NFL Draft 2017 Scouting Report: TE O.J. Howard, Alabama

**Our TE 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.*

***Our TE formulas had some slight changes in the offseason—an adjustment to better identify and value TE prospects that are smaller physically and are primed for the era ahead...the era of Jordan Reed and Delanie Walker-type TEs. Our historical grades will have changed some on various prospects as well, to show their grades by comparison.*

This could be a very short, simple scouting report – **O.J. Howard** is a near perfect tight end prospect.

There are only a few prospects I ever danced with the 'perfect' label on. **Calvin Johnson. David Johnson. Ryan Shazier. Luke Kuechly. Deone Bucannon. Aaron Donald**. Now, enter **O.J. Howard**.

There are simply no flaws with Howard…

He is the perfect measured tight end in every way – 6'5.6"/251, 33.75" arms, 10.0" hands.

Howard is 11 pounds heavier than **Leonard Fournette** and ran the same 40-time. I'll bet OJH comes in with better three-cone and shuttle times as well (have to wait to see if Fournette does them at his Pro Day). Howard goes down as one of the fastest, most agile tight end prospects in the NFL Combine.

He's beyond a willing blocker, as that's what Alabama had him do for four years. He has 22 bench-rep strength – a good/great number for strength translation to the NFL. You can see the blocking effort and skills on tape.

The question would be – how would Howard perform in a higher volume passing game? I mean, to say Alabama wasted him blocking all the time is the understatement of 2016–2017. I know **Nick Saban** is a genius, but how in the world could you possess **O.J. Howard** and not get him more involved in the passing game? When asked, Saban responded, "*We should have gotten him the ball more.*" **Lane Kiffin** should be banished to football hell for what he did (didn't do) with Howard (is Florida Atlantic the equivalent of football hell?).

When Howard did get touches, he was amazing. In the last two seasons of college playoffs (four games): 4.0 catches for 94.3 yards and 0.75 TDs per game. He was basically ignored/used for blocking in 95% of the games at Alabama otherwise. I watched him in his bigger output games – what a machine. What a beautiful specimen running the ball. When I had the opportunity to watch him at the Senior Bowl, where he was treated like a god/like a real tight end for the passing game – he caught everything…short, deep, with or without defenders draped all over him. At the Senior Bowl game, he caught passes like a real

tight end…and was fine. At the NFL Combine, he went through the passing drills and had no issues. He looks smooth catching the ball. He looks terrific running after the catch. He's sensational. I don't know what else to say.

I would add that Howard has a ton of character to go along with all the physical attributes. He was an All-SEC Community Service Team member. He was a finalist for the NCAA Senior CLASS award for community, classroom, character, and competition while in school. Beyond all the accolades that are obvious, I'd like to point to two things: (1) He had no real reason to go to the Senior Bowl. Top players, high-profile players stick their nose up at the Senior Bowl in many cases…not Howard. He went and worked and hustled the entire time. He was humble and gracious and determined in his interviews. He did not wear the aura of being the biggest name there…he played it down. He felt like he needed to prove something since he wasn't used much in the passing game at Alabama. (2) He could have skipped some of the NFL Combine drills if he wanted, but he didn't. **Leonard Fournette** 'managed' his Combine by skipping most of the non-40-time events, as did **Mike Williams**, who skipped the 40, and most everything else as well. Not Howard. Not in the deepest, most talented tight end draft class in NFL history. Howard showed up and competed and was near the top in most everything he participated in. My hat's off to him.

O.J. Howard, Through the Lens of Our TE Scouting Algorithm:

O.J. Howard, through the lens of our TE Scouting Algorithm

Here's the concern about getting overexcited about **O.J. Howard's** physical tools… The only other TE prospects to run faster than a 4.6 40-time with a sub-6.9 three-cone at 245+ pounds in the past 10–15 years are **Jordan Cameron, Tony Scheffler, Fendi Onobun, Jeff Cumberland, Kellen Winslow Jr.,** and **James Hanna**. Speed and agility only get you so far – someone/team has to make use of the gifts (and you have to be able to catch). At Alabama, that did not happen. He was not used much in the passing game. Will he be underutilized in the NFL? That's a legit question.

Howard's 4 catches for 39 yards in less than a half of play at the 2017 Senior Bowl was better than 14 of his last 22 games played for Alabama. In the regular seasons, it would have been one of the five best receiving game outputs he had the past two years.

Howard's 6.85 three-cone time is the sixth best by a tight end that I show in our system. His 4.16 short shuttle the ninth best in our records.

