THE NFL DRAFT REPORT PRESENTS

THE 2019 INSIDE/MIDDLE LINEBACKER DRAFT CLASS

THE TOP COPS - THE TWO DEVINS

TOP TEN DRAFT SELECTION

Devin White-#40

Louisiana State University Tigers

6:00.0-237

*Agility Tests.*..4.42 in the 40-yard dash…1.56 10-yard dash…2.58 20-yard dash…4.17 20-yard shuttle…7.07 three-cone drill…39 1/2-inch vertical jump…9'-10" broad jump…Bench pressed 225 pounds 22 times…32 1/8-inch arm length…9 3/4-inch hands…75 7/8-inch wingspan.

*College Career.*..White has appeared in 37 games for the Tigers, starting 25 of his last 26 contests. He lined up at the Rover position the last two seasons and was a weak-side inside linebacker as a true freshman. He collected 286 tackles (172 solos), registering 8.5 sacks for minus 67 yards, 29.5 stops for losses of 110 yards and thirteen quarterback pressures. He intercepted one pass for a 3-yard gain, advancing one of two fumble recoveries for 29 yards. He also caused four fumbles and had nine pass deflections. His 29.5 stops-for-loss topped Barkevious Mingo (29.0; 2010-12) for eleventh place on the school career-record list. His fourteen tackles behind the line of scrimmage in 2017 holds the 12th spot on the Tigers' season-record chart.

*Background.*..At North Webster High School, the Louisiana native was highly sought by major colleges, as the four-star recruit excelled on both sides of the ball. The 255-pound linebacker and tailback collected 81 touchdowns with 5,031 yards rushing during his career, including 1,650 yards with 31 scores on 208 carries (7.93 ypc) as a senior, adding two scores on twelve catches for 205 in 2015. Rated the third-best athlete in the national high school ranks, the Baton Rouge Advocate Super Dozen choice registered 192 tackles on defense and he would close out his prep career by participating in “The Opening,” an all-star summer prospect camp held on the Nike Campus.

Originally recruited as a running back, White was utilized as a weak-side inside linebacker as a true freshman, coming up with thirty tackles and three stops-for-loss. He caused and recovered a fumble and his lone sack for the 2016 season saw him take down Louisville's Lamar Jackson. He would be accorded Freshman All-Southeastern Conference status during his first campaign with the varsity.

White then took over Rover duties in 2017, becoming one of college football's elite performers. He earned second team All-American honors and was a first team All-SEC after he led the conference with an average of 10.2 tackles per game, ranking second in the league in total tackles with 133. He also became the first LSU player to lead the league in tackles per game since the mid 1980’s when tackles became an NCAA statistic.

White's 133 tackles rank fourth on the school season-record chart, topped by Bradie James (154 in 2002), Al Richardson (150 in 1981) and Lawrence Williams (144 in 1981). White's fourteen tackles-for-loss also paced the Tigers, as he had five pressures, three pass deflections and a fumble recovery to go with 4.5 sacks. He led the squad in tackles ten times and totaled eight double-digit tackle games to tie Bradie James (2002) for the most in a single season in school history.

White became LSU’s first winner of the Butkus Award (college football’s top linebacker) in 2018. He appeared in every game, starting twelve contests. Ejected for a targeting call vs. Mississippi State, he sat out the first half of the Alabama clash due to league rules. He still led the team and SEC in tackles (123) for the second-straight year, also pacing the team with twelve stops for losses of 33 yards that included three sacks.

White garnered All-American status from Walter Camp, Associated Press, Sporting News and American Football Coaches Association. He was credited with eight pressures, returning one of two fumble recoveries 29 yards while batting away six pass attempts. On January 14th, 2019, the junior announced that he was going to forgo his senior season and enter the 2019 NFL Draft.

*The Scouting Report*

*Athletic Ability.*.. White has a compact, muscular frame with good upper body development, broad shoulders, thick chest, good bubble, tapered thighs and thick hamstrings. He has actually reduced his bulk by over twenty pounds since arriving on campus as a true freshman in 2016 and losing that weight has seen a great improvement in his overall speed. He is a stout athlete with good muscle definition and is impressively defined in his calves and biceps. With his long legs and quick burst, he does an excellent job of mirroring receivers throughout deep patterns, which could be an added asset for teams like Carolina and Tampa Bay that utilize the Cover-2 scheme.

White shows fine balance closing on the ball and the ability to stay on his feet working through trash. With his flexibility, he is quick to redirect and work his way to the flow of the ball. He has the quickness of a safety dropping back in zone coverage and is an above average space player, thanks to the suddenness when closing (see 2018 Louisiana Tech, Florida, Texas A&M games).

He looks very athletic moving to the ball, showing fluid change of direction, acceleration and body control in attempts to keep the action in front of him. He is simply a very athletic defender, showing the hip swerve and flexibility you find in a safety, rather than a linebacker. He has very good suddenness in his initial move off the ball and gets to top speed quickly.

White has the lateral agility and change of direction agility to slip off blocks and string plays wide. He shows 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, as he has the foot speed to stay with most receivers through their routes.

*Football Sense*… White has the speed and frame that is ideal for the weak-side in a Cover-2 scheme, but his range and balance working himself through trash makes him a better fit in the middle. Some scouts feel he is from that very unique "Derrick Brooks mold," the highest compliment a scout can pay a player at his position. He has made very good strides in taking proper angles to the ball and he is a naturally instinctive player with very good field vision.

The coaches will tell you that he is a quick study, doing a nice job of taking plays from the chalk board to the field (understand, three years ago, he arrived on campus as a running back). He prepares well and understands his assignments. He is not the type that will take poor angles in pursuit, showing the hip action to quickly turn coming out of his backpedal. He is very alert maintaining eye contact with the ball when working through trash. He picks up traps and pulls easily, showing instant hip snap, no wasted steps in transition and fluid feet retreating in pass coverage. He stays focused throughout the play and knows his teammates’ assignments well enough to line other players.

*Key and Diagnostics Skills*… White is very good making reads and reacting quickly to the action in front of him. He plays with good instincts and awareness and is quick to see the play developing. He has a fine nose for the ball and with his marked improvement taking on blocks with the proper shoulder to maintain gap integrity, he does an excellent job of attacking the backfield, whether coming off the edge or slipping past bigger lineman when operating in closed quarters. He is sudden to react and triggers fast moving back in zone coverage.

