THE NFL DRAFT REPORT PRESENTS

THE 2019 OUTSIDE LINEBACKER CLASS

TEAMS ARE HOWLING FOR THIS WOLVERINE ON DAY TWO

Chase Winovich-#15

University of Michigan Wolverines

6:02.6-256

*Agility Tests.*..4.59 in the 40-yard dash…1.57 10-yard dash…2.69 20-yard dash…4.11 20-yard shuttle…6.94 three-cone drill…30 1/2-inch vertical jump…9'-08" broad jump…Bench pressed 225 pounds 18 times…32 3/4-inch arm length…10-inch hands…78 1/2-inch wingspan.

*Background.*..Hopefully, the Green Bay Packers organization agrees with my "Cinderella and the Glass Slipper" statement here - Winovich can be the second coming of Clay Matthews - a long-haired college rush end who just might be a more valuable commodity playing in the second level.

In this day when most high profile draft picks bail on their school prior to the bowl season, fearing that they would risk injury, Winovich went the completely different route. Doctors urged him to undergo thumb surgery after the regular season, but the defensive leader refused, saying he was needed on the field after several of his teammates decided to stay home during the Peach Bowl.

Winovich further impressed NFL teams, as he continued to put off surgery until after he performed at the 2019 NFL Scouting Combine. As his agility numbers above show, he not only had most of the top figures for the edge rushers attending the event in Indianapolis, but his agility test scored even bettered most of the defensive backs to run the course. Mind you, his eighteen reps in the 225-pound bench press was done before his mid-March thumb surgery.

Winovich just felt that he needed to do everything he could to show NFL scouts that his production at Michigan can translate to the NFL level and that’s meant putting off a medical procedure. He knew for some time that he needed to have thumb surgery, but wanted to apply the "business first" approach.

Winovich is expected to need two months to recover, so the hope is that he’ll be able to take part in OTAs and the final minicamp of the offseason program by mid-May. Where he’ll be playing in the country and on the defense both remain unknown as he has worked out as both a linebacker and defensive end to show his versatility.

“I don’t want to say [it’s] 50-50, but I’m pretty much getting the whole gambit,” Winovich said, prior to his surgery. “The whole spectrum. I’m getting teams that run a 4-3 and they love me. They have guys on their team they compare me to. They think I’m more athletic than their guy, one team said. I’ve had a lot of 3-4 teams just love me. It’s been good.”

Winovich injured his thumb in the regular season's eleventh game vs. Indiana. The team's 2017 Most Valuable Player mulled whether he would return for his final year of eligibility. He wanted to play in the Peach Bowl and finish his career with his teammates, what he described as “literally the first thing I love outside of my family.” In so many ways, Winovich has been the heart and soul of this team, and that’s how he would like to be remembered as he moves on to the next phases of his football career.

“Just important I’m viewed in a positive light and I’m viewed as someone who busted his butt and gave everything he had for his school,” Winovich. “That alone by itself would be a great legacy and conclusion that he made Michigan better and put Michigan in a better place than when he started. I think I can check those boxes.”

Defensive end Rashan Gary and linebacker Devin Bush decided to forego their final seasons at Michigan and are not playing in the bowl game. Running back Karan Higdon also did not play in the Peach Bowl, as well as right tackle Juwann Bushell-Beatty. Despite the heavily bandaged hand, the player teammates labeled the "try-hard guy" registered seven tackles with a sack and three stops behind the line of scrimmage in the losing effort to Florida.

The son of Nina and Peter Winovich, his father played basketball at Bethany College (1977-81) and his mother was a presidential fitness award recipient. Those great bloodlines shined brightly as the Pennsylvania native starred as a linebacker and quarterback at Thomas Jefferson High School. He totaled 149 tackles, 22.0 sacks, seven fumble recoveries and one interception on defense and carried the ball 119 times for 1,031 yards and 17 touchdowns on offense during his career.

Winovich's sophomore season saw him deliver 47 tackles, followed by 69 tackles, nine sacks and four fumble recoveries as a junior. In his final season, he collected 57 tackles, 13.0 sacks, three forced fumbles and three fumble recoveries. He also completed 14-of-29 passes for 210 yards and three touchdowns and registered 981 yards on 115 carries as a senior. He closed out his prep career participating in the 2014 Offense-Defense All-American Bowl.

Winovich committed to Michigan over offers from Arizona, Arkansas, Florida State, Michigan State, Missouri, Northwestern, Ohio State, Pittsburgh, Tennessee, Virginia Tech, and West Virginia. Despite being a lifelong Ohio State fan and having an offer from Ohio State, he committed to Michigan due to his connection to then Michigan head coach Brady Hoke.

Winovich's brother-in-law was also a huge Michigan fan. On National Signing Day, February 5th, 2014, Winovich was the first to submit his National Letter of Intent paperwork, which was officially processed at 7:03 a.m., to Michigan.

As a freshman, Winovich was a reserve 235-pound tight end who appeared in six games on special teams. The Academic All-Big Ten Conference selection made his college debut vs. Utah and recorded one tackle in each of the Penn State and Florida (Citrus Bowl) contests.

In 2016, Winovich added ten pounds to his frame for a move to defensive end. Again chosen Academic All-Big Ten, he appeared in all thirteen games, starting twice. He posted 35 tackles (11 solos) with five sacks for minus 29 yards, recording one in three of his final five appearances. He also made 9.5 stops for losses of 40 yards and caused one fumble. Through 286 snaps, he was charged with just one missed tackle.

Winovich was the team's Defensive Lineman of the Game vs. Maryland, as he made five stops and had one sack. He posted seven hits vs. Hawaii and in his first career start, he delivered six tackles and caused a fumble via a sack.

As a junior, the 253-pound defensive end was the recipient of the team's Blue Collar award. He was added to the Chuck Bednarik Award Watch List at midseason and the media named him first-team All-Big Ten. He started all thirteen games in the trenches, leading the front line with 79 tackles (28 solos), eight sacks and eighteen stops behind the line of scrimmage. He also recovered the two fumbles that he caused.

Winovich was named Defensive Player of the Game in the win over Purdue, as he set a then career-high with eight tackles including four solo stops and set new career-bests in tackles for loss (3.5) and sacks (2.5) while also contributing on special teams. He was selected Walter Camp National Player of the Week on Defense and Big Ten Co-Defensive Player of the Week after that game.

He was also the team's Defensive Lineman of the Game and delivered the Big Hit of the Week as he helped seal the win over Florida (Sept. 2) with a strip sack in the end zone in the game's final minutes.

He forced a fumble, made 1.5 sacks/tackles for loss and finished with three tackles overall against Rutgers and made five stops in the Outback Bowl vs. South Carolina, as he was credited with one sack, one fumble recovery and a quarterback hurry. On 739 snaps, he again recorded only one missed tackle in 2017.

As a senior, Winovich was recognized as a second-team All-American by The NFL Draft Report and the American Football Coaches Association (AFCA), adding third-team accolades from the Associated Press. A semifinalist for the Chuck Bednarik Award, he was a consensus All-Big Ten first-team choice. He was twice named Defensive Player of the Week for his performances vs. SMU and Northwestern. Along with the entire defense, secured a share of Defensive Player of the Week honors for their contributions towards the team performance vs. Michigan State.

The recipient of the Bo Schembechler MVP Team Award and the Richard Katcher Award, presented to Michigan's most outstanding defensive lineman or outside linebacker, Winovich made eight tackles with three solo stops at Notre Dame, including three tackles for loss and 0.5 sacks. He matched his career-high with 10 tackles vs. SMU, with four solo stops, including three for loss with half a sack and one pass breakup. He added six total tackles, tied for the team lead, playing along the defensive line and on special teams at Rutgers. He was in on seven tackles with 1.5 for loss before leaving the game with a thumb injury vs. Indiana. He closed out his career with seven tackles, including a team-high three for loss with one sack vs. Florida in the Chick-Fil-A Peach Bowl. On 639 snaps, he missed six tackles, but all came in the final two games with his hand heavily bandaged.

Winovich is also a community icon. He works with Tammi Carr and The ChadTough Foundation to raise awareness and money for Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma (DIPG) research. Tammi Carr's son, Chad Carr, who was the grandson of former Michigan head football coach Lloyd Carr, died in November 2015 at the age of five from DIPG, which is an inoperable malignant tumor in the brain stem.

Since teaming up with The ChadTough Foundation prior to the 2017 Michigan football season, Winovich has worked to increase awareness about DIPG. In December 2017, Winovich and several of his teammates and coaches dyed their hair orange for the 2018 Outback Bowl in order to raise over $200,000 for the ChadTough Foundation. He has also participated in Dancing with the Michigan Stars, which raised over $143,000.

*The Scouting Report*

*Athletic Ability.*..Winovich has good upper body muscle development and room on his frame to carry more bulk, if a team decides to keep him on the defensive line. With his quickness, range and change of direction agility, he is more than capable of playing as a strong-side linebacker. He has good arm and chest muscle thickness, good bubble and adequate thigh and calf thickness. As his frame continues to develop, he knows how to use his strength efficiently to compensate playing vs. the larger blockers.

Winovich plays at a good pad level and displays excellent quickness coming out of his stance for a rush end or linebacker. He performs with good suddenness and leverage, showing no issues when having to change direction, which are ideal traits to have if he possibly moves to linebacker. He has that sudden burst to consistently give backside chase coming off the edge, as his above average balance will usually see him sift through trash. He generates a very good initial burst off the snap and is quick to build acceleration on the move. He has outstanding lateral pursuit ability and does a very good job closing down the line. He is a strong wrap-up tackler with good hand usage and uses those hands effectively to keep blockers off his body.

*Football Sense*…Winovich has no problems taking plays from the chalkboard to the playing field. He has no problems grasping the mental aspect of the game. He is a low rep type that shows above average alertness to his surroundings. He understands his role and will not hesitate to ask good questions from the coaches, knowing their input can only help him more. On defense, you can see that he picks up traps and pulls quickly and is very capable of handling the mental aspect of the game.

He shows good awareness to find the ball and reacts with quickness when on the move than when working in the trenches. He picks up the ball on the run very well in pursuit. While he is becoming effective reacting to block pressure, he can get rerouted by the offensive tackle when he gets too high in his stance. Still, he is a smart player with an instinctive feel for blocks and can generally find the ball in the open field.

