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NEWS | TRADITION

Petition calls for return of "Dixieland"

By Rebecca Rakowitz | Assistant News Editor

A new petition on Change.org calls for the reinstatement of the song "Dixieland Delight" during the upcoming Iron Bowl. Started by Jon Adams, the online appeal was posted last week.

The text of the petition stressed the popularity of the song as a stadium anthem and fan-favorite. Adams argues that given the millions of dollars in tuition students pay to attend the University, the reinstatement of the tune is a "miniscule" request.

"This is one of the greatest joys we have as students singing this song with our classmates and alumni alike. With all this being said, FREE DIXIELAND DELIGHT," the petition said.

The song, originally released in 1983 by the country group Alabama, was a fourth-quarter staple at Bryant-Denny Stadium, but the practice ended after the 2014 Iron Bowl when the student section shouted "F--- Auburn" during the majority of the lyrical breaks.

After the SGA introduced a bill last fall to bring "Dixieland Delight" back, The Crimson White submitted open records requests to the University regarding the song. A spokeswoman from the University told The Crimson White that there were no emails or documents sent to or from University administrators referencing "Dixieland Delight."

As of Sunday morning, the petition had over 5,900 signatures – close to 80 percent of its stated goal of 7,500. Adams has repeatedly added updates to the petition, thanking supporters and encouraging people to keep sharing it on social media.

According to the petition, it will eventually be delivered to The University of Alabama Athletic Department, Athletic Director Bill Battle and University President Stuart Bell.

ALABAMA'S SUPERMAN

SEE PAGE 12

Jonathan Allen flies into the national spotlight

CW / Jonathan Norris

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Forging Jonathan Allen: The man of steel

By Tyler Waldrep | Sports Editor

The first time Stone Bridge High School football coach Mickey Thompson saw Jonathan Allen, he didn't know what to make of him.

Allen's athleticism was obvious, but he wasn't fast enough to play running back and his hands weren't better than the receivers already on Stone Bridge's team in Ashburn, Virginia.

"So he's sitting three-deep, three-deep everywhere, and he's not playing, it doesn't look like he's going to play much," Thompson said. "... [We thought] if we put him on the edge he can cause havoc and it's a pretty easy position to teach initially, just go get the quarterback."

Havoc, mayhem, destruction — you name it, Jonathan caused it. His success on the defensive line was apparent from the beginning.

"So he's sitting three-deep, three-deep everywhere, and he's not playing, it doesn't look like he's going to play much," Thompson said. "... [We thought] if we put him on the edge he can cause havoc and it's a pretty easy position to teach initially, just go get the quarterback."

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"Games were out of control," Thompson said. "There were games where people would have -80 yards of rushing. They couldn't get off the line of scrimmage. Then everybody started putting guys on him and then they didn't have enough guys to block the other guys [on our team]."

It took Allen a few years to earn significant snaps for the Crimson Tide, but once he did, the consensus five-star picked up right where he left off. He finished the 2015 season ranked No. 17 nationally with 12 sacks. This season, he has already surpassed the number of tackles he recorded last season (he currently has 46) and continues to find the quarterback (seven sacks so far.)

Coach Nick Saban didn't know if the defensive lineman would become anything more than a pass-rusher for Alabama when he first arrived in Tuscaloosa. Those concerns no

longer exist.

"What he's grown into because he's gotten bigger and stronger, he meets all the size criteria for his position," Saban said. "He still has those athletic qualities he had when he weighed 250 or 260 pounds and he's very athletic and it makes him a unique pass rusher when it comes to the power and strength that he has."

TAKING FLIGHT

Allen's athleticism has thrust him squarely into the Heisman conversation. Between the sacks and the fumble returns — Jonathan has returned two for 105 yards and a pair of scores — the country has taken notice.

The Associated Press and CBS Sports both have him No. 4 in their current predictions for the prestigious award, while ESPN's panel has him at No. 7.

If the people of Stone Bridge had anything to do about it, Jonathan would probably win the award in a landslide. When he makes a play for the Crimson Tide, it doesn't take much time until the entire Ashburn community hears about it.

