NFL Draft 2017 Scouting Report: QB Deshaun Watson, Clemson

**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.*

Deshaun Watson is going to be a lightning rod NFL Draft discussion all draft season. I would bet a lot of money (in late late-January) that the mainstream argument is going to come down to **Mitch Trubisky** OR **Deshaun Watson** as the top guy come April 2017. Scouts are going to lean Trubisky…because he a fantastic talent. Watson is going to be the media's and fan's choice because of familiarity. It's possible that both of these guys are going to wind up measuring under 6'2" and creating a whole bunch of scouting chaos. We'll see about that at the NFL Combine.

I think Trubisky is as good a quarterback prospect as I have seen in years. I'm all-in on Trubisky as a talent. As for the question of **Deshaun Watson** – I think he is clearly a 'C+' talent that is being rushed/pushed as an 'A/B+' talent because the story is easier to digest – national championship, back-to-back title games. *He has to be great, right?*

Why would anyone strongly profess that Watson is the top quarterback prospect in this draft, and for some the #1 overall pick? People would stumble around and say 'winner' and 'mobile'. *Really?* That's great and all, but let's deconstruct what we're talking about here…

Let's start with 'mobile'. Watson is a slightly above-average runner in NFL terms. He's not **Michael Vick** or **Cam Newton** or even **Russell Wilson**. He would be lucky to be a **Tyrod Taylor** – Tyrod ran a 4.52 40-time at the NFL Combine. I see Watson as a 4.6+ for sure. On tape, Watson is college-fast and elusive but just projects as 'good' in those traits for the NFL. He's not changing the landscape of football…he's just nicely mobile. Much of Watson's rushing totals in college come from purposed running plays. He ran the ball 15 or more times in a game 11 times in his career. He's not running the ball like that in the NFL. He's just not that good at it…plus, the NFL doesn't run QBs like that.

As a passer, Watson is limited. No one has watched his college work and been dazzled by his passing game – it's why there is such a debate about him and people default to 'winner' as their main attribute. Watson is not a total bust, but he's not a quality, prototypical NFL passer. He gives away 1/3rd of the field because he is not throwing passes where you have to read the defense and use pinpoint accuracy to complete them – over the middle. He throws screens, bubbles, and simple slants. When he goes deep it's 95%+ big heaves down the sidelines. He's not the first QB prospect to have those limitations, but it's going to hurt him at the next level. He's a shotgun spread QB who likes to run, going to the NFL to play under center a bunch and stay in the pocket and not run…it's not the right fit of skillsets.

Watson is very prone to turnovers – 23 INTs in his last 21 games. That's a lot for a supposed dominant QB on a dominant college team. Honestly, I watched several of his games this year and saw a lot of dropped INTs. In his opener against Auburn, he posted 1 TD pass and 1 pick. He should have had 3–4 picks and Clemson should have lost the opener. He was picked twice by Ohio State. Twice by Florida State. Three times by Louisville this year. If you never saw him play on the grand stage and play well against Alabama…you wouldn't recognize Watson as a top 100 prospect. He'd be called 'developmental'. It's his two season-enders against Alabama that are pushing his draft status. The two Final Four games before his Alabama contests, Watson averaged 223.0 yards passing and had 2 TDs/3 INTs total versus Ohio State (2016) and Oklahoma (2015). He's been big against Alabama and that has him branded with the vaunted 'winner' label.

"*He's a winner*" is my favorite label applied as a reason why he's a top prospect. OK, so why didn't **Cardale Jones** get more push after his amazing 2014 title run? How about **Jake Coker's** run at Alabama in their 2015 title season? You know who won a lot and put up very similar/better numbers at the same school? **Tajh Boyd** from Clemson. **Tim Tebow** was a winner. College 'winner' is nice, but not major grounds for the #1 pick overall.

In their last two seasons of college play at Clemson…

67.4% Comp. Pct., 290.0 passing yards, 2.5 TDs/1.0 INTs, 57.8 yards rushing per game = **Watson**

67.9% Comp. Pct., 298.0 passing yards, 2.7 TDs/0.9 INTs, 35.1 yards rushing per game = **Tajh Boyd**

I watched Watson's games against his toughest opponents in 2016 and I just didn't see anything to get excited about for the NFL. I saw a college-good runner and a decent arm/so-so mechanics thrower. He makes decent decisions. He has an average+ NFL arm with a bit of a **Carson Wentz** hitch. He wouldn't embarrass himself in the NFL if a team gave him room to run the spread a lot, but is he the QB taking a Cleveland Browns or San Francisco 49ers to the promised land? I don't think so. He can keep a seat warm…that's about it.

