



Safeties Top 10 Prospects

This is my first time doing full tape watching and evaluating draft prospects in full.

I am basing my decisions purely on what I see, I have given this a great deal of attention, throughout the college season I have watched games due to games being played more in the UK, I have also used highlights as well as watching games as well.

With the playoffs also being shown in the UK and a great deal more attention on this there may be slightly more recency bias in some of these picks.

1. Malaki Starks (Georgia)

It's that time of year again where there is another fantastic Bulldog defender preparing for the draft. There is Walker on the edge but then there is the top safety as well. Malaki Starks should in my opinion be a top 15 pick in this year's draft. He is outstanding.

Strengths:

What stands out with Starks is the fact he stays on the field all the time. It doesn't matter if it's pass or run. He reads plays well and reacts well to try and make a play. He attacks the ball in the air and will look to get interceptions when he can.

Starks looks impressive in both man and zone schemes. He is happy in a short, middle and deep role. One of his underrated skills is in the blitz. Starks seems to know exactly where to be on the field at all times.

Weaknesses:

This is another really harsh one, there were one or two plays later in games where he looked a little flat footed.

2. Nick Emmanwori (South Carolina)

Next is a player that should also go in the first round. I see Emmanwori heading to someone in the late 20s of the draft. Emmanwori is freak athlete and could be a stud at the NFL level.

Strengths:

Emmanwori is another who can play multiple positions but he is more of a strong safety, nickel and linebacker style of safety.

Emmanwori's strengths lie in the run game, he doesn't miss many tackles and attacks any rusher.

However this does not stop him from attacking passes at the high point and picking off quarterbacks and also undercutting receivers to pick the ball off.

When watching Emmanwori he looks quick in reading pass or run. He also seems at his best in zone and understanding his assignment.

Weaknesses:

Emmanwori plays best down in the action, he doesn't always look great in a deep safety role.

Also although he is capable, he can get caught by fast receivers in man coverage.

3. Xavier Watts (Notre Dame)

Next up is one of my personal favourite players of this draft class. I did get to watch a lot of Notre Dame games this year live and a player I fell in love with was Xavier Watts. Watts will likely be an early to mid second rounder but I think this maybe a outstanding pick up.

Strengths:

Watts is another player who is rarely off the field. He plays in both the run and pass game, but he plays both well and consistently.

There is a lot of natural instincts seen when watching Watts. He recognises pass or run quickly and then is quick to be in the right spots.

Watts loves to turn the ball over, this can be from interceptions and also forcing fumbles, but when he isn't doing that Watts is breaking quickly on routes to break up pass plays and running downhill fast to make tackles.

There are very rare occasions where Watts is beaten in contested catches.

Watching Notre Dame you will often see Watts pointing and looks to be a real leader on the field.

Safe to say I have a lot I like about this guy!

Weaknesses:

I honestly would love to say none but Watts doesn't look the quickest at times.

In the run he can not breakdown great sometime which leads to big hits on him with backs.

4. Andrew Mukuba (Texas)

Another player I am really high on is Andrew Mukuba, another player I was lucky enough to watch a fair bit this year. There are some similarities to Watts, but there is a slight gap between the two. Mukuba is likely a third rounder.

Strengths:

One biggest thing that stands out on Mukuba is his athletic ability, he has really good fast feet. He has good fluid hips and able to change direction quickly so he can attack the ball. Mukuba looks most comfortable in zone coverage, he is also happiest in deep zones, but can also play the middle and shallow zones when required.

When the ball is in the air he is hunting for it. He likes to attack the high point and tries to get take aways.

Weaknesses:

Mukuba always plays hard and attacks hard, but similar to Watts occasionally he doesn't break down well and it can cost him and the team.

In man coverage Mukuba does struggle from time to time but with some solid coaching this could improve.

I mentioned above he is best at deep zone, but to play safety in the NFL he may need to develop those shorter distances.

Overall a solid player with some good upsides.

5. Kevin Winston Jr (Penn State)

Wrapping up the top 5 is Penn State's safety Winston. He had a great partnership with number 6 on the list Reed. Winston edges it due to his versatility though.

Strengths:

The reason I said he edges is his versatility, Winston similar to Emmanwori loves to play the shallower routes first, he plays strong safety, nickel and at times lines up as a linebacker.

Winston is a huge physical presence. He is fast especially for his size. This leads him to tracking really well in man coverage.

In the run game he is an outstanding tackler, he very rarely gives up yards.

He plays and fights for the ball in both run and pass games.

Winston is also another leader on the field for Penn State.

Weaknesses:

Sadly for Winston, he had season ending injury with an ACL tear, this will effect his draft stock, but could end up being a steal for someone in the later rounds.

There is also work that needs to be done with zone plays and at the deep safety area. But overall he could be a good solid player.

My biggest hope is he recovers from the injury quickly and he is my 'could be a steal draft pick.

6. Jaylen Reed (Penn State)

7. Billy Bowman (Oklahoma)

8. Nathan Ranson (Ohio State)

9. Jonas Sanker (Virginia)

10. Malachi Moore (Alabama)