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## Preview 2004

## Even Better

Coming off a Southeastern Conference Championship, an NCAA Regional title and a runner-up finish at the NCAA Championships, the Crimson Tide finds itself in the enviable position of returning all but one gymnast off last year's championship squad. Of course, filling in for that one athlete will be tough. Kristin Sterner graduated as an 11-time All-American and two-year captain of the Tide. But Alabama has four freshmen ready to step in and help with the transition, plus 12 veterans ready to improve on last seasons results.

Improve on two postseason titles and a No. 2 national finish? Obviously that will take some doing, but this squad has a definite advantage over last year's, namely experience. While Alabama is still one of the nation's youngest team, with 10 athletes in its freshman and sophomore classes, the Tide now has 12 athletes with at least a year of collegiate experience under their belt, as opposed to just seven last year.

Last season the largely revamped lineup was looking to carve out its own identity, this season, with so many returners, the Tide can focus on building on last year's accomplishments.

"Winning the SEC Championship was definitely the defining moment for last year's team," head coach Sarah Patterson said. "We took one of, if not THE youngest teams in the nation to Birmingham and they brought back the championship in the closest, most down the wire meets imaginable. This year we can build on the experience we gained

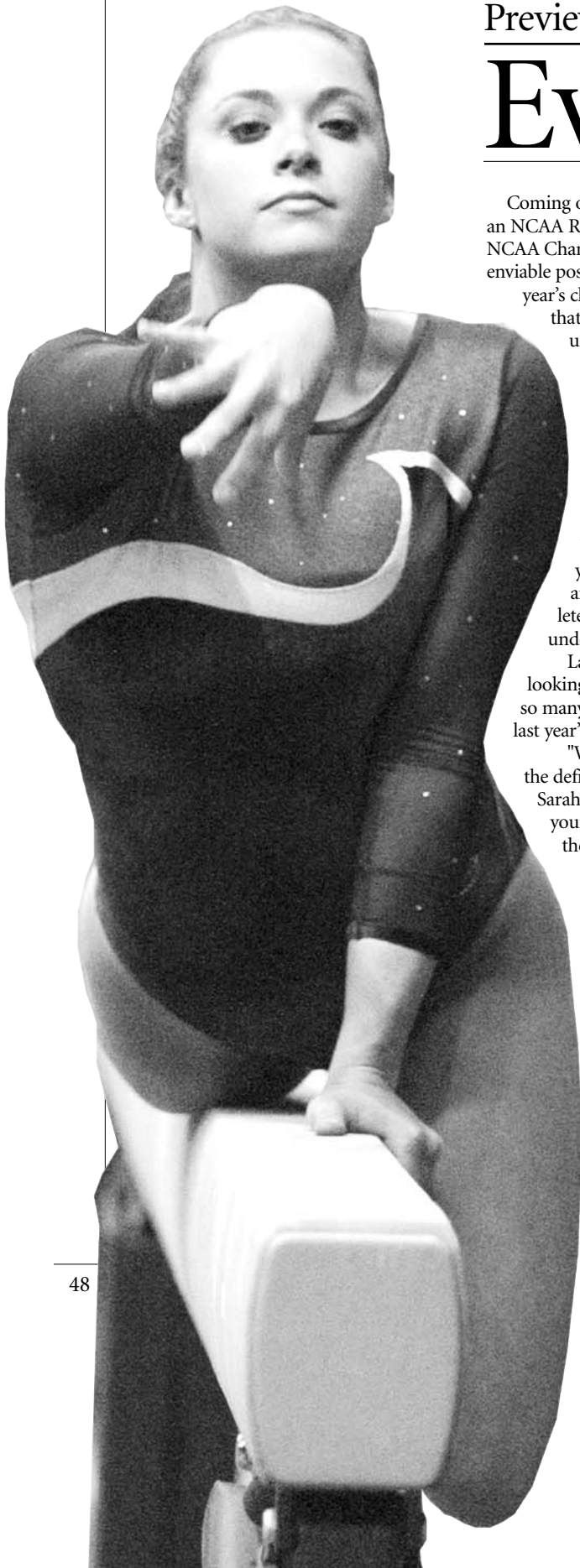
last season and focus on getting better across the board."

This may be the most talented and the deepest team Sarah and David Patterson have had in their 26 seasons. With 16 highly talented athletes, the Pattersons, along with assistant coach Bryan Raschilla and volunteer coach Dana Duckworth, will have their hands full figuring out how to best utilize each athlete, but that is certainly a good problem to have.

Keying Alabama's hunt for NCAA title No. 5 will be the Tide's six returning All-Americans. Leading that group will be reigning SEC Gymnast of the Year Jeana Rice. Rice earned five All-American honors last season, giving her 13 for her career. Not only is Rice one of the nation's very best gymnasts, but she has continued to improve through her career.

Seniors Lauren Holdefer and Stephanie Kite both return ready to take a spot in the Tide's vault and floor exercise lineups. Last season Kite earned All-American status on the floor and set up the Tide's SEC title when she scored a career best 9.925 in the Tide's next to last routine of the night. Both Kite and Holdefer, a Northport native, could also see duty on the balance beam.

Junior Alexis Brion took most of last season to recover from off-season ankle surgery, but was well enough by the NCAA Championships to earn All-American honors on the vault. This season, a healthy Brion could see action in the all-around, and will certainly be a welcome and exciting addition to the Tide's balance beam lineup. Fans can also look forward to the return of her high flying floor routine. Junior Shannon Hrozek earned her second straight All-American honor on the balance beam last season and





All-American Mari Bayer

should again see all-around action during the season. The Tide's lead off on the balance beam last season, earning All-SEC honors in the process, junior Michelle Reeser may add the uneven bars to her list of duties. She is also slated to return on the floor where she is a fan favorite.

Sophomore Ashley Miles was arguably the nation's most exciting athlete last season on the vault and the floor exercise. She clinched the SEC title last year with a huge routine that scored a 9.975 in the Tide's last routine of the night. She scored a 10.0 on the floor at the NCAA Regionals and capped a huge rookie season by winning the NCAA Vault title. She returns this season ready to compete on all four events. Mari Bayer opened up her rookie year with All-American honors on the uneven bars and balance beam in 2003. This season she could see action in the all-around, using her long lines and graceful routines to their full advantage.

Sophomore Dana Filetti is running away with the "most improved" title in the pre-season. After competing exclusively on the uneven bars last season, she could go all-around this season. Her floor routine will include some big, exciting tumbling. She may also be the first gymnast to compete a full

on, pike off vault in NCAA competition. Larissa Stewart returns for her second season slowed after cutting a tendon in her hand while using scissors to open a package. All-SEC on the uneven bars last season, Stewart started swinging on the bars again in December. Sophomore Dana Pierce should again compete on the vault, uneven bars and balance beam this year while classmate Rachael Delahoussaye could again see action on the balance beam.

The Tide's rookie four consists of Brittany Comeaux, Johnna Gay, Meredith Laxton and Erin Rightley. Comeaux could see action in the all-around, with the uneven bars and vault being her top events right now. Gay looked good on the vault and floor exercise in the pre-season. Her bubbly personality shines through in her floor routine, making her routine one to look forward to. Laxton will be trying to break into the Tide's balance beam and uneven bars lineup while Rightley could make an impact on the Tide's beam and floor lineup. Rightley is another gymnast, whose huge tumbling on the floor can bring fans to their feet.

It is a good thing that Alabama's lineup is far more experienced this season, because they will dive right into the thick of things, hosting the

Super Six Challenge on January 9th. That meet, which will feature Georgia, Florida, Oregon State, Oklahoma and Denver, is the first of the Alabama's five Fun Family Fridays. The decision was made to move all the home meets to Friday this season.

"I was looking for a way to kind of become a marquee event on Friday night for families," Patterson said. "I think we provide great entertainment for the whole family and we're a bargain in terms of ticket prices."

Patterson has again put together a schedule that will be exciting for the fans and challenging for her squad. In addition to the Super Six Challenge, Alabama faces perennial powerhouses Penn State, Florida and Georgia along with scrappy newcomer Arkansas in Coleman Coliseum in addition to seeing LSU, Auburn, Kentucky and Michigan on the road.

And once the regular season is over, Alabama will defend its SEC title in Duluth, Ga. at the Gwinnett Convention Center and challenge for the NCAA title in Los Angeles, Calif. in Pauley Pavilion.



