



# 2013 ROOKIE DRAFT GUIDE



# INTRODUCTION

## WHAT IS THE ROOKIE DRAFT GUIDE?

Over the past few months, we've published a record amount of rookie content, both on the free and premium sides. As the Draft comes and goes, more information and analysis will be coming your way by the talented team here at DLF. With so much to sift through, we felt it was a good idea to make an all-encompassing downloadable document to accompany our rookie cheat sheet this year. This Rookie Draft Guide will include all the following:

- Previous Articles featuring the Rookie Class
- Opinions and analysis on the class from multiple writers
- Cheat Sheets for your Rookie Draft

This first ever Rookie Draft Guide will be continuously updated on an "as needed" basis. The goal of this document is basically to take all our coverage and put it one easy to find place. We'll continue to work hard on covering the 2013 rookie class both before and after the draft. All the articles contained within are posted in chronological order, with the newest at the end.

The Cheat Sheet will be created and released right after the draft and we'll update the site and this Rookie Draft Guide throughout the Spring and Summer. For now, consider this a free gift for being a Premium Subscriber.

Enjoy!



DYNASTY LEAGUE FOOTBALL

# ROOKIE DRAFT GUIDE



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# EARLY ANALYSIS

## BOWL GAME OBSERVATIONS

**Author: Andy Miley**

It's that time of year when I turn my focus to the college bowl games to gain insight. I will do my best to find some draft eligible players that could improve your dynasty teams. This article intends to start conversations and encourage continued thought throughout the entire draft process. These are my observations based on the bowl games, unless otherwise indicated. I am listing these players alphabetically.

### **Ezekiel Ansah, DE BYU**

I came away very impressed by the young defensive end. He was quite quick and disruptive off the line. He flowed well to the ball and applied tremendous pressure on the quarterback. He lined up both outside and inside capitalizing on particular weaknesses of the offensive line play. His best trait was his constant effort, as most defensive linemen take plays off. This young man kept on attacking!

### **Gavin Escobar, TE SDS**

Gavin Escobar is an athletic tight end that reminds me a bit of the Baltimore's Dennis Pitta. He is not a strong blocker and showed little effort on running plays. When his concentration was there, Escobar caught the ball well. The young tight end seemed concerned about his well-being as he demonstrated alligator arms on a route or two.

### **DJ Harper, RB BOI**

Keep in mind, not all Boise backs are the same. DJ Harper is not the same athlete that Doug Martin is. He showed good lateral movement and does a good job reading his blockers. The young running back tends to leave his feet, sometimes with jump cuts, but is good at taking good angles to avoid tacklers. He is better in space as he tends to get caught up in the trash along the offensive line during short yardage situations. I see him as more of a third down back in the NFL, because he has soft hands and shows a lot of effort in his pass blocking. It was concerning to see his quarterback take some of the short yardage carries that Harper should have received.

### **Cody Hoffman, WR BYU**

He was a good route runner who had decent separation against the soft San Diego State coverage. The young receiver showed good body control while making tough catches. Hoffman appears to be more of a possession receiver in the NFL. He had a few concentration issues that reared their ugly head with two bobbled passes in the end zone. Hoffman has decided to stay in school.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## BOWL GAME OBSERVATIONS (CONT.)

### **Margus Hunt, DE SMU**

The defensive end had one of the most dominating games of the bowl season so far. He got off the line at the snap of the ball and used his strong upper body to toss around any blocker in front of him. He forced a fumble on his first sack of the day which SMU recovered. The defensive end is at times overly aggressive, but is effective rushing the passer from any defensive line position. For his second sack, he tackled the quarterback in his end zone for a safety. Hunt also separated the ball from the back on a designed draw play. He will be 26 years old before the start of his first NFL game.

### **Darius Johnson, WR SMU**

Early in the game, Darius Johnson was making an impact as a returner. He showed good vision and took the necessary angles to lengthen his return attempts. The young receiver demonstrated great instincts coming back to his quarterback when his signal caller was under pressure. He spent most of his time in the slot, but occasionally lined up outside. Johnson showed good separation against his coverage, ran crisp routes, and made a few difficult catches in traffic. A high-thrown ball bounced off his hands and was returned for a touchdown by the defender covering him. The young receiver found redemption later in the game with a beautiful snag between the two defensive backs for a touchdown.

