

Dane Brugler's 2026 NFL Draft summer positional rankings: Edge rushers



By **Dane Brugler**
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Based on summer scouting, edge rusher should be one of the stronger positions in the 2026 NFL Draft, including a few standouts at the top who might finish among the top non-quarterbacks in the class.

While I feel great about the seven edge prospects profiled below, numerous other candidates belong in the conversation. Can [Miami](#)'s Rueben Bain Jr. return to his freshman-year impact? Is Kenyatta Jackson Jr. the next top-50 pass rush prospect from [Ohio State](#)? The list goes on and on, which speaks to the high-end talent and overall depth of this group.

(Notes: An asterisk represents a draft-eligible underclassman. Listed heights and weights are what [NFL](#) teams have on file for each player, with "v" representing verified measurements and "e" for estimates.)

NO ONE BUILDS A LEGACY BY STANDING STILL



ACROSS

1. Tie the knot
4. Font flourish
6. Pack your bags and go see the world
8. One might be purchased from a nursery
10. Prepare for publication

DOWN

1. "If I ____ you..."
2. Historical period of time
3. Jump headfirst into a pool
4. One might be used to write letters?
5. Soft felt hats
7. There might be a long one at a popular

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1. [Keldric Faulk](#), Auburn (6-6e, 275e)*

Best traits: Big-man power and athleticism

Not only does he look the part, but also Faulk plays the part using his length and the power in his hands. Regardless of his alignment, he consistently detaches in the run game with an efficient ability to stack, shed and finish.

Although he is more advanced as a run defender, Faulk also uses his strength to create knock-back and affect the pocket as a pass rusher (45 pressures and seven sacks in 2024). He plays both gap sound and violent to control the point of attack and dispose of blockers.

Against Cal last year, Faulk owned the trenches and frequently introduced himself to quarterback [Fernando Mendoza](#) and running back [Jaydn Ott](#).

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Must improve: Basic pass rush setup

Faulk can get away with being “bigger, faster, stronger” (even against SEC competition), but the next step in his development is to create more diversity when setting up his pass rush. As he enters his third year at the college level, I hope to see an expanded arsenal with the corresponding punctuality to maximize his efficiency.

2026 NFL Draft outlook

Faulk is one of the best draft-eligible prospects I have studied so far this summer. In a lot of ways, he reminds me of [Mykel Williams](#) — he’s long, physical, athletic and also happens to be one of the youngest players in the upcoming draft class (Faulk won’t turn 20 until Sept. 7). However, I think Faulk has shown better consistency and overall versatility through two college seasons than Williams had. It hasn’t mattered if he’s lined up as the nose, wide nine or any technique in between, Faulk has been productive.

My initial 2026 NFL Draft top 50 board won’t be released until August, but I feel safe saying Faulk will be very highly ranked, likely in the top 10. His traits are outstanding, and I’m excited to see him this fall.

2. [T.J. Parker](#), [Clemson](#) (6-3e, 265e)*

Best trait: Body control running the arc

With his ability to win using both speed and power, Parker can dominate as a pass rusher. Whether he is mixing in a long-arm move or a physical swipe/chop, he uses his body well to leverage or wrap around blocks. And once he clears a blocker’s outside shoulder, Parker is quick to flatten and close on the quarterback.

He was an absolute menace against Pitt last season. Here are three clips (all sacks), which help illustrate his ability to carve up the corner and accelerate to the ball.

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Must improve: Positioning versus the run

The motor Parker shows as a pass rusher also translates to the run game — he will chase the ball all day. However, he can be pinned at times by offensive tackles or tight ends on the edge, especially on outside runs. Parker is a solid run defender, but he can get caught with his eyes in the wrong spot and needs to do a better job anticipating angle blocks.

2026 NFL Draft outlook

Parker has been a stud since he arrived at Clemson. After his Freshman All-America season in 2023, he followed up with 19.5 tackles for loss, 11.0 sacks and a school-record six forced fumbles as a sophomore. I was hoping to see him have more of an impact against [Texas](#), the biggest game of his 2024 season.

While his overall consistency needs to be better, he plays with a ton of energy and can continue to unlock his talent as he becomes a technician.

Parker, who is on the path to becoming a top-15 pick.

3. LT Overton, Alabama (6-2 3/8v, 274v)

Best traits: Ability and energy

Overton has been more flash than consistent in college, but he teases exciting potential. He moves with impressive quickness, bend and body coordination for his size and competes with passion. If he takes a jump in his development in 2025 and becomes the sum of his parts, he has SEC Defensive Player of the Year potential.

Overton weighed in the 274-278-pound range last season but can get up to 290 if needed, which would expand his role as an interior player.

This rep against [South Carolina](#) (a ridiculous play by QB [LaNorris Sellers](#)) showcases Overton’s exciting ability to win gaps at the line of scrimmage.

