

## Tyjae Spears: From SoPA to NFL sensation

July 27, 2023 1:30 PM Alicia Jasmin  
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Rookie Premier: Tyjae Spears photographed for the first time in his Tennessee Titans uniform. (Photo from @Titans Twitter | Ben Liebenberg)

Tulane School of Professional Advancement (SoPA) alumnus Tyjae Spears has been making waves with his remarkable achievements both on and off the football field. After an outstanding season with the Green Wave, Spears' talents caught the attention of the Tennessee Titans, who selected him as their third-round NFL draft pick. Additionally, his dedication and prowess in the sports arena led to him being honored as the Allstate Sugar Bowl's Outstanding Male Amateur Athlete of the Year for 2022-23. Amidst the whirlwind of his NFL rookie training camp, Spears took a

moment to connect with his alma mater to discuss his journey and aspirations.

*Editor's note: The following transcript has been edited for length and clarity.*

Make a plan, stick to it and be true to yourself. Don't let anyone else determine your success.

—Tyjae Spears, Tulane SoPA '23

### **What's a day like in the life of an NFL rookie?**

I'm up at 6 a.m. for breakfast followed by a team meeting at 7. We then spend about two hours on the field and there's another one-hour meeting after that. Sometimes we're on the field off and on from 7 in the morning until about 5 p.m. We are really putting in the work!

### **Are you getting play time with the veterans, or are the rookies at a separate camp?**

We're not separate at all. This is the best staff I've interacted with. Everybody cares about everybody. Here, it's all about relationships. Our head coach wants us to get to know everyone we come in contact with in the building from janitors to cooks. I really appreciate that.

### **Has there been much support from your hometown of Ponchatoula, LA?**

In high school, people started knowing my name because of what I was doing on the field. They knew me as the kid who was going to Tulane. There was a lot of support from that small town.

### **We watched you on draft day surrounded by friends and family. Are you adjusting well to the pressures associated with being in the spotlight?**

I constantly remind myself whenever I'm feeling pressure that I'm not doing this for me alone. It's for the people who will come behind me as well as the people who helped me get here.

### **Your parents looked so proud receiving your diploma in your absence. Whose idea was it to do that?**

I'm a first-generation college graduate so it was an important moment for me to have my mom and my dad walk across the stage to receive my diploma. That was the real highlight of my year because I know it's the first time they've ever walked across a college stage. It was my idea, but it was made possible with the help of my academic advisor and lots of other people within Tulane.

**If you weren't in the NFL, how would you use your health and wellness degree professionally?**

I had great men in my life, like my dad, but I wish that when I was in the ninth grade, I could have had someone who did it (played professional football) or was doing it that could give me advice. I would like to be a coach, but I would do it for the mentor aspect of it. Kids need someone to look up to.

**What advice do you have for players who are just starting their collegiate careers?**

I faced a lot of adversity, but I never quit. I was dealt a bad hand, but it's not about the hand you are given, it's what you do with it. Make a plan, stick to it and be true to yourself. Don't let anyone else determine your success.