

# Alabama NFL Draft 2021 Prospects: Patrick Surtain II

By Brent C. Taylor

SB Nation

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The son of a multi-time pro bowler in the NFL, Pat Surtain II was the #6 overall player in the 2018 recruiting class. As a 5-star elite prospect with an extremely recognizable last name, Surtain was, from day 1 in Tuscaloosa, assumed to be a 3-and-done, top-15 draft pick kind of player.

Often times, when a recruit has that much expectation placed on them, they inevitably don't quite live up to the fan and media hype.

With Surtain, he exceeded it.

He played a rotational role in each of Alabama's first 2 games in his freshman season, which was an achievement in its own right. In week three, starting cornerback Saivion Smith was victimized by D.K. Metcalf on the very first play of the game (in hindsight, getting outrun by Metcalf is understandable) and was benched in favor of Surtain. In a full game of matching up head to head with A.J. Brown, Surtain locked down the future NFL star to the tune of only a single catch.

He never relinquished the starting job after that, and grabbed his first career interception in his first actual start the following week. He went on to be named a Freshman All-American. By year two, he was already viewed by opposing coaches as the lockdown corner to look away from. Despite the lack of action, he picked off two passes and forced three fumbles on the season on his way to an Honorable All-American mention.

As a junior, Surtain was the lone returning starter from a secondary that sent 5 players on to the NFL. Rather than faltering under the weight of suddenly becoming the only veteran in the entire secondary, he rose to the challenge to have his most dominant season yet. He only allowed 21 catches for 273 yards over the course of the entire season (with most of those yards honestly coming on two plays) on his way to being named a Unanimous All-American, SEC Defensive Player of the Year, and a finalist for the Nagurski, Lott, Thorpe, and Bednarik Awards.

At 6'2" 200, Surtain is a tall, muscled corner that is BETTER than the prototype in the NFL... And he's a silky smooth athlete with tremendous footwork, flexibility, and speed. That kind of size and athleticism combination is pretty much impossible to find, and he combines it with an entire lifetime of training with a former NFL Pro Bowl cornerback. He's not just a perfect physical prospect, but considered a master technician at the position as well.

The only knock on his game going into the 2020 season was a lack of willingness to make tackles at times, and he made it a point in his junior season to really lay the wood whenever the chance presented itself. Almost as if to prove the detractors wrong, he made sure to become an impact player on special teams, displaying a level of dedication to winning in all phases, rather than not risking injury in order to focus on just being a corner.

In the last year, Surtain has consistently been name dropped by many Alabama players in interviews as the kind of guy that first stood out to them in Tuscaloosa as someone who was an example of consummate professionalism, dedication to being the absolute best, and a quiet leader on the team.

Surtain was projected by most at the end of the season to be a top-ten pick, though the way teams seem to be hyper-focusing on QBs, he may drop into the 10-15 range. Regardless, he's going to go very early on the first night of the NFL draft and make some team very, very happy.

# Patrick Surtain II's Famous NFL Dad Makes Pitch for Broncos to Draft the Alabama CB

By Luke Patterson

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Various offseason mock drafts have projected the Denver Broncos to select Alabama cornerback Patrick Surtain II with the ninth overall pick in the NFL draft. Considered by many draftniks to be a premier defensive back in this year's draft class, there's little doubt that the 20-year-old playmaker will make it past the top-10 picks in the first round.

The 6-foot-2, 202-pound junior played in 40 games for the Crimson Tide and saw immediate action as a freshman in 2018 where he started 12 games. Surtain concluded his collegiate career with 38 consecutive starts and logged 116 tackles (82 solo), six tackles for a loss, 24 passes defended, four interceptions, four forced fumbles, one fumble recovery, and scored one touchdown.

Surtain enters the draft as a first-team All-SEC defender and was named the Defensive MVP of the 2021 Rose Bowl.

The SEC Defensive Player of the Year is the son of ex-Miami Dolphins corner Patrick Surtain, Sr., who was drafted in the second round in 1998. Senior played seven seasons in Miami where he became a three-time Pro Bowler and two-time All-Pro before he was traded to the Kansas City Chiefs in 2005, where he went on to play four seasons.

