

2014 NBA Draft Prospect Profile: Aaron Gordon is versatile

Written by
Monday, 02 June 2014 10:32 -



Aaron Gordon had an impressive freshman season for the Arizona Wildcats showcasing his athleticism and defensive versatility. Should the Suns keep him in Arizona?

AARON GORDON

School: Arizona

Position: Forward

Draft Range: [Draft Express - 10](#) ; [NBA Draft Insider - 8](#)

Stats

Measurables

- Height: 6'7.5" without shoes, 6'8.75" in shoes
- Weight: 220 pounds
- Wingspan: 6'11.75"
- Standing Reach: 8'9"

Combine Numbers

- Max Vertical Jump: 39"
- Lane Agility: 10.81 seconds
- 3/4-Court Sprint: 3.27 second
- Shuttle Drill: 2.76 seconds (best at combine)

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Shooting

Shooting is probably Gordon's biggest weakness right now. He doesn't appear to be a natural shooter at all. He gets his feet set and releases the ball slowly. His stroke isn't completely broken, but it's not very consistent either.

He can occasionally hit an open spot-up jumper (he shot 16-45 from 3-point range this year), but he's not good shooting off the dribble. He's also a horrible free-throw shooter who doesn't look comfortable at all at the line.

Gordon played a lot of small forward for Arizona, primarily when [Brandon Ashley](#) was healthy, but from what I saw the Wildcats were somewhat limited offensively with him there as opponents didn't respect him on the perimeter.

Gordon needs to put in a lot of work on his jumper, but he seems to have the ability and the work ethic to improve. Some tweaks to his form and a ton of reps could be all he needs. As you can see in the workout video below, he knows this and is confident in his ability to get his jumper where it needs to be for the NBA.

Post Game

Gordon really doesn't have much of a post game at all. He often looks lost with his back to the basket, and usually relies on trying to back his opponent down and finishing over the top or going with a simple drop step. However, as a PF he's not big enough to rely on his strength in the post, and he lacks any sort of advanced foot work. He also doesn't have a consistent hook shot or great touch around the basket.

If a team drafts [Aaron Gordon](#), it won't be as a post-up player.

Scoring Ability

Gordon is raw but he does have some scoring ability. He's better at facing up than he is with his back to the basket. He's comfortable handling the ball and keeps his dribble low to the ground. He has a quick first step and a strong cross-over. His lack of a reliable jumper hurts him in the halfcourt because opponents know he wants to get the to the basket and sag off of him.

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His athleticism allows him to make plays in transition with the ball in his hands or running the floor. He has good hands and big hops which makes him a great alley-oop target on the break, in the pick-and-roll or while cutting back-door.

He doesn't have great touch around the rim, though, and despite his athleticism it seems like he doesn't get all the way to the basket as much as I'd like, instead taking off early and relying on difficult scoops, short floaters and finger rolls.

Gordon is not a natural scorer, and that could limit his upside, but at worst he has a few tools that will allow him to be effective within a system and not a liability. However, if he continues to develop and hone his skills he could be a very versatile and effective offensive option.

Rebounding

Gordon's athleticism and motor make him a very good offensive rebounder. He has a very quick second and even third jump that allows him to score even when he misses his first or second attempt. Sometimes, it seems like he's even trying to set up the put-back with his first shot.

Gordon is seventh among the college forwards and centers in the first round of Draft Express' mock draft in offensive rebound percentage. [Mitch McGary](#) is on a whole 'nother level and [Julius Randle](#)

and

[Joel Embiid](#)

are monsters, but Gordon's 10.4 percent compares favorably to

[Jabari Parker](#)

,
[Noah Vonleh](#)

and

[T.J. Warren](#)

who are all in double figures.

On the defensive end, Gordon is merely decent. He's ninth among the first rounders with a 19.3

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defensive rebounding percentage, which is last among bigs. In fact, hes closer to [Doug McDermott](#) and [Jerami Grant](#) than he is to the trio of lottery bigs (Vonleh, Embiid, Randle) and even [Kyle Anderson](#), who is second in the class.

Gordon isn't particularly big or long, which hurts him as he tries to pull down contested boards. He doesn't always box out when he should either, and can get pushed out of position.

Overall, Gordon is a good but not great rebounder, better on offense than defense. However, he's certainly capable of putting up big numbers on the glass in any individual game as his 18 rebounds in Arizona's [NCAA Tournament](#) loss to Wisconsin or his 15 rebounds against the strong front line of Stanford can attest to.

Defense

Defense is Gordon's greatest strength. He has the versatility to defend inside as well as to switch onto a guard and stay in front of him on the perimeter. Because of this versatility, he should be a valuable asset when defending pick-and-rolls with his ability to hedge and recover as well as switch onto guards when need be.

The most impressive thing to me, however, is how fundamentally sound he is. He stays down in a defensive stance and works hard to move his feet. He makes multiple efforts on a possession and recovers well. He does an excellent job of keeping his body straight and his arms up in the air, and therefore avoids fouling. He also does a good job of contesting shots - again, without fouling.

Gordon was a key cog in one of the best defenses in college basketball last season, whether he was playing the three or the four. He shouldn't have any problems picking up and fitting into an NBA system.

Overall

Gordon's offense still needs some work and the potential is there to be effective over time, but

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it's not a given by any means. Even if he doesn't ever become a top option offensively, he is still a willing and capable passer who can fit into an offensive system and help his team.

Defensively, I feel confident that he'll be an impact player with his athleticism, versatility and fundamentals. A forward like Gordon who is capable of covering multiple positions is a valuable asset to have in today's NBA.

I thought Arizona and Gordon both looked better offensively with him at the four rather than the three because he wasn't much of a threat on the perimeter, which is why I think he's a better fit at power forward even if he is a little smaller than you'd like. I think the versatility is a worthwhile trade-off.

A lot of people compare him to [Blake Griffin](#) because of his explosive leaping ability, his ball-handling and even his appearance. The similarities are definitely there, but Gordon isn't nearly the offensive player Griffin was or is, and he's a much better defender. Because of his tweener size, crazy athleticism and defensive versatility, I think [Shawn Marion](#) is as fair a comparison to make as any.

Fit in Phoenix

I think he'd be a great fit at power forward for the [Suns](#). He would be the kind of athletic and defensive upgrade the team needs. Jeff Hornacek's up-tempo offense is exactly the type of system that will allow Gordon to maximize his offensive talents while he continues to develop his skills.

Gordon probably isn't a great fit next to Plumlee because I think they need to be put in similar positions to succeed, especially initially. Neither one is much of a post-up threat and neither can spread the floor with a jumper opponents will respect, but both are great catching lobbs, working the weak-side and crashing the offensive glass. However, if [Alex Len](#) develops into the type of post and face-up threat the Suns are hoping he will be, Gordon would be a great fit next to him from the Suns' frontcourt of the future.

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Poll **What is your take on Aaron Gordon?**

- Get him! He's exactly what the Suns need.
- He has some potential, but I don't think he's the right fit for Phoenix.
- He's going to be a bust.

415 votes | [Results](#)