



## NFL Draft 2019 Scouting Report: WR Hakeem Butler, Iowa State

*\*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 typically less 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.*

**Hakeem Butler** may have picked the wrong year to be in the draft...

Butler is a stunning physical specimen WR prospect – 6’5”+/227 with a massive 83.8” wingspan to go with his nearly 11” hands. All that, plus he ran a 4.48 40-time at the NFL Combine. Whispers of ‘next Calvin Johnson’ are in the air...and, yet, there’s not a ton of mainstream excitement.

The masses are, instead, entranced by **D.K. Metcalf**... though **Hakeem Butler** is clearly as-good/better than Metcalf in just about everything except the 40-yard dash. As NFL WR prospects, there shouldn’t be a debate...Butler should rule Metcalf, but it’s 180 degrees the opposite for the mainstream today.

On the other hand, NFL draftniks are all ablaze by the 6’5” highlight reel creator. However, there are so many WR prospects to love for the draftniks, and SPARQ slaves...the ‘smart’ crowd – they can’t get too over the top on Butler, because there are possible ‘freak’ WR prospects like **Miles Boykin** and **Emanuel Hall** and **Jazz Ferguson** and many others (not even mentioning all the physically smaller ‘ace’ WR prospects). There are so many WR prospects to love in 2019, you can’t throw all your effort behind just one. Between the masses’ focus on Metcalf, like a herd of sheep, and the talent overload at wide receiver in 2019...Butler is kinda flying a bit under the radar. Strange for anyone drawing ‘next Calvin Johnson’ comps.

The question before us – *is Butler the next Calvin Johnson, or close enough to it?*

The answer is – probably not, but maybe, but not really. And now that I have definitively answered that, allow me to explain...

The main reason I would throw cold water on any ‘next Calvin Johnson’ talk is – it’s a different era.

When **Calvin Johnson** entered the NFL, he was a freak of freaks...in a time when dinosaurs roamed the earth/most cornerbacks were under 6-foot tall...and most wide receivers were under 6’2”/6’3”. **Calvin Johnson**, today, would still be a freak but quite not as ‘freaky’. It’s an apples and oranges comp of a WR



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20 years ago and one today, to some degree. Not only were players physically smaller in yesteryear, by and large, but also consider Calvin played in a weaker passing game era.

Butler is like **Calvin Johnson** in height, but about 10 pounds lighter and a touch slower speed-wise, although not a huge difference. It's fair to say Hakeem is 'like Calvin' in physicality and style, and abilities. But it doesn't mean Hakeem is going to rule the NFL world like Calvin did...it's a different time and place and set of circumstances.

**Hakeem Butler** is almost 'can't miss'. He has as good a size and catch radius and athleticism combo as you're ever likely to see. He has good hands, maybe not great hands, but good – throw him the ball and he'll high point it over most corners. Ask him to be **Michael Thomas**, playing pitch and catch on short/medium routes all game and you'll see some drops...and you're wasting his time; wasting his gift.

If Butler is made into or expected to be a **Michael Thomas** or **DeAndre Hopkins**...it's dumb. He'll be left lacking a bit. Ask him to be a **Mike Evans** or **Kenny Golladay**, or **Calvin Johnson** – you're going to get a massive, scary NFL weapon. You'd think was self-explanatory, but a lot of NFL teams have a *holy playbook* with a lot of timing routes, some because of their limited QB play – they don't push the ball deep. The NFL is where talents can go to die as misused decoys and/or with quarterbacks who cannot put the ball in a spot for Butler to do his thing. Most of the NFL is more comfortable with death by a hundred five-yard stop routes to **Keenan Allen** than it is for 'up for grabs' shots to a massive weapon on the outside.

Don't believe me? **Mike Evans** has 3-12-5-8 TDs over the past four seasons. One of the biggest, best 'go get it' WRs in the NFL is averaging 7.0 TDs per season the past four years...with one 'spike' season.

