

KJ Simpson

Colorado

#21 (Tier 3)

- MAESTRO - ENGINE
- SHOTMAKER



SCALABILITY



READINESS



SPECIALNESS



VERSATILITY

Introduction

If I had to describe KJ Simpson in two words, they would be 'quiet effectiveness.' Simpson's productivity profile is difficult to argue against, with 26% usage, 27% assist rate, 16% defensive rebounding rate, 2.7% steal rate. So is his outside shooting profile, putting up 182 threes and making 43% of them, 127 midrange looks and making 40% of them, taking 186 free throws and making 88% of them. At first glance, the tape may seem unimpressive by comparison, but it's all there.



Tools

The rim finishing is the swing skill, as Simpson has the vertical pop to reach the rim or backboard despite being only 6'0.25" without shoes. He took a ton of rim attempts at 203 and made a decent 55% of them. But regardless, Simpson will be able to make a career out of being a perimeter maven. He fits the Maestro Connector tag extremely well: he conducts the offense moving on and off ball, elite at catch and shoot as well as pulling up off the dribble. He does not make the flashiest passes but, again, highly effective ones, with a wide variety of deliveries.

Simpson is a physical defender, digging hard to pick up assorted steals with firm swipes. He can contest after ducking under screens or shuffle quickly, using his strong core to get through screens above. Perhaps his most important defensive skill is his rebounding, again employing his strong leaping skills with great timing and ability to locate the ball. In spite of his stature, he is likely to snag a few board per game with his tools.



Tools

What makes Simpson most appealing is the variety of ways he may contribute at the next level. He can get into the lane easily and get up volume from distance easily as well. It may be difficult to project the extent of his scoring upside, for this reason. He shows sparks of being a true offensive engine, particularly when he pivots in the lane to either kick out or dump the ball off to a sealing big, as well as in his ability to maximize screens while keeping his defender on his back. Simpson can both create advantages and extend them.

He is truly an elite shotmaker as well, shooting 42% on 55 guarded catch and shoot three point attempts and 42% on 72 pull up threes. His release is quick with a small dip, employing his vertical if needed to create space. His efficiency dipped a bit when being defended hard in pick and roll, the one downside for projecting his shotmaking ability at the next level.



Conclusion

The ability to flex KJ Simpson into an on ball or off ball player is highly appealing, especially as a physical guard who plays above his height. He can scale up any kind of shot attempt you would like, with one downside being a work-in-progress floater. Should he continue to iron out the details - still only 21 years old - Simpson could be an important player for a playoff-level team. A court general, shotmaker and potential offensive engine all at once, the sky may be the limit for Simpson as his game grows.



Johnny Furphy

Kansas
#22 (Tier 3)
- 3&D WING



SCALABILITY



READINESS



SPECIALNESS



VERSATILITY

Introduction

Furphy will have one of the lowest usage rates on my board, fourth in the pecking order for Kansas' offense. Nonetheless, I see his skill as fairly bankable, his feel for the game high and athleticism strong. The 19-year-old freshman was inserted effortlessly into the Jayhawk starting lineup where he posted an elite 61% true shooting percentage and made few mistakes generally.



Scalability

The strength for Furphy will be his scalability, where he can slot off-ball as a spot up shooter or cutter while also flashing signs of on-ball usage. He did not get much chance to display the latter, given the structure of the Kansas offense, but I believe there is potential to be realized, particularly when comparing his role at NBA Academy. While his handle is mostly simplistic and so are his passing reads, Furphy's size (6'7") and shooting gravity (9 three point attempts per 100 possessions at 36% conversion) will earn him plenty of chances to improve his closeout attacking.



Connector

He earns his gold connector status, meanwhile, through his consistent defensive play in addition to his spacing and ball moving. Furphy uses his size with effort, sliding well to contain drives and pushing through screens by hitting the screener at the right time. Part of being a connector is being able to capitalize, physically, on existing advantages, and Furphy's athleticism allows for that. He feasted in transition, where he got most of his dunks, a smooth mover in the open court. He's also an excellent cutter, timing when to sneak past the opponent's defensive miscues.



Conclusion

It can be risky to swing this hard on a low usage prospect, but I buy Furphy's ability to be excellent in a small role. And I think it's far from a foregone conclusion that's all he can be. He will get a lot of threes and his fair share of dunks while being a defender you can rely upon. The swing skill will be his handle, where he has shown capability with simplistic moves that could be branched into one-two pull-ups, and perhaps soon. With solid ball moving instincts and a general strong sense of how the defense bends, the ceiling might be much higher than his usage suggests.