*Explosion/Pursuit*…Winovich shows good explosion in his first step, with a proper rise in his pad level off the ground. He does a good job of reaching and sticking his hands into the fray in order to gauge the offensive lineman’s attack. He flashes that burst to surprise a lethargic blocker (see 2018 Notre Dame, SMU, North western, Florida games), which allows him to get instant penetration. He is a quick twitch type in his play, but must be conscious of keeping his arms inside the frame, as when he fires them too wildly, he leaves his body exposed for bigger blockers to lock on and control him. Still, Winovich shows consistent explosion coming off the snap. He has very good initial quickness and can change direction effortlessly. He is especially effective generating that burst coming around the corner on the pass rush.

Winovich is the type that actually was gets stronger and quicker deeper into the games, thanks to his excellent athletic ability. He has more than proven that he is a quick-twitch player who can easily burst up field and has made strides in generating the same quickness with his hands to disengage and it was very rare to see him be late coming off the line of scrimmage.

*Strength at the Point of Attack…*Because of his good pad level, Winovich is capable of slipping under slow blockers. He has the strength to shed and go vs. tight ends and fullbacks, but must continue to improve his hand usage in order to do a better job of combating double teams. He has that natural strength to impact an opponent, but is still learning the proper way to execute counter moves and generate good body lean. He just lacks the size and bulk you want in attempts to split or play the double team (when he drops his hands, he can be walked off before he can reload and hold ground at the point of attack) as a classic defensive end.

Each game, you can see the conscious effort he is making to use his hands to get inside control and leverage. He has the strong hand jolt to push blockers back on their heels and also has the speed to separate and then chase down the ball, knowing when to back off rather than out-battle. The thing you notice on film is that when he gets his hands on an opponent, he can tie up the blocker, standing them up and shed. His lower leg strength prevents lead blockers from being successful in attempts to reroute him (works better on the move than when stationary). He recovers off blocks quickly and is generally a disruptive force working down the line.

*Hand Usage.*..Winovich has good strength to control tight ends and lead blockers, but needs to be more effective with his counter moves and keeping his hands inside the frame to prevent blockers from attacking his body. When he gets good hand position, he has the quick moves to fight off the edge and defeat the pass block. He showed steady improvement in using his hands to fend off chop blocks in order to continue his flow to the ball when on the move. You can see that when he keeps his hands active, he is effective at creating separation. When he uses his hands to get inside control and plays with good technique, he will rarely give up any body surface (except when he gets a little too high in his stance). He also shows enough strength and pop to get off blocks, separate and jolt the blocker.

*Lateral Pursuit/Effort*…Thanks to his exceptional balance and good change of direction agility, Winovich could also become a candidate to play strong-side linebacker in a 3-4 alignment. He plays with good knee bend working through trash, especially when needed to chase off the edge (see 2018 Nebraska, Northwestern, Penn State Ohio games). He gives 110% effort in pursuit, as he is relentless trying to get to the ball. He moves well in the open field, thanks to his lateral range and his high motor lets him make big plays chasing across the field. He can close down the line of scrimmage quickly and shows the sudden burst needed to chase down plays from the backside. He is a good hustler who will run the long distance needed to make the plays at the opposite end of the field.

*Tackling Ability.*..Winovich excels at wrap-tackling, but he can also collide with lead blockers and ball carriers with a strong thud. He has the power and good pad level to impede the runner’s forward progress by attacking his opponent’s outside leg. He plays with valid control and awareness and it is rare to see him launch at runners, as he is quick to gain position. He shows good aggression in pursuit and explosiveness behind his hits. When locking up, his upper body strength allows him to drive through smaller blockers. In the open field, he willingly throws his body around. When he sets his sights on the quarterback, he will generally unload behind his hits.

*Run Defense.*..Winovich ranks second among all draft eligible defenders, as 11.8% of his tackles have resulted in impact hits in the backfield vs. the ground game (Montez Sweat is tops with 12.7%).

He has classic hand usage at the point of attack, doing a nice job of locking on and shedding the lead blockers when playing the ball in his area. He has that above average balance needed to make plays in pursuit, showing good knee bend. He will get covered up and contained by the bigger blockers, when he runs right into the pile, but as a stack-&-shed type, he does a very good job of stringing out plays and playing off blocks on the move. He makes quite a few plays in pursuit and shows the hand strength to shed and make plays while defending the tight end’s low blocks. He has very good balance, but must continue to be active with his hands in order to wear down the blockers during the game

*Pass Defense*…This is where Winovich’s speed is most evident. In 2018 games, he showed much better spin action to play off blockers when engaging them up field. His ability to escape with suddenness allows him to apply backside pressure (see SMU, Northwestern, Florida games). He has that burst that consistently surprises a lethargic blocker. When left out on an island, he is very capable of delivering the “knock out” blow to the quarterback. He does get out of control, at times, but you would rather that he plays with a relentless motor than just pick his moments. When free coming off the edge, it is as if he takes dead aim for the quarterback. If he breaks free from his blockers, he can generate lots of heat in the backfield with his quick pursuit. He has the burst to close on the quarterback off twists and games. Even in long pursuit, his quickness is above average.

*Compares To.*..Connor Barwin-ex-New York Giants...I think a team with a 3-4 defensive alignment, particularly Wade Phillips' system, would see him excel as a second level performer rather than play off the edge. Winovich is a disruptive force in the backfield due to his lateral agility and chase speed. He does a very good job of working off the offensive tackle’s edge when chasing around the back door. He is an active pass rusher who relies on a very effective swim move and a strong burst to close on the quarterback. He is relentless in pursuit and knows how to use his size to gain leverage.

INSIDE OR OUTSIDE, IT'S "ALL GOOD" FOR THE GATORS' JOSEPH

Vosean Joseph-#11

University of Florida Gators

6:01.4-230

*Agility Tests.*..4.58 in the 40-yard dash…1.61 10-yard dash…2.61 20-yard dash…4.75 20-yard shuttle…7.64 three-cone drill…28-inch vertical jump…8'-10" broad jump…Bench pressed 225 pounds 14 times…31 1/8-inch arm length…9 5/8-inch hands…75 1/8-inch wingspan.

*Background.*..Joseph started his Gators career as a middle linebacker, but was better utilized on the outside in 2017 before the coaches returned him to the "Mike" position in 2018. They secured the Miami native's services after the Norland High School standout earned Florida 2015 6A first-team All-State honors as a senior. He played on the 2016 U.S. Under-19 National Team in the International Bowl against Canada at AT&T Stadium in Texas. In 2015, he had totaled 97 tackles, seven sacks and five forced fumbles, despite missing the final two games.

Joseph played in all thirteen games for Florida in 2016, starting vs. Iowa as an extra linebacker in the Outback Bowl while serving as a key member of all four special teams’ units. He totaled 13 tackles, one tackle-for-loss, one pass breakup, and one fumble recovery on defense and posted a pair of special teams’ tackles during the season. In his starting debut in the Outback Bowl vs. Iowa, he recorded six tackles, one tackle-for-loss and one pass breakup. Of the six passes targeted into his area, two were completed for 16 yards, but his reckless play saw him miss on four tackles.

In eleven 2017 appearances, Joseph started ten times at weak-side outside linebacker. He finished third on the team with 55 tackles (22 solos), making four stops-for-loss. He also picked off one pass, deflected another and caused a fumble (UAB). His first career interception set up a scoring drive in the South Carolina tilt. On 448 snaps, he missed thirteen tackles, as the opposition completed 20-of-27 passes vs. him for 222 yards.

Back at middle linebacker for the 2018 campaign, Joseph started 11-of-13 games, leading the team with a career-high 93 tackles. He had four sacks among his nine stops for losses of 30 yards, as he advanced a fumble recovery 20 yards and broke up five passes. The junior had a career-high 14 stops and 3.5 tackles-for-loss in Florida’s win over LSU, as he garnered Walter Camp National Defensive Player of the Week and SEC Defensive Player of the Week honors for his performance against the Tigers. On 677 snaps, Joseph was charged with seventeen missed tackles and he was targeted 37 times, with 28 of those tosses caught for 279 yards and three touchdowns.

In 37 games, Joseph started 22 times. Having declared for the NFL Draft after his junior season, he closed out his career with 161 tackles (69 solos), four sacks for minus 23 yards and fourteen stops for losses of 44 yards. He deflected seven passes and recovered two fumbles, advancing one 20 yards. He also picked off a pass and caused one fumble. He missed on 34 tackle attempts and allowed 50-of-70 passes to be completed for 517 yards and three scores.

*The Scouting Report*

*Athletic Ability.*.. Joseph lacks ideal height for his position, but has a thick, muscular frame with a tight abdomen, broad shoulders, good arm muscle definition, a high, big bubble, thick thighs and calves. While he has the potential to carry some more bulk, he could max out at 235 pounds. He has a thin waist and good change of direction agility due to his loose hips.

Joseph has outstanding closing quickness and timed speed. He has the range to make plays at the opposite end of the field and demonstrates good balance and body control taking on blockers at the point of attack. He is an explosive hitter who stays low in his pads and can slip and avoid blocks when redirecting inside, but he is prone to reckless play and when he leaves his feet, it usually results in missed tackles. His agility and flexibility are evident when accelerating to close. He shows good strength facing up to the offensive linemen and has the timed speed to be effective dropping back in pass coverage (could possibly play strong safety).

*Key and Diagnostics Skills*…Against the run, Joseph excels at recognizing the blocking schemes, playing off of them and shutting down the rush lanes. He does a good job of splitting double teams, despite a lack of ideal height. He is still a work in progress reading pass plays and has to develop a better feel for the receiver through route progressions (allowed 50-of-70 targeted passes to be completed). He has the speed to stay with any receiver in the deep zone, but due to a lack of reps, it is hard to evaluate his ability to handle switch-offs playing in zone coverage.

He reacts quickly to jump the play in run support (made 111-of-161 of his tackles vs. the run) and takes good angles to the ball. He has a good feel for the ball carrier on the perimeter and is very effective at shutting down the cutback lanes. He has excellent vision to locate the ball in a crowd and the recovery speed to get back into the action on the rare times that he over-pursues. Because of reckless play that led to lots of missed tackles and the high amount of passes completed vs. him, he might not be the type you want on the field for all four downs, especially in pass coverage.

