

## HISTORICAL DRAFT REVIEW: WIDE RECEIVERS by Tony Villiotti

This is one in a series of articles in which **DRAFTMETRICS** will review the draft and other relevant history) for each playing position. Each article will focus on the years from 1991 through 2010, though shorter periods will be used when appropriate. The purpose of the articles will be to provide a greater understanding of the historical results of drafting the various positions.

As with just about every **DRAFTMETRICS** article, it is inevitable that the subject of Value Groups is raised. As reminder, the Value Groups are as follows:

Value Group 1 – Selections 1 through 13	Value Group 5 – Selections 75 through 114
Value Group 2 – Selections 14 through 28	Value Group 6 – Selections 115 through 200
Value Group 3 – Selections 29 through 48	Value Group 7 – Selections 201 and later
Value Group 4 – Selections 49 through 74	

More information on Value Groups can be found in *THE RELATIVE VALUE OF DRAFT CHOICES:2010 UPDATE* which is available on this website.

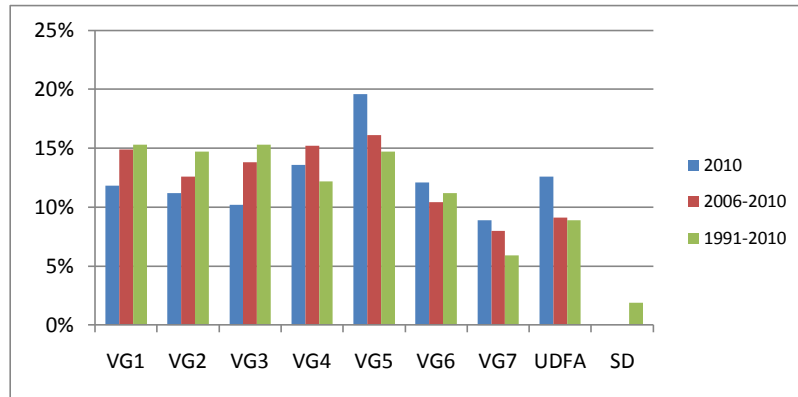
### **8 Things You Ought to Know About Drafting Wide Receivers**

1. Next to RBs, WRs are the riskiest position to draft
2. WRs drafted late (VGs 6 & 7, or from the mid 4<sup>th</sup> round on) have a very low success rate
3. WRs are least likely to start as rookies
4. An average of 32 WRs per year are selected in the NFL draft
5. ⅔ of the 5-year starters come from the “Big 5” conferences, led by the Big 10
6. Draftees from Mid-Major conferences have done well
7. Over the past 20 years, 78 WRs have started at least 8 games in their rookie seasons
8. Chances of drafting a 5-Year Starter by Value Group
  - a. VG1 – 65.4%
  - b. VG2 – 50.0%
  - c. VG3 – 37.2%
  - d. VG4 – 18.8%
  - e. VG5 – 18.0%
  - f. VG6 – 2.7%
  - g. VG7 – 3.3%

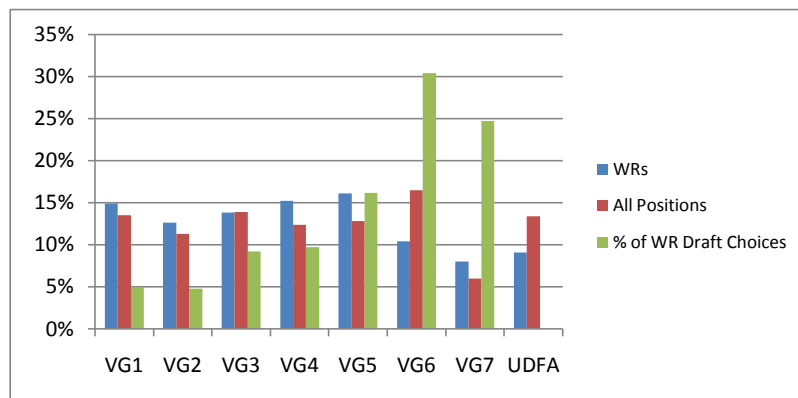
### **Source of Starters**

**DRAFTMETRICS** took a look at the source of WR starters for the 2010 season, the 2006-2010 and the 1991 to 2010 seasons. The following chart shows the percentage of games started by wide receivers, broken down by Value Group, Undrafted Free Agents (UDFA) and supplemental draft choices. Supplemental draft choices are those choices made in the Supplemental Draft, which is held to

accommodate players who wish to play in the NFL but who missed the draft filing date or had a change in circumstances.