### **Javone Lawson, WR ULL**

Javone Lawson did a great job catching the ball at its highest point and got good separation from his coverage. This young wide receiver is very aware of his surroundings as he uses the sidelines to his advantage. Lawson is not strong in run support, but does his best to get in his defenders way downfield. I liked that he was not afraid to go across the middle on a crossing pattern to make a tough catch in traffic. The receiver made a spectacular one-handed catch and shielded the ball away from his coverage. Lawson has a flair for the dramatic which was on display when he made an acrobatic reception in the end zone.

### **Latavius Murray, RB UCF**

The young running back was quite the battering ram as he does not shy away from contact. Murray has good lateral movement, but is not as fast in a straight line. He seems to depend on his offensive line to create running lanes. To be an effective ball carrier, he needs a high volume of carries. The powerful running back has decent hands and is very adept at reading blockers. He reminds me a bit of Tampa Bay's LeGarrette Blount.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## BOWL GAME OBSERVATIONS (CONT.)

### **Robbie Rouse, RB FRE**

This was my first time watching this young running back. He was very shifty giving the defense little to hit and used a good spin move to get away from trouble. While Rouse has a strong powerful trunk like Ray Rice, he plays more like Danny Woodhead with a less physical style based on taking the best angles and making people miss. Rouse lined up all over the field: in the backfield, in the slot, and split out wide. He had issues blocking larger defensive linemen and was stripped on a designed delayed run. This young playmaker might find success as a returner or a change of pace back in the NFL.

### **Kerwynn Williams, RB UTS**

Kerwynn Williams was the story of the Famous Idaho Potato Bowl. His 235 rushing yards on 18 carries and three touchdowns in that game put him over 1,500 rushing yards in his senior year. The young running back demonstrated impressive field vision and took great angles avoiding the defense. He has great quickness/speed to make defenders stop in their tracks. Once he got the ball in his hands, he seemed determined to score. Williams isn't a big back and might be more of a third down specialist/returner in the NFL as he excels in the open field.

### **Joseph Fauria, TE UCLA**

Joseph Fauria is the nephew of former NFL tight end Christian Fauria. He is a good receiving threat, but will not be mistaken for a skilled blocker. This tight end/receiver was effective lined up outside, like the Patriots use Aaron Hernandez, but he is not as fluid of an athlete. Fauria runs good routes, can climb the ladder to get to high throws, and anticipates where his quarterback is going with the ball. On his touchdown reception, he ran a seam route untouched and made a leaping grab. If the tight end were a more physical player, he might have had two more touchdown receptions. Both times the defensive back got into his body to break up the pass. Fauria might become a low-end TE1 like Jacob Tamme in the NFL.

### **Johnathan Franklin, RB UCLA**

Franklin did not have the type of game he wanted as he finished with 14 carries for 34 rushing yards. I expected much more from this agile/fast running back. When he found a crease in the defense (which was not often), you could see he was good in open spaces. Franklin has good hands, but the quarterback kept on forcing the ball down the field as the Bruins were behind almost immediately. When he did get carries, the running back kept on getting strung out by Baylor's front seven and did not show power/drive after contact. Franklin demonstrated some toughness pass blocking as he tried his best to keep his quarterback's jersey clean. I look forward to seeing him in a college all-star game to assess more.





# EARLY ANALYSIS

## BOWL GAME OBSERVATIONS (CONT.)

### **Khaseem Greene, LB RUT**

Greene was very impressive from the first snaps of the game. He was very quick on the edge from the outside linebacker spot. When a shotgun snap went awry, he chased down the quarterback in the end zone, stripped the ball and recovered it for a touchdown. Greene flows well to the ball with great lateral movement. There were a few times he was unable to slow himself down enough to make the play, though. I don't know if it was the flowing hair, but he reminded me of Troy Polamalu with his reckless intensity. Although, the linebacker is bigger than Polamalu, he caused the same type of havoc with a delayed sack blitz, sniffed out a screen for a loss, and appeared to enjoy smashing whomever had the ball. Greene will need to work on his coverage skills as he was fortunate that the tight end he was covering dropped the ball in the end zone. I would look to get him early in big play IDP rookie drafts.