There are times when he can be coaxed out of position vs. the run, but he has excellent range to make plays in pursuit. He is very explosive 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 always anticipate the flow of the ball (see 2018 Louisiana Tech, Texas A&M games). He simply excels at reacting and tracking down the ball when on the move. The thing you see on film that he is a patient type that generally plays under control and has no problems identifying what the offense throws at him.

*Strength at the Point of Attack…* While he lacks the brute strength you want from a "Mike," when taking on larger blockers, he compensates with field savvy, a quick hand punch, excellent quickness and natural instincts. He is very quick and active with his hands to control and get off blocks in attempts to get to the ball. He has average strength, but he can hit with leverage to stun lead blocks and cause a pile. When he takes on smaller blockers with his hands, he will generally separate and get off blocks quickly. He also is conscious of keeping those hands inside his frame, as opposing offensive linemen have had little success in locking on and neutralizing him.

White has the functional strength to take on blocks and shed vs. slot receivers, tight ends and fullbacks. He has no problems running down hill to fill the rush lane, but must maintain good leverage when taking on the linemen. When playing close to the line, he is quick and hits with a thud taking on lead blockers to gain separation and instantly disengages when receivers or backs dare to challenge him in the second level.

*Hand Usage.*..White uses his hands well when attempting to press and reroute his pass coverage assignment, showing good strength to jolt and redirect tight ends and backs in pass routes. He can use his hands effectively to keep blockers off his feet and get around trash quickly. He is not a natural hands catcher (has had more pass deflections vs. throws that could have been interceptions, if he did not body catch), but the Tigers’ system calls for him to attack the man, rather than the ball, making it difficult to evaluate his ability as a pass thief.

*Lateral Pursuit/Effort*… The former prep running back has superb range, hip snap and change of direction skills. White has a natural feel for the flow of the ball, showing quick lateral movement and fluid change of direction agility. He has that ease of movement when changing direction to turn and run on the ball in an instant. He plays with good hand usage, balance and agility to thread through traffic. He is quick to pull the trigger when operating in pursuit, as he has the speed to cover ground from sideline to sideline, thanks to his excellent range and good effort.

White takes good angles in pursuit and he 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 around traffic. He gives great effort in pursuit and when he plays under control, he can easily read and adjust to the flow of the ball. Few linebackers in the pro game display his ability when it comes to sifting through trash, and even fewer possess the smooth, fluid body control he demonstrates when closing on plays at the opposite side of the field.

*Tackling Ability.*..White is a solid wrap-up tackler who extends his arms properly to stalk and secure. He is an athletic mover who is equally effective playing in space and in tight areas. He has average strength to attack the outside leg of the ball carrier to quickly impede that opponent’s forward progress. It is rare to see him get out of control, as he is a calculating and aggressive hitter who closes fast, hits face up and wraps solidly. 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. and has the leg drive and strength to get the ball carrier on the ground instantly.

*Run Defense.*.. Against the inside run, White can easily utilize his change of direction agility and lateral movement to slip past blocks. He fills holes quickly and has the functional strength to take on fullbacks and even the bigger offensive linemen, as few blockers can engulf him when he is working in-line, as he does a fine job protecting his chest from the blocker attempting to lock on. He does a very good job of coming down hill, and also displays superb ability to use his hands to shed when working near the line of scrimmage, which allows him to fill the rush lane regularly.

White also plays with good leverage taking on blocks coming off the edge, and flashes good take-on ability to stuff lead blocks. He is quite consistent when asked to hold the point in one-on-one inside battles, but he also has the explosive burst to slip off and avoid blockers on the move. Against the outside run, he has the speed and burst to head off ball carriers along the corners.

*Pass Defense*…White has the ability to drop off deep in the zone due to his hip swerve. He has the quickness to run with backs, tight ends and slot receivers in the short area and shows good vision, quickness and ball anticipation to be right in the receiver’s face in attempts to reroute. He uses his hands with force in press situations and shows the hip swerve to operate in trail coverage. 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.

White shows no stiffness in his turns and this allows him to drop off quickly. As a Rover, you can see on film that 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, he can turn and run with almost any tight end, slot receiver or running back, along with the mirror skills and fluidness in transition to stay on the hip of the receivers into the deep secondary. He looks natural maintaining position on the receiver when working underneath. His quick feet allow him to shadow even the speedier receivers on deep routes, doing a nice job of opening his hips to turn and run.

*Compares To.*..Myles Jack-Jacksonville Jaguars...White is a well-prepared athlete who can handle whatever the offenses throw at him. He is a patient sort with good read-and-diagnose ability, knowing his teammates’ assignments well enough to keep everyone in position on the field. He stays focused, is rarely rattled and usually carries out all assignments. He plays with good leverage while taking on blocks and can hit and shed with authority. He uses his hands effectively to free himself working off the edge and has the pass coverage skills and fluid hip motion to drop back quickly in pass coverage.

THE BEST OF THE REST

Devin Bush-#10

University of Michigan Wolverines

5:11.0-234

*Agility Tests.*..4.43 in the 40-yard dash…1.53 10-yard dash…2.58 20-yard dash…4.23 20-yard shuttle…6.93 three-cone drill…40 1/2-inch vertical jump…10'-04" broad jump…Bench pressed 225 pounds 21 times…32-inch arm length…9 5/8-inch hands…76 1/2-inch wingspan.

*College Career.*..Bush appeared in 38 games at Michigan, including his last 32 contests at linebacker after spending his first six games as a Wolverine on special teams. He recorded 194 tackles (82 solos) with ten sacks for minus 75 yards, 19.5 stops for losses of 93 yards and eight quarterback pressures. He intercepted one pass and deflected fifteen others, but strangely, for a player known for his nose for the ball, he never caused or recovered any fumbles.

*Background.*..You instantly see the resemblance, as both father and son have that impressive quickness that helped them both excel at their craft. Father, Devin Sr., was a standout defensive back at Florida State who would go on to become a first round draft selection (26th overall) by the Atlanta Falcons in 1995. He played four seasons with the Falcons before joining the St. Louis Rams, where he helped the team capture the Super Bowl XXIV. He then spent his final two seasons with the Cleveland Browns before retiring in 2002.

