



NFL Draft 2017 Scouting Report: WR Taywan Taylor, Western Kentucky

**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.*

My bad.

Pre-Senior Bowl and pre-NFL Combine, and watched some tape of **Taywan Taylor**, to get a better feel for him, and I mostly just watched him versus Alabama (2016) and then some highlights...and nothing grabbed me. I thought, "*Smaller guy. Good college WR. High-volume offense. No big deal.*" After studying his tape and our data on him the past few days, I now have a new opening intro sentence on Taylor – it's possible **Taywan Taylor** will be the best wide receiver from this draft class.

Now, hold on...slow your roll. Wipe the dew from your spit-take off your chin. I know no one in any football circle has been this excited about Taylor...even if they love him as a prospect they are not throwing any 'best' labels around. I've been lukewarm. This is a sudden change of direction. I don't think, at this time, he will be the best from this class. I take **Zay Jones** and **Cooper Kupp** over him, but the gap is not as far as you'd think...and I pause when I debate ranking **Chris Godwin** or **Corey Davis** ahead of him...which means he's in the select few guys that could really make a difference at the next level.

OK, so what happened? Why the change of heart?

Four things to share which encapsulate my mood swing...

1) His feet.

I'm not sure anyone in this draft or many others have the foot movement of Taylor off the snap. I wasn't going into much detail with my early tape previews, but now watching several game tapes with purpose – I saw it. Plus, his NFL Combine numbers are striking...so it helped me look for it.

Taylor moves his feet, in any direction, so fast off the snap...it makes him almost impossible to cover. He can move left-right or fire out with such grace, adeptness – it gives him a split-second advantage that other receivers cannot match...and that most all cornerbacks cannot keep up with. It's breathtaking



APRIL 6, 2017

when watching hours of WR prospect tape day after day, and then you see Taylor just jump off the screen with how surreal his feet are from a standstill.

2) The Alabama tape.

Taylor had 9 catches for 121 yards and 0 TDs against Alabama in their 2016 game. Those numbers should impress you, on the surface, but note that 70+ yards came on a flea-flicker, gadget play. It's not the number tally that caught my attention.

Here's the thing – **Marlon Humphrey** covered Taywan most of the game...and Humphrey was mostly helpless against Taylor. But I'm not sure how many people really noticed. You have to consider the tape and surrounding stimuli with Taywan, you can't just go analytics here – the La Tech starting QB was not good. He was 'college acceptable', but not 'good'...he was typical...he was going to throw the pass to the first read/design without fail or consideration. His head went right where he was throwing and he threw it. If there were 10 defenders in front of the intended receiver – it didn't matter. The QB play was a factor because **Taywan Taylor** would beat Humphrey off the line nearly every time. If the La Tech QB could read the field, Taylor would have had 300+ yards receiving unless/until they started double-teaming him. **Marlon Humphrey** is going to be a top 20–30 pick in the NFL Draft, and Taywan Taylor abused him off nearly every snap...only the La Tech QB wasn't looking most of the time.

3) The other, non-Alabama games.

Taylor dominated most every 2016 game he was in, but so much more was left on the table it was frightening. I specifically remember watching Taylor versus Western Kentucky. He had 12 catches for 197 yards and 1 TD in that game. He could have had 3+ TDs easy with better QB play. He could have had 300+ yards and 20 catches if the QB was looking his way a majority of the time. If lesser teams try to double Taylor, it wouldn't have mattered if he had a great QB to work with...Taylor didn't have that. His dominant numbers were just the tip of what was possible.

4) His hands.

I would say that Taylor has 'B-' hands. Definitely not the best I've seen, but not the worst...not concerning. When I first watched Taylor, months back, I thought he might have C-/D+ hands, so I was kinda worried. Watching more tape, I kept waiting for more drops, because I had that in my head. It really wasn't an issue. He's not the smoothest receiver, but he's not a dud either.

I really expected to have Taylor graded in the middle of the pack for us, a guy with a great three-cone from the NFL Combine...but empty calories otherwise. Instead, I leave the study believing he might be as good a WR prospect as there is in this draft...only it's in hiding, to a degree, because Taylor's gifts couldn't be fully unlocked by his college QB. You put Taywan with **Aaron Rodgers**, and he might be Rookie of the Year in 2017. You put Taywan with the Jets and you won't remember his name in a year or two.



Taylor won't go early in the NFL Draft, so a major steal is sitting here for the taking for some NFL team.

Taywan Taylor, Through the Lens of Our WR Scouting Algorithm:

Taylor has posted 100+ yards in a game in 11 of his last 16 games.

Taylor has averaged 6.6 catches per game over his final two seasons of college play.

Taylor averaged 17.0 yards per catch or greater in each of his final three seasons of college play...he's 9th all-time in YPC in Conference USA history (since 1996).

Taylor has back-to-back seasons with 17 TD catches...and he's third all-time in Conference USA (41 TD catches) and #10 in career TDs in NCAA history (since 1956).

NFL Combine data...

5'11.0"/203, 32.6" arms, 9.3" hands

4.50 40-time, 4.21 shuttle, 6.57 three-cone (*best of any WR prospect at the NFL Combine*)

13 reps bench press, 33.5" vertical, 11'0" broad jump

Taylor's college stats on CFB Reference: <http://www.sports-reference.com/cfb/players/taywan-taylor-1.html>

The Historical WR Prospects to Whom Taywan Taylor Most Compares Within Our System:

You see the names. I know which one is catching your eye...

Two things about the comparison list – (1) **Steve Smith** was a really good WR. Not the **Steve Smith** who just retired – the other **Steve Smith**. He was a nice underneath/all-over receiver for the Giants and his run was cut short by injury. (2) Yes, **Odell Beckham Jr.** is a high-level match. When I watch Taywan move off the snap...it's the first thing I thought of—Odell Beckham. OBJ doesn't have the greatest hands either.



5'11.2"/198, 4.42 40-time, 10'8" broad jump, 38.0" vertical, 3.94 shuttle, 6.69 three-cone = **OBJ**

5'11.0"/203, 4.50 40-time, 11'0" broad jump, 33.5" vertical, 4.21 shuttle, 6.57 three-cone = **Taywan**

| <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> |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| 8.963 | 2017 | Taylor | Taywan | W. Kentucky | 5 | 11.0 | 203 | 8.98 | 11.17 | 8.86 |
| 9.763 | 2007 | Smith | Steve | USC | 5 | 11.8 | 197 | 8.67 | 11.83 | 8.64 |
| 8.871 | 2014 | Beckham Jr | Odell | LSU | 5 | 11.2 | 198 | 7.08 | 11.96 | 9.59 |
| 8.790 | 2006 | Jennings | Greg | W. Michigan | 5 | 11.0 | 197 | 9.93 | 12.81 | 9.91 |
| 6.479 | 2009 | Collie | Austin | BYU | 6 | 0.7 | 200 | 8.97 | 6.66 | 8.86 |
| 7.862 | 2010 | Williams | Damian | USC | 6 | 0.6 | 197 | 7.92 | 7.44 | 8.36 |
| 8.175 | 2015 | Aultman | Damarr | Maine | 5 | 11.0 | 202 | 11.25 | 7.04 | 8.28 |
| 10.609 | 2015 | Cooper | Amari | Alabama | 6 | 0.7 | 211 | 11.04 | 12.62 | 11.56 |

*A score of 7.0+ is where we start to take a Small-WR prospect more seriously. A score of 8.50+ is where we see a stronger correlation of a Small-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 Small-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/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.