Baylor Scheierman

Creighton
#23 (Tier 3)

-SHOTMAKER



SCALABILITY



READINESS



SPECIALNESS



VERSATILITY

Introduction

Baylor Scheierman is a flamethrower, shooting 38% on nearly 300 threes in his final collegiate season, and also 88% from the line, 45% in midrange. His volume of 13 threes per 100 possessions at his height of 6'6.25" without shoes make Scheierman's shooting gravity bankable at the NBA level. The question is whether he's a good enough athlete to deserve the playing time.



Pros & Cons

My short answer: yes, though not convincingly so. Scheierman is a bad run and jump athlete, lumbering through the lane on drives. He converted a disappointing eight dunks over 35 games despite his height and only nine blocks over the season. He is unlikely to be a good defender, not great at covering space in a short amount of time, though perhaps is better at sliding laterally than given credit for.

Another risk is his contact aversion, dodging out of the way of screens or bailing out of drives early. But he makes up for a lot of this by being a strong defensive rebounder, boosting his defensive production significantly as he grabbed 23% of opportunities.



Strengths

Scheierman provides value as a passer too. He had a very good 20% assist rate by being a quick, decisive connective passer as well as providing the occasional high-value assist (often a lob to Kalkbrenner). His shooting and passing are further enhanced by his screening, as Scheierman is able to create the space needed to get a shot off or punish a defense set into motion.



Conclusion

Scheierman's spacing could indeed be one of the skills that translates best in the entire class. While he will not be a standout defender, his strong rebounding recoups some value. With his combination of skills, Scheierman could be a dangerous offensive weapon, albeit with upside limited by subpar athleticism.



Cody Williams

Colorado
#24 (Tier 3)

-SHOTMAKER -3&D WING



SCALABILITY



READINESS



SPECIALNESS



VERSATILITY

Introduction

Cody Williams is a prized archetype: a 3&D shotmaker. While that title is mostly theoretical up to this point, there are reasons to buy into the hype. The most significant reason for optimism is he would likely benefit from added strength more than anyone in the class. It can be easy to fall into the trap of projecting the same, steep development curve as his brother JDub onto Cody, but genetics are a thing. My research from last year showed Franz and Mo Wagner, similarly skinny underclassmen, as two of the handful of players with the largest free throw rate increases over time.



Physicality

Added bulk would help Cody in several ways. First, his stocks are just mediocre, at 0.6 steals and 0.7 blocks per game, but limited both by a late second injury and his difficulty holding his position against stronger opponents. Cody generally has good instincts for where to rotate or how to contain an offensive player, but lacks the force to do so. Again, a reason for concern currently, but with room for optimism. Second, his movement shooting, and particularly off the dribble. While he showed prowess hitting shots off of modest relocations in catch and shoot, Cody only had 11 off-the-dribble jumper points all season, the same number as in 2022 Nike EYBL. This is why he only ranks as a silver rather than gold shotmaker. But added strength should help stabilize him off of movement, too. I am optimistic because the fluidity is there, and with a quick shot at his height, Cody will be able to get shots off at the next level.



Offense

And still, Cody was an efficient scorer this season, with 62% true shooting on 20% usage for a good Colorado team. He was best near the basket where he shot 74% at the rim with the majority of his makes unassisted. For someone of his skinny stature, Williams did not shy away from contact, accumulating 15 dunks and putting up a 0.43 free throw to field goal attempt ratio on drives. The feel was good if not great, but still ahead of schedule for a freshman. While his assist to turnover ratio was underwater, mostly due to some poorly-timed ideas, Cody was still a good connective passer and had the ideas to even try in the first place.



Conclusion

I have gone back and forth many times on Cody Williams, as his current game leaves much for wanting but with plenty of reasons for optimism. Ultimately I come out convinced in his usefulness as a play finisher, with a chance to be a very good one and adequate defender. But the ideas are still highly theoretical, and it will be a tough slog to return value at his mocked draft slot.



Nikola Djurisic

KK Mega
#25 (Tier 3)

- PHYSICAL TABLE SETTER



SCALABILITY



READINESS



SPECIALNESS



VERSATILITY

Introduction

Nikola Djurisic surged to close his Adriatic Basketball Association, scoring 25 points or more in four of his final six games, a stretch during which he shot 57% from the field. Efficiency is the biggest question mark for Djurisic, as much of a swing skill as they come in this draft class. He has been mediocre from distance (32% on four attempts per game) as well as from the line (76% on five attempts per game). But there are numerous reasons to be optimistic about his NBA translation, regardless.



