



## 2020 NFL Draft Scouting Report: QB Jalen Hurts, Oklahoma

*\*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.*

It's not 1900-2019 anymore.

January/pre-Draft professional football scouting is going to be very different this year.

One example: I am scouting **Jalen Hurts** very seriously for his potential in the NFL, and I wouldn't have last year...or any other year prior. Why?

We are now living in the **Lamar Jackson** era ...a QB prospect that half the league, and its scouts, thought would be better suited to be a conversion to WR. The other half of the league thought he'd be a gimmick QB for a couple of plays a game but would ultimately fail as a mainline starter because of the lack of any true pocket passer skills. Now, he's the league's MVP for 2019, far and away, and produced one of the most dominant performances at QB in NFL history...and will probably walk to a Super Bowl title. Actually, his team might roll into it like a Sherman Tank and crush everything underneath them. Again, Lamar was a guy no one thought would be a legit starter...and the few who thought he could never really believed an NFL team would give him that chance and build an offense and playbook around him.

There will be plenty of teams looking for '*their Lamar Jackson*' in 2020 and beyond. Worst case...looking for '*their Taysom Hill*'. If a guy no one thought could seriously thrive in the NFL could be its most outstanding player and the central piece of its most dominant team his 2nd season in the league – there will be a many teams trying to copycat that instant success. The Ravens O-C, **Greg Roman**, will likely get an NFL head coaching job as a first sign of the reaching/desperation to be in on this trend by the NFL teams with job openings.

The question is – of the 2020 crop, who is the '*next Lamar Jackson*'? I don't know that there is one or will ever be another like Lamar for another decade...just like looking for the 'next Brady' for the last 20 years...but you have to try. And **Jalen Hurts** will be on the short list of 2020 candidates for '*next Lamar Jackson*'.

I went into this scouting study with that mindset – can Hurts be the next **Lamar Jackson**?

I could see right away...as a traditional pocket passer...there's not much here with Hurts. He's a below average medium and deep ball thrower from the pocket. His game is the spread offense, quick strikes, the high threat of his running drawing the defense in to allow him to take advantage of the numbers game and have great time in the pocket/open passing lanes to throw at. **Lamar Jackson** isn't a great,



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traditional passer...he's just lethal in the spread, run-keep-option passing game – the style of offense **Jalen Hurts** has played his entire career, and gone to four CFB playoff games, three finals appearances, and one title win.

So, is he worthy of a next **Lamar Jackson** candidacy? Is he worthy of that debate?

I don't think so. Hurts plays more like **Deshaun Watson** than **Lamar Jackson**. Lamar is a runner at QB that we've never seen before...maybe **Randall Cunningham** is about as close there was. Watson is not a primary runner and he's not an amazing pocket passer, but he's a dangerous, willing runner and a good passer (great in the spread) and the threat of his mobility keeps defenses on their heels and allows Watson to thrive in the NFL. If Hurts makes it, he will be more of a Deshaun skillset with Lamar's mindset...if that makes any sense.

People say **Deshaun Watson** is like **Michael Jordan**...that he's a winner, he's unflappable, he's highly-mobile and can win games with his feet, which opens up the passing game – those are all labels you could also apply to Hurts. He started as a true freshman at Alabama...think about that for a moment, and he won the SEC Offensive Player of the Year as a true freshman. Hurts took two different programs to the CFB playoffs. He's completed 65%+ of his career passes with 80 TDs/20 INTs as a passer with another 43 rushing TDs. I'll show a Watson v. Hurts comparison in the next section...I think you'll be surprised by some of the numbers.

You know the odd thing about Hurts in this 2020 process? I still see the majority of scouts and analysts comparing Hurts to traditional pocket passers and thus they think he isn't worthy of real NFL Draft hype. There was more initial love for **Deshaun Watson** in his draft year, but he fell a bit in his draft because of the bias against spread offense QBs perceived as running-too-much. Hurts doesn't have Watson's hype and he will fall/be held back by some of that same bias. There will be lip service about him being an NFL QB like a **Taysom Hill**, but I don't sense a real belief by the football community (in January) that he's a top 10-25 draft pick/franchise QB.

