



Scouting Report: QB Clayton Thorson, Northwestern

**Our QB 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.*

There is a dichotomy to **Clayton Thorson**, QB prospect who I think will garner some sleeper heat from the Senior Bowl (**Late note...had to drop out of the Senior Bowl*).

The dichotomy?

He looks like a great NFL QB prospect at a glance – the size, the powerful arm, big frame, zips passes into tight windows. His ‘best of’ tape may look better than just about anyone’s in this class.

The problem is – for every good throw he makes, he makes 1-2 that are offline or poor decisions. 17 TDs/15 INTs in 14 games as a senior pretty much tells the tale. A four-year starter who tallied 61 TDs/45 INTs – he looks the part, and he’s a good runner (27 rushing TDs in his career), his arm is ‘plus’...there are just no great passer results/efficiency there to speak of/get excited about.

I know the football scouts and analysts – results don’t matter, per se. Not when they see his arm versus the other QBs at the Senior Bowl. They will see a tough, rifle-armed guy in 7-on-7 and 1-on-1 drills in Mobile with everyone in shorts and THEY will love what they see coming from Thorson’s arm -- like they loved and pushed **Logan Thomas** as a 2nd-round QB, a few years ago, when he was a similar disaster (for a high-end prospect) in college – Thomas had the look but not the reality. I was at his Senior Bowl week, one of the first times of my career being around this many scouts, listening to them talk about how great Thomas was...which was ridiculous, and truly eye-opening for me. Thorson might get that same hype, maybe.

I see some of the ‘wow’ throws on tape too. At first, I was like...*“This guy might be the sleeper of the QB class.”* After I watched throw-after-throw and game-after-game...I was like, *“What’s up with this guy? How is he missing these simple throws?”* Too many times Thorson has guys open and he identifies them, but he can’t get it to them – he fires a bullet at their ankles, or two feet over their head. He’s great on no-read slant rocket passes, sometimes. He can throw a dart deep...but rarely connect. He has guys dragging across with a step in coverage and one time he’ll throw a laser beam right to the receiver, the next time he’ll throw it two yards out in front or at his ankles.

None of what I’m saying will matter to most NFL coaches, because Thorson is apt to ‘win’ the Senior Bowl. Big frame, big arm, confident in communicating in press conferences/with the media, tough, smart/All Academic Big Ten. He really has a chance to make waves at the Senior Bowl, but as a tape scout and as a studier of analytics – there’s nothing to support their love.



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I don't think QBs like this can be 'fixed'. I think QB issues are mostly their inability to process the field fast enough, deep-seated issues with confidence, and/or fear of getting hit – all things you cannot prove conclusively just by looking...you have to let the performance numbers speak it to you and assume from them. 99% of the coaches and scouts do not believe in data or performance analytics. If it were not true, **Josh Allen** would have never been drafted in the top 100 last season. **Clayton Thorson** has a chance to catch the same wave **Logan Thomas** and **Josh Allen** did...only Thorson doesn't have quite the 'pub' that those other guys did going to the Senior Bowl. Allen had 'the arm'. Thomas has 'the size and mobility'. Thorson has all the 'bigs' you want but not to an extreme. It will be interesting to see how he comes out of his week in Mobile.

Clayton Thorson, Through the Lens of Our QB Scouting Algorithm:

Faced Ohio State, Michigan, Penn State, Wisconsin (2x), Notre Dame, Iowa (2x) and Utah the past two seasons (9 games total). His output in those tough opponent games:

4-5 record

9 TDs/12 INTs

No 300+ yard games, and under 220 yards passing in seven of those 9 games.

Didn't rush for 50 or more yards in a game the past three seasons but did rush for 22 TDs in that span – he's a sneaky runner that will fake a spread hand-off and keep it himself and surprise the defense and barrel in for a score. Looks like a 4.8+ runner.

Projects 6'3"+ and 220+ pounds.

*Tore his ACL in his 2017 bowl game, was rehabbed in time to start the 2018 season.

The Historical QB Prospects to Whom Clayton Thorson Most Compares Within Our System:



When I mentioned **Josh Allen** earlier, I had not looked at what our computer comp might be...but now I look and there's **Josh Allen**. Josh has a much stronger arm and is faster on the run but is much more erratic than Thorson...though they share a lot of the same qualities of 'sneaky runner' and 'big (erratic) arm'.

<u>QB-Score</u>	<u>Last</u>	<u>First</u>	<u>Yr</u>	<u>College</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>Adj Comp Pct</u>	<u>Adj Yds per Comp</u>	<u>Adj Pass per TD</u>	<u>Adj Pass Per INT</u>
3.518	Thorson	Clayton	2019	Northwestern	75.0	220	60.5%	10.4	35.9	29.4
0.628	Dysert	Zac	2013	Miami, OH	75.2	228	62.1%	11.3	26.9	29.7
2.248	Whitehurst	Charlie	2006	Clemson	76.8	223	64.8%	10.0	32.3	34.8
1.799	Coleman	B.J.	2012	Tenn-Chatt	75.1	234	60.9%	11.0	24.1	24.8
-2.985	Wilson	Tyler	2013	Arkansas	73.5	218	58.9%	13.0	25.4	24.8
-1.967	Tuel	Jeff	2013	Wash St	74.6	221	67.8%	9.8	52.6	32.0
0.637	Corp	Aaron	2012	Richmond	75.5	215	62.4%	10.5	25.0	33.4

*“Adj” = A view of adjusted college output in our system...adjusted for strength of opponent.

**A score of 8.5+ is where we see a stronger correlation of QBs going on to become NFL good-to-great. A scouting score of 9.5+ is rarefied air—higher potential for becoming great-to-elite.

QB's scoring 6.0–8.0 are finding more success in the new passing era of the NFL (2014–on). Depending upon the system and surrounding weapons, a 6.0–8.0 rated QB can do fine in today's NFL—with the right circumstances...but they are not 'the next Tom Brady' guys, just NFL-useful guys.

2019 NFL Draft Outlook:

I've seen Thorson's draft ranking all over the place, mostly in the 7th-round/UDFA range. I think he could get himself to the 4th-5th-round with his time at the Senior Bowl.

If I were an NFL GM, I'd not touch Thorson. Too erratic, too obvious with issues on tape and in results. I see better UDFA QB prospects if Thorson falls that far...I wouldn't even make a call.

NFL Outlook:



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Drafted to be a developmental backup and will never really catch any heat or excitement. Over time he'll be forgotten and just be a journeyman who gets multiple chances based on arm and personality.

If he was forced to start due to injury, in the NFL, I think he might actually be fine for a game or two – he's not a terrible QB. He's just going to show himself to be too erratic over time.

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