Tools

Djurisic's best skill is his passing. Revealing a high feel for the game, Djurisic is manipulative in his reads and with one of the best pass repertoires in the class. He ran a lot of pick and roll, shooting okay out of it, but with unlucky shooting results from his teammates. Djurisic made high degree of difficulty reads multiple times per game. He may not be creative with his handle, limiting his passing angles, but the creativity of his passing makes up for it.

Second, Djurisic is a good athlete. He dunks often, 6'7" with decent vertical pop. While he was only in the 30th percentile for layup finishing efficiency, his nearly one dunk per game raises his overall rim finishing to above average. This good (though not elite) athleticism shows up on defense, as well, able to keep his man in front of him and pick up the occasional stock.



Craft

Third, Djuriscic has driving craft. He has to, given his subpar outside shooting, but he has shown promise with stutter steps, a quick first step and the ability to mix in different gathers. Djuriscic got to the rim nearly five times per game, mixing in three pull-ups per game as a secondary option. This craft in combination with his athleticism led Djuriscic to a very strong 0.46 free throw rate.



Conclusion

Djurisic's efficiency has improved, at 56% true shooting this past season after 51% and 52% the two seasons before. If that trend can hold, Djurisic becomes a very deadly player. He has the tools at his disposal, good feel, good athleticism and good skill, simply lacking the finishing consistency. The rest of his game is good enough to be worth that dice roll.



Tristen Newton

Connecticut
#26 (Tier 3)

- PHYSICAL TABLE SETTER
- SHOTMAKER



SCALABILITY



READINESS



SPECIALNESS



VERSATILITY

Introduction

Tristen Newton is easy to imagine fitting in as a combo guard at a high level, and not just because he did it twice to win national titles. He's a shotmaker who can hang in physically with both point and shooting guards, and therefore highly scalable.

Newton guarded both positions more than adequately at UConn and, moreover, is simply more physical than you'd think. He gets offensive rebounds and some blocks without fouling, and gets to the line at a good rate for a guard. While his three point percentage could be improved upon, he's a stellar 83% from the line and has become a strong finisher inside.



Offense

But most of all, he is an elite diagnoser of what needs to be fixed. In UConn's heavy movement system, Newton was often the trigger man, deciding how and when the first action would play out. He found the ball in his hands late in the clock, too, to quickly move the ball to a play finisher or else take a difficult shot himself. Newton's steadiness, and ability to execute upon ideas with his good size and decent athletic traits for a guard, was a big reason Connecticut won the title.



Accolades

We have a ready-made proof of concept given Newton's importance to a team at the pinnacle of college basketball. Newton won the Bob Cousy Award for best point guard in the country, was named NCAA Tournament Most Outstanding Player and was one of the five finalists for the Wooden Award. Only fellow Huskie Shabazz Napier has won both since the Cousy award was created in 2004.



Conclusion

Newton's ceiling is a complicated question, as a guard who can handle blitzed pick and rolls while also screen-running on defense can fit in on many high level squads. And especially one who passes minimum athletic thresholds on the interior. If Newton's three point percentage improved to mid-to-high 30s, as I believe it could given his free throw and finishing touch, he could start for a playoff team.



Isaiah Crawford

Louisiana Tech
#27 (Tier 3)

- 3&D WING
- UNCONVENTIONAL RIM PRO.



SCALABILITY



READINESS



SPECIALNESS



VERSATILITY

Introduction

No one in this draft is more “toolsy” than Zay Crawford. He fits the traditional mold of a three and D wing to a tee, but isn’t so predictable, either. How many three and D wings, for example, also take over 100 pull-ups, splashing them at a strong 76th percentile efficiency. This is why I can’t remove upside projections beyond the three and D moniker. He might simply be better.



Defense

We could start on either side of the ball as Crawford is one of the more balanced players in the draft. His defense is the more reliable, however, as he gobbled up blocks and steals at extremely high rates. Due to past knee injuries, his max lateral thrust is limited, so it is possible to sneak past him on drives. But Crawford makes it difficult with his lightning fast reaction time and 7'0.5" wingspan which engulfs the ball.

Crawford is an ideal roving stockmaker, aware his team will have some defensive breakdowns so on the ready to clean up the mess. He may not be a lockdown one on one defender but he can slow even the best wings moderately while shutting down passing lanes with his length and timing.



Offense

Crawford is a swiss army knife on offense too. He is a great ball mover, with passing creativity popping in particular in scramble situations. One imagines Crawford thriving in a more upbeat offense than the 241st in pace Louisiana Tech. He is just who you want making decisions with the ball and has plenty of tools to give him options. He can shoot off the catch, where he knocked down 41% of his 70 catch and shoot attempts.

But the flexibility is the point of emphasis, where you can't just rely on hard close outs to make Crawford panic. He controls the ball calmly, assessing the best route to attack.

