Dane Brugler's 2026 NFL Draft summer positional rankings: Defensive tackles

By **Dane Brugler**
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Editor's note: *This is the third installment of Dane Brugler's 2026 Summer Scouting series. Previous rankings:* [Edge rushers](#) | [Running backs](#)

Although not as deep as the edge rusher group, the defensive tackle position has a ton of promise for the 2026 draft class, and it all starts with Clemson's Peter Woods, one of the best players in the country. I don't know if this group will have five first-rounders like the 2025 class did, but there are multiple DT prospects with top-100 promise.

(Note: Asterisk represents draft-eligible underclassmen. Heights and weights are what NFL teams have on file for each player, with a "v" representing verified measurements and "e" for estimated measurements.)

1. Peter Woods, Clemson (6-3e, 315e)*

When you think of Jeffery Simmons, Dexter Lawrence or any other of the NFL's best defensive tackles, they aren't just powerful *or* athletic, they are a balanced mix of both. And that is what stands out about Woods, who utilizes his play strength to break down blocks and movement skills to make plays up and down the line of scrimmage.

Woods is quick to diagnose the blocking scheme, which allows him to defeat the block and chase down the football with strength and athleticism. This play on the Pitt tape comes on third-and-goal and saves four points in a tight game.

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With his urgency to rid himself of blocks, Woods has dominant qualities in the run game.

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Must improve: Pass-rush polish

As a pass rusher, Woods becomes a battering ram and taps into his power to force his way through gaps or blockers. And though his bully mentality often translates to disruption, I would like to see

college ball would keep blockers guessing and make Woods even more dangerous.

2026 NFL Draft outlook

One of the top defensive line recruits out of high school three years ago, Woods almost immediately lived up to the hype as a Freshman All-American at Clemson. The Alabama native continued his promising play last season, bouncing between defensive end and defensive tackle while helping the Tigers win the ACC.

Woods is one of the best 2026 NFL Draft prospects I've studied thus far. He's not Jalen Carter — I can't go that far. However, could he be a 90-percent version of Carter in the NFL? I think that is a realistic projection.

2. Caleb Banks, Florida (6-6 1/8v, 334v)

Best trait: Downhill force

Banks is a humongous human with verified measurements that will make him one of the NFL's largest defensive linemen the moment he is drafted. That size is a strong selling point, but I was even more impressed with Banks' dogged effort and ability to create force. Straight out of the Chris Jones playbook, Banks uses his length to create movement, and his effort from the backside is outstanding.

On a per-snap basis, Banks was one of the most disruptive interior defensive linemen in college football last season due to his ability to generate force to the football.

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Must improve: Pad level

Standing over 6 feet 6, Banks unsurprisingly struggles with leverage issues at times when blockers can get underneath and stand him up. He has problems with angle blocks, which can cause him to move out of the run lanes. Banks has superb chase skills in the run game, but he can improve as a run-game finisher in close quarters.
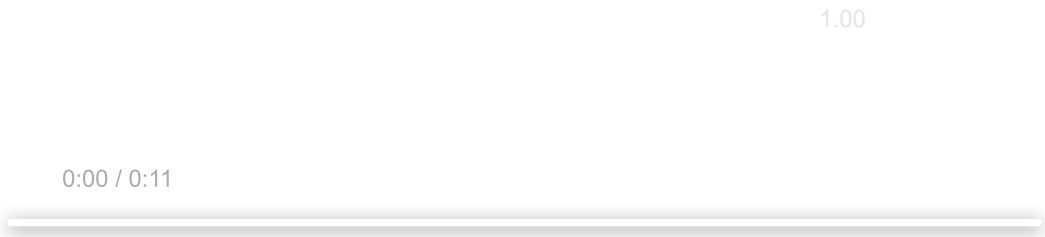
2026 NFL Draft outlook

My No. 1 criterion when scouting defensive linemen: Draft the guys who hate to be blocked. Banks qualifies because of the different ways he can unwind from blocks or power through contact. He led the Gators in pressures last season and should do so again in 2025, especially considering the dominant way he finished last season (check out his LSU and Ole Miss tapes).

Although he is a work in progress in several areas (both on and off the field), Banks is long and strong and still has plenty of untapped potential. Several NFL teams have stamped him this summer with second-round grades.

Best trait: Run-game radar

Miller launches off the line in the run game and extends his hands into single blocks while reading the backfield action. He has the power to play peekaboo as a two-gapper, press blockers off his frame and ground the ball carrier in the gap. His natural twitch and fierce hands are apparent when he sheds blocks and finishes tackles.

Thanks to his pad level, power and run-game radar, Miller was a problem for the Notre Dame offensive line in last season's playoff game.

