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NFL DRAFT 2017 SCOUTING REPORT: RB

TARIK COHEN, N.C. A&T

BY: R.C. FISCHER

TOTAL FOOTBALL ADVISORS, LLC

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NFL DRAFT 2017 SCOUTING REPORT: RB TARIK COHEN, N.C. A&T

**Our RB 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.*

**We use the term "Power RB" to separate physically bigger, more between-the-tackles-capable RBs from our "speed RBs" group. "Speed RBs" are physically smaller but much faster/quicker, and less likely to flourish between the tackles.*

I wouldn't trust scouting of **Tarik Cohen** that compares him to **Darren Sproles**. If you're comparing Cohen to Sproles – you're living in a bygone era of the NFL that has passed you by. It's OK. The major sea change started happening only a year ago, so there still time to catch up.

It's too simplistic to look at the **Tarik Cohen** and see – little guy who's bouncy, so he can't be a real running back in the NFL, so let's pigeonhole him as '**Darren Sproles**'.

Darren Sproles being '*a Sproles-type back*' hasn't really mattered for a few years – going back a few years into his New Orleans Saints run. You're wasting your time...you're showing your football age when you compare someone to **Darren Sproles**.

The Bears did not draft Cohen to be their **Darren Sproles**. I think they drafted him for the new era. They drafted Cohen to be their **Tyreek Hill**. Many NFL teams are trying to find their version of **Tyreek Hill** – Cohen is the Bears first swing at the piñata.

You'd rather have the next **Tyreek Hill** circa 2016 than **Darren Sproles** from any year in his career...and that's no slam at Sproles. Let that statement sink in. That's what's at stake here. We have to look at the Cohen pick through the **Tyreek Hill** lens. When you do, the obvious scouting question becomes – is Cohen as good or better than **Tyreek Hill**?

He's not.

But he's in the same zip code.

A quick look at a measurables comparison lets you know where the battle lines are drawn, where the big differences are.

5'6"/179, 4.42 40-time, 11 bench reps, 31.5" vertical, 7.22 three-cone = **Tarik Cohen** (2017)

5'8"/185, 4.29 40-time, 13 bench reps, 40.5" vertical, 6.53 three-cone = **Tyreek Hill** (016)

In a nutshell, **Tyreek Hill** may be the single fastest player in the NFL...a speed and agility combination, unlike most any player. **Tarik Cohen**, by comparison, is pretty fast for the NFL and not all that wonderful east to west/agility. **Tarik Cohen** is a 9mm weapon – efficient and deadly. **Tyreek Hill** is a nuclear bomb that you can't stop it and it's going to lay devastation to everything and anyone in its path. It's almost unfair to compare players to **Tyreek Hill**, but it helps provide the proper context for the Cohen scouting.

What Cohen lacks in a speed/agility comparison to Hill, he makes up for somewhat with his ability in the passing game. I get the Sproles comparison. If **Darren Sproles** were entering the NFL now, we'd probably be having the same discussion – *how does Sproles compare to Tyreek Hill*. If Sproles were just now entering the NFL he would probably be used a little differently than just a very secure screen and swing pass guy that the Saints deployed back in the day (and was somewhat ahead of its time).

Cohen has the hands and the movements of an interesting NFL wide receiver. I don't know that I would go so far as to call him a real NFL wide receiver...quasi **Wes Welker**-ish. And by that, I mean he's not **Antonio Brown** or **DeSean Jackson**. Guys like Cohen and **Tyreek Hill**, they are not 'real' NFL wide receivers...they're not 'classic' NFL wide receivers. They are a new breed of receiver. There are guys with running back experience/backgrounds/mindsets who can catch the ball well and have fantastic speed in the open field. You don't want them running timing routes against **Patrick Peterson**. You don't want them lining up as your main running back and taking 15+ carries a game. They were built for something different, something just emerging in the NFL – running back mindsets who lineup all over the field to create confusion. 2–5 carries per game. 4–8 targets per game. Not complicated targets, just getting the ball to them out in space. It might be a bubble screen. It might be a fake bubble screen and let them blast off on a deep route leaving a defender helplessly steps behind them. They're 'weapons', not NFL wide receivers. Cohen is an NFL weapon.

Cohen has huge hands and is pretty adept at running short, medium, and long pass routes, and tracking balls in the air and making catches. He's very reliable on the bubble screen. He can catch the ball sprinting deep. But what's really impressive is

Cohen can run those medium and intermediate routes and make catches like a traditional NFL wide receiver. He's just not limited to the short or long game only. He's too small to be 'just a WR'...you want him roaming around in different alignments and running those patterns against mismatches in coverage.

Basically, everything you'd ever want to know about **Tarik Cohen**, what his abilities are across the board as a runner and as a receiver – go watch his Kent State game tape available for free on YouTube. In 4–8 minutes of cut-up tape on Cohen, you'll see his greatest receiving game in his career. His career receiving numbers were only limited by the flimsy passing game of the school he went to. He's capable of a lot more in the passing game than what N.C. A&T could deliver.