Crawford shot a good 39% on 132 midrange attempts, where only 8% of makes were assisted. He won't have to self-create like this at the next level, but he has that gear if needed. With his composure on the ball, Crawford will be hunting out soft areas of the court.



Conclusion

The biggest question mark with Crawford is his level of athleticism, playing only a small percentage of games against good teams and only dunking 10 times in those games. But Crawford has NBA-level feel for the game and NBA-level skill. If he's even just an okay athlete, he could still be a starter-level NBA player.



Zaccharie Risacher

Introduction

JL Bourg
#28 (Tier 3)

-SHOTMAKER

-3&D WING



SCALABILITY



READINESS



SPECIALNESS



VERSATILITY

Zaccharie Risacher has drawn a lot of attention near the top of the 2024 draft, and it's easy to see why. At 6'8", Risacher is third in points per game for the third best team in the top French professional league. He is an excellent on-ball defender, utilizing his strong athleticism.



Downside

But the downside risk is real. Risacher is a very inconsistent off-ball defender, losing his assignment at least a little bit every few possessions, and an inconsistent shooter, his supposed biggest strength. Risacher was highly dependent on open catch and shoot looks, the only consistent shot type where he was above average efficiency, which made up 63% of his catch and shoot looks. He showed some promise on a handful of runners, but disappointing touch indicators otherwise, at only 54% on halfcourt rim attempts and 74% at the line.



Upside

Still, I believe Risacher is worth an upside swing in the 20s. He grades highly on the ‘makes things happen by accident’ scale, through his consistent effort and versatile athleticism - albeit with poor testing for the latter. He has long, fluid strides and has shown flashes of driving and passing brilliance, even if highly inconsistent. He has displayed occasional very tough shotmaking, as well, hitting stepback or no-load threes.



Conclusion

In addition, the importance of his role on a very good professional team should not be ignored. While Risacher could be seen targeted on screens, he can also take on difficult on-ball assignments already into his career. Should he handle develop (a consistent theme among wings in this class), he could develop into a very strong scorer. If his off-ball awareness improves, he could be a team's top 3 defender. By focusing on the upside, the outline of a very good player is there...as long as you can risk the bust potential.



Jaylon Tyson

California
#29 (Tier 4)

-SHOTMAKER



SCALABILITY



READINESS



SPECIALNESS



VERSATILITY

Introduction

Tyson was one of the best self-creating scorers in the NCAA this season. He created (was unassisted on) 70% of his 121 rim makes, 90% of his 51 midrange makes and half of his 50 threes. When you're creating that many points for yourself, the tape is likely to be aesthetically pleasing, and Tyson's is indeed. He gets to the rim with creative step-throughs, pulls up with ducking under moves and tidy footwork.



Shotmaker

This shotmaking is likely to translate a decent amount at the next level. His release is quick and he has a keen understanding of the space he has to work within. He knows how to win with slight margins.

The passing is far more uncertain. At a 24% assist rate, Tyson averaged a few assists per game and held a positive assist to turnover ratio. However, he could be found missing open men with poor timing and accuracy. Nevertheless, Tyson is capable of making high-value reads when locked in - especially adept at live dribble one-handed feeds. This amplifies his scoring gravity but the limitations significantly reduce any primary odds. Let him be a short-clock play finisher.



Athleticism

There are athletic contradictions, too. Tyson is strong at 6'5.5" and 218 pounds, and has a very quick first step for that size. However, he cannot extend this strength beyond the first, depending instead on his anticipation and proprioception to find finishing angles. When he had a runway, though, Tyson still managed to dunk home 24 of 24 attempts.

But this inability to extend strides with power are also harmful in his lack of foul-drawing. Despite carrying a 30% usage rate with over 300 attempts inside the arc, Tyson only maintained a free throw rate of 0.29. This reduces how deadly his on-ball reps are, while also again revealing his lack of consistent application of athleticism.



Conclusion

His defensive athleticism is okay, mostly forgettable on that side as not significantly exposable in isolation or help. But neither is he making a significant number of plays, with an okay 1.5% block and 2.0% steal rate. Tyson is about as mediocre as they come in defensive wing prospects, which likely means he'll reside in the 25th to 50th percentiles for defensive impact.

Tyson looks legit as a shotmaker, but has his flaws there too. His efficiency drops to around average when he's covered heavily in PNR, and he still only shot 33% on pull-up threes. Not bad, but not elite. Regardless, he has the fluidity and technique to give him some NBA play finishing reps. I would not reach for him in the first, but Tyson still has the tools to be worth a late first or early second.



