



NFL Draft 2018 Scouting Report: WR Richie James, Middle Tennessee 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 typically less 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.*

This was a strange scouting study.

On the surface, everything about **Richie James** screams 'great sleeper'. One of the best college producers among any of the 2018 NFL Draft WR prospects...maybe, the single best. 100+ catches and 1,300+ yards in each of his first two seasons but then broke his collarbone in 2017 and couldn't follow up with a third great season – and he would have.

James has the on-field numbers, plus he has the Combine numbers...4.48 40-time, 6.87 three-cone, 4.16 shuttle. Check-check-check.

All these positives, and yet, after watching several game tapes, I walked away unimpressed (and I was ready to love him when I started out)...and our computer scouting model turned its nose up at James too.

How could this be? Here's what I see...

James has a particular 'big' positive attribute but also a troubling big negative crashing together to create some scouting confusion. And I think the negatives are going to get him pushed to the fringes of the league more than his positives getting him a push to action.

The positive – James is a fearless player. You wish you could take James's heart and transplant it in several WR draft prospects (or into **DeVante Parker**). James has NFL speed and a fearlessness that manifested into becoming Middle Tennessee State's 'everything' on offense. He saw a ton of targets and got to run the ball on jet sweeps, as a wildcat QB, and just as a straight up tailback. He threw passes, he returned punts. James is a really good 'football' player, emphasis on 'football player'. He's the kinda guy you want to go to war with.

There is a downside – he has pretty bad (for the NFL) hands. He's a body catcher and often dropper-of-the-ball, which included some mild fumble issues. James was the type of talent that worked 'simple' in a



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very up-tempo offense. Plenty of bubbles and bombs, and handoffs. James was not running pro routes and making NFL WR catches all over tight defenses. He was a streetball WR...a great college weapon...just get him the ball and let him go.

And therein lies the problem...he walks into the NFL with no route running skills and no real separation on tape against decent CBs. He just caught a lot of swing and bubble passes, and then would suck defenders in and fake them short and race deep. A perfect usage of him...but he won't be so lucky in the NFL. No NFL team is drafting him to be the center of their offense. He was the epicenter of the Middle Tennessee State offense...but he probably can't make the Tennessee Titans roster/starting lineup.

James's 'football' grit may outshine fears of his WR weaknesses, but then you factor in James's frame/size/injury record. Played smaller, thinner in college and was tiny coming out of high school. He broke his collarbone in October and missed the rest of his 2017 season. He went to the NFL Combine and benched just 6 reps. James has a weak/thin upper body. He's not going to be able to speed past NFL defenders like he did in college...he's going to have to use strength and routes to get open – and he's not strong, not quick off the snap...plus he has pretty flimsy hands for the NFL (working the quick slant, short passing game).

I just never saw 'it' with James on tape, despite all the great numbers. His offense pushed a good player into an all-timer...at MTSU. He would have been 'good' in the SEC, but in Conference USA he was 'great'. I think James has too many physical and technical red flags to make a big investment in for the NFL. There is upside because he's such a fearless player but he's not sure thing...and the odds are lined up against him.

Richie James, Through the Lens of Our WR Scouting Algorithm:

His output numbers are ridiculous. 107-1,334-8 as a WR as a freshman/2015. Followed that up with 105-1,625-12 as a sophomore...along with 38 carries and another 4 TDs, then also completing 6-of-7 passes.

Most WR prospects would kill for the opportunity for touches in a high-flying offense such as James had...and many might have had the same or better numbers.

In 2016, James had 4 catches for 120 yards and 1 TD versus Florida Atlantic. In that same game, he ran the ball 22 times for 207 yards and 3 TDs (career high for carries in a game aside from this game was 6), while completing 5-of-7 passes. His team won 77-56. Yes, 77-56. This is what I speak of – James is a good football player who was given a golden opportunity for touches with a big-time offense. MTSU averaged 39.7 PPG in 2016. His output numbers are on steroids...which makes him look like this awesome sleeper prospect, but in context he's more of an inflated prospect.



2018 NFL Combine measurables...

5'10.1"/183, 9.0" hands, 31.75" arms

4.48 40-time, 4.16 shuttle, 6.87 three-cone

6 bench reps, 35.5" vertical, 10'2"

The Historical WR Prospects to Whom Richie James Most Compares Within Our System:

Jerrel Jernigan was a guy overlooked at first, and then fought his way to NFL relevance for a moment but just did not have the size/strength to consistently stay on the field and make an impact. He played his heart out, but his career came up short. I fear that's where James is headed.

<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 Strngt h Metric</u>	<u>Speed Agility Metri c</u>	<u>Hands Metric</u>
4.640	2018	James	Richie	Mid Tenn St	5	10.1	183	3.37	8.32	6.68
2.826	2011	Jernigan	Jerrel	Troy	5	8.9	185	6.33	6.20	6.66
7.582	2013	Lee	Marqise	USC	5	11.6	192	7.40	6.80	8.79
6.364	2013	Bailey	Stedman	West Va	5	10.2	193	6.80	7.58	9.38
2.584	2013	Collins	Jasper	Mt. Union	5	10.2	180	4.33	6.36	7.72

**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.

2018 NFL Draft Outlook:

James often gets 6th-7th round projections and I think that’s where he’ll wind up. He has enough momentum as a sleeper and enough stat production that a drafted looksee is warranted.

If I were an NFL GM, I’d not draft James but I’d give him a look as a UDFA for sure.

NFL Outlook:

James has a good football heart and motor, so there is a chance he becomes a workout warrior and hones his craft and becomes an NFL starter -- that outcome possibility is on the table. However, people mostly like him for his crazy output in college...and he’s not getting that type and volume of work in the pros. When he is forced to be a savvy, healthy NFL WR...I don’t think it’s a great bet hoping for that, especially not right away.

I hope I’m wrong, but I see too many red flags here to get too excited about his prospects. Plenty of other under-the-radar guys like this bouncing around the NFL/draft...they just didn’t get the numbers push that James did.

