

Getting to know Buccaneers safety Mark Barron

Cover 32

By Hunter Robinson – hrobinson71785@yahoo.com

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers' secondary is quietly becoming one of the scariest in the National Football League.

One of the key players in the Buccaneers' secondary is safety Mark Barron. The former Alabama Crimson Tide standout is another product of Nick Saban, who seems to produce NFL players faster than Usain Bolt running 100 meters. The star safety was a key player in Alabama's 2009 and 2011 National Championship seasons.

There are some things that Tampa Bay fans don't know about the former Crimson Tide player, like did you know he was a running back in high school? Or how about that Barron was a multiple state champion in track and field?

Lets find out more about the man who wears number 23 for Tampa shall we?

A native of Mobile, AL, Barron attended St. Paul's Episcopal Church where he played for the school's football team. Barron played multiple positions for the Saints including running back, wide receiver and linebacker.

As a senior, Barron had 1,094 rushing yards on 122 carries and 15 total touchdowns. Barron was named MVP of the 2007 Class 5A State Championship Game and was also named first-team Alabama Sports Writers Association All-State selection in Class 5A.

Barron was considered a five star recruit coming out of high school, and was highly sought by Alabama. He was considered the fifth best player in Alabama and was the 55th best player in the United States. Barron picked the Crimson Tide over Auburn, LSU, Florida and Florida State.

At Alabama, Barron was not a starter as a freshman in the 2008 season, but he did play in every game recording 18 tackles.

In 2009, Barron became a starter as a sophomore where he was second on the team in tackles with 74. Barron also had one touchdown and his seven interceptions were the best in the SEC and third best in the nation as Alabama won its first National Championship in 17 years. Barron's numbers earned him first-team All-SEC selection and third-team All-American at safety honors.

Barron put up similar numbers in 2010, but a pectoral injury in the Iron Bowl helped Auburn come from behind on their way to a National Championship. Barron was sidelined with the injury for the BCS Capitol One Bowl, but was able to return for the

2011 season, where the Crimson Tide won its second National Championship in three years.

After an illustrious career, Barron was projected to go in the first round of the 2012 draft. The Buccaneers selected Barron with the seventh overall pick, making him the highest selected defensive back in Alabama history. The previous owner of that milestone was 1992 SEC Championship hero Antonio Langham, who was chosen ninth overall in 1994.

"Boy, is this a solid pick. I love this kid because his floor and ceiling are the same thing," Mike Mayock said. "His ceiling is to be a Pro Bowl safety; his floor is to be a Pro Bowl safety. That's how good this young man is."

In Barron's first season, he lined up in the strong safety position along side free safety veteran Ronde Barber. It took no time at all for Barron to make his presence known as he recorded his first career interception against Tom Brady in week three of the 2012 season. Barron ended the season with 88 combined tackles and was selected to the All-Rookie team despite playing on the leagues worst pass defensive unit.

Barron's second year in the league yielded the same numbers as his first year as he finished with 88 combined tackles, but he recorded two interceptions and recovered a fumble.

Barron is entering his third season as a starter and with the defensive lineup the Buccaneers will produce in 2014, Barron has a chance to shine as a superstar safety. Tampa's defense could be among the top ranked defenses by the end of the 2014 season.