

The top 100 prospects: Breaking down a class that hits a plateau early but provides significant Night Two opportunities.
By Doug Martz (Final)



The Offensive Prospects (47)

Quarterbacks (3) Fernando Mendoza, Indiana (#3 overall rated prospect) – Ty Simpson, Alabama (#48) – Taylen Green, Arkansas (#70)

Analysis: What separates the top quarterback on this list, Mendoza, from Penn State’s Drew Allar—who did not make the cut? Simply put, it comes down to performance in critical moments. The ability to rise to the occasion when the game demands it is what defines elite quarterback play. Penn State’s underwhelming offense shares most of the blame, but Allar has consistently fallen short in defining situations. Similarly, LSU’s Garrett Nussmeier had a subpar season and has yet to establish himself as a reliable future starter. His physical limitations—smaller hands, frame, height, and weight (9 $\frac{1}{8}$, 6-1, 203)—combined with an inability to lead his team through adversity, keep him from reaching top-tier status in this evaluation.

This is a year where I would rather advocate for a high-motor linebacker or a technically sound interior offensive lineman than reach for quarterbacks who project as long-term backups. Both Allar and Nussmeier still possess intriguing traits, but concerns about their development and long-term trajectory place them as fourth-round prospects.

In contrast, Mendoza thrived when it mattered most, leading the Hoosiers to a National Championship and solidifying himself as the projected first overall pick (Las Vegas) in this year’s draft. He is one of ten players I placed in the “1A” tier. Simpson profiles as a solid but not elite prospect, landing in the middle of the second round. While he may ultimately be selected earlier, my projections are not predictive, but rather, based on long-term value.

Green earns the final spot due to his developmental upside and unique athletic traits, which give him a legitimate chance to contribute at the next level. As for the rest, quarterbacks better suited for backup roles are more appropriately valued in the fourth round and beyond, which is where they are likely to be selected.

Running backs (4) Jeremiyah Love, Notre Dame (#1) – Jadarian Price, Notre Dame (#52) – Mike Washington Jr., Arkansas (#67) – Kaytron Allen, Penn State (#86)

Analysis: Love is the word—and in Jeremiah’s case, it’s fitting. There’s simply so much to admire in his do-it-all skill set. With zero holes in his game, Love is the kind of prospect that shows up maybe three or four times in a decade. You don’t overthink that. If I’m the Cardinals, I’m sprinting the card up to the podium at No. 3 overall. Yes, the analytics crowd will scream about offensive line play—and they’re not wrong. A bad line can sink any runner. But when a true difference-maker is staring you in the face, you don’t pass because of hypothetical problems. You figure the rest out later. If Love somehow slips outside the top five, it’s not strategy, it’s paralysis by analysis.

Let’s be honest about this running back class: it falls off a cliff. At the top, it’s electric. After that? It’s about as exciting as a fullback dive on 3rd-and-1. The fact that Love’s own backup, Price, checks in as RB2 tells you everything you need to know. That said, Price has juice. He’s got traits that pop, and he should be the first name called on Night Two—somewhere around pick 50. In fact, there’s a chance that he goes with the final pick of Night One because the Seahawks need a running back as much as I need a good night’s sleep during the pre-draft process.

Two additional prospects—Washington and Allen—have enough ability to justify top-100 consideration. Both bring a no-nonsense, downhill style with real contact balance and vision. They’re not flashy, but they’re effective—and that plays on Sundays. Allen, especially, screams “perfect No. 2 back.” Need tough yards? He’ll get them. Goal line? He’s your guy. He’s not the headliner, but every good backfield needs someone like him. At the end of the day, give me runners who are tough, instinctive, and built for the grind. Washington and Allen fit that mold—and that’s exactly why they make this list.

