a **19.3 yards-per-catch** rate in 2025 and Micahi Danzy was even deeper at **21.1 YPR** (27 catches, 571 yards) – both home on the boundary and intermediate-to-deep routes.
- **ALA's vertical lean:** Lotzeir Brooks' **13.8 yards per catch** matched an Alabama passing profile that graded **+0.938 PPA on completed passes** with a **1.27 offensive explosiveness** rate in 2025.
- **Range over the top:** Hubbard (82.7) and Sabb (81.5) are the two highest-graded coverage safeties in this matchup – the printed reason the deep-middle is the Tide's best-protected route space.
- **Boundary stays physical:** Dijon Lee's 80.3 coverage grade and Brown's 70.7 with an 86.7 run-defense stamp gives Alabama two outside corners who win at the catch point rather than by blanketing separation.

Broadcast line: Both clubs' No. 1s live downfield, so the route collision is vertical outside – Robinson's 19.3 YPR against a Tide back end graded to take the deep middle away.

Slot & Seam

Alabama's tight-end group is the proven middle valve, and Florida State's slot targets are younger – the seam is where the Tide's coverage-backer edge and FSU's tight-end room meet.

- **Tide TE valve:** Kaleb Edwards was Alabama's second-most targeted catcher in 2025 (11 rec, 150 yds, 1 TD), the reliable seam-and-intermediate outlet behind Brooks.
- **Efficient slot scorer:** Rico Scott turned 11 catches into 98 yards with a team-tying **2 receiving TDs** in 2025 – the most efficient touchdown scorer in the Alabama pass game.
- **FSU's red-zone seam:** Landen Thomas caught just 3 balls in 2025 but scored **2 TDs** – a 35-yard, 2-touchdown line that made him the most efficient seam scorer on the Seminole roster.
- **Nickel answer:** Nikhai Hill Green's **84.0 coverage** grade is the highest printed coverage number at the second level in this matchup – the stated matchup for a slot or seam back.
- **TE depth shelf:** Greyson Labiad (SR, 1 catch) and freshmen Chase Loftin and Corbyn Fordham round out the FSU tight-end rotation behind Thomas.

Broadcast line: Kaleb Edwards is Alabama's proven seam valve, and the slot answer on the other side is Nikhai Hill Green – a backer who graded 84.0 in coverage in 2025.

What Matters Tonight

- **Robinson's downfield edge:** Duce Robinson's 1,081-yard, 6-TD 2025 line is the best individual receiving season on the field, and his 19.3 yards per catch is the sharpest explosive-play rate of any catcher in this game.
- **Coverage-spine battle:** Alabama's top four coverage grades belong to safeties and backers – Hubbard (82.7), Sabb (81.5), Hill Green (84.0), Dijon Lee (80.3) – the unit that allowed just **0.07 Def. PPA** in 2025.
- **Boundary duality:** Dijon Lee (80.3 coverage, 2 INTs) and Zabien Brown (70.7 coverage, 86.7 run-defense) give Alabama two contrasting outside corners – the range player and the press-man.
- **Tide seam valve:** Kaleb Edwards (11 rec, 150 yds) is Alabama's proven second-level outlet, and Rico Scott's team-tying 2 TD catches make him the slot efficiency play.
- **FSU's young shelf:** Behind Robinson and Danzy, the FSU receiver room is almost entirely freshmen – Brandon Bennett, Tony Bland, Devin Carter and Tae'S haun Gelsey – with transfer Squirrel White as the veteran rotation add.
- **Defensive efficiency gap:** FSU's 2025 defense allowed **0.15 PPA** on a 40.5% success rate versus Alabama's **0.07 PPA** / 37.4% – the largest per-play gap between the two clubs' defenses printed on the board.

Broadcast line: The 1-v-1 story is Robinson's downfield volume against a Tide secondary whose best coverage grades sit at safety and backer – the deep middle is the collision point, and Hubbard's range is the defense's best card.

Receiving Core (2025 season)

Team	Player	Pos	Rec	Yds	TD
ALA	Lotzeir Brooks	WR	32	441	2
ALA	Kaleb Edwards	TE	11	150	1
ALA	Rico Scott	WR	11	98	2
ALA	Marshall Pritchett	TE	7	57	0
ALA	MJ Chirgwin	WR	2	31	1
ALA	Jay Lindsey	TE	2	7	0
FSU	Duce Robinson	WR	56	1081	6
FSU	Micahi Danzy	WR	27	571	3
FSU	Jayvan Boggs	WR	9	103	1
FSU	Landen Thomas	TE	3	35	2
FSU	Teriq Mallory	WR	1	14	0
FSU	Greyson Labiad	TE	1	6	0
FSU	Chase Loftin	TE	1	6	0

17. Polls & Advanced Ratings Narrative

Where They Stand

Alabama enters the 2026 season as the ranked headliner in this Week 3 matchup, coming off an 11-4 season (7-1 SEC) a year ago. The Crimson Tide finished last season at No. 8 in the AP poll and reached as high as No. 4, with a 13.30 SRS against a 7.44 strength of schedule. Florida State sits unranked after a 5-7 season (2-6 ACC) last year, though the Seminoles climbed as high as No. 7 in the AP poll before the slide. Mike Norvell's club posted a 6.26 SRS against a 3.42 strength of schedule.

What the Numbers Say

The advanced-ratings picture favors Alabama but tightens the gap versus the surface record. SP+ for the 2025 season graded Alabama at 14.8 (No. 20 nationally) with Florida State at 7.2 (No. 41) – a roughly 7.6-point edge, not the 40-point chasm the poll rankings might suggest. That tracks the SRS split, where Alabama (13.30) led Florida State (6.26) by about seven points, and the schedule gap tells the same story: Alabama played the tougher slate (7.44 vs. 3.42 SOS) and still won six more games.

For broadcast context, the AP board and SP+ agree on direction, but not on distance. Alabama at No. 8 in the final 2025 AP poll is a top-10 team by the human vote; SP+'s No. 20 grade implies the Tide overachieved on the field last season relative to the model. Florida State's No. 41 SP+ mark is well below its 5-win record would imply for an ACC program – the Seminoles were graded as a fringe top-40 team despite the losing year, a reminder that the raw 5-7 final didn't reflect a talent floor that far off the board.

