

**Public Abstract**

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Title:Preserving the Lost Cause through Dixie's Football Pride: The Birmingham News' Coverage of the Alabama Crimson Tide During the Core of the Civil Rights Movement, 1961-1966

Using the state of Alabama and its iconic Crimson Tide as the lens for interpretation, this study identifies the peculiar relationship between southern college football and civil rights during the 1960s. The literature highlights the evolution of southern identity in the years leading up to the Civil War's centennial, explaining how football became a modern representation of the South's traditional past. As the core of the Civil Rights movement (1961-1966) carried on, Alabama increasingly faced more national scrutiny for its violent resistance to racial equality than arguably any other state in America did. Simultaneously, the state's flagship university won three national championships and is remembered as one of the greatest dynasties in the history of American sports. These conflicting extremes create a complex narrative that needs to be told in order to understand the differing, cultural geography in each region of the United States. A textual analysis was conducted on the Birmingham News -- the largest newspaper in Alabama and one of the most prominent southern newspapers in the 1960s -- to uncover how the Crimson Tide was framed within its state's sociocultural context. The research found that the News' Sports department used its overtly biased, almost propaganda-like coverage of the Crimson Tide to provide Alabamians with a reassuring distraction from the present realities of change. The News framed "Dixie's Football Pride" as physical evidence the South's time-honored traditions of the past were sustainable moving forward, regardless of any threats to the present status quo. The Tide essentially became a "progressive" symbol of white supremacy in Alabama, as well as the rest of the Deep South.