

First Small College Football Player Drafted©

By Tex Noel

The NFL has conducted 75 annual College Player Drafts; but for a player from a non-major college (Bowl Subdivision) school often has to wait to hear his name called in a lower round.

Russ Letlow, a guard out of San Francisco was the ninth player selected in the inaugural of 1936; as he would become the first of just 32 players to go in the first round of the NFL Draft.

The highlight of small college player hearing his name early on draft day hit the peek during an 11-year stretch beginning in 1970, as players below the major level were selected in the opening round.

In the era of what is called *The Common Draft* since the AFL-NFL merger, beginning with the 1967 selections saw 27 years where a small college player was selected in the opening round—and a pair, Terry Bradshaw out of Louisiana Tech in 1970 and then, in 1974 Tennessee State's Ed "Too Tall" Jones—claiming the honor of being the first player overall selected.

Players from divisional teams have been selected 34 in rounds two and three—easily surpassing the third through the seven combined with just nine players selected.

In the history of the American Football League (1960-69) and counting just the 1960-66 drafts, just four players were selected in its opening rounds and one, Grambling's Buck Buchanan, being the top selection in 1963 draft.

Other names you might recognize came from small colleges include: Walter Payton, Jackson State; Mississippi Valley star, Jerry Rice; Phil Sims out of Morehead State; Doug Williams, Grambling and another outstanding quarterback, the late Steve McNair who was considered a Heisman Trophy hopefully when played for Alcorn State and Azusa Pacific's Christian Okoye.

Divisions were identified by the NCAA's Divisional Era.

Year	College			Player	Drafted	College
	1st Round	Small Pick	* Player			
1936	1	9	9	Russ Letlow	G	San Francisco
1937	4	8	38	Henry Hammond	E	Southwestern (KS)

1938	7	5	55	Ed Cherry	B	Hardin-Simmons
1939	2	3	13	Gaylon Smith	B	Southwestern
1940	1	7	7	Clyde (Bulldog) Turner	C	Hardin-Simmons
1941	7	9	59	John Federovich	T	Davis & Elkins
1942	3	14	19	Wilson (Bud) Schwenk	B	Washington (MO)
1943	3	8	23	Irv Comp	B	Benedictine
1944	4	5	32	Herb Kane	T	East Central (OK)
1945	5	10	42	Ed Castleberry	B	West Texas State
1946	2	2	12	Nick Scollard	E	St. Joseph's (IN)
1947	3	10	23	Frank Minini	B	San Jose State
1948	5	10	35	Jay Smith	E	Southern Mississippi
1949	3	2	23	Phil Colella	B	St. Bonaventure
1950	6	7	73	Warren Wood	G	Puget Sound
1951	1	8	8	Chet Mutryn	B	Xavier (OH)
1952	1	3	3	Ollie Matson	RB	San Francisco
1953	2	7	20	Al Conway	B	William Jewell (Army)
1954	3	12	37	Bill Bowman	B	William & Mary
1955	2	12	25	Dean Renfro	B	North Texas State
1956	2	8	21	Dick Donlin	E	Hamline
1957	3	5	30	Don Owens	T	Southern Mississippi
1958	4	3	40	Dan Nolan	QB	Lehigh
1959	3	8	32	Pete Johnson	B	Virginia Military Inst
1960	2	9	21	Sam Homer	HB	Virginia Military Inst
1961	3	10	38	Houston Antwine	G	Southern Illinois North Carolina
1962	2	3	17	Chuck Hinton	T	Central
1963	6	3	73	Bob Paremore	B	Florida A&M
1964	3	14	42	Sid Blanks	RB	Texas A&I
1965	2	10	24	Alphonse Dotson	T	Grambling State
1966	1	14	14	Milt Morin	TE	Massachusetts
1967	1	17	17	Gene Upshaw	G	Texas A&I
1968	1	3	3	Claude Humphrey	DE	Tennessee State
1969	3	2	28	Ernest Calloway	LB	Texas Southern
1970	1	1	1	<i>Terry Bradshaw</i>	QB	Louisiana Tech
1971	1	3	3	Dan Pastorini	QB	Santa Clara
1972	1	3	3	Lionel Antoine	T	Southern Illinois
1973	1	8	8	Wallace Chambers	DE	Eastern Kentucky
1974	1	1	1	<i>Ed (Too Tall) Jones</i>	DE	Tennessee State
1975	1	4	4	Walter Payton	RB	Jackson State
1976	1	10	10	James Hunter	DB	Grambling State
1977	1	28	28	Ezra Johnson	DE	Morris Brown
1978	1	17	17	Doug Williams	QB	Grambling State
1979	1	7	7	Phil Simms	QB	Morehead State

1980	1	23	23	Roynell Young	DB	Alcorn State
1981	2	3	31	David Hughes	RB	Boise State
1982	1	14	14	Barry Redden	RB	Richmond
1983	1	17	17	Leonard Smith	DB	McNeese State
1984	1	22	22	Terry Taylor	DB	Southern Illinois Mississippi Valley State
1985	1	16	16	Jerry Rice	WR	Jackson State
1986	2	1	28	Jackie Walker	LB	Azusa Pacific
1987	2	7	35	Christian Okoye	RB	Northwestern State (LA)
1988	1	17	17	John Stephens	RB	Northern Arizona
1989	1	27	27	Shawn Collins	WR	Liberty
1990	1	21	21	Eric Green	TE	North Dakota State
1991	2	27	54	Phil Hansen	DE	Mississippi Valley State
1992	2	1	29	Ashley Ambrose	DB	Jackson State
1993	1	19	19	Lester Holmes	G	Alcorn State
1994	1	11	11	John Thierry	DE	Alcorn State
1995	1	3	3	Steve McNair	QB	Alcorn State
1996	1	15	15	John Mobley	LB	Kutztown (PA)
1997	2	22	52	Marcellus Wiley	DE	Columbia
1998	2	27	57	Cordell Taylor	DB	Hampton
1999	1	22	22	Lamar King	DE	Saginaw Valley State
2000	1	21	21	Sylvester Morris	WR	Jackson State
2001	3	16	78	William Peterson	DB	Western Illinois
2002	3	7	72	Roosevelt Williams	DB	Tuskegee
2003	2	7	39	Rashean Mathis	DB	Bethune-Cookman
2004	2	6	38	Ricardo Colclough	DB	Tusculum
2005	2	9	41	Michael Roos	T	Eastern Washington
2006	2	10	42	Danieal Manning	DB	Abilene Christian
2007	2	16	48	Justin Durant	LB	Hampton
2008	1	16	16	Dominique Rodgers- Cromartie	DB	Tennessee State
2009	3	5	69	Jason Williams	OLB	Western Illinois
2010	2	30	62	Vlad Ducasse	OT	Massachusetts

**Division based on NCAA Divisional History*