The next chart shows the sources of WR starts for the 2006 through 2010 seasons compared to (1) the average of all positions and (2) the percentage of WR draft choices in that Value Group. For example, the percentage of all WR starts from VG 1 is 14.9% while the percentage for all positions in 13.5%. The percentage of all WR selections in VG1 is 5.0% (a full 20 years was used for this factor since draft selections from many years are represented in the 2006-2010 starts).



The 2010 season to the contrary, there have been a lower percentage of starts from UDFA at wide receiver than any other playing position. The source of WR starters differs significantly from the norm in Value Groups 4 through 6. In Value Groups 4 and 5, the percentage of starters is somewhat higher than might be expected, while in VG 6 the percentage of starts is only about 60% of the average. The reason for this disparity will be addressed in more detail later in this article.

## Drafting Patterns

The following table shows the number of WRs drafted within each Value Group on an annual basis.

### Number of Wide Receivers Selected by Value Group and by Year

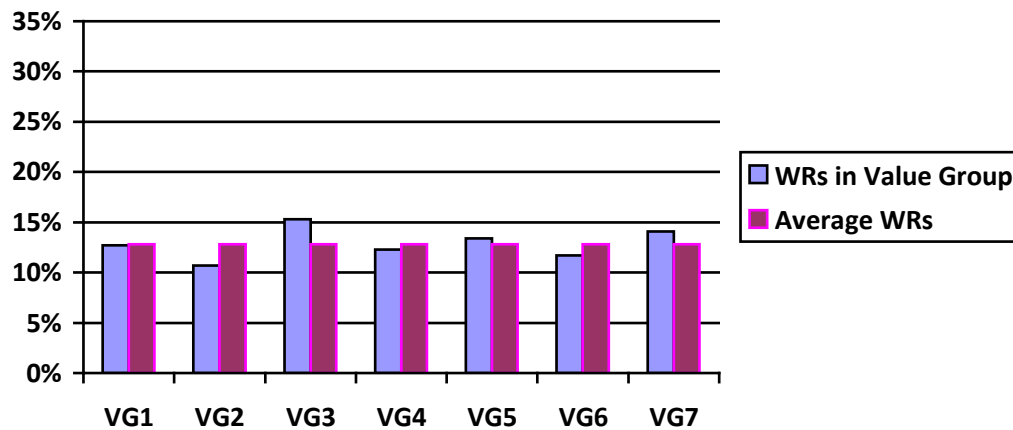
Year	VG1	VG2	VG3	VG4	VG5	VG6	VG7	Total
1991	3	1	2	6	6	6	22	46
1992	1	0	3	4	2	12	22	44
1993	1	2	1	4	5	11	4	28
1994	0	3	8	2	6	9	0	28
1995	3	0	1	2	4	11	8	29
1996	2	3	4	2	4	12	6	33
1997	1	3	2	1	3	11	4	25
1998	0	2	4	7	5	8	5	31
1999	1	0	0	2	7	9	8	30
2000	3	1	4	4	7	10	5	34
2001	2	3	4	2	1	14	8	34
2002	1	2	5	3	3	9	12	35
2003	2	1	2	6	2	13	11	37
2004	4	1	2	3	6	11	5	32
2005	3	3	2	4	3	11	5	31
2006	0	1	2	2	9	10	8	32
2007	2	2	4	3	7	9	8	35
2008	0	0	6	5	6	10	8	35
2009	2	2	3	1	9	8	8	33
2010	0	2	1	1	12	7	6	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>661</b>
<b>% of Total</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>9.2%</b>	<b>9.7%</b>	<b>16.2%</b>	<b>30.4%</b>	<b>24.7%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Excluding 1991 and 1992 when there were more rounds in the draft, there is an average of about 32 wide receivers per year selected in the draft, with 37 in 2003 being the most selected and 25 in 1997 being the least.

