



NFL Draft 2018 Scouting Report: SAF Derwin James, Florida State

FS/SS 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.

I'm not sure whether **Derwin James** is great or not...

That's a bigger scouting statement than it seems to be, because the entire world has written it ink...**James is great**. If you come in shy of that analysis, you're a loon.

I'll be that solo loon. Maybe.

My case as to why James is more good than great (and 'great' is very possible) would be as follows...

James is a safety. He's not a linebacker. He's not a cornerback. He's a safety, and as such...he is in the lowest position of desire/payroll in the NFL besides kickers (and I'd argue good kickers are worth exponentially more than good safeties).

I think people believe that James is such a talent that he is not only a great safety, but he could also play corner or be moved to linebacker. I think the arguments against that multi-dimensional star theory are what drops James from 'great' to 'good'.

James tested with poor agility at his Pro Day...doing so kinda under the radar. He tested wonderfully in most things at the Combine – he's a great athlete but then had a terrible showing in agility at his Pro Day (4.34 shuttle, 7.34 three-cone). That's not damning but it's pretty weak/troubling/odd. It hurts the theory of James moving to corner. You can see on tape – CB is not his game...he's not in the shutdown corner business. No crime in that but I don't see the move there as fruitful/likely.

He's also not a linebacker, even though he played it on and off in college. He's 6'1"+/215. He tackles like a cornerback – a lot of arms and grabbing. He doesn't tackle/hit like an outside linebacker or hybrid backer. He can fly to the ball quickly and that's of great value, but he's not the kind of safety that obliterates ballcarriers. He's more of a freelancer, floating around and using his speed to catch up to unsuspecting ballcarriers. He can cover tight ends in the passing game, he can be used at linebacker...but he's not a future NFL week-in-week-out starting linebacker...as far as I can see.

He does have the tools to be a really good safety...no crime in that, but then – what is a really good safety worth in the NFL these days? Not all that much judging by 2018 NFL free agency.

I think James stands out as a better player than he is because of his college tape...and more specifically what he was allowed to do at FSU. James basically played all over the field...just roaming around and



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dropping into coverage or coming up as a linebacker to blitz the middle or blitz off the edge. He got to freelance into all the fun things...the highlight reel things. He has a nice burst, so when he blitzed it was usually a good thing in college...or bad when better teams baited him and threw to his abandoned area. Most of his tape is filled with him blitzing the backfield or chasing ballcarriers from safety or linebacker. I don't know that the NFL is going to give James that kind of open freedom. He doesn't tackle well, so he's not like a **Deone Bucannon** who will just go around destroying things. James's college game produced a great/'cool' tape...and I think that makes us feel he's better than he is.

In the NFL, James is going to be asked to play one position (not freelance and moving all over)...and assuming that is safety, he's a good one not a great one.

James's gift is his straight-line speed. He can really hang with receivers on routes and chase things side-to-side. He is a great sprinter on the field. He's a legit NFL starter...I think more as a free safety than strong safety but either works. You want him chasing, freelancing to some degree and not tied down to one spot. He's not a banger as a tackler. He's not a convert to corner. He's a very good safety...but I don't know that that makes him worth a top 10 pick. People argue RBs are a waste in the top 10-20...I think safeties are too unless they are super-special. I don't see super-special with James. I see 'good' or 'very good'.

James is a good locker room guy. Serious about his craft and likely a team leader over time. You want **Derwin James** on your team. He provides some flexibility and projects for solid safety play...I just don't think he's 'great' or necessarily worth a top 5-10 pick because of the position he plays. There are other good, more classic safety prospects in this class...as fast/faster, as big, with way more agility 'on paper'. **Jessie Bates** for an example.

Derwin James, Through the Lens of Our SAF Scouting Algorithm:

Everything I see on James points to more good than great...

-- Had 4 passes defended (PDs) in a game against Syracuse in 2017, and then just 11 PDs in his other 25 game career. Solid, but not 'wow'. His two INTs last season came against Syracuse and FCS Delaware State.

