The 2019 NFL Draft has come and gone and to no one’s surprise, The FBS schools out number the FCS schools in the number of players picked. Out of the FBS schools, four major schools such as Alabama, Clemson, Oklahoma and Ohio State, lead the way in picks because of their game play during the season.

| **Year** | **Alabama draft picks** | **Clemson draft picks** | **Oklahoma draft picks** | **Ohio State draft picks** | **FCS draft pics** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2015 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 17 |
| 2016 | 7 | 9 | 4 | 12 | 20 |
| 2017 | 10 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 15 |
| 2018 | 12 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 19 |
| 2019 | 10 | 6 | 8 | 9 | 13 |

By the numbers for the 2019 NFL Draft, Alabama led the way with 10 picks while Clemson, who beat Alabama for the National Championship only had six picks, Oklahoma had eight picks and Ohio State had nine. Those four schools separately out number the total of FCS players picked in this year’s draft which was 13.

Hero Sports Senior FCS Analyst Sam Herder said that size, abilities, level of competition and risk played major factors in why more FBS players were getting drafted over FCS players.

“They just don’t have that measurables, they don’t have the size and the speed necessarily and the level of play too. I think that’s just something that FCS players have to overcome is scouts and analyst that kind of look at the FCS and say alright he didn’t play against that level of competition,” Herder said. “It’s obviously it’s a less risky pick to draft an Alabama wide receiver than draft an UC Davis wide receiver.”

Eric Bankston, who is the Assistant Athletic Director at UC Davis, said that branding and the historic trend were the main reasons why that FBS players were getting drafted over FCS players, but it shouldn’t be a deterrence for an FCS player to get to the draft.

“A lot of people know your sec’s, your Big Ten’s, your Pac 12’s, your big 12’s etc. but I think especially the last few years you have fcs talent from schools like UC Davis it shows that people can play,” Bankston said. “I think as time goes on student athletes when they are recruited they’ll know that if you can play, it doesn’t matter where you are, scouts will find you, teams will find you, personnel will find you and it’s just up to you to just go out there and ball.”

Ryan Perreault, who is the Assistant Athletic Director at FCS powerhouse North Dakota State, said that even though both divisions are getting looked at, the FBS schools are getting more attention.

“At some point during the year, a majority if not all NFL teams make it through North Dakota State whether that is fall camp or late into the regular season,” Perreault said. “So, I think they are evaluating talent at both levels but certainly there’s probably a little more talent at the FBS level.”

Going back to 1993 the FCS has averaged between 12 to 27 picks combined. According to Perreault, one of the challenges of FCS schools getting top tier talent is that the NCAA awards fewer scholarships to FCS schools compared to FBS schools. Even though it’s a challenge as he says it is, it doesn’t mean that they aren’t able to line up against FBS schools from time to time.

| **Year** | **Total FCS picks** | **1st round** | **Day 2 picks** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1993 | 17 | 2 | 2 |
| 1994 | 22 | 1 | 3 |
| 1995 | 22 | 1 | 4 |
| 1996 | 29 | 0 | 9 |
| 1997 | 27 | 2 | 5 |
| 1998 | 17 | 0 | 4 |
| 1999 | 27 | 0 | 4 |
| 2000 | 21 | 2 | 3 |
| 2001 | 16 | 0 | 1 |
| 2002 | 18 | 0 | 3 |
| 2003 | 12 | 0 | 5 |
| 2004 | 15 | 0 | 3 |
| 2005 | 16 | 0 | 4 |
| 2006 | 15 | 0 | 5 |
| 2007 | 18 | 0 | 4 |
| 2008 | 21 | 2 | 3 |
| 2009 | 17 | 0 | 6 |
| 2010 | 17 | 1 | 1 |
| 2011 | 19 | 0 | 3 |
| 2012 | 14 | 0 | 1 |
| 2013 | 16 | 0 | 2 |
| 2014 | 17 | 0 | 3 |
| 2015 | 17 | 0 | 2 |
| 2016 | 20 | 1 | 4 |
| 2017 | 15 | 0 | 5 |
| 2018 | 19 | 0 | 4 |

“Sure we have 22 fewer scholarships to offer but the caliber of football player that is out there at the FCS schools play often and when you are talking starting lineups may be able to match up but that always doesn’t mean that for to do it 11 to 12 times a year that that will hold up over the course of the season,” Perreault said. “But for a week here and there FCS teams can certainly play with some of the FBS teams.”

Because of the limited number of scholarships, they are awarded, FCS schools look for a specific type of players to attend their schools. Bankston said that UC Davis was a unique school because it ranks fifth in the nation among public schools and because of that UC Davis looks for more than athletic talent in a player coming to their school.

“In order to succeed here you have to value education as well,” Bankston said. “So with the type of academic programs that we have plus the athletic opportunities that UC Davis provides for someone that is looking for the best of all worlds that’s where a lot of recruits put UC Davis on their radar and show their initial interest and hopefully becoming an Aggie.”

The FCS has experience success when it has come to high draft picks and successful draft picks. Players like Carson Wentz, Joe Flacco and Steve McNair who came from FCS schools such as North Dakota State, Delaware and Alcorn State, have performed better than most quarterbacks that came from FBS schools. Joe Flacco has won two Superbowl’s with the Baltimore Ravens, Steve McNair led the Tennessee Titans to the Superbowl and Carson Wentz, prior to getting injured mid-season lead the Philadelphia Eagles to the Superbowl. Herder explained why those two quarterbacks didn’t get a chance with FBS schools and why they are having success in the NFL.

“I think that’s what you’re looking at with Carson Wentz and Joe Flacco just two guys that were probably overlooked a little bit for whatever reason but they have the height, they have the arm strength, they played in two of the best conferences in the FCS which is the Missouri Valley Football Conference and the Colonial Athletic Association,” Herder said. “In my opinion those two conferences are better than the MAC or the Sun Belt. I firmly believe that. They’ve played good competition and they have been showing their talents in the NFL now.”

Most of the talent that has come into the NFL from the FCS division has came through undrafted free agency. Only time will tell if that trend will change into more players from the FCS division coming into the league from the draft than Undrafted free agency. Herder said that the undrafted free agency route is one of the best ways for an FCS player to get into the NFL.

“I think the thing you see more and more while there is not that many FCS players drafted, there were more than 200 FCS players that either got undrafted free agent deals or got invited to a few mini camps,” Herder said. “So, there is a ton of FCS players that get an opportunity in the NFL.”