NFL Draft 2018 Scouting Report: WR Dante Pettis, Washington

*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.

I kept putting off a deeper scouting study of **Dante Pettis** until he could participate in a pre-Draft workout. He had an ankle injury and couldn't go at the NFL Combine and then skipped Pro Day work as well. From an analytics standpoint, we're all flying blind here.

Ahead of the Combine, I did a little scouting preview of his tape to get a feel. I was ready to see something special, because the one thing that jumps out at you with Pettis – an NCAA record 9 punt return TDs in his career. That's utterly amazing. I then watched the highlight tape of all his punt returns and some of his WR work and I just didn't see 'it'. He didn't look that fast at all. I don't know how he kept weaving through college teams for all these return TDs. He looked skinny, not super-fast or super-anything. He looked like a good college player, but I didn't see a major NFL prospect ahead.

Without the measurables and only limited, uninspiring tape, I put Pettis in the box of 'no big deal'. I didn't seal that box shut because the nine punt return TDs kept nagging at me…like, *how could a player look 'meh' on tape but be so lethal returning kicks and also put up a 53-822-15 season at WR in 2016*. This guy is producing but I see nothing jumping out at me on tape, and with no measurables to ponder…Pettis was dismissed/forgotten by me. Door still open, but not expecting him to walk through it and change my mind.

Well, after further consideration, my mind is now changed. He did walk through that door. I spent this week watching his game tape in detail and now I see some of the 'it' I didn't catch before. Pettis is not blazing fast, although he's fast enough…but where he shines is with his agility, vision/elusiveness, and best of all – route running.

Let me hit each characteristic and then we'll roll it all up with a conclusion…

Body is a 'C-'…6'0"/186, seems taller but is definitely thin framed. Needs to add 5-10 pounds of muscle.

Speed is a 'C+'…fast enough, but not blazing his way past everyone on all those punt return TDs.

Agility is a 'B+'…he moves side-to-side pretty well, but it's not his graceful agility as much as it is his…

Quick step/cutting/routes is an 'A' to 'A+'…I was shocked that I missed how great his feet are in the receiving game. He can get open on anybody. When he jams his foot in the ground to change direction he breaks ankles. He's got a fantastic ability to dart open or quickly avoid a tackler.

Elusiveness is an 'A'…he sees openings wonderfully and has the quick-shift feet to avoid hits in tight spaces and escape into the open. His punt return prowess has a lot to do with his quick feet and vision to hop past trouble, and find safe lanes to get through. Really impressive.

Hands are a 'C'…and this is the dark cloud. I don't think he has stone hands. It's not that he drops passes all day, but he doesn't consistently look graceful catching the ball…a lot of double catches. He makes the catches in college, but you worry he'll get exposed in the NFL.

Overall, I think Pettis is primed to be an NFL starter at WR…a B-/C+ type WR. Probably not a starter/impact as a rookie but by year two or three. He's a natural athlete…what you'd call a' football player'. He's just good on the field. He gets things done. He's smart, an academic all-star in the PAC-12…so, he'll figure things out quickly. He has good bloodlines, as his dad was a long time major league baseball player.

You want Pettis on your team. Whether that means he's 'just' a Pro Bowl return man, or he's that AND a nice starting #2-3 WR. He's a really good football player and, although I didn't totally see it at first, I do now.

Dante Pettis, Through the Lens of Our WR Scouting Algorithm:

An all-time NCAA punt return TD tally for a career (9) is impressive enough, but 9 return TDs in 90 attempts is insane…a punt return TD one out of every 10 tries. It's a surreal pace and success rate, and it's hard to even fathom or contextualize.

15 receiving TDs in 2016, for a team which only had 46 TD passes for the season. He dropped to 7 TDs catches in 2017, but the team had a new QB who only threw for 19 scores. Pettis accounted for about a third of the TD passes his last two seasons.

Had 3 receiving TDs in a game three times in his career…vs. Cal, Oregon State, and Fresno State.

24 receiving TDs, 9 punt return TD, one passing TD…a 'football player'.

2018 NFL Combine…

Obviously, we don't have numbers because Pettis couldn't participate in the Combine. Our rough estimates would be…

4.50-4.55 = 40-time

6.80-6.90 = Three-cone

4.10-4.20 = Shuttle

The Historical WR Prospects to Whom Dante Pettis Most Compares Within Our System:

Very hard to put Pettis into context given the lack of tangible measurables. The **Nate Burleson** comp struck a chord with me…Burleson hit the scene as great return man and great WR prospect. He was a solid return man in the NFL but a pretty good-to-very good WR. You get a bargain with Pettis if he's **Nate Burleson**-like.

WR Score	Draft Yr	Last	First	College	H	H	W	Power Strngth Metric	Speed Agility Metric	Hands' Metric
5.371	2018	Pettis	Dante	Washington	6	0.4	186	4.97	7.05	6.99
7.018	2003	Burleson	Nate	Nevada	6	1.0	197	8.86	6.22	10.48
3.324	2011	McKnight	Scotty	Colorado	5	10.4	182	4.88	9.17	6.87
7.048	2014	Lee	Marqise	USC	5	11.6	192	7.40	6.32	7.85
5.326	2014	Reese	Tevin	Baylor	5	10.4	175	3.39	11.57	6.79

*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:

Well, the draft has happened -- and Pettis was selected with the #44 pick in the draft. I would have projected a 3rd-5th-round pick pre-Draft but my work with Pettis wasn't as in-depth then as it is now. I like him more, but I still wonder if that draft position is a bit of a stretch. I see the return prowess, but I also see on tape he just doesn't look that explosive. So many conflicts…but regardless of draft position – he's a good football player and that's valuable anywhere in the draft.

NFL Outlook:

I can't imagine Pettis will start as a WR right away, and there's likely no thought of it. He's nowhere near as polished or physical as **Pierre Garcon**. He's nowhere near as fast and experienced as **Marquise Goodwin** and he's not a grinder over-the-middle WR like **Trent Taylor**. He'll likely be a #4 WR, used on passing downs and will be the starting punt returner as a rookie and then we'll see him become a starting WR in year three most likely, but if Pettis forced to start due to injury, etc., I think he'd be OK/useful right away.

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