On February 18th, 2016, Bush became a defensive analyst for the University of Michigan under head coach Jim Harbaugh, joining his son, Devin Bush Jr., who was part of Michigan's 2016 recruiting class, in Ann Arbor. Junior's sister, Deja, is currently a student and a member of the softball team at Florida State.

Bush Jr. attended Flanagan High School, where his father served as head coach, helping guide the team to the FHSAA Class 8A state championship in 2015. He was a two-time All-State pick, earning four-star recruit status, as he was rated the state of Florida's second-best inside linebacker (13th in the nation). He closed out his career by participating in the 2016 Under Armour All-American Game.

As a freshman, he had totaled 80 tackles, followed by 114 stops and three interceptions during his sophomore campaign. He added 67 tackles with 4.5 sacks as a junior before closing out his career with another 67-tackle effort his senior year.

Bush appeared in thirteen games as a true freshman for Michigan, performing as a linebacker during the final seven contests. He finished that campaign with twelve tackles. In 2017, the All-Big Ten Conference and Academic All-Big Ten choice was named a finalist for the Dick Butkus Award, honoring the nation's top linebacker. He was also the recipient of the Roger Zatkoff Award, presented to Michigan's top linebacker. He led the team with a career-high 102 tackles, posting five sacks among 9.5 stops-for-loss. He broke up nine passes and intercepted another.

Bush started the first twelve games during the 2018 regular season schedule, but in a troubling trend in college recently, opted not to play in the Wolverines' bowl game. A consensus All-American and unanimous All-Big Ten choice, he added league academic honors, in addition to being the Butkus Award and Bronko Nagurski Award finalist. He was also the recipient of the Big Ten Woodson-Nagurski Defensive Player of the Year and Big Ten Butkus-Fitzgerald Linebacker of the Year awards after he again paced the team with 80 tackles, repeating his 2017 season totals with five sacks and 9.5 stops-for-loss.

On December 19th, 2018, Bush announced that he would not return for his senior season and that he would declare for the 2019 NFL Draft. He also announced that he would not play in Michigan's bowl game, the Peach Bowl.

*The Scouting Report*

*Athletic Ability.*.. Bush has a compact build with thick muscle structure and good core strength. He is shorter than ideal, making for a possible switch to outside linebacker, but has good lower body thickness in his thighs, calves and ankles, along with a good bubble. He has good arm length and wingspan, along with adequate hands. He has room to add at least another ten pounds of bulk with no loss in quickness, if he is to remain at inside linebacker in a 3-4 defensive alignment.

Bush shows good closing speed vs. plays in front of him, as he has had good success as a downhill thumper. He builds his acceleration steadily and stays low in his pads to slip under blocks and make plays in pursuit. He has improved his change of direction agility as a junior (as a sophomore, he had some hip stiffness that caused him to struggle some when attempting to redirect). There are times when he will bite on misdirection, but he has a good short area burst to string plays wide, showing good balance working his way through trash. He has enough speed to pressure the pocket on the blitz, but must work on opening his hips quicker in pass coverage. Bush displays the quickness, agility, balance and body control that could see him be a very efficient weak-side outside linebacker at the next level, but you would like to see him protect his legs better on the move (must keep hands inside his frame to combat chop blocks and double teams).

*Football Sense…*Bush takes the plays from the chalkboard to the field with no problems and has a firm grasp of the playbook, but there are some concerns that his lack of great height and adequate vision leads to him being fooled by misdirection. He is capable of calling defensive signals when he doesn’t bite on pump fakes or play action. He does a good job of lining up his teammates and is quick to react to plays in front of him, especially vs. the inside run, as he demonstrates above average gap discipline. He has a knack for getting back quickly to invert tight ends and handle backs and slot receivers in underneath coverage. He might be a better fit for the “will” position than at the conventional “Mike” spot, but for teams using a 3-4 defensive alignment, he does a nice job of scraping down the line to follow the flow of run plays.

*Key and Diagnostics Skills*…There are some concerns that Bush lack of height, along with adequate field vision make him a better candidate for weak-side linebacker in a 3-4 alignment (inside in that defense or outside in a 4-3) rather than having him call defensive signals as a conventional middle linebacker in a 4-3 scheme. While he is quick to locate the ball in front of him when he does not get caught up in a crowd and shows good urgency closing on plays in front of him, he is susceptible to play action and misdirection.

Do not be fooled by his excellent three-cone time. He might not have the hip swerve to come out of his breaks with explosion, but he plays until the whistle and knows how to get around traffic in attempts to make plays on the ball (see 2018 Florida, Cincinnati, Air Force, Purdue games). He is quick to fill the inside holes, when he uses his hands to keep blockers away from his feet. He anticipates gaps well when blitzing and has shown improvement using his hands to execute counter moves. He sometimes takes soft angles to the ball, but when he stays low in his pads and opens his hips quicker, he can get a quick drop into underneath coverage.

*Strength at the Point of Attack…*Prior to 2018, Bush did not get good hand placement in attempts to play off blocks. He has shown the ability to keep his hands inside his frame as a senior, but in the past, he would get too wide with his arm extension, which allowed blockers to get underneath and grab a piece of his jersey. He is best making plays on the move, where his body control is much better than at the point of attack. He has just average bulk to handle the bigger offensive linemen, but needs to be more consistent shooting his hands to keep his opponent from attacking his body, especially vs. chop blocks and double-teams.

Bush has enough functional strength to take on opponents at the point of attack, but only when he keeps his hands active in attempts to shed (inside strength is a concern in attempts to lock out). With his low pad level, he has proven very capable of generating enough strength needed to shoot the inside gaps and plays with enough stoutness to make scouts feel he could handle the trash at the next level playing an inside position in a 3-4 alignment. When he gains quick advantage in his shed, he is very good at making lots of plays.