### **Jawan Jamison, RB RUT**

Jamison was not at his best on Friday. He looked very shifty early and usually made the first man miss. Too bad for him, the rest of the Virginia Tech defense was ready to smash him. The only plays that worked were designed cut back runs and delayed handoffs. Jamison has a good spin move that he used to keep from losing yardage on more than one occasion. He hurt his ankle in the second half and did not return. I liked that his effort, regardless of his offensive line play, did not dampen. His value is very dependent on which team drafts him in April.

### **Ryan Otten, TE SJS**

He is a big target at 6'6" who is a bit lanky at 245 lbs. Otten got separated from the ball on his first target by a head hunting linebacker and laid on the ground for a few minutes. It looked like the young tight end would not return, but he came back the next series. The San José State grad is one of the few two-way tight ends as he does a good job run blocking as well as catching the ball. Otten did not line up as an inline blocker often, instead he split out wide or in the slot. His inconsistent effort confused me as he would jump high to make a catch on one play and on the next, he gave a half-hearted attempt at securing the ball. It was troubling that he caught most of his targets with his body and that he could be boxed out by defensive backs. If he can add more muscle and become a bit more physical versus coverage, Otten could become a decent TE2.

### **Conner Vernon, WR DUK**

Vernon does a great job of plucking the ball out of the air at its highest point and knows how to sit down in coverage anticipating his quarterback's decisions. While the young wide receiver is not a physically dominant player, he does a decent job blocking downfield and braces well for impending big hits. Vernon lined up in the slot and split out wide. In the NFL, he will probably be used in the slot as he struggles to get separation unless by design. He showed good lateral movement, ran precise routes, and fought for every yard. I was impressed with his ability to shield his cornerback from the ball on his ten yard touchdown reception.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## BOWL GAME OBSERVATIONS (CONT.)

### **Terrance Williams, WR BAY**

Williams is a complete wide receiver. He excels at the little things in the passing game and the running game. On his routes, he showed good separation and used the sidelines as another blocker after the catch. I was impressed with the head fake he gave his cornerback as he sold it well. This gave Williams a small window to scream down the field and make a beautiful catch in stride. He was denied a touchdown as he ran out of room (thanks to the free safety) on the sidelines. It happened again when he was head slapped a second before the ball arrived on what should have been a 60+ yard score. Williams did a good job blocking his man on run plays and made a point to keep on blocking downfield when other receivers caught the ball. I can't put my finger on it, but he reminds me of another Williams aka Tampa Bay Mike. I'm not sure if he will ever be a true WR1, but I like him to develop into a WR2.

### **Tavon Austin, WR WVU**

Austin is an impressive looking athlete. He caught only two passes, but also ran the ball twelve times. Some runs were misdirection sweeps from the slot, but surprisingly the majority of his carries were from the half back position. He is so dangerous with the ball in open spaces. Austin possesses amazing vision that he uses to set up his blocks and takes the best angles to avoid contact. His best run of the night was a delayed handoff in which he was behind the line ten yards and he fought through six defenders to get back to the original line of scrimmage. He showed toughness in traffic, used a few sweet spin moves, and laid wood blocking for his quarterback and down the field for his fellow wide receiver Bailey. Austin should be a top ten rookie pick regardless of format.

### **Stedman Bailey, WR WVU**

Bailey was the playmaker for the West Virginia offense as he scored 12 of their 14 points. Not only is he a deep threat, but he can take a short crossing pattern, break a tackle and take it to the house. This wide receiver catches the ball at its highest point, shows great lateral movement getting in and out of breaks, and busts out a hurdler's jump if he sees the chance to score. He had a 59 yard pitch and catch that reminded me of Demaryius Thomas, which is quite a feat since Bailey is much smaller at 5'10" and 190 lbs. His passion to make a play was clear when Bailey out-muscled his coverage on his second touchdown of the game. He could be a plug and play dynasty WR3 if he lands in a situation like Houston or Miami.





# EARLY ANALYSIS

## BOWL GAME OBSERVATIONS (CONT.)

### **Le'Veon Bell, RB MSU**

Bell is not the most athletic running back who may come out for the draft, but he could be the toughest. He lined up ready to smash into the line and knock around the TCU front seven. The young running back reads his blockers well, always falls forward, and does a great job at taking what the defense gives him. If he can grind out three yards on a play, he happily takes it. I liked his devastating stiff-arm and subtle spin moves to eke out extra real estate. Bell has good downfield vision, shows good lateral moves (including a jump cut), and runs inside to out. Hopefully, he can learn how to pick up his feet as he got tripped by too many ankle grabs. He got stronger as the game went on and finally saw his first pass target with less than three minutes to play. Bell could become a workhorse runner in the right situation.