"[With] the kids there's a sense of pride and ownership. [They're like] 'hey this is where Jon Allen went to school,'" Stone Bridge defensive coordinator R.J. Windows said. "And the minute he makes plays on Saturdays there's 100 texts between the players, the coaches, 'Hey, did you see Jon Allen scoop and score? Hey did you see? 'Constantly.'"

Windows wasn't at Stone Bridge when Allen went to school. He actually held the same position at another local school, Chantilly High School, but he remembers what it was like to watch film in preparation for the Bulldogs' one-man wrecking crew.

"He was playing Robinson High School and they ran an option and he tackled the dive back, threw him to the ground, chased the quarterback down [and] when the quarterback pitched the ball he tackled the pitch man on the sideline," Windows said. "It was a remarkable play. He just dominated high school football."

"You become a huge fan when you're not playing him."

Occasionally, the defensive lineman even took snaps at running back when

Stone Bridge found itself in a short yardage situation.

Pass-rusher or running back, the results seemed to be the same for Allen. He usually got where he wanted to go.

"[Watching his touchdown against Ole Miss,] it did remind me of that because it was kind of a rumble, it wasn't like a fleet-footed guy," Thompson said. "In high school, it was just like a pile of people piling down the field because they couldn't get him on the ground."

That's just one of the many flashbacks Thompson has had while watching Allen make play after play this season.

"A head coach should never do it, but there were times in our games where I would just watch him and I caught myself doing the same thing watching the Alabama game," Thompson said. "I just watch him, and I'm waiting on the next jaw-dropping moment, that's kind of what it's like."

Allen left his former community with a lot of high school highlights to remember him by during his senior season, but perhaps one of his more incredible plays for Stone Bridge didn't happen while he played defense or offense.



CW / Jonathan Norris


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"In high school, they had punt where they had three guys stand in front of the punter, and he jumped over top of them and blocked the ball off the punter's foot," Windows said. "He literally leaped over them headfirst and took the ball off the punter's foot. The kid literally did everything."

Thompson couldn't help but remember that play when he watched Allen take flight once more earlier this season. This time, instead of blocking a punt, Thompson's former player did his best Kal-El impression while sacking Texas A&M quarterback, Trevor Knight.

Ada Allen was also impressed with her grandson's Superman sack. She witnessed it first hand inside Bryant-Denny Stadium and has watched it online countless times since, but her response remains the same.

"I don't know how he did that, that was astonishing, that was wonderful," Ada said. "I don't know how he did it."

FAMILY FIRST

Jonathan's 294-pound frame has given opposing offensive lineman problems all season long, and the sight of him flying through the air might live on in the nightmares of opposing quarterbacks just as easily as it does on the internet, but his strength isn't something Ada is concerned with.

"Whenever I come around he's always delighted to see me he says 'Grandma when you coming, when you coming,'" Ada said. "And when I do come, he hugs

me and lifts me up off the ground as strong as he is, and I'm amazed by that. I like that."

Ada said she is still amazed at the attention Jonathan gets sometimes. She said hearing the crowd inside Bryant-Denny Stadium cheer for her grandson is incredible, but the attention he gets hardly stops there.

After a game earlier this season, the family went to eat sushi only to discover there would be a 45-minute wait. Ada said when a man in a suit recognized the defensive lineman, the stranger insisted that the Allens take the table his family was seated at, but Jonathan insisted even more firmly that he wouldn't hear of it.

Alabama fans, just like the people back home in Virginia, might adore Jonathan, but both groups are, at best, competing for second place.

"I don't miss hearing his name [in a game]— 'Jooonnnnathaann Allleeennn,'" Ada said. "... I'll watch each game three or four times by the time the weekend's over."

Easily Jonathan's biggest fan, Ada always texts her grandson before every game, and Jonathan always makes time to respond to all of her texts.

"[I usually text] how I want him to kick butt and take no prisoners and then after I will text him and congratulate him," Ada said. "... One time I was so tired I fell off to sleep before I could text him and congratulate him and he text me back wanting to know, 'Did you watch the game?'"