*Hand Usage.*..Bush was much more active with his hands as a junior than in the past. He has a good array of counter moves and can surprise a lethargic blocker with his rip-&-swim moves (see 2018 Cincinnati, Purdue games). He has had just limited opportunities to secure the interception, but there is not enough there to evaluate and see if he has natural hands in this area. Now, he demonstrates much better ability and strength taking on blocks, as he refined his hand placement and improved his hand technique to prevent the lineman from gaining leverage. He has shown improvement with his hand placement in attempts to reroute short area receivers and uses them efficiently to control and shed blocks. He still needs to generate a stronger jolt and stack at the point of attack, though.

*Lateral Pursuit/Effort*…Bush has good balance on the move, flowing to the ball nicely to push the outside run back in, but must improve his hip swerve to be more effective. He demonstrates good desire and wrap-up form to close and is slippery enough to elude some blockers working in space. In 2018, he demonstrated much better chasing ability than in the past, as he gets through traffic and is able to come through the back door to make plays from behind (see 2018 Florida, Rutgers games). He is best playing in the short area, where he takes good pursuit angles, but needs to open his hips better coming out of his backpedal in long pursuit.

*Tackling Ability.*.. Bush has greatly improved his wrap-up tackling technique since learning to keep his hands inside his frame. He won’t explode behind his hits, but when he keeps his pad level down, he is effective at driving into and pushing back the ball carrier by consistently attacking the opposing runner’s legs to impede their forward progress. He gets a little out of control trying to make plays in long pursuit and when he fails to redirect fluidly, he struggles to recover (see 2018 Penn State and Ohio State games). He is a better tackler on the move, as he knows how to avoid the bigger blockers than when making plays at the point of attack.

Bush has good body control in space, showing the ability to break down and hit with functional pop. During the 2018 season, he has been used more often in run containment, but he does have slippery moves to shoot the gaps and disrupt the pocket (see 2018 Cincinnati, Air Force, Purdue games), as he demonstrated solid square-up ability, showing good form taking on blockers in-line and in space.

*Run Defense.*.. Once he sees the play develop, Bush shows urgency closing and stepping up to take on the lead blocker in attempts to clog up the inside rushing lanes. He doesn’t have the explosive speed to give a long chase on the outside, making him a more likely a 3-4 weak-side inside linebacker candidate, but plays on his feet well and regains his balance to play off blocks in tight areas. He is quick to fill the inside holes and is more stout than he looks.

Against the outside run, Bush does a nice job of sifting through traffic and timing his hits, but he will bite on misdirection more than you would like. Still, he is a stout downhill player who has shown better feel for taking angles to the ball (would soft angle in the past). He uses his frame well to collide with the ball carriers and does a good job of forcing the action back inside. With his balance, he is capable of playing on his feet and is quick to get up when he is cut.

*Pass Defense*…In short area man coverage, Bush has the quickness to stay with tight ends and slot receivers. He has some tightness in his hips when trying to redirect, but will close with good form on plays in front of him. He plays more in the zone than in man coverage and has the feel to handle switch-offs in the open. He has a good decent burst when turning in coverage and showed improved hand placement as a senior to prevent separation and make plays on the ball in flight (hands are not natural as an interceptor, though).

When he gets a bead on a receiver in front of him, he will hit with a thud to drive his man back. He also has the timed speed to stay with quicker receivers past the second level and is quick enough to get to the corner in attempts to jam or press backs and slot receivers to impede their forward progress. When he reverts to taking soft angles, he has to gather himself too much and that takes away from his closing burst on the ball, though.

*Compares To.*..Lavonte David-Tampa Bay Buccaneers- If Bush is allowed to play the weak-side inside or outside linebacker positions in a 3-4 alignment, an NFL team will find him to be a high intensity type who does a fine job of making plays in front of him. He has just adequate size that bring some concerns about him producing as a classic middle linebacker in a 4-3 scheme, but he has made good strides improving his hand placement and punch as a junior and is relentless in his pursuit of the ball working through traffic.

ROUND TWO COULD SEE WILSON AS THE ONLY MIKE GUY DRAFTED

Mack Wilson-#30

University of Alabama Crimson Tide

6:01.1-240

*Agility Tests.*..4.65 in the 40-yard dash…1.58 10-yard dash…2.63 20-yard dash…4.20 20-yard shuttle…7.04 three-cone drill…32-inch vertical jump…9'-07" broad jump…Bench pressed 225 pounds xx times…32 3/8-inch arm length…9 1/4-inch hands…75 7/8-inch wingspan.

*College Career.*..In 42 games with the Crimson Tide, Wilson started seventeen contests at middle linebacker, including all fifteen appearances in 2018. He finished his career with 119 tackles (62 solos), a 1-yard sack, 7.5 stops for losses of 13 yards and twelve quarterback pressures. He batted away seven passes and intercepted six others for 39 yards in return, including one touchdown. He also recovered a fumble and recorded one safety.

*Background.*..Third on the "totem pole" along most NFL team draft boards, Wilson is yet another in a long line of standout five-star recruits to join the Alabama linebacker unit. He first attended George Washington Carver High School in Montgomery, Alabama, where the 2015 All-USA selection by USA Today was also a Scout.com All-American. He was ratred tenth on Prep Star's Top 150 Dream Team and listed as the second-best outside linebacker in the country by 247Sports.com.

After his prep senior season, Wilson was selected to participate in the 2016 Under Armour All-America Game and Nike's 2015 "The Opening" after he had posted 115 tackles in 2015 with five sacks, four forced fumbles and an interception. He also recorded 86 tackles, nine sacks, five forced fumbles and two interceptions as a junior, garnering first-team 6A All-State by the Alabama Sports Writers Association recognition in both 2014 and 2015.

Wilson was relegated to third-string duties as a weak-side outside linebacker during his first season at Alabama, playing behind future NFL first round choices, Rashaan Evans and Reuben Foster. In fifteen games, mostly on special teams, he made eight tackles with a fumble recovery. Dropping ten pounds from his frame prior to 2016, Wilson shifted inside, where the 236-pounder backed up Shaun Dion Hamilton. He earned two starts through twelve games, missing the Mississippi State and Mercer clashes due to a foot injury.