N'Faly Dante

Oregon
#30 (Tier 4)

- VERTICAL DOMINATOR
- SOME HELP RIM PROTECT.



SCALABILITY



READINESS



SPECIALNESS



VERSATILITY

Introduction

N'Faly Dante dunked, rebounded and blocked shots over his competition this season, a vertical dominator of I've ever seen one. Wielding a 7'6" wingspan despite being only 6'10", Dante is able to make plays few can. He spikes shots on blocks in a flash, difficult to sneak by considering the radius his outstretched arms cover.



Defense

Using this wingspan moving away from the basket, Dante was able to 1.7 steals per game in addition to his 1.9 blocks. He is a disruptor at the level of the screen, able to hang with ballhandlers for a beat before returning to drop position. Given his stocks rate and general patrolling of the paint, it is surprising opponents shoot a decent 59% at the rim against him.



Offense

Dante might be the prime type of athletic big who can beat up on lesser college bigs but won't translate in the pros. But he has been so dominant, with a 69% true shooting rate on 24% usage, and 45 dunks in 22 games, that maybe he's just that good.

Passing is the swing skill for Dante, boasting a subpar 0.7 ATO and just okay 12% assist rate. He has shown moments of going through his rotations kicking out of post ups, either finding cutters or shooters. But it's far from consistent, and Dante can get tunnel vision on post ups.



Conclusion

Teams looking for a smallball killer would do well in seeking out Dante. He is strong enough to overwhelm smaller bigs and has an impressive dunk/lob radius with his length. Add in his disruption near the level of the screen and Dante can make up for a lot of your team's flaws. The upside is likely capped, but low end starter is still within reach for the Oregon senior.



Yves Missi

Baylor

#31 (Tier 4)

- VERTICAL DOMINATOR
- SOME HELP RIM PROTECT.



SCALABILITY



READINESS



SPECIALNESS



VERSATILITY

Introduction

Yves Missi is one of the more painful watches in the draft class, unfortunate as owner of the worst lowlight compilations over the season.

The tools are gigantic - Missi is 6'10.75" without shoes, 7'2" in wingspan, and very nimble on his feet - but do not coalesce around a likely NBA player. Missi has upside, as still only 20 and relatively new to basketball, but it will be difficult to hit the ground running at a higher level of competition.



Pros & Cons

Missi's strengths stand out, statistically: he had a 7% block rate, 14% offensive board rate and 62% true shooting. Missi has the clear markings of a vertical dominator prospect, though the downside is clearly defined too, by a 0.3 assist to turnover ratio. Even in the strengths, we can find some flaws. Missi has one of the lowest dunk conversion rates among draft picks since 2008, a list of almost exclusively busts.



Pros & Cons

His team was also bad at protecting the rim when he was on the court as the rim protector, allowing 65% rim finishing. Both wrinkles might originate from the same problem: Missi is quite bad at gauging distance. When he comes away from the basket to hedge or switch he gets baited into coming out too far repeatedly. He is indecisive in the cat and mouse two-on-one game defending the PNR big, preventing neither action. This may also contribute to his poor finishing on putbacks (20th percentile) and in the post (26th percentile).

The positive is the rolling to the hoop, where Missi can unveil his 38.5 inch max vertical to soar over the opposing big. He experiments, too, with over one drive per game and with decent results. Those will be more difficult against NBA defenses, as Missi's handle is still suspect, but are encouraging signs of Trying Something needed to reach top tier outcomes.



Conclusion

In all, Missi is a G League big. He reminds me of a worse version of Clint Capela, a PNR lob threat at heart who can sky in for some difficult blocks. But the details are gnarly, and Missi needs more time to iron them out. For this reason he is difficult to recommend as a first round pick, with questionable upside given the rigidity of the problems.



Jared McCain

Duke

#32 (Tier 4)

-SHOTMAKER



SCALABILITY



READINESS



SPECIALNESS



VERSATILITY

Introduction

Jared McCain is a lethal shooter, but lacks enough other NBA-level skills to be a true difference maker. He was effective both in catch and shoot scenarios, where he shot a 90th percentile 1.26 points per shot on 160 attempts. He also was impactful off the dribble, where he shot an 81st percentile 0.97 points per shot on 103 attempts. But I could argue he may not be an elite NBA shotmaker, either.



Weaknesses

First, McCain is short at only 6'2" without shoes and a 6'3.5" wingspan. While he gets good elevation on his attempts, it requires the space for a windup not needed by taller shooters. In addition, he lacks the separation abilities to be effective in iso (only 0.93ppp on 14 possessions) nor the functionality in pick and roll when the defense commits (0.76ppp on 63 possessions). He needs a screen, a hand-off, or to be spotting up to get his shot off, which will all be money in the pros. But this is less rare to find than the iso kings or pick and roll maestros.



