

CFB's biggest stars making jump to NFL

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The Alabama Crimson Tide won its fourth title in the last seven seasons by defeating the Clemson Tigers in one of the most exciting national championships in recent memory. Bowl season is over, and draft eligible players from both programs can finally declare for the NFL draft. The first major event of the off-season is the NFL Combine on Feb. 23 and concludes with the NFL Draft on April 28.

Heisman Trophy winner Derrick Henry finished his Alabama career with a 158-yard, three touchdown performance. The Tide's workhorse is expected to declare for the NFL draft and be one of the first players selected. Junior tight end O.J. Howard boosted his draft stock with his performance in Monday's championship game. Howard had not caught a touchdown pass since 2013, but quickly made up for lost time. He caught two touchdown passes and finished with 208 receiving yards on only five catches. Howard is also expected to declare for the draft. Alabama Head Coach Nick Saban didn't announce which players declared for the draft until after the title game. Saban said he didn't want public declarations to distract the team from the game itself.

Alabama outside linebacker Tim Williams is considering declaring for the draft. Williams said publicly he would return to Alabama, but changed his tune recently, admitting he might jump to the NFL. Scouts have expressed an interest in Williams due to his speed in the pass rush.

Defensive end Shaq Lawson is the only player on the Clemson roster who has declared for the draft. Lawson led the nation in tackles for loss. He's a big body on the defensive line and has a knack for getting to the quarterback. Ohio State wide receiver and draft prospect Braxton Miller could fly under the radar.

Miller started his career as a successful quarterback, winning two Big Ten Player of the Year awards for the Buckeyes before severe shoulder injuries forced him to move to wide receiver. Miller struggled early as a blocker, but he made strides as the season progressed. The sample size is small, but there's no denying his athletic ability. NFL scouts will be paying attention at his pro day.

The 2015 college football season saw its share of memorable moments produced by the best players in the nation. The fans of these programs will be saddened by the departure of some of the nation's brightest play-makers, but they will have an opportunity to watch them shine on the NFL stage and see a new crop of elite talent to cheer for on campus in 2016.