

Spirit-Filled Quarterback Says Entering the NFL Draft Is a 'Leap of Faith'

University of Alabama quarterback Tua Tagovailoa, who burst onto the college football scene three years ago touting his faith in Jesus Christ and saying he spoke in tongues, declared for the 2020 NFL Draft Monday, saying his decision was a "leap of faith."

As a junior eligible, Tagovailoa had to decide whether to stay at Alabama or declare for the draft. He opted for the latter.

Tagovailoa, who suffered a major season-ending hip injury in November against Mississippi State and underwent surgery to repair it the next day, said he and his family had prayed diligently about the decision to turn pro over the past couple of months and that he also sought advice concerning the decision from his pastor, Chris Hodges of Church of the Highlands, and from international evangelist Perry Stone.

"It pretty much boils down to one thing, and I think that's faith," Tagovailoa said Monday during a press conference in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. "It boils down to that. Coming from a family that has a lot of it, I'm definitely willing to take that challenge. ... We [sought] guidance from a good amount of pastors. My dad is really good friends with Pastor Chris at Church of the Highlands. I got to seek counsel from our pastors back home. And then also Pastor Perry Stone. They pretty much all said the same thing—follow your heart. And then they also all had stories to kind of align with what they were trying to share with me."

Despite his injury, many NFL experts have Tagovailoa going high in the first round of the NFL draft in April. But

Tagovailoa, although he says he is content with his decision, said none of his doctors have been able to give him definitive answers on his health for the foreseeable future. He said he won't know for at least a month, perhaps two, how he's progressing or if he'll be able to attend the NFL combines—workouts for teams prior to the draft.

“Because of the extent of the injury, this was certainly a leap of faith for me,” said Tagovailoa, who led the Crimson Tide to a national championship as a freshman in 2017 and finished second in the Heisman Trophy voting as a sophomore in 2018 before Alabama lost to Clemson in the national championship game.

“I'm optimistic that I will be able to play this upcoming season, but right now, I'm more worried about getting better as soon as possible. This was a really hard decision. While going through my rehab, I've been talking a lot with my parents about it, and we've been going back and forth. Some things made sense, others did not. Do I stay or do I go? Now that's done, and I don't have to worry about it.”

Following the national championship against Georgia in January 2018 in which he threw the game-winning 41-yard touchdown pass in overtime to Devonta Smith, Tagovailoa said on national television that he prayed in tongues and that “kept him calm.”

“I just want to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,” Tagovailoa said after the game. {eo}

Shawn A. Akers is an assistant online editor for *Charisma Media*.