The following graph includes two items:

- The percentage of WRs selected in a Value Group as a percentage of all selections in that Value Group (e.g., there were 33 WRs chosen in VG1 so the percentage would be 12.7% because there were 260 VG1 selections from 1991 through 2010)
- The percentage of WRs taken in total in the draft (e.g., there 661 WRs drafted out of 5159 selections, so the percentage is 12.8%).

The graph shows that the number of wide receivers drafted is disproportionately high in Value Group 3 and then, to a lesser degree, somewhat disproportionately low in Value Group 6. The lower draft activity is a partial, though minor, explanation of the lower than normal number of starts from Value 6 draftees.



**Success Rates by Value Group**

**DRAFTMETRICS** also analyzed the success in drafting WRs by Value Group. For purposes of this analysis, the drafted WRs were divided into two groups – those drafted in 2004 or earlier and those drafted in 2005 and later. The reason for this division is that the latter group of WRs have careers that are still in flux and even a preliminary final measurement is premature.

The following table shows various performance measures by Value Group for the period from 1991 through 2004. A probability of 61.5% for rookie starters in Value Group 1 means that 16 of the 26 RBs drafted in Value Group 1 started as rookies.

**Table: Various Measures by Value Group for 1991-2004**

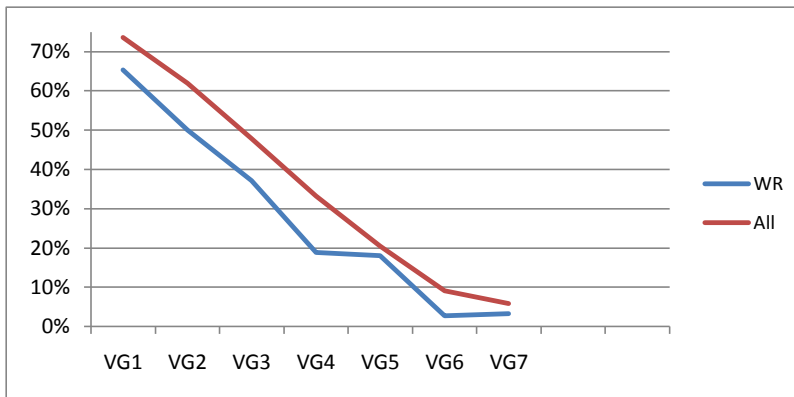
Value Group	Number Of Choices	Probability of				
		5-Year Career	5-Year Starters	Rookie Starters	Pro Bowlers	All Pros
VG1	26	96.2%	65.4%	61.5%	34.6%	23.1%
VG2	22	77.3%	50.0%	50.0%	22.7%	13.6%
VG3	43	76.7%	37.2%	25.6%	14.0%	9.3%
VG4	48	64.6%	18.8%	18.8%	6.3%	4.2%
VG5	61	52.5%	18.0%	9.8%	11.5%	6.6%
VG6	146	25.3%	2.7%	1.4%	2.7%	2.7%
VG7	120	14.2%	3.3%	0.0%	4.2%	0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>41.2%</b>	<b>15.5%</b>	<b>11.8%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>	<b>5.2%</b>

Observations are as follows:

- WRs have the lowest percentage of draftees becoming rookie starters (true for the entire period from 1991 through 2010)
- While there are always exceptions to the rule, a team historically has had to draft WRs early if they are looking for someone to step in and play

- Having said that, WRs are still relatively risky propositions even when drafted early
  - The probability of drafting a 5-Year starter at WR is worse than the average in every Value Group
  - The graph that follows these observations demonstrates this
- WRs are closest to the average in VGs5 and 7
- VGs 4 and 5 (midway through round 2 through midway through round 4) have roughly the same results

**Probability of Drafting a WR 5-Year Starter vs Average of all Positions by Value Group**



The following table shows various measures for WRs drafted between 2005 and 2010.

