Scouting Report: QB Riley Ferguson, Memphis

*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.

This report won't take a lot of time. I started watching the tape and just shut it down after a few games. I saw what I needed to see…an extension of watching some of his work at the East-West game. Riley Ferguson is not a serious prospect for the NFL.

Ferguson was tracking as a top 10 QB prospect in early January but has started to drop as people got to see him work at the East-West Shrine all-star game. He just doesn't have the arm talent, QB instincts, or size (weighed in at 196 pounds) of a legit NFL prospect.

The numbers Ferguson produced at Memphis were really nice…70 TDs/19 INTs in two seasons as a starter. A 63%+ completion rate both seasons. He had games with 6 (vs. UCLA) and 7 (vs. UConn) TD passes this season. What's not to love?

When you watch the tape, you figure it out pretty quickly – classic 'good' college QB in an up-tempo spread offense and numbers got produced, but the mechanics and passer instincts are poor when looking at him for the next level.

Every pass seems to be the same with Ferguson…shotgun run-pass option (RPO) and he fakes to the RB and then takes a step or two and fires to an intended target. He's throwing that pass to the predetermined receiver no matter what…unless he is pressured and scrambles and throws. Ferguson often stands flat-footed or falling backwards as he tries to quick-throw passes before the defense reacts. It worked fine in college, and he got away with several 'should've been' picked off passes throwing into heavy coverage…but it's not going to work in the NFL.

Ferguson doesn't have the arm for the NFL. Even if he were placed in an RPO offense, his throws are slow-developing, laboring to get where they are going. Too many times, I saw Ferguson try to throw to the far sideline from a flat-footed throw stance where it seemed like his throw was taking an hour to make it to the receiver. This Memphis offense had so many quick, blind throws from Ferguson…where it was all about the timing and the play, not the QB reading the situation and making decisions. If it wasn't that, then they had Ferguson rolling out, which I saw **Paxton Lynch** do a lot of at Memphis – getting the uncomfortable/limited QB on the move and out of the pocket. That's fine in college but the pros will snuff that out in a heartbeat.

I was completely turned off watching Ferguson's tape. He's as gimmicky a 'system' guy and as jumpy/uncomfortable in the pocket as any of the QB prospects I've studied so far. He was great for college and will get eaten alive in the pros. He doesn't have the experience of reading defenses constantly, nor of working from under center, and his arm is average at best with below average

mechanics on most of his throws. He just isn't ready for the NFL, and likely never will be. At best, you could call him developmental, but there are so many other guys with more tools you'd want to develop.

I just don't see this happening at all at the next level. Nice college QB in a perfect system to hide/minimize the QB with quick, predesigned timing passes. The story ends there.

Riley Ferguson, Through the Lens of Our QB Scouting Algorithm:

4 or more TD passes in a game in 6 of his last 15 games. 6 TD passes vs. UCLA. It seems like Ferguson should be better graded in our system…or is a better QB than I'm seeing. However, he struggled with Louisiana-Monroe (10-for-25, 97 yards, 0 TD/1 INT), racked numbers against a bad UCLA team, had nice output versus the non-defenses of the American Athletic conference, and in his losses to better teams (three losses) he had 7 TDs/4 INTs – and watching him in his three losses against Central Florida (2x) and Iowa State (bowl)…he threw blindly, per usual, so many times…sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn't, with several missed/dropped INTs by the opponents.

When I went back and watched the 6 TD pass UCLA game…I still didn't see 'it'. I don't know how it happened that he racked such numbers. It's a lot of the same feeling I had watching **Paxton Lynch** his final year when everyone fell in love with him. Gimmicky offense with the QB throwing a lot of simple passes and when asked to throw deeper it was more of a wing and a prayer type throws that landed sometimes but were ill-advised. I didn't see Lynch carving apart the defense more than just executing quick, safe, short, smart plays…ditto for Ferguson, and Ferguson with much less arm talent and physical size.

Ferguson measured 6'2.75"/196 pounds at the East-West game with 9.75" hands, 30.63" arms. Has the height but the 196 pounds is a major red flag.

Ferguson has decent feet, probably a 4.85+ runner…but his size would not warrant great open field running longevity in the pros.

The Historical QB Prospects to Whom Riley Ferguson Most Compares Within Our System:

Seth Doege was a similar gimmicky, productive college QB – and is a good comp for Ferguson.

QB-Score	QB	Yr	College	H	W	Adj Comp Pct	Adj Yds per Comp	Adj Pass per TD	Adj Pass Per INT
3.866	Ferguson, Riley	2018	Memphis	74.8	196	63.6%	13.8	18.6	34.7
3.686	Doege, Seth	2013	Texas Tech	73.1	200	67.9%	11.0	16.9	26.8
0.478	Chapple, Colton	2013	Harvard	72.1	196	61.1%	12.5	15.4	24.7
3.558	Lacey, Kevin	2017	Tuskegee	78.1	183	56.7%	15.1	13.1	32.6
4.072	Foote, McCallum	2014	Middlebury	75.2	189	59.3%	10.5	16.5	32.4

"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.*

QBs 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.

2018 NFL Draft Outlook:

Ferguson started out the draft year as a top 10 QB prospect and a 6th- or 7th-round prospect but has been sliding since the East-West game. I don't think he'll be drafted by the time the draft hits. He'll be a UDFA training camp hopeful.

If I were an NFL GM, I wouldn't have Ferguson as draftable. There's a sliver of hope with him, I guess…but he would need a lot of development and the NFL doesn't have that kind of time. There are so many other UDFA guys I could get my hands on to work with who have far more raw skills and tools…like Princeton's **Chad Kanoff**.

NFL Outlook:

Is cut in 2017 training camp, and might get a year on a practice squad, but I think he'll be gone from the NFL in 2-3 years unless he transforms his body radically.

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