The reason Hurts isn't considered that way...is sad. It's because his career has been upside down – it started hot and then had somewhat of a decline in momentum every season he went on.

Hurts blasted onto the scene in 2016 as a true freshman and led Alabama to two title games and won one...but he didn't really win it – **Tua Tagovailoa** did. Remember, the 2017 Alabama team was 12-1 going into their national title game with Georgia, led by Hurts the whole season. Partway into the title game, **Nick Saban** pulled Hurts for Tua...and Hurts' career was flipped on its head. Hurts was 26-1 at Alabama, at that point, the leader of the offense having a nice sophomore season – and then Saban benched him on the biggest stage.

This is the moment in time, the part of the story where most people bail on Hurts as a legit prospect...because Saban bailed on him. But it could/should be the moment we all take Hurts more seriously.



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So, Hurts is benched in the title game as a sophomore. **Tua Tagovailoa** is named as the starter for 2018 (Hurts' junior season). Hurts doesn't quit/transfer, he works hard as the backup...so much so **Nick Saban** is blown away by Hurts' efforts under the circumstances and praises him to the moon. Tua gets hurt in the 2018 SEC Championship game, and Hurts comes off the bench to lead a come from behind victory which got the Tide into the CFB playoffs again (where Tua would lose to Clemson in the finals).

Hurts works hard to graduate early and is thus eligible to grad transfer directly in 2019 without sitting out a season. He goes to Oklahoma and has the best statistical season of his storied career – 32 TD passes, 3,851 passing yards, 1,298 rushing yards and 20 rushing TDs...a Heisman runner up.

Hurts had a spectacular start to his Alabama career, and it was overshadowed by his replacement in the title game by **Tua Tagovailoa**.

Hurts had a terrific season transferring to Oklahoma, a near Heisman win -- and all he'll be remembered for from 2019 is getting blown out of the playoffs by **Joe Burrow** (as well as losing the Heisman to him). It just seems like Hurts is always the bridesmaid never the bride. And it is hurting his draft stock and public perception. It's unfair because the guy is 39-4 as a starter in college on the biggest stages and put up huge runner-passer numbers but will always be best remembered for being benched in a title game for Tua.

All the Tua and Burrow stuff is hiding a really interesting mobile QB prospect who has off the charts character and leadership qualities. You want to talk about a guy with a quiet chip on his shoulder – it's Hurts (you can tell he's not thrilled about it in interviews, but he never bashes anything/anyone). You want to talk about the 2020 QB prospect with the best runner-passer skills and numbers against the toughest competition – it's Hurts.

So, do I see an NFL starter in Hurts?

I'm not sure. I'm trying to use my **Lamar Jackson** and **Deshaun Watson** mindset in projecting Hurts. I graded/scouted Lamar and Deshaun as bad pocket passer prospects but interesting runners, and assumed they'd never get the chance to run college spread offenses in the NFL – but they did and they've thrived and now I look at Hurts and he looks like a different/better in some ways **Deshaun Watson**.

Hurts is very comfortable running the spread option offense. He is very capable running the ball out of it...almost a run first guy, where Watson is a run second. The key to much of Hurts' prospects in the NFL is that physically, he is a little like a taller **Josh Jacobs** playing quarterback – Hurts is 6'1"/6'2" (official measurements won't hit until the NFL Combine) and 218 pounds of solid muscle. Hurts is like a powerlifting god for his size – he squats 550-600 pounds, can bench near 300-pounds, and deadlift 550+ pounds. **Deshaun Watson** cannot touch that...nor can any QB prospect. I'm not sure how many offensive line prospects can do that. We all worry, rightfully so, that **Deshaun Watson** will get broken in half soon because he gets hit so much running the ball...he's wiry and has sustained a ton of critical injuries already in his career. Hurts could transition to tailback with his physical profile, but he's not a



tailback, he's a QB who knows how to run the spread offense but isn't afraid to run that ball or take a hit – there's a big value in that if Lamar and Deshaun types are ruling the NFL.