*Strength at the Point of Attack…* Joseph generates good explosion behind his hits. He might not have the size you look for in a traditional run stuffer, but with his low pad level and decent playing strength, he does a good job of slipping off and avoiding blocks in backside pursuit. His size limitations become an issue when an offensive linemen latches on to him, as he does not have the bulk to separate.

He is more effective on the move, where he can avoid the blockers, as he has the speed to take a wide loop to the ball and still make the play rather than sit back and engage the opponent. He shows nice explosion on contact to make up for his size issues, but is better off when he can slip off blocks rather than use his hands to shed. He would be even more involved in the plays if he can develop better hand/shed ability and recognition skills. He might not have the “sand in his pants” to hold ground firmly when working in-line.

*Hand Usage.*..Joseph’s game relies on making plays on the move and avoiding the piles. Like most undersized linebackers, he does not have the hand usage needed to shed blocks, so he has to rely on quickness to slip them. He is not asked to play vs. the pass much and must show better hand usage in attempts to jam and reroute tight ends and slot receivers to compete at the next level. He has good training room strength, but must utilize it better when attacking offensive linemen.

He doesn’t have the arm length to separate and must get off blocks quickly or he will get tied up. He needs to show that he is capable of grabbing and swimming off blocks better than he did in the 2018 season (17 missed tackles), in order to keep blockers off his body. He also does not show natural hands for the interception and even with his good leaping ability, he does not attack the ball well to deflect it at its highest point.

*Lateral Pursuit/Effort*…Joseph could shift outside in a Cover 2 defense due to his range and closing burst. He has the loose hips and change of direction agility to take the long road in pursuit and still make the play. He maintains balance on the move and never takes wasted steps in attempts to close. He is a reckless tackler, but has an exceptional burst to attack perimeter ball carriers. He simply excels when allowed to scrape and flow to the ball. The thing you see on film is his ability to avoid trash when on the move. He has the timed speed to cover the entire field and the range to chase from the backside with his sudden burst. He just gets a good jump on the ball due to his pure speed.

*Tackling Ability.*..Joseph is reckless tackler, but has good range and explosion. When he stays low in his pads, he has better plant-&-drive agility to redirect. He is not as effective when working in-line, especially when the offensive lineman gets into his body to lift him at the pads. Because of that in-line inability, he might be a better fit for an outside linebacker spot. He does a good job of keeping plays in front of him, keeping his arms extended to wrap and secure. He shows good pop on contact and the thing that he excels at is dragging down ball carriers in the open. In the open, he generates good pop, but he just lacks the size to face up to blockers inside at the next level. His speed is better suited for a possible shift outside.

*Run Defense.*..Despite a high amount of missed tackles, this is what Joseph does best. He attacks the fullback with a vengeance and uses his strength well to plug the inside rush lanes. He attacks with his shoulders properly squared, but must develop better hand usage to shed when working in-line. He will never have the size needed to stuff offensive linemen, but is perfectly able to slip and avoid to make the play. His timed speed is a rarity in this business for a linebacker. He has a fluid flow to the ball along the perimeter and can redirect to neutralize the cutback lanes. He might too reckless and over-pursue at times, but his recovery burst puts him right back into the play. He just runs the field well and has more than enough speed to cut off the outside play.

*Pass Defense*…This is a hard category to evaluate him in, as his responsibilities at inside linebacker was mostly for run containment and when used in coverage, he was torched for 50 receptions via 70 tosses. You can see he has the speed to stay with any receiver in pass routes and he has the loose hips to get depth in his pass drops. He needs to stay lower in his pads through his backpedal, but he comes out of it with few wasted steps to mirror the receiver on deep patterns. He shows good awareness to locate and attack receivers working underneath, but still needs to get his head turned around and not eye the quarterback too long when playing in the deep area. When he recognizes the play, he does a good job of getting square to the ball.

*Compares To.*..Haasan Reddick-Arizona Cardinals...Joseph can close on the ball in a hurry, but while some pro teams might view his size and speed as a better fit at outside linebacker, he will need more reps operating in zone coverage. He is utilized mostly in the box, but has to do a better job of recognizing plays as they develop, as his high amount of missed tackles would soon find him on the bench at the next level.

UNHERALDED BADGER HAS MADE A NICE LIVING ATTACKING THE BACKFIELD

Andrew Van Ginkel

University of Wisconsin Badgers

6:03.4-241

*Agility Tests.*..4.56 in the 40-yard dash…1.66 10-yard dash…2.67 20-yard dash…4.14 20-yard shuttle…6.89 three-cone drill…38-inch vertical jump…10'-03" broad jump…Bench pressed 225 pounds 17 times…32 1/2-inch arm length…9 3/8-inch hands…77 3/8-inch wingspan.

*Background.*.. Called the "best athlete and most underrated" player in the 2019 linebacker draft class, Van Ginkel became an instant "fan favorite" for scouts, as his reports in league organizations have been nothing but positives. Most in the scouting industry consider him to be an ascending player who may be just scratching the surface of his potential.

What separates Van Ginkel from most linebackers in his draft class is a highly effective initial hand punch that he uses regularly to pop the blocker and disengage. He gives total, all-out effort and speed in pursuit and has become an instinctive defender who plays well in space as a traditional linebacker. He's also become an excellent special teams player.

The well-traveled athlete found a home among the Badgers' second level defenders after toiling for two seasons at two other colleges as an undersized, yet highly productive defensive end. Shunned by major college recruiters coming out of Rock Valley High School, the youngster did not even receive a nibble from local universities - Iowa and Iowa State.

At Rock Valley, Van Ginkel played football for Nighthawks and also lettered in basketball. He was a five-time state qualifier in track. Competing as a defensive back and quarterback, he was used at several other positions, guiding his team to a 32-4 record during his three campaigns. Selected for the Iowa Shrine Bowl all-star game in 2013, the all-state selection during his senior year finished his career for Boyden-Hull/Rock Valley with 176 total tackles, 21.5 stops behind the line of scrimmage, ten interceptions and ten fumble recoveries.

During his final season in 2013, Van Ginkel recorded 95 tackles, including 14.5 stops-for-loss, as he also threw for 1,466 yards and 17 touchdowns while rushing for 1,413 yards and fifteen scores.

On the basketball team at Rock Valley, competing in the smallest of Iowa’s four classes, he averaged 25.4 points, 7.7 rebounds and 4.0 assists as a senior while shooting 40.6 percent from 3-point range, earning first-team all-state honors.

Much like the pioneers in the 1800s, Van Ginkel headed the "head west" call and arrived at the University of South Dakota in 2014. The prep defensive back and quarterback did not see the field during that first college season, as the coaches decided that the 205-pound first year player would have to bulk up and adjust to a new position.

Having been assigned jersey #59 upon joining the Coyotes program, hard work in the weight room saw two changes prior to the 2015 schedule. The coaches decided to move Van Ginkel to the defensive front wall and he also shunned his original jersey for #17. It would soon be an award-winning season, as he finished third in the STATS FCS Freshman Player of the Year Award balloting, with Northern Arizona quarterback Case Cookus finishing first in the voting and North Dakota running back John Santiago was second. Van Ginkel was one of six defensive players on the 20-person ballot.

Van Ginkel earned first team All-Missouri Valley Football Conference honors in 2015 and was named the conference's Freshman of the Year, in addition to being named to the MVFC All-Newcomer Team. He became the first Coyote to earn the award since South Dakota joined the league in 2012. He is the second South Dakota player to win a major player award, joining Tyler Starr who was Defensive Player of the Year in 2013.

Van Ginkel was also second in the voting for MVFC Newcomer of the Year. That award was given to Northern Iowa junior quarterback Aaron Bailey. He was the only defensive player on the College Football Performance Awards (CFPA) Watch List for Freshman Performer of the Year. He was also on the CFPA Watch List for Defensive Lineman of the Year accolades.

For the season, he set the school season-record for freshmen with eighteen tackles-for-loss (tenth in the nation) and nine sacks. He totaled 56 tackles, setting another school mark with ten consecutive games with at least one tackle-for-loss. He caused two fumbles, recovered three others and blocked one kick.

With three years of eligibility remaining, Van Ginkel decided to return to his home state, enrolling at Iowa Western Community College. Because he already had used his red-shirt season, he would have lost a year of eligibility by transferring to an FBS program and been forced to sit out under NCAA rules. Despite playing with an injured hip, the All-Region rush end delivered 50 tackles that included thirteen stops behind the line of scrimmage for the Reivers. He posted 3.5 sacks and tallied nine pressures with an interception in 2016.

Van Ginkel said his three finalists coming out of junior college were Nebraska, Iowa and Wisconsin. Wisconsin saw him as an outside linebacker. But Nebraska and Iowa wanted him to play defensive end. “I didn’t know if that really fit me as a player as much because I’d have to bulk up,” Van Ginkel said. “I wouldn’t have been able to drop into coverage. I think I can do that. I think I have the ability to drop back, hit my landmarks and cover the guys I’m asked to cover. That was a huge part of my decision to come here as well. This defense is very dynamic.”

Wisconsin rarely pursues players in the junior college ranks. In fact, Van Ginkel was the first junior college player to sign in Badgers coach Paul Chryst’s first three recruiting classes. But coaches saw him as a great fit academically and athletically. Plus, he understood Wisconsin’s culture having grown up just one state away. He arrived in time for spring practice and quickly learned Wisconsin’s complicated playbook.

Van Ginkel was part of a stellar trio of outside linebackers for Wisconsin, alongside starters Dooley and Leon Jacobs. While Dooley and Jacobs wreaked havoc on the field through their brute force, Van Ginkel’s athleticism and elusiveness provided what Leonhard called “a little bit of a change-up.”

That change-up saw the new Badger record 39 tackles and tie for the team lead with 6.5 sacks, despite never starting any of his 2017 appearances.