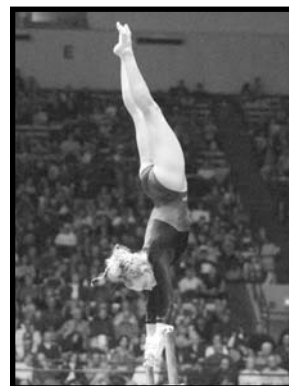
All-American Alexis Brion



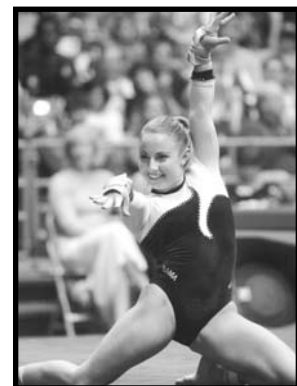
All-SEC Larissa Stewart



All-American Stephanie Kite



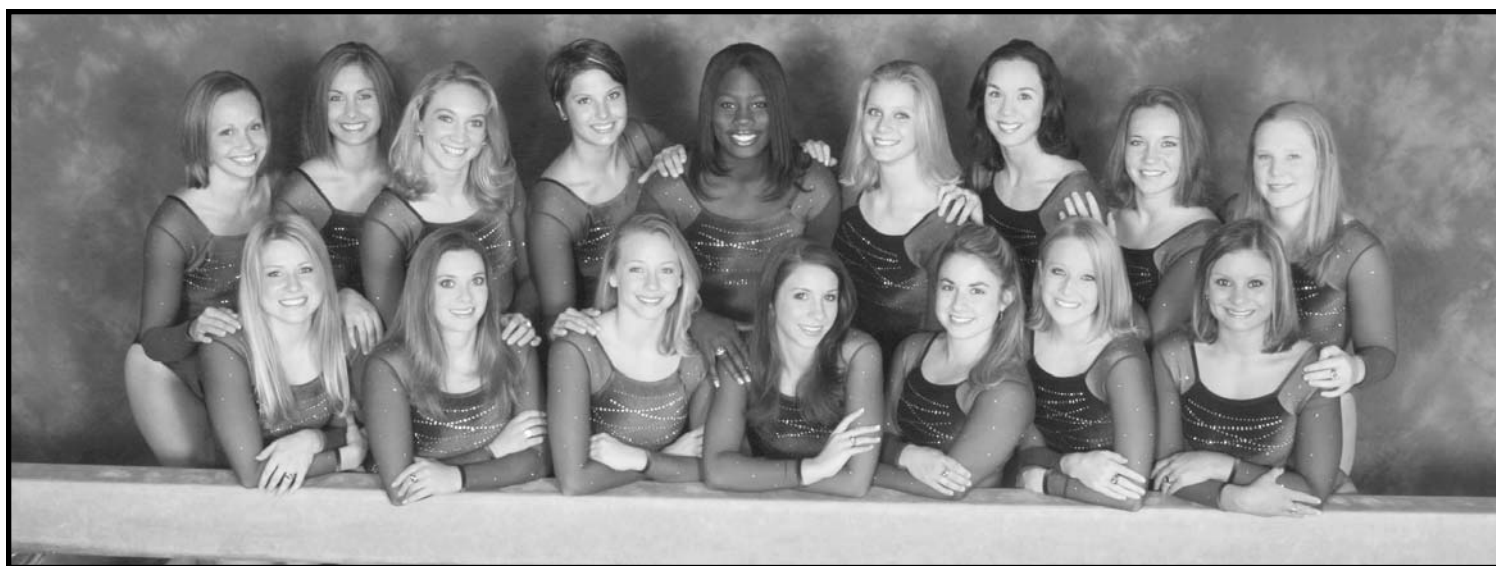
All-American Shannon Hrozek



All-SEC Michelle Reeser



# 2004 Roster Breakdown



## LETTERWINNERS RETURNING (12)

**Seniors (3)** Lauren Holdefer, Stephanie Kite, Jeana Rice

**Juniors (3)** Alexis Brion, Shannon Hrozek, Michelle Reeser

**Sophomores (6)** Mari Bayer, Rachael Delahoussaye, Dana Filetti, Ashley Miles, Dana Pierce, Larissa Stewart

**Newcomers (4)** Brittany Comeaux, Johnna Gay, Meredith Laxton, Erin Rightley

**LETTERWINNERS LOST (2)** Kristin Sterner & Lauren Pruitt

**ALL-AMERICANS LOST (1)** Kristin Sterner

## ALL-AMERICANS RETURNING (6)

Mari Bayer (2): 2003 — Bars, Beam\*

Alexis Brion (3): 2003 — Vault  
2002 — Vault, Floor

Shannon Hrozek (2): 2003 — Beam  
2002 — Beam\*

Stephanie Kite (1): 2003 — Floor\*

Ashley Miles (2): 2003 — Vault, Floor

Jeana Rice (13): 2003 — All-Around, Vault, Bars, Beam, Floor\*  
2002 — All-Around, Vault\*, Beam  
2001 — All Around, Vault\*, Bars\*, Beam\*, Floor

\* Denotes second team All-American

## NCAA CHAMPION RETURNING (1)

Ashley Miles — 2003 Vault

**2003 SCHOLASTIC ALL-AMERICANS (8)** Mari Bayer, Rachael Delahoussaye, Lauren Holdefer, Shannon Hrozek, Stephanie Kite, Dana Pierce, Michelle Reeser, Kristin Sterner

**2003 ACADEMIC ALL-SEC (8)** Mari Bayer, Rachael Delahoussaye, Lauren Holdefer, Shannon Hrozek, Stephanie Kite, Dana Pierce, Michelle Reeser, Kristin Sterner

Name	Yr.	Exp.	Hgt.	Hometown	Club Team
Mari Bayer	So.	1VL	5-5	San Jose, Calif.	West Valley Gymnastics
Alexis Brion	Jr.	2VL	5-2	Virginia Beach, Va.	Excalibur Gymnastics
Brittany Comeaux	Fr.	HS	5-3	Addis, La.	Elite Gymnastics
Rachael Delahoussaye	So.	1VL	5-2	Mandeville, La.	Northshore Gymnastics
Dana Filetti	So.	2VL	5-0	Chesapeake, Va.	Excalibur Gymnastics
Johnna Gay	Fr.	HS	5-1	Mobile, Ala.	Planet Gymnastics
Lauren Holdefer	Sr.	3VL	5-5	Northport	Bama Bounders
Shannon Hrozek	Jr.	2VL	5-3	The Woodlands, Texas	Flips Gymnastics of Texas
Stephanie Kite	Sr.	3VL	5-1	Austin, Texas	Capital Gymnastics
Meredith Laxton	Fr.	HS	5-4	Papillion, Neb.	Nebraska Gold
Ashley Miles	So.	1VL	5-7	San Antonio, Texas	South Texas Gymnastics Acad.
Dana Pierce	So.	1VL	5-1	Advance, Ind.	DeVeau's School of Gymnastics
Michelle Reeser	Jr.	2VL	4-9	Monroe, La.	River City Gymnastics
Jeana Rice	Sr.	3VL	4-10	Longwood, Fla.	ACE Gymnastics
Erin Rightley	Fr.	HS	5-3	Ft. Walton Beach, Fla.	Emerald City Gymnastics
Larissa Stewart	So.	1VL	5-0	Healdton, Ok.	Victory Gymnastics

HEAD COACH	ASST. HEAD COACH	ASST. COACH	VOLUNTEER ASST. COACH
Sarah Patterson 26th Year	David Patterson 26th Year	Bryan Raschilla 8th Year	Dana Duckworth 5th Year

## STAFF

**Assistant Athletic Trainers:** Monica Decker-Veal

**Student Athletic Trainers:**

Ben Cleveland (spring semester)

Shelley McDaniel and Matt Smith (fall semester)

**Managers:** Allison Spidle and Claire Harris

**Director of Gymnastics Operations:** Rita Martin

**Administrative Assistant:** Robin Kelley

**Academic Advisor:** Cathy Elliott

**Strength and Conditioning Coach:** Jesper Sjokvist

**Cardio Fitness Director:** Mary Cartee

## PRONUNCIATION GUIDE:

Alexis **Brion** . . . . .Bree-own

Shannon **Hrozek** . . . . .Row-zek

Jeana **Rice** . . . . .Gee-na

# The Crimson Tide at a Glance



**MARI BAYER**  
San Jose, Calif.  
Sophomore  
**\*All-American\***



**ALEXIS BRION**  
Virginia Beach, Va.  
Junior  
**\*All-American\***



**BRITTANY COMEAUX**  
Addis, La.  
Freshman



**RACHAEL DELAHOUSSEY**  
Mandeville, La.  
Sophomore



**DANA FILETTI**  
Chesapeake, Va.  
Sophomore



**JOHNNA GAY**  
Mobile, Ala.  
Freshman



**LAUREN HOLDEFER**  
Northport  
Senior



**SHANNON HROZEK**  
The Woodlands, Texas  
Junior  
**\*All-American\***



**STEPHANIE KITE**  
Austin, Texas  
Senior  
**\*All-American\***



**MEREDITH LAXTON**  
Papillion, Neb.  
Freshman



**ASHLEY MILES**  
San Antonio, Texas  
Sophomore  
**\*All-American\***



**DANA PIERCE**  
Advance, Ind.  
Sophomore



**MICHELLE REESER**  
Monroe, La.  
Junior



**JEANA RICE**  
Longwood, Fla.  
Senior  
**\*All-American\***



**ERIN RIGHTLEY**  
Ft. Walton Beach, Fla.  
Freshman



**LARISSA STEWART**  
Healdton, Okla.  
Sophomore



# Mari Bayer

## THE MARI BAYER FILE

Sophomore • 1VL • 5-5  
 Hometown: San Jose, Calif.  
 Major: Nutrition  
 Events: All-Around  
 High School: Lynbrook  
 Club: West Valley

## Alabama Highlights:

2003 — freshman

- First team All-American on the uneven bars and second team All-American on the balance beam
- Finished eighth on the uneven bars at the NCAA Championships
- Scored a career best 9.9 on the uneven bars during the NCAA Super Six
- Scored season best marks of 9.9 or higher on all four apparatus
- Only freshman to compete on all four events during the season
- Scholastic All-American
- Academic All-SEC