Both coaching staffs remain intact entering the 2026 season – Mike Norvell for Florida State, Kalen DeBoer for Alabama – setting up a Week 3 test at Bryant-Denny Stadium where the visiting Seminoles carry the lower ranking but a ratings gap (roughly 7.6 SP+ points last season) that is tighter than the AP gap.

Broadcast line: Alabama is the clear No. 8-ranked favorite, but last season's SP+ split (14.8 vs. 7.2) and SRS split (13.30 vs. 6.26) both put the gap around a touchdown-plus – a ranked-road-test narrative for the Seminoles, not a mismatch.

Polls Snapshot (AP & Coaches)

Team	AP Rank
ALA	8

18. Transfer Portal & Roster Composition

Transfer Portal Difference-Makers

Both rosters were reshaped by the 2025 transfer cycle, with Florida State taking a more aggressive route into the portal.

- **FSU's headline add – Duce Robinson (WR, SR):** The 6-6, 230-pound target arrived from USC and is now an established returning receiver in the room after a year in Tallahassee. He's the marquee name among the 2025-cycle arrivals – a 4-star pickup – and gives the offense an elite size mismatch on the outside.
- **FSU QB churn built the competition:** Ashton Daniels (SR) and Dean DeNobile (SR) are both **newcomers to the 2026 roster**, joining returning signal-callers Michael Grant (JR) and Kevin Sperry (FR) in what the depth chart lists as an open battle. The departures of Thomas Castellanos, Brock Glenn, and Jaylen King gutted last year's QB room around them.

- **Alabama rebuilt through subtraction:** The Tide are working off a 2025 cycle defined by volume out – Jehiem Oatis (DL) to Colorado, Elijah Pritchett (OT) to Nebraska, Justice Haynes (RB) to Michigan, and Kendrick Law (WR) to Kentucky all left via the portal.

Youth vs. Experience

- **FSU – 40 returning, 66 newcomers:** The roster swings young, with the departures concentrated at skill positions and along the line. Newcomers Charles Lester III (DB, SO), Omar Graham Jr. (LB, SR), Xavier Chaplin (OL, SR), and Jordan Sanders (DL, SR) join a class loaded with freshmen at defensive back and offensive line.
- **Alabama – 55 returning, 65 newcomers:** A more experienced skeleton remains, headlined by an intact returning defense – Keon Sabb (DB, SR), Zabien Brown (DB, JR), Yhonzae Pierre (LB, SR), and Luke Metz (LB, SO) all return. The front seven took the biggest hit, forcing newcomers like Desmond Umeozulu (LB, SR) and Caleb Woodson (LB, SR) into the mix.

Career Arcs

- **FSU's QB room tilts senior:** Ashton Daniels and Dean DeNobile are both seniors pushing for the starting job, while true freshman Kevin Sperry represents the long-term play behind them. Running backs Ousmane Kromah (SO) and Zay Parks (SO) return as the young backfield core.
- **Alabama's QB continuity is the anchor:** Austin Mack (SR) returns as the senior signal-caller with John Cooper (JR), John Gazzaniga (SO), and Keelon Russell (SO) returning behind him – a much deeper room than FSU's. Freshmen Jett Thomalla and Tayden-Evan Kaawa are the only new additions.
- **FSU's experienced pass catchers:** Jayvan Boggs (SO), Micahi Danzy (SO), and Tae'S haun Gelsey (FR) join Robinson, giving the new QB whoever wins the job a range of young targets.

What Matters Tonight

- **FSU's portal exodus (2025 cycle):** Patrick Payton (EDGE) to LSU, Luke Kromenhoek (QB) to Mississippi State, Marvin Jones Jr. (EDGE) to Oklahoma, Malik Benson (WR) to Oregon, Hykeem Williams (WR) to Colorado, TJ Ferguson (IOL) to Syracuse, and Tomiwa Durojaiye (DL) to Illinois.
- **FSU's shelf hit:** Darrell Jackson (DL, SR) and Stefon Thompson (LB, SR) are gone from the prior roster, leaving the front seven leaner heading into a Week 3 trip to Bryant-Denny.
- **Alabama's portal exodus (2025 cycle):** Oatis, Pritchett, Haynes, and Law headlined, but the losses ran deep – Deontae Lawson (LB), Parker Brailsford (OL), Kady Proctor (OL), Jaeden Roberts (OL), Lebbeus Overton (DL), Tim Keenan (DL), Domani Jackson (DB), and DaShawn Jones (DB) all left the program.
- **Alabama's rebuild targets:** Khalifa Keith (RB, SR) and Dijon Lee Jr. (DB, SO) arrive as the most impactful newcomers – Keith to add veteran punch to the backfield, Lee a 5-star freshman corner who was already a high-end recruit before landing in Tuscaloosa.

Broadcast line: Both clubs are mid-reload through the portal, but the storylines split – Florida State is rebuilding an entire QB room around a pair of senior transfers, while Alabama is replacing a wave of defensive and offensive-line departures while keeping its quarterback continuity intact.

19. NIL Valuation & Deal Spotlight

Top NIL Names Tonight

The biggest valuation in this building lines up with the marquee true-freshman quarterback competition – **Alabama's Keelon Russell** carries a **\$2.0 M NIL valuation**, the **No. 89 overall** mark on the board. He's the headliner of the Tide's QB room, and his valuation more than doubles the top FSU number on the sheet.

Florida State counters with a pair of \$1.0 M names: sixth-year senior **Ashton Daniels** at quarterback and senior wide receiver **Duce Robinson**, the marquee portal arrival who brings Arizona State-level star power into the Noles' pass game.

Ryan Coleman-Williams (ALA, WR) sits just behind Russell at \$1.8 M and No. 92 overall – giving Alabama two top-100 valuations to Florida State's two \$1 M names in this head-to-head.

Broadcast line: The money on the field tilts clearly to Tuscaloosa tonight – two top-100 NIL valuations wear crimson.

Deal Headlines

The NIL news cycle around the matchup is quieter than the four-figure talent on the field, with most recent ink landing in recruiting circles rather than on this active roster.

- Ohio State WR commit Jett Harrison signs with New Balance (2026-08-05) – the freshest deal on the board, a footwear pact for a prep receiver, not a player in tonight's building.
- USC 5-star ATH commit Honor Fa'alave-Johnson inks NIL deal with Destination Kia (2026-07-13) – an auto-brand partnership for a Trojan commit, again outside tonight's sidelines.
- Arkansas PG commit Jordan Smith Jr.'s DMV ties make New Balance NIL deal special (2026-04-10) – basketball-side news that rounds out the recent headline window.