Wide receivers (15) Carnell Tate, Ohio State (#7) – Omar Cooper Jr., Indiana (#10) – Makai Lemon, USC (#14) – Jordyn Tyson, Arizona State (#18) – KC Concepcion, Texas A&M (#27) – Denzel Boston, Washington (#31) – De’Zhaun Stribling, Mississippi (#45) – Chris Bell Jr., Louisville (#51) – Antonio Williams, Clemson (#57) – Zachariah Branch, Georgia (#62) – Germie Bernard, Alabama (#66) – Ted Hurst, Georgia State (#72) – Chris Brazzell II, Tennessee (#77) – Elijah Sarratt, Indiana (#85) – Bryce Lance, North Dakota State (#100)

Analysis: Wide receiver has become the deepest, most reliable position group in the draft year after year. For that reason, all 15 of these names practically placed themselves on my board.

Honestly, I could've gone deeper—there were a handful of receivers I hated leaving off. There will be legit talent still sitting there in rounds four and five. But at this point, that's the norm.

Now, when it comes to Night One, don't be surprised if these guys get squeezed a bit. Edge rushers and offensive linemen can create a feeding frenzy, and that could push a few receivers down the board. But let's not get carried away—there's too much high-end talent here for a real slide. This group has difference-makers, and teams know it.

And yeah, I'll say it: Omar Cooper Jr. is *my guy* in this class. No hesitation. No apology. That's the apple of my eye in this group. Carnell Tate has been the steady constant—my top receiver from day one, and that's not changing. He's the standard. The safest bet. The tone-setter for the entire group. But Cooper? He's the one I'm pounding the table for. I'm higher on him than most, and I'm completely fine with that. He's a slippery, do-it-all weapon in the slot who can move around and create mismatches. When you need a play, he shows up. Period. That translated in college, and it's going to translate on Sundays. And here's the kicker—his “missed tackles-forced rate” (hovering in that 30–32% range) is the best in this class. That's not fluff—that's game-breaking ability. That's what separates guys and endears me to his on-field behavior and athletic traits!

Stribling is another name I'm riding with, even if the buzz isn't quite there yet. Probably a third-round guy for most—but don't be shocked if he goes earlier. The dude plays like he's got rocket fuel in his system. The twitch, the burst—it's different. At 6-2, 207, with 23 career touchdowns across three programs (Washington State, Oklahoma State, and Ole Miss), he's proven and battle tested. But more than that, he's got that edge—physical, smart, instinctive. Some guys just *have it*, and he's one of them. He's an easy call for this list—let's call it mid-second.

Tight ends (4) Kenyon Sadiq, Oregon (#17) – Eli Stowers, Vanderbilt (#44) – Justin Joly, North Carolina State (#83) – Oscar Delp, Georgia (#93)

Analysis: This is a weird group. Not because there's anything wrong with them, though. The position is blessed with talent, as it might be the deepest tight end crop ever. Really, that statement is probably true—if one just considers “playable for the NFL based on traits,” it might be the deepest one we've ever seen. Where the difference crops up from other cohorts in the past decade is in the top-end talent. Some years have a half-dozen good ones spread among the top 75 with a couple of them being elite blue-chippers. This year, Sadiq is solid but might be propped up by being the single first round talent.

The only sure-fire bets to go in the top 100 are Sadiq and Stowers. After them, each team might have a different preferred flavor. It just depends what type of prospect and traits are needed as to who might be valued most. 2023 saw a total of eight tight ends drafted in the top 100 and the 2025 class had six. This top 100 is allotted with just four, keeping it modest until things are likely to “EXPLODE” at the start of the mid-rounds. There could be upward of 15 additional NFL-ready tight ends taken from the start of round four until the conclusion of the draft. The “run” on tight ends is going to be one of the fascinating things to watch for as the round three transitions to round four. Since the job here is to pick out those with significant value, only Joly and Delp seems to stand above the rest, and both get a spot beside Sadiq and Stowers.

Tackles (10)

Francis Mauigoa, Miami (#8) – Monroe Freeling, Georgia (#15) – Max Iheanachor, Arizona State (#21) – Caleb Lomu, Utah (#25) – Blake Miller, Clemson (#30) – Kady Proctor, Alabama (#34) – Travis Burke, Memphis (#59) – Caleb Tiernan, Northwestern (#76) – Markel Bell, Miami (#87) – Austin Barber, Florida (#94)

Analysis: This is a classic “on-off-on-off” tackle class. The position is very strong in the first round, where five or six tackles could realistically come off the board—maybe even seven. Spencer Fano is listed as an interior offensive lineman for this exercise, but some teams will absolutely view him as a tackle. His shorter arm length may push him inside at guard (or potentially center), but his elite athletic profile keeps him firmly in that early group regardless of projection. Overall, the top cluster gives this class a strong opening.

