

# Meet Alan Tweedie

## Roll Crimson Tide



Alan (red shirt, center) and his friends love Alabama football.

by Sharleen Nelson

It's Friday night in Tuscaloosa. Summer has surrendered to fall colors of red and white and a rolling RV army of "Bama" fans make their way to Bryant-Denny Stadium to gather for one of America's favorite pastimes—tailgating at a college football game—Alabama style. At any given home game there can be as many as 1,500 RVs, but when Alan Tweedie rolls onto the University of Alabama campus in his tricked-out Marathon coach, heads turn—you can't miss the giant "Crimson Tide" slogan emblazoned across the front in dazzling red lights! In reference to their crimson jerseys, a sportswriter in 1907 described Alabama's offensive line as a "Crimson Tide." The nickname stuck, and "Roll Crimson Tide" has been the rallying cry of University of Alabama fans ever since.

Although Alan says he uses his coach for camping and traveling to the occasional business meeting, he purchased it primarily for the purpose of tailgating. But, to underscore his intense team spirit and pride, it needed some additional modifications. The exterior of the triple slide-out H3 coach is decked out in Alabama's signature crimson and white colors, but most prominent is the exterior lighting. "I had them add 'Crimson Tide' to the front and it lights up red, and red lights shine out from underneath the coach," said Alan.

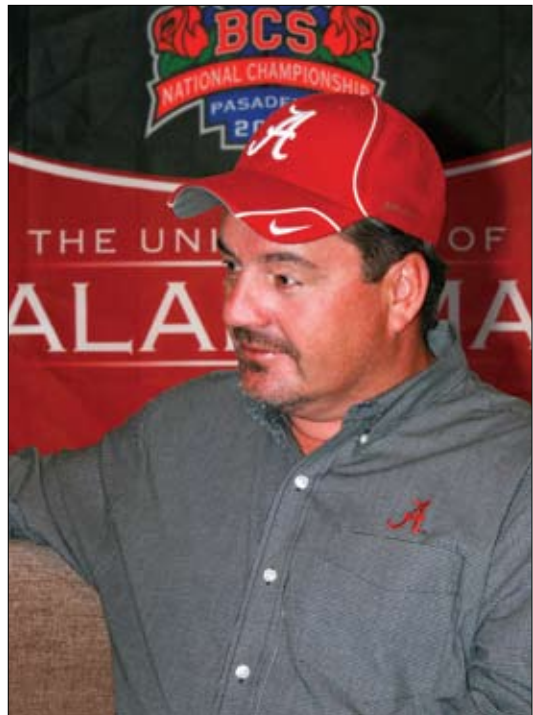
A well-established tradition throughout the south, tailgating often provides as much excitement





*Alabama running back Mark Ingram, #22, won the 2009 Heisman Trophy.*

as the game itself. Tailgating brings people together to eat, drink, socialize, and "arm-chair quarterback." And the party atmosphere prevails on game day at the University of Alabama. Overnight, the quad area fills up with pop-up tents, grills, lawn chairs, coolers, party lights, TVs, Alabama mascot "Big Al" signs and banners, stereos, and tens of thousands of football fans. The pre-game party in the recreational-vehicle parking lot is equally spirited. Some tailgaters don't even bother entering the stadium, choosing instead to party and watch the game on big-screen TVs in the comfort of their RVs.



Tailgating can be traced back to the very first college football game between Rutgers and Princeton in 1869, when fans traveled to the game by carriage and buckboard. When people started bringing along a picnic basket of food to the games, tailgating was born. Fortunately, the carriage and buckboard have given way to today's luxury RVs, where hard-core tailgaters such as Alan can eat and imbibe in grand style. "We'll usually all get together on Friday (before the game) if it's a home game," he said. "We're all out there in our Crimson Tide colors and we set up our chairs, TVs, and everybody just comes down and has a good time."

To accommodate guests, Alan's coach has three slide-outs and a spacious interior that houses two ultra-comfy leather sleeper sofas and two large-screen TVs in the salon. "I have two TVs for watching the games," Alan said. "That way, you can watch two different games if you want to." It also features an additional TV in the outside entertainment center, as well as a built-in grill that slides out from the underbelly.