What about Hurts' deficiencies as a pocket passer? I mean, he's not Brady...but neither are Lamar or Deshaun. They are their own thing...passing opportunity created by the running threat, a la **Cam Newton** back in the day. Let them run THEIR offense and have a license to run...and good things can happen. When I watched tape of Hurts against his best opponents...he does fine throwing the ball. There are flaws but he's not lost as a passer. He creates opportunities and plays to throw the ball downfield within his skill set.

In the end, I'd say I see a lot of Deshaun in Jalen. Deshaun has a little more razzle-dazzle in his playmaking. Watson never had elite speed or agility or size or passer skills, but he was faster than most, tough, and a leader, and great running the spread...all things I can say about Hurts, except Hurts is 2x physically sturdier and less talented throwing deep, although not so much less that you don't want to touch him.

I'm doing a lot of comparing Hurts to Deshaun, but that's high praise in 2020. How about a different look? How about -- Hurts vs. **Daniel Jones**? Not even close...I'll take Hurts. Jones is not a great pocket passer either, but he's OK, schooled in the 7-on-7 era like Hurts and Jones is fairly mobile...Hurts is as limited in the pocket as Jones is as a passer, but Hurts is a way better runner and much more physically sturdy. Jones is nimble and decent at escaping...Hurts runs as a weapon that changes defensive schemes. If **Daniel Jones** didn't immediately die in the NFL in 2019 on a sad NYG team...then I think a mentally tougher Hurts who has played on much bigger college stages and who is a physical brick wall with way more athleticism can be just fine in today's NFL.

And maybe Hurts will be better than OK, perhaps a real weapon, a B/B+ new era mobile QB. Not the next Lamar (there may not be one for another decade), but really good in his own right.

### Jalen Hurts, Through the Lens of Our QB Scouting Algorithm:

Hurts started his 1st two seasons at Alabama, then yielded to Tua in his 3rd season, and then Hurts went to Oklahoma...so, three years starting in his college career. **Deshaun Watson** started for two full seasons. Let's compare their starting seasons per game...



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64.6% Comp. Pct., 202.6 pass yds, 1.67 TDs/0.42 INTs, 72.3 rush yds, 0.95 rush TD per game = **Hurts** (39-4 in three years as a starter)

67.4% Comp. Pct., 290.0 pass yds, 2.53 TDs/1.0 INTs, 57.8 rush yds, 0.70 rush TD per game = **Watson** (28-2 as a two-year starter)

69.7% Comp. Pct., 275.1 pass yds, 2.29 TDs/0.57 INTs, 92.7 rush yds, 1.43 rush TD per game = **Hurts** (12-2 record in 2019 at Oklahoma)

Comparing the two: Watson the better passer but Hurts at Oklahoma was not far off from Watson versus Hurts's semi-conservative Alabama years...and Hurts the much more lethal rushing threat especially in his Oklahoma year.

Hurts was responsible for 53 TDs (as a passer, rusher, receiver) in 2019...#1 in the Big 12, #2 in the NCAA, and his 124 career TDs is 19th in NCAA history. If not for Tua coming along, and then if not for **Joe Burrow** materializing in 2019...Hurts would have likely had one of the great college careers and maybe won a Heisman and we'd have a whole different perception of him.

Hurts' final college season vs. **Kyler Murray's**, playing in the Oklahoma system (per game)...

