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NFL Draft report: South Carolina's A.J. Cann looking like a 1st rounder

By [Dan Kadar](#) ◻ [@MockingTheDraft](#) on Sep 17 2014, 10:00a [11](#)



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This week's look at pro prospects is an appreciation of the under-appreciated, including East Carolina defensive tackle Terry Williams.

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College football is underway, so each week we'll begin looking ahead to the 2015 NFL Draft to find out who's helping and hurting their NFL status.

In this year's draft, there wasn't a single guard taken in the first round. That came as something of a surprise. UCLA's Xavier Su'a-Filo carried a high grade throughout much of the draft process but still slipped to the first pick in the second round.

In the 2013 draft, three guards went in the first round, but they've had varying levels of success. Seventh overall pick Jonathan Cooper missed his rookie season due to injury and has played just a single snap this season. Tenth overall pick [Chance Warmack](#) has been inconsistent for the Tennessee Titans while 20th overall pick [Kyle Long](#) has been a success for the Chicago Bears at right guard. In 2012, [David DeCastro](#) was considered an elite guard, if such hyperbole can be exhausted on an interior blocker. Even he fell to the 24th overall pick (and he's since had some poor play and injuries).

Despite the challenge of pegging where a guard will go in the draft, and the play that will follow, it looks like [A.J. Cann](#) of South Carolina will be deserving of hearing his name called on the first day of the 2015 NFL Draft.

Leading into the season, Cann was overshadowed by 6-foot-8, 344-pound Gamecocks offensive tackle left tackle Corey Robinson. But through three games, Cann has stood out. Cann isn't overly big at a listed 6-foot-4 and 311 pounds, but he has few flaws. His handwork is technically sound and violent. He keeps a good base and knows how to adjust.

Against Georgia last Saturday, many of South Carolina's best runs came directly behind Cann. Even late into the fourth quarter he pushing the acclaimed Bulldogs defenders around to help South Carolina finish off an upset win.

In love with a large Pirate

Perhaps the single most impressive performance of Week 3 came from East Carolina defensive tackle Terry Williams. The senior is a proverbial tree stump of a player at 6-foot-1 and 353 pounds. That weight number may be on the light side too.

Despite his girth, Williams made more big plays in the Pirates' upset of Virginia Tech than his five tackles would suggest. Williams was disrupting the pocket on most plays he was in, forcing Hokies quarterback [Michael Brewer](#) to get out on the move.

As a pro prospect, Williams shows a good array of moves for an interior player. His rip move is particularly effective and he even showed off a nice spin move. He may never be a starter or full-time player at the next level, but his play warrants a third day pick. That is as long as his character checks out, though. Williams has been suspended twice by East Carolina.

Pirates quarterback [Shane Carden](#) may also get a draftable grade. There's not a lot of flash with Carden, but he can do just enough to land on a roster.

Random draft notes

[Last week's draft report](#) mentioned the disappointing play of Michigan State defensive end Shilique Calhoun. This week's disappointing edge player is Georgia's Leonard Floyd. He was knocked around against South Carolina and looks like a player who needs to get much stronger before considering the jump to the NFL.

If Calhoun and Floyd are trending down – and it may be too early to make that declaration – then Missouri's Shane Ray is trending upward. Ray has smoothly transitioned into being a starter for the Tigers and has first round potential. Ray already has 7.5 tackles for loss and five sacks this season thanks in large part to his burst at the snap and closing speed.

CBS announcer Gary Danielson compared Bulldogs running back [Todd Gurley](#) because of his size, power and speed combination. Sounds about right.

Despite playing just days after having knee surgery, Iowa offensive tackle [Brandon Scherff](#) really stood out in a loss to Iowa State. Scherff is so strong and fundamentally sound, it's easy to see why he projects as a top 10 pick.

After a journey that saw him flip from Indiana to LSU to Notre Dame, Cincinnati quarterback [Gunner Kiel](#) finally made his debut against Toledo last Friday. All he did was throw for 418 yards and six touchdowns. While that can be overlooked some because of the opponent, Kiel still looked good. From a pure physical standpoint, the redshirt sophomore has the tools. It's unlikely he goes pro after this season, but because of his talent and proclivity for bouncing around places he's a prospect worth following. A big game against Ohio State later this month will be telling.

Site note: Expect an initial 2015 NFL Draft top 50 sometime next week. Expect a few surprises.

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