



Scouting Report: QB Gardner Minshew, Washington State

**Our QB grades can and will change as more information comes in from Pro Day workouts, leaked Wonderlic test results, etc. We will update ratings as new info becomes available.*

I'll give the one sentence scouting report, that really captures it all and then I'll blviate for 1,000+ words on it in case you really want the reading material/reasoning.

One sentence: **Gardner Minshew** is the '10%-less-sugar-added' **Baker Mayfield** QB dessert...from style, to mannerisms, to size, to mechanics, to leadership – very similar, just not completely 'Mayfield' in all his *Mayfield-ness*.

In his favor, compared to Mayfield, Minshew has zero of the off-field issues and far fewer quotable statements in the media... but I wouldn't be surprised if Minshew started confidently/arrogantly sparring with the media and NFL management at some point. I can see it in him.

I say 'less-sugar-added' Mayfield...he's not quite Mayfield, but that's not the worst thing ever. I would argue **Baker Mayfield** is the greatest processor of the field/defenses, etc., that I've ever seen (right up there with **Tom Brady**) – and has the arm and mental will/confidence combo in a QB that we've never seen before. Mayfield is 'Larry Bird' to **Patrick Mahomes** 'Magic Johnson'. Maybe the two greatest players in basketball, with two totally different styles and personas...personas that fit the city they played in like none other. Mayfield-Mahomes is going to become that in the NFL.

Minshew is a little less football passing talented than Mayfield, in my judging of 'the art of QB play'. A 10-20% discount on the arm, and in the middle of the field passer ability, and in the full-on confidence of Mayfield...but, again, I'd argue no one is in Mayfield's class and every young QB is a steep discount to Mayfield except **Patrick Mahomes**.

Let's look at the Minshew journey to NFL Draft prospect, because it's a little different and did not reach a fever pitch of hype anywhere near what Mayfield did. However, it's not out of the question if scouts and analysts wake up – they'll see Minshew is arguably the best QB prospect in this 2019 class. But I'd bet a lot of money THEY'll be against him, for many of the same reasons THEY were against Mayfield.

The Mississippi high school star, Minshew, began his college journey on an academic scholarship for Troy (Alabama) – after no home state/Mississippi schools showed interest. A fact that sits like a chip on his shoulder to this day.

Minshew didn't see a chance to play quickly/ever at Troy, so he transferred to Northwest Mississippi Community College (2015) and led his team to the NJCAA title. Minshew gained notoriety from his JUCO



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title year and was offered a scholarship to East Carolina (and, again, no Mississippi teams showed interest).

He played in 17 games at ECU over two seasons, a less than 60.0 Comp. Pct. passer in his time there. 4 TDs/4 INTs in his first five games at ECU, but then things started to click late his sophomore season...4 TDs/0 INT his last two games of 2016, and then 16 TDs/7 INTs in his junior season.

This is where the story starts to get interesting and the Minshew rocket ship started to take-off...

Minshew wasn't starting for ECU to begin the 2017 season, he played some but it was a cluster rotation (and lots of losing). He was installed as the full starter in November 2017, and his first game he went 52-of-68 for 463 yards, 3 TDs/1 INT against a pretty good Houston defense. Minshew's final five games for ECU...12 TDs/5 INTs with three 350+ yard games...and two wins (after 1-11 in the first 12 games he appeared in for ECU). *The emergence of Minshew was happening...*

But East Carolina was a bad team/program with a lot of losing and Minshew was ready to bolt...having already graduated, he could immediately go wherever he wanted after his junior season.

Minshew got noticed...and noticed by people you want to get noticed by.

Nick Saban offered Minshew the chance to be a backup for Alabama's juggernaut run for another title. Minshew accepted, but then late in the process he got the lifechanging phone call. Washington State head coach **Mike Leach** called, and in the most Mike Leach-like move ever, asked Minshew if he, *"...wouldn't mind leading the nation in passing?"*

With that, Minshew switched from Alabama backup to behind-the-eight-ball (in learning the offense) starter needing to get up to speed at Washington State.

