

How Often Do Top Five Recruits Pan Out?



Ohio State has consistently been one of the top recruiters in the country since Urban Meyer took over as head coach in 2012, and that has continued into the Ryan Day era.

That was evident in the 2021 class that finished as the No. 2 overall class in the nation behind only Alabama. Ohio State's 2021 class was given a late boost by Sammamish (Wash.) Eastside Catholic five-star defensive lineman J.T. Tuimoloau, who made his decision to commit to the Buckeyes on July 4.

His commitment gives Ohio State two commits that rank in the top five for the 2021 class, with Tuimoloau ranking third and fellow defensive lineman Jack Sawyer coming in at fourth in the 247Sports composite rankings.

But, how often do players in the top five of the composite rankings live up to all that hype?

The 247Sports composite goes back to 2000, and one of the better gauges of if players were as good as promised is by where they ended up in the NFL draft, whenever it was that they ultimately decided to leave the program. While this, of course, is not an exact science, as some players light it up in college but aren't as built for the pros, it felt as close as possible to a measurement.

Looking at sample size, the field of top five players for this looks at the classes from 2000 to 2017. The start date is because, as previously mentioned, that is when the composite rankings began. The 2017 class is the end date because it is the most recent class to have all of its top five declare for the draft.

That leaves 90 players in the group, each of which were considered players with the highest potential in the country. This is where they each landed, or didn't land, in various NFL drafts. The dark green signifies a first round pick, light green signifies a Day Two (second or third round) selection, yellow is a Day Three (rounds 4-7) selection and red is for players that went undrafted.

The team listed for the recruits is what they initially signed on as for the class, despite some of the players ultimately transferring or leaving the team for a variety of reasons.

	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
2000	D.J. Williams	Brock Berlin	Charles Rogers	Travis Johnson	Marcus Houston	2009	Matt Barkley	Bryce Brown	Russell Shepard	Manti Te'o	Jacobi McDaniel
Position	LB	QB	WR	DE	RB	Position	QB	RB	QB	LB	DT
Team	Miami (Fla.)	Florida	Michigan State	Florida State	Colorado	Team	USC	Tennessee	LSU	Notre Dame	Florida State
Round	First	Undrafted	First	First	Undrafted	Round	Fourth	Seventh	Undrafted	Second	Undrafted
2001	Kevin Jones	Brodie Croyle	Roscoe Crosby	Reggie Williams	Shaun Cody	2010	Ronald Powell	Seantrel Henderson	Robert Woods	Dominique Easley	Jackson Jeffcoat
Position	RB	QB	WR	WR	DT	Position	DE	OT	ATH	DT	DE
Team	Virginia Tech	Alabama	Clemson	Washington	USC	Team	Florida	Miami (Fla.)	USC	Florida	Texas
Round	First	Third	Undrafted	First	Second	Round	Fifth	Seventh	Second	First	Undrafted
2002	Vince Young	Lorenzo Booker	Ryan Moore	Ben Olson	Chris Davis	2011	Jadeveon Clowney	Cyrus Kouandijo	La'el Collins	Karlos Williams	Anthony Johnson
Position	QB	RB	WR	QB	ATH	Position	DE	OT	OT	S	DT
Team	Texas	Florida State	Miami (Fla.)	BYU	Florida State	Team	South Carolina	Alabama	LSU	Florida State	LSU
Round	First	Third	Undrafted	Undrafted	Fourth	Round	First	Second	Undrafted	Fifth	Undrafted
2003	Ernie Sims	Whitney Lewis	Kyle Wright	Lamar Woodley	Prescott Burgess	2012	Dorial Green-Beckham	Mario Edwards Jr.	D.J. Humphries	Shaq Thompson	Noah Spence
Position	LB	WR	QB	LB	S	Position	WR	DT	DT	S	DE
Team	Florida State	USC	Miami (Fla.)	Michigan	Michigan	Team	Missouri	Florida State	Florida	Washington	Ohio State
Round	First	Undrafted	Undrafted	Second	Sixth	Round	Second	Second	First	First	Second
2004	Adrian Peterson	Ted Ginn Jr.	Willie Williams	Rhett Bomar	Early Doucet	2013	Robert Nkemdiche	Jaylon Smith	Vernon Hargreaves III	Laremy Tunsil	Su'a Cravens
Position	RB	WR	LB	QB	WR	Position	DE	LB	CB	OT	S
Team	Oklahoma	Ohio State	Miami (Fla.)	Oklahoma	LSU	Team	Ole Miss	Notre Dame	Florida	Ole Miss	USC
Round	First	First	Undrafted	Fifth	Third	Round	First	Second	First	First	Second
2005	Eugene Monroe	Patrick Turner	Mark Sanchez	Derrick Williams	Fred Rouse	2014	Leonard Fournette	Myles Garrett	Jabrill Peppers	Cam Robinson	Da'Shawn Hand
Position	OT	WR	QB	WR	WR	Position	RB	DE	ATH	OT	DE
Team	Virginia	USC	USC	Penn State	Florida State	Team	LSU	Texas A&M	Michigan	Alabama	Alabama
Round	First	Third	First	Undrafted	Undrafted	Round	First	First	First	Second	Fourth
2006	Andre Smith	Percy Harvin	Vidal Hazelton	Sergio Kindle	Myron Rolle	2015	Trenton Thompson	Martez Ivey	Byron Cowart	Iman Marshall	Derwin James
Position	OG	WR	LB	LB	S	Position	DT	OT	DE	CB	S
Team	Alabama	Florida	USC	Texas	Florida State	Team	Georgia	Florida	Auburn	USC	Florida State
Round	First	First	Undrafted	Second	Sixth	Round	Undrafted	Undrafted	Fifth	Fourth	First
2007	Joe McKnight	Jimmy Clausen	Eric Berry	Marvin Austin	Ryan Mallett	2016	Rashan Gary	Dexter Lawrence	Greg Little	Shea Patterson	Jacob Eason
Position	RB	QB	CB	DT	QB	Position	DT	DT	OT	QB	QB
Team	USC	Notre Dame	Tennessee	North Carolina	Michigan	Team	Michigan	Clemson	Ole Miss	Ole Miss	Georgia
Round	Fourth	Second	First	Second	Third	Round	First	First	Second	Undrafted	Fourth
2008	Da'Quan Bowers	Terrelle Pryor	Julio Jones	Darrell Scott	Will Hill	2017	Jaelen Phillips	Najee Harris	Cam Akers	Alex Leatherwood	Foster Sarell
Position	DE	QB	WR	RB	S	Position	DE	RB	RB	OT	OT
Team	Clemson	Ohio State	Alabama	Colorado	Florida	Team	UCLA	Alabama	Florida State	Alabama	Stanford
Round	Second	Third	First	Undrafted	Undrafted	Round	First	First	Second	First	Undrafted

