



## NFL Draft 2018 Scouting Report: WR Dylan Cantrell, Texas Tech

*\*WR grades can and will change as more information comes in from Pro Day workouts, Wonderlic test results leaked, etc. We will update ratings as new info becomes available.*

*\*WR-B stands for "Big-WR," a classification we use to separate the more physical, downfield/over-the-top, heavy-red-zone-threat-type WRs. Our WR-S/"Small-WRs" are profiled by our computer more as slot and/or possession-type WRs who are less typically physical and rely more on speed/agility to operate underneath the defense and/or use big speed to get open deep...they are not used as weapons in the red zone as much.*

You might have been reacting like me on scouting **Dylan Cantrell** going into the NFL Combine. At first you see the Combine invite list and you're like, "Who's that?". Then you see he's a nice size (6'3"/226) and productive at high-flying Texas Tech and shrug your shoulders and think, "Maybe?" Then he runs a 4.59 40-time to start the Combine and you're like...*yawn*. Then later it's revealed he ran a 6.56 three-cone with a 4.03 shuttle time and you're like, "How you doin'?"

There's not many 6'3"/226 receivers with that kind of timed agility. When I look in our system for WRs that were 6'2" or taller, 220 pounds or heavier and posted a sub-6.70 three-cone at the NFL Combine (not Pro Day) – it's Cantrell, **Devon Cajuste** (former Stanford WR/2016), and **Julio Jones**.

There's a big disparity of talents in that three-man group...Cajuste and Jones are at opposite ends of the spectrum for NFL success.

Sadly, Cantrell is much more Cajuste than he is Julio...but he's probably somewhere in-between.

Cantrell has a lot of positive markers for the analytics crowd. He's got the #1 SPARQ score of the 2018 WR Combine group. He's going to be everyone's favorite sleeper WR in the metrics community, but not in my own Metrics company.

There are two problems I see with getting too overheated on Cantrell...

(1) He played in one of the most pro-passing game offenses in college football...and got to work with the great **Patrick Mahomes**. Cantrell's output was good with Mahomes/2016, not amazing, and he was fairly solid with a very solid **Nic Shimonek** in 2017. A guy with Cantrell's gifts and playing with top QBs in a great passing game...a career best season of 71-816-7 (13 games) is a bit of a letdown.

(2) The tape doesn't show a fleet-of-foot guy that the Combine does. A perfect example/comparison:



SMU WR **Courtland Sutton** and **Dylan Cantrell** had about the same Combine story...big WRs, 4.5+ 40-times, stunningly low agility times.

When I studied Sutton on tape...I was blown away with how fast and smooth he was moving. He was so good that the other teams often put 2–3 defenders on him. TCU put like 2-3-4 on him at any given time, seriously. Whenever Sutton got single coverage, he burned his opposing CB almost without fail (the only fail was his QB couldn't hit him wide-open half the time). Alternatively, Cantrell got a lot of one-on-one coverage and not a lot of separation. Opponents didn't feel compelled to shut him down at all costs. Most of Cantrell's catches are non-separated, fighting for 50-50 balls...and coming down with a fair share of them. He has skills...but the high-end agility isn't showing on tape. It's not getting him open like you'd think it would.

Cantrell does have NFL gifts to explore, invest in. The size is great. The 40-time is fine at that size. The agility is promising. He catches high-point and contested passes well...but usually going deep. Not much of Cantrell working over defenders over the middle (he may not have been asked to because he was good deep...or because he wasn't great in muddy waters).

People will want to compare Cantrell to **Jordy Nelson**...tall, athletic, hands, (Caucasian). I get that, but the difference is that Jordy was dominant in college and was also returning punts for TDs, throwing passes, etc. Jordy was an awesome college player. By contrast, Cantrell was a pretty good WR on a high-flying offense...and not involved in the return game.

Cantrell has tools to work with, and they are going to get him drafted...and they should. He has an upside – with some work he can use his physical gifts to matter in the NFL. However, he is not displaying, on tape, that little X-factor of greatness with all these gifts in college in a setting that should push him to looking better than he is.