On Tuesday, Senior. joined Nick and Cecil on 104.3 The FAN where he was asked about the key to defensive longevity at the cornerback position in the NFL.

"I think it's just being consistent, honestly, and knowing what you're doing," Surtain told hosts Nick Ferguson and Cecil Lammey. "Taking care of your body and just being a pro at what you do. Come in every day and work. Don't start any chaos in the building, just go about doing your job, man."

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Surtain is currently the head coach of American Heritage High School where his teams have won three state championships. He also coached his son Surtain II, who went on to become a five-star recruit, as well as Georgia corner Tyson Campbell, in addition to numerous student-athletes that have entered NCAA. The proof is literally in the pudding in South Florida as Surtain's football program is nationally recognized.

When asked about the experience of coaching his son in high school, Surtain offered up some unique insights into the prospect NFL teams are considering drafting. "

It's been great. It actually started in little league," Senior told The FAN. "I coached him since he was nine years old and just to watch him mature into the player he is today, man, it's been awesome. He started out as a running back, switched to DB and you could tell early that he had something special within him... He's a student of the game and he wants to be great. His study habits, and the way he goes about it, even

his coaches at Alabama said that he carries himself like a pro. He knew he wanted to get to this point one day, and he did all the hard work. Now he's on the crest of achieving his dream which is playing in the National Football League."

Surtain II is known for being a fierce tackler that doesn't back down from competition. Just ask Minnesota Vikings Pro Bowl wideout Justin Jefferson, who lined up against Surtain II when Alabama and LSU squared off. Although Surtain II didn't have his best game, he proved at 18 years old that he was fearless and up for the challenge.

Surtain II has a lengthy frame that allows him to recover against speed-driven receivers, and his utilization within multiple defensive schemes make him a sought-after prospect.

"He's a technician at what he does, and you see it on the film and the film doesn't lie," Surtain Sr. told The FAN. "He has tremendous ball skills, comes up and tackles, he does it all. He understands zone concepts and he's going to be a very smart player, a player who's already a pro going into the league. Obviously, there's some things that he has to work on as he's not a finished product, to say the least but that's what the coaches get paid the big bucks for in the league. The sky is the limit for him, and on top of all of that he's a great kid. He doesn't get in trouble and he knows his 'why', and he knows how to do the right things and that's going to carry over to the next level."

It's his discipline and football acumen that distinguishes him from the pack, as Surtain II could thrive in both press-man and zone coverages. Although he projects as a boundary corner, another element of his game is highlighted on the perimeter against the run with his tackling and rare willingness to mix it up in the SEC run game, which has impressed NFL coaches and scouts.

"I saw it at an early age, he wasn't afraid to throw his body in there," Surtain Sr. told Ferguson and Lamme. "As he got bigger and matured and grew into his body, you saw it more. The days of the cover-cornerback are over because the game is so spread out now. You've got to be able to tackle in space. So, he's taken that, and he's gotten better and better every year and he's going to bring that aspect to the game."

Surtain II is one of multiple players in this year's draft class that is considered 'legacies' as their fathers previously played in the NFL. South Carolina corner Jaycee Horn is the son of former long-time New Orleans Saints Pro Bowl receiver Joe Horn. Florida State's Asante Samuel, Jr. hopes to make an NFL career as his father did in New England and Philadelphia.

There's also Nebraska wideout J.D. Spielman, the son of Minnesota GM Rick Spielman, hoping his name is called on draft day.

I can remember watching the Broncos face off against Surtain, Sr. with the Chiefs in what seems like yesterday but was in fact in the mid-2000s. Now it's come full circle as his son prepares to enter the draft this spring. Call it a feel-good story if you want, but football is a family business.

Social media is still relishing videos from Super Bowl LV including Tampa Bay Buccaneers safety Antoine Winfield, Jr. The rookie safety from Minnesota was seen celebrating the Bucs' championship victory with his father, Winfield Sr., who was a three-time Pro Bowler for the Vikings. Despite enjoying a 13-year NFL career, Winfield, Sr. never won a championship, but you'd never know that based on the celebratory embrace between father and son.