1.00



Though his ability is outstanding, Overton needs to mature his technique and play stronger to be a more consistent performer, especially as a pass rusher. With only two sacks and three tackles for loss last season, he didn't overwhelm with stat sheet production. NFL teams covet pass rush value, so to maximize his draft grade and NFL impact, Overton needs to take a jump in his second year as a starter.

2026 NFL Draft outlook

A consensus five-star recruit out of high school, Overton was one of the top prep players in Georgia and chose Texas A&M over his home state Bulldogs. He was part of a headline-grabbing class for the [Aggies](#), which also included fellow five-stars [Walter Nolen](#) and [Shemar Stewart](#), both first-round picks in April. Overton, one of the youngest seniors in the 2026 draft class (will turn 21 in October), spent two years in College Station before transferring to Alabama, where he came off the bench last season as a key part of the defensive line rotation.

Overton ranked No. 4 among edge rushers (and as the No. 1 senior edge rusher) because his flashes have been better than his body of work. His summer grades from NFL teams are more in the Day 2 range, but he has the talent to cement himself in the first round if he puts better down-to-down consistency on his 2025 tape.

4. [Matayo Uiagalelei](#), Oregon (6-5e, 270e)*

Best trait: Relentless physicality

Looking over my notes from the six Oregon games I studied last season, the word "effort" appeared under Uiagalelei's name double-digit times. His motor is nonstop; he won't take plays off, but I was more impressed with the relentless physicality of his play style. Whether taking on pullers or forcing his way through contact, Uiagalelei consistently makes his presence known on each snap.

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Must improve: Pass rush get-off

Uiagalelei rushes with a potent mix of power and flexibility, allowing him to thud blockers or access the corner. He is an athletic player (at around 270 pounds), but his initial burst tends to be inconsistent. Although he will probably never be an elite get-off type of rusher, Uiagalelei can improve his timing and first-step quickness to make him an even more dangerous edge rusher (even if that means dropping some weight).

2026 NFL Draft outlook

The Oregon defensive front was loaded last season, with three starters who became top-100 draft picks ([Derrick Harmon](#), [Jordan Burch](#) and [Jamaree Caldwell](#)). Uiagalelei was the fourth starter, and he has a shot to be the highest-drafted of the group.

The younger brother of former top quarterback recruit [DJ Uiagalelei](#), Matayo, was highly recruited himself and hasn't disappointed (10.5 sacks last season). With his well-rounded skill set, Uiagalelei reminds me of [JT Tuimoloau](#), who led the Big Ten in sacks in 2024 and was a 2025 second-round

with poision, physically and strenght. It is easy to envision Otagaieri becoming a solid pro.

5. [David Bailey](#), [Texas Tech](#) (6-3e, 250e)

Best trait: Arc explosiveness

Especially when lined up as a wide nine, Bailey is the type of speed rusher who can stress offensive tackles on an island using his arc acceleration and rush balance. Not only will he go around blockers, but also he can also convert that speed to power and put blockers in reverse. The [Stanford](#) transfer forces blockers to be perfect with their feet and timing, and he continued to add moves to his bag of tricks.

This ghost dip-and-rip rush against [San Jose State](#) looks like vintage TJ Watt. After a quick get-off, Bailey flashes that inside hand before taking it away and dipping underneath the blocker’s reach. The move execution and beautiful finish result in a strip sack.

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1.00

Must improve: Proving himself as a full-time starter

With only two starts last season, Bailey averaged just 30 defensive snaps per game. He battled an injury midseason that contributed to his lower snap count, but the scheme also used him primarily as a pass rusher, which is what he does best. Scouts are hoping to see a more expanded role for him with the Red Raiders so he can prove himself as an every-down edge presence.

2026 NFL Draft outlook

Highly recruited out of Mater Dei (Calif.) High, Bailey was a Freshman All-American at Stanford. He then led the team in sacks and tackles for loss as both a sophomore and junior despite not being a regular starter. He also tallied five forced fumbles in 2024, the fourth most in the FBS. Amid a coaching change this offseason, Bailey jumped into the transfer portal and landed at Texas Tech as one of the most impactful spring signings.

[Bolt](#)-like impact in the NFL. He is one of the top senior defensive prospects I have studied this summer.

6. [Zion Young](#), Missouri (6-5 1/8v, 255v)

Best trait: Stout edge setter

Young is a “first off the bus” kind of player. He has broad shoulders, long arms and definition throughout his frame, and his on-field play matches his body type. Against the run, Young has outstanding hands and controls the point of attack with his length. Edge setters with his size, athleticism and strength can have decade-long careers in the NFL.

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Must improve: Effectiveness at the top of his rush

With his length and power, Young can push his way to the pocket as a bull rusher. However, he is inconsistent at the top of his rush and doesn't threaten the corner with his quickness. Though he

because he won't win with edge speed alone.

2026 NFL Draft outlook

A former three-star recruit from the Atlanta area, Young began his college career at [Michigan State](#), where he became a starter as a freshman. (He was one of seven Spartans charged with misdemeanor assault after a postgame incident in the Michigan Stadium tunnel following a 2022 game.) After Michigan State fired Mel Tucker, Young entered the portal and transferred to Missouri before the 2024 season.