The newcomer also finished fourth on the team with ten stops for losses of 44 yards. Involved in 33 running plays, he held his opponents to minus seven yards (-0.21 ypc), as he delivered eleven tackles-for-loss and stopped two other ball carriers at the line of scrimmage. He allowed two first-down carries, but kept his opponents out of the end zone, posting a pair of touchdown-saving tackles. He made nine third-down stops and two more on fourth-down vs. the run.

Having played defensive back in high school, Van Ginkel flashed his pass coverage experience in the post-season. He returned an interception for a touchdown vs. Ohio State in the Big Ten Conference Championship Game and then had another pass theft in the Orange Bowl vs. Miami. He delivered at least one tackle-for-loss in ten of fourteen contests, including in seven of his final eight appearances.

Despite being limited by a right leg injury that saw him register minimal snaps in three early season games, Van Ginkel was one of the team's bright spots during the 2018 campaign. Through ten regular season starting assignments, he ranked fourth on the team with 46 tackles. He led the Badgers with 4.5 sacks and was tied for the lead with seven quarterback pressures. His most impressive numbers come vs. the running game - on 38 carries directed at the strong-side outside linebacker, his opponents have a net gain of just eight yards.

The well-traveled defender has appeared in forty-eight college games - eleven at South Dakota, eleven more at Iowa Western Community College and twenty-six as a member of the Wisconsin Badgers. He started the first twenty-two games of his career as a defensive end and earned his last ten recent starts as a strong-side outside linebacker for the Badgers.

Van Ginkel has amassed 191 tackles (116 solos) with 23.5 quarterback sacks for minus 175 yards, 38.0 stops for losses of 257 yards and thirty quarterback pressures. He gained 48 yards with a touchdown on three interception returns, also deflecting six other tosses. He recovered four fumbles, caused six others and blocked two kicks.

As a member of the Wisconsin defense, he has delivered 85 tackles (58 solos) with eleven sacks for minus 88 yards, seventeen stops for losses totaling 100 yards and ten quarterback pressures. He recovered a fumble and caused two others while picking off two passes for eleven yards in return, including one touchdown. He also deflected four other pass attempts and blocked one field goal.

*The Scouting Report*

*Athletic Ability.*.. Van Ginkel has a muscular frame with good upper body development, broad shoulders, thick chest, good bubble, tapered thighs and thick hamstrings. He has a tight waist and hips with room on his frame to carry at least another 10-15 pounds of bulk, if a team decides to return him to edge duties.

Van Ginkel is a very athletic defender, showing the hip swerve and flexibility you find in a safety. He shows suddenness in his initial move off the ball and gets to top speed quickly. He has the lateral agility and change of direction agility to slip off blocks and string plays wide. He shows very good strength upon initial contact and breaks down well on the move.

His ability to quickly turn and run makes him an asset in pass coverage or attacking the backfield on the blitz, as he has the foot speed to stay with most receivers through their routes. He has good explosion coming off the ball and above average power behind his hits. He has an above average burst off the edge and shows acceleration when working in space, along with displaying quick hand usage when disengaging inside.

*Key and Diagnostics Skills*…For a one-year starter at Wisconsin, the former down lineman shows the vision of a veteran reading keys and getting into position to make the play. He is not one to get fooled by misdirection and shows good knee bend to take on blockers and escape. He attacks the ball with good urgency due to his ability to quickly break down plays in front of him. He is very quick coming off the snap, staying low in his pads while generating quick lateral movements to string the plays wide. He has the natural ability to anticipate the flow of the ball. He needs to be quicker dropping back in pass coverage, but is effective at reacting and tracking down the ball when working in a crowd at the line of scrimmage.

*Strength at the Point of Attack…*Van Ginkel possesses ideal size to take on the larger blockers, thanks to his quickness, lateral agility, strength, field savvy and instincts. He has the hand punch to shed blocks quickly, doing a nice job of extending to keep blockers from attacking his body. He has the ease of movement agility to flow to the ball, staying at a proper pad level to extend, wrap and secure as a tackler. He constantly keeps his legs moving on contact, doing a nice job of driving the ball carrier back (see 2017 Illinois; 2018 New Mexico games).

When he takes on blocks with his hands, he will generally separate and get off blocks quickly. He has more than enough functional strength to take on blocks and shed. He has no problems running downhill to fill the rush lane and plays with good leverage when taking on the linemen. In pass coverage, he is quick to engage the slot receivers, backs and tight ends and has a good feel for blocking schemes. While he is field fast, in the short area, you have to be impressed with the way he flashes cat-like quickness, especially when reacting to movement.

*Hand Usage.*..Van Ginkel uses his hands well, showing good strength to jolt and redirect tight ends in pass routes. He plays bigger than his size indicates, showing good physicality in his game. He uses his hands effectively to keep blockers off his feet and get around trash quickly. He is not a natural hands catcher (more pass deflections rather than interceptions), but the Wisconsin system calls for him to attack the man, rather than the ball, making it difficult to evaluate his ability as a pass thief. He fights pressure, and uses his hands well to disengage and transfer on the block. When he stays low in his pads, he can get his hands on the blocker and can keep the linemen off his body with his hand extension.

*Lateral Pursuit/Effort*…Van Ginkel has a natural feel for the flow of the ball, showing quick lateral movement and fluid change of direction agility. He takes good angles in pursuit and stays low in his pads to deliver a clean wrap-up tackle. He shows explosive acceleration when closing and has a natural flow in his backpedal. The thing you see on film is his ability to run through and around traffic. He gives great effort in pursuit and still plays under control to properly read and adjust to the flow of the ball.

He keeps his feet and plays with leverage and explosion. He has enough acceleration to skate, string plays out and catch a play from behind, doing a solid job in back-dooring action. As an edge rusher, he fights to collapse and get to the ball, getting a good push off the offensive lineman and is hard to contain, thanks to pretty nifty spin and rip moves (see 2018 New Mexico; 2017 Florida Atlantic, Brigham Young and Illinois games).

*Tackling Ability.*..Van Ginkel is a solid wrap-up tackler who extends his arms properly to stalk and secure. He is the type that collides with ball carriers upon initial contact and has the strength to shed blocks and stay on the ball. He shows ease of movement getting to the ball when working in space. He has the leg drive and strength to get the ball carrier on the ground instantly.

He brings a good thump upon contact and his hits have been known to jar the ball loose from several ball carriers (see 2017 Maryland, Ohio State; 2015 Kansas State, Southern Illinois games). He brings his arms properly to wrap and is very fluid in his lateral movements to string the play wide. If he fails to penetrate, he will make a very determined effort to string the play out. In the short area, he has enough arm strength to lock up and wrap. He follows through the plays in front of him with good balance.

*Run Defense.*.. Against the inside run, Van Ginkel combines size and bulk with his change of direction agility and lateral movement to slip past blocks. He has the strength to take on the offensive linemen, but can get engulfed when working in-line if he does not protect his chest from the blocker locking on. He does a good job of coming down hill, but is best when using his hands to shed when working near the line of scrimmage, which allows him to fill the rush lane. He plays with good leverage taking on blocks coming off the edge.

Against the outside run, few linebackers in college excel in this area like Van Ginkel. He has the speed and burst to head off ball carriers along the corners (see 2017 Michigan, Miami; 2015 Drake, Western Illinois games). He is a smart player who stays in control, but also shows urgency in making the play. He has the range to make plays sideline to sideline. His change of direction skills lets him cover large portions of the field. He runs to the ball well and has the hand usage to slip off passive blocks. When he closes on the ball, he will usually take good angles. His speed is evident when he simply explodes and accelerates to close.

*Pass Defense*…The former high school defensive back has the ability to drop off in the zone due to his hip swerve. He takes no wasted steps in transition and is quick to turn coming out of his backpedal. He flips his hips properly and plays at a good pad level. He shows no stiffness in his turns and this allows him to drop off quickly. He gets very good depth in his pass drops and keeps his head on a swivel to locate the ball in flight.

In man coverage, Van Ginkel has the quickness of a safety (4.56 speed). He can turn and run with most tight ends and running backs. He looks natural maintaining position on the receiver when working underneath. His quick feet allows him to shadow even the speedier receivers on deep routes, doing a nice job of opening his hips to turn and run.

Zone coverage will be a new area for Van Ginkel, for before 2017, his primary assignment was attacking the pocket. Still, in 2017, on nineteen pass plays, he held his opponent to an average of 4.71 yards per completion and 1.74 yards per pass attempt. He is still not a finished product in this area, but you can see he has the ball awareness skills that lets him locate the ball quickly. He does a good job of picking up and switching off on receivers, keeping the play in front of him. He has an explosive break on the ball and keeps his hands properly extended to wrap and secure. His developing understanding of zone concepts and ability to anticipate the ball in flight allows him to stay on the field for every down.

*Pass Rush and Blitz.*..Van Ginkel has a nice array of pass rush moves to help when countering (rip and swim moves are just adequate). He likes to attack the quarterback, taking proper angles to pressure the pocket and disrupt action in the backfield. His change of direction and lateral agility are great assets in pursuit and he has very good success on blitzes and playing off the edge, where he can use his speed to bend the corner. He uses the bull rush with effectiveness, displaying consistency on counter moves, as he looks to have the loose hips needed for spinning (was limited some in 2016 due to a hip strain). He plays low and pumps his legs to get the leverage he needs on the edge.

*Compares To.*..Clay Matthews-Green Bay Packers...Van Ginkel does not have Matthews' bulk, but 23.5 sacks, 38.0 tackles behind the line of scrimmage and 30 pressures with six forced fumbles and four fumble recoveries are certainly evidence that this Badger can be disruptive in the opposing backfields. For the "Sam" position, he has very good size and athletic ability, along with quick initial read and react skills. He has downhill ability with good fits to the hole and good instincts, locating the ball well with good pursuit angles.

He is the type that throws his body around and is aggressive taking on blocks. He could work better with his hands, but is explosive on contact. He has excellent pass rush skills and works well versus a tight end with good second effort. He also gets good leverage when playing off a block. For the most part, he is becoming solid in coverage in both man and zone. He has the ability to cover a tight end up the seam and demonstrates good zone awareness. In general, is very active in coverage and shows good range. He works to finish on the play and is a high motor type with a nose for the ball.

