Tyler Ennis

6’2 180 13ppg 3rpg 6apg

Tyler Ennis exceeded all expectations in his lone year at Syracuse, earning Second-Team All-ACC and All-Rookie team honors while leading the Orange to a 28-6 record. Ennis big upside is his ability to improve and become a good point guard.

Ennis' playmaking ability is what separates him from other players in this draft class. He is one of the few “pure point guards” you can point to, as he led the NCAA in PPR as a freshman, posting a rate 50% higher than the next best PG. Ennis plays with a maturity beyond his years, as he operates at his own pace, is incredibly unselfish, and is always under control. He whips the ball all over the floor with great timing, moving the ball ahead for easy transition baskets, making pinpoint post-entry passes, and doing a tremendous job executing the pick and roll thanks to his superb ball-handling skills and court vision.

Since 2001, Only six drafted players under the age of 20 have posted a PPR over 5 like Ennis: Mike Conley, Ty Lawson, T.J. Ford, Kendall Marshall, Eric Maynor and Marcus Williams (UConn)—which shows how rare it is to see a player this young show this type of passing acumen at such an early stage.

Ennis' excellent feel for the game and anticipation skills show up on the defensive end of the floor too, as he generates a good amount of steals (2.4 per-40). Part of this has to do with the fact that Syracuse plays exclusively in a zone, but his solid wingspan (6-5), quick hands and exceptional instincts also have plenty to do with that.

Ennis is not a prolific or efficient scorer as we'll discuss below, but he does show some promise as a perimeter shooter, which bodes well for his NBA prospects. He's proven capable of making jumpers with his feet set or off the dribble, and has the type of mechanics and touch that lead you to believe he'll continue to improve in time.

Another aspect of Ennis' game that breeds optimism is his demeanor and the confidence he displays. He shows tremendous poise and maturity for his age, as he never looks rattled and seems to elevate his game when his team needs him the most. He took all of Syracuse's big shots this season, leading to some very memorable moments (and some less), but nevertheless proved that he likes the spotlight, has a killer instinct, and won't back down from a challenge.

On the downside, Ennis has a number of flaws, some of them very significant, which could become much more notable in the NBA.

One is his overall athleticism, as he's not the quickest or most explosive player around. His first step is just average, which forces him to rely heavily on his superior ball-handling skills, timing and hesitation moves to create his own shot in the half-court, something he found mixed results in at the college level. Often you see him pushing off his man with his off hand to try and gain separation without a screen, which might not work quite as well in the NBA against bigger and stronger defenders.

This really shows up in his struggles getting inside the paint and finishing around the basket in the half-court, where he converted just 42% of his attempts when accounting for floaters and layups. He shot nearly as many floaters (60) as he did layups (94) this season, and hit just 28% and 50% of them respectively in the half-court, both very poor rates. Getting stronger could help him do a better job of finishing through contact and getting to the free throw line (5.4 attempts per-40 pace adjusted, ranked 13th of 15 Top-100 prospect PGs).

Ennis wasn't much of a scorer in general in college, his 15.8 points per-40 ranked 12th among the 15 point guards in our top-100 prospects. That's something most NBA teams expect from their point guard these days, particularly late in games, so it will be interesting to see how he develops in this regard in the long term. How he shoots the ball from the perimeter in workouts could go a long ways in convincing teams just how much he can improve in this area down the road. He was somewhat inconsistent from the perimeter in his lone season in college (35% 3P%), but seems to have good potential here thanks to his solid mechanics and touch. This is almost certainly an absolute must considering his limitations in other areas.

Another thing NBA teams will want to look at in private settings is his man to man defense. It's tough to get a great read on this part of his game due to Syracuse's strict insistence on only using the 2-3 zone, but based on the glimpses we can see on film and how he looked in other settings (such as the U19 World Championship last summer), he likely projects as an average defender at best. His lateral quickness is not exceptional, and his fundamentals as a man to man defender weren't great going into college, so a full season of not practicing or improving on that part of his game may cause him to struggle on this end of the floor, at least early on in the NBA. That's not to say that he can't improve on this in time, though, as he has good length and excellent anticipation skills as noted, and certainly doesn't look like a lazy player in the way he approaches the game.

Finally, while Ennis only played one season of college basketball, he is a little bit older than your average freshman, as he turns 20 this summer. He's a full year older than fellow freshmen Aaron Gordon, James Young and Noah Vonleh for example, and the same age as Michigan State sophomore Gary Harris. That's definitely not a deal breaker, but it is worth noting.