Despite his reserve status, Wilson still led the Tide with four interceptions for 39 yards in return during the 2017 schedule. He made 40 tackles, with just 2.5 stops-for-loss, but also had a quartet of quarterback pressures. National recognition was accorded the junior in 2018, as the Butkus Award semi-finalist started all fifteen games at middle linebacker. The instinctive, hard-hitting linebacker was dominant down the stretch, earning second team All-America accolades from the AFCA.

The All-Southeastern Conference second team selection by the league's coaches registered 71 tackles, including 4.5 for a losses of eight yards and one sack. He contributed seven quarterback pressures and five pass breakups. He also added two interceptions to tie for second on the Tide defense and was twice named Player of the Game. After the bowl season, Wilson announced that he was departing Alabama and entered his name into the 2019 draft pool.

*The Scouting Report*

*Athletic Ability.*..Wilson has an athletic, compact physique with a thick upper body, muscular arms, good bubble, thick thighs and calves. He possesses very good lower body strength which allows him to anchor firmly vs. double teams. He displays fluid hip snap with minimal body fat and room to carry at least another ten pounds of bulk without the added weight impacting his overall quickness.

Wilson has above average agility, body control and balance. He has that sudden burst and quick feet to fill the rush lanes, just what you expect from a classic middle linebacker. He changes direction with good balance, showing good acceleration and burst to close. He is flexible, displaying ease of movement working his way down the line. He runs with a normal stride and has good athleticism for his position, showing good urgency and a strong concept for angling when closing on plays in front of him.

*Football Sense…*Wilson is an instinctive middle linebacker who is quick to read and react. He is quick to get into position and make plays, as he easily takes the plays from the board to the field. He has solid field instincts and is the type who can make proper calls and adjustments up front, but it is a bit puzzling that he does not force his way into the backfield more often. He is capable of making blocking reads and combined with his balance and closing burst, his instincts will generally find him around the ball.

*Key and Diagnostics Skills*…Wilson plays with valid football instincts. He takes good angles to the ball and is a smart player who always seems to be in position to make the play. He reacts with the same decisiveness vs. the run and pass and it is rare to see him caught out of position. He is an instinctive player who is quick to read and react. He excels working in schemes by formation and is equally effective in a base defense. The thing you notice on film is his ability to diagnose blocking keys, doing a nice job of slipping past double teams and avoiding trash while using his hands well to avoid low blocks.

*Strength at the Point of Attack…*Wilson hits with good pop on contact and playing strength. He is active with his hands, using his arm swipes effectively to lock out, shed and get to the ball. It is his burst and acceleration that lets him beat most blocks rather than raw power, but he does have the upper body strength to impact the lead blocker and clog the inside rush lanes. Even when he makes a wrong guess on a play, he is quick to recover and explode into his tackles. He stays square and can take on and shed with quick reaction off blocks. He is tough to knock off his feet and has the ability to use his hands properly to shed, but it is surprising his alarming lack of tackles behind the line of scrimmage.

*Hand Usage.*..Wilson uses his hands well to get separation and control the blocker. He does a nice job of maintaining position on the tight ends and looks sharp playing off blocks. He has developed natural hands to make the interception and extends well from the body’s framework in attempts to make the pass deflection. He also knows how to get good hand placement to prevent the blocker from attacking his feet. He will deliver a strong blow to fend off bigger blockers and get off the opponent, quick enough to close on the plays in front of him.

*Lateral Pursuit/Effort*…Wilson shows good effort and quickness working sideline to sideline. He always gives good effort in his pursuit, but he needs to use his speed better to chase down ball carriers in the backfield (just 7.5 stops-for-loss in 42 games). He has good swim moves to work his way through traffic, but fails to deliver much when he does get into the backfield. He keeps his balance on the move and is efficient in coming up with the big hits along the sidelines. His athletic ability and fast feet will generally find him around the ball, but you just want him to attack the pocket more often.

*Tackling Ability.*..Wilson is an aggressive tackler who uses his lower body strength to drive through ball carriers. He will face up, drag down and wrap up in pursuit. He will punish his opponent due to his playing strength, and is effective making tackles that the ball carrier will not slip off of. He shows good body control in the move and takes good angles to seal off the corners. He does over-run some plays, but does a good job of recovering to get back in the action. Right now, he is better in close quarters than in space, as he is more effective breaking down and wrapping in tight areas (tends to drag down more in the open field).

*Run Defense.*..With his lack of tackles behind the line of scrimmage, Wilson seems to prefer waiting for the action to come to him. He is quick to fill the tackle-to-tackle holes and does a nice job of taking on and shedding blocks to make plays when working down the line, but his numbers in an opposing backfield are some of the worst for a first or second level defender in this draft. Against the outside run, he shows good range to the sideline, keeping his feet to get through traffic. His quickness lets him fill the rush lanes and he has the balance to hold his ground and prevent blockers from washing him out. He has a good burst when attacking the outside run, as his recognition skills let him get good position to make the hit. He will sometimes lose momentum and overshoot the play, but he can redirect, slide and adjust when working in space.

*Pass Defense*…Wilson is effective in man coverage vs. the slot receivers, as he has enough speed to run stride for stride with his opponent. He shows good turn-&-run motion moving in reverse and is able to get depth with a good drop angle. He reacts quickly to switch-offs and to the ball in flight when playing in the short zone. He is very alert looking up receivers and breaking on zone plays. There is no hip stiffness when turning out of his backpedal and it is rare to see him gather, as he gets enough depth working the intermediate zone. He has enough body control to maintain contact in the short area. The thing you see on film is his ability to take good angles to the ball. His leaping ability lets him get his hands on more than a few thrown balls.

*Compares To.*..C.J. Mosley-New York Jets-Wilson is more of a flow-to-the ball type of tackler, but can also step up and punish, despite a lack of ideal size, making up for it with his desire and good playing strength. He has good quickness and acceleration to the ball and that speed lets him race past the slower blockers to make plays in the backfield. He always gives good effort and has the intelligence to handle assignments in either the base or schemed defense. He reads and reacts quickly to plays in front of him and also shows immediate reaction when operating in pass coverage. He has a good feel for taking proper angles to the ball, utilizing his above average straight-line speed.

