NFL Draft 2015 Scouting Report: DE Dante Fowler, Florida

*Our DL 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.

You have to be kidding me with this draft, if **Dante Fowler** is the 3rd-best player according to most mock drafters. I mean, what is everyone seeing here? About two minutes into his 2014 game tape, I was shaking my head incredulously. **Dante Fowler** is not a top-3, not a top-10, and it's debatable whether he's even a debatable top-32 NFL Draft pick.

Dante Fowler is one of the most stiff, awkward, unathletic looking top DE/OLB prospects I've seen in a while (in context of the top-rated ones). His NFL Combine numbers back up my claim. **Dante Fowler** has one gift to offer the NFL—he runs straight ahead pretty nicely…a 4.60 runner with a 1.59 10-yard split. You definitely like that for the NFL, but that's all you got. Aside from that you have a flimsy bench press (19 reps), with a non-existent vertical (32"), and a garbage broad jump. If you think all that doesn't matter to playing DE/OLB in the NFL…you're wrong. Wrong in the sense that people are promoting a guy with bottom of the barrel athleticism compared to his peers as a top-5 pick.

What's really crazy is how his poor agility times are being swept under the rug. Everything about Fowler screams 'issue', but many analysts are looking right past it. You cannot make Fowler a top-10 draft pick if you're an NFL team…huge mistake.

He's absolutely not a 3-4 DE, nor is he a great 4-3 DE prospect. He's only 6'2"+ with a limited vertical. He has one move to get to the QB—running straight ahead, but in the NFL he'll be absorbed quickly by an O-Tackle, and Fowler's weak agility will not allow him to make a major move past the blocker. Fowler is an OLB prospect much more than a DE prospect, and a suspect one at that.

If you watch Fowler on tape, against better opponents, it's comical (considering he is supposed to be a top 5-10 guy). When Fowler rushes off the edge as a 4-3 DE, he is gobbled up by better SEC O-Tackles. Where Fowler's whole 'shtick' comes into play is when he would drop back as almost a 5th D-Lineman/middle linebacker…standing up over the Center and rushing with a 2-3 yard head start, and then he tried to use a built-up head of steam to find a hole to race through. If this is what your team is looking for…a middle linebacker who only rushes the middle or stunts the passer, you're in luck. However, that skill is not worth a top-10 ranking in this draft.

Fowler has NFL-speed (straight line), so he has some value as a straight-shot OLB finding a hole and racing through it. Aside from that, Fowler is not creating any pressure on his own. He is not bullying Offensive Tackles back into the backfield. Nor is he flying all over the field making tackles. In college, all he did was try to rush the passer…and was thwarted most all the time by equal or better opposition, with the occasional stunt or gimmick blitz/sack coming from over the center. Your best hope with him in

the NFL is shaving off about 10-15 pounds and making him a pure OLB. With the weight loss could come additional speed and agility.

I have to circle back to my original statement, that Fowler looks awkward. You can see the lack of high-end athleticism watching him play-by-play in games. He moves very stiffly, almost off balance on plays, when he tries to make a cut/move past a blocker…which makes sense because of his terrible agility times.

Fowler posted decent performance numbers overall in college, but not 'awesome' ones. He has solid TFL numbers, but I believe he is getting a chunk of those off stunts and racing through open gaps in the O-Line…it's not him just dominating a blocker.

Fowler, in his current state, should not be a top-10 draft prospect. Not even close. Your best hope is having him cut weight and moving out as a pure OLB who rushes the QB some on a zone blitz. Perhaps, Fowler could move to ILB, but that seems like a stretch. The problem with that is Fowler has shown no penchant for being a big tackler or coverage guy…he is a cool college pass rusher who is in for a rude awakening in the NFL.

Dante Fowler, Through the Lens of Our DE Scouting Algorithm:

Here is an interesting 'split' on Fowler's TFLs the past two seasons:

 -- 1.4 TFLs per game = against unranked teams or FCS opponents

 -- 0.6 TFLs per game = against ranked opponents

We saw this trend on tape as well…looks great against inferior opponents but struggles to rush the passer as a pure DE against better opponents.

