Although the college football season generates a lot of interest from fan bases and television networks willing to play Monopoly money for ratings, it is the recruiting season that is the lifeblood of college football.

Vanderbilt put the wraps on its football season, with a 31-24 loss New Years Eve in the Liberty Bowl. The Commodores got bowl eligible on the final regular season game.

It was a must-win game, played on the road at Wake Forest and the Commodores wasted little time in securing what I consider its most impressive win of the season.

In a 6-7 season, beating Wake was the signature win in Coach James Franklin's maiden voyage at Vanderbilt. They were in position to win a few other SEC games, but were prevented by their age-old problem of not being able to close out those type games.

They won two SEC games, against Ole Miss and Kentucky. Ole Miss was the worst team in the SEC. In the East, Kentucky tied Vanderbilt at 2-6. Tennessee was 1-7. The Vols' lone SEC victory was over Vanderbilt.

So it is obvious Vanderbilt and Tennessee need to have outstanding recruiting classes. Recruits don't sign binding letters of intent until next month, and a lot could change between now and then.

After all, many teenagers have difficult choosing which movie to go see or which girl to ask to the prom.

Optimism runs high in both Tennessee and Vanderbilt camps. According to Rivals.com's latest team rankings, the Vols are No. 13 in the country. That makes them fifth best among SEC schools. This is the year Derrick Dooley needs his best recruiting class. With eight four-star and 11 three-star players, they could use more star power. Not a single five-star player had taken Tennessee's offer.

At Vanderbilt, Franklin got off to a fast start getting a commitment from what is considered one of the state's top running backs in Memphis East's Brian Kimbro, who carries a four-star ranking.

The Commodores have four four-star players and 16 three-star commitments. Rivals ranks it No. 22, arguably Vanderbilt's strongest class ever.

Both teams are weak where SEC teams need to be strong. That is at the defensive tackle position. Tennessee has one four-star defensive tackle while Vanderbilt had one three-star defensive tackle.

The current two top teams in the country are LSU and Alabama. LSU has 22 commitments, a five-star QB and 12 four-stars. Alabama has 24 commitments, two five-stars, 10 four stars. They have recent history and tradition on their side. Tennessee and Vanderbilt do not.

Dooley and Franklin need to finish with a flurry. Franklin is a "won't take no for an answer'' salesman. Remember in-home visits have not started and that is where Franklin is expected to be an attention-grabbing star.

Don't think that Vanderbilt diploma sermon delivered Franklin style won't hit home with a lot of mamas and daddies in those living rooms.

Both coaches have to go out of state to land their high profile players. Dooley was Nick Saban's recruiting coordinator at LSU. He knows where the players are.

The question is, can he get them quick enough and develop them quick enough to please new athletics director Dave Hart. He didn't hire Dooley, but Hart will be the one to decide his future. And having been at Florida State with Bobby Bowden and Alabama with Nick Saban, Hart understands the clout a nationally acclaimed football program carries.

by Joe Biddle

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