Passing

A big reason for that lack of pick and roll functionality is, again, his height, but more so his lack of ability to compensate with creative passing. He often delivers the ball too low and too late, leading to a 20% turnover ratio in pick and roll when attacked. His 11% assist rate is awful for a guard of his height, just more than one third of that maintained by Rob Dillingham for comparison. Once drafted, McCain will join a group of only seven others to be his height or shorter and to have an assist rate below 12%, with only Immanuel Quickley successful in the NBA.



Conclusion

The defense will be a major net negative, simply not tall or long enough to contest successfully against NBA two guards, only clocking three blocks all season. He snagged steals here and there, a decent slider who showed some signs of physicality. Still, McCain can get on a heater like few others in this class, and that alone is worth a draft pick.



Ajay Mitchell

UC Santa Barbara
#34 (Tier 4)

- ENGINE



SCALABILITY



READINESS



SPECIALNESS



VERSATILITY

Introduction

Ajay Mitchell is a tantalizing prospect, the final potential offensive engine in my top 40. He is a PNR machine, running 387 PNR possessions over 29 games. On the 221 possessions he finished himself, Mitchell was in the 90th percentile for points per possession, carving up the Big West. But questions abound surrounding the level of competition he played in and just how dominant he was.



Pros & Cons

As one major red flag, UC Santa Barbara's offense was only six points better when he was on the court. For a potential first round pick who runs an offense, you would hope to see a larger boost than that. Of the 18 Big West players on record with an offensive impact near or above that of Mitchell's (gauged by PRPG!), only JaQuori McLaughlin was able to get a few NBA minutes.

Mitchell was able to create the heavy majority of his own offense, the 17th least assisted share in the NCAA at only 19%. Mitchell was particularly prolific at the rim, where he took 5.6 attempts per game and made 60% of them, self-creating 93% of the makes. He is a jackknife through traffic, precise with his footwork, chosen angles, hesitations and head fakes.



Pros & Cons

His passing is extremely creative, excellent at high-value assists which drop into his big's hands with a wraparound or bullet through traffic. This play between soft touch rim finishing and last second playmaking give Ajay a nexus point: a spot where he can get to with ease which gives him multiple dribble/pass/shoot options. He can use a floater (91st percentile) or make a split second decision on which scorer to find.

The athleticism limits him, although he's not without his own special traits. He skates through traffic with perfect balance, utilizing flexible ankles with long, low strides. But he lacks the strong base to keep the defender caged on his back, and lacks the ability to stay close to his man on defense. When he overhelps, he is unable to recover back to his man in adequate time.



Conclusion

Ajay Mitchell is a complicated evaluation, mainly racking up points and assists playing against poor competition, but looking dominant in some ways in the process. Ultimately he does not stand out statistically (particularly with low offensive rebound and dunk figures that point to a poor run and jump athlete). But Mitchell has something extremely valuable, a creation nexus point, positioning himself as a legitimate offensive engine bet.



Dalton Knecht

Tennessee
#35 (Tier 4)
-SHOTMAKER



SCALABILITY



READINESS



SPECIALNESS



VERSATILITY

Strength

Athleticism is often a double-edged sword. Gain one trait at the expense of the other. For Dalton Knecht, we see this in the extreme. For his scoring, he is able to smoothly organize from gather to release. So fluid, in fact, that he can stay on balance when fading off to the side, leg kicking at the right time. He can move from shot fake to triple threat to then release again in an instant. He can create 'negative space' with his stepback which chains immediately into a pull-up.



Limitations

However, this fluidity turns into a type of complacency on the defensive end. While on offense he can mask his intentions with his vast arsenal, in defense he fails to set the agenda entirely. He has little force or explosion, forced to stay on his heels to remain in position.

He has one other issue as well that compounds poorly with his limitations: Dalton Knecht has very poor peripheral vision. This places limitations for his upside as a passer, defender and, perhaps most concerning, even as a scorer. His passing ideas are decent but often cannot spot who is open beyond those directly in front. On defense, he not only struggles to create contact but also can be seen losing his matchup at inopportune times. While he has exceptional gathers on the way to the rim, a well-timed dig can interrupt his flow.



Downside

Dalton Knecht has plenty of firepower as a scorer; that much is obvious. 77 for 182 on catch and shoot threes is nothing to sniff at. But the limitations are perhaps prohibitive of starter-level upside. Combine that with just okay midrange shooting and just okay finishing rates and the downside risk for Knecht as a prospect is real.