### **William Gholston, DE MSU**

With a name like Gholston, you have to be careful. There were some things to like about him as the defensive end was an anchor on running plays. He did not give up ground; however, Gholston was slow to react to runs on his side. He used his brute strength with little technique to get past offensive linemen. I was not impressed with his motor as he would show monster effort play and then seem to care less the next. He lined up in all four defensive line spots and even rushed from an inside linebacker spot on one play. He did have a crucial batted pass and sacked the quarterback in the fourth quarter after applying good pressure throughout the game. I would peg him as a rotational pass rusher to begin his NFL career.

### **Marquise Goodwin, WR TEX**

This former Olympian long jumper was something special to see against Oregon State. Goodwin's night began with a disaster as he sprinted past his cornerback in the end zone, but he lost the pigskin in the lights. The next time he touched the ball was on a reverse that he darted 64 yards for a touchdown. For the first ten yards, all the players were in camera shot. By the end of his run, he was all by himself like DC Comic's "The Flash." His ability to get to world-class speed in a few steps makes him a dangerous weapon. Goodwin used the sidelines well and made tough contested catches between two defenders. He redeemed his first target mishap with a 36 yard touchdown catch with less than 2:30 in the fourth quarter to take and keep the lead for the Longhorns. Goodwin seems raw, but he has the gifts to become an NFL starter in a year or two.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## BOWL GAME OBSERVATIONS (CONT.)

### **Alex Okafor, DE TEX**

Okafor demanded my attention from the start of Alamo Bowl. This defensive end was lightning quick off the edge and manhandled any blocker that got in his way. With each passing strike he delivered to QB Cody Vaz, you could see the defender get faster and stronger. Okafor punished the entire Beaver offense as he recorded nine tackles, four and a half sacks and a forced fumble. He was not as effective against the run because he was more concerned with the quarterback than maintaining his position on the line of scrimmage. I would rank him as a top seven rookie defensive end.

### **Geno Smith, QB WVU**

Smith had a rough game against Syracuse and with some of his warts on display. His arm strength was greatly affected by the snow and the wind as his passes had almost zero zip to them. The young quarterback did well when his first passing option was open, but struggled when he had to go elsewhere. Of all the quarterbacks I have seen in this class, Smith is the one that is most reliant on his wide receivers to make plays. Most of his passes were short to intermediate throws. He was hurt by the way the coaching staff used Austin as more of a running back instead of as a receiver. Smith scored two safeties for Syracuse, one was a strip sack in the end zone and the other was an intentional grounding penalty. He lacks a sense of pocket pressure and seems very emotional, which is very troubling for a potential leader of men. Despite his bowl game, Smith is still a top three quarterback in this weak draft class.

### **Markus Wheaton, WR OR ST**

Wheaton was the heart and soul of the Beaver offense. He mostly lined up in the slot, but also carried the ball on a few reverses to keep the defense honest. The wide receiver was very quick/agile and he took good angles to squeeze as much yardage out of his touches. He plucked the ball at its highest point or lowest point (he looked like a shortstop scooping up a ball two inches off the ground). I liked his toughness as he was a willing blocker, took a few big shots and kept competing. Wheaton seemed to get frustrated with his quarterback's propensity to throw some passes behind him. He wasn't without his warts, either, as he missed a pass that should have went for a touchdown early in the game. Much like Goodwin, Wheaton also lost a long pass target in the lights. I'm not sure how fantasy relevant he will become, but the talent is there.

### **Devin Street, WR PIT**

Street was the beneficiary of some garbage time stats, but flashed nonetheless. He was a more physical player than I had thought despite his lanky size (6'4" 190 lbs). He showed good pad level blocking on running plays and isn't afraid to hand fight with defensive coverage. Street can sky the ball at its highest point and runs crisp routes even though he is more of a long strider. I saw a bit of a wiggle on a crossing pattern, when he shook off two defenders in route to a 20+ yard gain. He did a good job boxing out the cornerback en route to a ten-yard touchdown. Street's value in a rookie draft is very dependent on where he lands.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## BOWL GAME OBSERVATIONS (CONT.)