In the past two seasons, Fowler registered six or more tackles in a game ten times. In those 10 games he posted 31 solo tackles…and 33 assisted tackles. More assists than solos is a bit of 'a tell', and runs along with a theme that we see on him…Fowler is rarely the catalyst creating defensive trouble—sacks or solo tackles. He gets to many plays after the fact and grabbing assisted tackle stats. Two of his better career games for tackle totals have come against LSU in 2013 and 2014: In all, 16 total tackles in his last two games against them…4 solo and 12 assisted.

There is nothing in Fowler's performance numbers that scream "future star" here…just "future useful."

Physically, it's not good…

Of all the sub-270-pound D-Linemen who ran at the NFL Combine, Fowler had the worst three-cone, and the 2nd-worst vertical, bench press, and broad jump.

Somehow, an NFL team is going to take a decent college pass rusher with poor athleticism in the top-10 of this draft.

The Historical DE Prospects to Whom Dante Fowler Most Compares Within Our System:

It's NFL-flameout **Sergio Kindle**, and then a bunch of no-names. I am still amazed that Fowler is seen as a top-10 pick...flabbergasted may be a better description.

DE Score	Last	First	Yr	College	H	H	W	Tackle, Strngth Metric	Speed, Agility Metric	Pass Rush Metric	Tackle Metric
5.34	Fowler	Dante	2015	Florida	6	2.5	261	6.41	6.65	4.73	5.34
6.19	Kindle	Sergio	2010	Texas	6	2.7	250	6.91	6.09	4.58	6.19
4.63	Martin	Josh	2013	Columbia	6	2.1	247	5.88	6.17	6.11	4.63
2.77	Johnson	Derrell	2014	E. Carolina	6	1.4	257	6.38	4.90	4.32	2.77
2.30	Hubbard	Adrian	2014	Alabama	6	6.0	257	4.73	5.16	4.20	2.30

A score of **8.00+ is where we see a stronger correlation of DEs 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 DE.*

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

Power-Strength Metrics = A combination of several measurements. An attempt to classify the DE prospect as more of a battle-in-the-trenches type of DE, a 'bull-rusher', and/or a DE prospect who has some DT capabilities.

Speed-Agility Metrics = A combination of several speed, agility, size measurements. A unique measuring system to look for DEs who profile more as speed-rush, stand-up DEs, and/or possible OLBs.

Pass-Rusher Rating = 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 whether a particular DE is likely to achieve high sack totals in the NFL. We know the 'system'/scheme the DE goes

on to play in has a part in future success...but so do the player's skills and performance history. "You can't keep a good man/DE down," we'd like to think.

Tackling Rating = 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 DE as one more likely to be involved in a heavy amount of tackles, tackles for a loss, and forced fumbles. Lower-scoring DEs in this subcategory tend to be more pure pass-rushers/specialists. This is also our attempt to quantify, if it's possible, the 'toughness' of a player.

2015 NFL Draft Outlook:

Not only is Fowler tracking in everyone's top-10 right now...he's usually their #3 overall. I would say I'd be amazed if it actually happened, but nothing amazes me anymore in the NFL Draft. If Fowler goes to Jacksonville at #3, would any of us be surprised? The team trying to convince us how great **Blake Bortles** was to end 2014, who before that was telling us how good **Blaine Gabbert** was despite what we all thought—I could see them picking Fowler with a #3 overall...I could see it...very clearly.

If I were an NFL GM, I'm just sitting back and laughing as some team burns a top-10 pick here. I wouldn't use a 1st-round pick on him, so there is no chance I'd be faced with the option of choosing him.

NFL Outlook:

He'll be taken highly, and thus with big expectations...expectations he cannot live up to. There is a high probability that he has 'bust' thrown around on him pretty quickly. NFL teams have one chance—make him cut 10-15 pounds, and see if he becomes a more nimble, effective, useful OLB. Even then, I don't know that this will work beyond him giving you some nice work as a rotational player and as a special teamer.