Broadcast line: Footwear and auto-brand deals are dominating the current NIL newsfeed – but none of tonight's active rosters.

What It Means for TV

The valuation gap is a clean on-air frame for the QB storyline: the Tide's presumptive fresh face under center carries a **\$2.0 M** price tag, while the Noles' presumed starter sits at **\$1.0 M** – a tidy 2-to-1 number for the pregame graphic. Both programs feature exactly two players on the team valuation sheet, but Alabama's top pair (\$2.0 M + \$1.8 M) outpaces Florida State's combined \$2.0 M across its two \$1 M names. Class-year tension adds weight: Russell is a sophomore in a five-deep Tide QB room, while Daniels and Robinson are the FSU seniors the Noles are leaning on to stabilize a 5-7 2025 campaign.

Broadcast line: Sell the dollar gap, the true-freshman-to-senior contrast, and the portal star power Robinson brings to Tallahassee.

20. Opening Week History & Program Cool Facts

Opening Week History & Program Cool Facts

Storyline setup: This 2026 season matchup (Week 3, Saturday, September 19 at Bryant-Denny Stadium) pits Florida State (ACC) and Alabama (SEC) – a cross-conference clash that has been a recurring November fixture in past years, now moved into the September window. FSU and ALA both carry loaded 2026 QB rooms into the year: Norvell's group features seniors Ashton Daniels and Dean DeNobile, sophomore Micahi Danzy, and freshman Kevin Sperry; DeBoer's side counters with senior Austin Mack and sophomores John Gazzaniga and Keelon Russell. A year ago, FSU finished 5-7 (2-6 ACC) while Alabama went 11-4 (7-1 SEC) under Kalen DeBoer.

21. Player Spotlights

Duce Robinson – the lone 1,000-yard receiver here

The senior is the only pass-catcher on either sideline with a 1,000-yard receiving season, and he sits atop Florida State's target tree as the matchup's most proven downfield threat.

REC	YDS	YPR	TD
56	1081	19.3	6

Form & Streaks

- **Fantasy engine:** Robinson averaged 14.3 half-PPR points a game in 2025 with four 20-plus-point outings, and his last three games ran 15.1 – ahead of his season mark.
- **Downfield finisher:** 19.3 yards per catch across 56 receptions, the sharpest receiving slice on the FSU roster.

Role & Shot

- **Full-stack No. 1:** led FSU in receptions, receiving yards and receiving TDs in 2025, with the widest production gap of any receiver in this matchup.
- **Red-zone gravity:** all 6 of his 2025 scores came through the air, making him the club's top catch-down target.

Matchup

- FSU's completed-pass PPA (+1.128) graded above Alabama's (+0.938), and Robinson is the vertical answer to a Tide secondary whose top coverage grades belong to safeties, not boundary corners.
- His 19.3 YPR is the cleanest route to chunk plays against an Alabama defense that allowed 0.07 Def. PPA in 2025.

Storylines

- Portal arrival after the 2025 season – an established senior head on the roster, not a newcomer.
- NIL valuation sits at \$1.0 M, second-highest on the FSU board he shares with Ashton Daniels.

What Matters Tonight

The only 1,000-yard wideout in the building, and the matchup's most bankable target.

- FSU's offense leaned pass in 2025 (423 pass downs vs 439 rushes), with its best efficiency on third down (+0.87 PPA, #3/137 FBS).
- Alabama's defensive success rate (37.4%) was the stingiest per-play figure on this board – Robinson's 19.3 YPR is the counterweight.

Broadcast line: Duce Robinson is the one receiver with a 1,000-yard 2025 to his name – FSU's downfield answer and the most proven target on the field.

Micahi Danzy – the second vertical stick

The sophomore caught the deep ball even more often than FSU's No. 1, posting the highest yards-per-catch average on the roster in 2025.

REC	YDS	YPR	TD
27	571	21.1	3

Form & Streaks

- **Fantasy tail:** Danzy's last three games averaged 6.9 half-PPR points, 4.8 below his 11.7 season mark – a cold finish to 2025.
- Still produced 2 games of 20-plus fantasy points on the season.

Role & Shot

- **Clear No. 2:** 27 catches, 571 yards and 3 TDs in 2025, finishing with 787 total yards and 6 scores across rush and receiving work.
- **Deeper measurement than the headliner:** 21.1 YPR to Robinson's 19.3.

Matchup

- Gives FSU two legitimate downfield threats at once, stretching the same two-deep shell Robinson attacks.
- FSU's completed-pass PPA (+1.128) pairs with the twin deep threats to create catch-and-run space that Alabama's pass defense didn't surrender to its own league (0.07 Def. PPA).

Storylines

- Returning sophomore on the rise in a receiving room otherwise loaded with freshmen behind the top two.

What Matters Tonight

The second vertical option who can punish safety rotation over the top.

- His 6 total TDs in 2025 trailed only Robinson on the FSU offensive board.

Broadcast line: Micahi Danzy posted the highest yards-per-catch on either roster last year (21.1) – FSU's second stick who kept the deep ball live opposite Robinson.

Ousmane Kromah – the efficient lead back

The sophomore handled the heavy lift of FSU's 2025 backfield work at a 5.7-yard clip, pacing the club's running backs in carries and scrimmage yards.

CAR	YDS	YPC	TD
72	408	5.7	0

Form & Streaks

- No rushing touchdowns despite the lead volume – the red-zone finish is the one gap in an otherwise efficient line.
- 555 total yards and 1 touchdown across rush and reception work in 2025.

Role & Shot

- **Committee head:** 72 carries, more than four times the next returning option (Zay Parks, 15 carries, 95 yards, 1 TD).
- Portal arrival Gavin Sawchuk adds an established third back behind Kromah and Parks.

Matchup

- FSU's ground game graded at +0.145 rush PPA on 439 rushes with a 16.4% stuff rate in 2025 – crease production with few negative plays.
- **The rush attack lived on money downs:** FSU ranked #3/137 FBS in third-down PPA (+0.87).

