

---

# Vanderbilt Commodore Football

---

## *Head Coach Bobby Johnson - A Lifetime of Success*

Bobby Johnson walks onto the Vanderbilt campus and into the lives of thousands of Commodore faithful armed with a legacy of integrity, character, intelligence, motivation and winning tradition.

Quite possibly, the South Carolina native arrives from Furman University with the ideal combination of professional success and personal well-being to succeed in turning around the Vanderbilt football program.

Johnson arrives in Nashville with few accomplishments unfulfilled at Furman. During an eight-year reign as head coach, Johnson guided the Paladins to a 60-36 overall record, NCAA I-AA national runnerup finish, four NCAA appearances and a pair of Southern Conference titles. He mentored an abundance of I-AA All-Americans, including 2000 Walter Payton Award winner Louis Ivory.

In 2001, Johnson directed Furman to the pinnacle of I-AA success. The Paladins claimed a share of the Southern Conference, then scored three playoff wins to reach the I-AA finals for the first time since 1988. One of the victories was a dramatic 24-17 win over two-time defending champion Georgia Southern to earn a berth in the I-AA national finals. In the NCAA finals, Furman narrowly lost to #1 Montana 13-6.

The 2001 success was the culmination of a tremendous rebuilding job by Johnson at Furman. The tradition-rich Paladins were coming off three disappointing seasons when Johnson was named head coach in 1994, after spending a year as defensive coordinator at his alma mater, Clemson.

Johnson's revitalization effort at Furman started with a 3-8 season in 1994. The next season, Johnson led a youthful Furman squad to a winning season, 6-5, and renewed respect in the Southern Conference.

The winning combination mushroomed in 1996 as Furman went 6-0 at home enroute to a 9-4 finish and the school's first NCAA appearance and Top 20 ranking in six years. During the playoffs, the Paladins scored an impressive 42-31 road victory over Northern Arizona before losing to Marshall. Johnson



### The Johnson File

- Age: 50
- Furman Head Coach
- 60-36-0 Record
- I-AA National Runnerup
- Native of Columbia, SC
- Married
- Attended Clemson
- 16 Years As Assistant Coach
- Clemson Def. Coord.

---

received the first of three Region II Coach of the Year honors by the American Football Coaches Association. He also coached All-American tight end Luther Broughton, the first Paladin NFL draftee in a decade.

Johnson's 1997 and 1998 Furman squads, expected to contend for the Southern Conference championship, struggled to continue the school's football tradition, finishing 7-4 and 5-6, respectively.

In 1999, Johnson guided the Paladins back to championship form, posting a 9-3 record, capturing an NCAA playoff berth and the team's 10th Southern Conference championship. The team was ousted from the playoffs by defending national champion Massachusetts 30-23 in overtime. The Paladins' three losses were by a total of 12 points. Johnson's team also handily defeated North Carolina 28-3, its first I-AA win since 1985. A seven-game win streak ended against eventual I-AA champion Georgia Southern, 41-38. The Paladins featured a bevy of stars, including running back Louis Ivory, NFL draftees John Keith and Des Kitchings and academic All-Americans Stuart Rentz and Marion Martin.

Johnson's strong run continued in 2000, as Furman again finished 9-3. The highlight was a 45-10 defeat of #1 Georgia Southern, the eventual I-AA national champion. The regular season featured a five-game win streak, and two losses by a combined margin of three points. The playoffs ended quickly for Furman,

-more-

---

## *Vanderbilt Head Coach Bobby Johnson - Bio*

---

as Hofstra captured a 31-24 first-round victory. Johnson's players reaped numerous honors, including Ivory, who captured the Walter Payton Award as the top offensive player in NCAA I-AA football after rushing for 2,079 yards. Four other Paladins were recognized as All-Americans and Martin was awarded a prestigious National Football Foundation/Hall of Fame Scholarship.

The Paladins dropped the 2001 season opener, 20-14 to I-A foe Wyoming, then ran off 12 victories in 13 games before losing the national championship to Montana. The highlight was Furman's 24-17 victory over favored Georgia Southern in the NCAA semifinals that snapped GSU's 39-game home winning streak.

The fact that Furman thrived under Johnson surprised few Paladin followers. Johnson's style and appreciation for winning football became evident at Furman as he distinguished himself as a top assistant coach and later as defensive coordinator. Johnson was a key factor in virtually all the success Furman has enjoyed since 1975, including 11 conference championships and an NCAA I-AA national title.

Johnson's professional reputation is built on years of squeezing the most out of his players' abilities while urging them to put forth maximum effort on and off the field. His career has seen Johnson serve as academic advisor and admission office liaison. Furman football's nationally acclaimed graduate rates and 12 academic All-American selections during Johnson's tenure testify to his effectiveness. His ability to work with qualified associates is apparent from the simple fact that his coaching staff has remained virtually intact at Furman since his appointment in 1994.

Johnson's coaching career, which covers 24 years, began in 1976 as defensive backs coach at Furman. In 1980, Johnson left the university to serve as academic counselor at Clemson, but returned the following year. In 1983, he added the responsibility of defensive coordinator - a position he held for three years under then head coach Dick Sheridan and seven seasons under Jimmy Satterfield. In 1993, he accepted a similar position at his alma mater, Clemson. During



---

*New Vanderbilt Coach Bobby Johnson - Integrity, Character, Work Ethic & Commitment to Winning Football*

---

his tenure as defensive coordinator at Furman, the Paladins were 91-31-3, claimed five Southern Conference crowns and registered eight I-AA Top 20 final rankings. In Furman's 1988 national championship campaign, Johnson's defense led the nation in scoring defense, allowing just 9.7 points per game.

In his only season at Clemson, his strong Tiger defense helped deliver a Peach Bowl victory, though he left the Tigers prior to the bowl to accept the head coaching job at Furman.

A native of Columbia, South Carolina, Johnson starred as a football, baseball and basketball player at Eau Claire High School. In 1968, he was named South Carolina Lineman of the Year. He continued his playing career at Clemson, where he lettered three years playing at wide receiver and cornerback. Johnson led Clemson in interceptions in 1971 and 1972, and was a two-time Atlantic Coast Conference All-Academic selection.

He graduated from Clemson in 1973 with a bachelor of science degree in management. In 1979, he was awarded a master's degree in education from Furman.

He is married to the former Catherine Bonner of Charleston, S.C.