Minshew ended up the 2018 season 2nd in passing yards, 1st in completions, 2nd in Completion Percentage, 4th in TD passes, 5th in total TDs in the NCAA in 2018 – winning the PAC-12 Player of the Year and Johnny Unitas Golden Arm Award and finishing 5th in the Heisman voting. Washington State went 11-2 and got to the PAC-12 title game (a loss in a snowstorm to Washington).

The knock against Minshew should be obvious by now...*'of course he put up numbers at Washington State with Mike Leach'*! Said by the same people who used that to knock **Baker Mayfield** and **Patrick Mahomes** and **Jared Goff** and every QB prospect that blew away numbers – for some reason NFL scouts like unproductive physical specimens like **Josh Allen**, **DeShone Kizer**, and **Carson Wentz** and hate super-productive, high-volume college passers. I'd argue it's because most NFL head coaches want to 'establish run games' and don't know what to do with these new age college passers. The NFL is somewhere between 15 and 500 steps behind college and high school football trends. Consequently, the slow/never-to-change NFL will be unlikely to like Minshew right away.

I liked Minshew the first moment I saw him. I had studied Haskins-Grier-Lock-Jones-Finley, etc., bigger attention name QB prospects and had varying pros and cons, but I'd never seen Minshew play (I don't



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really watch CFB until after the NFL season/for draft scouting purposes) and not seen his name ever among the guys the mainstream liked – I wasn't expecting much, but instantly lit up when watching him work on tape.

He's probably 6'1"+, so he looks and works like **Baker Mayfield**...which scouts will hate (they want 6'4"+ always). Minshew has no issues working as a passer at 6'1", just like Baker had zero problems in the NFL. Minshew sees the field. He has that uncanny escape-ability to slide around in the pocket to buy time for throws as needed. He has a nice arm with good mechanics. He's accurate on all types of throws. He has great feet in the pocket, like Mayfield – a perfect form dropping back, and bounce and really lets it rip on his throws and doesn't always need to step into his throws. He can throw from off-kilter angles. He works the middle of the field and tight windows...he has very good accuracy on his throws. He reads the defense – he's not just completing simple passes all the time like **Dwayne Haskins**...Minshew takes the simple when needed but, unlike Haskins, will zip passes over the middle and deep with success.

Minshew is just not as good as Mayfield...but he might be 'close enough', with the bonus of 'no issues' off the field brought to the table. Minshew checks down a little more than Mayfield did/does...but, although Mayfield is always going for the jugular when he can, he will reel it in as needed...but his default mode is 'ruthless aggression'. Minshew will push but tends to play a bit more conservatively than Mayfield...which NFL coaches might prefer. Full-Mayfield scares them. Minshew is the non-scary Mayfield-lite.

Minshew has that blue-collar vibe that could take over a depressed football town, like Mayfield did. Minshew grew out a throwback mustache in 2018 and it became such a thing that fans started wearing fake mustaches in the stands to honor Minshew. You will often see Minshew wearing big mirrored sunglasses with his 1970s mustache...he's endearing, beloved by fans and players and coaches – a good sense of humor, but the team leader...the heart and soul of a team. Like Mayfield, on the right team, Minshew will change a culture if they let him. Players and fans will love him...the football establishment not-so-much.

Mike Leach, Washington State coach, is known as an offensive/passing game scientist...and a bit eccentric...and easily irritated. He's coached a lot of 'producers' at the QB position over the years. Leach calls Minshew the smartest QB he has ever coached. I've never seen Leach so pleased or complimentary of a QB/player in all my years. Minshew has 'something'...an 'it' factor...a nice chip on his shoulder from not being coddled and from having to fight for everything and doing it the right way.

I don't know how high his ceiling is for the NFL, but if there is a better QB prospect than Minshew in 2019...then this will be a helluva draft class.



Gardner Minshew, Through the Lens of Our QB Scouting Algorithm:

One 'bad' game in 2018...his PAC-12 Conference title game loss to Washington. 152 yards passing and 0 TDs/2 INTs. Consider, this game was played in a snow storm and one of the INTs was a time-running out before half Hail Mary fling to the end zone which got picked. Minshew rarely makes bad throws. He also completed 74.3% of his passes in that snow storm against the #5 defense in CFB.

