

PLAYER PROFILE:

SENIOR DEFENSIVE BACK Johnthan Banks

By Brittany Young

With 33 career starts, 12 interceptions (three of them resulting in touchdowns) and 196 interception-return yards, all-purpose player Johnthan Banks has drawn much attention entering the 2012 college football season. However, Banks' success didn't come overnight. He has been putting in work since he first stepped foot on the gridiron during his freshman season in 2009. Banks' biggest highlight of 2009, one that will always be remembered by Bulldog fans, resulted in two interception returns for touchdowns against defending national champion and top-ranked Florida. From that point on, everything went up hill for Banks.

The Maben, Miss., standout has never been one to shy away from the spotlight, playing for his high school varsity team since the eighth grade. In high school alone, Banks ran a 4.6 in the 40-yard dash, was a second team all-state linebacker, accounted for 1,740 yards of total offense and 36 total touchdowns and totaled 35 tackles and seven interceptions during his senior season. To describe him as talented would be an understatement.

His versatility in high school helped Banks make a smooth transition into college and provided the coaching staff with several options on how to utilize him. Since arriving on campus, Banks has played cornerback, safety and on special teams. After earning All-SEC honors following his freshman season, Banks earned the starting job at left corner after making the switch from safety in the offseason. That decision quickly paid dividends as 2010 saw Banks record his first career sack early in the season against Auburn and later intercept his seventh career pass in the Gator Bowl win over Michigan. The following season, Banks had the attention of his opponents and solidified himself as a superstar on his team and in the SEC.

The 2011 season proved to be the best season Banks has compiled during his tenure at Mississippi State. Last season, Banks was the only defensive back to place in the top three in sacks (first), passes defended (second), quarterback hurries (tied for first), interceptions returned for touchdowns (tied for first), punt return touchdowns (tied for second), tackles (third), tackles for loss (third), interceptions (third) and fumbles forced (third). At the conclusion of the season, Banks was a Jim Thorpe Award semifinalist, a Conerly Trophy finalist and a third team All-SEC selection.

There is no doubt that Banks has earned himself the distinction as one of the top corner backs in both the SEC and in the nation entering his senior season. Already a preseason All-American by six different publications and a member of six different watch lists, Banks proves there's no reason why he won't be State's 2013 NFL first-round draft pick. 🍀