## Prep Highlights:

- Competed for West Valley Gymnastics under coaches Diane Amos and Chris Swircek
- As a elite level gymnast, was invited to two Pre-Olympic training camps with Bela Karolyi
- Competed at the 2001 Finland International Friendship competition taking fourth on the balance beam
- Took eighth on the uneven bars and 15th in the all-around at the 2001 USA Championships
- Won the floor exercise and finished fourth on the uneven bars and fifth in the all-around at the 2000 Level 10 National Championships
- Finished ninth in the all-around, fifth on the uneven bars and sixth on the vault at U.S. Classic
- Led West Valley to the 2001 Level 10 State Championship
- Earned Lynbrook's Red, White and Blue Award for Algebra

## Personal Information:

- Full name: Mari-Christine Ruth Bayer
- Parents are Anton and Cynthia Bayer
- Two Brothers: Anton and Nyle
- Uncles, Steve and Chris Weber, both played football at Stanford
- Born July 5, 1984

## Bayer's Top Scores

Vault: 9.900  
 Bars: 9.900  
 Beam: 9.925  
 Floor: 9.900

# Alexis Brion

## THE ALEXIS BRION FILE

Junior • 2VL • 5-2  
Hometown: Virginia Beach, Va.  
Major: Psychology  
Events: All-Around  
High School: Kempsville  
Club: Excalibur

### Alabama Highlights:

#### 2003 — sophomore

- Earned All-American honors on the vault, pushing her career total up to three
- Returned to the Tide lineup in February after off-season ankle surgery

#### 2002 — freshman

- Earned two All-American honors at her inaugural NCAA Championships, vault and floor exercise
- 2002 regional champion on vault after scoring a career-high 9.9
- Competed on floor exercise in every competition of her rookie season
- Second-team All-SEC honors on the floor exercise after placing second at the SEC Championships
- Scored 9.9 or higher on the floor exercise 14 times in 16 outings
- The Tide's top finisher on the floor exercise six times, taking first-place honors four of those times

### Prep Highlights:

- Graduated from Kempsville High School
- Coached by Dena and Jim Walker at Excalibur Gymnastics
- First person in the world to compete a double full-in-back-out in the pike position on the floor exercise
- National Honor Society
- Help lead the United States to a win in the USA vs. Ukraine meet
- Finished fifth in the all-around at the 1996 Hungarian International Gymnastics Championship in Budapest
- Took 10th in the all-around at the 1995 Subway World Gymnastics Challenge in Ontario, Canada
- Led the United States to a first place finish at the 1995 Pacific Ocean Games held in Cali, Columbia, taking third in the all-around
- Competed at the 1995 U.S. Olympic Festival, winning the floor exercise and leading her squad to the gold medal

### Personal Information:

- Full name: Alexis Renee Brion
- Parents: Dan and Laura Brion
- Brother: Dan
- Born: November 18, 1982

### Brion's Top Scores

Vault: 9.925  
Floor: 9.975



### Did You Know...

Alexis Brion was the first gymnast, male or female, to perform a double full-in pike, a skill that is now known as the "Brion".





# Brittany Comeaux

## THE BRITTANY COMEAUX FILE

Freshman • HS • 5-3  
Hometown: Addis, La.  
Major: Interior Design  
Events: All-Around  
High School: Brusly  
Club: Elite Gymnastics

### Prep Highlights:

- Competed for coach Johnny Moyal at Elite Gymnastics in Baton Rouge, La.
- Five-time National Qualifier
- Finished 16th in the all-around at the 2001 National Championships
- Two-time Junior Olympic National Team Member, 2001 and 2002
- Honors Senior

### Personal Information:

- Full name: Brittany Danielle Comeaux
- Parents are James and Tana Comeaux
- Sister: Blair
- Born: November 22, 1984



# Rachael Delahoussaye

## THE RACHAEL DELAHOUSSAYE FILE

Sophomore • 1VL • 5-2  
Hometown: Mandeville, La.  
Major: Pre-med Biology & Art History  
Events: All-Around  
High School: St. Scholastica Academy  
Club: Northshore

### Alabama Highlights:

#### 2003 — freshman

- Scored a career best 9.9 on the balance beam at the NCAA Regional Championships
- Earned the William Ray Moore Physical Sciences Scholarship
- Scholastic All-American
- Academic All-SEC

### Prep Highlights:

- Competed for Bryan Neal at Northshore Gymnastics
- Seven-time Louisiana State Champion
- Competed at regionals seven times
- National Honor Society
- Alpha Honor Roll
- Student Council

### Personal Information:

- Full name: Rachael Marie Delahoussaye
- Parents are Jerry and Nancy Delahoussaye
- Sisters: Rebecca, Sarah and Abby
- Born September 21, 1984

### Delahoussaye's Top Scores

Beam: 9.900

Floor: 9.675





# Dana Filetti

**THE DANA FILETTI FILE**

Sophomore • 1VL • 5-1  
 Hometown: Chesapeake, Va.  
 Major: Communications  
 Events: All-Around  
 High School: Nansemond-Suffolk Academy  
 Club: Excalibur

**Alabama Highlights:**

2003 — freshman

- Scored 9.85 or better on the uneven bars six times during the season, including a 9.85 at the NCAA Super Six Team Finals

**Prep Highlights:**

- Competed for Jim and Dena Walker at Excalibur Gymnastics
- Alternate on the 2001 United States World Championship squad
- Finished sixth in the all-around as part of the U.S. National team at the 2001 DeHypotheekshop Gymnastics Top in Amsterdam, Netherlands
- Member of the USA Senior International Team 2001-02
- Took ninth at the 2001 U.S. National Championships in the all-around
- Finished 10th in the all-around at the 2001 U.S. Classic
- Led her team to the team title at the 2001 Capital Cup, winning the all-around and vault in the process
- Won the all-around at the 1999 American Challenge

**Personal Information:**

- Full name: Dana Brown Filetti
- Parents are Dante and Jean Filetti
- Older sister Mara is a junior at Alabama
- Born August 1, 1984

Filetti's Top Scores  
 Bars: 9.850

**Did You Know...**

Dana Filetti has an older sister, Mara, who is a junior at The University of Alabama.

# Johnna Gay

## THE JOHNNA GAY FILE

Freshman • HS • 5-1  
Hometown: Mobile, Ala.  
Major: Elementary Education  
Events: All-Around  
High School: Faith Academy  
Club: Planet Gymnastics

### Prep Highlights:

- Graduated from Faith Academy
- Competed for Vladimir and Joanne Novikov and Jennifer Webb at Planet Gymnastics
- Finished 14th on balance beam at 2003 Junior Olympic National Championships
- Finished 3rd all around, 3rd on vault and 4th on floor exercise at 2003 Region VIII Championships
- 2003 Level 10 State Champion on vault, uneven bars, floor exercise and all around
- Led her team to a 2003 Level 10 State Championship
- Helped the Region VIII Senior A team place 1st at 2002 Junior Olympic National Championships
- Placed 5th on floor exercise, 2nd on balance beam and 6th all around at the 2002 Regionals
- 2002 Level 10 State Champion on vault
- Took 3rd in the all-around and 2nd on the balance beam and floor exercise at the 2002 Level 10 State Championships
- Competed at the 2000 Eastern Nationals and placed 7th on balance beam and floor exercise and 13th in the all-around
- National Honor Society Member
- Awards in French, Government and Physics
- School yearbook editor

### Personal Information:

- Full name: Johnna Lynn Gay
- Parents are John and Lynda Gay
- Sister: Ashleigh
- Born: November 15, 1985



### Did You Know...

Johnna Gay was a member of the National Honor Society.

# Lauren Holdefer

THE LAUREN HOLDEFER FILE  
 Senior • 3VL • 5-5  
 Hometown: Northport, Ala.  
 Major: Psychology  
 Events: All-Around  
 High School: Tuscaloosa County  
 Club: Bama Bounders

## Alabama Highlights:

### 2003 — junior

- Scored a career best 9.85 on the vault at Auburn, the SEC Championships and the NCAA Central Regional Championships
- Named to Gamma Beta Phi and Psi Chi national honor society
- Keynote speaker at the Alabama Sports Festival Athletic Leadership Summit
- Scholastic All-American
- Academic All-SEC

### 2002 — sophomore

- Scored a season-high 9.750 on the vault against Nebraska
- Posted a season-high 9.875 on the floor exercise twice at both the season opening Super Six Challenge and the season ending NCAA Super Six Championships
- Inducted into Beta Gamma Sigma national honor society
- Scholastic All-American
- Academic All-SEC

