NFL Draft 2018 Scouting Report: CB Minkah Fitzpatrick, Alabama

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

First off, I don't know if **Minkah Fitzpatrick** should be classified as a CB or a SAF. I LIKE him at either spot, but I don't LOVE him at either spot.

Fitzpatrick feels like a guy who is a very solid college DB that has been whipped up into 'the greatest' because he plays for Alabama. He's like a '7' (out of 10) being discussed/promoted as a 9–10. It happens all the time with Alabama players. Everyone in football has already penciled him in as 'great', so you can't have an opposing view…but I'm going to lay out the case for concerns.

Fitzpatrick has a lot going for him. He has top tier speed (4.46) among DBs. He's a quality person…winning several awards for his off-the-field work in the community, etc., and he was a team captain as a junior. He has good size at 6'0"/204. He played at Alabama, so he has had great coaching. Plenty of positives.

However… 6'0"/204 and running a 4.46 – there are plenty of prospects that are around that big and run that fast and faster. It's good…it's nothing 'special'. Where concern seeps in…or just 'lack of specialness' is in his other measurables – 14 bench reps, 33" vertical, 10'1" broad…those are all very average to below average numbers. He skipped the agility drills at the Combine and his Pro Day, which worries me a bit. Athletically, he's 'good'…definitely not 'great'.

Instantly, Fitzpatrick defenders will dismiss this with 'analytics is for nerds' and talk about the tape, and how great a player he is. To me, that's the biggest issue with Fitzpatrick…the tape is dull/mediocre, and in the spots where it's exciting at all – it's flashy plays anyone could have cashed in on. I'll explain…

First, I think the reason why people are essentially saying, "He's called a DB…because it's awesome that he could be a CB or he could be a safety!" is because he isn't great at either, so no one knows what to do. They try to sell this versatility as 'awesome'…so many options. But I think it's a 'tell' of an issue (trying to judge him as high end)…the reason THEY don't classify him as a safety or CB is because he didn't shine at either spot. He wasn't obvious in either role. People have been force-fed the narrative that Fitzpatrick is great, so then all the issues or inconsistencies are twisted into positives to support this story.

When I watch Fitzpatrick on tape, I see a guy with NFL speed allowed to roam all around a star-studded defense…and he's just looking to make plays – splashy ones. He had the luxury of being a DB who could blitz the backfield at times. He had the luxury of sitting back in the secondary looking for picks – he plays

with an all-star defense, so he's allowed to gamble because it won't hurt the team since he has other great players behind him AND the team is usually winning every game comfortably. He's afforded the luxury of being a playmaker, and when he has that 'moment'…it's celebrated like he created it – he was just there. If he played on weaker teams, his same style would be critiqued as sloppy and/or not taking care of business.

It's the **Tyrann Mathieu** argument, to some degree…a player Fitzpatrick is often compared to…

Everyone thinks Mathieu is great because he has some cool INTs and long returns off them. It's easy to sear those highlight moments in your mind. For every one cool pick Mathieu was laying in wait for or jumping a route on…there are 70+ other plays in a game…hundreds of plays in-between picks where the gambling doesn't always help…and it actually hurts. Where Mathieu is looking for the big play instead of covering his man or area, and he's out of place or looked off by the QB and he gets burned, no one plays those moments on a highlight reel. I saw it all the time in Arizona and could never believe others couldn't recognize it. So, the Cardinals paid Mathieu a mint and the NFL used him in advertising a few years ago…and then realized the mistake a few years later.

People talk themselves into these players being great when they're just 'good'. There's a place for 'good' in the NFL…it's just some NFL team is going to pay top 10 money for something (Fitzpatrick) they could have found in another non-SEC talent for a fraction of the price.

I watch Fitzpatrick on tape and look at his numbers – he doesn't chase tackles/get tackles anywhere near the level of 'real' safeties. I also didn't see a classic shutdown corner on tape either. He was just floating around the field looking for opportunity…which is great, but it makes him look 'cooler' than he really is when he gets to the NFL and is asked to play a role.

You watch him in the CFB playoffs last season…really no major impact on tape or in output. He doesn't stand out in any way. He's good, but he's not top-10-in-this-draft great.

Fitzpatrick is a finesse player with more of a safety's body, and NFL teams are seeing a safety/hybrid linebacker. I don't think he's tough enough to be a strong safety or hybrid. He's a free safety or a cornerback to me…and because free safeties are completely devalued in the NFL, I'd look to draft him to train him to become a starting corner. His upside is in becoming a real corner. He's a bland free safety prospect in an NFL marketplace not craving such players (see NFL free agency).

