NFL Draft 2019 Scouting Report: (2) SAF Juan Thornhill, Virginia and Johnathan Abram, Miss State

FS/SS 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.

Most analysts proclaim **Johnathan Abram** as the top safety prospect in the 2019 NFL Draft, but he has his dissenters as well. He's a logical/viable choice to be the top guy, in fact, he's on our short list of the top safety grades. Most analysts who don't have Abram at the top most likely have **Juan Thornhill** there – driven mostly by the analytics crowd. We're usually not in agreement with the mainstream, but we have Thornhill and Abram right up there 1-2 in the 2019 safety class just like they do. **Where we differ with them is with **Nassir Adderley**.*

The argument/debate over Thornhill vs. Abram is a debate over 'styles'. What kind of safety are you looking for?

Thornhill has all the measurables. Not that Abram is weak there, but Thornhill has the 'wow' factor. A 44.0" vertical…11'9" broad jump…a 4.42 40-time.

Abram ran a 4.45 40-time but had a weaker 33.5" vertical and 9'8" broad jump (compared to Thornhill).

On paper, you want Thornhill.

On tape…you probably want Abram. I know the NFL will.

Thornhill is a former cornerback who plays safety a little like a former cornerback. Thornhill moves around the field quickly/gracefully. He's solid in coverage because of his cover background and his great athleticism. He also tackles more like a cornerback…he usually makes his tackles diving at ballcarrier's feet rather than 'blowing them up' or hitting above the waist. He's a finesse safety…more of a great free safety who can/will tackle, but whose greatness is that he can cover a lot of ground in the passing game.

Abram is the opposite. He's OK in coverage, but he's more like a SAF-LB hybrid. He wants to hit people, and he does. His measurables don't show anything special (or bad) about his speed-mass-strength but on tape he moves with great authority and controlled aggression and tackles like you want a safety to tackle in the NFL, like you need them too…he'll hit you everywhere and wrap up to take you down, or just blast you with force shoulder first. He's looking to intimidate. On tape, I think he moves/reacts more quickly and naturally than Thornhill, despite the measurables saying Thornhill is the more blessed in that area.

If you want a 'hitter', strong safety type with enough athleticism to matter in all phases…you take Abram. If you want a more athletic, projected better in coverage…possible conversion/can be used as a

corner if needed type of safety who is a solid enough open field tackler – you lean towards Thornhill. 90% of NFL coaches want the tough guy/intimidator…so Abram is going to stand out for scouts and NFL coaches.

The tape shows it too…

I watched a few of Thornhill's games, and he never really stood out to me. During Senior Bowl week, it was like he wasn't even there for me. Watching him against South Carolina in his bowl game or against Ohio U. (9 solo tackles) – he just never jumped out at me. I kept waiting and waiting for him to grab me with his play and movements, to be the guy with the great measurables. I just didn't see it. He was fine. He can play deep safety or come up as an extra linebacker on occasion. He moves well to the ball. He tackled things he could get to…but he was also easily blocked out of plays the closer he got to the line of scrimmage and there were never 'wow' moments. I would have assumed him a 3rd-5th-round safety prospect (on tape) if I didn't know the extreme athleticism numbers he had.

When you watch Abram, you instantly see how much more confident and aggressive he is compared to Thornhill. Watching Abram against Iowa (bowl game/last season)…totally dominated **T.J. Hockenson**. I'd go so far as to say TJH was afraid of him. When I watched Abram against Alabama…he was not fazed by the Crimson Tide athletes at all. The downside on Abram…the downside of many college safeties who want to be 'hitters' – he can get sucked into playing the run and burned in the passing game. You can coach that out…hopefully.

Off the field, both safeties seem fine/all good.

Thornhill is smart, open, polite to listen to in a discussion. Abram is a little more boisterous…he commands the room a little more – maybe a little too much. He might be leaning to the side of too cocky, but isn't overbearing or egregious, he's just pretty confident in himself. I think they will both be fine transitioning to an NFL locker room.

Juan Thornhill and Johnathan Abram, Through the Lens of Our SAF Scouting Algorithm:

The following statistical observation might show you an area of concern for Thornhill, as compared to Abram…but it's difficult judging this apple-orange comparison because they could only compete/produce against the teams on their schedules…

The opponents against which Thornhill and Abram got 9 or more total tackles in a game in their careers…

Louisville (bowl/LJax), Auburn, LSU, Texas A&M, Alabama, Arkansas = **Abram**

William & Mary, Navy (bowl), Ohio U., Liberty, Va Tech. = **Thornhill**

That says a lot when you stare at the list. Thornhill never played Clemson in his career…Miami, NC State, Va Tech were the top opponents he faced over the years in the ACC. Whereas Abram was battling Alabama, LSU, Auburn, Texas A&M, etc., multiple times.