How good is **Hakeem Butler**, regardless of the NFL situation he may or may not be in? He's good...really good. He's a #1 wide receiver in the **Mike Evans** vein...or old **Calvin Johnson** opportunity. He has great athleticism chasing down deep passes in one-on-one events...he can outrun coverage, he adjusts to passes well, and he'll high point or contort and snatch the ball away from coverage. He might lead the league in pass interferences called against him because he's so massive a target that all you can do is grab his arms to stop the catch.

Two 2018 games highlight the opinion difference for **Hakeem Butler** in scout's eyes. The ones who bring up 'hands' issues, etc., probably remember his Iowa 2018 game (3-35-0, and a few drops) too much. The ones that love Butler, can go to his 2018 Oklahoma game (5-174-2) and drool. The Butler story is on display in both of these games.

You have to consider more facts about the Iowa 2018 game, where he struggled a touch/didn't have a huge game. If you just see it as a 'typical game' for your tape watching or within a spreadsheet analysis – it hurts his case or calcs. But there's more to it. In 2017, the season prior, Butler went 5-128-2 on Iowa...which was his college breakout party, or a glimpse of it. Iowa/2018 knew very well what Butler was capable of from the prior years -- thus they employed a lot of double and triple coverages. They forced Butler to play more inside and he was covered, or contained, or just ignored (as the QB didn't



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have time to waste if Butler was always covered up). Butler dropped one easy pass in the game. He didn't catch another that he had bracketed double coverage on and he mis-timed the catch sailing close to defenders' arms in his line of vision. Scouts and ESPECIALLY analysts love to yell DROP any time a receiver gets a fingernail on a ball...but not all drops are 'bad drops'/signs of some issue. All drops are different. On tape, game after game, I didn't see Butler with any real 'hands' issue. But if you focus on Iowa highlights for Butler...if it's all you saw – you'd think there might be an issue. There isn't.

The very next week, last season, after the Iowa game, Iowa State faced Oklahoma. Unlike his 2017 flash-breakout work against Iowa, Butler had a simple 1-54-0 against Oklahoma in 2017. So, when they faced him 2018, they arrogantly decided to go with a lot of one-on-one coverage on Butler. Iowa State saw it and immediately attacked it and Butler made some *stupid/great* catches/plays on his way to 5-174-2 vs. the Sooners.

Plays such as: <https://youtu.be/V4qN3kKK8FY>

And: <https://youtu.be/qTr5Q9cB49g>

That's the **Hakeem Butler** that I think of.

2018 vs. Iowa **Hakeem Butler** looks like a possible problem.

2018 vs. Oklahoma **Hakeem Butler** looks like the better-than/next **Calvin Johnson**.

Which one is true? More the Hakeem vs. Oklahoma one. If NFL teams put a 6'0" corner one-one against Butler all 2019...and **Ben Roethlisberger** has him – Butler will be Rookie of the Year. If teams bracket Butler with a safety over the top and he's a proud Buffalo Bill with **Josh Allen** throwing passes 75-feet over his head...you'll kinda forget about or feel bad for Butler.

You want a big play, and you can choose to throw a deep ball to either **D.K. Metcalf** or **Hakeem Butler** – you want it to go to Butler. He's got way better hands and much better receiving instincts and adjustment ability. Butler can be a better **Mike Evans**, if he has a better situation than Evans (Evans being saddled with quasi-**Josh Allen** inaccurate **Jameis Winston**).

You don't have many weapons built like Butler roaming the NFL today...and that's worth a lot in NFL valuation terms. Whether they use it properly is a whole different story.

Butler is a good kid/young man. Came from abject poverty and saw his mother pass early in his teenage years from breast cancer, but he fought through it all with the help of his extended family. He's humble and hungry. He was a basketball and football star in high school. He's not an aggressive personality/receiver, but he's not passive either. He should be productive+ in the NFL, and maybe a major weapon that changes an offense because of the mere threat he poses.