However, things thin out quickly after that initial run. Once the top tier is off the board, the position effectively “turns off” for a stretch, with noticeably weaker value and a clear drop in talent for much of the second round. In fact, it wouldn’t be surprising if no tackles come off the board at all in Round 2. Maybe Burke or Tiernan sneak into that area with a reach, but the broader expectation is “crickets” at the position to open Night Two. It’s less a steady drip of talent and more a long drought before the next wave finally arrives.

As Round 3 arrives, several players offer strong value—Burke, Tiernan, Bell, and Barber all fit comfortably into that range. After that brief resurgence, though, the class thins out once more, and meaningful tackle value becomes scarce for the remainder of the draft.

The overarching takeaway is simple: if you need a tackle, you should prioritize the position early or be willing to reach, because the depth simply isn’t there in this class. That said, I’m generally comfortable with the names in that third-round group, with only mild hesitation on Barber. Bell

in particular stands out—a massive 6’9”, 346-pound presence who both enthusiastically delivers punishment in the run game. In a relatively weak mid-tier, he has a strong case to come off the board before the end of Round 3.

Guards/Centers (11) Olaivavega Ioane, Penn State (#11) – Spencer Fano, Utah (#12) – Chase Bisontis, Texas A&M (#40) – Keylan Rutledge, Georgia Tech (#49) – Emmanuel Pregnon, Oregon (#53) – Gennings Dunker, Iowa (#68) – Logan Jones, Iowa (#73) – Trey Zuhn III, Texas A&M (#80) – Connor Lew, Auburn (#84) – Sam Hecht, Kansas State (#90) – Jake Slaughter, Florida (#97)

Analysis: This year’s interior offensive line class is an impressive and deep group. At the top, you find a tier of versatile, powerful, and quick-impact players who can step in and contribute early. As the draft unfolds, there should be quality options well into the later rounds at both center and guard. The position group is so loaded that the real challenge isn’t finding talent—it’s deciding who to leave off the list.

Ioane, Fano, Bisontis, Rutledge, Pregnon, and Dunker are essentially automatic selections. All six project as high-quality guards at the next level, with both Fano and Dunker also offering legitimate tackle versatility depending on the scheme and team. There’s been little hesitation at their inclusion, as they would fit in any year. Dunker is the one player who may slip into the top of the third round.

The remaining five names break down into four centers (!) and a versatile swing-lineman. In fact, even the swing-man is being groomed for an eventual placement at the center position. Jones, Lew, Hecht, and Slaughter stand out as terrific group of traditional snappers to chose from. Lew would have been in the “upper Round 2 conversation” were it not for a significant knee injury (ACL) suffered in October. Even so, the overall center group is one of the stronger units in recent drafts, but these four separate themselves with distinct traits and pro-level upside.

Zuhn earns his spot thanks to rare positional versatility. He profiles as the ultimate offensive line swing piece, with experience at tackle—49 starts at left tackle over four years—but traits that translate cleanly inside. In my view, he settles as a guard with the ability to play center and spot tackle in a pinch—a valuable chess piece for any offensive line room. Versatility!

The Defensive Prospects (53)

Defensive linemen (9) Kayden McDonald, Ohio State (#29) – Peter Woods, Clemson (#35) – Lee Hunter, Texas Tech (#41) – Christen Miller, Georgia (#47) – Domonique Orange, Iowa State (#56) – Caleb Banks, Florida (#61) – Gracen Halton, Oklahoma (#79) – Chris McClellan, Missouri (#92) – Tyler Onyedim, Texas A&M (#99)

Analysis: There's been a surprisingly lazy narrative floating around this pre-draft cycle: that the entire defensive line class is just a bunch of "two-down run stuffers." That kind of take feels more like noise than analysis. Yes, many of these interior linemen are built to clog gaps and stop the run—but that's the job. They're not edge rushers flying around the corner chasing highlight sacks; they're doing the heavy lifting in the trenches, the kind of work that doesn't always show up in the box score but absolutely shows up on film. Expecting them to play like something they're not is like complaining your refrigerator doesn't make coffee. Different roles, different value.

