



NFL Draft 2016 Scouting Report: WR Michael Thomas, Ohio State

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

**WR-B stands for "Big-WR," a classification we use to separate the more physical, downfield/over-the-top, heavy-red-zone-threat-type WRs. Our WR-S/"Small-WRs" are profiled by our computer more as slot and/or possession-type WRs who are less typically physical and rely more on speed/agility to operate underneath the defense and/or use big speed to get open deep...they are not used as weapons in the red zone as much.*

The best way I could sum up my studies on **Michael Thomas** is with a complicated word picture. You know how they say that a particular player *'makes things happen'*? **Michael Thomas** is the opposite of that—things are happening around him, and occasionally he's a part of the activity. That's the best way I can describe what I see.

I don't see a wide receiver who is a 'force of nature' with Thomas. He's not the centerpiece of his team's offense/pass game; not the go-to guy. I see a guy that happened to be on the field, and is a pretty decent athlete, so he would get open and occasionally the quarterbacks would throw to him. He's not an aggressor or a battler, he's an *'exister'*, for lack of a better word. He just exists out on the football field. I was never wildly impressed watching him play. You can see that he's competent, but I always left game tape thinking he should be doing a little better in games; given the nice physical specimen that he is...but at the end of any stretch of watching him play I was never making notes that Thomas is a definitive star, ready-made for the NFL. I just do not see it.

Thomas has physical gifts. He's 6'2"+ tall, he's a 4.58 runner, which is fast enough, and he has very nice agility...a quick first step to make a move running a route or to gain extra yards after the catch. Thomas has all the tools to be 'good' (not great), but to me he's more average...average in terms of you just think he should be better. People keep telling me how good they think he is, but they can never tell me exactly why...it's just that everyone else is saying this guy is something. Even when it comes to his true gift—his nimble feet. He makes sharp move immediately after the catch, but he goes down too easy on any contact...so it's negated a bit. Again, I'm always left wanting—when thinking about him as a next-level, top-pick talent.

I'm not saying Thomas is not an NFL-worthy player, but this notion that he's a top 3–5 WR prospect in this draft is ludicrous. I don't know that he'd be in the top 10 of last year's WR NFL draft class.

I watched tape of several games with Thomas, and it's just dull. He solid enough. He has pretty good hands, and he has nice athleticism. I just never see him on the attack. I never see him abusing defenders,



overwhelming them with his incredible skills. I see a guy running his route, a few times lazily if he's pretty sure he's not going to get the ball—and he makes mostly reliable catches when the ball comes his way. He's 'capable'—might be the best way I can put it. For an NFL team, you don't pay what the draft price will be for Thomas...you don't pay up for 'capable'.

Thomas struggled early in his career with mental mistakes, running the wrong routes, running the wrong direction. He was in doghouses early on in **Urban Meyer's** regime. He broke out of that and became a pretty good college wide receiver the past two seasons. He has some skills, and several flaws...just because he has size and went to Ohio State doesn't mean he's '*the next coming*'.

With Thomas, an NFL team is about to draft a mediocre athlete, who had a relatively dull college career, who has battled football IQ issues, and the occasional drop—some team is going to pay a hefty price for that package. I just don't get it.

A lot is made of him being the cousin of **Keyshawn Johnson**...Thomas is the opposite of Keyshawn. Thomas is humble and soft-spoken. He would never proclaim—"*Just give me the damn ball!*" Thomas's football book would more be "*Just throw it to me...if I'm open, if you want to, whatever...it's fine by me. I'll be over here if you need me.*"

Michael Thomas, Through the Lens of Our WR Scouting Algorithm:

Thomas played 31 career games at Ohio State, 28 games pretty heavily involved (the past two seasons), and in that span Thomas posted only two 100+ yard games for his career. For a supposed 'high end' WR talent in college—that's not a good sign. Top WRs in college dominate opponents and stat sheets. In nine of his last 18 games, **Josh Doctson** has produced 100+ yard receiving efforts. In seven of those games he went for 150+ yards. That's what dominant WRs do...that's not the **Michael Thomas** story. Thomas's career high for receiving yards in a game = 107 yards against Maryland.

In 31 career games, 28 starts, Thomas has scored 2 or more TDs in a game just once. Doctson did so 11 times, including six games in a row in 2015 with two or more TDs.