In total, 31 of the 90 top five prospects over the first 18 years of the composite rankings went in the first round. That is just 34.4 percent, though it was the most likely of the four outcomes. Going deeper than just the top five, 12 of the 18 No. 1 overall prospects in a class - 66.7 percent - lived up to the hype enough to get taken within the first 32 picks.

It was also extremely rare for the composite rankings to completely swing and miss on first-round talents. Just one of the 18 years - 2009 - had no players taken in the first round. But even that year likely should have had one, with linebacker Manti Te'o finishing second in the Heisman Trophy voting. His draft stock fell due to a poor performance at the NFL Combine, as well as some other well-documented events that happened outside of football.

Te'o was one of 23 players to go in the second or third rounds in the draft, good for 25.6 percent of the sample. Fifteen of the 90, or 16.7 percent, went on Day Three, while 21 players, or 23.3 percent, did not get drafted. That percentage may continue to go down, as just four top-five players in classes from 2012-17 went undrafted, just 13.3 percent.

Going position by position, the most likely group to get selected in the first round by success rate were the offensive linemen. Of the 11 tackles and one guard, five went in the first: Eugene Monroe, Andre Smith, D.J. Humphries, Laremy Tunsil and Alex Leatherwood. Being the only guard, Smith gives the specific position a 100 percent first round rate.

Following closely behind the offensive linemen are the defensive backs and defensive linemen, the latter of which is good news for Ohio State with Sawyer and Tuimoloau entering the fray. Each position had 40 percent of their group land in the first round.

Looking at the secondary, two out of the three cornerbacks in the sample made the cut, as did a pair of the seven safeties. Not only did defensive linemen dominate the total amount of top five players with 20, they also had the most first-round picks with eight. They have also have picked up more steam as late, with the three D-linemen from the 2016 and 2017 classes all going in the first.

The least successful position at getting drafted early, by a sizable margin, were the quarterbacks. Of the

14 signal-callers ranked in the top five, only two - Vince Young and Mark Sanchez - got selected on Day One, just 14.3 percent. Even further, over a third of the quarterbacks - 5 of 14 (35.7 percent) - went undrafted.

This number would be improved dramatically with the inclusion of the 2018 class that included Trevor Lawrence and Justin Fields, who both were taken in the first round at No. 1 and 11, respectively. Ohio State fans can only hope that 2022 commit Quinn Ewers, the No. 1 overall prospect in the class, continues putting the quarterback position on the right track toward the top.

Ohio State has just two top five prospects through these 18 classes and is sitting at a 50 percent success rate. Wide receiver Ted Ginn Jr. was selected ninth overall, and while quarterback Terrelle Pryor did not get taken in the regular 2011 NFL Draft, it was because of the results from Tattoogate. He was ultimately taken in the third round of that year's supplemental draft by the Oakland Raiders, meaning that the Raiders lost, at the time, next year's third round pick to take him.

With Sawyer, Tuimoloau, Ewers and 2020's No. 3 overall prospect, wide receiver Julian Fleming, on deck for Ohio State, the Buckeyes will have plenty of opportunities to get over that 50 percent threshold. But, if the first 18 classes of the 247Sports composite era have proven anything, not even the very best prospects can be a sure thing.