### **Andre Ellington, RB CLEM**

Ellington had a decent bowl game overall (12 touches for 85 yards), but he was pulled from the game too often for my taste. This senior back does a good job of not giving defenses a lot to hit when he runs, has enough vision to find most of his blocks, and takes good angles to make defenders miss. He keeps his legs churning after initial contact is made, is more quick than fast, and tends to bounce his runs outside. Ellington tries to pick up blitzers, but didn't do much to slow them down. I was impressed how high he leapt to make his only reception, and the way he ran a deep post pattern like a wide receiver. He gave up a crucial fumble near their end zone which led to a LSU score, so ball security may be an issue with him. Ellington remains a top five rookie running back option in a weak class. He would have to go to a running back hungry team to make an impact in 2013.

### **Mike Glennon, QB NCS**

Glennon is considered one of the best senior quarterbacks, but it was hard to tell against Vanderbilt. While he did throw for over a 66% completion rate and passed for nearly 400 yards, he was very inconsistent throughout the afternoon. The quarterback put the ball where only the receiver could catch it when he had time in the pocket. He has a strong arm, that at times, got away from him, especially when he was under pressure. When he doesn't step up as he is throwing, he floats the ball which happened several times during this bowl game. I liked when the coaching staff ran a few bootlegs as this opened up one side of the field to him and gave him more time to throw. Glennon is not very mobile and needs to work on feeling pocket pressure. He reminded me a lot of Brandon Weeden, as he showed a strong arm and concrete feet.

### **DeAndre Hopkins, WR CLEM**

Hopkins has been the most impressive player I have watched this bowl season to date. He is excellent at catching the ball at its highest point regardless if he has one on one coverage or when he gets bracketed. The receiver runs crisp routes, sells the defender on where he is going, then suddenly changes direction. I love his little "shake and bake" juke that he uses to get separation. He manipulates the sidelines as an extra blocker once he gets the ball in his hands. Even when a corner is in his hip pocket, he can out-muscle his coverage, shield the ball away and come down with the contested reception. When he gets to a ball in full stride, Hopkins is hard to bring down as he keeps his legs pumping and has no wasted movement. He demonstrated his catch radius on an 11 yard second quarter touchdown reception that was thrown low and then in the last three minutes of the game as he tip-toed in the back of the end zone for his second score of the night. I would be very excited to select him in my start-up or rookie draft this year.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## BOWL GAME OBSERVATIONS (CONT.)

### **Barkevious Mingo, DE LSU**

Mingo made an immediate impact in his bowl game. He crashed down the line, forced a fumble, and injured Clemson wide receiver Sammy Watkins in one fell swoop. The defensive end looked more like a linebacker as he ran down a receiver from ten yards away and had great instincts trying to create turnovers. He held his spot on the line of scrimmage making it difficult to run his direction. Mingo delivered some huge hits on the quarterback as he broke free from blockers by using spin moves, leverage, and raw power. He looked more like a OLB than a DE, regardless, he will be a top IDP rookie this coming season.

### **Sam Montgomery, DE LSU**

Montgomery played injured during this game. He, like Mingo, was very strong at the point of attack which forced Clemson to run inside most of the night to avoid these bookend defensive ends. He did a good job caving in the pocket and seemed to pick up his game when Mingo went out due to injury. The defensive end finished the game with two sacks. His final sack forced the Tigers to go for it on fourth and 16. Montgomery has a better chance of playing DE than Mingo, but at 260 lbs he will need to bulk up to make that happen.

### **Zac Stacy, RB VAN**

Stacy was quite the playmaker in the Music City Bowl. While he ran out of a single back set for most of the game, the running back was most effective running from the wildcat formation. Stacy has good downfield vision that makes it easier for him to read the running lanes that his offensive line created. This senior back can make the first defender miss or just shrug them off using his strong upper body. He makes himself small in the hole, uses strong leg drive (love the way he picks up his feet), and always leans forward for extra yardage. In the passing game, Stacy is a better receiver than a blocker. I expect Stacy to be a part of an RBBC in the NFL.