There's just something special about a father being proud of his son. Surtain, Sr. was asked by Ferguson about what seeing his son drafted in the first round would mean to him.

"Man, that would be awesome. You know, I'm not sure how I'll react to it because it's going to be such sudden emotions. But I know as a father, you always want your kids to do better than you," Senior said. "I went in the second round, [so] for him to have the same call that early in the draft would be a culmination of all the hard work and sacrifices that he's put into it. As a father, I'm going to be proud."

The Broncos are dangerously thin at corner and with question marks surrounding the future of safety Justin Simmons, the most sensible move would be to draft a starting-caliber corner in the first round. I'm not saying that a first-round corner would solve all of Denver's defensive woes, but a generational talent the likes of Surtain II is a massive step in the right direction that immediately fills a gaping hole in Vic Fangio's defense.

"I told him, Denver is a great city and has a great organization," Senior told The FAN. "If that does happen on draft night and we're coming to the Mile-High City, get ready!"

# Alabama cornerback Patrick Surtain II excited for homecoming at Hard Rock Stadium

By Peter Burke

WPTV

January 4, 2021

Patrick Surtain II is headed home.

Alabama's All-America cornerback and former American Heritage School star will play for a national championship next week in front of family and friends at Hard Rock Stadium, just a short drive north on Florida's Turnpike from his hometown of Plantation.

"It's pretty exciting, you know, to play back at home," Surtain told reporters Monday, one week before the top-ranked Crimson Tide face No. 3 Ohio State in the College Football Playoff National Championship in South Florida. "But it doesn't matter where we play at. We've still got to play 60 minutes of the football game and focus on what we need to do and control what we need to control."

For Surtain, that means shutting down Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields, who completed 22 of 28 passes for 385 yards and a Sugar Bowl-record six touchdowns in a 49-28 win against No. 2 Clemson.

"While it was an emotional win, that wasn't the goal," Ohio State head coach Ryan Day said of his team's performance in the College Football Playoff semifinal. "The goal was to win this one, and so I'd be disappointed if we didn't play well in this game. This is everything on the line, everything we wanted, and so now all the focus goes on to Alabama. We've just got to prepare.

The most prepared team is going to win the game, and we have to prepare like we did the week before. The good news is I think we have a little confidence going into the game that we've shown what we can do, and now we've got to go do it again."

To do it, the Buckeyes will have to take down an Alabama squad loaded with arguably the nation's best quarterback (Heisman Trophy finalist and Florida native Mac Jones), running back (Najee Harris), wide receiver (Heisman and Biletnikoff Award finalist DeVonta Smith), center (Landon Dickerson, who transferred from Florida State in 2019) and offensive tackle (Florida native Alex Leatherwood). Along with Surtain, the aforementioned players were named first-team All-Americans by The Associated Press -- the most of any team in the country.

Alabama head coach Nick Saban will be vying for his sixth national championship at the school since 2009. Including his 2003 national championship at LSU, he is currently tied with Alabama legend Bear Bryant for the most in the modern era. A win next Monday night would solidify Saban as the most successful major college football coach in history.

Saban said the Buckeyes pose a significant challenge, "but these are the kind of games, if you're a competitor, you really look forward to playing in, and this is a great opportunity for our players to compete against a great team."

This will be Surtain's second trip to South Florida with the Tide. Alabama defeated Oklahoma 45-34 in the 2018 Orange Bowl semifinal to advance to the national championship game -- a losing effort to Clemson.

That would make winning at Hard Rock Stadium a fitting finish to Surtain's season -- and possibly college career. Surtain, who has yet to declare for the NFL Draft, is projected to be one of the top defensive backs selected if he leaves school early.

The 6-foot-2, 202-pound junior said he's looking forward to play in front of friends and family, including his father, former NFL cornerback Patrick Surtain.

Surtain Sr. was a Pro Bowl cornerback who spent seven of his 11 NFL seasons with the Miami Dolphins.

