



NFL Draft 2018 Scouting Report: ILB Christian Sam, Arizona State

**Our LB 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 graded out **Christian Sam** as one of the best ILB prospects in the 2018 NFL Draft, but he's not even a top 10 ILB prospect for most draft scouting services. I'm not sure why we're so divergent from the mainstream here. I mean, Sam isn't an end-all, be-all ILB prospect, and I get that 'they' like **Roquan Smith**, etc., but I'm not sure why Sam is so far back for the mainstream.

My guess on why Sam is not as highly regarded, the knock I hear on him – he doesn't play ultra-aggressive and has no real highlight plays. That's the typical, childish scouting from the NFL perspective – too much focus on things like 'highlight plays' (because they only watch 30–60 seconds of a player's tape and snap to a judgment and never change from it) and too much looking for machismo...instead of seeking smart, sound players. It's why, in 2016, they all got burned pushing **Reggie Ragland** as a top guy in the draft and about 100 picks later **Blake Martinez** was drafted...who was, and is, 10x the linebacker Ragland ever was. I could give endless examples similar.

Roquan Smith is a great example/platform to use to discuss Sam's skills by comparing and contrasting the two. Smith has a more attractive 40-time (4.51 vs. Sam's 4.75). Smith can fly to the ball and makes some cool plays – usually blitzing the backfield or chasing down a runner going side to side. What the 'cool factor' overlooks is that Smith is weak playing up the middle because he's impatient and not an ILB at heart – he gambles/rushes into most every play, gets blocked away a lot, and makes most plays chasing sideways or from behind. He's rarely an instigator or brick wall in the middle. He likes blitzing the backfield...more like an OLB than an ILB.

Sam is the opposite. Not as blazing fast but quick, fast enough...and makes up for any lack of super-speed with smart, savvy play. Sam's heart and instinct are playing as an ILB. He is patient in the middle and has a great instinct to read the situation in traffic and find his way to the ballcarrier. Roquan Smith is usually blocked out of the play or guesses wrong on a run blitz and leaves his space wide open. Sam doesn't guess as his primary move – he reads and reacts...a subtle skill that doesn't jump off a 30-second highlight reel loop on ESPN.

Sam's best piece of work to watch is his 2017 game against Oregon – 11 tackles, 9 of them solos. Three things jump out when I watch Sam in this game (and his other games):

- 1) He's so patient in the middle. He stays home, reading the play, and almost always makes the right read. When he goes forward to stop the run, he's rarely ever blocked out of the play. He does a great job dodging obstacles and shedding blockers to make tackles.



2) When Sam reads the pass...he drops back smartly picking up a running back trying to slide out of the backfield. He has great instincts for seeing the run or sniffing out the pass.

3) He is strong.

Consider that Oregon has a 229-pound mauler of a running back, NFL Draft prospect **Royce Freeman**. Several times Sam hit Freeman up the middle as Freeman was going full steam, as Sam was waiting patiently and made a quick move forward from a near-standstill and halted Freeman in his tracks. Sam's stops on a guy like Freeman should be a highlight reel...but they won't be because NFL analysts aren't trying to push him like Roquan.

With Sam, you're getting a high character, quality person. He's humble...but not a raw meat-eating pitbull personality like what some NFL analysts and coaches think a middle linebacker has to be. The teams who are interested in Sam – his pre-Draft visits: NE, KC, DAL, ARI, HOU, DET, LAR. Yeah, I think a lot of those head coaches and personnel departments are smarter than those of most of the rest of the league and the draft analysts. Not on there – the Jets, Browns, Colts, etc.

Christian Sam, Through the Lens of Our ILB Scouting Algorithm:

Missed 2016 with an ankle injury. Came back in 2017, as a junior, led the PAC-12 in solo and total tackles. 4th in the nation in solo tackles in 2017.

Sam has posted 10 or more tackles in a game 11 times in his last 16 games played. Roquan Smith had 10 or more total tackles in a game 8 times in his career.

Sam has made 7 or more solo tackles in a game 10 times in his last 16 games. Roquan 6 times in his last 16 games.

2018 NFL Combine measurables...

6'1"/244, 10" hands, 31.5" arms

4.75 40-time, 1.63 10-yard, 4.25 shuttle, 7.03 three-cone

28 bench reps, 32" vertical, 9'6" broad jump



The Historical ILB Prospects to Whom Christian Sam Most Compares Within Our System:

Sam profiles with linebackers who aren't household names, but they are long-time starters and producers in the league. That could be Sam – solid, steady, unassuming, and productive.

<u>ILB Score</u>	<u>Last</u>	<u>First</u>	<u>Yr</u>	<u>College</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>H</u>	<u>W</u>	<u>Tackle, Strngth Metric</u>	<u>Speed, Agility Metric</u>
8.306	Sam	Christian	2018	Arizona State	6	1.0	244	9.52	4.30
8.842	Greenway	Chad	2006	Iowa	6	2.4	242	9.55	4.35
7.633	Vigil	Zach	2015	Utah State	6	2.0	240	8.51	4.64
9.550	Ogletree	Alec	2013	Georgia	6	2.4	242	9.20	6.09
7.189	Harris	Connor	2017	Lindenwood	5	11.1	242	8.99	4.01
10.668	Foster	Mason	2011	Washington	6	1.2	245	11.10	5.28
11.910	McKillop	Scott	2009	Pitt	6	0.7	244	10.36	7.75

**A score of 8.00+ is where we see a stronger correlation of LBs 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 NFL elite LB.*

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

Tackle-Strength Metrics = A combination of several physical and performance measurements. An attempt to classify the LB prospect's ability to stop the run, as well as to gauge how physical the player is, and the likelihood of higher tackle counts in the NFL. All based on profiles of LBs historically.

Speed-Agility Metrics = A combination of several speed, agility, and size measurements...as well as game performance data to profile an LB for speed/agility based on LBs historically. A unique measuring system to look for LBs that profile for quickness, pass-coverage ability, and general ability to cover more ground.

2018 NFL Draft Outlook:

Sam is tracking a 5th-7th-round pick, but he should be a top 100 guy. He'll be a steal like **Blake Martinez** was in 2016.

If I were an NFL GM, I'd be eyeballing Sam as he fell past #100. He's not a must-have, game changer but an excellent piece to have on the roster.