UTAH'S BARTON EXPECTS DRAFT DAY TWO CALL

Cody Likeke Barton-#30

University of Utah Utes

6:02.4-237

*Agility Tests.*..4.64 in the 40-yard dash…1.61 10-yard dash…2.71 20-yard dash…4.03 20-yard shuttle…11.47 60-yard shuttle…6.90 three-cone drill…32 1/2-inch vertical jump…9'-08" broad jump…Bench pressed 225 pounds 30 times…31 7/8-inch arm length…9 1/4-inch hands…76 1/4-inch wingspan.

*Background.*..Barton is posing a pleasant problem for teams - where to play him. A college middle linebacker, his power is perfectly suited for strong-side outside linebacker, but he lacks the size teams look for there. Many scouts felt he was too slow to play on the weak-side, but he disproved that theory with one of the better agility test scores within the linebacker group that attended the NFL Scouting Combine.

Barton comes from an athletic family. His older brother, Jackson, was a teammate of Cody's at Utah, where the two-year starter on the offensive line also fared well in drills in Indianapolis. Their father, Paul, played football and baseball for the Utes and spent a year in the minors with the Toronto Blue Jays’ organization. Their younger sister, Dani Drews, plays volleyball at Utah.

Their mother, Mikki Kane-Barton, is a member of Utah’s Crimson Club Hall of Fame. She was a two-time honorable mention All-American basketball player, the 1993 Western Athletic Conference Player of the Year and a three-time first-team all-WAC basketball pick. She played two seasons of volleyball for the Utes and led the nation in blocks in 1993 while making the all-conference team.

At Brighton High School, the Salt Lake City native bounced back from an injury-plagued junior campaign (only played in three games) to earn Salt Lake Tribune and Deseret News first-team all-state honors as a safety in 2014, while also competing as a tight end. He was rated a three-star recruit by Rivals.com and Scout.com after he posted 72 total tackles and three interceptions on defense and had 27 receptions for 334 yards and two touchdowns in 2014.

A reserve linebacker as a true freshman, Barton was relegated to special teams in 2015. He appeared in twelve games, posting seven tackles, including two each in the Oregon and Washington and Washington contests. As a sophomore, he moved to Rover, starting five games (Southern Utah, San Jose State, UCLA, Arizona State, Oregon) for the Utes before an injury vs. the Ducks sidelined him for the final two contests.

Barton finished second on the team with 66 tackles in 2016, recording his first sack and making eight stops behind the line of scrimmage. He also broke up three passes. His twenty tackles vs. Oregon was the most in a game by a Ute since 1991. He added eleven tackles vs. Southern Utah and seven tackles, 2.5 stops for loss and two pass breakups vs. UCLA. On 479 snaps, he had 26 tackles vs. the run, allowing 20-of-28 pass completions for 177 yards and a touchdown. He also had three missed tackles.

Despite starting just four of thirteen games in 2017, Barton tied for the Pac-12 Conference lead with

three fumble recoveries, including two vs. West in the Heart of Dallas Bowl. He finished second on the team with four sacks for minus 27 yards and registered 45 tackles (23 solos) on 420 plays, including fourteen hits vs. the running game. He had a season-high ten tackles (two sacks), a pass breakup and a 13-yard fumble return vs. Colorado and made eight tackles and a sack vs. Arizona State. He also delivered seven tackles vs. North Dakota. He missed just two tackles for the season and on thirteen passes into his area, he allowed ten catches for 104 yards and one touchdown.

Barton moved from Rover to middle linebacker in 2018 and had his finest season. The All-Pac-12 Conference honorable mention started all fourteen games, leading the Utes with a career-high 116 tackles (68 solos), sacking the quarterback four times while making 10.5 stops for losses of 38 yards. He had his first career interception while breaking up seven other throws and also caused a fumble in 968 defensive snaps.

Barton delivered 48 of those tackles vs. the run, as opponents gained 308 yards on 31-of-45 passes completed in his area. His average of 8.3 tackles per game ranked tenth in the league and his tackle-for-loss figures placed 11th. He posted 12 tackles vs. Washington in the Pac-12 Championship game and tied for the team lead with 12 tackles vs. both Northern Illinois and Arizona State. Three of his 11 tackles vs. Oregon came from behind the line of scrimmage, as he forced a fumble via a sack.

Barton registered 11 more tackles vs. Washington and was in on eight stops with a sack vs. Arizona State before closing out his career with eight tackles that included an assisted sack vs. North-western in the Holiday Bowl. His lone interception came in the UCLA clash, as he also had seven tackles.

*The Scouting Report*

*Athletic Ability.*.. Barton has a well-proportioned frame with an athletic physique that can actually carry at least another ten pounds of bulk without the weight impacting his overall quickness. He has good upper body muscle definition, tight waist and hips, along with a very strong lower body, evident by the way he can firmly hold ground and drive back lead blockers to attack the rush lanes consistently.

Barton has adequate timed speed, but very good quickness and agility to string plays wide and displays the body control and balance to escape multiple blockers and impact the rush lanes (has made 88 tackles vs. the run, 23.5 for losses). Thanks to his change of direction agility, he has excellent tools to line up at strong-side linebacker in a 3-4 defensive alignment, as he shows the low pad level and burst coming off the edge and the leg drive to shoot the gaps. He generates a quick first step and is very active working down the line.

He has fluid hip flexibility and movement coming off the snap and valid strength and good knee bend. He is effective extending his arms to keep blockers off his chest and comes out of his breaks cleanly to make plays in the short-to-intermediate passing game. He is not quick enough to handle receivers on deep routes, but in the second level, he is quite effective using his strong hands to reroute/jam tight ends, backs and slot receivers working underneath.

*Key and Diagnostics Skills*… This is Barton’ best asset, as he compensates for a lack of great range and explosive speed by his ability to always be in position to make the play. He is outstanding with his diagnostic ability and when he locates the ball, all regard for his own safety “goes out the window” in his quest to make the play. He is very disciplined in containing the run and charges hard coming off the edge to disrupt the pocket. He comes off the snap with a good, strong rise and is very forceful using his hands to shed when engaging the lead blocker.

He is very intuitive, quick to read and react, especially on action in front of him. He is not quick enough to be utilized in deep pass coverage, but he is always around the football when he keeps the action in front of him. He shows urgency when around the football and determination to create havoc once he gets into the backfield (see 2018 Oregon, Colorado games). He will get tied up at times when challenged by much bigger blockers, but he is becoming much more comfortable using his hands and spin move to avoid, rather than take on offensive tackles when in pursuit of the quarterback.

*Strength at the Point of Attack…*Barton has good natural strength, with a strong upper body and an even stronger hand punch. He is more likely to be utilized as a strong-side linebacker in a 3-4 alignment at the pro level. He can be “caught looking” past the blocker in attempts to get to the ball, but he has the balance and loose hips to recover and get back into the play. When you first make “eye contact” with Barton, you might think that he would be more of a speed/space type of player, but he showed that he can handle lead blocks and knows how to use his hands to throw offensive linemen to the ground (has a very good hand jolt and efficient rip and swim moves). When asked to cover short area receivers, he can punch and extend vs. tight ends, as he uses those hands to leverage or reroute. He has the ability to split tackles and outstanding ability to knife down the line. He shows excellent strength at the point of attack, squeezing and leveraging blockers well.

*Hand Usage.*..Barton lacks natural hands, evident by one interception at Utah. He is quite effective using his strong hand punch to shed blocks that should earn him success when utilized as a 3-4 strong-side linebacker at the next level. He has no problem holding up tight ends and slot receivers in the short area passing game. He is an active, fend-off type of defender that will shock-&-jolt vs. offensive linemen, as he also knows how to deliver a blow and is quick to get placement when trying to grab and jerk on the opponent’s jersey. When he keeps his pads down and hands inside the framework, he can clear blocks and get to the ball regularly. Even when his pad level gets high at times, he has a very good punch and extension to defeat the blocks.

*Lateral Pursuit/Effort*…Barton can make plays at the opposite side of the field, but lacks the explosive burst when he is working in space. He is much better making plays moving down the line or coming off the edge, as he does play with all-out hustle, demonstrating the straight-line power and low pad level to slip through blocks and pressure the pocket or give chase in the backfield. He has the functional lateral agility to deliver when competing with his hand down, but there are times where he can fail generate the burst in slants and if he does get too upright in his stance, he will be washed out when a blocker is able to lock on.

*Tackling Ability.*.. You would like him to pile on hits and play as if his “hair is on fire,” but he works well in containing the run when operating in tight areas and he is a classic wrap-up tackler – with arms inside his frame, low pad level and the skills to attack the outside leg of a ball carrier to impact the runner’s forward progress after the initial hit. He is not as effective maintaining balance working in space and speedy tailbacks can beat him in the open field when he takes a side rather than square up and wrap. When he hits a ball carrier, usually he will bring his man down right at the spot. He has functional body control and above average power to face up and wrap up with explosive strikes to punish.

Still, despite his high figures in 2018, he is not really a “tackling machine,” as he will get too narrow with his base in space and is better off playing along the line of scrimmage. He has a punishing hand punch, but when he tries to grab-tackle rather than wrap, the quicker backs can escape his initial hit. He does show good body control making plays on the move in the short-to-intermediate areas, but he is much more effective playing in close quarters, as he seems much more decisive breaking down vs. plays in front of him.

*Run Defense.*..While Barton has good ability working down the line, he does appear tight at times opening his hips when in space. He has shown steady improvement taking angles in pursuit, but this area can still use some more work. He can punch and extend vs. lead blockers and holds his ground firmly when operating at a proper pad level vs. offensive linemen. Where he has his most success is when he uses his hands to shed and then get in front of the play to wrap-tackle. He keeps his feet and can string plays out in short area pursuit, as his low pad level allows him to generally take away the cutback.

But, when he gets out of control or upright in his stance, he does not have the blazing speed or sudden change of direction agility to recover. Against the inside ground game, he is much quicker attempting to fill. He is tenacious enough and active with his hands enough to defeat combo blocks or keep opponents off his chest. If he gets a quick read on the play, more often than not, he will make the tackle unblocked.

*Pass Defense*…The Utah scheme does not expose their linebackers to much man coverage, so most of Barton’ success in passing situations comes from using his hands as weapons to jam or reroute receivers in the short area. He does not have the recovery skills when a receiver gets behind him, but he excels at anticipating the count and quarterback, as you will never see him bite on play action or misdirection.