### **Robert Woods, WR USC**

Woods is an ultra-talented receiver. It was too bad he had the freshman quarterback, Max Wittek, throwing him the ball. Somehow, the declaring junior wide receiver caught three passes for 33 yards. He had passes thrown too high, too low and too outside for him to get his hands on. All three of his receptions were hard to bring in as Woods had to do a great job climbing the ladder to get to the ball. He would extend his body and contort it to somehow make a bad pass look decent. Woods was visibly frustrated, but kept his head in the game. His effort on running plays is something else entirely. The wide receiver looked disinterested in the process and did his best to get in front of defenders without really engaging them. Woods is a top four rookie wide receiver no matter where he lands.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## BOWL GAME OBSERVATIONS (CONT.)

### **Montee Ball, RB WISC**

Ball played well against Stanford. He ran strong, bounced off would-be tacklers, lowered his shoulders, and generated power with his lower body. If you want a battering ram for a lead back, Ball is who you want as he fights for every yard. The Badger running back displayed a few spin moves, made a nice jump cut and glided into the end zone on an 11-yard carry. By using his outstanding vision, he sets up his blocks and finds the best running lane to hit. While he isn't used much in the passing game, Ball has adequate hands and is effective as a pass blocker. I expect Ball to be a top three rookie running back, but don't expect a dynamic playmaker. He is more of a grinder like Shonn Greene.

### **Zach Ertz, TE STAN**

Ertz led Stanford in receiving for the hybrid tight end spot. He lined up as a tight end, split out wide and occasionally as an h-back. The talented tight end ran sharp routes and plucked the ball out of the air with his big mitts. Ertz does a good job blocking in the run game and had the sense to come back to block for his quarterback when the signal caller was forced to scramble. His most impressive play of the day was a 43-yard catch he made down the middle. Despite having a safety draped all over him, he found the ball in the air, adjusted to it, and made a difficult reception on the three yard line. This play set up a touchdown run the following play. Ertz is neck and neck with Tyler Eifert battling for the #1 tight end spot. I would be excited to get either one in your rookie draft.

### **Jarvis Jones, OLB UGA**

This fiery playmaker caused a lot of havoc in his bowl game. He lined up just outside of the offensive tackle switching sides to confuse blocking schemes. Jones gets low and uses his strong legs to gain leverage. He excels at hand fighting which stops blockers getting into his body. Sometimes the linebacker would let himself be guided by a lineman, only to discard them once he determined what the offense was attempting to do. Jones, at times, ran a bit high and out of control. He has the speed and agility to recover from some of those gaffes, but not all of them. Early in the game, he came very close to sacking the quarterback, but poured on the pressure in the second half to bring the quarterback down twice. Don't be fooled that he is just a one-trick pony as Jones broke up a pass downfield intended for a tight end and he sniffed out a screen pass bringing down the running back for a loss. He is a must own in big play IDP leagues.

### **DJ Swearinger, S SCAR**

Swearinger is a strong run support safety. He tackles with good technique and power. On every tackle, he tries to separate the ball carrier from the pigskin and this paid off with a forced fumble against the Wolverines. This is also a detriment as Swearinger missed a critical tackle when he focused too much on forcing the turnover. The safety does a decent job defending the pass as he skied above a Michigan receiver to break up a 60+ yard pass attempt. In IDP leagues that separate safeties and cornerbacks, draft him in the last or second to last round for depth.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## BOWL GAME OBSERVATIONS (CONT.)

### **Denard Robinson, RB/WR MICH**

Robinson will probably be one of the most discussed rookies this year. Should he play quarterback, running back, wide receiver, returner or defensive back? As someone who has watched every snap of his games at Michigan, I don't think he has the hands to play wide receiver and I don't think he is physical enough to play defensive back. If we look to what he did against South Carolina, his skill set makes him either a change of pace back or a returner. Will either of these positions make Robinson fantasy relevant? I'm not sold. "Shoelaces," as he is called, is a strong runner and has excellent field vision that he uses to read his blockers and elude defenses. He has elite speed and quickness, but does not have the frame to take punishment. I would not look at drafting him before the third round in rookie drafts and that would only be in leagues that score return yardage.