## Hakeem Butler, Through the Lens of Our WR Scouting Algorithm:

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In 2017, Butler was still working in the shadows of **Mike Evans**-like **Allen Lazard**...Lazard was a better receiver than Butler, and he didn't get drafted in 2018...*let that sink in for a moment*. You have to look more at Butler's 2018 to see where he was getting more work as a true #1, and I'm not reading a ton into his number spikes because the Iowa State QB play and offense...well, it was not Oklahoma or West Virginia-like; that's for sure.

If you take a basket of Iowa, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Texas, TCU from 2017 and 2018 (all of which he played twice) plus his two bowl games, a 12-game sample of Butler's performance vs. his toughest opponents, his numbers were:

48 catches (4.0 per game), 987 yards (82.3 per game), 7 TDs (0.6 per game).

Those are solid numbers, considering their offense, weak/ever-rotating QB play, and the fact that he was not a top target in 2017.

The only things that stopped Butler from having huge numbers in college – his coaches, his QBs, and double-triple teams from certain teams.

*2019 NFL Combine measurables:*

6'5.3"/227, 10.75" hands, 35.25" arms

4.48 40-time, skipped the agility drills

18 bench reps, 36" vertical, 10.8" broad, 83.8" wingspan

## The Historical WR Prospects to Whom Hakeem Butler Most Compares Within Our System:

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I'm not in love with any one comp here. **Mike Evans** is more physical, but he's probably the closest thing to compare to Butler. You watch Butler against Oklahoma 2018, and watch some of the catches and tackles he broke – he's a handful to deal with, toughness-wise, as well.



The **Allen Lazard** comp is real...and concerning...considering how poorly Iowa State WRs are treated by the analysts. Lazard went undrafted in 2018.

<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>8.780</b>	2019	Butler	Hakeem	Iowa St.	6	5.3	227	10.16	6.33	8.76
<b>9.160</b>	2014	Evans	Michael	Texas A&M	6	4.6	231	10.56	4.35	7.53
<b>7.925</b>	2018	Lazard	Allen	Iowa State	6	4.5	227	10.24	2.96	8.69
<b>8.085</b>	2006	Colston	Marques	Hofstra	6	4.6	224	8.69	5.90	7.15
<b>15.848</b>	2007	Johnson	Calvin	Georgia Tech	6	5.0	239	14.17	11.55	14.39
<b>7.185</b>	2016	Mathews	Mitch	BYU	6	6.5	222	6.82	3.90	9.09
<b>5.802</b>	2000	Burruss	Plaxico	Michigan State	6	6.0	231	10.93	1.17	8.18
<b>14.736</b>	2005	Jackson	Vincent	N. Colorado	6	4.8	241	13.45	6.16	12.26

*\*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, and 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.*



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## 2019 NFL Draft Outlook:

I see **Hakeem Butler** with more #75-100 overall draft rankings than top 50. On one hand, there's no way Butler should be outside the top 50...he's a 'freak', but I know the NFL... He didn't play in the SEC, he didn't play at a favored Big-12 school. He could get buried like **Allen Lazard**...though, thankfully, not as bad as Lazard. Analytics people will have him top 50, but I'll bet on the NFL being the NFL and say he's 3rd-round.

*If I were an NFL GM*, I'd have to stop and think about pulling a 3rd-round trigger on Butler. There are many good-great WR prospects in 2019. I don't have to overpay for any, but Butler is going to be a bargain. Even if my roster didn't need a wide receiver, per se...imagine the possibilities he brings. Imagine if Butler landed on the Chiefs – Butler on the outside with **Tyreek Hill** and **Travis Kelce** taking all the heat and working with the amazing **Patrick Mahomes**? Butler is so freakish and may come at such a value...it would be hard to pass up.

There could be an NFL team that lands both **N'Keal Harry** and Hakeem Butler in this draft and totally changes their offense in an instant.

## NFL Outlook:

He's going to be a successful NFL weapon. The question is whether he's just good or 'wow'? He lands right, and it will be 'wow'. There's a lot of upside and excitement here.

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