Upside

The way I'm proven wrong is if Knecht is an even better athlete in his strengths than I realize. There were moments where his pull-up looked deadly, in spite of his only shooting 29% on these attempts from three over the season. He has complex finishing gathers, which perhaps will help his efficiency stabilize regardless of coverage. But I resist the idea of defensively limited spot up only poor passers, so Knecht is not someone I would want to build around.



Tidjane Salaun

Cholet
#36 (Tier 4)

-3&D WING



SCALABILITY



READINESS



SPECIALNESS



VERSATILITY

Introduction

Tidjane Salaun, currently, makes up the outline of a very valuable player. He fits ideally into the 3 and D+ archetype at first glance, giving his three point volume and his steals. He plays with a high energy that may be convincing that he's a high feel player. Reader, I have concerns (while still acknowledging the upside).



Offense

For the three pointer, his efficiency is just okay. He was a solid 38% on unguarded threes but only 29% when guarded. His free throw percentage of 75% also points to a mediocre spot up shooter. The outline is there, but it's not convincing, and especially if this is the primary source of offensive value for Salaun.

He shows flashes of driving and passing ability, but again I remain less than convinced. He is predictable and inflexible on drives, nearly traveling at the start of every one and typically driving into the teeth of the defense - his 0.6 points per possession on drives was poor. The passing, too, is fraught with missteps, with an ATO of 0.7 with a highly uninspiring sub-7% assist rate.



Defense

His defense has promise as well, while being full of holes currently. Salaun is not great at recognizing actions, slow to rotate, prone to over-help, loses his man in a scrum and may not call out a screen. Even if very young playing in a pro league, this many errors may be tough to overcome, especially if hoping to get early NBA playing time. With his energy he's still able to make things happen here and there, snagging a solid 1.1 steals per game but hardly ever blocks a shot.



Conclusion

The energy and the Tools Potential is enticing when evaluating Tidjane Salaun. But ultimately, playing upside can be determined by how locked in one can get into what is happening on the court. Salaun is young enough he certainly has time to figure it out. However conditions may get rocky before then, as I doubt he can play NBA minutes off the bat. The good thing with Salaun is he has plenty of routes to improve, giving himself opportunity with hustle and just straight trying shit. That looks to me like a late first or early second round pick.



Reece Beekman

Virginia
#37 (Tier 4)

- PHYSICAL TABLE SETTER



SCALABILITY



READINESS



SPECIALNESS



VERSATILITY

Introduction

Reece Beekman may be the best point of attack defender in the class, and offers enough offense to keep your attack alive. In a plodding UVA system, Beekman was the conductor. He had no shortage of touches, connecting the ball between shooters running off screen and cutters. This role likely juiced his assist numbers, #1 in the country in assist rate, but he unveiled some true passing talent previously unseen in his career.



Offense

Beekman also figured out how to score some, too. His two point attempts went up by 70% while increasing from a lackluster 43% to a reasonable 49%. Scoring from all three levels at decent efficiency, Beekman also worked in a runner once per game, hitting those at a 47% clip.

But the main offensive value he'll provide is through his passing. Assisting on 45% of his teammates' buckets while also having three assists per one turnover, there is a case for Beekman as a top 3 passer in the class. His ability to understand where the ball needs to be when makes him an excellent ball custodian. His improved driving only created more opportunities to display this talent.



Defense

The main sell for Beekman, though, is his defense. Beekman is a very sticky defender, with offensive players unable to escape off the dribble. He has a surprising amount of strength for his frame, withstanding physicality on drives or leaning into screens to get better angles. His hands are elite, racking up the 8th best steal rate among high major players. His hand accuracy rarely misses, stripping even the steadiest ballhandlers.



Conclusion

Reece Beekman looks more like a backup point guard based on his lackluster scoring efficiency, however has ways to provide offensive value while also being one of the best defenders in the class. An extremely high feel player, Beekman knows when to hit cutters on offense and when to go for the steal on defense. Draft him for a dependable physical table setter who rarely makes mistakes.



Pacome Dadiet

Ulm

#38 (Tier 4)

- 3&D WING
- SHOTMAKER



SCALABILITY



READINESS



SPECIALNESS



VERSATILITY

Introduction

The most important number for Dadiet is 67 - the number of pull-up attempts Ulm permitted Pacome to take over his BBL season. While Dadiet was a low usage player overall, at only 18% usage rate, he still took the difficult attempts needed to continue his development as a tough shotmaker. Recovering from an ankle injury suffered in summer of 2023 while also undergoing a growth spurt over the 2023-24 season, Dadiet adjusted and expanded his game.