Where coverage skills change the scope of things…

2 INTs, 9 INT return yards, 10 PDs = **Abram** (33 game career)

13 INTs, 177 INT return yards, 26 PDs = **Thornhill** (38 game career)

The hitter numbers(?)…

0 forced fumbles, 9.0 TFLs, 0.5 sacks = **Thornhill** (last two seasons)

3 forced fumbles, 14.0 TFLs, 5.0 sacks = **Abram** (last two seasons)

2019 NFL Combine (and Pro Day) Measurables…

Juan Thornhill:

6'0.2"/205, 8.75" hands, 31.1" arms

4.42 40-time, 2.60 20-yard, 1.57 10-yard

4.20 shuttle, 6.86 three-cone (Pro Day numbers)

21 bench press, 44" vertical, 11'9" broad jump

Jonathan Abram:

5'11.3/205, 9.6" hands, 31.4" arms

4.45 40-time, 2.60 20-yard, 1.56 10-yard

 DNP agility drills

16 bench reps, 33.5" vertical, 9'8" broad jump

The Historical SAF Prospects to Whom Juan Thornhill and Johnathan Abram Most Compare Within Our System:

Abram as an **Antoine Bethea** comp makes a lot of sense. This comp list re-reminded me of the proper valuations of safety prospects (they aren't very valuable commodities in the NFL) – I still think **Godwin Igwebuike** is as good/better a safety prospect as Abram…and he didn't even get drafted in 2018.

Overall	Last	First	Yr.	College	HT	HT	Weight	Tackle Strngth Metrics	Speed Cover Metric	Strong Safety	Free Safety
8.135	Abram	Johnathan	2019	Miss State	5	11.3	205	8.29	7.08	57%	43%
8.439	Bethea	Antoine	2006	Howard	5	11.0	203	8.71	7.66	43%	57%
8.737	Philips	Kenny	2008	Mia, Fla	6	2.2	212	8.07	7.03	56%	44%
6.713	Davis	Cody	2013	Texas Tech	6	1.4	204	11.03	7.86	61%	39%
8.776	Igwebuike	Godwin	2018	Northwestern	5	11.3	213	9.59	10.19	58%	42%
7.348	McMahon	Ryan	2013	Sacramento St	5	10.6	207	8.16	8.39	51%	49%

Thornhill comps with more of the better cover safeties. Nothing on this list really grabbed me as to what I thought it might look like. I don't see **Eric Berry** here, but the computer sees some comps.

Overall	Last	First	Yr.	College	HT	HT	Weight	Tackle Strngth Metrics	Speed Cover Metric	Strong Safety	Free Safety
8.264	Thornhill	Juan	2019	Virginia	6	0.2	205	7.74	8.35	45%	55%
8.941	Huff	Michael	2006	Texas	6	0.0	204	8.13	10.33	25%	75%
11.802	Berry	Eric	2010	Tennessee	5	11.5	211	9.70	9.57	46%	54%
9.840	Griffin	Michael	2007	Texas	5	11.6	202	9.40	11.53	47%	53%
8.977	Stuckey	Darrell	2010	Kansas	5	11.4	205	8.55	5.77	56%	44%
5.490	Fuller	Kyle	2014	Va Tech	5	11.6	190	4.14	6.68	3%	97%

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 SS/FS prospects, with a focus on which SS/FS prospects went on to be good-great-elite in the NFL. We found characteristics/data points that the successful NFL SS/FS's had in common in college, that most other SS/FS prospects could not match/achieve.

*Scoring with a rating over a **7.0**+ in our system is where we start to take a SS/FS prospect more seriously. Most of the future NFL-successful college SS/FS prospects scored **8.0**+ in our system, and most of the NFL-superior FS/SSs pushed ratings more in the **9–10.0**+ levels overall. Future NFL busts will sneak into the **8.0**+ rating range from time to time.*

TACKLE/STRENGTH METRIC *-- A combination of physical measurables and college performance, graded historically for future NFL profiling. In the simplest of terms, this is an attempt to classify the SS/FS as one more likely to be involved in a heavy amount of tackles, forced fumbles, and physical hits to separate a WR from the ball. It also gives some insight into the "toughness" of a player, if it is possible to quantify that (this is our attempt to).*

SPEED/COVERAGE METRIC *-- A combination of several speed, agility, size measurements as well as college performance. A unique measuring system to look for SS/FS prospects that profile for superior coverage skills and abilities.*

2019 NFL Draft Outlook:

Abram could be the first safety taken. SEC…big hitter…tough persona – he's everything NFL coaches desire. He'll likely go #25-40 overall.

Thornhill will likely go as one of the top three safeties off the board but could go first if a coach sees a quick conversion/usage as a CB-SAF opportunity. More likely he goes 2nd or 3rd.

If I were an NFL GM, the last thing I would spend a top 50 or top 100+ pick on would be a safety. You can get veteran safeties all day long in free agency, and you can get competent prospects late in the draft, and you can convert struggling CB prospects there. Drafting a 'good' safety is a waste of draft stock.

NFL Outlook:

Both Abram and Thornhill should start quickly in the league and be productive. Abram will stick out more because of his hitting and reputation. Thornhill might be better because he offers more versatility of positions to play. Either way, both are solid/fine NFL prospects.

Copyright Statement

Signature_____ Date_____

4/20/2019