"It's going to be a tremendous feeling having them come and support me back at home," Surtain Jr. said. "It will be a great feeling. I've just got to show out and make them happy, make them proud, you know."

While Surtain is certainly excited to be playing on the biggest stage in a stadium he knows quite well, he's also aware the spotlight will be on him -- not just for his performance, but as a totem for South Florida's homegrown talent.

Under Saban, Alabama has frequently recruited and plundered talent from tradition-rich South Florida. Of the 17 Florida players on the current roster, seven hail from the tri-county area.

Surtain has a message for South Florida's future college football stars.

"I'd just say work hard," he said. "South Florida, there's talent everywhere. Your name will get called and you will be on a bright stage like this, so just keep working and keep striving to perfection."

# Before Becoming Crimson Tide Stars, Mac Jones and Patrick Surtain II Both Idolized Gators Legend Tim Tebow

By Tyler Martin

SI.com

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The University of Alabama and Florida are meeting for a record 10th time in the Southeastern Conference Championship Game on Saturday and this specific contest will have very special meaning for a couple of the Crimson Tide's star players.

For starters, cornerback Patrick Surtain II, who grew up and played high school football in Plantation, Fla., recalls a time in his childhood, when he watched the 2009 SEC title game, where the Crimson Tide and Gators faced off, with Alabama taking down the defending national champions that season, 31-20.

"I was some parts of a Gator fan," Surtain said via Zoom to reporters on Monday. "I used to be a big Tim Tebow fan. I remember wearing his jersey one time, and I kind of got a little mad when Alabama beat them. I was really a Tim Tebow fan."

Little did he know at that time, that he would be suiting up for No. 1-ranked Alabama just 11 years later.

The same can be said for Jacksonville, Fla. native, Crimson Tide quarterback Mac Jones, as he also grew up idolizing the 2007 Heisman Trophy winner.

"Yeah, that was a long time ago," Jones said laughing as he told a story of when he first met Tebow after he won the Heisman at a local mall. "I definitely remember that opportunity to wait in line and get a picture with him and then him signing the picture with me and my family. I think we still have it somewhere in the house. It was a cool experience.

"Tim is a great player, but he also did a lot of great things off the field and I looked up to him when I was younger. Being able to meet him then was really cool."

Saturday's meeting will be the fifth time that the Crimson Tide has faced No. 11 Florida in the league's title game since coach Nick Saban has arrived in Tuscaloosa.

Alabama is 3-1 in those previous four matchups, but this is the strongest Gators team since 2009, when Tebow was leading the charge, and Jones says there are a few similarities with Florida's offense back then to now, which is led by quarterback Kyle Trask.

"I think it goes back to that it's two great schools, Florida and Alabama," Jones said. "They have a bunch of great players and good coaches. Watching a team back then and seeing how great they were, you see some similarities, but football has evolved a little since then. Each team is its own team.

"Growing up and watching those teams was awesome. You just got to learn the example of good college football."

If all bodes well for Jones, he could end up being the Crimson Tide's first signal caller to win the Heisman Trophy after a solid performance against his childhood idol's former team.

"Oh, I just remember the ending when he was crying," Surtain said when asked about what comes to mind when thinking about the 2009 game.

"That's all I remember."

# Alabama football: Surtain No. 2 living up to name on multiple levels

By Phil Ervin  
Saturday Down South  
November 14, 2020

There's the name. And then there's the game.

Ever since Patrick Surtain II began tearing up youth football fields as an oversized running back in Plantation, Fla., lofty expectations have followed him. They're always lurking around the corner when the father you're named after is a 3-time Pro Bowler.

But a surname only takes you so far. Just ask Ken Griffey Jr., Steph Curry or the third-generation farmer taking over his family plot upon his dad's retirement.

What's expected of Surtain has only increased since he arrived at Alabama in 2018. Coming to Tuscaloosa as a 5-star recruit is one thing; several bona fide blue-chippers have done that.

But starting 12 games as a true freshman under Nick Saban is another. Fast-forward 2 years, and the elder statesman of the Crimson Tide's secondary was viewed as the closest thing to a sure thing "during these uncertain times."