Although the stat sheet production has been modest (5.5 tackles for loss and 2.5 sacks in 2024), Young is built like an NFL player and his best football is still ahead of him. Scouts are optimistic he can follow a similar path to that of former Missouri edge defender [Darius Robinson](#) and become a top-60 pick with continued development as a senior.

7. [R Mason Thomas](#), Oklahoma (6-1 5/8v, 249v)

Best trait: Explosive twitch

With his first-step burst and ability to gain ground in a blink, Thomas flashes the explosive twitch to stress blockers and access the pocket. Once at the top of his rush, he can bend or attack from a low position to create a leveraged push into contact.

Former [LSU](#) left tackle [Will Campbell](#) gave up two sacks combined over his sophomore and junior seasons. This rep against Thomas was one of them.

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Must improve: Press out versus the run

Though his backfield production jumps off the page, Thomas managed just 23 tackles last season, a number that reflects some of his issues as a run defender. He flashes feisty power to set the edge

pressing on contact at the point of attack and working around roadblocks to create issues in the run game.

2026 NFL Draft outlook

Despite having a wildly inconsistent defense last season, [Oklahoma](#) boasted several well-established prospects, including linebacker [Danny Stutsman](#) and safety [Billy Bowman](#) (both fourth-round picks in April). However, Thomas was the top draft-eligible prospect on Oklahoma's defense and led the team in both tackles for loss (12.5) and sacks (9.0). He would have been a top-100 pick in 2025 but elected to return for his senior year.

With a short, compact frame and limited length, Thomas won't be an ideal fit for every scheme. However, because of his explosiveness off the line, Thomas has cornering skills to finish at the top of his rush and affect the pocket, which could keep him on an NFL field for a long time.

Preseason top 30 seniors (all measurements are NFL-verified)

1. Overton
2. Bailey
3. Young
4. Thomas
5. [Dani Dennis-Sutton](#), [Penn State](#) (6-5 5/8, 265)
6. [Derrick Moore](#), Michigan (6-3 3/8, 265)
7. [Gabe Jacas](#), Illinois (6-3, 279)
8. [Joshua Josephs](#), Tennessee (6-2 5/8, 237)
9. [Max Llewellyn](#), Iowa (6-5 1/8, 260)
10. [Trey Moore](#), Texas (6-1 1/2, 246)
11. [Cashius Howell](#), Texas A&M (6-2 1/8, 249)
12. [Patrick Payton](#), LSU (6-4 5/8, 252)
13. [Tyreak Sapp](#), Florida (6-2 1/8, 267)

15. [Romello Higgins](#), Texas Tech (6-2 1/4, 228)
16. [Jack Pyburn](#), LSU (6-2, 262)
17. [Tre Smith](#), Arizona (6-4 1/8, 253)
18. [Keyron Crawford](#), Auburn (6-3 3/4, 249)
19. [Mikail Kamara](#), Indiana (6-0 1/2, 260)
20. [Dean Miller](#), Kansas (6-5, 227)
21. [Eric O'Neill](#), [Rutgers](#) (6-2 1/2, 257)
22. Mo Westmoreland, Tulane (6-0 7/8, 262)
23. [Marvin Jones Jr.](#), Oklahoma (6-4 1/4, 260)
24. [Aidan Hubbard](#), Northwestern (6-4, 259)
25. [Caden Curry](#), Ohio State (6-2 1/8, 255)
26. [Ethan Burke](#), Texas (6-6 1/8, 260)
27. [Roy Williams](#), Northern Illinois (6-5 1/2, 252)
28. [TJ Guy](#), Michigan (6-3 1/8, 249)
29. [Nyjalik Kelly](#), [UCF](#) (6-4 3/4, 248)
30. [Corey Walker](#), Wisconsin (6-5 5/8, 291)

Preseason top 15 draft-eligible underclassmen (all measurements are estimates)

1. Faulk
2. Parker
3. Uiagalelei
4. Rueben Bain Jr., Miami (6-3, 275)
5. [Kenyatta Jackson](#), Ohio State (6-6, 260)
6. [Anto Saka](#), [Northwestern](#) (6-4, 250)
7. [Anthony Smith](#), Minnesota (6-6, 285)
8. [Will Heldt](#), Clemson (6-6, 265)
9. [Boubacar Traore](#), [Notre Dame](#) (6-4, 245)
10. [Beau Atkinson](#), Ohio State (6-6, 265)
11. Damon Wilson II, Missouri (6-4, 250)
12. [Wesley Williams](#), [Duke](#) (6-3, 265)
13. [Samuel Okunlola](#), Colorado (6-4, 250)
14. [Elo MODOZIE](#), Georgia (6-3, 245)
15. [James Williams](#), [Florida State](#) (6-6, 240)

(Top photo of LT Overton: Jason Clark / Getty Images)



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AWESOME

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