NFL Draft 2018 Scouting Report: CB Denzel Ward, 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.

People make the argument that **Denzel Ward** is the best CB prospect in the draft and I am not going to disagree. I haven't run into a better one yet in my studies, although there's still time. **Jaire Alexander** may have a case.

This scouting report is pretty simple – **Denzel Ward** is one of the fastest, quickest, most graceful CB prospects that I have ever scouted. A 4.32 runner with a 1.47 10-yard dash…those are 'elite of the elite' speed numbers.

When I watch Ward on tape… I see that 'fast guy'. The numbers didn't lie. But he's not just a speedster. He's one of the best 'mirroring' CBs I've ever scouted. He's so incredibly quick and fluid. No WR can shake him easily.

There are some negatives, but they are more nitpicks; things that force him to be graded as 'really good' and 'not great' or excellent+.

Just two issues to discuss…

1: He's small…small-framed.

5'11"/183. He's not going to be a physical corner, and that may cause some problems jamming receivers off the line. However, he seems tough enough and his feet/recovery speed allow him not to be perfect in press coverage/getting physical. He can defeat WRs with mirroring coverage, not grabbing/tugging skills.

Because he's kinda thinner-framed, he's not a great tackler. He's willing, but there's just not enough mass/force behind it for him to be great tackling. You're not drafting him to tackle, however.

2: He tends to mirror so tightly that he loses track of the ball in flight.

He turns his back a lot and just runs with the receiver like a shadow. It's great, except he's susceptible to back shoulder throws because of it. This can be cleaned up with coaching and more reps.

That's the thing that I love about Ward…that mirroring skill. Most catches against him are near-miracle catches because Ward is all over the receivers going middle or deep. Another thing I loved, as an aside - - I've watched so much **Baker Mayfield** tape for studying Baker, or for his offensive weapons, or to watch defenders against him…and Mayfield is usually the dominant guy in all situations. He struggled working against Ward…you could see it. Mayfield couldn't quite expose Ward down the field as easily as he did most DBs.

Ward appears to be a solid citizen off the field. Had to bide his time to get a feature CB role due to NFL star prospects **Marcus Lattimore** and **Gareon Conley** starting ahead of him. He waited and filled other roles, andwhen he got his chance, he stepped up great in 2017. He's a quiet and personable guy…not a leader but does his job.

Besides being a little thin-framed, and the risk of nagging injuries because of it…and he battled those in college…he's an A/A- prospect at corner, not an A+.

Denzel Ward, Through the Lens of Our CB Scouting Algorithm:

The only real numbers that are important here are his 40-time and 10/20 splits…they are sublime. He doesn't have a ton of production numbers from college because he really became a starter in 2017, and then people stayed away from him.

In game one of his 2017 season, Indiana went after Ward a lot…and he responded with 1 pick and 5 PDs. Teams started shying away after that.

2018 NFL Combine measurables…

5'10.7"/183, 8.8" hands, 31.3" arms

4.32 40-yard, 2.48 20-yard, 1.47 10-yard, DNP agility

16 bench reps, 39.0" vertical, 11'3" broad jump – this line is a terrific set of numbers for a CB prospect

The Historical CB Prospects to Whom Denzel Ward Most Compares Within Our System:

Ward compares most with successful NFL CBs…top cover guys. Ward is almost 'can't miss'.

CB Grade	Last	First	Draft Yr	College	H	H	W	Cover Rating	Speed Metrics	Agility Metric	Tackle Metric
9.091	Ward	Denzel	2018	Ohio St.	5	10.7	183	10.28	11.60	8.33	5.79
10.059	Hall	Leon	2007	Michigan	5	11.2	193	10.98	10.68	11.65	6.42
8.146	Lattimore	Marshon	2017	Ohio State	6	0.0	193	9.29	8.62	7.14	5.81
9.147	Trufant	Desmond	2013	Washington	5	11.5	190	9.85	8.32	11.15	7.57
8.472	Verrett	Jason	2014	TCU	5	9.4	189	11.64	8.03	11.47	7.89
9.087	Bailey	Champ	1999	Georgia	5	11.6	184	9.47	12.07	9.72	5.70
8.211	Wheatley	Terrence	2008	Colorado	5	9.5	187	9.10	9.60	6.95	6.04
7.258	Houston	Chris	2007	Arkansas	5	9.7	185	8.26	9.74	6.13	7.25
7.113	Webb	Lardarius	2009	Nicholls St	5	9.6	179	6.57	9.41	7.07	5.55

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.*

2018 NFL Draft Outlook:

Ward is mostly a top 10 overall draft pick projection, and I wouldn't bet against it.

If I were an NFL GM, I'd want Ward if I had a CB need. I wouldn't go crazy for him. He has elite speed and skills, although there is a bit of an injury risk factor with his frame, but if I had the need and a top 10 pick, he's on the list to take. He's just too good in coverage to deny.

NFL Outlook:

He's going to be a quiet shutdown corner because he's not big or flashy or a special team return man. He's just going to be really good at what he does…if he can stay injury free.

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