He has more than enough field vision and awareness to pick up tight ends, slot receivers and backs into the second level, but without great change of direction agility or flexibility in his hips, he won’t get the depth with proper angle and position to take on opponents racing into the deep secondary. He is better suited in short area man coverage, but when playing the intermediate zone, he does show a feel for routes.

*Compares To.*..Nick Vigil-Cincinnati Bengals...Barton is a highly intelligent and instinctive player, but not the type that will “out-think” himself on the field. He is a quick reactor to action in front of him and easily picks things up well, showing no problem taking plays from the chalkboard to the playing field. He reads the quarterback well and a move to strong-side linebacker is anticipated and he is capable of locating receivers quickly working underneath.

GEORGIA'S WALKER MIGHT HAVE BETTER NFL SUCCESS IN THE SECOND LEVEL

D'Andre Walker-#15

University of Georgia Bulldogs

6:02.3-251

*Agility Tests*...4.70 in the 40-yard dash…34 3/8-inch arm length…9 7/8-inch hands…81 3/4-inch wingspan...Note-Walker was unable to work out for teams at the Scouting Combine or Georgia's Pro Day, as he recovers from a hernia.

*Background...*Teams will have just game films to judge from in regards to Walker after he was prevented from working out for teams due to his hernia. It took the defender four years to crack the starting lineup when he joined the first unit at the "Jack" position last year, so rather than undergo surgery during his lone season as a starter, he waited until Georgia's campaign ended.

At Langston Hughes High School, Walker was a Parade Magazine All-American honorable mention and 2014 U.S. Army All-American. He was a member of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution 2014 Class AAAAAA All-State Team and named to the Georgia Sports Writers Association All-State Class AAAAAA first-team.

The weak-side defensive end was rated a four-star recruit, ranking 236th on the PrepStar 300 All-American squad. He was rated the fifth-best weak-side end in the nation and 19th-best player in the state of Georgia by Rivals.com and was regarded as the best player in the South by Scout.com after he finished his senior season with 102 tackles, including 29 stops for loss and 23.5 sacks.

The Fairborn, Georgia native was a 212-pound reserve linebacker as a true freshman, recording nine tackles while assisting on a sack for a 3-yard loss. He had a season-high four tackles vs. Alabama and four more stops with a QB hurry at Vanderbilt. He also registered a tackle and blocked a punt for a safety in his UGA debut vs. Louisiana-Monroe.

At 223 pounds, Walker shifted to strong-side outside linebacker for the 2016 season. He appeared in all thirteen games, recording nineteen tackles (9 solos) with 2.5 stops behind the line of scrimmage. His seven quarterback pressures ranked third on the team. He had a season-best five tackles, including one for lost yardage, in the win at South Carolina, adding two pressures vs. North Carolina. He posted four tackles vs. both Mississippi and Nicholls State, coming up with 1.5 stops-for-loss in the Ole Miss clash. He was the recipient of the Coffee County Hustle Award for exhibiting the most desire during spring drills.

One of four players to share the team's Most Improved Award in 2017, Walker played behind Lorenzo Carter at the "Sam" position. The 240-pound linebacker made 40 tackles (26 solos) in fifteen games, adding 5.5 sacks for minus 48 yards and was second on the squad with 13.5 stops for lossxes of 65 yards. He blocked a kick, deflected a pass and caused one fumble.

The defensive winner of the Physicality/Head-hunter Award after spring drills, Walker posted a season-high six total stops in win at Georgia Tech, including a pair of tackles for lost yardage. He matched that performance in the SEC Championship game vs. Auburn. In the Rose Bowl, he made five tackles, including two for lost yardage and a QB sack for a loss of eight yards vs. Oklahoma. Against Tennessee, he blocked a punt and vs. Kentucky, he forced a fumble on a QB sack.

Walker returned to the "Jack" position in 2018, as the 245-pound senior started all thirteen games. He registered 45 tackles (23 solos) while leading the team with 7.5 sacks for minus 43 yards and eleven stops for losses of 59 yards. He also paced the Bulldogs with four forced fumbles, recovering one and batting away three passes. He was the co-winner of the Defensive Up Front award, given at team's post-season awards gala.

The linebacker had a career-best seven tackles vs. Georgia Tech, including a second-quarter QB sack, adding five tackles vs. Alabama including two for loss, a QB sack, a forced fumble and a pass breakup. He made a sack for a 6-yard loss, in addition to a forced fumble vs. Tennessee. He added a sack and a tackle for a 9-yard loss vs. South Carolina. He was credited with two QB sacks and four pressures, to go along with this four tackles, in the win at Missouri.

*The Scouting Report*

*Athletic Ability.*..Walker has a compact, solid frame with good upper body development, broad shoulders, thick chest, good bubble, tapered thighs and thick hamstrings. He shows good straight-line quickness and the arm extension to shed blocks. His body is more suited for linebacker, as he is more likely at maximum growth potential and will not be able to carry the bulk needed to compete as a down lineman on a steady basis.

Walker has good up field quickness, showing suddenness in his initial move off the ball and gets to top speed quickly. He has some stiffness in his hips that affects his lateral and change of direction agility, but is combative in attempts to slip off blocks and string plays wide. He shows good strength upon initial contact and breaks down well on the move. He is an effective short area pass defender because of his foot speed to stay with most receivers through their routes. He is playing out of position on the defensive line and is better suited for the outside linebacker position, as he has good explosion coming off the ball and adequate power behind his hits.

*Pursuit Skills.*..Walker shows the vision of a veteran reading key and getting into position to make the play, but he is the type that can be fooled by misdirection. He shows good knee bend to take on blockers and escape, but he needs to play with better control, though, as he will get reckless and then over-pursue the play (tries to make the sensational hit rather than taking what the offense has to offer). He attacks the ball with good urgency due to his ability to quickly break down plays in front of him. He is very quick coming off the snap, staying low in his pads while generating quick lateral movements to string the plays wide.

He needs to be quicker dropping back in pass coverage, but is effective at reacting and tracking down the ball when working in a crowd at the line of scrimmage. He is a little stiff in his pass drops, but does a good job of moving down the line and redirecting to plays at the Xs. His ability to play in space make him a better fit at linebacker than as a down lineman. Perhaps because of the team’s system, he is used more to keep plays in front of him and did not get enough reps in pass coverage to fully evaluate his ability in that area. He has the ability to run through and around traffic. He gives good effort in pursuit and when he plays under control, he can properly read and adjust to the flow of the ball, but can get caught in trash when he fails to keep leverage on the ball.

*Strength at the Point of Attack*...Walker has good weight room strength, but is still developing proper hand placement and techniques to separate from blocks. He hits with a good thud, but due to his lack of bulk as a down lineman, he needs to avoid the opponent rather than engaging the bigger blockers. He does not use his hand punch well in attempts to shed and when he “short arms,” the bigger offensive linemen have good success in engulfing him. He needs to be more combative with his arm swipes, as he will try to out-finesse rather than battle his opponent in one-on-one confrontations. He has more than enough functional strength to take on blocks and shed, but must be more alert to low blocks to protect his body from double teams. He has no problems running down hill to fill the rush lane and plays with good leverage when taking on the linemen.

*Hand Usage.*..Walker runs hot and cold here. He will short arm at times, letting blockers to get under his jersey when he does so. He has a strong punch, but will try to avoid power confrontations when he should be meeting them head-on. When he keeps his hands properly extended, he can effectively to keep blockers off his feet and get around trash quickly, but must keep them active at all times, as he is susceptible to the low block. He is not a natural hands catcher (more pass deflections rather than interceptions), but the UGA system calls for him to attack the man, rather than the ball, making it difficult to evaluate his ability as an interceptor.

*Tackling Ability.*..Walker is still not developed as a solid wrap-up tackler, needing to show better consistency to secure and drag down. He extends his arms properly to stalk and is the type that collides with ball carriers upon initial contact, showing the strength to shed blocks and stay on the ball. He lacks that ease of movement getting to the ball when working in space (choppy footsteps). He can deliver a strong thud upon contact and when he brings his arms properly to wrap, he can strike opponents with good pop on contact, though.

Walker is not used much in pass coverage and needs to show he has the ability to locate the ball when working in the deeper areas of the zone. He will sometimes take poor angles in pursuit and lacks the hip snap to neutralize the cutback lanes. He can slip under trash when trying to shoot the gaps, but is susceptible to side blocks and must become more alert to blocking schemes. Right now, he plays more on adrenalin that on football knowledge.

*Run Defense.*..Most linebackers his size can get engulfed when working in-line, but Walker does a good job of coming down hill, using his hands to shed when working near the line of scrimmage, which allows him to fill the rush lane. He plays with good leverage taking on blocks coming off the edge. And has the speed and burst to head off ball carriers along the corners. He has some hip stiffness, which is sometimes impacted when he tries to make plays sideline to sideline. His change of direction skills might not let him cover large portions of the field, but he runs to the ball well on plays in front of him and has the hand usage to slip off passive blocks. His speed is evident when he simply explodes and accelerates to close in the backfield.

*Pass Rush Ability.*..Walker needs to generate better hip swerve in order to drop off deep in the zone. While he takes no wasted steps in transition, he must become quicker when trying to turn coming out of his backpedal. He doesn’t flip his hips properly, but plays at a good pad level. Because of the stiffness in his turns, he can’t drop off quickly. He gets adequate depth in his pass drops, but does keep his head on a swivel to locate the ball in flight. In man coverage, he has the quickness to stay on the tight ends and slot backs, using his hands effectively to reroute. He has the acceleration to maintain position on the receiver when working underneath, but his poor transition skills prevent him from shadowing the speedier wide-outs past the second level (better in plays in front of him).

*Compares To.*.. Jarvis Jones-ex-Pittsburgh Steelers...A late bloomer, Walker offers a team value as a situational edge rusher, as he knows how to use his quickness to slip past and avoid blocks in order to get to the ball and clog the inside rush lanes. He has the balance and body control to run clean and take proper angles to the ball when working in space. He is not big enough to prevent NFL linemen from engulfing him as a defensive end, but as a linebacker, he could develop into a solid blitzer.

