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Rivals.com Freshman All-American team

David Fox
Rivals.com College Football

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Veterans are indispensable to any championship team, but certain freshmen this season become more important to their teams than some upperclassmen.

Just take a look at some of the teams in the BCS. Auburn heads to the national championship game with a freshman tailback. Wisconsin needed a freshman to pick up the slack for an injured John Clay as the Badgers sealed a trip to the Rose Bowl. Arkansas is headed to the Sugar Bowl with two freshman starters on the offensive line. Big 12 champion Oklahoma also has freshmen starting on the offensive line, at linebacker and at receiver.

Even teams that didn't win their leagues relied on freshmen: South Carolina and Nebraska fell short of conference titles, but neither team would have reached league championship games if not for freshmen in their starting backfields.

While last season may have been the year of the freshman running back -- think of [LaMichael James](#), [Dion Lewis](#) and [Ryan Williams](#) -- this season featured more complementary players. Still, being a freshman All-American can be a preview of future accolades. Two of last season's freshman All-Americans, James and Stanford's [Andrew Luck](#), ended up as Heisman finalists as sophomores.

Here is the Rivals.com 2010 Freshman All-America team. (Redshirt freshmen are denoted with an asterisk.)

RIVALS.COM FIRST-TEAM FRESHMAN ALL-AMERICA OFFENSE

QB TAYLOR MARTINEZ, NEBRASKA*

Particulars: 6-1/205; Corona (Calif.) Centennial

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: Quarterback play was the major question for Nebraska before the season. Martinez answered in a hurry, opening the season on a tear -- 1,046 yards and eight touchdowns through the air and 870 yards and 12 touchdowns on the ground in the first seven games. Injuries caught up with him at the second half of the season, but he still led the Huskers to the final Big 12 championship game.

RB MARCUS LATTIMORE, SOUTH CAROLINA

Particulars: 6-0/218; Duncan (S.C.) Byrnes

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★★

Buzz: Lattimore was a highly hyped signee, and he lived up to billing. He is second in the SEC in rushing with 1,198 yards and has 17 rushing touchdowns. He had monster games against the Gamecocks' three biggest SEC foes -- 578 yards and six TDs in games against Florida, Georgia and Tennessee. He also is an excellent receiver.

RB JAMES WHITE, WISCONSIN

Particulars: 5-10/198; Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) Saint Thomas Aquinas

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: John Clay came into the season as the Badgers' top running back, but the position will be in good hands for several seasons even if Clay turns pro early. White rushed for 1,029 yards and 14 touchdowns, including 459 yards and five touchdowns in the final three games.

WR MARQUESS WILSON, WASHINGTON STATE

Particulars: 6-3/173; Tulare (Calif.) Tulare Union

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: Wilson was the only freshman receiver nationally to top 1,000 yards. He had some of his best games against the Pac-10's best defenses, with six catches for 150 yards and a touchdown against Stanford and six catches for 131 yards and a score against Arizona.

WR ROBERT WOODS, USC

Particulars: 6-1/185; Carson (Calif.) Serra

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Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: The top-ranked athlete and No. 6 overall prospect in the 2010 class, Woods didn't disappoint as a freshman, catching 65 passes for 792 yards and six touchdowns. In a two-game stretch against Stanford and Cal, he caught 19 passes for 340 yards and five scores.

TE TED BOLSER, INDIANA*

Particulars: 6-6/252; Cincinnati Indian Hill

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: Bolser was the nation's most productive freshman tight end, catching 27 passes for 407 yards and five touchdowns.

T JAMES HURST, NORTH CAROLINA

Particulars: 6-6/290; Plainfield (Ind.) High

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: Hurst was the fourth-ranked tackle in the freshman class, and he started all but one game this season for the Tar Heels.

T LUKE JOECKEL, TEXAS A&M

Particulars: 6-6/304; Arlington (Texas) High

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: Joeckel, the fifth-ranked tackle in the 2010 class, started every game at left tackle for the Aggies, who are No. 20 nationally in total offense.

G ALVIN BAILEY, ARKANSAS*

Particulars: 6-5/323; Broken Arrow (Okla.) High

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: One of the most effective offenses in the SEC was anchored by two redshirt freshmen in the interior. Coaches raved about Bailey's work ethic last season, when he redshirted, and he started every game this season for the Hogs.

G GABE IKARD, OKLAHOMA*

Particulars: 6-4/282; Oklahoma City Bishop McGuinness

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: Oklahoma's fastest and most athletic guard, Ikard -- who was recruited as a tight end -- stepped into the starting lineup in the third game of the season and remained there the rest of the way.