Somehow, Surtain continues to exceed the hype.

"I think Pat's done a great job," Saban said. "He leads by example. He always practices the way you're supposed to practice, takes coaching the way you're supposed to take coaching. I think he respects the critical eye.

"He wants to be a good player. He wants you to tell him how he could do things better. He's very committed to being a good player."

The results? Try the Power 5's top defender grade per Pro Football Focus, for starters. With opposing offenses often scheming around the 6-foot-2, 202-pound cornerback, Surtain has tallied 5 pass breakups, 22 total tackles and an interception this season.

He returned that pick on Halloween against Mississippi State 25 yards for a touchdown.

Surtain is a soft-spoken, mild-mannered kid. But you could see the pure elation behind his facemask as he crossed the goal line at Bryant-Denny Stadium.

After a rocky start for the Alabama defense, Surtain has helped lead it to a resurgence. It seems like eons ago, but the Tide — who are coming off an unforeseen bye week thanks to a COVID-19 outbreak on LSU's roster — shut out Mike Leach's Air Raid attack a week after holding Tennessee to 302 yards of offense and 17 points.

This ain't your older brother's stifling Bama defense. But it has been much, much better at exactly the right time, with Surtain in the thick of it.

"We always challenge ourselves on finishing plays, communicating out there, flying around to the ball," Surtain said. "When you fly around to the ball, more plays happen. We always wanted to be that defense. The standard of the defense has been dominance. We want complete dominance around the whole defensive unit."

The expectations go well beyond just locking down the opposing team's top receiver. With a multitude of freshmen and sophomores in the lineup, it has fallen upon Surtain and senior linebacker Dylan Moses to set and enforce the standards Surtain mentioned.

You're not likely to see him give an impassioned speech on a Zoom press conference or rip into a teammate for malperformance.

Surtain doesn't "do" leadership. He lives it.

"I think he's not really a vocal guy, but in a quiet way impacts everybody in a very, very positive way because of the example that he sets," Saban said. "He is somebody that I wish every guy on our team would try to emulate in terms of the character that he has as a person, and the competitive character he demonstrates every day in preparing for a game, as well as how he plays in a game."

It's not hard to see where Surtain gets it. His dad, Patrick Surtain, played for the Miami Dolphins and Kansas City Chiefs from 1998-2008 and finished his career with 37 interceptions.

His namesake's first football memories are of his father in Kansas City. The elder Surtain taught him first to love the game, then how to play it — including serving as his coach at American Heritage School in Plantation.

Father and son have broken down hundreds of hours of film together. It was pops who suggested a long, lanky Patrick II focus on defensive back during his later years.

Today, dad still gives son a pep talk before every Alabama game.

There's a spot on an NFL roster awaiting the younger Surtain should he decide to forego his senior season and prepare for next spring's Draft. He has already drawn comparisons to star Rams defensive back Jalen Ramsey.

But there are more immediate benchmarks to eclipse, starting Saturday against Kentucky. Alabama's season is suddenly down to 3 regular-season games, a presumed SEC championship contest and the College Football Playoff if all goes as planned.

When it comes to Surtain, so far, it has.

"Pat is definitely a key piece to our defense," Moses said. "He's a leader, and all the other guys, as well as myself, look to him to make plays, just like we look for everyone else in our defense to make plays. Ultimately, we all have to do our jobs. It's not necessarily a single individual in our defense, it's everyone. We all have to do our job."

# Father-son bond still guiding Patrick Surtain II to success at Alabama

By Tony Tsoukalas  
Bama Insider  
September 20, 2019

Every pregame conversation between Patrick Surtain II and his father involves a prayer and ends with a simple message.

Since the sophomore defensive back arrived at Alabama a year ago, he's received a pep talk from his dad before every game. Patrick Surtain Sr., a three-time Pro Bowl cornerback, generally tells his son to focus on the technique he's drilled into him over the years. He also reminds him to play with confidence and remember he's the best player on the field. Most importantly, he leaves him with one constant phrase.