What Matters Tonight

The lead back whose 5.7 YPC was the counter to Alabama's run-stuffing front (19.8% stuff rate on ALA rushes).

- His receiving share keeps him on the field on throw downs.

Broadcast line: Ousmane Kromah's 5.7 YPC and 555 scrimmage yards anchored a 2025 FSU ground game that avoided negative plays – the lead back tested by an Alabama front at Bryant-Denny.

Ashton Daniels – the senior head of the QB race

The graduate senior is the front-runner in Florida State's open quarterback battle, entering this 2026 opener with no 2025 counting line printed on the QB room board – a projection from personnel and last season's offense rather than a finished line.

- FSU's 2025 offense graded at +0.30 off. PPA with a +0.35 pass PPA, the shape of the attack he would inherit.
- **Competition behind him:** seniors Dean DeNobile, juniors Malachi Marshall and Michael Grant, and freshman Kevin Sperry. Sperry is the only competing QB with printed 2025 production: 221 total yards and 2 TDs.

Storylines

- NIL valuation sits at \$1.0 M, tied for the top of the FSU valuation board.
- A veteran transfer-raised arm carrying a pass-first 2025 offense into a true road opener.

What Matters Tonight

- **Unknown quantity:** no 2025 passing counting stats on the board, so the audition is the story.
- The protection around him is FSU's soft spot – 21 sacks at a -1.081 PPA in 2025.

Broadcast line: Ashton Daniels leads a wide-open Florida State quarterback race with no completed 2025 counting line to scout – the \$1.0 M senior is the live audition in Tuscaloosa.

Austin Mack – steady floor in an open race

The senior's clean 75.0% efficiency in 2025 and the elite protection in front of him give Alabama's passing game a reliable floor while the Tide's six-man quarterback competition sorts itself out.

CMP%	ATT	YDS	TD	INT	Y/A	RTG
75.0	32	228	2	0	7.1	155.5

Form & Streaks

- **Clean sample:** 24 of 32 for 228 yards, 2 TDs and no interceptions in 2025 – a 75.0% clip and 155.5 rating, the highest of any Tide QB with meaningful attempts.
- Finished 2025 with 250 total yards and 3 TDs.

Matchup

- **The front protects him:** Jaeden Roberts holds Alabama's top pass-block grade (86.3), with Kam Dewberry (82.3) and Kadyn Proctor (81.8) bookending the line.
- Alabama absorbed 27 sacks at a -1.496 sack PPA in 2025 – clean pockets are the swing variable.

Storylines

- **The competition is genuine:** sophomore Keelon Russell flashed 11-for-15 for 143 yards, 2 TDs and a 197.4 rating (9.5 Y/A) in his own 2025 sample.
- Sophomore Keelon Russell carries Alabama's top QB NIL valuation (\$2.0 M, #89 nationally).

What Matters Tonight

The steady-handed senior with the highest completion rate of the Tide QB room.

- His efficiency floor pairs with an 80-plus pass-block front against an FSU edge led by Mandrell Desir's 6.5 sacks.

Broadcast line: Austin Mack's 75.0% 2025 efficiency and a protection front anchored by Jaeden Roberts's 86.3 pass-block grade give Alabama a steady quarterback floor in a genuinely open race.

Lotzeir Brooks – the Tide's top target

The sophomore closed 2025 as Alabama's leading receiver and doubles as the club's top kickoff returner, making him the most proven all-purpose catcher in the room.

REC	YDS	YPR	TD
32	441	13.8	2

Form & Streaks

- Led Alabama in receiving yards in 2025, the only returning receiver with more than 150 yards on the board.
- Added 13 kick returns for 256 yards (19.7 average), pairing production and return duty.

Role & Shot

- **No. 1 target:** 32 catches for 441 yards and 2 TDs, with the tight-end room the only other returning volume catcher.
- Finished 2025 with 448 all-purpose yards from scrimmage plus return work.

Matchup

- Alabama's passing game graded at +0.938 PPA on completed passes in 2025, and Brooks is the downfield hub of that attack.
- FSU's defense allowed 0.15 Def. PPA at a 40.5% success rate in 2025 – a more permissive shell than the Alabama pass defense faced last year.

What Matters Tonight

The proven vertical threat against an FSU front whose pass rush (Desir 6.5 sacks) carries more pop than its back end.

Broadcast line: Lotzeir Brooks is Alabama's proven downfield hub and top kick returner – the most productive receiver still in the Tide room.

Daniel Hill – the featured back

The sophomore handled nearly half of the returning committee's carries and led the group in touchdowns, even as Alabama's ground game ran below water in 2025.

CAR	YDS	YPC	TD
75	284	3.8	6

Form & Streaks

- Touchdown turn:** 6 scores on 75 carries, with 487 total yards and 7 TDs in 2025.
- PFF run-offense grade of 71.9, the committee's mid-point on a group headed by AK Dear's 84.0.

Role & Shot

- Feature share:** 75 of 153 returning carries (49%), with Kevin Riley (59) and AK Dear (19) behind him.
- Pass-down function:** Hill graded 38.0 in pass blocking, the low bar on a team that leans pass.

Matchup

- Alabama's ground game posted a -0.040 rush PPA with a 19.8% stuff rate in 2025 – the run ran at negative value behind the pass-first identity.
- FSU's rush defense allowed 0.15 Def. PPA, a permissive number by comparison.

What Matters Tonight

The volume back whose 6 TDs led the ALA backfield despite the negative-efficiency baseline.

Broadcast line: Daniel Hill is Alabama's featured back – 49% of the committee's carries and 6 rushing TDs in 2025 – carrying a ground game that ran at negative efficiency.

Kaleb Edwards – the middle-of-field valve

The sophomore is the proven receiver of Alabama's tight-end room and second-most targeted catcher on the roster behind Lotzeir Brooks.

REC	YDS	TD
11	150	1

Role & Shot

- Second target:** 11 catches for 150 yards and a touchdown in 2025, the only non-WR with meaningful volume.
- Head of the TE rotation that also returns Josh Ford (JR) and Peyton Fox (SR).

Matchup

- The middle-of-field valve Alabama can attack against FSU's back seven, whose top coverage grades trail the Tide's secondary.
- FSU allowed 0.15 Def. PPA in 2025 – catch-and-run space in the intermediate game.

What Matters Tonight

A reliable safety valve who can exploit the seam against FSU's 40.5% defensive success rate.