### **Stepfan Taylor, RB STAN**

Taylor was a big reason that Stanford beat Wisconsin. He is a patient runner who for the first three quarters seemed content taking what the defense gave him. The Cardinal back was good at finding his running lanes, showed a little juke move, and had soft hands. Taylor displayed good lateral movement and usually made the first defender miss. What I liked most about Taylor was that he got stronger in the fourth quarter. He ran a little harder and on one play, this determined runner put his back to the defense driving three defenders down the field five yards. Depending where he lands, Taylor is a late first round rookie pick.

### **Bjoern Werner, DE FSU**

Werner was not the factor I expected him to be against Northern Illinois. I am a bit concerned with his inconsistent motor as he would hustle to break up a screen pass on one play and lightly jog to the other side of the field on another play. He possesses a great first step and reads the offensive plays quickly. The defensive end anchors his spot on the line and does a good job keeping offensive linemen away from his body with his long reach. He relies more on brute strength than technique to separate himself from the offensive line. Werner has a knack for tipping passes as he makes a point to keep his arms high when he can't reach the quarterback in time. He is not big enough at 255 lbs to play defensive end in the NFL, but he doesn't seem fast enough to play OLB either. Werner may need to bulk up if he wants to become an impactful defender. I would love to have him as a DE3 or a LB4 on my dynasty team, depending on which position he plays.

### **Roosevelt Nix, DE/OLB KENT**

Nix seems a bit too big to play linebacker at 295 lbs, but crazier moves happen in the NFL. He was very quick out of his stance and got past the line of scrimmage in a hurry. I'm not sure if he will ever become a dominant defender, but he flashed some excellent play by shedding blockers with both swim and spin moves. Nix did not play all out on every play, which is a concern. He projects as a part-time pass rusher, so keep him in mind near the end of your rookie drafts. #MacAction (twitter hashtag for the Mid-American Conference)



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## BOWL GAME OBSERVATIONS (CONT.)

### **Kenjon Barner, RB ORE**

Barner is one of Head Coach Chip Kelly's speed pieces of the Oregon Ducks spread offense. He looked just as slender as LaMichael James did last year, but not as fast or elusive. The senior running back has a slight stutter step, uses good balance, and gets small in the running lane. While he won't overwhelm anyone with power, Barner has a mean stiff-arm, always falls forward, and got stronger as the game progressed. He is good at reading his blocks, being a patient runner, and uses a jump cut to get away from danger. In the passing game, the senior back is an adequate blocker who can slow up a blitz for a second or two. Barner ran an excellent wheel route that he used to score a 24-yard touchdown. With that reception, it is obvious that he is at his best in open space. He was targeted earlier on the same pattern. That play would have gone for a 60+ yard touchdown if Barner would not have lost the ball in the lights. I have my doubts he will ever be more than a member of an RBBC.

### **Arthur Brown, LB KST**

Brown is considered by some draftniks to be the best outside linebacker in this year's crop. In his game against Oregon, the linebacker only played a handful of snaps on the outside and spent the majority of the time as a weak side inside backer. He has good vision, comprehends the play almost immediately, and moves quickly side to side. On a few occasions, he rushed the quarterback from both inside and outside linebacker spots. What concerns me is that Brown lacked consistency defending the run. He would rarely attack the line of scrimmage, instead he would trail the play and make the tackle five yards down the field. I'm not convinced Brown can step up and shed blockers on the way to whomever has the pigskin.

### **Sharif Floyd, DT/DE FLA**

Floyd was a very important cog for the Florida defense. When he was not on the field, Louisville was more effective running the ball. He lined up and down the defensive front trying to find the best mismatch. The defensive lineman got low to the ground, dug in and was difficult to move. He played with a wide base forcing the offensive coordinator to use two linemen to block him. When the Cardinals tried to block him one-on-one, he usually shed his blocker quickly on the way to the ball carrier. Despite all the attention he received, Floyd got good penetration while pushing around his blockers. For a 303 lbs. man, he has a decent motor, a good spin move and is athletic enough to leap-frog a lineman who was laying on the ground. Floyd uses his good vision and instincts to predict the offensive plays. There were two amazing plays he made during the game and an almost great play. First, Floyd pushed a guard back with so much force that the offensive lineman smashed into the running back behind him knocking both offensive players to the ground. The second was a passing play that Floyd got thrown to the ground by the quarterback, but the determined DT bounced back up like Rocky Balboa and KO'ed the signal caller. His almost great play was a screen pass that Floyd sensed was coming, and came within two inches from thwarting.