SAFETY TURNED LINEBACKER MOVING UP TEAM DRAFT BOARDS

Germaine Pratt-#3

North Carolina State University Wolfpack

6:02.4-240

*Agility Tests.*..4.57 in the 40-yard dash…1.60 10-yard dash…2.65 20-yard dash…33 1/2-inch vertical jump…9'-08" broad jump…Bench pressed 225 pounds 24 times…31 5/8-inch arm length…9 1/8-inch hands…75 3/8-inch wingspan.

*College Career.*..In fifty games, Pratt started twelve contests, as the former free safety started once at that position in 2014. Moved to weak-side outside linebacker in 2018, he started eleven games at that position, losing bowl eligibility by signing with an agent immediately after the 2018 regular season. He finished with 235 tackles (121 solos) on 1,577 defensive snaps, adding six sacks for minus 43 yards, 17.5 stops for losses of 74 yards and five quarterback pressures. He deflected ten passes and intercepted three others for 102 yards in return, including one touchdown. He also caused five fumbles and recovered three others.

*Background.*..Pratt became a part of a disturbing trend in college football recently - no allegiance to the school that offered them a scholarship. Despite only one season as a linebacker and his only season as a starter, the athlete who "plays with his hair on fire" decided to sign with an agent after the regular season, waving good-bye to teammates prior to their 52-13 loss to Texas A&M in the Gator Bowl. Yes, Pratt became part of the "me" generation.

At Central High School in High Point, North Carolina, the then 190-pound Pratt played safety and wide receiver, helping his team finish 9-4 to advance to the second round of the NC 4A state championships as a senior. He then participated in the 2013 North Carolina-South Carolina Shrine Bowl, where he had eight tackles, including one for a loss. He was also selected to the Offense-Defense Senior Bowl, but did not play because of early enrollment at N.C. State.

The three-time All-Piedmont Triad 4A all-conference pick was a 2013 Associated Press all-state selection at defensive back. He was named Piedmont Triad 4A Conference’s Defensive Player of the Year as a senior, recording 104 tackles, five stops-for-loss, five interceptions, seven pass deflections while making 31 receptions for 424 yards and three touchdowns. For his career, he posted 328 tackles (179 solos), 21.0 stops behind the line of scrimmage and twelve interceptions.

In 2014, Pratt enrolled at North Carolina State for the 2014 spring semester and participated in spring drills. He made twelve appearances at free safety during the 2014 campaign, earning his first career start vs. Louisville. The true freshman delivered an impressive 32 tackles (21 solos) with three stops-for-loss via 262 snaps.

With 34 pounds added to his frame since he joined the team, the 234-pound Pratt backed up Hakim Jones at free safety in 2015. Through 178 snaps, he was in on thirty tackles, causing three fumbles and recovering another. He also had an interception. That would be his last action until the 2017 schedule, as he sat out the entire 2016 season after undergoing shoulder surgery. He moved from safety to linebacker during his year out.

Pratt shared weak-side outside linebacker duties with Airius Moore upon returning to the gridiron. Despite not starting any games, he ranked fourth on the team with 69 tackles, appearing in 458 plays. He picked off two passes, becoming the first Wolfpack defender to score a pair of touchdowns in a season since David Amerson in 2011. He first returned an interception 25 yards for a touchdown in the win over Louisville to seal that Wolfpack victory. He recovered a blocked punt for a score at Notre Dame and also picked off a pass to seal the win over UNC in the regular season finale, returning it 75 yards.

Pratt started eleven games in 2018, as the new first unit weak-side linebacker missed the North Carolina clash with a knee sprain. In 679 snaps, he recorded 104 tackles (54 solos), as his average of 9.5 tackles per game ranked second in the Atlantic Coast Conference. He posted 6.5 sacks among eleven stops-for-loss, causing two fumbles while recovering another.

*The Scouting Report*

*Athletic Ability.*..Pratt shows a cut, athletic physique with good lower body thickness, tight waist and hips, good washboard-type abdomen, good bubble, muscular thighs and calves and low body fat. He has a broad chest with good shoulder length.

Pratt has above average quickness and change of direction agility, looking fluid scraping down the line. He is not a “blow them up” type of tackler and can be engulfed by larger blockers in tight areas, but he uses his lateral movement to slip past and avoid blockers effectively. He might be a better fit for an outside position, as he shows a good flow to the ball. He has the speed and range to cover the field coming from the weak outside area and that quickness seems a better fit for him to apply pressure coming off the edge (see 2018 Syracuse and Marshall games). He has good lower body flexibility, especially in the hips. He also demonstrates good balance on the move, along with the acceleration and burst to close on plays in front of him.

*Football Sense…*Pratt has a nice feel for blocking schemes, knowing that he needs to avoid bigger opponents. He is still too inexperienced at the linebacker position to make good calls, but he has the vision to locate the ball in a hurry (see 2018 Boston College, Syracuse games). He learns and retains plays well, having no problems taking them from the chalkboard to the playing field. He plays with his head up and does a nice job of anticipating the quarterback’s moves, but can get fooled by play action when he gets out of control, which is often. Still, he gets a good break on the ball, flowing to the sidelines quickly to challenge the ball carrier and cut off the cutback lanes.

*Key and Diagnostics Skills*…Pratt has a good feel for blocking schemes, knowing that he has much better success when avoiding blockers rather than taking them on. He is not effective in his backside pursuit due to getting absorbed by bigger blockers, making him a better candidate to play on the outside, where his hip snap, quickness and ability to flow to the ball when giving long distance chases has seen him regularly wreak havoc in the backfield. When he gets out of control, he can be fooled by play action and misdirection. He does a better job of locating plays in front of him, but he won't struggle tracking the ball in flight (has three big interception returns during his career). He reads off the snap well, but when trying to sift through trash, he will lose sight of the ball, at times, making him much more effective when utilized in motion.

*Strength at the Point of Attack…*Pratt is an effective shed player, thanks to quick, active hands that give him success when bigger blockers try to latch on to his jersey and control him. He is much more effective attacking the backfield from the edges rather that attacking the inside gaps, making me feel he is better suited as a weak-side outside linebacker. He does play with good knee bend and keeps his hands active in attempts to shed. He is just not the type that will fill hard or stack at the point of attack, as he can be pinned and sealed by the bigger opponent operating inside and must work around blocks rather than take them on. While he does work hard to stay square, he can be positioned at the X’s. His body seems better suited for playing in motion that performing in a stationary area. He is very active with his hands, using his arm swipes effectively to lock out, shed and get to the ball. It is his sudden burst and acceleration that lets him beat most blocks rather than raw power.

