Something I've never seen before

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I saw something last Saturday I never recall seeing before.

Vanderbilt's football team didn't play its best game, yet managed to beat Auburn at Vanderbilt Stadium.

Is it a sign of the Apocalypse? First *The Tennessean* endorsed a Republican for President. Now this.

Although the final score was 17-13, I never felt it was a game the Commodores were in danger of losing.

At 1-6, Auburn is off to its worst start since 1952. Yes, Auburn is that bad. It ranks No. 119 out of 120 Division I teams in total offense. The Tigers trotted out two quarterbacks, neither of which were SEC quarterbacks.

But any win is a good win for Vanderbilt, especially after Auburn became its second SEC victim of the season. And with Massachusetts, Kentucky, Ole Miss, Tennessee and Wake Forest remaining, the 3-4 Commodores could be favored in all five games.

So while Auburn fans are itching to cut ties with Gene Chizik and Tennessee fans can't wait to get rid of Derek Dooley and just as much as Kentucky and Arkansas want to change coaches, Vanderbilt is more than content with James Franklin.

If you want to buy a stock with huge upside, invest in Vanderbilt football. How long has it been

that someone said that?

If you drive around Nashville, you can’t help but notice all the billboards that show Coach James Franklin shouting, “This Is A Game Changer.’’

While it’s obvious James Franklin loves him some James Franklin, it is equally evident he has energized the previously moribund Commodores fan base.

He definitely has the Vanderbilt players drinking the Kool-Aid. He is getting in their heads and I have always thought the formula for winning college football games is more mental than physical. Due to his recruiting success, Franklin will succeed in bringing the physical part up to SEC speed.

I thought former Vandy coach Gerry DiNardo was a workaholic, but I haven’t seen a Vanderbilt football coach work as hard as Franklin does. More than any SEC program, this job demands that.

The Commodores are currently ranked No. 15 by Rivals.com in the upcoming recruiting class. That is only two spots behind South Carolina.

Scout.com has Vanderbilt sitting in the No. 21 position while 24/7 Sports has the Commodores at No. 23.

It’s safe to say rival SEC coaches know they can’t dismiss the progress Vanderbilt is making in recruiting.

This program didn’t get where it was when Franklin arrived overnight and it won’t be a quick fix.

On the sidelines, Franklin sometimes shows his inexperience under fire. He takes chances, which is good when it works.

But then a fake punt he tried against Auburn blew up in his face. He has confidence in his defense to cover his mistakes.

“The execution obviously was not what we wanted," Franklin understated. “It was actually an option play. If Wes (Tate) can keep the ball and go, he goes. If not, he pitches the ball out. We had the look, but the pitch wasn’t good. That’s execution. We need to rep it and get better.’’

Franklin went for it five times on fourth down and converted two in a close game.

“I told you guys before we’re going to play aggressive around here. We are going to take some calculated risks and I’m perfectly fine with that," Franklin said.

That’s what you have to do to be a game changer.

Contact Sports Columnist Joe Biddle at This e-mail address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it .

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