### 2001 — freshman

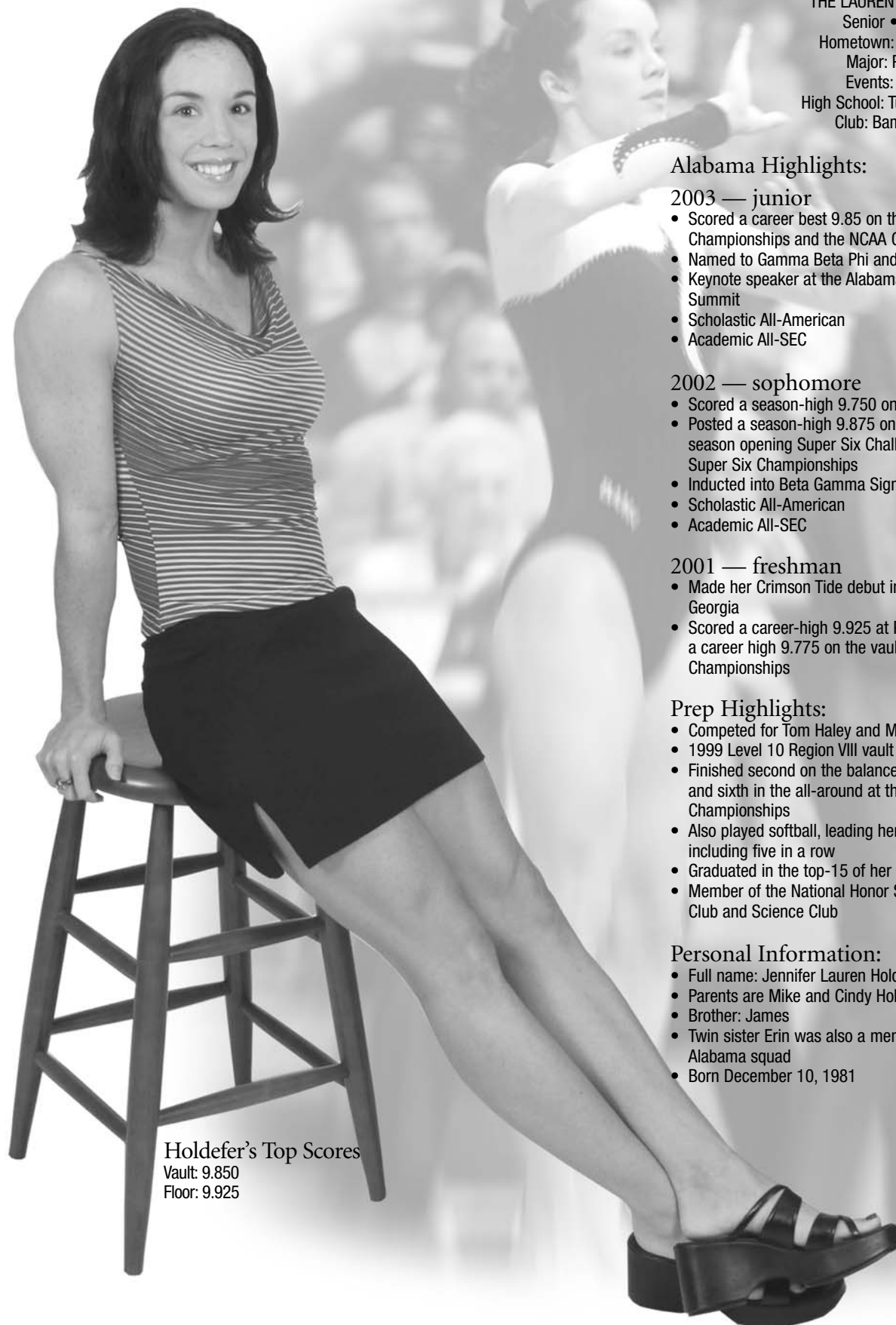
- Made her Crimson Tide debut in the vault and floor line-ups at Georgia
- Scored a career-high 9.925 at Penn State in the floor exercise and a career high 9.775 on the vault against UGA and again at the SEC Championships

## Prep Highlights:

- Competed for Tom Haley and Marianne Nunnally at Bama Bounders
- 1999 Level 10 Region VIII vault champion
- Finished second on the balance beam, fifth on the floor exercise and sixth in the all-around at the 1999 Level 10 National Championships
- Also played softball, leading her team to six league championships including five in a row
- Graduated in the top-15 of her class
- Member of the National Honor Society, Beta Club, Key Club, German Club and Science Club

## Personal Information:

- Full name: Jennifer Lauren Holdefer
- Parents are Mike and Cindy Holdefer
- Brother: James
- Twin sister Erin was also a member of the 2002 NCAA Champion Alabama squad
- Born December 10, 1981



Holdefer's Top Scores  
 Vault: 9.850  
 Floor: 9.925



# Shannon Hrozek

## THE SHANNON HROZEK FILE

Junior • 2VL • 5-3  
Hometown: The Woodlands, Texas  
Major: Consumer Sciences  
Events: All-Around  
High School: The Woodlands  
Club: Flips Gymnastics of Texas

### Alabama Highlights:

#### 2002 — sophomore

- Second team All-American on the balance beam
- Posted a career best 39.45 against LSU in the all-around
- Scored a career best 9.95 on the floor exercise against LSU and at Auburn
- Scored a career best 9.9 on the balance beam at Nebraska and the uneven bars against Auburn
- National Society of Collegiate Scholars
- Scholastic All-American
- Academic All-SEC

#### 2002 — freshman

- Earned All-American honors on the balance beam
- Competed in the all-around twice
- Posted a season high 9.900 on the uneven bars at the NCAA Central Regional Championships
- Helped Alabama to an NCAA record 49.725 on the balance beam at the NCAA Central Regional with a season high 9.9
- Won her first all-around outing, scoring a 39.250 against Florida
- Earned a 39.250 in the all-around at Auburn, again taking home first place where she also won the floor exercise
- Scored a season high 9.90 in her first outing on floor exercise against Auburn in Birmingham
- Ranked as high as No. 11 nationally on floor exercise
- Earned Dean's List Honors in her first semester (posting a 3.5 or better grade point average)
- Named to Phi Eta Sigma honor society
- Scholastic All-American
- Academic All-SEC

### Prep Highlights:

- Graduated from The Woodlands High School
- Coached by Randy Scott at Flips Gymnastics of Texas
- Level 10 National competitor 1996, '98, '99 and '00
- 2000 Region 3 All-Around Champion
- 1998 Texas State Vault Champion
- 1998 Level 10 National Championship All-Around Runner-up
- Finished in the all-around top-10 at the Level 10 National Championships three years in a row, 1998-2000

### Personal Information:

- Full name: Shannon Marie Hrozek
- Parents are Richard and Carrie Hrozek
- Brother: Wayne
- Born December 16, 1982

### Hrozek's Top Scores

Vault: 9.850  
Bars: 9.900  
Beam: 9.900  
Floor: 9.950  
All Around: 39.450



### Did You Know...

Shannon Hrozek has earned back-to-back All-American honors on the balance beam.



Kite's Top Scores  
Vault: 9.850  
Beam: 9.725

# Stephanie Kite

## THE STEPHANIE KITE FILE

Senior • 3VL • 5-1  
Hometown: Austin, Texas  
Major: International Marketing  
Events: All-Around  
High School: Westlake  
Club: Capital Gymnastics

## Alabama Highlights:

### 2003 — junior

- Earned second team All-American honors on the floor exercise
- Scored a career best 9.925 on the floor exercise at the SEC Championships
- Posted six scores of 9.900 or better on the floor exercise
- Named to the Verizon Academic All-American At-Large team
- Named to Omicron Delta Kappa (ODK) and Gamma Beta Sigma honor societies
- Earned the Dow Chemical Undergraduate Award
- Named to the President's List for the Fall and Spring Semesters after earning a pair of perfect 4.0 grade point averages
- Scholastic All-American
- Academic All-SEC

### 2002 — sophomore

- Competed on the vault for the Tide for the first time at the season opening Super Six Challenge
- Scored a career-high 9.825 on the vault against UCLA
- Competed on the floor exercise in every meet of the season, posting a 9.8 or higher in 13 of 15 competitions.
- Named to the President's List for the Fall and Spring Semesters after earning a pair of perfect 4.0 grade point averages
- Scholastic All-American
- Academic All-SEC

### 2001 — freshman

- Scored a career-high 9.90 on floor against Kentucky and again at the NCAA Regionals
- Scored no lower than 9.80 on the floor exercise in last five outings
- Made first appearance in the line-up at the season opening Super Six Challenge
- Inducted into Alpha Lambda Delta and Phi Eta Sigma honor societies
- Awarded Economics Freshman Achievement Award
- Scholastic All-American
- Named to the President's List for the Fall and Spring Semesters after earning a pair of perfect 4.0 grade point averages

## Prep Highlights:

- Competed for Jim and Cheryl Jarrett at Capital Gymnastics, the same club that produced former Crimson Tide All-Americans Merritt Booth, Sheryl Dundas, Kara Stilp and Stephanie Woods along with 2002 senior Alexa Martinez
- Finished sixth on the vault and 13th in the all-around at the 2000 Level 10 National Championships
- 1999 Level 10 National Vault champion
- Finished fifth on the floor exercise at the 1999 Level 10 National Championships
- Member of the Level 10 National Region III team in 1999 and 2000
- National Honor Society
- Graduated sixth in her class

## Personal Information:

- Full name: Stephanie Lee Kite
- Parents are Tom and Christy Kite
- Father, Tom, is a professional golfer, who played collegiately at Texas
- Mother, Christy, played golf for Arizona State
- Twin brothers: Paul and David
- Born October 7, 1981

# Meredith Laxton

## THE MEREDITH LAXTON FILE

Freshman • HS • 5-4  
Hometown: Papillion, Neb.  
Major: Pre-Major Studies  
Events: All-Around  
High School: Papillion LaVista  
Club: Nebraska Gold