SMALL SCHOOL STAR HAS BIG PLAY POTENTIAL

Oshane Ximines-#7

Old Dominion University Monarchs

6:03.4-253

*Agility Tests*...4.78 in the 40-yard dash…1.72 10-yard dash…2.71 20-yard dash…4.57 20-yard shuttle…7.13 three-cone drill…34-inch vertical jump…9'-10" broad jump…Bench pressed 225 pounds 24 times…33-inch arm length…9 7/8-inch hands…78 5/8-inch wingspan.

*Background.*..One of college football's "best-kept secrets" emerged in 2018, capturing All-Conference USA honors en route to being the first player from his school to ever play in the prestigious Senior Bowl. Professional teams have changed their defensive philosophies in recent years, utilizing the smaller, quicker edge rushers more often at the first level of defense, rather than try to convert these types of players into classic linebackers.

While yielding considerable bulk to offensive tackles, Ximines has managed to set the school sacks standard in each of his last three seasons, along with establishing the school career-record in that category. As much of an unknown as he has been to the media, Ximines is well-regarded in scouting circles and NFL.com recently pegged him as one of the elite players to watch for the upcoming collegiate season, as he cracked the Top Fifty for the 2019 NFL Draft. If selected, Ximines would draw the distinction of being the first ever Monarch to earn that honor.

As a two-star recruit, Ximines became a curious discussion piece for several college recruiting sites, with one even going so far to believe that he was a fictional character. Just looking at the history of his surname - Ximines - shows that it is referred to as the 744,554th most common surname in the world. Only 256 people in the world can stake claim to that name - 125 residing in Jamaica, 100 in the United States, sixteen more in England, nine in Canada and six in Indonesia.

At Hertford County High School, the North Carolina prepster competed on both sides of the ball in football, adding to his resume as a member of the basketball team. What he was known for was his uncanny ability to get to the quarterback. The 210-pound, two-time Defensive MVP and All-North-eastern Coastal Conference selection recorded 145 tackles with 35.0 sacks during his career. As a junior, he was in on 65 tackles that included fourteen sacks. He notched six sacks in one contest during his senior season. On the basketball court, he averaged 8.0 points, 4.7 rebounds and 0.9 steals per game as a junior and senior.

Capturing the attention of the local Carolina colleges, Ximines decided to join fellow Herford County High teammates Antonio Vaughan and Kevin Privott as members of the Old Dominion Monarchs football team. He red-shirted in 2014, but did make a brief appearance vs. Eastern Michigan, recording one quarterback pressure. From a 214-pound recruit, Ximines returned to 2015 fall camp a solid 240 pounds, staking claim to the "stud" defensive end spot. He started all twelve games, recording 32 tackles while leading the team with five sacks, 7.5 stops-for-loss and nine quarterback pressures, donning jersey #98 as he earned a spot on the Conference USA Commissioner's Honor Roll.

Ximines started all but the FIU clash (Senior Day) in 2016, setting the school season-record with 7.5 sacks. He made 42 tackles, 11.5 coming from behind the line of scrimmage. He also caused three fumbles, recovering two while adding four quarterback pressures and three pass deflections to receive All-Conference USA recognition.

One of the few bright spots during the 2017 season, Ximines ranked 20th in the nation as he broke his own school season-record with 8.5 sacks among his team-best fourteen stops for loss. He tallied a career-best 44 tackles with seven pressures and set another annual record with four forced fumbles - fifth best in the major college ranks. He opened the season with a sack vs. Albany, then added four tackles, a sack and 1.5 tackles for loss in the win at UMass. He notched six tackles, a sack and two tackles for loss vs. Western Kentucky and tied his season-high with seven tackles and added a tackle for loss at North Texas.

The All-Conference USA selection recorded 58 tackles (32 solos) with twelve sacks and 18.5 stops for losses of 88 yards in 2018. His twelve sacks gave him 33.0 for his career, second to Louisiana Tech's Jaylon Ferguson among active FBS players. He registered fourteen quarterback pressures, returning an interception 14 yards while deflecting two other tosses. He blocked one kick and tied his own school season-record with four forced fumbles on 665 defensive snaps.

Ximines also tied for first among active FBS players with eleven career forced fumbles. He secured his first career interception while making seven tackles and a sack vs. Marshall. He notched seven tackles, two sacks and three tackles for loss vs. Florida International and registered seven tackles, two sacks and 2.5 tackles for loss in the win over Virginia Tech. He posted seven tackles and 1.5 sacks at East Carolina and totaled a career-best nine tackles in the comeback win over North Texas, adding 1.5 sacks and two tackles for loss.

Ximines started 48-of-50 games for the Monarchs, recording 176 tackles (93 solos) with 33.0 sacks for minus 205 yards, 51.5 stops for losses of 234 yards and 35 quarterback pressures, as he also caused eleven fumbles, recovering three for 25 yards in advancements. He also deflected ten passes and returned one interception 14 yards.

Ximines set the school record with 33.0 sacks, racing past 2017 teammate Bunmi Rotimi (19.0; 2014-17). The previous record prior to 2016 was 13.5 by Craig Wilkins (2009-12). He owns the school record with eleven forced fumbles. The old mark of seven was first set by T.J. Ricks (2013-16).

Ximines' three fumble recoveries rank fifth, topped by Wilkins (nine), Carvin Powell (six; 2009-12), Ricks (five) and Marvin Branch (four; 2015-16). His 51.5 stops behind the line of scrimmage shattered the old ODU mark of forty by Wilkins. The senior also established the school record with 7.5 sacks in 2016, topping that mark with 8.5 in 2017 and again with twelve in 2018. The previous season record was 6.5, first set by Deron Mayo in 2010 and matched by Cameron (2011) and Wilkins (2012). His four forced fumbles in both 2017 and '18 tied the record first set by T.J. Ricks in 2014.

*The Scouting Report*

*Athletic Ability.*..Ximines is undersized for a down lineman, but has very good strength, along with a frame that can carry more bulk. He has an athletic physique with good upper body muscle definition, firm midsection and tight waist and hips. He has the long wingspan and reach to keep blockers at bay and the large, strong hands to generate a solid punch. He has a good bubble and adequate lower body development, along with minimal body fat (8.6%).

Ximines might be a better fit as a 3-4 linebacker, due to size issues, but it is also a perfect position for the way he plays, as he operates better on the moves. He is comfortable making plays in pursuit vs. the run and coming off the edge, he generates good heat to pressure the pocket. He has good quickness and keeps his feet on the move, showing the agility and balance in his running stride. He has adequate change of direction agility and flexibility, along with good acceleration to close. He has loose hips and runs faster than his timed speed. He has good upper body strength and leg drive. He looks a little stiff in space, but has a good closing burst.

*Pursuit Skills.*..Ximines is an instinctive player with a great feel for slipping through tight areas to generate the pass rush. He is a good read-&-react type with the instincts and vision to find the ball. He is alert to misdirection and won’t be suckered in by play action fakes. He shows a quick break and urgency to negate the cutback lanes when pinching the outside running game back in. He is alert to blocking schemes and moves suddenly to avoid. He might overrun a few plays, but is quick to recover. He can diagnose the run or pass and has no problems reading and reacting to plays on the edge.

Ximines has some hip stiffness, but still manages to flow with the ball. His stiffness only becomes evident when he has to turn out of his breaks on short area pass coverage or when having to redirect suddenly. He has good playing speed to make plays in pursuit. He might overrun a play or two due to some stiffness in his change of direction, but is quick to recover. He shows good urgency getting to the ball and uses his active hands to prevent getting tied up working through trash. The thing you notice on film is that he shows good speed with proper pursuit angles while chasing.

*Strength at the Point of Attack*...Ximines has a strong hand punch, but despite solid weight room numbers, he does get engulfed working in-line and needs to be in motion to be effective, as he is not going to win physical battles vs. the offensive linemen in the trenches (capitalizes on quickness to elude). He just struggles and gets bounced around too much at the Xs when working inside. He lacks the bulk and lower body strength to split double teams and hold ground at the point of attack, but plays much better on the move, where he can used his hand punch to reroute the tight ends, thus making him a better fit for a conversion to linebacker.

Playing off the line, he shows good stack and shed ability. He is strong with his hands, especially when working on the edge, using a powerful club move and arm-over action to get past blocks. He can be even better when he uses his natural leverage. When he plays high, he will get tied up trying to disengage, failing to stay on his feet working near the pile. His size issue as a down lineman comes into play when he fails to protect his body working in trash, as he can be washed out of the play by double teams when he leaves his body too exposed.

*Hand Usage.*.. Ximines has developed the strength needed to shock and jolt even the biggest offensive linemen, but must not occupy the linemen too long for fear of being engulfed (has had success vs. the lethargic types). He has good power behind his punch with his initial strike. He has a good array of pass rush moves (rip, swim, club) and uses his hands to play off blocks and stack. He still could use a little refinement shooting his hands, but he shows strength behind his strikes. He has the wingspan and extension to redirect tight ends off their routes when in short area coverage, adding to his resume for a potential move to linebacker at the next level. He is not a natural hands catcher for the interception, but has the leaping ability and times his jumps to do a great job of batting the ball down at the line of scrimmage.

*Tackling Ability.*..Ximines sometimes gets caught up in the battle in the trenches and fails to locate the ball carrier on time. He will shut down some when his moves fail to get him a release from the block. He has enough quickness to deliver explosive hits on the quarterback, but is susceptible to side blocks, where he is often ridden wide. He can be fooled by double teams and try to shoot the inside gap, only to get stonewalled. When he stays low in his pads and drives forward with his legs, he can push the fullback back through the rush lanes. He hits with a thud and can jar the ball loose on contact. He is more of a drag down tackler than a wrap-up one, which could see the slippery backs escape. However, he has the upper body strength to bring the runner down once he latches on. This area of his game is going to be a work in progress, but if he shifts to the second level, his tackle figures should increase.