"I always end it with this," the older Surtain said. "Win, lose or draw, just know that we're here for you, we're your No. 1 fans, and we love you."

The younger Surtain's first football memory with his father dates back to when he was five year's old.

"It was probably getting to suit up for my first football game while he was with the Chiefs," he told BamaInsider. "That's when I first started playing real, organized football. I remember starting out playing and my dad telling me things about football and us going to buy equipment and stuff."

The five-star defensive back has been picking up tidbits ever since.

The elder Surtain could tell his son was going to be a football star early on. Around the age of nine, the budding athlete was already separating himself from the rest of his youth football teammates. Then featuring as a running back, his elite speed allowed him to easily sweep past defenders. Although, as he began to grow into his current 6-foot-2 frame, it became apparent that the young athlete was destined to follow in the footsteps of his father.

"The thing was, he was getting so damn tall," the older Surtain said with a laugh. "He hit a growth spurt around nine years old, and I'm like 'Man, you are going to get banged up playing running back.' He did both for a while, but I just saw it at an early age. He had the natural ball skills, and he had that athleticism. I told him, 'You're going to play defensive back in high school, and that's going to be your path.'"

After a few years and a bit of convincing from his father, the younger Surtain finally settled on his new position. From there, the lessons started to intensify.

The elder Surtain played quarterback in high school before switching to defensive back at Southern Miss. Admittedly raw heading into college, he credits his road to the NFL to a focus on fundamentals. It's why he emphasized them so relentlessly to his son.

On top of countless hours perfecting footwork on the practice field, the two also broke down film together as he taught his son how to read opposing offenses and search for quarterback tendencies.

“Most of it was mental,” he said. “We’d watch a lot of film to get him to understand the things the quarterback might do in certain situations. After a while, you could tell it was starting to click. I remember one time in high school you could see the quarterback was giving a hitch signal. Pat picked it up and jumped it for a pick-6.”

The younger Surtain played under his father during his final two years at American Heritage School in Plantation, Fla. There the two claimed back-to-back 5A state championships while recording a 27-game winning streak.

During his junior year, the younger Surtain recorded two interceptions and three fumble recoveries. While offenses stopped throwing his way the following season, the five-star recruit continued to shoot up the national rankings, finishing as the top cornerback and No. 8 player overall in the 2018 class.

The younger Surtain experienced a much busier recruiting process than his father, who quietly committed to play for Southern Miss in 1994. While the Golden Eagles offered a chance to follow in his father’s footsteps, he had his eyes on more prominent programs.

“I was like, ‘Hey man, you have to give my alma mater at least a look,” the elder Surtain said with a laugh. “But with him being such a high-profile recruit, I kind of knew he’d go to a bigger school.”

“I just told him to blaze a path all of your own. I didn’t want him to worry about what I did. It’s his time now. I told him, ‘I want you to be better than me. I had my time, and it’s your time to shine now.’”

Ultimately, the younger Surtain’s path brought him to Tuscaloosa, Ala., setting up an interesting dilemma for his proud father this weekend as the Crimson Tide takes on Southern Miss at 11 a.m. CT inside Bryant-Denny Stadium. While the elder Surtain still claims to be a “Golden Eagle for life,” he’ll be setting aside his black and gold for crimson and white this weekend.

“This week is kind of different,” he said. “It’s my alma matter versus my son. Obviously, I’ve got to go with my blood. I’ll go tailgate with the fellows, and I’m sure they’ll give me a bit of a hard time. But when 11 o’clock rolls around, I’m all Roll Tide.”

The elder Surtain admits he has missed coaching his son the past two years. He’s still getting used to watching games from his vantage point in the bleachers of Bryant-Denny Stadium compared to shouting at him from the sidelines.

“I see all the nuances that the offense is trying to do,” he said. “I try to yell them to him, but there are 100,000 other people in the seats yelling, too.”

Then again, his son seems to be picking things up just fine. Through three games, the 6-foot-2, 203-pound sophomore is Alabama’s highest-graded defensive player, earning an 89.5 mark from Pro Football Focus. He’s also tied for the team lead with two pass breakups and has recorded an interception while holding opponents to a 45.6 NFL passer rating on balls thrown his way.