### Prep Highlights:

- Competed for coaches Don and Terry Houlton and Barb Bottieri at Nebraska Gold gymnastics club in Omaha, Neb.
- Competed for Scott Zymball and Becky Wickstrom at Pappillion LaVista High School
- Led Pappillion LaVista to the Metro and State High School Championships
- 2000 Nebraska High School State Floor Exercise Champion
- Took third in the all-around at the 2000 Nebraska High School State Championships
- Regional qualifier in 1998-2001 and 2003
- Concert and Free Spirit Show Choir
- National Honor Society

### Personal Information:

- Full name: Meredith Leigh Laxton
- Parents are Neal and Susan Laxton
- Sister: Caroline
- Born: February 1, 1985





# Ashley Miles

## THE ASHLEY MILES FILE

Sophomore • 1VL • 5-7

Hometown: San Antonio, Texas

Major: Advertising

Events: All-Around

High School: Radiance Academy

Club: South Texas Gymnastics Academy

## Alabama Highlights:

### 2003 — freshman

- NCAA Vault Champion
- Scored two 10.0s at the NCAA Championships, both on the vault
- Earned All-American honors on the vault and floor exercise
- Won the NCAA Central Regional floor exercise title with a 10.0, tying the NCAA Record on that event
- Also won the NCAA Central Regional vault title, scoring a 9.95
- Won the SEC floor exercise title marking the first time a Tide freshman won a league title since Katherine Kelleher's 1989 vault title
- Clinched Alabama's 2003 SEC Championship with a 9.975 on the floor exercise, winning the event and earning All-SEC honors in the process
- Scored a 10.0 on the vault at her very first meet at Coleman Coliseum (vs. Auburn 3/1)
- Out of 28 routines scored 9.9 or better 24 times, including 16 marks of 9.95 or better
- Scored 9.95 or better nine times on the floor exercise, a stretch that included a 10.0 at the NCAA Central Regional and three 9.975s
- Came back from an injury that sidelined her for four meets in the middle of the season and scored a 10.0 on the vault her first event back

## Prep Highlights:

- Four-year member of the U.S. National Team, 1997-98, 1999-2002
- Helped the US National Team to a bronze medal at the 2001 World Championships
- Led the United States to a gold medal at the 2002 Spring Cup in Burlington, Ontario by collecting gold of her own in the all-around and balance beam and silver on the floor exercise and vault
- Helped the US National Team to a gold medal performance at the 2001 American Team Cup and the 2000 International Team Championships in Honolulu, Hawaii and Syracuse, NY respectively
- Took fifth in the all-around, second on the vault and fourth on the uneven bars at the 2001 U.S. Gymnastics Championships
- Finished fourth in the all-around at the 1999 Japan Junior International Championships
- At the 2001 U.S. Classic, took sixth in the all-around, fourth on the uneven bars and fifth on the vault
- Took 13th in the all-around and third on the vault at the 2000 U.S. National Championships
- Won the all-around at the 1997 Monja Blanca Invitational where she also took first in the floor exercise, second on the vault, balance beam and uneven bars

## Personal Information:

- Full name: Ashley Rae Miles
- Parents are Milton and Sherine Miles
- Brothers: Daniel and Joshua - Sister: Lauren
- Born March 3, 1985

## Miles' Top Scores

Vault: 10.000

Bars: 9.900

Floor: 10.000



# Dana Pierce

## THE DANA PIERCE FILE

Sophomore • 1VL • 5-1  
Hometown: Advance, Ind.  
Major: Secondary Education/Coaching  
Events: All-Around  
High School: Western Boone  
Club: DeVeau's School of Gymnastics

### Alabama Highlights:

#### 2003 — freshman

- Only freshman to compete in every meet during the season
- Scored a career best vault of 9.925 against Auburn
- Posted a career best 9.925 on the balance beam at Georgia
- Council of Presidents' Freshman Academic Achievement Award
- Scholastic All-American
- Academic All-SEC

### Prep Highlights:

- Member of the United States National Team
- Led the 2000 Region 5 All-Star team to a silver medal in France
- Placed fourth in the all around at the 2000 U.S. Classic
- A member of the famed Bela Karolyi's pre-Olympic training group
- Finished second on the vault and third on the floor exercise at the 1999 US Classic
- Also competed in diving, undefeated throughout the regular season as a junior and track and field, competing in the long jump, winning the sectional and conference championships
- National Honor Society Vice-President
- Voted Western Boone's "Miss Congeniality" as a senior
- Homecoming Queen as a freshman and a senior

### Personal Information:

- Full name: Dana Marie Pierce
- Parents are Danny and Lisa Pierce
- Brothers: David and Daniel - Sister: Amy
- Born June 28, 1983

### Pierce's Top Scores

Vault: 9.925  
Bars: 9.850  
Beam: 9.925



### Did You Know...

Dana Pierce was the only Tide freshman in 2003 to compete in every meet of the season.



# Michelle Reeser

## THE MICHELLE REESER FILE

Junior - 2VL • 4-9  
 Hometown: Monroe, La.  
 Major: Accounting  
 Events: All-Around  
 High School: St. Frederick  
 Club: River City Gymnastics

### Alabama Highlights:

#### 2003 — sophomore

- Earned second team All-SEC honors on the balance beam
- Scored a career best 9.9 on the balance beam four times during the season
- Inducted into Beta Alph Psi national honor society
- Scholastic All-American
- Academic All-SEC

#### 2002 — freshman

- Made her competitive debut on the floor exercise against Nebraska posting a 9.900
- Posted a 9.975 on the floor against Auburn, winning the event
- Scored 9.9 or better on the floor exercise six times
- Member of Alabama's Honor Program
- Earned Dean's List honors (3.5 or better grade point average) for both the fall and spring semester
- Inducted into Gamma Beta Phi national honor society
- National Society of Collegiate Scholars
- Scholastic All-American
- Academic All-SEC

### Prep Highlights:

- Graduated from St. Frederick
- Coached by Steve Biondo at River City Gymnastics
- Elite Level Gymnast
- Led Region 8 to a second place finish at the 1997 Level 10 National Championships
- Finished second on the floor exercise at the 1999 American Challenge
- Finished second on the floor exercise at the 1999 US Challenge
- National Honor Society
- Delta Beta Sigma Charity Sorority
- Octagon Club
- Member of the "A" Honor Roll throughout high school career
- Valedictorian of her class

### Personal Information:

- Full name: Michelle Anne Reeser
- Parents are Michael and Mary Anne Reeser
- Brother: Corey
- Born May 21, 1983

### Reeser's Top Scores

Bars: 9.825  
 Beam: 9.900  
 Floor: 9.975

### Did You Know...

Michelle Reeser earned All-SEC honors after scoring a 9.9 from the leadoff spot of the Crimson Tide's SEC Championship balance beam line-up.

# Jeana Rice

## THE JEANA RICE FILE

Senior • 3VL • 4-11  
Hometown: Longwood, Fla.  
Major: Advertising  
Events: All-Around  
High School: Lake Mary  
Club: ACE Gymnastics

## Alabama Highlights:

### 2003 — junior

- Earned four first team and one second team All-American honor, giving her 13 career honors through three seasons, the fourth most in Alabama history
- First team All-American in the all-around, vault, uneven bars and balance beam
- Second team All-American on the floor exercise
- Finished third on the balance beam and fourth on the uneven bars at the NCAA Championships
- SEC Gymnast of the Year, marking the fourth time in a row an Alabama gymnast has earned that honor
- Won the SEC All-Around title, marking the third time in four seasons an Alabama gymnast has taken home that prize
- Won the SEC balance beam and uneven bars titles, giving her three titles on the season. It marks the third time in four years that an Alabama gymnast has won three or more titles at a single SEC Championship
- The nation's No. 1 ranked all-arounder for the last three weeks of the regular season
- Scored career best marks on the vault (10.0), uneven bars (9.975) and balance beam (10.0)
- Won eight of nine all-arounds during the regular season
- Scored 9.9 or better 41 times
- Scored 39.4 or better in all 12 all-arounds, including five that went for 39.7 or better
- Twice scored a career best 39.750 in the all-around
- Three-time SEC Gymnast of the Week (1/14, 2/4, 3/18)

### 2002 — sophomore

- Earned three All-American honors - first team on the balance beam and second team in the all-around and vault
- Repeated as NCAA Regional All-Around champion
- Also won the vault and balance beam at the NCAA Regional Championships
- Scored a career-high 9.950 on the balance beam at NCAA Regionals to contribute to the Tide's NCAA record-setting beam effort
- Earned a career high 9.95 on vault at Kentucky
- Won two all-around titles in the regular season, first at Georgia and then at Kentucky

### 2001 — freshman

- Earned five All-American honors taking first team honors in the all-around and the floor exercise and second team on the balance beam, vault and uneven bars

- Finished third in the all-around at the NCAA Championships, the highest NCAA Championship finish by a Crimson Tide freshman since Meredith Willard took third in 1994
- Finished sixth on the floor exercise during the individual finals of the NCAA Championships
- All-Southeastern Conference
- Runner-up in the all-around at the SEC Championships
- 2001 Central Regional floor exercise and all-around champion
- Competed in the all-around 9 of 12 meets
- Scored 39.400 or higher five times in the all-around
- Hit 40 for 45 routines during the season
- Contributed to the Tide's 49.700 school floor exercise record with a 9.975
- Contributed to Alabama's school record on the uneven bars at Central Regional Championship, 49.625, with a 9.925
- Won 10 events throughout the season and led the team 12 times
- Ranked as high as No. 16 on bars, No. 4 on vault and No. 8 in the all-around during the season
- Named Alabama's "Most Valuable Freshman"
- Scholastic All-American