C TRAVIS SWANSON, ARKANSAS*

Particulars: 6-5/305; Kingwood (Texas) High

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: Swanson helped pave the way for an Arkansas rushing attack that became more effective as the season went along. RB Knile Davis rushed for at least 150 yards and two touchdowns in four of the Hogs' last six regular-season games.

RIVALS.COM FIRST-TEAM FRESHMAN ALL-AMERICA DEFENSE**E DAMONTRE MOORE, TEXAS A&M**

Particulars: 6-4/248; Rowlett (Texas) High

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: The understudy to All-American [Von Miller](#), Moore had a productive freshman season of his own. He was second to Miller on the Aggies with 5.5 sacks and finished with 6.5 tackles for loss and an interception. He also forced three fumbles against Louisiana Tech early in the season.

T ROOSEVELT NIX, KENT STATE

Particulars: 6-0/250; Reynoldsburg (Ohio) High

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: Nix had the most productive season of any freshman lineman in the nation, and he was named the MAC's defensive player of the year. He led the MAC in tackles for loss (20) and sacks (10) and forced four fumbles on a defense that was fifth nationally against the run.

T AKEEM SPENCE, ILLINOIS*

Particulars: 6-1/305; Fort Walton Beach (Fla.) High

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: Along with sophomore [Corey Liuget](#), Spence was part of one of the nation's most productive defensive tackle tandems. Spence finished the season with 45 tackles and three tackles for loss for an Illini team that surprised most by earning a bowl bid.

E JUNIOR ONYEALI, ARIZONA STATE

Particulars: 5-11/233; Denver Mullen

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: A little undersized to be a full-time defensive lineman, Onyeali can rush the passer from either defensive end or linebacker. He led the Sun Devils in sacks (6.5) and tackles for loss (11.5).

LB SHAUN LEWIS, OKLAHOMA STATE

Particulars: 5-11/212; Missouri City (Texas) Hightower

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: Lewis was fifth on the Cowboys in tackles (55) and he was one of the leaders in big plays; he had three interceptions, including one he returned for a touchdown against Oklahoma. He also had three forced fumbles and seven tackles for loss.

LB C.J. MOSLEY, ALABAMA

Particulars: 6-2/225; Theodore (Ala.) High

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: The Crimson Tide defense had to be rebuilt this season, and Mosley emerged to ease some of the concerns at linebacker. He was excellent against the pass, with two pick-sixes (one against Florida, the other against Georgia State) and eight pass breakups. He is second in the Tide in tackles with 66.

LB KEVIN PIERRE-LOUIS, BOSTON COLLEGE

Particulars: 6-1/221; Stamford (Conn.) King and Low-Heywood Thomas School

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: Boston College has a recent track record of stifling run defenses led by sure-tackling linebackers. Following in the path of [Mark Herzlich](#) and [Luke Kuechly](#), Pierre-Louis has 86 tackles this season for the nation's leading run defense.

CB TYRANN MATHIEU, LSU

Particulars: 5-9/180; New Orleans St. Augustine

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: Playing in the same secondary as Thorpe and Bednarik winner [Patrick Peterson](#) has its perks. For Mathieu, though, it has meant that opponents have been more than willing to throw to his side of the field. Mathieu has three forced fumbles and six pass breakups on the season, and had an interception and a fumble recovery against West Virginia. LSU was willing to play him near the line of scrimmage, too, as he finished with 7.5 tackles for loss.

CB XAVIER RHODES, FLORIDA STATE*

Particulars: 6-1/209; Miami Norland

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: Florida State's defense enjoyed a turnaround this season, in part because of more pressure on the quarterback but also because of an improved secondary. Rhodes was a starter this season from Day One and leads the ACC with 12 pass breakups. He also has three interceptions and two sacks.

FS TY ZIMMERMAN, KANSAS STATE

Particulars: 6-1/203; Junction City (Kan.) High

Rivals ranking: ★★

Buzz: A quarterback in high school, Zimmerman made a smooth transition to safety as he finished the season with 69 tackles. He intercepted three passes, including two in a rout of Texas.

SS HAKEEM SMITH, LOUISVILLE*

Particulars: 6-1/175; Jonesboro (Ga.) Riverdale

Rivals ranking: ★★

Buzz: One of most stark turnarounds in the Big East was turned in by Louisville's defense, which improved from allowing 371 yards per game to 305. Smith was the Cardinals' leading tackler (80) and recorded six tackles for loss.