Aside from the Washington snow storm game...38 TDs/7 INTs in his other 12 games...3+ TD passes per game in 2018.

Against top opponents not faced in a snow storm, USC, Utah, Stanford, Iowa State (bowl), Minshew went 3-1 with 11 TDs/1 INT and 381.5 yards passing per game.

A knock on Minshew will be 'system QB' and a lower yards per attempt and lower 'air yards' on throws than some want to see, but you have to remember that Washington State's offense is basically passes in lieu of the run. So, they have a lot of swing/flare passes by design...as their running plays. He will have a lot of cheap completions because it's the offense – but then you go look at his downfield passes and where he completes them and how he completes them, and you'll see no issue...arguably the best tight window passer among the 2019 prospects.

We projected Minshew at 6'1"+, and that will hurt him a little in scouting circles...but if he comes in at 6'2"+ that may pave the way for him running up into the top prospect debate by the time he's done at the Senior Bowl week.

Minshew is not a runner, but he's Mayfield sneaky-mobile. He ran for 119 yards and 4 TDs in 2018. He's probably a 4.85+ runner.

The Historical QB Prospects to Whom Gardner Minshew Most Compares Within Our System:

I say, '*poor man's Baker Mayfield*', but The Computer says more '**Teddy Bridgewater**'. Being compared to Bridgewater feels like a huge deflating balloon after being called a 'Mayfield' like QB prospect, but we've lost some sense of history over time.

Remember Bridgewater's journey – instantly capable in a stuffy **Mike Zimmer/Norv Turner** environment...leads his team to a division title his 2nd-season and loses 1st-round of the playoffs on a



fluke, last second missed chip shot FG in a frozen tundra game. The following season he had that brutal offseason leg injury that cost him his 2016, 2017 and made him a backup perceived talent in 2018 free agency. He started out his NFL career very well in a tough environment and then injury knocked him way down. He was fine/on-the-rise before the tragedy struck.

I think Minshew has played more smart/surgical/conservative like Bridgewater than he has played a constant pedal-to-the-medal, successful style like Mayfield...but there is some of that lurking in Minshew. Minshew's style may be more accurately portrayed as the middle ground between Mayfield and Bridgewater.

<u>QB-Score</u>	<u>Last</u>	<u>First</u>	<u>Yr</u>	<u>College</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>Adj Comp Pct</u>	<u>Adj Yds per Comp</u>	<u>Adj Pass per TD</u>	<u>Adj Pass Per INT</u>
8.154	Minshew	Gardner	2019	Wash State	73.0	220	71.6%	10.2	18.4	93.3
8.230	Bridgewater	Teddy	2014	Louisville	74.1	214	71.7%	12.6	14.6	81.0
8.895	Mayfield	Baker	2018	Oklahoma	73.0	215	70.6%	15.5	11.2	58.4
10.306	Wilson	Russell	2012	Wisconsin	70.6	210	70.3%	13.4	10.4	38.9
3.380	Espinosa	Mason	2014	OH-Wesleyn	74.5	211	67.1%	11.4	20.4	71.3

*“Adj” = A view of adjusted college output in our system...adjusted for strength of opponent.

**A score of 8.5+ is where we see a stronger correlation of QBs going on to become NFL good-to-great. A scouting score of 9.5+ is rarefied air—higher potential for becoming great-to-elite.

QB's scoring 6.0–8.0 are finding more success in the new passing era of the NFL (2014–on). Depending upon the system and surrounding weapons, a 6.0–8.0 rated QB can do fine in today's NFL—with the right circumstances...but they are not 'the next Tom Brady' guys, just NFL-useful guys.

2019 NFL Draft Outlook:

It's early January as I pen this, and I see Minshew as either not on early mainstream boards, or more 5th+ round. The more sharky draft services are willing to go 4th-round at the highest. The Senior Bowl week will tell the tale, I think if he measures close/over 6'2", plays well...he could steal **Will Grier's** spot as *mistrusted 'system' QB but still top 3 QB prospect* vibe.

I don't think the mainstream will go all the way to pushing him as the #1 QB, ever. Ohio State has too many 'friends' in high places for that. However, I think they'll wake up Senior Bowl week and wonder