## Prep Highlights:

- Competed for her mother and step-father, Joan and Ray Gnat, at ACE Gymnastics
- Four-year member of the United States National Team
- Competed for the U.S. at the 1999 China Cup in Tianjin, China
- Finished seventh in the all-around and third on the balance beam at the 1998 U.S. National Championships
- Finished runner-up on the vault and ninth on the balance beam at the 1998 U.S. Classic
- At the 1997 U.S. Gymnastics Championships, finished 19th in the all-around and ninth on the floor exercise

## Personal Information:

- Full name: Jeana Marie Rice
- Parents are Bob Rice and Joan Gnat
- Mother, Joan Moore Gnat, was a member of the 1972 U.S. Olympic Gymnastics team in addition to winning 11 national championships, while stepfather, Ray Gnat, competed gymnastics for LSU
- Father, Bob Rice, was a gymnast at Temple University
- Two brothers: Steve and Sean
- Two half-sisters: Ashleigh and Heather
- Born November 22, 1981

## Rice's Top Scores

Vault: 10.000  
Bars: 9.975  
Beam: 10.000  
Floor: 9.975  
All Around: 39.750



# Erin Rightley

## THE ERIN RIGHTLEY FILE

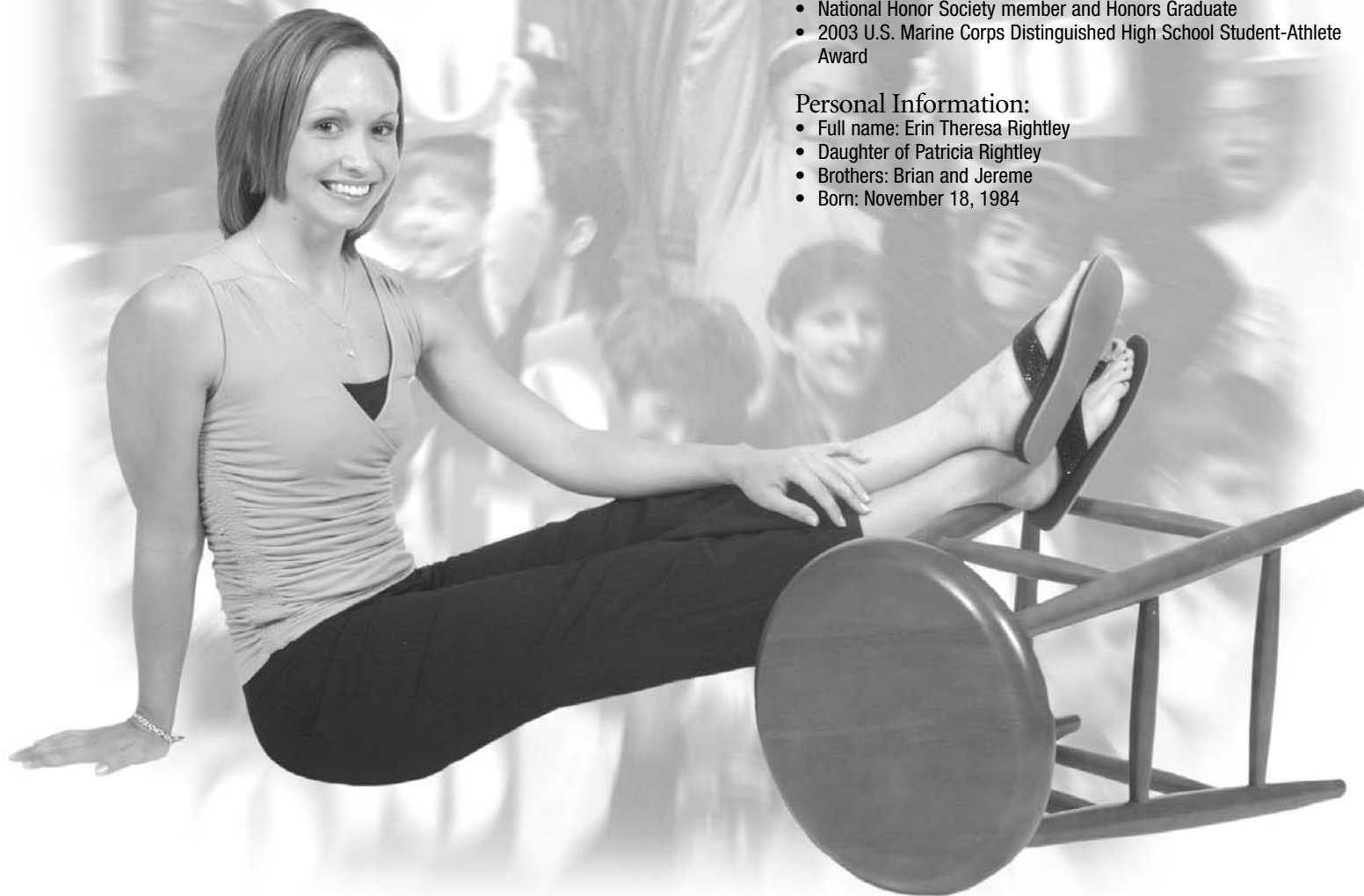
Freshman • HS • 5-3  
 Hometown: Ft. Walton Beach, Fla.  
 Major: Pre-Physical Therapy  
 Events: All-Around  
 High School: Choctawhatchee  
 Club: Emerald City Gymnastics

### Prep Highlights:

- Completed for coaches Bud Gill and Serra Abel at Emerald City Gymnastics
- 2003 Florida's NAWGJ Outstanding Gymnast Role Model Award
- First alternate for the 2002 National Championships
- Finished eighth in the all-around and fifth on the uneven bars at the 2002 Region Championships
- 1998 Region VIII All-Around Champion
- 1998 NW Florida All-Sports Association Amateur Athlete of the year Nominee
- 1998 Florida State Beam Champion
- 1997-2003 Florida State and Regional Qualifier
- 1998 East National Balance Beam Champion
- Took second in the all-around and third on the floor exercise at the 1998 East National Championships
- National Honor Society member and Honors Graduate
- 2003 U.S. Marine Corps Distinguished High School Student-Athlete Award

### Personal Information:

- Full name: Erin Theresa Rightley
- Daughter of Patricia Rightley
- Brothers: Brian and Jereme
- Born: November 18, 1984





# Larissa Stewart

## THE LARISSA STEWART FILE

Sophomore • 1VL • 5-0  
Hometown: Healdton, Okla.  
Major: Pre-med  
Events: All-Around  
High School: Healdton  
Club: Bart Conners Gymnastics Academy/Victory Gymnastics

### Alabama Highlights:

2002 — freshman

- Second team All-SEC on the uneven bars
- Earned a career-high 9.9 on the uneven bars at the SEC Championships, matching that score in the NCAA Super Six Team Finals
- Scored 9.85 or better eight times in 12 uneven bars routines, including six that went for 9.875 or better

### Prep Highlights:

- Member of the USA National Team
- Competed at Bart Conners Gymnastics Academy for coaches Jenny Rowland, Adrian Burde, Ben Fox.
- Trained at Victory Gymnastics
- Finished seventh in the all-around and fifth on the uneven bars at the 2000 Romanian International Invitational
- As a member of the US Junior National Team, took second on the uneven bars at the 1999 USA vs. France meet
- Finished fifth on the balance beam at the 2001 USA Championships
- Finished 20th in the all-around and 13th in the uneven bars and balance beam at the 2000 USA Championships
- Took 17th in the all-around at the 2001 US Classic
- Took ninth in the all-around at the 1999 John Hancock Classic and placed thirteenth at the 2000 American Classic/Challenge
- Won the all-around at the 1999 Gymnix International Invitational in Montreal, Canada

### Personal Information:

- Full name: Larissa Janeen Stewart
- Parents are Robert and Jeannette Stewart
- Sister, Amanda, competes in track and field and cross country at St. Gregory University
- Born June 11, 1984

### Stewart's Top Scores

Bars: 9.900  
Beam: 9.800





## Athletic Trainer

# Monica Decker-Veal

There is nothing quite so reassuring for members of the Alabama Gymnastics team as walking into the gym and seeing Monica Decker-Veal's smiling face.

Decker-Veal, in her fourth year as a member of the gymnastics staff, is an invaluable part of the Crimson Tide program.

"Monica is by far one of the finest athletic trainers that I have worked with," head coach Sarah Patterson said. "Her rapport with the staff and the athletes is exceptional and her knowledge of rehabilitation is outstanding. She has a gift for working with elite level athletes. I think anyone can know the nuts and bolts of training, but I think it takes someone who is gifted to work with elite level athletes."

A native of Phoenix, Ariz., Decker-Veal came a long way to work with the Crimson Tide. She earned her Bachelor's Degree in Exercise Science from Arizona State in 2000, and in 2002 she earned a Master's in Sports Medicine Health Care from The University of Alabama.

"Even though I'm out of school," Decker-Veal said. "I feel like I'll still be learning something new no matter how long I'm in the profession. You can never know enough when it comes to working with elite-level athletes."