And let's be honest—this push for constant splash plays feels like a byproduct of highlight culture creeping into draft evaluation. These guys aren't boring; they're essential. And for what it's worth, I'm fully in on this group.

McDonald headlines the class for me as an underrated standout. He anchors well, moves better than you'd expect, and has real upward momentum as a prospect. Behind him, Woods, Hunter, Miller, Orange, and Banks all bring legitimate upside and project as impactful players at the next level—they're easy inclusions. Halton, McClellan, and Onyedim represent a slight drop-off, but even they hold their own when stacked against other position groups. I like the "inside disrupter" pass-rush skill of McClellan in particular. This batch may not be among the flashiest names on the board, but they've got the traits to outplay some of the "sexier" picks once the pads come on.

Edge rushers (16) Arvell Reese, Ohio State (#2) – David Bailey, Texas Tech (#5) – Keldric Faulk, Auburn (#16) – Rueben Bain Jr., Miami (#20) – Zion Young, Missouri (#24) – T.J. Parker, Clemson (#28) – Akheem Mesidor, Miami (#33) – Malachi Lawrence, Central Florida (#37) – Gabe Jacas, Illinois (#43) – Cashius Howell, Texas A&M (#50) – R Mason Thomas, Oklahoma (#54) – Derrick Moore, Michigan (#65) – Dani Dennis – Sutton, Penn State (#74) – Jaishawn Barham, Michigan (#81) – Keyron Crawford, Auburn (#89) – Joshua Josephs, Tennessee (#96)

Analysis: And boom, here comes the deepest position within this top 100 list. This edge class is a full-blown buffet of body types and skill sets. You've got short-armed speed-to-power sack artists, thickly built hybrid defenders who can move around the formation, and pure pass-rush specialists who might make you a little nervous when it's time to defend the run. It's a little bit of everything—and that's what makes it fun. Wait, is it fun or is it an obsession, doing this for the last 25 years?

Of course, that kind of variety I speak of also means chaos. This board of edge rushers is going to get pulled in every direction depending on what a team values most. Some players pegged as “Day Two” talents will inevitably sneak into Round 1, while others I'm high on could slide thanks to concerns about arm length or their ability to consistently shed blocks. Beauty is in the eye of the defensive coordinator.

Still, when you zoom out, this is a strong, deep, and intriguing group. I feel confident in all 16 names included here, and honestly, there are a few more who could've made the cut without much debate. But at some point, you must draw the line—and chances are, those just-missed prospects will end up being steals for someone on Day Three.

Linebackers (6) Sonny Styles, Ohio State (#4) – Jacob Rodriguez, Texas Tech (#32) –
CJ Allen, Alabama (#39) – Jake Golday, Cincinnati (#55) – Anthony Hill
Jr., Texas (#63) – Josiah Trotter, Missouri (#88)

Analysis: The raw number of prospects for this linebacker class aren't what we've seen in years past. For context, 2021 had 11 linebackers selected in the top 100, 2022 jumped to 14, and 2023 settled back at 11. The last two cycles, though, have dipped—just seven in 2024 and six in 2025—so there's clearly a trend forming.

But it's not just about volume; there's a bit of positional identity crisis going on, too. Some prospects don't fit neatly into a single box anymore. Edge rusher Arvell Reese could just as easily be grouped here depending on scheme, and as I will discuss below, some people will have my final safety prospect, Kyle Louis, in this group. I much prefer Louis as a safety/slot prospect. More college defenses are leaning into 3-3-5 alignments, favoring an extra defensive back over a traditional linebacker. The evolution of the game is pushing us toward “big DBs” and hybrid defenders, which naturally trims down the pure linebacker pool.

