

Evaluating a player's character and intangibles is one of the trickiest parts of scouting and drafting in football. Unlike measurable physical traits and on-field production, these qualities – leadership, resilience, work ethic, decision-making under pressure – are subtler and often subjective. Yet, without properly assessing them, teams risk investing high draft capital on players with unseen pitfalls or passing on future leaders.

So, how do you evaluate character and intangibles without simply guessing? The answer lies in adopting a rigorous process grounded in film study, contextual analytics, and corroborated by direct insights. In this post, I'll walk through my framework, dive into useful tools like Mock Draft Simulator and Game & Fantasy Sim, and explain why relying on momentum or consensus can mislead you.

The Process Matters More Than The Outcome

Before diving into data or anecdotes, let me emphasize this core truth: the reliability of your evaluation depends on **how** you do it, not just the end result.

- **Consistency:** Approach every player with the same structured criteria, avoiding emotional sway from big-name reputations or recent hype.
- **Transparency:** Keep detailed notes at every stage. When you rewatch snaps, jot down specific moments that reveal character traits like poise or leadership rather than abstract impressions.
- **Verification:** Check one data point against multiple sources before placing judgment. This reduces confirmation bias.

In other words, you want a *repeatable system* where the process itself filters out guesswork and bias.



Using Film Study as the Base Layer

I always say: *"Show me the snaps."* Film is the foundation for understanding character.

It's tempting to judge intangibles only by what coaches say or off-field stories you hear. But the clearest evidence comes by observing behavior within the game context. Here's what to look for during film review:

- **Situational composure:** Does the player maintain focus amid high-pressure moments, such as third-and-long or red-zone stops?
- **Communication:** Look for vocal leadership cues, pre-snap adjustments, or helping teammates recover from mistakes.
- **Body language:** How does the player respond to adversity? Do they visibly get frustrated or quickly reset?
- **Consistency:** Compare performances across different games and opponents. True character shows up repeatedly, not just once.

Example: Team Captain History on Film

One overlooked but powerful indicator is whether a player was a team captain or held other leadership positions at their college program.

Watching the film from those teams can reveal how the captains interact with the group during pivotal moments—do they rally teammates, sometimes at the line of scrimmage or after a turnover? These leadership behaviors become apparent when you dive into the game tape.

Analytics as Support, Not Replacement

While film is the backbone, having quantitative analytics helps organize and support your evaluations.

- **Pressure Rates:** For defensive players, analytics on how often they create disruption offer clues on work ethic and aggression.
- **Route Efficiency:** Offensive players with consistent route precision show preparation and discipline.

However, it's critical to remember that analytics alone do not tell the whole story—especially regarding character.

For instance, a player with great measurable traits might still struggle with sideline presence or motivation, and nothing in the numbers reveals that. Conversely, a player who's less physical but who consistently bails out their team during crunch plays may not always shine in box-score stats.

Think of analytics as your supporting cast that confirms, questions, or refines the hypotheses drawn from film—not the [nfl.com](https://nfl.com/draft) lead actor.

Beware of Consensus & Momentum

One of the biggest traps in pre-draft evaluation is the herd mentality.

Consensus rankings, hype cycles, and mock drafts can mislead you about a player's true character profile. Psychology plays a role: if a group praises a player's leadership, people tend to accept it with less scrutiny. Conversely, negative stories can unfairly cloud judgment.



This is where tools like the **Mock Draft Simulator** come into play—it lets you simulate various scenarios where players are picked under different team philosophies and front-office structures. These simulations highlight how momentum around a player's perception can shift without new film or evidence.

Similarly, **Game & Fantasy Sim** can generate statistically based scenarios under different conditions, revealing how a player might react in various pressures and environments — a helpful proxy to anticipating their mental resilience beyond surface stories.

Incorporating Coach Interviews and Off-Field Context

Coach interviews often provide direct, nuanced insight into a player's character that film alone can't reveal.

- **Ask targeted questions:** about leadership style, reaction to setbacks, and habits during practice and film study.
- **Look for consistency:** Do multiple coaches tell similar stories about a player's maturity or locker room role?
- **Cross-check with teammates:** Team captain history or peer praise corroborates coaching assessments.

Off-field context is important but must be approached carefully. Investigate family background, community involvement, and any disciplinary history—not as judgments by themselves, but to understand the whole person.

Patch these pieces together, and you get a layered view: film shows how character manifests under stress, interviews deepen the narrative, and analytics add measurable support.

Summary: A Practical Checklist to Evaluate Character & Intangibles Without Guesswork

1. **Start with Film:** Review multiple games focusing on leadership cues, composure, communication, and body language.
2. **Check Leadership Roles:** Confirm team captain history or leadership recognition and connect them with on-field evidence.

3. **Supplement with Analytics:** Use pressure rates, route efficiency, and other data to support or challenge film observations.
4. **Interview Coaches and Staff:** Obtain qualitative insights, seeking consistency and specifics.
5. **Incorporate Off-Field Context:** Understand background and character influences beyond the playing field.
6. **Avoid Herd Mentality:** Use tools like Mock Draft Simulator to test how consensus may bias opinions.
7. **Test Hypotheses:** Employ Game & Fantasy Sim to model player responses in situational pressures and scenarios.
8. **Document Rigorously:** Keep detailed notes and revisit film rather than relying on highlight reels.

Final Thoughts

When someone throws out a “character concern” or “intangibles are top-notch” claim, I always ask, “*Show me the snaps.*” Characters aren’t hidden magic; they’re revealed in moments. A robust, structured process — starting with film, bolstered by interviews and analytics, and shielded from hype cycles — lets you evaluate these traits without guessing.

In my 12 years cutting All-22 and tagging plays for coaches, I’ve learned no tool replaces the slow, deliberate work of watching how players handle the grind of football. Trust the process, and the outcomes become much more reliable.