In addition to serving as a certified athletic trainer on the Tide staff, Decker-Veal is also an instructor in Alabama's athletic training undergraduate program as well as serving as coordinator of the University's clinical proficiency lab.

Much of her day to day work, especially in the preseason, is spent on preventative measures, helping stop problems before they get started. During the season, most of Decker-Veal's time is spent helping the athletes maintain their health and fitness levels.

"Positive reinforcement is a big part of the job," Decker-Veal said. "To be there everyday, encouraging them, letting them know that they are making progress and keeping them positive."

And in the case of injuries, she is there through their rehab to help them return to peak health as quickly and safely as possible. Decker-Veal worked extensively with 2002 senior Andréé Pickens, helping her come back from a torn Achilles tendon. She was part of a team that included orthopedic surgeon Dr. James Andrews, that helped Pickens not only come back in record time, but helped Alabama to its fourth NCAA Championship last season.

For her efforts during the 2002 season, Decker-Veal was awarded the David Dutton Award, given to individuals who go above and beyond the call of duty for the Alabama Gymnastics program.

In addition to her other duties, Decker-Veal also tries to teach her charges the importance of carrying on healthy habits into the life beyond their career.

"I hope that I can teach them all enough about taking care of themselves, that when they go out into the world, they enjoy healthy and successful lives," Decker-Veal said. "And being part of the Alabama gymnastics 'family' I look forward to watching them grow and mature over the years."

Decker-Veal is married to Jeremy Veal. The couple have a daughter, Ayana Berenice, born last May.



Alabama's student trainers, from the left - Ben Cleveland (spring semester), Shelley McDaniel and Matt Smith (fall semester)

# Strength & Conditioning

To maintain its status as a top team in the nation, Alabama gymnasts must stay in top form. Enter Jesper Sjokvist and Mary Cartee, the Crimson Tide's strength and cardio coaches.

Every year, the gymnastics coaches meet with Sjokvist and Cartee to modify the Tide program to make sure it best meets the needs of the current team. On average, the team spends nearly five hours a week improving and enhancing their flexibility as well as their physical and aerobic strength. The Tide also utilizes a Pilates program in its training régime to help with flexibility and overall strength.

"The exercises the gymnasts do build a good power base," Sjokvist said. "Our goal is to increase their strength and endurance."

This preseason, the gymnasts spent one day lifting in the weight room working on individual weaknesses, two days conditioning in the gym and two days spinning with Mary Cartee.

"In the gym, the girls are given gymnastics-specific exercises," Sjokvist said. "We use the equipment as much as possible."

Sjokvist and Cartee work closely with the Alabama coaching staff, especially assistant coach Bryan Raschilla, who designs, with input from Sjokvist and Cartee, the overall program.

The preseason workouts are designed to build the gymnast's core strength, Raschilla explained. "Once the season arrives, we are still building, but we don't increase our levels of frequency," Raschilla said. "We also add more joint stabilization exercises to prevent injury."

Sjokvist's job isn't finished when the final Alabama gymnast competes at the NCAA Championships. Instead, he is busy preparing the squad's summer conditioning. The gymnasts get four to six weeks off



depending on individual needs. Then it's back to maintaining the strength they worked so hard to develop over the last year. Sjokvist designs a summer conditioning program tailored to each gymnast's requirements, and incoming freshmen receive a general program designed to prepare them for the team's pre-season.

As the Tide's aerobics instructor, Cartee leads the team through spinning, the core of the aerobic program. "While spinning is basically an aerobic exercise, we've modified it to be more strength oriented, more explosive," Raschilla said.

"Spinning not only improves cardiovascular endurance," Cartee said. "But I also see it helping in improving a gymnast's power. At the first competition in the first year we did this, all the girls were coming to me and telling me how strong they felt. So, they are gaining strength that can help them in



things like the floor exercise, on vault, even on bars."

Leaner, faster and stronger. That is the aim of the Crimson Tide strength and conditioning program and staff for the athletes. Every step an Alabama gymnast makes to build these characteristics is just another step closer to another national championship title.

**Jesper Sjokvist (top) and Mary Cartee (above, center) work hard in conjunction with the coaching staff to make sure that the Crimson Tide stays in the best possible shape.**



# Gymnastics Support Staff

For every minute that Alabama Gymnastics shines in the white hot spotlight of national success, there are thousands of behind the scene details that make it possible.

For the Crimson Tide, there are two women charged with handling those details and keeping everything running smoothly. Rita Martin, the gymnastics operations director, and Robin Kelley, the Tide's administrative assistant, work hard every day to keep the Alabama Gymnastics world shining bright and running like a well oiled machine.

As director of operations, Martin is responsible for a wide variety of tasks, from daily paperwork to being the meet director, and everything in between.

The New Jersey native has been a part of the athletics department for more than 20 years. Before joining the gymnastics office,

she was administrative assistant for Assistant Athletics Director/Senior Women's Administrator Ann-Marie Lawler. When Sarah Patterson assumed that role in 1985, Martin became her assistant, and one of the great teams in athletics was created.

"Rita is so great at keeping everything together," Patterson said. "She allows us to be our best because she handles all the details so well."

Martin is married to Buddy Martin and the couple has a daughter, Kelly, and two sons, Paul, a junior at Alabama, and Brett.

Kelley is in her second year with the gymnastics program, though she has been a part of the athletics department for the past three years.

A native of Northport, Ala., Kelley and her husband Jay have two sons, Tanner and Jesse.



**Rita Martin**  
 Director of Gymnastics Operations



**Robin Kelley**  
 Administrative Assistant



## Gymnastics Team Managers

### Allison Spidle and Claire Harris

One is a veteran and the other a rookie, but both Allison Spidle and Claire Harris, the gymnastics team's managers, will be there every day of the season, helping to get the Crimson Tide ready for whatever comes up next.

And while Harris and Spidle don't dress out for practice or go through conditioning and training, they do have very specific jobs that keep them just as busy, whether it is making sure each gymnast has the right size apparel, videotaping routines and individual skills or helping with the floor exercise music. Both women are always jumping and on the go, right up to traveling to the meets with the team.

Spidle is in her fourth year with the team. The Gallatin, Mo. native is aiming for a double major, studying Russian and communication disorders. Now in her senior year, she has adapted to balancing her school and gym work and has grown extremely close with the team.

"I love these girls," Spidle explained. "We're all pretty tight." So tight, in fact, that she and fellow classmate, Stephanie Kite are roommates.

Her connection to the team goes past the last four years though, Spidle is the sister of former Alabama All-American Gwen Spidle who competed from 1996-99 and was part of the Tide's 1996 NCAA Championship squad.

Harris is in her first year with the team and at the University. A native of Tuscaloosa, she spent her freshman year at Troy State before transferring to Alabama. She is a graduate of Central High School where she was on the varsity volleyball squad. Salutatorian at Central, she plans to study chemistry at the Capstone with an eye on pharmacy school down the road.

The Tide's managers are tremendously important and play a key role in the program's accomplishments. In fact, this fall when the Alabama gymnasts received their SEC Championship rings during half-time of the Alabama vs. Kentucky football game, Spidle was right down with them, receiving her ring. She also received a championship ring as part of the Tide's 2002 NCAA Championship squad.

Spidle is the daughter of Ron and Kim Spidle of Gallatin, Mo. Harris is the daughter of Robert and Kay Harris of Tuscaloosa.

## Tony Giles

The Voice of Crimson Tide Athletics

Tony Giles is in his 12th season as the voice of Alabama Gymnastics. Giles, the public address announcer for the Crimson Tide home meets since 1993, is considered one of the nation's best. In addition to serving as the announcer for the Tide's regular season home schedule, he has also been the voice of the 1996 and 2002 NCAA Championships as well as several NCAA Regional and Southeastern Conference Championships.

Giles is also Alabama's announcer for men's basketball and football. He is a financial advisor and estate planning consultant for Morgan and Stanley. A 1976 graduate of The University of Alabama, Giles and his wife Lynn have two sons, Scott and Rowdy.



**Kent Gidley**

Photography Coordinator for Athletics



**Garrett Klassy**

Assistant Athletic Ticket Manager



**Steve Wilson**

Coleman Coliseum Manager



**Joe Whitehead**

Assistant Coleman Coliseum Manager



## Jana Morrison

Assistant Director of Event Management

As Assistant Director of Event Management Jana Morrison's responsibilities include planning and coordinating athletic events and championships. She is in her fifth season working with gymnastics.

In 2002, Morrison was the meet director for the NCAA Gymnastics Championships, hosted and won by Alabama. Last season she will reprise that role at the 2003 NCAA Central Regional Championship, held in Coleman Coliseum.

A 1991 graduate of Vanguard (Fla.) High School, Morrison earned a Bachelor of Science in Athletic Administration from Stetson University and a master's degree in Athletic Administration from Springfield College.

A native of Ocala, Fla., Morrison played softball and ran cross country at Stetson.



Alabama's Medical Staff

# Mending the Crimson Tide

When Dr. Jimmy Robinson talks about his work with the Alabama Crimson Tide, you can hear the excitement in his voice.

"When I was doing my residency, I got bit by the sports medicine bug," Robinson said. "The more I worked with the teams, the more I wanted to do this kind of medicine."