Broadcast line: Kaleb Edwards is Alabama's proven tight-end target – 150 yards in 2025 – the reliable valve behind Lotzeir Brooks in the passing game.

22. Roster Career Arc – Youth, Veterans & Breakouts

Youth vs Experience

The quarterback rooms frame this matchup almost perfectly – each side pairs a senior signal-caller with a pack of underclassmen, and the experience gap between the two starters is the headline. Florida State's Ashton Daniels (SR) is the most proven arm on either roster; last season he threw for 797 yards and 3 touchdowns on 119 attempts at Auburn, and added 280 rushing yards with 2 scores on 63 carries. Alabama counters with Austin Mack (SR), the returning starter who produced 228 passing yards and 2 touchdowns on 32 attempts in 2025 along with a rushing score. Behind them, the youth runs deep: FSU's printed 2026 skill roster carries 11 freshmen (including quarterbacks Kevin Sperry and the recently arrived Dean DeNobile battle) against an Alabama QB room that lists sophomores Keelon Russell and John Gazzaniga behind the senior. FSU's 2025 season ended 5-7 (2-6 in ACC play), while Alabama finished 11-4 (7-1 in SEC play) under Kalen DeBoer – the Tide bring the conference pedigree, the Seminoles bring the fresher faces.

- QB battle by the numbers:** Daniels' 2025 passing volume (119 attempts) dwarfs both Mack (32) and every underclassman arm on the board – the sample edge sits squarely with the FSU senior.
- System continuity:** Mack returns within DeBoer's scheme; Daniels arrives via the portal, so his 2025 line is a prior-club baseline, not FSU chemistry.

Freshmen & Young Core

FSU's 2026 class-year list opens on the roster with a clear freshman wave – Brandon Bennett, Tony Bland, Devin Carter, Corbyn Fordham, Tae'S haun Gelsey, Drew Hardwick, Chase Loftin, Jasen Lopez, Teriq Mallory, Gavin Markey and Kevin Sperry all carry FR codes. Kevin Sperry (FR) is the young QB with real last-season production: he went 17-of-attempts for 194 yards and 2 touchdowns with no interceptions, plus 27 rushing yards on 7 carries – a tiny but clean sample. Chase Loftin (FR, TE) adds 1 catch for 6 yards from 2025. The sophomore tier carries the play making

punch: Micahi Danzy (SO) posted 27 receptions for 571 yards and 3 receiving scores while adding 216 rushing yards and 3 more touchdowns on just 12 carries last season; running back Ousmane Kromah (SO) rushed 72 times for 408 yards and caught 9 passes for 147 yards and a score. Zay Parks (SO) rounds out the second-year group with 15 carries for 95 yards and a touchdown. Alabama's young QB room lists Keelon Russell (SO) – 143 passing yards, 2 touchdowns on 15 attempts in 2025 – and John Gazzaniga (SO) behind the senior.

- **Young playmaker:** Micahi Danzy (SO) is the only FSU skill player on the printed list with both 500+ receiving yards and 200+ rushing yards in 2025.
- **Clean-sample QB:** Kevin Sperry (FR) finished 2025 with a 0-interception line across his 17 attempts.

Senior Leadership

The veteran presence on this FSU roster clusters at quarterback and at the top of the receiving chart. Duce Robinson (SR) is the headline senior weapon – he caught 56 passes for 1,081 yards and 6 touchdowns in 2025, the clear top target in the room entering his senior year. Quarterback Ashton Daniels (SR) brings the experienced arm (797 passing yards, 3 touchdowns, 280 rushing yards, 2 rushing scores last season), and Dean DeNobile (SR) is the other senior in the QB competition. At tight end, Greyson Labiad (SR) returns with 1 reception for 6 yards from 2025, and Desirrio Riles (SR) anchors the senior defensive presence. On the Alabama side, Austin Mack (SR) is the senior leader of the QB room – 228 passing yards, 2 touchdowns, plus a rushing score in 2025 – and the Tide lean on his returning production as the presumed starter.

- **Proven target:** Duce Robinson (SR) is the only FSU player on the printed senior list with 2025 receiving production above 1,000 yards.
- **Veteran arm:** Ashton Daniels (SR, transfer from Auburn) carried 119 pass attempts last season – more than every other QB on both rosters combined.

Breakout Watch

The clearest breakout candidates are the young FSU skill players with 2025 flashes that could turn into featured 2026 roles. Micahi Danzy (SO) tops the list – 571 receiving yards and 3 scores plus 216 rushing yards and 3 more touchdowns on just 12 carries last season gives him a dual-threat ceiling the coaching staff can build around. Ousmane Kromah (SO) quietly averaged 5.7 yards per carry (408 yards on 72 attempts) with 147 receiving yards and a touchdown – efficient volume that suggests a bigger workload. At quarterback, Kevin Sperry (FR) produced 194 yards and 2 touchdowns on 17 attempts without an interception; if he wins the job, he's the upside story of the room. Teriq Mallory (FR) caught 1 pass for 14 yards and Jayvan Boggs (SO) added 9 catches for 103 yards and a touchdown – both young pass-catchers with room to grow. On Alabama's side, Keelon Russell (SO) is the young arm with a clean 2025 sample (143 yards, 2 touchdowns, 0 interceptions on 15 attempts) pushing for snaps behind senior Austin Mack.

- **Volume-adjacent breakout:** Micahi Danzy (SO) combined 787 scrimmage yards and 6 touchdowns across 2025 – the most complete production profile among FSU's underclassmen.
- **Efficiency breakout:** Ousmane Kromah (SO) never fumbled into a touchdown drought on the ground, producing 408 rushing yards without a rushing score – the scoring breakthrough is the watch.
- **Watch note:** Danzy's 12 carries produced 216 yards and 3 scores – a per-touch burst rate that stands out before the 2026 opener.

Broadcast line: Florida State's story is youth and portal turn over in a rebuilding year (5-7 in 2025), while Alabama leans on senior Austin Mack in a return to SEC contention – the experience gap at quarterback is the cleanest on-paper angle, but FSU's sophomore skill duo gives the Seminoles the breakout upside.