Minkah Fitzpatrick, Through the Lens of Our CB Scouting Algorithm:

Fitzpatrick has had 3 or fewer solo tackles in a game in 31 of his 42 career games. He never registered more than 8 tackles in any game. He had only 6 or more tackles in a game 11 times in 42 games. Fitzpatrick was roaming around the defense but not really collecting tackles. On tape, you don't see him

aggressively pursue ballcarriers. He'll tackle them if they come near and he loves to blitz the backfield for unsuspecting ballcarriers…but in terms of seeking and destroying ballcarriers past the line of scrimmage – it's not Fitzpatrick's game. He's not a great or special open field tackler. He also moves on the field like he's not that interested in it anyway.

Fitzpatrick had a two-INT game against Texas A&M in 2015 and got three picks versus Arkansas in 2016. In his other 40 games, Fitzpatrick has just 4 INTs. Nice, but not 'wow'. He's had some good games, and found some picks, but he was not a turnover machine nor heavy with passes defended. He had solid/OK numbers in INTs and PDs, but nothing radical.

Fitzpatrick doesn't have great numbers in tackles or in coverage…but solid/OK in both – that's why no one will classify him strongly at a specific DB one way or the other. They think it's to his advantage that he can do either, but he's not a star talent at either spot.

2018 NFL Combine measurables…

6'0.1"/204, 31.3" arms, 9.4" hands

4.46 40-time, 2.58 20-yard, 1.52 10-yard, DNP agility times

14 bench press, 33.0" vertical, 10'1" broad jump

Other than pretty good 40- and 10-yard times, Fitzpatrick is nothing special as an athlete…as measured. You're getting a 'B-' NFL athlete and paying a 100%+ premium tax because 'Alabama'.

The Historical CB Prospects to Whom Minkah Fitzpatrick Most Compares Within Our System:

Marlon Humphrey, in size/movement, is exactly who Fitzpatrick reminds me of…athletically gifted but a little soft…a little too much a beneficiary of playing in the loaded Alabama defensive environment. NFL talents, but way overvalued because they played for **Nick Saban**.

CB Grade	Last	First	Draft Yr	College	H	H	W	Cover Rating	Speed Metrics	Agility Metric	Tackle Metric
6.91	Fitzpatrick	Minkah	2018	Alabama	6	0.1	204	7.21	4.56	3.88	7.11
5.33	Humphrey	Marlon	2017	Alabama	6	0.0	197	5.51	6.69	7.54	5.38
4.78	Collins	Jalen	2015	LSU	6	1.4	203	5.74	5.28	4.73	6.38
4.31	Langley	Brendan	2017	Lamar	6	0.3	201	5.35	4.60	2.21	6.15
3.37	Jones	Cyrus	2016	Alabama	5	9.7	197	5.08	5.57	7.40	5.34

The ratings are based on a 1–10 rating scale, but a prospect can score over 10.0+ and less than 0.0

OVERALL RATING -- *We merge the data from physical measurables, skill times/counts from the NFL Combine/Pro Days, with college performance data available on pass coverage/tackles, etc. and grade it compared to our database history of all college CBs, with a focus on which CBs went on to be good-great-elite in the NFL. We found characteristics/data points that the successful NFL CBs had in common in college, that most other CB prospects could not match/achieve.*

*Scoring with a rating over a **7.00+** in our system is where we start to take a CB prospect more seriously. Most of the future NFL successful college CBs scored **8.00+**, and most of the NFL superior CBs pushed scores more in the **9.00+** levels...and future NFL busts will sneak in there from time to time. **10.00+** is where most of the elite NFL CBs tend to score in our system analysis.*

COVERAGE -- *A combination of on-field data/performance and physical profile data*

SPEED -- *Measurables from a perspective of straight-line speed, burst, etc.*

AGILITY -- *Measurables for lateral movements, quick cuts, body type, speed, etc.*

POWER -- *A look at physical size, tackling productivity in college, other physical measurables. One of the side benefits/intentions here, is to see which CBs may be more of a model for a conversion to playing safety successfully in the NFL. Also denotes CBs who are more physical/will have higher tackle totals...over pure speed/coverage CBs.*

2018 NFL Draft Outlook:

Fitzpatrick has unstoppable draft momentum. He'll go in the top 10 overall, but his days of top 5 hype appear to have ended.

If I were an NFL GM, I see this 'Alabama' tax coming a mile away and want nothing to do with it. There are plenty of CB, SAF, Hybrid prospects as good as/better than Fitzpatrick in this draft.

NFL Outlook:

Is taken top 10. Is thrust into the starting lineup quickly. Doesn't have quite the impact expected. It's excused as 'learning curve', and then we forget about him in 2-3 seasons. He has a nice, solid NFL career but never becomes a star…unless he puts all his effort into becoming a legit cornerback.