Pros & Cons

At 6'9" in shoes, Dadiet's outside shooting diet is highly appealing to any NBA franchise. The greater question for me is around his level of athleticism. Dadiet had 20 dunks over the season and a 0.99% block rate. These are not spectacular numbers but perhaps stifled by the ankle recovery - he had twice the block rate the season before at a lower level of competition, and there is likely some adjustment to growing two inches in a year as well.

A major strength is his effort. Dadiet is a decent slider to stick with drive threats, although will get blown by true point guards. But he is active to get back in a play and has a general strong sense of the game and approach angles. He has a good max vert but can struggle with lack of burstiness to quickly cover ground or get up in an instant to protect the rim (hence the low block rate).



Pros & Cons

Ultimately, though, Dadiet was not a very productive player at Ulm, with great efficiency but paltry usage, assists, rebounds, blocks and just okay steals. Some may be explained by temporary factors like ankle injury recovery and growth spurt, which is why I'm willing to give Dadiet some benefit of the doubt.

I also buy his touch, 60% on midrange pull-ups and 68% on layups, where he made very difficult attempts with soaring hooks or off-balance adjustments. This is encouraging that he can increase rim volume, but a just okay handle and poor flexibility on drives make that harder.



Conclusion

I'm ultimately a little below consensus on Dadiet given my concern for his lack of productivity but optimism for some athletic gains given age and circumstance. He reminds me of a worse Johnny Furphy in many ways, and maybe not much worse.



Riley Minix

Morehead State
#39 (Tier 4)

-3&D WING



SCALABILITY



READINESS



SPECIALNESS



VERSATILITY

Introduction

For a player who spent four years playing below-Division I competition, Riley Minix carries a lot of intrigue. He hit the ground running at Morehead State, with a valid claim to best player in the Ohio Valley conference. The name of the game for Minix is scoring versatility, where he had 40+ reps and was league average efficiency or better for (in descending frequency) post-ups, spot ups, PNR rolling, putbacks, cuts, transition play and isolations.



Offense

There were few spots on the floor that Minix couldn't score from. A career ~40% from three and 80% from the line when combining DI and DII stats, Minix does not shy away from difficult attempts as 70% of his final season catch and shoot attempts were guarded. Due to his consistent high usage, I have confidence in Minix scaling up or down to scoring role.



Defense

The reason for Minix being out of my first round is simple: he gets beat off the dribble. At 6'8" in shoes, Minix might be better suited to guard 4s than 3s, but is likely giving up strength there, instead. An additional reason is his complicated feel for the game. While he can read plays developing early and knows how to capitalize, he also has fairly



Conclusion

A 6'8" scorer with high feel for the game will always deserve a shot. Despite being 24 his rookie NBA season and his unusual trajectory, Minix can be relied upon to get some buckets against bench units. His performance at the Portsmouth Invitational Tournament put this on display, though also showed how he is too stiff to contain drives. If he can improve his flexibility or strength with an NBA training program, he could still turn into a useful role player.



Tristan da Silva

Colorado

#40 (Tier 4)

-SHOTMAKER



SCALABILITY



READINESS



SPECIALNESS



VERSATILITY

Introduction

Tristan da Silva, recently turned 23 years old, is one of the readiest players in the draft, but I expect little upside is to be had in investing in him as a prospect. Da Silva is limited athletically, and in a way that severely limits his production potential. Still, he is as predictable of a contributor as they come in a specific way, a catch and shoot three point shooter.



Offense

Da Silva reminds one of late career Bojan Bogdanovic. He is tall, 6'8.25" without shoes, and is a deadly shooter off the catch. Da Silva was especially dangerous when left unguarded, when he splashed 31 of 64 three point attempts. You simply cannot leave TDS open. That consistent gravity - da Silva is able to launch from a high set point with little loading - makes him a valuable commodity.

In addition, da Silva has real skill. He can dribble and pass, and has very good instincts for how to make a play in a pinch. But his slow foot speed limits his quickness, limits how much space he can create in a short amount of time. Da Silva makes Kyle Anderson look light-footed, and his skill is closer to very good than truly great.



Defense

The real issue is the defensive end. TDS will be put into endless actions to get him defending in space, where he is incapable of sticking to a man. He overcorrects by overcommitting on closeouts, taking seconds to get back in the play, or over-biting on dribble moves when trying to keep up. His lack of athletic thrust also limits his helpside rim protection potential, limiting the utility of his 6'10.25" wingspan.



Conclusion

Tristan da Silva has a highly sought after trait: he is tall and he can knock down threes. But his mobility limits his playmaking potential on both sides, ultimately making him a low ceiling prospect. He may find ways to contribute nevertheless with his strong instincts, but lacks the good starter upside potential needed to find himself in my first round.