*Hand Usage.*..Pratt is active with his hands when taking on and shedding blocks, but despite impressive weight room strength, he lacks that strong hand punch to put offensive linemen back on their heels. He keeps his hands inside his framework to get under the blocker’s pads, but when he is challenged by counter moves, he will struggle to disengage and shed. He catches the ball outside his framework when going for the interception (does struggle to turn and stay on the receiver in the deep zone, despite good change of direction agility, though). While he has not displayed it in college, back during his prep days, his ball skills were much better on plays in front of him that when having to track it over his outside shoulder or with his back turned to the ball, though.

*Lateral Pursuit/Effort*…Pratt knows this is one of his better assets and another reason that I feel if he is utilized like Sean Lee (Dallas) as a weak-side linebacker, he will be much more productive than he can be in the middle. He struggles at time to get through traffic and maintain position at the point of attack, but plays with good effort and better production in pursuit. He takes good angles to the ball and has the closing speed to give chase and make plays in front of him. You can see on film that he plays better when flowing to the ball, especially when unblocked, as he can angle and cut through to make plays on the edge and has the range to get wide in order to make those stops. The Wolfpack defender shows a good flow to the ball, as his ability to get to the edge allows him to generate solid outside containment vs. the run.

*Tackling Ability.*..When he keeps plays in front of him and stays low in his pads, Pratt is very effective attacking the ball carrier’s outside leg to impede the opponent’s forward progress. He has the range to maker plays on the outside and has shown a much better concept for taking angles playing on the edge. Still, he seems to try to over-compensate for a lack of experience at the position and will get reckless when trying to shoot the gaps and an inside 'backer, failing to keep his feet vs. double team activity. He is better served playing in control, as he will revert to over-pursuing and getting too aggressive when trying to make that “home run” hit, as he struggles at times trying to get back into the action when he races out of control past the play.

He is just better tackling on the outside, where he does not have to take on the big-body type blockers so much. He will come to balance and take good angles with his outside pursuit, but when he gets too tall in his stance, he loses some pop on contact. He just needs to be more consistent as a low pad level wrap-up tackler (opponents can bounce off his high hits).

*Run Defense.*.. Pratt plays better on running plays to the outside than when trying to impact the action in-line due to size, bulk and strength issues. He can get bounced around some on inside running plays. Generally, he is quick to avoid in pursuit, as he is best when unblocked, as he can be pushed out of position when he fails to square up in attempts to fill the gaps. On outside plays, he has the range and change of direction agility to get through traffic in attempts to get wide to make the play. He keeps his feet better on the move and is a much better force when giving chase.

*Pass Defense*…Covering in the short area, Pratt gets very good depth in his pass drops, as he has the hip flexibility and quick feet to mirror tight ends and backs underneath. He has good eyes reading the pass when facing the quarterback, rarely struggling when attempting to track the ball in flight over his shoulder. His ball skills are evident (three interceptions, a pair of touchdown returns) on plays in front of him. He shows the awareness to locate and pick up receivers, having the loose hips needed to turn and flip. He does appear decisive in deep zone coverage, showing fluidity in his short area drops, playing his man with a tight cushion.

*Compares To.*..Nick Barnett-ex-Green Bay Packers…Like Barnett, Pratt gets most of his production by making plays on the move. He has very good range and change of direction agility, making him a much better fit playing on the outside rather than dealing with inside trash. The former safety has the foot speed and pursuit skills to be a big impact vs. the outside running game. He will be an effective player in the pros, but could be much more productive if allowed to roam the field from the outside, as he is better on the chase or creating havoc in the backfield than one who needs to occupy his talent handling inside chores.

THE NFL DRAFT REPORT'S SLEEPER

Josiah Tauaefa-#55

(pronounced tow [rhymes with cow] - ah - f - ah)

University of Texas-San Antonio Roadrunners

6:02.1-247

*Agility Tests.*..4.82 in the 40-yard dash…1.65 10-yard dash…2.72 20-yard dash…x.xx 20-yard shuttle…x.xx 60-yard shuttle…x.xx three-cone drill…xxx-inch vertical jump…xxx broad jump…Bench pressed 225 pounds xx times…xxx –inch arm length…xxx –inch hands…xxx –inch wingspan...Note-At press time, UTSA had yet to have their Pro Day. Agility test numbers will be added shortly.

*College Career.*..The former defensive end converted to middle linebacker in 2017, starting 31-of-38 games for the Roadrunners. In three seasons, he recorded 257 tackles (121 solos) with 11.5 sacks for minus 83 yards, 22.5 stops for losses of 83 yards and thirteen quarterback pressures. He advanced a fumble recovery 22 yards for a touchdown, as he caused two fumbles, deflected tree passes and returned an interception 14 yards.

Tauaefa's 257 tackles rank second in school history behind Triston Wade (293; 2011-14), as his 121 solo stops are surpassed by only Wade's 169. His 11.5 sacks are third on the school career chart behind Marcus Davenport (22.0; 2014-17) and Jason Neill (14.0; 2011-12, ‘14-15). His 22.5 stops behind the line of scrimmage are fourth-best in the school's history.

Tauaefa is the only Roadrunner to ever record one hundred tackles in a season, holding the two top spots on the annual record chart with 115 hits in 2016 and 113 more in 2018. His 11.5 stops-for-loss in 2018 rank second on the annual list, topped by Marcus Davenport (17.5 in 2017).

*Background.*..Tauaefa's draft stock is all over the draft boards, as several teams cite his lack of pass coverage skills as only seeing him being utilized as a two-down performer. Other teams see an athlete with tremendous hitting ability - over-aggressive, at times - but still recognize that this is a youngster who never played linebacker until his second year in college. In fact, the two-star recruit actually was lured to UTSA to play edge rusher.

