Trends in NFL Player Representation from SEC Schools (2011–2025)

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Abstract

The NCAA SEC is one of the premier conferences in college football from recent years, but how much is each program represented in the draft? Our data was collected from Pro-Football-Reference.com, which is a database that tracks every NFL player's stats, awards, drafting, and teams during college and NFL. Our analysis examines the number of draftees from each SEC football program for every individual year from 2011 through 2025 and compares trends within the graphs to further analyze the popularity and production of each program (in terms of outputting NFL talent). The results yield two common patterns in the data: either the program shows a quadratic trend that peaks in the late 2010s, or an exponential trend in which draft representation steadily grows from 2011 onward.

Introduction

The NFL is the highest viewed sport in the U.S. as it has been nicknamed Americas sport by the media. In turn college football also exudes major viewer retention and support since the players in college are the future of the NFL, also college students love to support their school. Over the last 15 years there has been one NCAA football conference that has prominently outputted the most NFL talent, that being the South Eastern Conference (SEC). Numerous factors apply when it comes to recruitment, such as head coach prestige, academic prestige, and program prestige, all these factors apply but the most important factor is players drafted. Powerhouses like Alabama and Georgia have remained constant machines when fostering NFL talent, but over recent years LSU and Texas have provided incredible NFL talent. From 2011 to the present year 2025 the SEC has remained a constant pool of NFL talent as they are the programs that every high school football player strives to be apart and compete with the talent within the SEC. The trends for each SEC program in terms of draft representation will differ considering that each program competes against all the other programs within the SEC, therefore more recruits will strive to attend the programs that are winning and the programs that create the most NFL talent. Therefore, if we can analyze the trends for each SEC program in terms of draft representation we can comprehend how each program performed during the period 2011-2025 and which programs grew or withered in draft representation.

Data

The data set used for this analysis, "College_Dataset.xlsx," contains 1470 observations of information on NFL players and the colleges they attended, with players who began their NFL careers from 2011 to 2025, spanning 14 years. The data was obtained from Pro-Football-Reference, a reliable source that collects and publishes official NFL statistics, including player backgrounds and school affiliations. Relevant variables