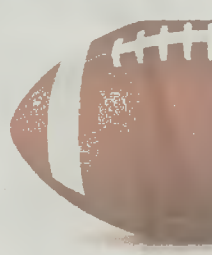




# SPORTS WEEK



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**Timothy Ramsey**  
Sports Columnist

## Clemson takes another step toward the top

BY TIMOTHY RAMSEY  
THE CHRONICLE

The Clemson Tigers have won their second national championship in the past three years. Their 44-16 rout of the Alabama Crimson Tide was a surprise to all.

Alabama has been the gold standard in college football for nearly the past decade. Since Crimson Tide head coach Nick Saban took over the program in 2007, he has turned the team into national contenders almost every year.

For Clemson to totally dominate the game the way they did was not the expected outcome. I, along with most others, thought this game would be a close one all the way through. In reality, after the first quarter, Clemson dominated the game on both sides of the ball.

I have never seen a Nick Saban-led Alabama team get manhandled that way. Offensively, they were totally held in check by the Clemson defense. On defense, they could do nothing to stop what the Tigers threw at them.

With five championships since 2009, I'm not saying Alabama isn't the cream of the crop in college football, but Clemson has put themselves on an equal level with the win on January 7. I never thought the Tigers would be able to pull even with the Crimson Tide in such a short time.

If you look at the national championship game, the Crimson Tide were soundly out coached by the Clemson staff. Also, there was a clear advantage for Clemson at the skill positions as far as pure athleticism was concerned. If there was a 50/50 play to be made, the Tigers seemed to always come up with it.

Honestly, that was a surprise to me. Saban has always recruited the top athletes from around the country and routinely brings in a top three class every year, but they seemed outmatched by what Clemson had on the field.

Clemson is just getting started. Most of their skill position guys on offense are freshmen and sophomores, so the country has another year or two to deal with the talent the Tigers have on the field. Trevor Lawrence, Clemson true freshman quarterback, was ready for this moment. He thoroughly outplayed Heisman finalist Tua Tagovailoa, which I'm sure no one saw that coming to this degree.

To be honest, I never thought that Clemson would get to this level so quickly under Dabo Swinney. He took over the Clemson program midway through the 2008 year for Tommy Bowden. He immediately established himself as a great recruiter by making Clemson one of only 10 schools to be ranked in the top 20 of

See Ramsey on B2

## JV Defensive Player of the Year sits down with The Chronicle

BY TIMOTHY RAMSEY  
THE CHRONICLE

Collin Smith is the 2018 JV Defensive Player of the Year for The Chronicle. The 5-foot 8-inch defensive back was a key contributor for the Spartans on the JV level, before moving up to Varsity to help the team during their playoff run.

The Louisiana product was in his first year with Mt. Tabor and made an immediate impact on the field. JV head coach Mike Lovelace says Smith is one of the most talented, yet humble kids he has ever been around.

Smith recently spoke with The Chronicle about his incredible year on the field and what to expect from him going forward.

**Question:** When you heard the news you had been selected as the defensive player of the year, what were your first thoughts?

**Answer:** I felt blessed, because I worked hard for it. My coaches around me helped and supported me the entire year. I also had a good group of guys that welcomed me as I transferred schools from New Orleans, so I was blessed to be in a good position and have a good coaching staff around me. This was a great opportunity for me.

**Q:** What type of expectations did you have for yourself coming into the year considering it was an entirely new environment and team?

**A:** Basically, I just wanted to prove to everyone that I could play at a very fast level and that I could



Smith made an immediate impact for his Mt. Tabor team, transferring from the state of Louisiana.

live up to what my coaches were hyping me up to be. I just felt I

**Q:** What do you feel are your best attributes on the field, because you seem to be able to do it all, defending the run and pass?

**A:** I feel as though I have a very high football IQ, I recognize things really fast, and I feel like I am a good leader on the field. Honestly, I just like to make plays.

**Q:** How do you get yourself amped up for every game?

**A:** Well, I know that Mt. Tabor is on the top of the map in Winston, so it's always someone trying to be better than you or get where you are at. I just focus on trying to stay top dog and that keeps me going.

**Q:** After a stellar sophomore campaign, what do you expect from yourself once you are on the varsity level full time?

**A:** I definitely want to keep the momentum I have going. I want to improve what I am doing on the field by getting faster and stronger, so I can be more explosive next year and maybe help out on offense as well next year.

**Q:** Your head coach had nothing but high praise for you. How good does it make you feel to hear those things coming from him?

**A:** I feel like I am just an overall good person. I care for others and I am respectful to authority, because that's how I was raised.

**Q:** What are your favorite subjects in the classroom?

**A:** English, I would say.

**Q:** What is your dream school?

**A:** LSU (Louisiana State University), because they are the hometown team.

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Photos by Alphonso Abbott Jr.

BY TIMOTHY RAMSEY  
THE CHRONICLE

On Tuesday, January 8, the Duke Blue Devils made their way to Winston-Salem to take on the Demon Deacons. Zion Williamson and the crew put on a great show for the fans in Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial

Coliseum.

The Deacs kept the game within striking distance at the half, only trailing by the score of 42-34. But, behind Williamson's 30 points and fellow freshman sensation RJ Barret's 21 points, the Blue Devils turned it on after intermission leading to the 87-65 victory.