-- Against Alabama, Miami, Clemson, Florida in 2017...15 solo tackles (3.8 per game) and 27 tackles total (6.8 per game) with 2.5 TFLs (0.6 per game). All 'good' numbers...not 'great' from a high-end safety roaming as a safety-linebacker-sneak attack edge rusher.



-- His 7.34 three-cone time at his Pro Day would have been the single worst among all DBs at the NFL Combine. His 4.34 shuttle time the 4th worst. I see James as mostly a great athlete, nice size for a DB, lacking some in agility, plays like a quality free safety...he's 'good'. He might be great, but I'm in the 'good' camp.

The Historical SAF Prospects to Whom Derwin James Most Compares Within Our System:

People were very high on bigger, quicker safeties **O.J. Atogwe**...a #66 pick back in 2005. **Earl Wolff** was a sleeper safety prospect in 2013. Similar profiles with James...neither really had a major impact in the NFL.

James is nowhere near the tackler and playmaker that **Derrick Kindred** is. He's not the athlete that **Obi Melifonwu** is. I just keep getting 'good' not 'great' signs from James.

Overall	Last	First	Yr	College	H T	HT	Weig ht	Tackle Strngth Metrics	Speed Cover Metric	Strong Safety	Free Safety
8.261	James	Derwin	2018	Florida St.	6	1.6	215	7.45	7.52	52%	48%
8.273	Atogwe	O.J.	2005	Stanford	5	11.0	219	9.98	4.44	69%	31%
8.614	Wolff	Earl	2013	N.C. State	5	11.2	209	10.10	6.47	58%	42%
7.875	Kindred	Derrick	2016	TCU	5	10.0	207	8.07	4.76	62%	38%
7.089	Vaughn	Chip	2009	Wake Forest	6	1.3	221	9.22	6.93	58%	42%
10.360	Melifonwu	Obi	2017	U Conn	6	3.7	224	8.78	6.87	64%	36%

**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 SS/FS prospects, with a focus on which SS/FS prospects went on to be good-great-elite in the NFL. We found characteristics/data points that the successful NFL SS/FS's had in common in college, that most other SS/FS prospects could not match/achieve.

Scoring with a rating over a **7.0+** in our system is where we start to take a SS/FS prospect more seriously. Most of the future NFL-successful college SS/FS prospects scored **8.0+** in our system, and most of the NFL-superior FS/SSs pushed ratings more in the **9–10.0+** levels overall. Future NFL busts will sneak into the **8.0+** rating range from time to time.



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TACKLE/STRENGTH METRIC -- A combination of physical measurables and college performance, graded historically for future NFL profiling. In the simplest of terms, this is an attempt to classify the SS/FS as one more likely to be involved in a heavy amount of tackles, forced fumbles, and physical hits to separate a WR from the ball. It also gives some insight into the "toughness" of a player, if it is possible to quantify that (this is our attempt to).

SPEED/COVERAGE METRIC -- A combination of several speed, agility, size measurements as well as college performance. A unique measuring system to look for SS/FS prospects that profile for superior coverage skills and abilities.

2018 NFL Draft Outlook:

He projects to be taken as highly as top 5, but usually between #6-10. People love him and made up their mind he's a multi-dimensional top athlete. He's definitely going top 10-15.

If I were an NFL GM, I would not pay up for a safety I had questions on. **Obi Melfonwu**...I pay up for. He's a freak. James is just really good. Probably worthy of a 1st round grade, but not a top 10-15 grade for me...partly because I see him as just 'good' and partially because I'm not paying up for a safety with a high draft pick.

NFL Outlook:

James will be expected to play right away, and he'll serve a team well because of his speed and effort. He should have a very solid career, but I think it will be as a safety and also someone 5-6 years into the league, like a lot of these other safeties, where their team either lets them walk in free agency or pays them a nice contract but soon cuts them for money purposes after a year or two of the bigger deal because 'good' safeties just aren't worth big money. I just don't see James 'changing the game'. He's 'good'.