69.7% Comp. Pct., 275.1 yds, 2.29 TDs/0.57 INTs, 92.7 rush yds, 1.43 rush TD, 53 total TDs = **Hurts** (12-2 record in 2019 at Oklahoma)

69.0% Comp. Pct., 311.5 yds, 3.00 TDs/0.50 INTs, 71.5 rush yds, 0.86 rush TD, 54 total TDs = **Murray** (12-2 record in 2018 at Oklahoma)

In 2019, Hurts ran for five 100+ yard games...impressive as the CFB deducts sacks from rushing totals.

I would estimate Hurts' measurables as...

6'1.5"/218...and I bet he gets down to 215 or lower to run faster 40-time for the NFL Combine, and then bulks back up after.

4.55 40-time/6.95 three-cone...and he may be the first QB prospect in a long time to actually participate in the bench press.



**The Historical QB Prospects to Whom Jalen Hurts Most Compares Within Our System:**

It’s coming down to, at this point...**Jalen Hurts** is differently skilled version of **Deshaun Watson** – Watson the better passer and Hurts the superior-built runner.

When we get the Combine info, it could sink Hurts into the low 7s (out of 10 grade in our models) and make him more of a question mark...or the Combine solidifies or increases his grading/potential as a runner-passer.

<u>QB-Grade</u>	<u>LJax Rating</u>	<u>Last</u>	<u>First</u>	<u>Yr</u>	<u>College</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>Adj Comp Pct</u>	<u>Adj Yds per Comp</u>	<u>Adj Pass per TD</u>	<u>Adj Pass Per INT</u>
<b>7.876</b>	8.24	Hurts	Jalen	2020	Oklahoma	74.0	215	64.5%	14.3	16.1	36.0
<b>8.113</b>	7.89	Watson	Deshaun	2016	Clemson	73.5	210	64.0%	11.5	16.8	41.6
<b>7.078</b>	7.06	Hundley	Brett	2014	UCLA	74.2	223	66.9%	17.0	10.5	35.1
<b>7.806</b>		Adams	Vernon	2016	Oregon	71.0	201	64.8%	11.6	18.3	29.6
<b>4.226</b>		Sims	Blake	2015	Alabama	71.4	223	63.6%	12.8	16.8	31.4
<b>4.102</b>	7.75	Boyd	Tajh	2014	Clemson	72.8	224	64.9%	12.2	14.9	23.6
<b>10.306</b>	6.83	Wilson	Russell	2012	Wisconsin	70.6	210	70.3%	13.4	10.4	38.9

*\*'LJax rating' – new for 2020, as we re-do our grading systems to better identify/reward the spread offense QB prospects...looking for the runner-passer talents.*

*\*\*“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.*

*QB's 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.*



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### 2020 NFL Draft Outlook:

I'm seeing rankings all over the place early in the process...mostly 3rd-round grades. I think he's going to be a 2nd-3rd-round prospect, held back by the benching for Tua and for being outplayed by **Joe Burrow**...with neither situation really fair to Hurts. Additionally, the early rankers are still stuck on their love for tall pocket passers with big arms. I suspect the football intelligentsia will not totally fix themselves/change their scouting process for QBs for another year or two. Hurts doesn't fit the traditional profile.

In the end, I think Hurts could be a top 50-75 pick. I don't believe he'll be a 1st-rounder unless his 40-time and three-cone time come in at shocking levels, which is possible.

### NFL Outlook:

If this were 2017, I'd say Hurts has no chance in the NFL and would recommend he try the XFL. In 2020, after **Lamar Jackson's** 2019...it will come down to whether a team drafts Hurts with the purpose of changing their offense to suit his style.

I fear Hurts will be drafted as a backup and not see the field (on purpose) for a few years and never really have a system built for him. However, if the desire by some coaches to follow the Lamar model pushes them to take Hurts as a discount Lamar and try to see if Hurts pays off quickly...Hurts could be a big surprise to the NFL.

Lamar and Deshaun had 1st-round pick status pushing them, but unless Hurts gets that he's going to have a tough time making it in the NFL as a true starter in an offense built for him. There is hope...but also concern here.