*Run Defense.*..Ximines shows no hesitation working in-line in attempts to clog the rush lanes, but is susceptible to low blocks, despite having the long wingspan to protect his legs. As a rush end, he was more productive vs. the outside run when he avoided blocks rather than trying to take on the bigger blockers. He can make plays on the move and shows the burst to close and make plays taking on the fullback. He is quick to read the inside run and step up to take on the offensive lineman or lead back, but lacks the bulk to consistently stack. He has shown improvement staying lower in his pads, as when he got too high in his stance in the past, he did not square up when taking on blocks. He shows good pursuit quickness to the outside and is able to run and work through and around trash. He has the chase speed and takes proper angles to cut off the runner on the outside.

*Pass Rush Ability.*..Ximines needs to be on the move to be effective, as he gets engulfed at the point of attack and appears frustrated when his moves fail working in a phone booth. He has a good feel for rushing off the edge and has the up field burst, doing a good job of dipping his shoulder to bend the corner. He needs to avoid offensive linemen to be effective, as he will not be able to escape if the bigger blocker gets on him. He is better blitzing off the edge, but can be very good at running stunts because of his quickness, if he can find the clear lane. He has the speed to rush off the edge and has a few moves along the way to avoid blocks (arm under and over action). He is just not a solid bull rusher, even when he stays low in his pads, but his explosion and ability to close on the pocket could see him be highly effective playing the second level in a 3-4 defensive alignment.

*Compares To.*..Justin Houston-Indianapolis Colts…Ximines is an undersized defensive end who will need some time to adjust to playing linebacker. He might bring quicker value as a situational rush end, as he is not really fluid in his pass drops, but I am confident that he will not struggle in pass coverage. He is more of a drag-down tackler than a wrap-up type working in space, causing some of the slippery runners to escape. However, he is a solid hitter vs. plays in front of him and shows enough spin in his lateral movements to make plays outside the box. He has good acceleration working down the line and does a good job of colliding with the ball carrier on contact. When he gets too high in his stance, he tends to pick a side rather than squaring up, making him an easy target to block.

THE POSTSEASON HAS NOT BEEN POLITE FOR POLITE

Jachai Polite-#99

University of Florida Gators

6:02.5-258

*Agility Tests*...4.84 in the 40-yard dash…1.71 10-yard dash…2.85 20-yard dash…7.59 three-cone drill…32-inch vertical jump…8'-06" broad jump…Bench pressed 225 pounds 14 times…32 5/8-inch arm length…9 3/4-inch hands…80 1/4-inch wingspan.

*Background.*..Murphy's Law seems to be following this Gator since the end of the season. Poor workouts at the NFL Scouting Combine that the player claimed was due to back and hamstring issues, saw him decline doing most of the agility tests and position drills. Once considered a likely first round choice, he further muddled his draft picture with very bad discussions during the team interview processes in Indianapolis.

Things continued to go South for Polite during Florida's Pro Day, as he still declined to do several tests. After running 4.84 at the Combine, he coasted to a 5.03-second 40-yard dash time for scouts on campus. His poor weight room figures (14 reps at 225 pounds) and equally poor position tests could see this once touted prospect barely hanging on to draft day two hopes.

Jachai (pronounced juh-KYE) was an all-state pick his junior year at Daytona Beach's Mainland High School, as he posted 81 tackles (43 solos) with thirteen sacks and seven pass deflections that year. While his team compiled an 11-2 record during his senior season to earn a berth in the Class 6A Regional Finals, he slumped badly, posting ten tackles (6 solo), four sacks, and one fumble recovery.

Rather than leave the state of Florida, Polite remained local, joining the University of Florida program in 2016. Listed third on the depth chart at weak-side end, the 261-pound freshman made eleven tackles that included a pair of sacks, 3.5 stops-for-loss and a forced fumble on 208 snaps.

He had his best game on the season in UF’s Southeastern Conference opener vs. Kentucky, as he tallied his first-career sack and forced fumble.

Polite started four of the team's first seven games before a shoulder injury sidelined him later in the year. He managed to record 22 tackles (11 solos), adding a pair of sacks among 5.5 stops behind the line of scrimmage. He caused one fumble and had six quarterback pressures on 254 plays. He registered six tackles in the season-opener vs. Michigan and posted one sack, one forced fumble and three quarterback hurries vs. Vanderbilt.

In 2018, Polite sat out the opening series of the team's first game after coaches said he "failed to meet the Gator standard." HE started five times through thirteen games at weak-side end, dropping close to twenty pounds from his frame during the off-season. He recorded a career-high 45 tackles (27) through 529 plays, making 21 tackles vs. 215 running plays. He led the team with eleven sacks for minus 55 yards and 17.5 stops for losses of 69 yards, adding three pressures.

The Associated Press All-American second-team choice tied Clifford Charlton's school season-record (1986) with six forced fumbles, giving him eight for his career, becoming the fourth Gator in history with at least eight career forced fumbles, joining Clifford Charlton (15 –1984-87), Guss Scott (11 – 2000-03), and Alex Brown (9 – 1997-2001). He also deflected four passes.

Polite was one of two players in the country to record at least five forced fumbles and 10-plus sacks. He fell just 0.5 tackles-for-loss shy of tying Alex Brown’s 1999 season for the 10th-highest single-season total in school history. He and his teammate Jabari Zuniga became the first pair of Gators with at least 11 tackles-for-loss in a season since the trio of Jon Bullard (17.5), Antonio Morrison (12.0) and Jarrad Davis (11.0) all reached that mark in 2015.

They are also the first pair of Gators defensive linemen to reach that total in a season since Jaye Howard (12.0) and Justin Trattou (11.0) did it in 2010. The All-SEC first-team choice added SEC Defensive Lineman of the Week honors following Florida’s win at Mississippi State after he recorded three tackles, two sacks and one pass breakup. He garnered Walter Camp National Defensive Player of the Week following UF’s win at FSU when he totaled six tackles, 3.5 tackles-for-loss and 2.5 sacks.

After declaring for the NFL Draft in December, Polite packed the lost twenty pounds back on his frame, thus leading to his poor Combine performance. In 32 appearances for the Gators, the weak-side defensive end started nine times. He recorded just 78 tackles (44 solos), but had 26.5 stops for losses of 98 yards, including fifteen sacks for minus 74 yards. He registered ten quarterback pressures, caused eight fumbles and deflected four passes through 991 plays. He delivered 51 of his stops via 448 running plays.

*The Scouting Report*

*Athletic Ability.*..Polite has a well-built, muscular frame with a tight waist and hips, long arms, good bubble, thick thighs and room on his frame for additional growth, if he is to stay at defensive end. He has the sudden burst and straight-line speed to be an impact edge rusher at the next level, but seems to have hip stiffness, looking sluggish when having to change direction and work down the line, which could make a move to linebacker difficult, as he will need to drop back in pass coverage often and does not seem to have the ability to do so.

He runs easily into the backfield and is quick to accelerate when he sees a chance to get to the quarterback. He is an explosive athlete that has all tools you look for in an edge rusher, as he generates an explosive first step and and is active using his hands to defeat the bigger blockers with good cross over action. He lacks fluid hip flexibility and movement coming off the snap, but he also needs to develop better strength and knee bend. He does tend to get a bit high in his stance when on the move and can be inconsistent extending his long arms to keep blockers off his chest

*Pursuit Skills.*..Polite has sudden quickness off the ball and does a very good job of getting on the edge and keeping advantage. He explodes coming out of his stance and has a good feel for knowing when to burst. He has above average instincts coming off the snap, having the ability needed to fly past offensive tackles coming off the edge. He shows no hesitation getting to top speed when moving up field. Even when he gets engulfed by the larger blockers, he will fight hard to escape and has the hand usage to get the offensive tackles up on their heels and off-balanced

*Strength at the Point of Attack*...Polite has just adequate strength to consistently split tackle. He shows better ability when he tries to avoid when knifing through the gaps. He just lacks the body mass and brute upper body strength. He has just adequate hip roll, but plays with leverage when he uses his hands to work the blocker (keeps his arms extended and can squeeze the lane). He struggles to disengage when working in-line, but has the speed to defeat tackles coming off the edge. He does not play stout when working around the pile, as he does not have the bulk to prevent the bigger blockers from absorbing him. Even with his long arms, if a blocker gets into his chest, Polite will fail to shed (has good crossover moves, but has to get the blocker up on their heels to be effective).

*Hand Usage.*..Polite has good hand usage, as he can sometimes work a blocker and because of this, he is able to compete vs. bigger opponents with leverage, combined with his quick feet and hands. His pad level can get high at times, but does struggle to shed and escape at times, especially when working in-line. He has good pull moves and is very with his hands when attempting to separate vs. the blockers on running plays, but can be stalled if he leaves his chest exposed to high blocks.

*Tackling Ability.*..Polite is not a physical backside tackler, as he lacks great strength to jolt on contact. He shows solid wrap-up tackling technique and drives hard into the ball carrier, rarely softening in his approach, but until last year, outside of the pass rush, he failed to play with intensity. He has enough agility needed to adjust and finish the play when working in space, but appears to be too stiff in his hips for a possible move to the linebacker unit.

*Run Defense.*..Polite lacks the raw strength to hold his ground and is better working off the edge, as he struggles at times vs. blockers lined up over his head. He plays with good leverage, but will struggle at the point of attack, as he lacks the bulk and lower leg drive to prevent the much bigger blockers from pushing him back. His quickness does help him string plays wide. He has just adequate lateral agility, as he tends to be high in slants and at times gets washed out when a blocker is able to lock on. He has the functional lateral range to avoid blockers, but just seems to struggle when he has to suddenly redirect or drop back in pass coverage (usually taken out on obvious pass plays). He has closing speed to chase and move through traffic, but does not always play with very good effort, except when closing from the back side.

*Pass Rush Ability.*..Polite comes off the snap with a sudden first step. He shows good dip and body lean on the edge and has the burst to get by a lethargic blocker in an instant. When he is active using his hands, he can consistently run his feet. His spin move is fluid and he can squeeze through tight areas, but must do a better job of protecting his feet from low blocks. His knee bend allows him to redirect and dip under blocks in his back side pursuit. His best asset is when he comes off the edge to collapse the pocket. His quickness allows him to run past offensive tackles to make the play behind the line of scrimmage.

*Compares To.*..Dante Fowler-Los Angeles Rams...Like Fowler, there is a "buyer beware" label on Polite. You wonder if he is just a situational type and you see during the postseason that dedication and maturity levels are not there yet.

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