



NFL Draft 2016 Scouting Report: WR Pharoh Cooper, So. Carolina

**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.*

Pharoh Cooper is one of those guys who just seems to have a positive momentum among scouts and analysts, and I don't even think they really know why. Everyone has nice things to say about Cooper, despite his poor showing at the NFL Combine. Because he's a bit 'anointed' by a group-think, the weak measurables are deemed unworthy of the discussion with Cooper; he transcends the 'number geek's' scouting, they believe.

I understand the mainstream's ignoring of the measurables, because there are players who defy poor analytics' evaluations, just like there are prospects uncovered via analytics that traditional scouts missed by a mile...it just so happens, there's a lot more missed by traditional scouting. However, occasionally traditional scouts get it right. I wondered if that was the case with **Pharoh Cooper**, because the numbers, on paper, are not so much in his favor...

Cooper is 5'11"/203 and ran a sluggish 4.65 40-time at his Pro Day along with a weak 7.15 three-cone... both terrible numbers for his size. He has smaller hands 9.1" hands and shows little in the vertical leap (31.0"). On paper, Cooper should not have been drafted.

However, then you look at his tape and you see this guy making nice catches; he has good/great hands. Even more eye-appealing, you see him running the ball as a wildcat quarterback (71 career rushes in three seasons), while sometimes throwing the ball (16 career passes, 4 TDs). The guy on tape is nothing like the guy on paper.

...thus the battle lines of traditional scouting versus analytical scouting are drawn.

Our scouting analytics were anti-Cooper as well, but I had done some basic film review and had a favorable memory of him. I was open to the possibilities as I began my deeper study. After taking the deeper dive, I have to say that I walk away more unimpressed/neutral, than I am thinking Cooper is a possible NFL star. I think 'bust' is more likely than 'star'. Most likely outcome = average, forgotten.

There are two things that jumped out in my notes watching Cooper in games last season...



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1: Sure, he has a lot of cool plays on tape...many of them against Coastal Carolina or Citadel. However, when you watched him against his most difficult matchup last year, facing Florida, he was a pretty average looking receiver.

I want to tell you the reason why I had a negative opinion on Cooper after the Florida game was because ace cornerback **Vernon Hargreaves** shut him down. However, that wasn't really the case, per se. More jarring to me was the fact that Florida did not put Hargreaves on Cooper all the time. In fact, it looked to me like Florida really wasn't that preoccupied with Cooper at all. Considering by the time they faced each other in 2015, Cooper had become the established star/centerpiece for South Carolina, you would think Florida would point all of its guns at Cooper, their best defensive guns. They didn't. They just played him kinda straight up, and often let him roam around without top coverage switching over or deploying double coverage on him. It was telling. No matter who covered him on Florida, it seemed like they had no trouble staying stride for stride with him.

2: Watching Cooper against the better teams on his schedule in 2015, I just noted too many times where he did not look as fast as he did on his highlight reel or running the wildcat. He looked a little stiff, and had a hard time separating away from respectable coverage as wide receiver. In the NFL, everything is respectable coverage and beyond. Cooper is going to have a very difficult time getting open in the NFL, I fear.

When Cooper ran the wildcat for South Carolina, he seemed energized and working at another gear. It may have been a little deceptive as defenses got confused by his wildcat play; because as a receiver, he didn't look like the same guy/athlete...he looked ordinary/college good at wide receiver. He was exciting as a 'wildcat' in college, but he is not likely going to run the 'wildcat' in the NFL. I think a lot of the Cooper-love is because he ran the wildcat. **Mohamed Sanu** ran the wildcat in college a thousand times better than Cooper, and Sanu is a better measured athlete than Cooper. By logic, Cooper is a lesser-**Mohamed Sanu**. What are you willing to pay for a lesser-**Mohamed Sanu**?

If Cooper is going to make it in the NFL, he's going to have to be an **Anquan Boldin** or **Jarvis Landry** type wide receiver – a guy who doesn't blow everyone away with athleticism but has value because he's tough with reliable hands. I could see Cooper being valuable to his team in that capacity, but what I don't see is Cooper as a future star in that role. There are several NFL wide receivers who can play that role with similar or better athleticism.

In the end, I left the in-depth study of Cooper thinking he was going to be another story of a guy who was really interesting/cool in college, and then gets lost in the pros to mediocrity or worse.

Pharoh Cooper, Through the Lens of Our WR Scouting Algorithm:



I have nothing but concerns looking over his numbers...

In his toughest seven matchups the past two seasons (Clemson 2x, Georgia 2x, Florida 2x, and LSU), Cooper averaged 3.4 catches for 50.0 yards and 0.60 TDs. He was reliable, but not a game-changer or game-breaker in these contests.

Even more telling...

Earlier, I noted all his 'wildcat' activity...71 career rushes for 7.2 yards and 4 TDs, not bad. However, against that seven-team group I just mentioned: 21 carries for 83 yards (3.95 ypc) and 0 TDs. He didn't look so hot running the 'wildcat' against better competition.

I can guess why he skipped all the speed-agility drills at the NFL Combine...because he knew his times were not NFL-star worthy. Using his Pro Day numbers to compare to the Combine – he would have been a bottom seven performer in 40-time and three-cone. That's taking the Pro Day numbers at face value, but you know they are always in favor of the players when they do them on their home turf. In reality, Cooper may have been one of the worst athletes, on paper, among the NFL Combine WRs.

Nothing at all about Cooper's numbers gets me excited as an evaluator. All I have to get excited about are some slick catches and 1-2-3 cool 'wildcat' moments on tape.

The Historical WR Prospects to Whom Pharoh Cooper Most Compares Within Our System:

Our computer scouting model sees the **Jarvis Landry** potential here, which is exciting, but don't ignore that all the other comps are not very exciting.

<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 Strngt h Metric</u>	<u>Speed Agility Metric c</u>	<u>Hands Metric c</u>
4.832	2016	Cooper	Pharoh	So Carolina	5	11.1	203	9.00	-4.48	9.65
2.337	2012	Cunningham	B.J.	Michigan St	6	1.1	211	8.97	0.59	9.46
5.159	2014	Landry	Jarvis	LSU	5	11.0	205	7.98	-4.53	13.28
4.439	2015	Bailey	Rasheed	Del. Valley	6	1.2	205	7.58	-2.37	8.12
1.013	2014	Davis	Mike	Texas	6	0.0	197	6.12	2.07	9.94

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

2016 NFL Draft Outlook:

This report is being published post-NFL Draft, so we know that Cooper was selected in the fourth round by the Los Angeles Rams. Heading into the NFL Combine, Cooper was considered a top 40 overall prospect. He ended up being selected outside the top 100. His poor measurables were damning to his draft stock.

If I were an NFL GM, I would've had Cooper on a 'players of interest' watch list – guys to look at if they slid to the sixth or seventh round or went undrafted. I could not use a valuable top 150 pick on a 'good hands', below-average athlete, 5'11" WR prospect...which is why I would have passed on **Jarvis Landry**. College football is spitting out way too many quality WR prospects with elite athleticism to overdraft a marginal version.

NFL Outlook:

Cooper falls into a great opportunity with the Rams in 2016 because, outside of **Tavon Austin**, who plays a completely different role, Cooper has weak competition on the depth chart. He has an opportunity to play right away in this young offense. Cooper may make a minor splash because of the opportunity, but in the end, over time, I think he will be phased out as a more also-ran option for an NFL offense. Good

