**Success in Division I Head Football Coaches**

An Analysis of Collegiate Players Drafted to the NFL

By: Katelyn Sobotka; Mentor: Professor John Solow
Tippie College of Business, The University of Iowa, 21 East Market Street, Iowa City, IA 52242

## Abstract

What constitutes a successful Division I head football coach in the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) is often determined by their ability to add value to the team by generating on-field wins and post-season success. Another way in which a Division I head football coach can be considered successful is by their ability to add value to the individual players on their squad by getting them drafted into the National Football League (NFL). Highly regarded studies have been done and papers have been written concerning the former definition of a successful Division I head football coach. Our research is to determine the latter definition of what constitutes a head football coach's ability to successfully add value to the individual player. We plan to do this by using various economic analysis tools on a large data set to determine which coaches are most successful at taking recruits, specifically low-star recruits, and having them drafted into the NFL after participation in their football program. We will also analyze characteristics of such coaches and use the similarities to attempt to create a model of what constitutes a head football coach that is successful at adding value to the individual player.

## Material & Methods

The main economic tool we will be using in our research is regression analysis. Regression analysis is a statistical process for determining whether there are relationships between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. In many of our analyses we will be using the number of players drafted as our dependent variable and then try to determine what factors influence that variable, whether it be caliber of recruiting classes, lagged winning percentage, etc.

We started our research with a data set that Professor Solow already had. This set included recruiting classes and the star rating (caliber) for each player in those classes from 2002 to 2007 for various FBS schools. We wanted to expand this data set to include which of these recruited players got drafted and at what pick in the draft. To do this I researched and compiled another data set that included all 256 players drafted to the NFL every year from 2004 to 2012. Sorting this data by school, I was able to easily match up and find which recruits were drafted and when. We plan on running a regression on this individual data to see if there is any correlation between caliber when recruited and a higher draft pick.

The new data set showing the draftees from all teams also brought up many new observations and questions for Professor Solow and myself. Currently we are working on seeing what variables affect how many players get drafted per year.

## Literature Review

There has been two papers written that largely correspond with the research we have been performing and the questions we have been asking. The first paper is An Economic Model of the College Football Recruiting Process written by J. Michael Dumond, Allen K. Lynch, and Jennifer Platania and published in 2007. Their research asks the question of what factors influence a high school recruit's decision on where to play college football. They tested for many factors including recruit performance variables, team performance variables, and institutional variables. Their regression results showed that the most significant factor affecting a recruit's college selection is the distance from their hometown to the college.

The second paper, Just Win Baby? Determinants of NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision Coaching Compensation written by Randy R. Grant, John C. Leadley, and Zenon X. Zygmant, researches factors that influence a head coach's salary. Their results show that the most influential variables on a head coach's salary are winning, BCS ranking, and recruiting success. One variable the authors failed to test for was player draft data, which is partial reasoning for the research we are currently performing.

## Results So Far

Following are some of the results we have thus far found in our research. We plan to continue expanding our study, which may cause some of these conclusions to change in the future.

- Many of the players in our NFL draft data set were not in our recruiting class data set. This could be because the recruiting class data set was not complete with all FBS teams and/or it shows that many walk-ons also get drafted.
- Higher caliber recruiting classes doesn't necessarily mean more draftees.
- Cheaters Prosper? Eleven of the 25 top teams listed to the right were found to be committing an NCAA violation during the table's time frame. Though these violations were for a variety of actions, it still begs the question.

## Top 25 Teams

This list shows the 25 FBS teams who have had the most draftees in the past ten years (2005 to 2014).

- USC
- LSU
- Oklahoma
- Florida State
- Alabama
- Ohio State
- Florida
- Miami (FL)
- California
- Clemson
- Texas
- Wisconsin
- Notre Dame
- Virginia Tech
- Iowa
- Nebraska
- Oregon
- Penn State
- Tennessee
- Michigan
- South Carolina
- Auburn
- North Carolina
- Stanford

## Top Conferences

This list shows the FBS conferences in order of who has had the most draftees in the past ten years (2005 to 2014). We have also included the FCS teams as a whole.

- SEC
- ACC
- Big 10
- Pac 12
- Big 12
- FCS
- Mountain West
- AAC
- MAC
- CUSA
- Independents
- Sun Belt

## Moving Forward

As our research continues we plan to add information to our data sets that will allow us to increase our regression analysis to include more independent variables in hopes of better explaining our dependent variable. Some variables we are currently in the process of adding are team winning percentage for the two years prior to the draft and conference affiliation. We hope that these two variables, in addition to the average caliber of the recruiting class, will help give us an understanding as to why some teams draft a significantly higher amount of players than other teams do.