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Jonathan Allen tackles a Kentucky player during this year's Homecoming game. CW / Sam MacDonald

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

Jonathan's grandmother is hardly the only family member who pays close attention to his performance.

With his son's success in mind, Richard Allen sometimes questions Jonathan's decision making, even on plays like the Superman sack. When Richard spoke to Jonathan after the game, he pointed out that there was some risk involved with that type of diving move: What if he missed?

But, Richard realized his son made the decision in the heat of the moment, and he is just thankful Jonathan correctly assumed the quarterback would not have time to react to his 294-pound frame flying through the air.

"He knows I'll always be honest and critical, but ultimately like I tell him, he knows more about football than I'll ever know," Richard said. "So [I just suggest] alterations he needs to make and he listens, but like I said, I tell him what to do what the team tells him to do."

Richard said Jonathan isn't simply satisfied with wins and losses. If his personal performance wasn't up to his own standards, then he feels that he's let his teammates and his family down.

"If he played well he's jubilant, he's a gregarious person by nature, but also when he doesn't do well, he's not really in a good mood," Richard said. "He's really kind of down and contemplating what could he have done better."

Jonathan's desire for something resembling perfection in his performance is textbook Alabama, but his high standards were hardly forged in Tuscaloosa.

Ada saw something similar in his sister when she began studying Spanish.

"She didn't like it because she said it was hard and she was getting Bs, but if Ariana isn't getting

As she feels like she's not doing a good job because her father has instilled in them 'you have to come home and study, you have to be the best, you have to give it all you got, he's really taught those kids to excel at whatever it is that they like to have passion in it," Ada said.

But, Jonathan doesn't always want to talk or think about football, especially when he spends so much time living it. Luckily, he and his father share a passion for computer games.

"Sometimes we'll play [Total War] for two, three or even four hours, but lately we haven't had as much time because of my job and sometimes he can't play and I can't play," Richard said. "I would say we try to play at least once a week."

THE RIGHT INTANGIBLES

Jonathan is currently one of several Alabama defenders who are expected to go early in the 2017 NFL Draft. At the conclusion of last season, Jonathan received a second-round grade from the NFL, but Richard said his son decided to return largely so he could prove he was worthy of first-round consideration.

Jonathan will have plenty of chances to prove himself against quality competition before the season ends. On Saturday, Alabama will play an Auburn team that checks in at No. 15 ahead of Tuesday's updated College Football Playoff Committee rankings. After that, he'll face Florida (currently No. 23) in the SEC Championship game with potential top four matchups looming should Alabama remain in the CFP picture.

"I'm way more consistent playing against the run [this season]," Jonathan said. "That's one of

the biggest things I wanted to focus on. Also, my leadership abilities. We lost a lot of leaders last year, so I really wanted to step it up this year. And I feel like I've had success doing that so far."

Jonathan's success seems undeniable, but the people back home think there's a lot more to the defender than an NFL scout or a casual fan might notice watching the games.

Thompson said Jonathan was able to channel a rage that allowed him to have success in high school.

"If anybody came on our sideline they would just be bug-eyed at the way he approached the game, because he was this nice, kind respectful person [off the field]," Thompson said. "And then all the sudden, he was just this crazy man on the sideline. All in a good way."

Windows remembers Jonathan for more than the talent he possessed. Even with that rage, he also remembers the class he showed on the field.

"We knew back then this was a person you're going to watch on Sunday," Windows said. "... He would always help other people up, but man he was ready to knock them down any chance he could."

Richard saw his son make plenty of great plays in high school, but a great high school career doesn't guarantee anyone a trip to the NFL. Watching Jonathan chase down an Auburn running back from behind as a freshman in 2013, as he did so often in high school, gave Richard confidence that his son could make it.

"I'm extremely proud of him... he set his goal and what he wanted to accomplish and he worked extremely hard to accomplish it," Richard said. "He never faltered. He never wavered in his pursuit of what he wanted and for that, you can't be any prouder than what we are."



Jonathan Allen greets fans in Death Valley. CW / Jonathan Norris