23. Storylines, Rivalry & Milestones

Milestones & Streaks

- **Last-meeting edge:** Florida State beat Alabama 31-17 in the 2025 season opener on Aug 30, 2025 – the teams' most recent meeting and one of FSU's defining wins of a 5-7 campaign.
- **Perfect on points-after:** FSU's Jake Weinberg converted all 46 extra points in 2025 (46/46); Alabama's Conor Talty matched at 44/44 – both kicking games protect red-zone points, while each carries a sub-70% field-goal rate into 2026 (Weinberg 12/19, 63.2%; Talty 13/20, 65.0%).
- **Lone 1,000-yard receiver:** Duce Robinson's 1,081 receiving yards in 2025 make him the only receiver on either sideline to top the mark.
- **Front-line outlier:** Mandrell Desir recorded 6.5 sacks in just 8 games for FSU in 2025 – a per-game pace no other front player on this board matched.

Historical Rarities

- **The tie that started it all:** FSU and Alabama played to a 37-37 draw on Sept 23, 1967 – a rarity in a series where the two sides have split three wins apiece with one deadlock across the last seven meetings.
- **Alabama's revenge now:** FSU holds the most recent result, a 31-17 win on Aug 30, 2025 – the first meeting between head coaches Mike Norvell and Kalen DeBoer, and the game that kept FSU competitive while Alabama's 11-4, 7-1 SEC season played out.

Player Impact Storylines

- **Duce Robinson – the returning downfield hub:** the senior's 56 receptions, 1,081 yards (19.3 per catch) and 6 TDs in 2025 anchor FSU's pass-lean identity; a 2025 portal arrival, he is now the established centerpiece of the receiver room rather than a new face. Ashton Daniels – senior front-runner of an open race: the graduate senior sits atop FSU's spring quarterback battle with no 2025 counting line on the packet, projecting the 2026 offense in a competition that also features Dean DeNobile (SR), Malachi Marshall (JR), Michael Grant (JR) and freshman Kevin Sperry.
- **Ousmane Kromah – efficient between the tackles:** the sophomore's 72 carries for 408 yards (5.7 YPC) and 555 scrimmage yards led FSU's 2025 backfield, with 2025 portal add Gavin Sawchuk joining the committee this fall.
- **Lotzeir Brooks – Alabama's proven target:** the sophomore's 32 catches for 441 yards and 2 TDs in 2025 make him the Tide's top returning receiver at 13.8 yards per catch in a downfield-leaning passing game. Bray Hubbard – best defensive grade on the board: the safety posted an 82.9 overall (the top mark in this matchup) with 4 interceptions in 2025, anchoring an Alabama defense that allowed a 0.07 defensive PPA, the stingiest per-play unit on this board.

Revenge & Personal Angles

- **Tide's rematch:** FSU's 31-17 win on Aug 30, 2025 is the most recent result in the series – tonight at Bryant-Denny is Alabama's first chance to answer that season-opening loss.
- **Head-to-head renewal:** Mike Norvell (38-34 at FSU) and Kalen DeBoer (20-8 at ALA) meet for the second time, both running rebuilt programs after FSU's 5-7 and Alabama's 11-4 2025 campaigns.

Coaching Chess

- **Money-down collision:** FSU's offense graded #3/137 nationally in third-down PPA (+0.87) in 2025, while Alabama's defense was the stingiest per-play unit on the board (0.07 Def PPA, 37.4% success) – the game's decisive down pits FSU's strongest strength against Alabama's strongest strength.
- **Pass-rush vs. protection:** FSU's edge (Desir's 6.5 sacks in 8 games in 2025) meets an Alabama front that surrendered 27 sacks last season (-1.496 sack PPA) but returns elite pass-block anchors at 86.3 (Jaeden Roberts), 82.3 (Kam Dewberry) and 81.8 (Kadyn Proctor).

- **Open QB battles on both sides:** Alabama's six-name race features senior Austin Mack, who went 24-for-32 for 228 yards, 2 TDs and 0 INTs (75.0%, 155.5 rating) in limited 2025 work.

Standings / Race

- **Last season's baseline:** FSU finished 5-7 (2-6 ACC) with an SRS of 6.26 and a 3.42 strength of schedule; Alabama went 11-4 (7-1 SEC) with a 13.30 SRS and the nation's-toughest printed SOS on this board at 7.44.
- **Poll ceilings:** FSU reached an AP high of No. 7 in 2025, Alabama No. 4 – a marquee cross-conference SEC-ACC clash in Week 3 of the 2026 season with no counting stats yet for either side this year.

Rivalry & Series History

Date	Matchup	Score
Aug 30, 2025	FSU def. ALA	31-17
Sep 2, 2017	ALA def. FSU	24-7
Sep 29, 2007	FSU def. ALA	21-14
Oct 12, 1974	ALA def. FSU	8-7
Sep 23, 1967	Tie	37-37
Oct 23, 1965	ALA def. FSU	21-0

The modern all-time ledger sits dead even – three wins apiece with one tie (the 1967 37-37 draw) across the last seven meetings, and FSU owns the most recent result.

Broadcast line: FSU carries the last-meeting edge (31-17 a year ago), but Alabama now brings the stingiest defense on this board (0.07 Def PPA) to Bryant-Denny for the rematch – strength-against-strength on third down, with both clubs still settling their quarterback races.

Coaching Matchup

Team	Head Coach	Record Entering	Career at School
FSU	Mike Norvell	5-7 (2-6 conf)	38-34
ALA	Kalen DeBoer	11-4 (7-1 conf)	20-8

Series History – FSU vs ALA

Date	Away	Home	Score
2026-09-19	FSU	ALA	–
2025-08-30	ALA	FSU	17-31
2017-09-02	ALA	FSU	24-7
2007-09-29	FSU	ALA	21-14
1974-10-12	FSU	ALA	7-8
1967-09-23	FSU	ALA	37-37
1965-10-23	FSU	ALA	0-21

- Last 7 meetings: FSU 3 – ALA 3.*

Transfer Portal Impact – FSU & ALA (2025 cycle)

Portal board: 2025 cycle (latest synced for this matchup).