One of Robinson's rotations during his Family Practice Residency in Tuscaloosa was with Alabama team physician Dr. Bill DeShazo. Not only did he work the required hours of his rotation, but he found himself hanging around and helping out even when he wasn't on duty.

As a matter of fact, Robinson traveled with the gymnastics team to Salt Lake City, Utah in 1988 and was on hand for the Tide's first ever NCAA Championship.

"It was a blast," Robinson said. "I was still in training and just getting interested in sports medicine. So to be out there with the gymnasts when they won the first championship Alabama's ever had outside of football, it was definitely an exciting moment."

After doing a fellowship in sports medicine at the Cleveland Clinic in Cleveland, Ohio, Robinson received a call from Sang Lyda, the trainer in charge of the Tide's Olympic Sports. Dr. DeShazo was retiring and Lyda wanted to know if Robinson would be interested in taking over as the team physician for the Olympic Sports. It was an opportunity Robinson jumped at. "I came back and opened a practice in August of 1989 and have been with the University ever since," Robinson said.

As Robinson's practice began to grow, he began to look for someone to join him. With high standards, his search took quite a while. He had been practicing seven years when he asked Craig Buettner to join him and another five after that when Jeff Laubenthal was asked to join the practice.

"Both Craig and Jeff were handpicked. Both have the right kind of personalities and are smart as can be to boot," Robinson said. "When I identified them through the residency program, and they caught the sports medicine bug, we tried to set them on the path that would bring them back here. Both men are big Alabama fans, so working with the athletics department was a big incentive."

Laubenthal in particular is very familiar with the Alabama athletics department. Not only is he a former stand-out baseball player for the Tide,



but he is married to former All-American gymnast Katherine Kelleher.

Now the three men serve as the primary physicians for the Crimson Tide. Robinson and his colleagues are involved in all levels of an athlete's healthcare, from the first physical of the year before an athlete can even start practice, to an exit physical at the end of an athlete's career and everything in between. The hours involved are long to say the least, but for Robinson and his cohorts, the effort is worth it.

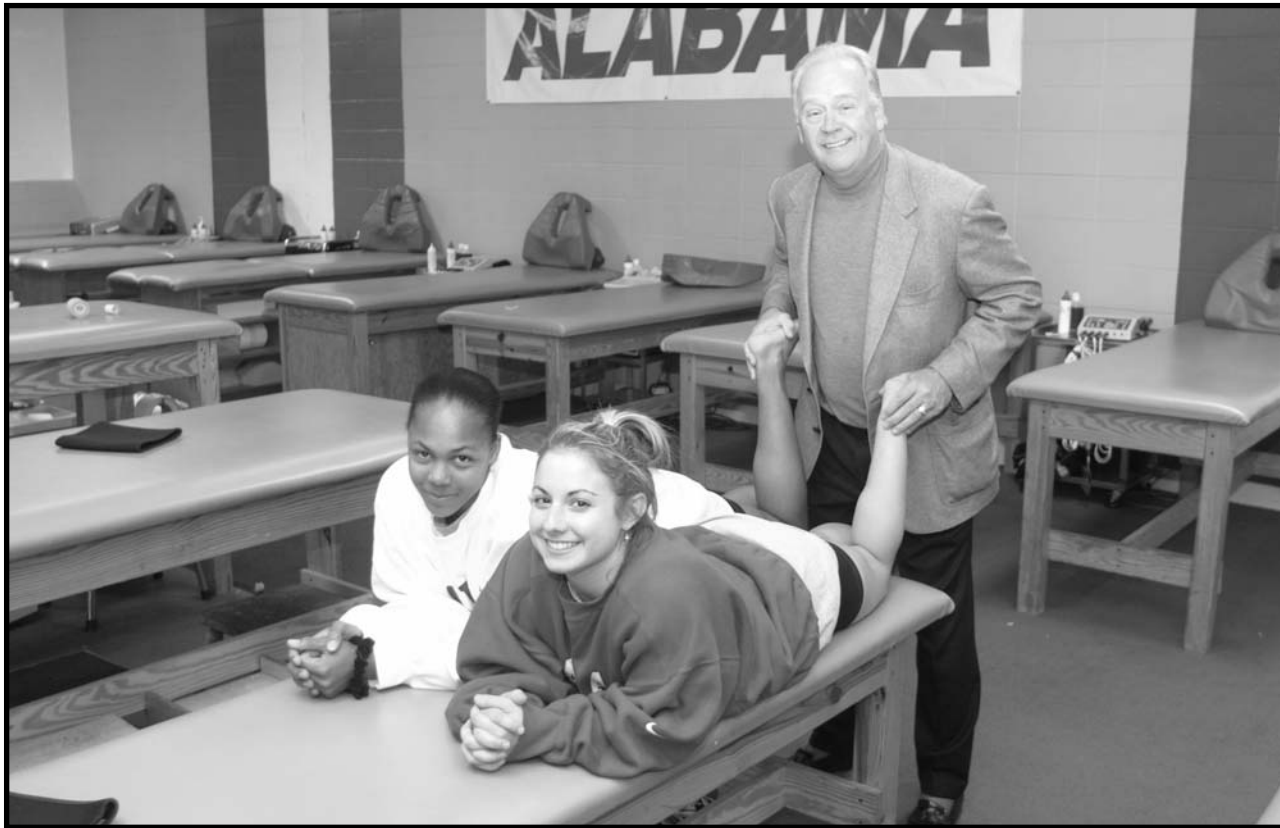
"I'm a fan and the opportunity to work with the department is better than a paycheck," Robinson said. "To me, the biggest thrill is when I get to work with an athlete and maybe something I do helps them be as good an athlete as they can be. There's nothing like feeling that in some small way, I made a positive difference in an individual or team's performance."



**TOP:** From the left — Dr. Craig Buettner, Dr. Jimmy Robinson, Dr. Les Fowler and Dr. Jeff Laubenthal are all part of the Crimson Tide's medical staff. **ABOVE:** Bernard Burroughs, Ginger Gilmore, Sherry Kimbro, Monica Decker and John Morr head up the training staff in Coleman Coliseum.

Robinson's expertise in the sports medicine has reached international acclaim. For the 2000 Olympics in Sydney he was one of eight team physicians for the U.S. Olympic squad. He served in the same capacity at the 1998 Goodwill Game and 1999 Pan Am Games.

In addition to the near daily attention of Drs. Robinson, Buettner and Laubenthal, Alabama has several specialists on call including former



Dr. James Andrews, one of the nation's foremost experts in orthopedic medicine, here with NCAA Champion Andréé Pickens (left) and Michelle Reeser, who earned All-SEC on the balance beam last season.

Alabama quarterback Dr. Les Fowler who serves as the department's orthopedist.

Alabama athletes can also count on Dr. James Andrews who serves on the Tide's medical staff as a consultant. Andrews is one of the world's foremost orthopedic surgeons, internationally known and recognized for his scientific and clinical research contributions in knee, shoulder and elbow injuries and his skill as an orthopedic surgeon. Many of the world's outstanding athletes seek his expertise in sports injuries. His work with Andréé Pickens's ruptured Achilles' tendon allowed her to not only compete her senior year but compete at a higher level than before the injury. She led Alabama to the 2002 NCAA Championship and captured the NCAA Uneven Bars crown.

**THE TRAINING STAFF**

Keeping Crimson Tide gymnasts fine-tuned is the No. 1 job of the University of Alabama trainers. Their "body shop" is the state-of-the-art training room located in Coleman Coliseum, and their tools consist of hot and cold whirlpools, electrical stimulation and ultrasound machines, tape and pre-wrap and QDA spray, and a brain full of knowledge needed to make sure each gymnast performs to her full potential.

Bill MacDonald is over the Crimson Tide's

athletic training program. Rodney Brown is the head of football's athletic training staff, though he works out of the football-training complex, he has been instrumental in helping Crimson Tide gymnasts of past come back from injury in record time. Former Crimson Tide All American Shay Murphy recovered from a torn knee ligament and surgery and was competing in a span of less than five months working with Brown.

The full-time staff at Coleman Coliseum includes Monica Decker (gymnastics), Sherry Kimbro (women's basketball, swimming and diving, and volleyball), John Morr (men's basketball, men and women's tennis, softball and men and women's golf), Ginger Gilmore (baseball, soccer and cheerleading) and Bernard Burroughs, (men's track and field).

The athletic training staff also consists of eight graduate assistants: Brian Cramer (swimming and diving), Clint Haggard (Football) Brian Metz (softball), Renarda Tolbert (women's track and field), Christine Pawluk (cheerleading), Mandy Ward (volleyball), Eric Law (men and women's tennis) and Kana Takiguchi (soccer).

Student athletic trainers receive hands-on experience as a part of the CAAHEP athletic training education program at the University of Alabama. Each student trainer gains experience

by working with one contact sport as well as with one non-contact sport. Dr. Ken Wright's high school outreach was designed to give more student trainers the opportunity to work with contact sports. The gymnastics team will have three student-trainers working with it this season. Ben Cleveland will be with the team during the spring semester while Shelley McDaniel and Matt Smith helped out during the fall.

Student trainers must maintain a GPA of at least 2.50. Student trainers are given a monthly stipend depending on their level of experience in the program.

Alabama ensures the safety of its athletes by assigning at least one trainer to each team to cover home and away events, conditioning, practice and travel.