



Rising Tide: Bear Bryant, Joe Namath, and Dixie's Last Quarter

Randy W. Roberts , Ed Krzemiński

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The extraordinary story of how Coach Paul "Bear" Bryant and Joe Namath, his star quarterback at the University of Alabama, led the Crimson Tide to victory and transformed football into a truly national pastime.

During the bloodiest years of the civil rights movement, Bear Bryant and Joe Namath—two of the most iconic and controversial figures in American sports—changed the game of college football forever. Brilliantly and urgently drawn, this is the gripping account of how these two very different men—Bryant a legendary coach in the South who was facing a pair of ethics scandals that threatened his career, and Namath a cocky Northerner from a steel mill town in Pennsylvania—led the Crimson Tide to a national championship.

To Bryant and Namath, the game was everything. But no one could ignore the changes sweeping the nation between 1961 and 1965—from the Freedom Rides to the integration of colleges across the South and the assassination of President Kennedy. Against this explosive backdrop, Bryant and Namath changed the meaning of football. Their final contest together, the 1965 Orange Bowl, was the first football game broadcast nationally, in color, during prime time, signaling a new era for the sport and the nation.

Award-winning biographer Randy Roberts and sports historian Ed Krzemienski showcase the moment when two thoroughly American traditions—football and Dixie—collided. A compelling story of race and politics, honor and the will to win, **RISING TIDE** captures a singular time in America. More than a history of college football, this is the story of the struggle and triumph of a nation in transition and the legacy of two of the greatest heroes the sport has ever seen.

Rising Tide: Bear Bryant, Joe Namath, and Dixie's Last Quarter Details

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Ashish M. says

This is one of my favorite sports books. Randy Roberts, Ed Krzemiensk do a great job on this, in a lot of nonfiction sports books the authors just drone on and on about one game then the next then the next. This book details the the players lives and the problems facing America in those times just as much as it talks about the Crimson Tide games. The two main characters are Joe Namath, son of a Hungarian immigrant with a talented arm, and Paul "Bear" Bryant, a hard-nosed football coach. The to combine by playing and coaching for Alabama, and the result is a dominant football games. Joe Namath has a tough time adjusting to the south, he is not familiar with segregation. Bear Bryant and Joe Namath try to focus on just football, but they cannot ignore the things going on. The civil rights movement. John F. Kennedy's assassination. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech.

You will have to read this book to find out to find out how the two main characters transform football to a national pastime with everything that is going on at the time. This book is more for than just sports-lovers, people who appreciate history will like this book too.

Scott Martin says

A solid, if not spectacular, book that attempts to describe a key intersection in time between the University of Alabama football program, the legendary coach Bear Bryant, and his somewhat off-beat, but incredibly talented Pennsylvania quarterback, Joe Namath. It offers just enough bio information to let the reader know who the key individual are, and then attempts to intertwine the fortunes of the football program with the rising Civil Rights movement in the state during the early 1960s. It is a fast, interesting read, but not a great stand-alone work. I am sure there are better books on the various topics discussed in the text. Still, for someone who may not have a lot of familiarity with 'Bama and its historic football program, it is worth a one-time read.

David Barney says

I haven't read much about Bear Bryant. Interesting coach. Namath got away with a lot of things at Alabama. Good and concise story of Namath's time at Alabama with Bryant.

Brent Darling says

Could not put this book down!

Brian says

I thought the authors did a fine job of conveying the culture of late 50's/early 60's Beaver Falls, PA and the University of Alabama campus of the early-mid 60's. This is primarily a sports book with the history of the era in the background, but fascinating for those of us from a younger generation (in my case, Namath retired from the NFL around the time I was born) to see the intersection of Namath, Bryant, and even the controversy involving Bryant and the Saturday Evening Post.

Wayne Harvey says

I was interested to know how Bear Bryant and Joe Namath worked together, such contrasts in life, one occupied with rules, the other who enjoyed breaking the rules. This book didn't tell as much as I'd wanted on this subject but it was nevertheless satisfying as the author described the background of civil rights in Alabama and its effect on the football program at U of A. Also, a strength of the book was its description of Namath's hometown in Pennsylvania, an element that we need to understand in order to understand Namath. Altogether, this was a good book about a great college football program in the early '60's and about Bryant and Namath who played key roles in football.

David Ward says

Rising Tide: Bear Bryant, Joe Namath, and Dixie's Last Quarter by Randy Roberts (Twelve Publishing 2013) (796.33263) was not, to my surprise, the usual paean to "all things Bear" that is often ginned up in Alabama. The author explores the period in the early 1960's when integration came to college sports. Joe Namath was the quarterback at Bama in those days, and Bear Bryant was shrewd enough to take the high road once it was demonstrated that the Alabama football program could not fight the inevitable tide (to coin a phrase). My rating: 6/10, finished 11/26/13.