Against OSU's toughest rivals the past two seasons, Thomas produced the following numbers:

2.5 rec. for 42.0 yards and 0.0 TDs per game = vs. Michigan (2 games)

2.5 rec. for 49.5 yards and 0.50 TDs per game = vs. Michigan State (2 games)

5.3 rec. for 58.0 yards and 0.50 TDs per game = OSU's four playoff/bowl games played (Wisc., Ala., Ore., N. Dame)



The output is just never that magical when you look at Thomas on tape, or just go strictly by box scores.

The Historical WR Prospects to Whom Michael Thomas Most Compares Within Our System:

The **Austin Pettis** comparison is a pretty good one for **Michael Thomas**. Pettis was a capable NFL WR, but not a star or even a starter...more a bit player or a role player. Pettis was nice to have as part of an ensemble, but not the lead singer type. **Rueben Randle** may be a perfect comparison...a guy you thought would be better because he looked pretty fluid on some game tape/highlight reels, went to a big-name school, and everyone said how good he was, but his heart was just not that of a football ‘warrior’.

<u>WR Score</u>	<u>Draft Yr</u>	<u>Last</u>	<u>First</u>	<u>College</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>Power Strngth Metric</u>	<u>Speed Agility Metric</u>	<u>Hands' Metric</u>
6.251	2016	Thomas	Michael	Ohio State	6	2.6	212	6.51	6.52	8.97
6.156	2011	Pettis	Austin	Boise St	6	2.6	209	4.71	7.76	7.22
4.913	2012	Randle	Rueben	LSU	6	2.6	210	5.25	5.12	8.49
3.380	2010	LaFell	Brandon	LSU	6	2.5	211	4.81	4.90	8.36
6.119	2015	Harris	John	Texas	6	2.3	213	7.17	4.20	7.74
7.924	2013	Allen	Keenan	Cal	6	2.0	206	4.20	5.17	11.63

**A score of 7.0+ is where we start to take a Big-WR prospect more seriously. A score of 8.50+ is where we see a stronger correlation of a Big-WR going on to become NFL good/great/elite. A score of 10.00+ is more rarefied air in our system and indicates a greater probability of becoming an elite NFL Big-WR.*

All of the WR ratings are based on a 0–10 scale, but a player can score negative, or above a 10.0 in certain instances.

Overall WR score = A combination of several on-field performance measures, including refinement for strength of opponents faced. Mixed with all the physical measurement metrics, rated historically in our database.

“Power-Strength” = A combination of unique metrics surrounding physical size profiling, bench press strength, etc. High scorers here project to be more physical, better blockers, and less injury-prone.

“Speed-Agility” = A combination of unique metrics surrounding speed, agility, physical size, mixed with some on-field performance metrics. High scorers here project to have a better YAC and show characteristics to be used as deep threats/to create separation.



“Hands” = A combination of unique metrics surrounding on-field performance in college, considering the strength of opponents played. Furthermore, this data considers some physical profiling for hand size, etc. High scorers here have a better track record of college statistical performance, and overall this projects the combination of performance and physical data for the next level.

2016 NFL Draft Outlook:

Michael Thomas as a fringe top 10 WR prospect in this class, I guess I could understand that—a guy with third- or fourth-round draft grades. I’m not even at high on him, but I could understand that type of valuation for his size and decent skills. However, this whole push of him as a top 40 overall prospect, as a potential top 3–5 WR prospect in this class, is ludicrous. He does not belong near the top 5 group in this class—at the very back end of the top 10 maybe. In the end, he has draft momentum, and he has size, and he went to Ohio State...sadly, that’s going to get him into the second round.

If I were an NFL GM, I have almost zero interest here. Again, I don’t dispute that **Michael Thomas** is a capable football player. There’s just nothing that thrilling that I see about him. He’s not physically imposing. He does not possess speed or agility that is off the charts. His college numbers were decent, but not inspiring. His game tape is dull. There’s a bunch of other wide receivers that will be drafted later than Thomas in this draft, and in the prior draft...and in future drafts...guys that are as interesting as/more interesting than Thomas. If **Michael Thomas** is drafted ahead of where **Tyler Lockett** (third-round) was last year, someone should be prosecuted in the NFL.

NFL Outlook:

I expect **Michael Thomas** to have a **Reuben Randle**—like NFL career. High expectations, but never lives up to them...always frustrating coaches and fans. He’ll have enough talent to keep sticking around for a while, and maybe he’ll have that one good year out of nowhere, but I absolutely do not see a sustainable, high-impact starter in the NFL here—not one that anyone would be proud of.



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Signature _____

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R.C." with a stylized flourish.

Date _____

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