



## NFL Draft 2016 Scouting Report: CB Eli Apple, Ohio State

*\*CB grades can and will change as more information comes in from Pro Day workouts, Wonderlic test results leaked, etc. We will update info as it becomes available.*

It's that old, pesky Ohio State scouting issue again. Sorry, to be a broken record this entire draft season, but in a couple years we'll look back and be proven right on almost all...or all of these claims. The football media has an unreasonable, illogical love of any player with the 'Ohio State' or 'Alabama' label. Actually, it's just lazy, simplistic scouting. We see it all the time with whatever the 'hot' schools of the day are. It was Florida State a few years ago. LSU had their run. USC cleaned up during the **Pete Carroll** era. It never correlates in the NFL. It's nothing new, but you'd think scouts and analysts would have figured themselves out by now. They haven't. They keep pushing mediocre Ohio State prospects to a whole other level. Whatever grade an Ohio State player should have, football analysts and scouts bump them two letter/round grades minimum in 2016.

Such is the case with **Eli Apple**. It's not that Apple is not NFL-worthy, because he is for sure. Attending any other school, Apple would be noted as a decent NFL prospect that should be taken/graded #75–125 overall. There's nothing wrong with that mid-draft grade on Apple. However, some NFL team is likely to take him in the first round. They are going to pay 2X or 3X the valuation because football analysts 'push' them to...football analysts' top scouting indicator is what college you went to. It's sad, and unfair to all the other impressive, more worthy prospects at various positions that went to other schools that are going to miss out on opportunity and money because of this bias. OK, off my soapbox.

**Eli Apple** is fine. He has NFL athleticism at cornerback, but he's not off the charts in size or physical skills. He's definitely not special, nor does he show any great technique as a tackler. He should be seen/graded anywhere from 'solid' to 'good'.

When I studied the tape of Apple, I was very impressed with the fluidity of his movements. If you only took a quick sampling of **Eli Apple's** scouting tape, you might think he's a future shutdown corner. Apple is very, very smooth with his movements. He has NFL+ athleticism. He can mirror a receiver as well as anyone in this draft. But it's not enough. Apple lines up on his receiver, and normally stays step for step with him through most of the route. The problem is in what Apple sacrifices in staying step for step – he almost always turns away from everything else in order to chase his receiver. He stays close in coverage well, but he often has no idea that the ball is in flight or headed his direction. An experienced QB-WR tandem will have a field day picking on Apple. That's not to say Apple is a future bust, because he isn't. There's a gift in being able to stay attached to your receiver. Apple can gain more experience reading receivers' faces when he has his back turned. What you can't teach is his speed and mirroring technique. There is a value in **Eli Apple**. However, he's not sensational overall; he's just pretty good.



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Apple's going to give you next to nothing in the run game at the next level. Partly because he's often unaware of what's going on around him because he so focused on the receiver. However, he's also a thinner-framed, mediocre-to-poor tackler. He's speedy enough to get to the action, but way too many times he is blocked out of making a play, or when he does make an attempt he either misses it or needs help bringing the ballcarrier down. Apple's gift is coverage, not run-stopping.

I like **Eli Apple** overall. I could see him as a #2 cornerback in the NFL, or a great nickel coverage guy. He has above average NFL speed, with mediocre agility. He is solid in coverage with some holes in his technique and instincts. He brings a decent size, but he's not going to offer a ton in helping his defense stop the run game. He's just a very solid nice player. What I don't think he is – is a top 25 overall draft asset. You'd like to have **Eli Apple** on your NFL team...you just don't want to pay the initial price it's going to take in the draft. A team that does won't have a bust on their hands; they may just think they could have done better with the pick.

### Eli Apple, Through the Lens of Our CB Scouting Algorithm:

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It's difficult to get a read off of **Eli Apple's** statistical output. He didn't light up the stat sheets, but teams also tended to avoid him if they could. His raw numbers say he's solid, but his they also undersell him a bit because he tended not to see the most action.

In 2015, Apple faced WR draft prospects **Will Fuller**, **Leonte Carroo**, and **Aaron Burbridge**...and he did not struggle with any of them...but he also wasn't on them as often in-game. Ohio State didn't deploy Apple as a knockout punch on opposing stud WRs, which was a little odd to me.