Phillip Gonzales says

An interesting view of the rise of Alabama football during the late 1950's and early 1960's. Legendary coach Paul "Bear" Bryant and Joe "Willie" Namath face struggles on and off the field in the form of opponents, segregation, and harsh accusations during the building of one of the South's most formidable college football programs. Entertaining in its mention of players and coaches from a golden era in the game, it chronicles the sacrifices, dedication, and determination in becoming one of the nation's elite.

Mel says

A good account of the Bear's return to 'Bama, during the early 60's and the Civil Rights struggle. This book ends right where *The Missing Ring* begins. Not just for Bama fans!

Budd Bailey says

Lane says

a very good book that uses alabama football to examine the times in the 1950 and 60's. even with all of the books etc about these times, bear bryant, joe mamath and alabama football, this is an interesting read.

Nick Black says

torn on how to review this--it was exceptional sportswriting and even well-cited (a rarity among most non-fiction these days, let alone longform sports), the principals were richly developed, no gross failures in editing were present (at worst, a few repetitions of phrase); this was a well-executed book. the parallel construction of the Deep South's reaction to *Brown v Board of Education*, unfortunately, is too thin to stand on its own as a history, and too poorly integrated (no pun intended) to add much to the story of Bear and Joe. one of the authors is a character in the narrative, though that's never made explicit; it seemed disingenuous, and realizing as much left a bad taste in my mouth. it mentions my beloved Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets, but they're usually losing. this is a fun read for any fan of college football, but it badly fails to deliver on its promise of something greater.

i would award this four stars for readability, but i'm sufficiently irritated by their failure to go the extra distance to drop it to three. joe namath would have gone that distance; bear bryant would have demanded it.

Bob O'G says

Rising Tide was a true mix of the three subjects in the subtitle and because of that, the book leaves you wanting to know more about each. This leaves Rising Tide as only the slightest bit unsatisfying. However, the book is stunningly well researched and it covers roughly the four year period (and the months before) when Joe Namath quarterbacked the Crimson Tide during one of the most tumultuous times in our country.

As an extreme fan of professional football, I admit that I could not care less about college ball. Though as a testament to Randy Roberts work, I found myself consistently engrossed in his attention to detail, be it character study, game plays, or politics. This is worth checking out more for fans of football. As I stated above, there is an equal mix of Bryant, Namath, and segregation issues. Therefore, people interested in solely the political elements and how they relate to football will come away disappointed.

Note: I'm an admirer of Joe Willie. As a Jets fan, how could I not be? Reading this solidifies his legend as a great football player. Though his numbers do not always show it, he was a general on the field. He was also a non-conformist who was still able to be respectful and a man who did not care about the color of your skin. He only cared if you knew the plays and wanted to win. It was great to read about his early years.

Jane says

As a native Alabamian and a life-long University of Alabama fan, I was very interested in reading this book. Although I was too young to remember watching Joe Namath play at Alabama, I grew up hearing stories about him and other legendary players at UA. I have to admit that it's always painful to read about the years of segregation, and the turmoil that accompanied the civil rights movement in Alabama, but I know it's important for us to be aware of our history so that it's not repeated. It was nice to get a peek into the mystique that surrounds Bear Bryant and his ability to lead and inspire most who came in contact with him. All in all, even though I greatly prefer fiction to non-fiction in most cases, I thought this was a very good read.

Hugh Henry says

The style is compelling, the pace swift and the characters life-like. The authors trace the fortunes of the Alabama Crimson Tide in Bear Bryant's early years and the Civil Rights movement alongside the prankish and often-wayward hijinks of Joe Willie Namath.

The Good: Young Joe Namath comes to life through his background in Pennsylvania steel country to a degree achieved by only good biographers. Reviewers compare this book to an ESPN documentary and it really is a page-turner. Bear Bryant is still a somewhat enigmatic marble man, but none of the biographies I have read have managed to get beyond his towering public persona. The best way to handle him is with a generous supply of quotes, which these authors do.

The Bad: There is one glaring factual error when the authors report, "The summer (of 1963) belonged to Bull Connor..." when actually Connor left office in May 1963. The book covers the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama in great detail, but the authors fail to mention the ouster from office of their greatest villain. The omission is inexplicable and it distorts the tide of change that was coming to Alabama in the 1960s. The people of Birmingham who voted against Connor deserve better.

In sum: Every Alabama fan needs to read this book. If you did not live through this time, and even if you did, you will probably learn something about the wild recruitment process that permitted multiple letters of intent, the Civil Rights Movement, and the boy who grew up to be Broadway Joe.