I think Watson's status will take a hit when they start measuring and considering a mobile QB at 215 pounds, who has hurt his ACL before and suffered some random, minor injuries in his career. He might measure 6'1.5"/215 and have NFL people worried. We'll update our ratings after the NFL Combine, but his size, mediocre arm strength, questionable downfield accuracy and average/solid passer instincts are all potential cold water on his draft status the farther we move from the National Championship fervor. He may get a little exposed at the Combine.

Deshaun Watson, Through the Lens of Our QB Scouting Algorithm:

When I look over the data in our system, the simple statement I would make is – on a per-throw basis, Watson is an average-to-good college quarterback. He racks raw totals on back-to-back 15-game seasons. He had some juicy numbers when he was throwing 40–50 times in a game. People will ding **Davis Webb** and **Patrick Mahomes** for pumping numbers because of throw volume, but most of the Watson big games came on huge pass attempt numbers (72 attempts in a game vs. Pitt this past season).

Watson threw for 300+ yards in a game 12 times the past two seasons. Eight times they happened with 40+ throws in a game. His two Alabama games, he threw for 400+ yards each game…and did so on 51.5 pass attempts per game. No one will mock him for that like they will Webb and Mahomes.

Watson threw two or more INTs in a game eight times in his final two years of college play. By comparison, some of the notable QBs (at random) of the last few drafts (and 2017 draft eligible) on the same comparison…

0 times he was picked twice or more in a game = Marcus Mariota over his final two seasons.

1 time = Teddy Bridgewater

3 times = Jared Goff

3 times = Dak Prescott

3 times = Josh Dobbs

3 times – DeShone Kizer

3 times = Mitch Trubisky (once in hurricane, weather-issue game…also note—only one season as a true starter)

4 times = Derek Carr

7 times = Jameis Winston

7 times = Matt Barkley

At a minimum, you have to be open to the idea that there might be an issue with Watson as a passer for the next level. When you do…then you have 'winner', 'mobile' and a possible size issue to deal with.

The Historical QB Prospects to Whom Deshaun Watson Most Compares Within Our System:

The comps in our system analysis are college good or great, mobile QBs…who sit as NFL backups or never-weres (or didn't get shots). I think Watson is closer to that than a legit, successful NFL starter.

QB Grade	Name	Yr	College	H	W	Adj. Comp. Pct.	Adj. Yds per Comp	Adj. Pass per TD	Adj. Pass per INT
6.37	Watson, Deshaun	2017	Clemson	74.0	215	64.7%	11.5	18.8	34.8
4.30	Boykin, Trevone	2016	TCU	73.5	205	62.3%	12.1	20.9	30.7
7.39	Manziel, Johnny	2014	Texas A&M	71.6	207	70.2%	13.3	11.4	27.0
8.28	Adams, Vernon	2016	Oregon	71.0	201	66.9%	17.0	10.5	35.1
6.66	Guiton, Kenny	2014	Ohio State	74.2	208	66.7%	8.8	12.4	28.6
5.77	Florence, Nick	2013	Baylor	72.1	205	60.8%	14.4	17.1	32.0
3.33	Lynch, Jordan	2014	N. Illinois	72.0	220	64.8%	11.1	20.2	37.7

**"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 onto become NFL good-to-great. A scouting score of 9.5+ is rarefied air—higher potential for becoming great-to-elite.*

QBs scoring 6.0–8.0 are finding more success in the new passing era of the NFL (2014–on). Depending upon 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.

2017 NFL Draft Outlook:

What a debate this is going to be! I truly believe the media is going to push Watson as a first-rounder and as the #1 overall QB. I suspect that the NFL Combine measurements added into a less than ideal tape as a passer will do Watson in – sending him into the second round. If Watson is 6'2"+…then he'll go first round with the push from the media.

NFL Outlook:

Watson will have 'draft status' and the media's backing, which means he'll get shots others are not afforded. I think Watson could hold his own if forced into playing time…just like **Trevone Boykin** is OK for Seattle (actually, I like Boykin better). Watson will get the benefit of the doubt for 1-2-3 seasons and then in seasons 4–5 everyone will grow weary and will have moved on to the next thing. I think Watson will either languish or be mediocre, get chances to play, and wind up disappointing more than succeeding but he could have a decent game or two. He'd be better than **Cody Kessler** or **Matt Barkley** forced in as starters for their teams last NFL season…that's about the best thing I could say.

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