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Must improve: Pass-rush plan

The explosiveness Miller shows in the run game is apparent when he is rushing the passer, too — he flashes a swim move to squeeze into the backfield. However, his countermeasures and pass-rush efficiency are currently undeveloped, and Georgia's heavy defensive line rotation is a significant reason behind that. If given more opportunities to rush the passer, Miller has the talent to make noise.

2026 NFL Draft outlook

Georgia always has dudes on the defensive line, even if the frequent rotation and run-first mindset limit production on the stat sheet. Miller ranked 17th on the team in defensive snaps last season, but he was among the Georgia leaders in exciting flashes, primarily against the run. With Warren Brinson and Nazir Stackhouse off to the NFL, Miller will see a bump in his playing time, and the talent is there for him to cement top-50 status in the 2026 class.

4. David Oke, Arkansas (6-1 3/4v, 312v)

Best trait: Nimble big man

with a ton of talent and ambition. He gained weight over the years but didn't sacrifice his athleticism.

Oke is at his best moving laterally to cross the face of blockers or bounce between gaps to make stops at the line.

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Must improve: Consistent pad level

Oke is a highly active player with a radar for the football in the run game. However, there are times when he gets too high and flat-backed at the point of attack, which causes him to lose his balance. Now, in the SEC, Oke will need to play with more consistent leverage to win at the contact point.

2026 NFL Draft outlook

Abilene Christian isn't known for churning out defensive talent (its last defensive draft pick was 20 years ago: defensive back Danieal Manning). However, the school found something in Oke, who had a breakout 2024 season, primarily as a nose tackle.

competition will help NFL scouts decipher if he has NFL starting potential, like he showed on last year's video.

5. Domonique Orange, Iowa State (6-1 3/4v, 328v)

Best trait: Point-of-attack power

A thickly built, powerful nose, Orange plays with extension into contact and generates knockback, which allows him to create downhill tilt or muck up run lanes. He can easily power through the numbers of blockers or open lanes. Orange can be a step late anticipating, but his violent play to discard blocks stands out.

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Must improve: Turning flashes into consistency

Orange has the play strength to create interior push, but he needs to be more consistent with his shed timing and awareness to become more productive. Although he was much more impactful than the stat sheet suggests (4.5 tackles for loss, 1.0 sack), those numbers are expected to increase as his blocking awareness and overall consistency improve.

2026 NFL Draft outlook

A Kansas City, Mo., native, Orange had offers from Georgia, Ohio State and several other premier programs out of high school before committing to Iowa State, where he has steadily developed the last three seasons. At one time, he weighed over 400 pounds, but he has worked hard to slim down and improve his conditioning, which has been reflected in his impressive play last season.

Orange checks a lot of boxes for the next level. He has a dense, bulky body type with a stout lower half and the length to shoot his hands and control the point of attack. For a 4-3 scheme looking for a shaded nose, Orange could be an early-round target.

(Measurements are NFL-verified)

1. Banks
2. Oke
3. Orange
4. Darrell Jackson Jr., Florida State (6-5 1/4, 341)
5. Zane Durant, Penn State (6-1, 290)
6. Zxavian Harris, Ole Miss (6-7 1/8, 330)
7. Tim Keenan III, Alabama (6-2 3/8, 313)
8. Albert Regis, Texas A&M (6-1 1/8, 310)
9. Dontay Corleone, Cincinnati (6-0, 331)
10. Brandon Cleveland, NC State (6-2 5/8, 320)
11. Keeshawn Silver, USC (6-3 7/8, 332)
12. Rayshaun Benny, Michigan (6-3, 300)
13. Gary Smith III, UCLA (6-1 3/8, 329)
14. Cameron Ball, Arkansas (6-3 1/4, 323)
15. DeMonte Capehart, Clemson (6-4 1/2, 313)
16. Gracen Halton, Oklahoma (6-2 1/8, 295)
17. Jackie Marshall, Baylor (6-2, 295)
18. Damonic Williams, Oklahoma (6-1 3/8, 320)
19. Akheem Mesidor, Miami (6-2 3/8, 273)
20. Lee Hunter, Texas Tech (6-3 1/2, 330)
21. Chris McClellan, Missouri (6-2 7/8, 317)
22. Deven Eastern, Minnesota (6-5 1/2, 316)
23. Will Whitson, Mississippi State (6-4, 278)
24. Skyler Gill-Howard, Texas Tech (5-11 7/8, 291)
25. Jacobian Guillory II, LSU (6-1 1/2, 317)

Preseason top five draft-eligible underclassmen

(All measurements are estimates)

1. Woods
2. Miller
3. James Smith, Alabama (6-3, 295)
4. Keanu Tanuvasa, BYU (6-4, 300)
5. C.J. Fite, Arizona State (6-2, 310)

(Top photo of Peter Woods: Jacob Kupferman / Getty Images)

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