“I think Pat’s grown tremendously,” cornerback Trevon Diggs said last month. “He had tremendous ability and last year he was playing like he was young. He was just finding his way but now he improved like he knows the plays, he knows calls, he knows adjustments, he knows things like how to read routes so I’ve seen him grow tremendously.”

After earning SEC All-Freshman honors at cornerback, Alabama moved Surtain to Star this spring. The Star role, the Crimson Tide's fifth defensive back in the nickel formation, is viewed as one of the most complex positions on defense. Not only does it require the ability to keep up with shifty slot receivers but it requires defensive backs to be able to tackle and blitz the cornerback. Fortunately, it's a position his father is familiar with from his time in the NFL, which made for some extra tutelage over the summer.

"It's a position that takes a lot of studying, and that was more important than anything," the elder Surtain said. "I knew he could handle it athletically, but mentally with him being such a young player, I wanted to make sure he was comfortable with everything."

While the father is happy to help when he can, he's confident his son is in good hands at Alabama. This year, the sophomore cornerback has received even more guidance as cornerbacks coach Karl Scott, safeties coach Charles Kelly and head coach Nick Saban all oversee the defensive backs during practice.

"It was a different transition learning from different people's perspectives and stuff," the younger Surtain said. "My dad probably coached different than coaches up here. But they still got the same philosophy on how things should work. I basically use that as a learning tool and learn from each and every coach. It has been a great learning experience for me."

The elder Surtain knows full well the level of instruction his son is receiving. The former NFL defensive back spent a few weeks working under Saban after the head coach signed with the Miami Dolphins 2005. In fact, he said he shares a similar coaching style with his old boss.

As for who comes down the hardest, the younger Surtain says it's close, but he's still going with his dad.

"I don't know; Nick takes care of them corners now. Those are his babies," the older Surtain said with a laugh. "I don't know though. I'd still say it's probably me. I'm a guy who will yell out there. Nick is too, but he has different guys who he can bounce off of. With me, I'm going to give it to him raw. I'm going to give it to him the way he needs to hear it."

He'll also be in his son's ear Saturday morning for a pregame chat and another reminder that he'll always have his back.

"It's been all that you dream about," the father said. "You don't have an idea how it will all turn out. I still remember him running around the Dolphins facility with a football when he was one year old. To just see the way he's grown not only as a football player but as a man, it just makes you proud. Now he's playing for the greatest program in the country and all his dreams and goals are right there. It's everything we talked about."

# Like father, like son: Alabama CB Patrick Surtain II set to Star at new position

By Alex Byington  
Montgomery Advertiser  
August 21, 2019

Patrick Surtain just chuckled at the idea his only son and namesake would ever articulate any concern with a coach's decision.

Alabama sophomore cornerback Patrick Surtain II, the progeny of the former three-time Pro Bowl cornerback with the Miami Dolphins and current head coach at American Heritage High School in Plantation, Florida, simply wasn't raised like that.

"If you knew Pat, you'd know nothing bothers this kid. He just goes about his business," Surtain Sr. told the Montgomery Advertiser on Monday. "I guess he just looked at it as business as usual: 'They want me to do something else, I'm going to do it to help the team.' It speaks to his character and the kind of person that he is."

Of course, with a mentality like that — although highly commendable — the elder Surtain sometimes must take it upon himself to speak up in his son's best interests.

"I had to even tell some of the coaches, 'Man, hey, y'all got him on like five special teams (groupings),'” Surtain Sr. said with a chuckle, “but it shows the trust that they have in him that he's going to do things the right way. At the same time, five special teams, that's (a little much for a returning starter).”

Entering his second season with the Crimson Tide, the former five-star cornerback from a year ago — who started 12 games as a true freshman last season — has seen his role on the team increase this offseason, including making the move to Alabama's vital Star/nickel-back position.