Apple was the eight-fastest DB at the NFL Combine with a 4.40 40-time. He later posted a decent, not great, three-cone time (7.00). He wasn't an elite athlete at the NFL Combine, but he was really good. His Pro Day was solid enough.

### The Historical CB Prospects to Whom Eli Apple Most Compares Within Our System:

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If **Eli Apple** is the next **Kareem Jackson**, then that's a good thing. Jackson is a quality coverage guy...but he's not considered among the best at his position, but he's starter-worthy. That's how I see Apple...a nice #2 CB at best, and never confused with being a #1 shutdown corner.



## 2016 NFL DRAFT SCOUTING REPORT

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<u>CB Grade</u>	<u>Last</u>	<u>First</u>	<u>Draft Yr</u>	<u>College</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>Cover Rating</u>	<u>Speed Metrics</u>	<u>Agility Metric</u>	<u>Tackle Metric</u>
6.081	Apple	Eli	2016	Ohio St	6	0.5	199	7.84	4.62	3.57	5.82
5.455	Jackson	Kareem	2010	Alabama	5	10.4	196	7.07	5.87	6.19	6.82
5.944	Florence	Drayton	2003	Tenn-Chatt	6	0.2	198	7.86	5.89	5.16	6.58
4.978	Hogan	Brandon	2011	West Va	5	10.2	192	6.93	5.50	5.79	7.67
3.156	Cromartie	Marcus	2013	Wisconsin	6	0.0	195	4.97	0.00	3.49	7.24
5.384	Smith	D'Joun	2015	Fla Atl	5	10.0	187	7.72	2.63	4.05	6.48
5.446	Fuller	Kyle	2014	Va Tech	5	11.6	190	8.25	-0.38	5.91	6.39

*\*The ratings are based on a 1–10 rating scale, but a prospect can score over 10.0+ and less than 0.0*

**OVERALL RATING** -- We merge the data from physical measurables, skill times/counts from the NFL Combine/Pro Days, with college performance data available on pass coverage/tackles, etc. and grade it compared to our database history of all college CBs, with a focus on which CBs went on to be good-great-elite in the NFL. We found characteristics/data points that the successful NFL CBs had in common in college, that most other CB prospects could not match/achieve.

Scoring with a rating over a **7.00+** in our system is where we start to take a CB prospect more seriously. Most of the future NFL successful college CBs scored **8.00+**, and most of the NFL superior CBs pushed scores more in the **9.00+** levels...and future NFL busts will sneak in there from time to time. **10.00+** is where most of the elite NFL CBs tend to score in our system analysis.

**COVERAGE** -- A combination of on-field data/performance and physical profile data

**SPEED** -- Measurables from a perspective of straight-line speed, burst, etc.

**AGILITY** -- Measurables for lateral movements, quick cuts, body type, speed, etc.

**POWER** -- A look at physical size, tackling productivity in college, other physical measurables. One of the side benefits/intentions here, is to see which CBs may be more of a model for a conversion to playing safety successfully in the NFL. Also denotes CBs who are more physical/will have higher tackle totals...over pure speed/coverage CBs.

### **2016 NFL Draft Outlook:**

**Eli Apple** is pretty much a given as a first-round draft pick projection. As much as I want to bellyache about that, the reality is that the draft momentum rules the world...and it's not egregious to pick him top 30. He's not going to be a bust. I have no doubt he will go in the first round.



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If I were an NFL GM, I've already stated my case. I like **Eli Apple**; I don't love him. I'd like to have him on my team, but I'm not paying a top 30–50 overall pick price tag for it. There are far too many other interesting, talented cornerback prospects in this draft...who didn't go to Ohio State or Alabama, and they are ones I could jump all over later in the draft and find an NFL asset equal to/better than Apple.

### **NFL Outlook:**

I think people will like Apple in the NFL. He won't be the name people discuss five years from now as one of the great corners in the game, but he will be of value to his team whether as a #2 corner, or as a #3 corner/nickel coverage guy.

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