Player	Pos	From	To	Stars
Duce Robinson	WR	USC	Florida State	4
Deamontae Diggs	DL	Coastal Carolina	Florida State	4
Patrick Payton	EDGE	Florida State	LSU	4
Luke Kromenhoek	QB	Florida State	Mississippi State	4
Jehiem Oatis	DL	Alabama	Colorado	4
Elijah Pritchett	OT	Alabama	Nebraska	4
Marvin Jones Jr.	EDGE	Florida State	Oklahoma	4
Justice Haynes	RB	Alabama	Michigan	4
Malik Benson	WR	Florida State	Oregon	4
Kendrick Law	WR	Alabama	Kentucky	4
Hykeem Williams	WR	Florida State	Colorado	4
TJ Ferguson	IOL	Florida State	Syracuse	4
Jayshawn Ross	EDGE	Alabama	Kansas State	3
DeVonta Smith	S	Alabama	Notre Dame	3
Caleb Odom	WR	Alabama	Ole Miss	3
Kobe Prentice	WR	Alabama	Baylor	3
Damon Payne	DL	Alabama	Michigan	3
Justin Okoronkwo	LB	Alabama	South Carolina	3
Hunter Osborne	DL	Alabama	Virginia	3
King Mack	S	Alabama	Penn State	3
Keanu Koht	EDGE	Alabama	Vanderbilt	3
Tomiwa Durojaiye	DL	Florida State	Illinois	3
Emmanuel Henderson Jr.	WR	Alabama	Kansas	3
Dylan Lonergan	QB	Alabama	Boston College	3

Prior-cycle arrivals no longer on the 2026 roster

Player	Pos	From	To	Stars
Jerry Wilson	CB	Houston	Florida State	4
James Williams	EDGE	Nebraska	Florida State	4
Luke Petitbon	IOL	Wake Forest	Florida State	4
Micah Pettus	OT	Ole Miss	Florida State	4
Jayson Jenkins	DL	Tennessee	Florida State	4
Isaiah Horton	WR	Miami	Alabama	4
Kelby Collins	DL	Florida	Alabama	4
Squirrel White	WR	Tennessee	Florida State	4
Nikhai Hill-Green	LB	Colorado	Alabama	4
Cameron Calhoun	CB	Utah	Alabama	4
Kam Dewberry	IOL	Texas A & M	Alabama	3
Dre'lyn Washington	RB	Louisiana	Alabama	3
Adrian Medley	IOL	UCF	Florida State	3
Arkel Anugwom	OT	Ball State	Alabama	3

24. Recruiting Pipeline & Portal Wins

Recruiting Class Rankings

Alabama's 2025 recruiting class checked in No. 3 nationally with 298.40 points; Florida State's class landed **No. 19 with 244.11 points**. Rankings reflect the **2025 recruiting cycle** (the latest synced board).

School	Rank	Points
Alabama	3	298.40
Florida State	19	244.11

- **Alabama:** Built on elite closing power at the top – the Tide hauled in three 5-star commits in the 2025 class.
- **Florida State:** Stacked four-star depth at the skill positions, headlined by two multi-year high-end signees at RB and DL.

Alabama – 2025 class

Player	Pos	Stars	Nat'l Rank	Rating	HS
Keelon Russell	QB	5	2	0.9997	Duncanville
Dijon Lee Jr.	CB	5	14	0.9926	Mission Viejo
Michael Carroll	IOL	5	17	0.9909	IMG Academy
Jackson Lloyd	OT	4	45	0.9784	Carmel
Akylin Dear	RB	4	53	0.9729	Quitman

Florida State – 2025 class

Player	Pos	Stars	Nat'l Rank	Rating	HS
Ousmane Kromah	RB	4	76	0.9622	Lee County
Kevin Wynn	DL	4	84	0.9566	Greene County
Jayvan Boggs	WR	4	179	0.9288	Cocoa
LA Jesse Harrold	EDGE	4	217	0.9202	Gaither
Tylon Lee	DL	4	223	0.9189	Pace

- Bio **Keelon Russell** is the centerpiece – a **5-star QB**, the **No. 2 recruit nationally** at a **0.9997** composite from Duncanville, and he slots into Bama's open quarterback room for 2026.
- **FSU's 4-star trio** of Ousmane Kromah (RB), Kevin Wynn (DL) and Jayvan Boggs (WR) gives the Seminoles a young spine at the offensive skill and defensive-line spots.

Best Portal Wins Still Active

- **Duce Robinson (WR, USC → Florida State, 4★):** The biggest active FSU pickup of the portal cycle – an established receiver addition with a reported \$1.0 M NIL valuation.
- **Deamontae Diggs (DL, Coastal Carolina → Florida State, 4★):** A 4-star interior addition for the FSU front this cycle.
- **Alabama boundary:** Bama's portal cycle was more churn than acquisition – headliners Jehiem Oatis (DL → Colorado), Elijah Pritchett (OT → Nebraska) and Justice Haynes (RB → Michigan) all departed in the 2025 cycle.

NIL Pipeline Context

- **Alabama:** Freshman QB **Keelon Russell** ranks **No. 89** nationally at a **\$2.0 M** NIL valuation – the top figure among the four players valued here; **Ryan Coleman-Williams (WR)** checks in **No. 92 at \$1.8 M**.
- **Florida State:** **Duce Robinson (WR)** and QB **Ashton Daniels** are both valued at **\$1.0 M**, pacing the Noles' board.

Broadcast line: Alabama's No. 3 class and the \$2.0 M freshman QB headline the talent gap, while FSU leans on a four-star 2025 haul plus two active portal wins – Duce Robinson and Deamontae Diggs – to close the recruiting delta.

Recruiting Class – FSU & ALA (2025)

Recruiting class: 2025 (latest synced; game season is 2026).