At Lake Dallas High School, Tauaefa was tabbed honorable mention all-state, named the District 6-5A Defensive Most Valuable Player and also was a first-team all-district choice at fullback/tight end as a senior. He was named the District 5-4A Defensive MVP after registering 75 tackles and a team-leading eight sacks as a junior. He was also named the district’s Newcomer of the Year following his sophomore campaign.

Tauaefa red-shirted while performing on the scout team as a defensive end after enrolling at Texas-San Antonio in 2015. The next season, he appeared in all thirteen games. He came off the bench as an edge rusher until starting his next twelve appearances at middle linebacker in 2016. He set the school season-record with 115 tackles (50 solos), getting to the quarterback six times among his nine stops-for-loss. He also posted seven pressures with a 14-yard interception runback, earning Freshman All-American Conference USA Freshman of the Year, first-team all-league and C-USA All-Freshman Team accolades.

A late season knee injury cost Tauaefa three full games on the field in 2017. Through seven starting assignments, he managed just 29 tackles, but he did recover a fumble that he advanced 22 yards for a touchdown vs. Texas State.

Fully recovered from knee woes, Tauaefa had a banner 2018 campaign, as the Butkus Award semi-finalist was called by his coaching staff the best player to ever suit up for the Roadrunners, an impressive compliment, especially after his former teammate, Marcus Davenport, was so coveted by the New Orleans Saints that they traded two first round picks to move up and select him in the 2018 draft.

Tauaefa again led the team with 113 tackles, the second-best season total in school history, as his 11.5 stops behind the line of scrimmage holds the second spot on that annual chart. He also made 4.5 sacks, twice causing fumbles from those quarterback hits. After the season, he announced that he was leaving college and entered his name into the 2019 draft pool.

*The Scouting Report*

*Athletic Ability.*..Tauaefa has the typical middle linebacker’s frame – thick body, especially in his upper frame, thick arms, large hands, firm midsection, tight waist and hips and good bubble. He is a bit bow-legged, which helps when trying to stay low in his pads and has strong thighs and calves to drive through ball carriers.

*Football Sense…*Tauaefa has that combination of size and power to punish the runner with crunching hits. You would think that the way he attacks the ball carriers that he would have many more nicks and bruises, but outside of the 2017 knee issue, he has been durable during his career, considering his “search and destroy” attitude on the field. He has excellent balance, showing the change of direction and lateral agility to make plays along the perimeter. He plays faster than his timed speed indicates and even when banged up, he will give total effort on the field.

*Key and Diagnostics Skills*…auaefa is a steady playmaker with the eyes and instincts to recognize the action developing in front of him and getting into position to make the play. Yes, there are times he plays as if his hair is on fire and he will get reckless and over-pursue in attempts to make the spectacular play, and is then slow to recover. He does a good job of reading keys and is quick to find the ball sifting through trash. He can be fooled by misdirection and there are times he is caught out of position when needed to neutralize play action fakes. On those occasions, he will run himself out of position, but is quick to recover.

*Strength at the Point of Attack…*Tauaefa comes off the snap with good explosion and knows how to use his hands to generate a punch to rock the offensive lineman back on his heels. He is not really sudden in his movements until he can locate the ball. Then, he has no trouble building to top speed to make plays out of his territory. He will get out of control trying to deliver the sensational hit and when he does this, his hands will get outside his frame, allowing savvy ball carriers to sidestep and avoid. Still, he generally meets the blocker with good force and is explosive delivering his hits, but if he gets too high in his stance, he can be positioned.

*Hand Usage.*..Tauaefa has above average strength, along with a violent hand punch and proper hand placement to stun and slip off blockers. He displays the large, soft hands and good extension to attack the ball at its high point and secure it for the big interception. He plays with strength and good authority, as he can deliver a good punch to stop his opponents in their tracks. He uses his hands well to protect his legs on the move and gets through traffic with no problems.

*Lateral Pursuit/Effort*…Tauaefa runs with good urgency and does a good job of generating inside run containment. He is a classic downhill tackler who uses his hands with force to shed and control the offensive linemen. He lacks the great, loose hips to change direction on a dime, but once he locates the ball, he displays the range to make plays along the sidelines. His problems occur when he gets reckless in his play and tries to punish people, losing sight at the task at hand – getting to the person with the ball. He shows good long and short pursuit quickness, doing a fine job of catching the running back from behind and will not hesitate to run long distances to make the stop.

*Tackling Ability.*..Tauaefa is an explosive hitter who knows how to use his size and athleticism to stack and control. He drives hard with his legs to push the lead blocker out of the way and clog the rush lanes. He gets in trouble when he gets reckless in his play, as he will get vertical and leave his feet, but that will only result in a missed tackle. He breaks down well in space, but it is his ability to fly to the ball with suddenness and ease of movement that separates him from the rest of the middle linebacker draft class. He needs to play with better control at times, but at the Xs, he does a good job of breaking down, facing up and wrapping up, but when he gets reckless, he will revert to shoestring tackles.

*Run Defense.*..Tauaefa is best when taking on the lead blocker and clogging the rush lanes. He has the lower body strength to split double teams and uses his hands with force to stun or with quickness to shed. He shows good urgency moving through a crowd and is a great impact hitter. He has the speed to close on running plays along the perimeter and does a fine job of impeding the ball carrier’s forward momentum with his ability to consistently attack his opponent’s outside leg. Taking on the inside run, he is quite effective playing right up the “A” gap, showing enough strength to hold ground at the point of attack. He holds ground well on plays directed right at him and is quick to fill and hit a lick.

*Pass Defense*…This is his weakest area, more so out of a lack of experience than poor mechanics.

Tauaefa tends to get too upright in his backpedal and has sloppy footwork in his retreat skills which affect his transitioning out of his backpedal. There are too many times where he gets over-confident reading his keys and while he can be a heat-seeking missile sifting through trash to shut down the screens, more often than not, he will over-pursue.

*Compares To.*..Bobby Wagner-Seattle Seahawks-Tauaefa is taller than Wagner and much rawer technique-wise, but he's fun to watch because he plays so physically. He is big, strong, and explosive, displaying the perfect middle linebacker temperament. He is the type of player that can set the tempo of the game and makes players around him better. His teammates know that if they let up, he is going to get all over them. He plays very close to the line of scrimmage, right up in the gap and will not hesitate to attack and be physical with blockers.

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