NFL Combine measurables:

6'5.6"/251, 33.75' arms, 10.0" hands

4.51 40-yard, 4.16 shuttle, 6.85 three cone

10'1" broad jump, 30.0" vertical, 22 bench reps

Link to college stats at Fox Sports: http://www.foxsports.com/college-football/oj-howard-player-stats

The Historical TE Prospects to Whom O.J. Howard Most Compares Within Our System:

Seeing **Tony Gonzales** and **Antonio Gates** as some of the best comparisons on this list reminds that one does not have to have a stat-packed career in college football to go kill it in the NFL as a tight end when it is time. I often wonder why Howard didn't get used more…was it just Kiffin or something else? Is there something to worry about? It makes no sense, but then again – a lot of football usage makes no sense. Seattle traded for **Jimmy Graham**, probably the most gifted weapon of a tight end of our lifetime…and they use him to block a lot and give limited targeting. I wouldn't worry about Howard's weaker college production. **Jimmy Graham** wasn't affected by it translating from college to the pros. Most college QBs are afraid to throw to the tight end because it's over the middle in traffic…bubble screens, quick slants, deep balls, or just taking off and running are what college QBs prefer. Tight ends rarely shine in college, statistically…but the great ones do shine in the NFL just fine…in the right offense.

TE Grade	TE-Reed	Last	First	Yr	College	H	H	W	Spd-Agil Metric	Strgth Blxing Metric	Hands Metric
10.060	7.94	Howard	O.J.	2017	Alabama	6	5.6	251	12.48	9.74	9.13
10.010	8.39	Gonzalez	Tony	1997	California	6	5.0	243	10.95	5.48	8.77
7.600	3.14	Olsen	Greg	2007	Miami, Fla	6	5.7	254	10.57	7.93	7.11
9.730	3.80	Graham	Jimmy	2010	Miami, Fla	6	6.2	260	10.78	8.18	8.23
10.660	8.63	Gates	Antonio	2003	Kent State	6	4.0	255	11.07	8.10	9.10
8.040	6.63	Cumberland	Jeff	2010	Illinois	6	4.0	249	13.36	7.68	7.33
8.670	7.31	Housler	Rob	2011	Fla Atlantic	6	5.3	248	13.37	6.74	8.10

A score of **7.0+ is where we start to take a TE prospect more seriously. A score of **8.50**+ is where we see a stronger correlation of TEs going on to become NFL good/great/elite. A score of **10.00**+ is more rarefied air in our system and indicates a greater probability of becoming an elite NFL TE.*

All of the TE ratings are based on a 0–10 scale, but a player can score negative, or above a 10.0 in certain instances.

***The 'TE-Reed' score is in honor of Jordan Reed's 2015 season…looking at TEs in a different manner—the smaller, speedy receiving threats.*

"Speed-Agility Metric" = A combination of unique metrics surrounding speed, agility, physical size, mixed with some on-field performance metrics. High scorers here project to have a better YAC and show characteristics to be used as deep threats/create separation.

"Power-Strength Metric" = A combination of unique metrics surrounding physical size profiling, bench press strength, etc. High scorers here project to be more physical, better blockers, and less injury-prone.

"Hands Metric" = A combination of unique metrics surrounding on-field performance in college, considering the strength of opponents played. Furthermore, this data considers some physical profiling for hand size, etc. High scorers here have a better track record of college statistical performance, and project the combination of data for receiving success at the next level.

2017 NFL Draft Outlook:

I have maintained that Howard is going in the top 10 overall of this draft, and I am not changing after the NFL Combine. There is no more 'sure thing' NFL prospect in 2017 than Howard. There is an element of risk and negatives even with **Myles Garrett, Mitchell Trubisky**, or **Leonard Fournette**…or whatever name you want to pose. Howard will not fail…a team might fail him, but he will not disappoint with his performance. He was a five-star high school player. He was an underutilized in the passing game star at Alabama. His character is high. He is a very good, willing blocker. He has perfect physical/athletic traits. He is the 'can't miss' prospect of the draft. You have to take that top 10, if not top 5.

NFL Outlook:

I pray that Howard falls in with a team where they can utilize the tight end. 90%+ of NFL teams say they want to use the tight end but then don't…mostly because they have a mediocre-to-terrible quarterback who is afraid to throw into tight windows. The higher in the draft Howard goes, the more likely he lands with a bad QB team (like the Jets or Jags, which is where I believe he will go). In the right situation, Howard will be an All-Pro and possible Hall of Famer. In the wrong place, he's **Greg Olsen**…a guy who is well respected, and then you look at his career numbers by season and go "*I thought he was better than this?*"

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