All that said, I'm completely comfortable with the six names on this list. Styles is a blue-chip talent and a lock to go in the top 10. Rodriguez might be one of the most underrated players in

the entire class—his instincts jump off the tape. Allen, Golday, Hill, and Trotter round things out as experienced, reliable players who check the traditional boxes teams still value at the position.

After that group finds its place, there's another wave of about ten players who will likely come off the board based on fit and team need more than pure talent. Most of that cluster projects to Rounds 4 and 5. Don't be surprised if a few sneak into the top 100 once teams start chasing specific roles and scheme fits. In fact, I suspect my value-based approach will hurt me at this position, because teams will be likely to nap a few prospects absent from my list. Oh well, we stick to value and belief, not prediction. Substance over symbolism. Give me these six.

Cornerbacks (14)

Mansoor Delane, LSU (#9) – Jermod McCoy, Tennessee (#13) – Chris Johnson, San Diego State (#22) – Colton Hood, Tennessee (#26) – D'Angelo Ponds, Indiana (#38) – Brandon Cisse, South Carolina (#42) – Keionte Scott, Miami (#46) – Davison Igbinosun, Ohio State (#60) – Avieon Terrell, Clemson (#64) – Keith Abney II, Arizona State (#69) – Daylen Everette, Georgia (#75) – Will Lee III, Texas A&M (#82) – Malik Muhammad, Texas (#91) – Chandler Rivers, Duke (#98)

Analysis: This year's cornerback group has "defensive upgrade" written all over it. There isn't a team in the league that couldn't use another capable cover guy, so this is the perfect year to dive into a deep class and come away better on the back end.

The variety here is outstanding. You've got blue-chip anchors like Delane and McCoy, the edge and competitiveness of Johnson and Ponds, the length and physical profile of Igbinosun, and then the quick-twitch, undersized but ultra-fluid movers like Rivers and Cisse. Different flavors, same result—playmakers who can help you design successful gameplans. It's a well-rounded, high-quality group that, frankly, feels a little underappreciated at times.

Hopefully, front offices aren't making that same mistake. I wouldn't be shocked if some of these 14 don't crack the top 100, but every name here earns a spot on my board. The only thing that might slow an early run at the position is the depth waiting behind them. There's a whole second wave—Jadon Canady, Julian Neal, Charles Demmings, Tacario Davis, Devin Moore, and Ephesians Prysock—who could easily sneak into the conversation but more likely find homes on Day Three.

Safeties (8)

Caleb Downs, Ohio State (#6) – Dillon Thieneman, Oregon (#19) – Emmanuel McNeil-Warren, Toledo (#23) – Treydan Stukes, Arizona (#36) – A.J. Haulcy, LSU (#58) – Bud Clark, TCU (#71) – Jalon Kilgore, South Carolina (#78) – Kyle Louis, Pittsburgh (#95)

Analysis: Now here's a group to end our top 100 discussion with a bang. The safety class is loaded with versatile, twitchy athletes who can impact the game. And this list doesn't even do the depth justice—I've got eight names here, but you could easily tack on another half-dozen without much argument. That's how strong this group is. Even into Day Three (Rounds 4 and beyond), teams are going to find quality contributors with developmental upside.

At the top, Downs, Thieneman, McNeil-Warren, and Stukes headline the class as true difference-makers. These are tone-setters—guys who can erase mistakes, create turnovers, and fly downhill with ass-kicker intentions. They won't last long on draft weekend.

The next tier—Haulcy, Clark, and Kilgore—offer experience, stability and consistency. There are a lot of games started among the three. They may not have quite the same ceiling as the top group, but they're reliable, assignment-sound players who project cleanly to the next level. There's no hesitation including them in this year's slate.

As for Pittsburgh's Kyle Louis, some may try to label him as a linebacker—but that's a stretch. He's built slither than a traditional NFL linebacker and asking him to live in the box full-time would be a mistake. Instead, he projects as a hybrid defender: part nickel, part safety, part slot weapon. That versatility is exactly why he remains on my safety board, where his skill set makes far more sense in today's game.

My **very** best to you, dear NFL Draft fans!

Enjoy the draft!

— Doug Martz
DraftBoardGuru.com