RIVAL.COM FIRST-TEAM FRESHMAN ALL-AMERICA SPECIALISTS

K ROSS KRAUTMAN, SYRACUSE

Particulars: 5-7/154; Franklin Lakes (N.J.) Ramapo

Rivals ranking: ★★

Buzz: Krautman beat out returning starter Ryan Lichtenstein to become the Orange's kicker. The move paid off, as Krautman was 17-of-18 on field-goal attempts. He ended the regular season by making his final 15 attempts.

P KIRBY VAN DER KAMP, IOWA STATE

Particulars: 6-3/195; West Des Moines (Iowa) Valley

Rivals ranking: ★★

Buzz: Although he didn't punt until his senior year of high school, Van Der Kamp led all freshman punters nationally with a 45.2-yard average on 60 kicks.

KR ANDRE DEBOSE, FLORIDA*

Particulars: 6-0/192; Sanford (Fla.) Seminole

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: After sitting out last season with a hamstring injury, Debose showed how explosive he could be as he ranks sixth in the nation in kickoff returns with a 29.7-yard average. He returned kickoffs for touchdowns against LSU and South Carolina.

PR TERRENCE MITCHELL, USF

Particulars: 5-10/165; Tampa Hillsborough

Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

Buzz: In a year when no full-time freshman punt returner took one back for a touchdown, Mitchell led rookie punt returners with a 10.2-yard average.

Second Team

OFFENSE		DEFENSE	
QB	Aaron Murray, Georgia* 6-1/209; Tampa Plant Rivals ranking: ★★★★★	E	J.R. Collins, Virginia Tech* 6-2/254; Stafford (Va.) Brooke Point Rivals ranking: ★★★★★
RB	Michael Dyer, Auburn 5-9/215; Little Rock (Ark.) Christian Academy Rivals ranking: ★★★★★	T	Justin Washington, Arizona* 6-2/275; Cypress (Texas) Cypress Woods Rivals ranking: ★★★★★
RB	Ronnie Hillman, San Diego State 5-10/175; La Habra (Calif.) High Rivals ranking: ★★★★★	T	Nikita Whitlock, Wake Forest* 5-11/235; Wylie (Texas) High Rivals ranking: ★★★★★
WR	Josh Boyce, TCU* 6-0/203; Copperas Cove (Texas) High Rivals ranking: ★★★★★	E	Michael Sam, Missouri* 6-3/245; Hitchcock (Texas) High Rivals ranking: ★★★★★
WR	Kenny Stills, Oklahoma 6-0/183; Carlsbad (Calif.) La Costa Canyon Rivals ranking: ★★★★★	LB	Shawn Jackson, Tulsa 6-0/230; Tulsa (Okla.) McClain Rivals ranking: ★★★★★
TE	Gavin Escobar, San Diego State* 6-6/230; R. Santa Margarita (Calif.) Catholic Rivals ranking: ★★★★★	LB	Jelani Jenkins, Florida* 6-1/223; Olney (Md.) Our Lady Good Counsel Rivals ranking: ★★★★★
T	D.J. Fluker, Alabama* 6-6/340; Foley (Ala.) High Rivals ranking: ★★★★★	LB	Tom Wort, Oklahoma* 6-1/225; New Braunfels (Texas) High Rivals ranking: ★★★★★
T	Seantrel Henderson, Miami 6-8/330; St. Paul (Minn.) Cretin-Derham Hall Rivals ranking: ★★★★★	CB	Ricardo Allen, Purdue 5-9/175; Daytona Beach (Fla.) Mainland Rivals ranking: ★★★★★
G	Will Jackson, Georgia Tech* 6-3/285; Knoxville (Tenn.) Farragut Rivals ranking: ★★★★★	CB	Lewis Toler, Western Michigan* 5-10/174; New Castle (Del.) William Penn Rivals ranking: ★★★★★
G	Mason Walters, Texas* 6-6/300; Wolfforth (Texas) Frenship Rivals ranking: ★★★★★	FS	Nickoe Whitley, Mississippi State* 6-0/200; Jackson (Miss.) Provine Rivals ranking: ★★★★★
C	James Stone, Tennessee 6-4/295; Nashville Maplewood Rivals ranking: ★★★★★	SS	Brian Blechen, Utah 6-2/203; Moorpark (Calif.) High Rivals ranking: ★★★★★
K	Nate Freese, Boston College* 6-0/180; Strongsville (Ohio) High Rivals ranking: ★★★★★	P	Anthony Fera, Penn State* 6-2/210; Houston St. Pius X Rivals ranking: ★★★★★
PR	Venric Mark, Northwestern 5-8/170; Houston St. Pius X Rivals ranking: ★★★★★	KR	Justin Gilbert, Oklahoma State 6-0/194; Huntsville (Texas) High Rivals ranking: ★★★★★

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