Surtain's shift inside to Star is widely viewed as both a sign of the Alabama coaching staff's confidence in the talented sophomore's continued development and their desire to create more opportunities for fellow sophomore corner Josh Jobe and others within the secondary this season. Last year's starting Star, senior Shyheim Carter, has seemingly slid back to free safety to compete alongside fellow senior Jared Mayden, but also provides quality depth and experience should either of the previously-mentioned sophomores struggle any during the season.

Not that Surtain II is worried about any of that at the moment, preferring to focus on what he needs to do to better embrace the challenge.

"It's a new learning process for me, (so) I'm just still working on it, still competing," Surtain II said Monday. Surtain's father, of course, is quite confident his son can handle it.

"I think in that second year it really slows down for you, and with him playing multiple positions this year I think it'll give him a better opportunity to make plays," Surtain Sr. said.

For the younger Surtain, playing Star is simply an opportunity to take his game to the next level, and prove his coaches' faith in him has been well-placed.

"It means a lot for me, just because that means the coaches believe in me to play that position," Surtain II said. "The coaches have a lot of trust in me, so I believe I should carry it on and take that position well." His teammates agree.

"I think Pat's grown tremendously. He has tremendous ability and last year he was playing like he was young — he was just finding his way," senior cornerback Trevon Diggs said of Surtain, "but now he improved like he knows the plays, he knows calls, he knows adjustments, he knows things like how to read routes so I've seen him grow tremendously."

That growth, especially when it comes to the mental side of the position — properly reading routes and tendencies before the snap and making the correct adjustments — has been as important if not more so than any other part of his continued development, including physically getting the job done in coverage. That's where his father comes into the picture, imparting some of his professional wisdom having played 11 seasons in the NFL.

"Anytime I can help, I played at the highest level and that's what made me the player I was," Surtain Sr. said. "Just understanding the game and understanding how offenses want to attack the defense and certain coverages, always knowing where the weak spot is and where your help is at in every coverage. And I've been able to relay that to him."

According to Surtain Sr., first-year Alabama associate defensive coordinator/safeties coach Charles Kelly has already made the natural comparison between Surtain II and former Florida State cornerback Jalen Ramsey, whom Kelly coached during his four years as the Seminoles defensive coordinator (2014-17).

"Coach Kelly kind of compared them because he'd seen Pat in high school and he knew what kind of player Jalen (Ramsey) was, he actually recruited Pat to Florida State," Surtain Sr. said. "So he knew what he was getting (in Surtain II) as a player when he went to Alabama. He coached Jalen at that position and I guess sees some similarities."

Both are considered larger press-cornerbacks with similar builds — Surtain II is 6-foot-2 and 203-pounds while Ramsey is 6-1 and 208 entering his fourth season with the Jacksonville Jaguars — and, coincidentally enough, Ramsey was also thrust into the Star position within FSU's defensive scheme as a sophomore.

The ability to play in the Star/slot defensively can be considered a challenge for most larger cornerbacks, especially given the usually shifty nature of slot receivers. But the athletic and physical Surtain II is bucking that trend, proving to be more similar to another ex-Alabama first-round pick that made the Star position his home for three years in Tuscaloosa: Minkah Fitzpatrick (6-1, 207), who played Star as a freshman and junior between a midseason move to safety following an injury to Eddie Jackson in 2016.

"I feel like when you're in the slot, people think the position is supposed to be smaller so you can move (with) those guys," said Diggs, who also saw time at Star during spring practice. "Pat and I are bigger guys but we can move just as well as the smaller guys so I feel like ... we have an advantage because quarterbacks (will) normally read the Cover 2 and throw that seam route, (and) it's harder to get that (pass) over our heads because we're taller and longer, so I feel like that's our advantage, and we can move as well so I feel real good (about Surtain at Star)."

And much like Fitzpatrick did before him, there's a belief Surtain will not only prosper at Star, but it will only further aid in his quest to follow his father's footsteps into the NFL.

"I think it shows they trust him first-and-foremost, they know how valuable he is, they know what kind of skill set he has," Surtain Sr. said. "That just shows how they feel about Pat and what he can bring to the table.