Off the field, no issues. Three-time All-Academic Big-12. He's one of the better/willing blocking WRs out there. He's personable, if not a bit silly. He almost comes off as too silly...wants to be a comedian, which is no big deal, but then it makes you wonder how locked in he is on his craft. Perhaps he matures quickly and works his butt off, and winds up a steal. He's a neat, middle-of-the-draft prospect, but it may take a few years for the payoff.

...or the payoff never happens.

### Dylan Cantrell, Through the Lens of Our WR Scouting Algorithm:

Cantrell's performance numbers/output look good on the surface. Not great racking yards, but got a solid amount of catches and TDs in college. 5.6 catches and 0.65 TDs per game are not bad numbers at all, but then you look at 'market share' he had in the passing game and it's pretty weak...low 20% share



of the passing game action. You like to see 25–30%+ at least. Granted he played in an offense in which many prospered, but he also had plenty of chance to be dominant with this group and solo coverage and it really never happened.

The tape and numbers are just ‘good’, in a kinda boring sense that had he run a 6.95 three-cone, he might not get drafted. The agility times put him on the map. He needs more than that at the next level.

*NFL Combine measurables...*

6’2.7”/226, 31.38” arms, 9.25” hands

4.59 40-time, 6.56 three-cone, 4.03 shuttle

18 bench reps, 38.5” vertical, 10’10” broad jump

This profile, on paper, is higher end.

**The Historical WR Prospects to Whom Dylan Cantrell Most Compares Within Our System:**

The list below is exactly what I would fear trying to evaluate Cantrell...former size/athletic WRs, who had mediocre output in college despite their advantage of size-athleticism. All guys who just didn’t seem to have or display that X-factor to impact in the NFL.

<u>WR Score</u>	<u>Draft Yr</u>	<u>Last</u>	<u>First</u>	<u>College</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>Power Strngth Metric</u>	<u>Speed Agility Metric</u>	<u>Hands' Metric</u>
<b>7.228</b>	2018	Cantrell	Dylan	Texas Tech	6	2.7	226	8.84	7.65	9.28
<b>7.088</b>	2012	Kinnie	Brandon	Nebraska	6	2.6	220	7.90	9.77	8.92
<b>4.631</b>	2016	Cajuste	Devon	Stanford	6	3.6	234	7.83	9.02	7.46
<b>4.141</b>	2012	Moss	Dale	So Dakota St	6	3.3	220	7.38	11.36	8.18
<b>4.294</b>	2011	Kelley	Jeremy	Maine	6	5.5	223	12.61	3.22	3.92

*\*A score of 7.0+ is where we start to take a Big-WR prospect more seriously. A score of 8.50+ is where we see a stronger correlation of a Big-WR 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 Big-WR.*



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

*Overall WR score = A combination of several on-field performance measures, including refinement for strength of opponents faced. Mixed with all the physical measurement metrics, rated historically in our database.*

*“Power-Strength” = A combination of unique metrics surrounding physical size profiling, bench press strength, etc. High scorers here project to be more physical, better blockers, and less injury-prone.*

*“Speed-Agility” = A combination of unique metrics surrounding speed, agility, physical size, mixed with some on-field performance metrics. High scorers here project to have a better YAC and show characteristics to be used as deep threats/to create separation.*

*“Hands” = A combination of unique metrics surrounding on-field performance in college, considering the strength of opponents played. Furthermore, this data considers some physical profiling for hand size, etc. High scorers here have a better track record of college statistical performance, and overall this projects the combination of performance and physical data for the next level.*

### **2018 NFL Draft Outlook:**

Cantrell moved from 7th-round projections to a 4th–5th round one after the Combine. The NFL tends to be more reluctant with SPARQ ‘wonders’ from the Combine at WR if they didn’t show dominance. I’ll project Cantrell goes late 5th round.

If I were an NFL GM, I’d like to have Cantrell as a developmental WR prospect, but I’m not paying for it. Maybe a late pick, or I would love to have him as a UDFA. I’ve seen too many guys come and go with his profile, and I didn’t see anything here to make me chase him.

### **NFL Outlook:**

Hopefully, he can get 2-3 years developing for a team on a practice squad, etc., but the NFL is not all-too patient. Cantrell better show some splash early or he’ll get bounced around after year three and we’ll all be semi-excited about some other fresh-faced guy who runs a sub-6.70 three-cone in the draft.

