



NFL Draft 2014 Scouting Report: OLB Khalil Mack, Buffalo

**Our LB 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.*

I'm onboard with everyone...to a point. I'll agree, **Khalil Mack** is a great NFL prospect. I am semi-surprised that Mack has become the 'wink, wink' (football analysts talking) "for my money this kid might be the #1 overall prospect for the draft." I would argue over whether he is the single best prospect, but he is in the discussion...he is a legit top prospect. I guess, I'm a little biased/angry because I am watching how this 'group-think' with Mack is unfolding.

Before the NFL Combine, **Khalil Mack** was a top 10-20 prospect that most people were not overly focused on. **Anthony Barr** was considered the best OLB/DE in the 2014 NFL Draft, and there was scuttlebutt over **Dee Ford** and **Kony Ealy**. Mack was not a huge part of the early, early discussion.

During the NFL Combine, Mike Mayock dropped his **Khalil Mack** 'pipe bomb' of "I'd take this Mack kid over Clowney." The football world suddenly had a collective epiphany of the same evaluation. Mack got the "Pope's blessing," and he started shooting up everyone's draft boards. The NFL Network all became huge fans. Message boards went predictably batty, as Mack + "beast" references jumped 800-fold. The shark has been jumped when I just saw that **Mel Kiper** has raced **Khalil Mack** to his #1 spot in his 3.0 Mock Draft to the Texans.

For me to try to prove to you why **Khalil Mack** is a good-great prospect is mostly a waste of time. The football world has been shouting it since Mayock, and I'm not sure what else I can add. He's very good. What I can do is try to tear it down a little bit. Try to show you the flaws for consideration (minimal as they might be). It's what I would do if I were an NFL GM. Try to find the negatives in the situation. With a top pick, I want as sure a thing as there is. Something that is going to be 'special'. So my question to myself: "Am I 100% sure that Mack is 'special'? The answer: No-ish. I'm not 100% sure he is a future elite OLB.

Why stop short on Mack?

When I watch Mack on tape, I can see that he is a great college player. His tape shows him dominating opponents a la **Jadeveon Clowney** in 2012. On tape, sometimes, Mack is almost uncontainable. I thought that of **Jarvis Jones** on tape last year as well. The thing about the names whom I just mentioned: Clowney and Jones were dominating SEC caliber offensive lines, coaching, and schemes. **Khalil Mack** can look like "a man against boys" because the visual perspective is a little warped. He should dominate Stony Brook and U Mass. Mack is a future NFL starting OLB, there should not be anyone on Stony Brook to stop him...and there wasn't.



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Mack played in the MAC, which provided a steady diet of directional Michigan schools, and various mid-major Ohio programs. He was the big fish in a little pond. Don't take that as a heavy negative. He should have dominated, and he did...and that's a scouting credit to him. My point is that he looks crazy awesome on tape at times, but should we question whether our viewpoint is skewed. If you put **Jadeveon Clowney**, or **Trent Murphy**, or **Anthony Barr** in the MAC...would they not have looked the same on tape?

I raise the 'perspective' point because when I turn and look at the measurables, I do see a very good athlete. I do not see a jaw dropper. By comparison, I see output and athleticism that make my eyes spin with **Aaron Donald** and **Ryan Shazier**. A step behind them is what I see with **Khalil Mack**. In simple terms, Mack to me is an 'A+' performance output and an 'A-' OLB athlete. That's still an "A" average, and it makes him one of the top prospects in the draft, but I don't feel comfortable saying he is the best prospect in this draft. I also see him just shy of being a possible 'transcendent', redefining the position for the millennium type prospect. I just see him as ordinary 'great', but there are minor signs of being the all-world.

As a side note, there are no major marks on Mack's off the field record, but it's not totally clean either. Mack was suspended for a short period for fighting/beating up a fellow teammate. He was also suspended for missing a scrimmage during his Buffalo years.

Khalil Mack, Through the Lens of Our OLB Scouting Algorithm:

There's not much to pick at with Mack's on-field performance. He was an excellent player and producer. He has a well-above average amount of tackles for a guy who played rush-DE most of the time, and who was the main focus of his opponents. Mack also racked up great tackles for loss (TFL) numbers as well as sacks.

The couple of impressive items I see on Mack's statistical resume:

He's had double-digit TFLs in a season for all four seasons of his college play. In fact, he is the NCAA's all-time leader in TFLs with 75.