<https://youtu.be/q9sQprwwJnw>

The only downside I ever see watching Cohen on tape is his side-to-side or east-to-west running. Straight ahead, Cohen is fantastic. Excellent burst. He can stop and start on a dime. Make him go side to side and it's a mild version of kryptonite for him. It's the biggest area of differential between him and **Tyreek Hill**. Other than that, there are a lot of similarities in their styles, and in the ways they'll be used in the NFL.

Cohen is capable of running the ball like a running back, and absorbing hits and fighting for yards – or just running past everyone. He has a running back's mindset, not a wide receiver's mindset. That's what makes RBs playing WR roles so dangerous. Excellent speed. Excellent vision. Great toughness for his size. If you can get Cohen the ball in space where he can run straight ahead and get a head of steam – he's gone.

Cohen as part of a new breed of NFL player/college prospect – they are weapons you can line up all over the field and get them the ball in a variety of ways. It's up to his NFL team to make use of it.

TARIK COHEN, THROUGH THE LENS OF OUR “SPEED RB” SCOUTING ALGORITHM

Four 200+ yard rushing games in 2016. One 100+ yard game receiving. 18 rushing TDs in 12 games. His 2016 senior season was fantastic.

Ran for 1,000+ yards all four years of his college career.

Against D1 opponents:

— 15 carries for 69 yards and no TDs vs. UNC (2015)

— 24 carries for 133 yards and 1 TD, 9 catches for 125 yards receiving vs. Kent St. (2016)

NFL COMBINE DATA...

5'6.3"/179, 29.8" arms, 10.13" hands – massive size for his size (or any size)

4.42 40-time, 1.54 10-yard, Pro Day: 4.27 shuttle, 7.22 three-cone

11 bench reps, 31.5" vertical, 9'10" broad jump

THE NFL "SPEED RB" WHOM TARIK COHEN MOST COMPARES WITH STATISTICALLY IN COLLEGE, WITHIN OUR SYSTEM:

Well, our computer scouting models see **Darren Sproles** here too. He's like Sproles the athlete/size, but the old 'Sproles role' is a thing of the past. It's not a 3rd-down RB and hurry-up offense role...it's now a weapon used in a variety of ways.

TABLE 518

RB-s Score	RB- Re	RB- Ru	Name	Name	College	Yr	H	H	Weight	Speed	Agility	Power
6.639	8.22	6.90	Cohen	Tarik	NC A&T	2017	5	6.4	179	8.48	0.13	2.06
7.087	7.18	5.22	Sproles	Darren	Kansas St	2005	5	6.1	187	4.99	9.88	7.64
2.917	8.11	2.21	Locke	Derrick	Kentucky	2011	5	8.2	188	9.25	6.11	3.99
0.027	2.46	0.44	Hollomon	Robert	C. Conn St.	2015	5	7.4	165	2.49	-3.36	1.55
9.324	3.64	6.83	Smith	Antone	Florida State	2009	5	7.6	191	11.61	2.73	11.58

**A score of 8.50+ is where we see a stronger correlation of RBs 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 RB.*

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

Overall rating/score = A combination of several on-field performance measures, including refinement for the strength of opponents faced, mixed with all the physical measurement metrics – then compared/rated historically within our database and formulas. More of a traditional three-down search – runner, blocker, and receiver.

RB-Re score = **New/testing in 2017. Our new formula/rating that attempts to identify and quantify a prospect's receiving skills even deeper than in our original formulas. RB prospects can now make it/thrive in the NFL strictly based on their receiving skills – it is an individual attribute sought out for the NFL and no longer dismissed or overlooked. Our rating combines a study of their receiving numbers in college in relation to their offense and opponents, as well as profiling size-speed-agility along with hand size measurables, etc.*

RB-Ru score = **New/testing in 2017. Our new formula/rating that attempts to classify and quantify an RB prospect's ability strictly as a runner of the ball. Our rating combines a study of their rushing numbers in college in relation to their offense and strength of opponents, as well as profiling size-speed-agility along with various size measurables, etc.*

Raw Speed Metric = A combination of several speed and size measurements from the NFL Combine, judged along with physical size profile, and then compared/rated historically within our database and scouting formulas. This is a rating strictly for RBs of a similar/bigger size profile.

Agility Metric = A combination of several speed and agility measurements from the NFL Combine, judged along with physical size profile, and then compared/rated historically within our database and scouting formulas. This is a rating strictly for RBs of a similar/bigger size profile.

2017 NFL DRAFT OUTLOOK...

I was shocked when **Tarik Cohen** was drafted in the fourth round of the 2017 NFL Draft. I didn't think a small school guy would get as much love. I especially didn't think it would come from the Chicago Bears who have a pretty crowded backfield to