**Table: Various Measures by Value Group for 2005-2010**

Value Group	Number Of Choices	Probability of				
		5-Year Career	5-Year Starters	Rookie Starters	Pro Bowlers	All Pros
VG1	7	28.6%	14.3%	57.1%	28.6%	0.0%
VG2	10	30.0%	20.0%	40.0%	20.0%	10.0%
VG3	18	11.1%	0.0%	27.8%	5.6%	0.0%
VG4	16	31.3%	6.3%	18.8%	18.8%	12.5%
VG5	46	15.2%	0.0%	8.7%	0.0%	4.3%
VG6	55	3.6%	0.0%	3.6%	1.8%	0.0%
VG7	43	4.7%	0.0%	2.3%	2.3%	0.0%
Total	195	11.8%	2.1%	11.8%	5.1%	2.6%

While the results don't look they will be changing very much, it does appear that VG6 performance may improve a bit. The percentage of rookie starters is exactly the same in the two time periods.

### Producing WRs – Who Does It Best?

In order to address this issue, **DRAFTMETRICS** developed the following table which lists the number of QBs drafted by conference and by Value Group from 1991 through 2010. The conference affiliations are those in place during the 2010 college football season. Five conferences (ACC, Big 10, Big 12, PAC 10 and SEC) dominate production of players and are referred to as the “Big Five”. The “Mid-Majors” included the Big East, the Independents, the Mid-American Conference, the Mountain West Conference, Conference USA and the Western Athletic Conference.

**Table: WRs Drafted by Conference and Value Group**

Conference	VG1	VG2	VG3	VG4	VG5	VG6	VG7	Total
ACC	7	6	9	11	13	22	12	80
Big 10	10	4	11	10	12	22	9	78
Big 12	4	5	7	7	8	21	15	67
Pac 10	5	3	6	4	16	22	15	71
SEC	5	8	16	8	16	21	21	95
Total Big 5	31	26	49	40	65	108	72	391
Mid-Majors	2	5	10	15	28	46	41	147
Other	0	1	2	9	14	47	50	123
Total	33	32	61	64	107	201	163	661

The “Big Five” conferences (ACC, Big 10, Big 12, PAC 10 and SEC) dominate the first two Value Groups, accounting for almost 88% of the draftees. In Value Groups 6 and 7, the “Other” schools account for almost 27% of the selections, indicating that NFL teams are taking some chances on performers from smaller schools. Other than QBs, WRs had the lowest percentage of overall draft choices from the Big 5.

**DRAFTMETRICS** then addressed the issue of whether any of the conferences have had better (or worse) than expected success from their drafted WRs. This was done by focusing on actual versus expected 5-Year starters for players drafted during the years 1991 through 2004. The cut-off of 2004 was used in order to allow the draftees adequate time to become a 5-Year starter. Obviously a player drafted in 2007, for example, cannot have achieved 5-Year starter status because he has not been in the NFL for five years.

The expected number of 5-Year starter was calculated by applying the probabilities calculated in the “Success Rates by Value Group” section of this article (which follows) to the number of selections from each conference in each Value Group. The following table shows the findings.

**Table: Actual vs. Expected Number of 5-Year Starters: 1991-2004**

Conference	Number Drafted	5-Year Starters		Rookie Starters
		Expected	Actual	
<b>ACC</b>	58	12.2	9	10
<b>Big 10</b>	56	12.3	16	8
<b>Big 12</b>	44	6.6	4	8
<b>Pac 10</b>	47	8.7	7	6
<b>SEC</b>	66	13.2	12	9
<b>Total Big 5</b>	271	53.0	48	41
<b>Mid-Majors</b>	96	12.9	17	9
<b>Others</b>	99	6.1	7	5
<b>Total</b>	466	72	72	55

A few observations are as follows:

- Somewhat surprising, the Big 10 produced the most 5-year starters of the Big 5 schools
  - Five Big 10 schools provided all 16 5-year starters led by Ohio State (5), Michigan State (3), Michigan (3), Penn State (3) and Wisconsin (2)
  - No 5-years starters came out of VGs 6 and 7
- Only two of the ACC's 11 VG 2 and 3 selections became 5-year starters
- The Big 12 had 39 players drafted in VGs 3 through 7 and none became 5-year starters
- Big 5 schools produced no 5-year starters out of 129 draftees in VGs 6 and 7
- Mid-Major schools were led in 5-year starters by Conference USA (6) and the Big East (5)
- From 2005-2010 the number of WRs drafted from "Other" schools has been decreasing
  - Several promising receivers (Marques Colston, Johnny Knox, Pierre Garcon), though, have been drafted in recent years.