Mack picked off three passes in 2013 and returned two of them for TDs. Mack had an impressive 7 PDs (passes defended) in 2013 and notched 22 PDs for his career. That is a sign of a DE/OLB that not only can get into the backfield in an elite manner but is not afraid/is smart enough to drop back into coverage when warranted. That may seem like a minor point, but more and more I see athletic DE/OLBs just non-stop rushing the passer and doing little of anything else...not Mack. By comparison, **Jadeveon Clowney** had 7 PDs in his three seasons of college play, Mack had 7 PDs in 2013 (and 22 for his four-year career).



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Athletically is where I have the slightest downgrade against Mack (in terms of 'special'). He is not that 'special' on paper. Mack is well above-average with his 40-yard dash, and above-average in agility. He is a 'B+' in terms of speed-agility combo among the history of OLB prospects. His 40" vertical is high-end, sensational. He is an overall great athlete. I would not call him the "**Calvin Johnson** of OLB prospects." He's just really, really good...which makes it sound like I am dinging him, but I am just talking about it from an "Is he the top pick in the 2014 NFL Draft perspective?"

The Historical OLB Prospects to Whom Khalil Mack Most Compares Within Our System:

You see **Aaron Curry's** name below, and it might give you a panic attack on **Khalil Mack**. You see **Terrell Suggs** listed, and it you will light up with joy for Mack. Only God knows what happened to **Aaron Curry**. He has actually been better in the NFL than given credit, and this could happen to Mack as well: The OLB position, depending upon how you are used, will likely not make you a household name. You can be a well-respected OLB in the NFL, and no one cares about it. High sack counts are sexy, and high tackle counts and passes defended are more boring. Mack may end up in that more 'boring', but NFL good-great category.

OLB Grade	Last	First	Draft Yr	College	H	H	W	Tackle Strgth Metric	Spd Agil Metric	Pass Rush Metric
11.39	Mack	Khalil	2014	Buffalo	6	2.5	251	9.18	11.23	8.56
10.86	Curry	Aaron	2009	Wake Forest	6	1.6	254	10.02	8.63	7.16
15.34	Suggs	Terrell	2003	Arizona St	6	3.3	257	9.44	16.35	12.42
5.03	Carter	Bruce	2011	UNC	6	1.4	243	6.61	6.32	6.00
7.56	Wagner	Bobby	2012	Utah State	6	0.3	241	10.59	6.78	5.86
4.23	Rivers	Keith	2008	USC	6	2.2	241	7.07	5.58	5.35

A score of **8.00+ is where we see a stronger correlation of LBs 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 NFL elite LB.*

All of the LB ratings are based on a 0–10 scale, but a player can score negative, or above a 10.0 in certain instances.

Tackle-Strength Metrics = A combination of several physical and performance measurements. An attempt to classify the LB prospect's ability to stop the run, as well as a gauge of how physical the player is and the likelihood of higher tackle counts in the NFL. All based on profiles of LBs historically.



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Speed-Agility Metrics = A combination of several speed, agility, and size measurements...as well as game performance data to profile a LB for speed/agility based on LBs historically. A unique measuring system to look for LBs that profile for quickness, pass-coverage ability, and general ability to cover more ground.

Pass Rush Metrics = A combination of the physical measurements, but also proven on-field ability to get to the QB/backfield in college.

2014 NFL Draft Outlook:

Khalil Mack's star is burning bright for the NFL Draft. I cannot imagine that he will not be a top-5 selection overall. He's going anywhere from #1 to #5, and that's probably fair value. He belongs in the discussion of the top-5.

If I were an NFL GM, Mack is definitely on my short list, but not sure he is at the top of it. It would depend upon my team's style of play. In the end, at OLB, I'd take **Ryan Shazier** over Mack because Shazier is a more freakish athlete, and I can use him in so many ways (OLB, Safety, even CB if I had to). Mack will be a great pick as well, but he is an OLB for life in the NFL. Mack's a touch short for a high-end DE in today's NFL. He's much better freelancing as an OLB. At like a pick #5 in this draft, for example, Mack may not be there, but I know Shazier will be.

NFL Outlook:

Mack will not disappoint in the NFL. He may disappoint the fans a little from the lofty perch he has been put on, but the NFL team that selects him will get a nice ROI on him. Our guess would be that Mack pushes as a 100+ tackle a year guy as an OLB, with the ability to sneak toward double-digit sacks depending on how his defensive coordinator schemes. He's going to be a great asset for an NFL team.

