

# University of Alabama Football Team to Receive Disney Spirit Award for Inspiring Efforts to Aid Tornado Victims

*Junior long snapper Carson Tinker and Crimson Tide teammates recognized for contributions to Tuscaloosa, Ala. community in wake of devastating tornado last April; UA is fourth team to receive the honor in the award's history*

**LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (Nov. 21, 2011)** — The University of Alabama football team will receive the 2011 Disney Spirit Award, given annually by Disney Sports to college football's most inspirational player or team. Long snapper Carson Tinker will accept the award on behalf of the Crimson Tide squad, which was chosen because of its extraordinary efforts last April to aid tornado victims and help rebuild the Tuscaloosa, Ala., community, ultimately bringing much needed hope to the area.

The EF-4 tornado on April 27 packed 195-mph winds that demolished 7,000 homes, 600 businesses and took 50 lives, including Tinker's girlfriend, Ashley Harrison, who was ripped from Tinker's arms by the massive tornado.

The Alabama student-athletes immediately reached out to support their community – the same people who have supported them religiously year after year. Tinker put his own loss aside to visit with a 10-year-old boy who lost his mother, father and sister in the twister.

Linebacker Courtney Upshaw raised nearly \$20,000 in relief funds in his hometown of Eufaula, Ala., while former tight end Preston Dial loaded up an 18-wheeler and drove in supplies from Mobile, Ala. Offensive lineman Barrett Jones lugged a chain saw around Tuscaloosa to remove debris from homes and yards. And the University of Alabama Athletic Department contributed \$1 million to the UA Acts of Kindness Fund, which provides relief to faculty, staff, and students of The University of Alabama who are experiencing hardship.

Even former Crimson Tide players pitched in. Javier Arenas of the Kansas City Chiefs donated \$1,600 in supplies, and several other ex-players made large monetary donations.

"I think that it really speaks well for the University of Alabama. I really think it speaks well for a lot of people in the organization who made a significant contribution to trying to help a community that was effected by probably as devastating of a circumstance as I've ever had to deal with in my life," said Head Coach Nick Saban. "Carson Tinker, who was also named, who I think has done a lot of community service, probably lost the most and has given the most. I'm very proud to be a part of this, and I think a lot of other people should be as well. I think it's the way we should do things, and I think I'm proud of the example we try to set in helping in our community, and I'm talking about the University as a whole and the football program as a whole."

After escaping death that day, Tinker has vowed to make the most of everyday and his story of compassion and selflessness, along with the contributions of his teammates, remain a source of inspiration and hope for Tuscaloosa and the surrounding area.

*'This award does not represent me, it represents our team, our University and the Tuscaloosa community. Everyone reached out and pulled together as a family in the face of this tragedy. The tornado took so much from us, but with a spirit of hope and a lot of hard work, we have begun the healing process. I am very proud of how this team and this community rallied*

together after such devastating storm.’

— Carson Tinker, University of Alabama long snapper

Despite the April tragedy, the Crimson Tide team is thriving, going 10-1 so far this season and ranking No. 2 nationally. Offering a temporary escape from the devastation, their play on the field has helped turn sorrow and sadness to smiles and cheers around Tuscaloosa.

“The compassion and generosity that these young men displayed were instrumental in the rebuilding efforts of a community in dire need of physical as well as emotional help, and Disney Sports is proud to honor them for their contributions,” said Disney Sports executive Faron Kelley. “The Crimson Tide and the University of Alabama have shown that sports can have a healing power far beyond the field or court.”

Kelley will present the award, along with a special video message from 2010 Disney Spirit Award winner D.J. Williams, during *The Home Depot College Football Awards* at Walt Disney World Resort on Dec. 8. The 21st annual awards show is scheduled for 7-9 p.m. ET and will be televised live on ESPN.

Tinker and his teammates become the 16th recipient of the award, joining past honorees Daniel Huffman (1996), Dwight Collins (1997), Matt Hartl (1998), East Carolina University (1999), Hameen Ali (2000), the United States Service Academy football teams (2001), Dewayne White (2002), Neil Parry (2003), Tim Frisby (2004), the Tulane University football team (2005), University of Louisville band member Patrick Henry Hughes (2006), Zerbin Singleton (2007), Tim Tebow (2008), Mark Herzlich (2009) and Williams (2010).

Williams, now a Green Bay Packers tight end, was selected last year while at the University of Arkansas for his courage in overcoming a childhood fractured by an alcoholic, drug-addicted and abusive father. He used his personal struggle to raise awareness and inspire others to abandon troubled relationships and seek help.

In 2009, Herzlich, now a New York Giants linebacker, was selected after overcoming a rare form of bone cancer and helping inspire more than \$120,000 in donations for cancer-related causes.

The year before, Tebow, the Denver Broncos starting quarterback, was chosen because of his remarkable humanitarian efforts in support of less fortunate people in the U.S. and abroad.

## Disney Spirit Award Recipients:

Date	Recipient	School (Hometown)
1996	Daniel Huffman	Rossville High School (Rossville, Ill.)
1997	Dwight Collins	Central Florida University (Lake Charles, La.)
1998	Matt Hartl	Northwestern University (Denver, Colo.)
1999	East Carolina University *	East Carolina University (Greenville, N.C.)
2000	Hameen Ali	College of William & Mary (Dover, Del.)
2001	U.S. Air Force Academy **	U.S. Air Force Academy (Colorado Springs, Colo.)
	U.S. Military Academy **	U.S. Military Academy (West Point, N.Y.)
	U.S. Naval Academy **	U.S. Naval Academy (Annapolis, Md.)
2002	Dewayne White	University of Louisville (Marbury, Ala.)
2003	Neil Parry	San Jose State University (Sonora, Calif.)

2004	Tim Frisby	University of South Carolina (Allentown, Pa.)
2005	Tulane University*	Tulane University (New Orleans, La.)
2006	Patrick Henry Hughes	University of Louisville (Louisville, Ky.)
2007	Zerbin Singleton	United States Naval Academy (Annapolis, Md.)
2008	Tim Tebow	University of Florida (Jacksonville, Fla.)
2009	Mark Herzlich	Boston College (Wayne, Pa.)
2010	D.J. Williams	University of Arkansas (Little Rock, Ark.)
2011	Carson Tinker*	University of Alabama (Murfreesboro, Tenn.)

\* presented to entire football team

\*\* presented to football teams at all three service academies

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**Media Note:** Media interested in attending The Home Depot College Football Awards Show can apply for credentials at [www.espncollegefootballawards.com](http://www.espncollegefootballawards.com).

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