Class rankings

School	Rank	Points
Alabama	3	298.40
Florida State	19	244.11
South Alabama	118	120.71
Alabama State	197	0.00
Alabama A & M	197	0.00

Top signees (stars / national rank / composite)

School	Player	Pos	Stars	Nat'l Rank	Rating	HS
Alabama	Keelon Russell	QB	5	2	0.9997	Duncanville
Alabama	Dijon Lee Jr.	CB	5	14	0.9926	Mission Viejo
Alabama	Michael Carroll	IOL	5	17	0.9909	IMG Academy
Alabama	Jackson Lloyd	OT	4	45	0.9784	Carmel
Alabama	Chuck McDonald	CB	4	51	0.9745	Mater Dei
Alabama	Akylin Dear	RB	4	53	0.9729	Quitman
Alabama	Justin Hill	EDGE	4	60	0.9691	Winton Woods
Alabama	Ivan Taylor	S	4	62	0.9681	West Orange
Florida State	Ousmane Kromah	RB	4	76	0.9622	Lee County
Florida State	Kevin Wynn	DL	4	84	0.9566	Greene County
Alabama	Derek Meadows	WR	4	126	0.9434	Bishop Gorman
Alabama	Duke Johnson	LB	4	130	0.9418	Dodge County
Alabama	Kaleb Edwards	TE	4	163	0.9318	Oak Ridge
Florida State	Jayvan Boggs	WR	4	179	0.9288	Cocoa
Alabama	Lotzeir Brooks	WR	4	185	0.9276	Millville
Alabama	Micah DeBose	IOL	4	205	0.9231	Theodore
Florida State	LA Jesse Harrold	EDGE	4	217	0.9202	Gaither
Florida State	Tylon Lee	DL	4	223	0.9189	Pace
Alabama	Marshall Pritchett	TE	4	285	0.9075	Rabun Gap-Nacoochee
Alabama	Luke Metz	LB	4	287	0.9072	Mill Creek
Alabama	Abduall Sanders Jr.	LB	4	312	0.9037	Mater Dei
Florida State	Zae Thomas	CB	4	341	0.9005	American Heritage
Florida State	Tae's haun Gelsey	TE	4	351	0.8997	Riverside
Alabama	Mal Waldrep	OT	4	364	0.8985	Central

25. Betting Lines & Market Storylines

Game Market Read

Betting Pros has Alabama as a 15.5-point home favorite at Bryant-Denny Stadium, pricing the Crimson Tide at -650 on the moneyline and Florida State at +470 to win outright. The total sits at 52.5, with the over and under each even at -110.

- **Double-digit chalk:** Alabama is laying 15.5 as a home favorite – a number set against last season's 11-4 record (7-1 SEC) and Florida State's 5-7 finish (2-6 ACC).
- **Total 52.5:** The number sits in range of Alabama's high-scoring profile from a year ago, when the Tide went 6-0 in the six games it scored 30-plus.
- **Moneyline spread:** The -650/+470 gap captures the gulf in last season's résumés, with Bama winning all 11 games in which it outscored an opponent (11-0).

Situational Hooks

Last season's (2025) situational splits point to a lopsided setup in Tuscaloosa.

Situation (2025)	FSU	ALA
Scored 30+	5-2 (71%)	6-0 (100%)
Held opponent ≤17	5-0 (100%)	6-0 (100%)
One-score games	0-3 (0%)	4-1 (80%)
Road games	0-5 (0%)	4-1 (80%)

- **Home vs road split:** Alabama went 7-2 at home in 2025, while Florida State was winless away from Tallahassee (0-5) – a 0-5 road mark to carry into Bryant-Denny.
- **Defensive clampdown:** The Tide held opponents to 17 or fewer in all six such games last season and won every one; the Seminoles matched that 5-0 record when they held a foe to 17 or fewer.
- **Close-game contrast:** Florida State was 0-3 in one-score games a season ago, while Alabama went 4-1 (80%) in that same spot – the exact kind of margin a 15.5-point spread eliminates.
- **Win-condition splits:** The Seminoles were 5-2 when scoring 30-plus but 0-5 on the road, meaning their highest-scoring performances last season largely came at home.

Broadcast line: Alabama enters as a 15.5-point home favorite on the strength of a 2025 season in which it went 6-0 when scoring 30-plus and 11-0 when outscoring opponents – while Florida State arrives having gone 0-5 on the road a year ago.

26. Fantasy Football Storylines

What Matters Tonight

- **Duce Robinson – the clear anchor:** led Florida State's perimeter in 2025 fantasy production at **14.3 pts/G**, and he heated up down the stretch at 15.1 pts/G across his last three games – a **+0.8** bump over his season average. He posted 4 games of 20+ points in 12 games, the only player on this board with multiple ceiling weeks.
- **Role clarity wins tonight:** Robinson is a returning senior and transfer who is already established in the room, while both teams ride unresolved quarterback competitions into the opener – FSU's battle spans Ashton Daniels, Dean DeNobile, Malachi Marshall, Michael Grant and Kevin Sperry. However the signal-caller reps fall, Robinson is the most target-secure pass catcher on either sideline.
- **No availability flags:** the injury report is clean for both clubs, so the top option is unobstructed heading into a game at Bryant-Denny Stadium.

Broadcast line: In a game with two brand-new quarterback rooms, Duce Robinson is the one bankable target on the field.

Trending Up / Down

- **Trending up – Duce Robinson:** 15.1 pts/G over his last three vs 14.3 for the 2025 season, the only above-baseline performer among the four featured options.
- **Trending down – Micahi Danzy:** the FSU sophomore's 6.9 pts/G over his last three sits **-4.8** below his **11.7 season mark**; his 2 games of 20+ points in 11 games show the upside exists, but the recent form is a real pullback.
- **Trending down – Daniel Hill:** the Alabama pass-catcher slipped to 7.3 pts/G over his last three, a **-1.6** dip from his **8.9 season average**, with only 1 game of 20+ in 10.
- **Essentially flat – Kevin Riley:** the Alabama back held steady at 7.0 pts/G over his last three vs 7.5 for the season (**-0.4**), with 1 game of 20+ in 9 – consistent, but a low-ceiling profile.

Broadcast line: The only arrow pointing up belongs to Robinson; Danzy, Hill and Riley are all working through down-shifts into the opener.

Ceiling & DFS Angles

- **Robinson's ceiling is the stack core:** 4 games of 20+ fantasy points in 2025 makes him the single highest-upside builder on the board – a stacking anchor no matter which FSU quarterback wins the job.
- **Danzy is the boom-or-bust secondary piece:** the sophomore's **2 ceiling games in 11** give him tournament appeal, but his **6.9 recent average** demands a discount from DFS pricing built on his full-season **11.7**.
- **Alabama's pass-game floor:** Hill brings modest per-game volume (**8.9 pts/G**) that stabilizes a lineup in a competitive SEC spot – not a ceiling target, but a reliable fill.
- **Riley as a value touch:** at 7.5 pts/G with just **1 ceiling game**, Riley fits a conservative roster strategy chasing his steady floor more than a spike week.

Broadcast line: If you're chasing a ceiling in this spot, it starts with Robinson – every other featured option is a floor play, not a spike play.