"What we do is we 'box in,'" explained Alan. "They let us park front to back, nose to nose, side to side and we'll have four coaches squared in, so the whole center is open. We'll have my TVs, and other people have their TVs out, but mainly everybody congregates at my coach because I have the grill and the refrigerator and the coolers." And what does Alan like best about his coach? "It's a Marathon; I like everything about it!" he said. "I like how I have it set up for tailgating now—I guess you could call it a party bus."

The highlight of the tailgating season, however, is one of the greatest rivalries in college football—the annual Iron Bowl game between Alabama and Auburn University in Montgomery. "If you're born here, you choose either Alabama or Auburn," Alan said. "You know you just have to choose. It's a rivalry!"

The outcome of the big game determines "bragging rights" in the state of Alabama for the

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next year, and it has been said that the intense rivalry between the two teams has been known to split apart marriages and families. Still, according to Alan, that good ol' southern hospitality always prevails. "Every now and then we'll let some people from the other team's fans come in with us, too," he said. "It's all in fun. I've got LSU friends that come and tailgate with us when the games are here. And when the games are at LSU we tailgate with them. Auburn fans are friends, too, so we'll all hang out and have a good time. It doesn't ever get mean, just a little bragging, but not too much."

Alan traces his Crimson Tide roots back to his childhood. Legendary football coach Paul "Bear" Bryant, who led the team to a national



*Alan's dad  
attends most  
of the games  
with him.*



title in 1961, 1964, 1965, 1973, 1978, and 1979, was the idol of every kid growing up in Alabama. "When I was a little kid my mother, who was from England, didn't understand about the 'Bear,'" he said. "My step-brother said, 'There's the bear,' and my mother asked, 'Where's the bear?,' and there he was, Bear Bryant. He was leaning up against the goalpost."

Although "Bear" is no longer coach, Alabama football is still one the most successful football programs in the country with a record of thirty 10-win seasons and 57 bowl appear-

ances, winning 31 of them, as well as turning out 18 hall-of-fame players. Through his continued donor support of the University's athletic department, Alan has had the opportunity to get to know the current head coach, Nick Saban, and often goes to the field to watch the team practice. This year, Alan is planning to sponsor a fully endowed football scholarship with the university.

Alan resides in the small town of Arab, Alabama ("If you blink your eyes you'll miss it," he said), and is the owner of a successful catalytic converter recycling busi-



ness in Somerville. All cars are required to be equipped with catalytic converters, so his company purchases used converters from auto salvage yards and either refurbishes or recycles them. "Our niche market is really the remanufacture," he said. "I'll buy them for a certain price and we bring them back here and refurbish the ones we can; the ones that are broken we'll 'decan,' and then sell them to a refinery that melts them down to retrieve the precious metals and then transform them back into converters."

When the football season is over, Alan pursues a number of other interests. And as someone who likes "tricked-out" coaches, he is naturally drawn to other unique vehicles. "I have Harleys and I collect old muscle cars and stuff—corvettes and different things," he said. "I have two Harleys and a 1971 Plymouth Cuda, and I just purchased a 1971 Dodge Challenger. I go to the Barrett-Jackson car auction, and I attend car shows and cruise-ins."

After attending Marathon's "Extraordinary Oregon" rally in 2009 at Marathon's Coburg, Oregon facility, Alan has decided to take in a few more Marathon events. "The rallies are kind of similar to tailgating—it's fun meeting and getting to know different people," he said. "I kind of enjoy that."

Since the Oregon rally, Alan has also made several trips back to the Eugene area. He likes the area so much he's considering purchasing a vacation home on the McKenzie River. "I guess you would say I'm semi-retired," he said. "My business is pretty flexible with me. I've got people working for me to handle things when I'm away." Alan may also have another reason for spending more time in Oregon. "Believe it or not my daughter is thinking about attending the University of Oregon and becoming a Duck," he said with a chuckle. "She informed me of this recently. She said to me, 'I know where *you want* me to go, Dad,' but I told her, '*You go wherever you want to go.*'" The good news is there will be no team rivalry between father and daughter because Alabama and Oregon aren't in the same college football conference. "The Ducks won't play the big boys!" said Alan.

Still, despite the rallies, car shows, and his other activities, Alabama football and tailgating is never far from his mind. His predictions for next season? "Repeat national champions," said Alan. "We won the championship game in 2010, we're going to win it all again soon." Roll Tide Roll. •