

2019 NBA Draft Prospect Profile: Alen Smailagic

Throughout the college basketball season, we have heard a ton about a variety of players, varying in style of play such as Cameron Johnson, De'Andre Hunter, and Ty Jerome. We have also experienced a ton of clamoring of players during the NBA combine with different draft pundits declaring Isaiah Roby and Nicolas Claxton as winners with their excellent performance in a small scale exhibition setting. However, an 18 year old, who played this past year in the G-League, has received little to no fan-fare as a potential prospect in the media. This player's name is Alen Smailagic, a 6 foot 10 inch Forward from Serbia that plays for the Golden State Warriors' G-League affiliate, the Santa Cruz Warriors. There is little background information available on this player other than he had never played at a level higher than the Serbian 3rd division or U-19 Junior League and is eligible to be drafted in the 2019 NBA Draft. To ESPN's credit, their rankings have him as the 67th best prospect in the draft, but he may actually be more like a top 50 prospect.

Based on his G-League numbers, he fits the mold of a role player on the Golden State Warriors. He is a strong offensive rebounder that displays excellent defensive instincts (2.4% STL (Lg: 1.7%), 4.8% BLK (Lg: 1.6%)) and strong on/off numbers. However, there are reasons why he is clearly not a 1st round talent, which include his poor 3-point shooting (.244 3P% (Lg: .348)), below average ability to create for teammates (8.8% AST (Lg: 14.1%)), and high turnover rate (15% TOV (Lg: 13.6%)). However, the reason to be excited for him as a prospect is the fact that he is only 18 years old. As is the thought process in developing prospects in baseball, the age of a player plays a huge role in determining the future value of a player. If a 19 year old position player performs at the same level as a 28 year old position player in AA, the 19 year old position player will be valued more. The reason is that the 19 year old is clearly playing up to a competition that is more difficult for a teenager than it is for a 28 year old. For future NBA prospects, this has a clear and significant effect as well, which I have found through my research on college players. During this past G-League season, Alen Smailagic had the 6th highest BPM of 2.28 in 2019 (Figure 1), which would place him as the 3rd highest BPM recorded for a player under 21 years old that had a rookie stint in the NBA in the past three years. Based on my prospect model, his true future value would be as a role player, 1.78 xWAR, ranked in the top 50 in close approximation to Daniel Gafford (1.94) and Isaiah Roby (1.92) (Figure 2). However, I would estimate that his future value may be higher because he is playing competition that may be more difficult than typical college basketball. It is hard to make any real definitive assumption because he is the youngest player to ever play in the G-League, so a lot of his value comes from the eye of the beholder.

Figure 1:

2019 G-League BPM Rankings

Rank	Player	BPM
1	Chris Boucher	5.01
2	Bruno Caboclo	4.53
3	Willie Reed	2.87
4	Marcus Thornton	2.57
5	Hamidou Diallo	2.39
6	Kevin Hervey	2.28
6	Alen Smailagic	2.28

Figure 2:

2019 College Draft Prospect Rankings

Rank	Player	xWAR
30	Goga Bitadze	2.54
31	Luguentz Dort	2.44
32	Cameron Johnson	2.41
33	Ty Jerome	2.35
34	KZ Okpala	2.27
35	Rui Hachimura	2.20
36	Louis King	2.17
37	Dedric Lawson	2.10
38	Admiral Schofield	2.02
39	De'Andre Hunter	2.02
40	Daniel Gafford	1.94
41	Isaiah Roby	1.92
42	Terence Davis	1.77
43	Kerwin Roach	1.76
44	Devon Dotson	1.74
45	Charles Bassey	1.70
46	Jalen McDaniels	1.67
47	Miye Oni	1.59
48	Deividas Sirvydis	1.59
49	Ky Bowman	1.58
50	Mfiondu Kabengele	1.58

Ultimately, I do not think he classifies as a top prospect in the echelon of Zion Williams, Ja Morant, or RJ Barrett. However, I have rarely heard much about him as a draft prospect, which should not be the case. He should be ranked as a top 50 prospect with the strong qualities of a role player and the clear potential to improve as an 18 year old. There is a possible reason why the Golden State Warriors chose to not display him in Winter Showcase games. It may not be the reason that the Warriors gave, which was to give other players the ability to showcase their skills to scouts, but to hide a promising player that the Warriors and, most likely, the league clearly values as a draft prospect.