# EARLY ANALYSIS

## BOWL GAME OBSERVATIONS (CONT.)

### **Mike Gillislee, RB FLA**

Gillislee might have been more effective had the Gators offense started off their bowl game stronger. The young running back is very light on his feet and has the ability to start and stop on a dime. He doesn't have a strong leg drive nor is he a physical player as he got caught up in the trash around the line of scrimmage. Gillislee was most effective out in space where he had room to fool defenders with his juke moves and use his lateral agility to make people miss. He is more quick than fast, uses a decent stiff-arm and has a jump cut to pull out of a hat when he needs it. Gillislee might be more suited to be a third down back than a feature runner. I want to see more from him in an all-star game before I decide where he fits in my rookie running back rankings.

### **Dion Jordan, OLB/DE ORE**

While Jordan only played the first quarter due to a shoulder injury, the talent defender made a memorable impact on the game's second play. Showing off his athleticism, he converted a two-point conversion by catching a shovel pass in the swinging gate formation. Jordan has a fantastic first step, combined with a spin move, that usually gets him into the backfield in a hurry. The linebacker, lining up in a two-point stance, would flip-flop sides to confuse the offensive line. When the offense decided to run his way, Jordan did a good job standing up his blocker. He plays a bit fast and loose. If he guessed right, he made a great play and if he guessed wrong, you couldn't find him on your TV screen. When the defensive scheme required him to drop back in coverage, he was effective covering Kansas State's tight end. I was impressed with him after seeing him play in those 15 minutes before he was injured. Jordan is a top-tier IDP player especially in big play leagues.

### **Jordan Reed, TE FLA**

Reed showed up on the box score with one reception for seven yards on a slant play and seemed to disappear at times during the bowl game. On early red zone passing plays, he was the quarterback's first read. Obviously, we need to look at another game to get a better idea of what the tight end can do. I quickly reviewed his game against Texas A&M to gain additional insight. Reed is a versatile player as he can line up beside the tackle, in the backfield and split-out wide. He shows a willingness to block on running and passing plays, but it is not a strength. The Gator tight end glides more like a wide receiver as he has very quick feet that help him in and out of breaks. Reed showed off his good balance when he hurdled a linebacker while he straddled the sideline. As a route runner, he boxes out his coverage and runs exactly where the quarterback anticipates him to be. He has good leaping ability and can catch the ball at its highest point. If Reed declares, I would rank him a notch below Stanford's Zach Ertz and Notre Dame's Tyler Eifert.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## BOWL GAME OBSERVATIONS (CONT.)

### **Eddie Lacy, RB ALA**

Lacy took the fight to Notre Dame under the bright lights. He is a strong, powerful runner who likes nothing better than running over or through people. The running back has excellent vision, as shown during his 20-yard touchdown to open up the scoring in the big game. He showed good patience and used his blockers well. It was still a bit of a surprise that such a big back could show such an excellent jump cut and spin moves. He actually looked like a top on his touchdown reception.

In the passing game, he has his strengths and weaknesses. Lacy had no problems in pass blocking, and was always looking for someone to hit when in protection. He was a willing blocker as he looked for contact on every passing play where he wasn't running a pass pattern. His hands, however, could be cause for concern, as he fought with the ball at times. Despite that slight issue, I have him and Montee Ball as my top-tier running backs in a weak class.

### **Manti T'eo, LB ND**

T'eo was a beast this year and my heart goes out to him for the losses he has endured throughout the season. Unfortunately for him, this was the worst performance I saw from him. The senior linebacker got caught a few times peering into the backfield when he should have focused on the blockers crashing down on him. He also got caught out of position on Lacy's 20-yard touchdown run, a play that normally would have seen him stepping into the hole and filling the gap. It wasn't all bad – he was able to shed blockers and make plays on the ball carriers, but he will need to do this more often while not getting caught looking the wrong way. It didn't help that his defensive linemen kept getting injured and could not keep him clean. Despite these troubles, T'eo was always around the ball as he seemed to be the second defender to arrive in every pile. He is still a top three IDP rookie to me, even with the warts.

### **Tyler Eifert, TE ND**

Eifert was one of the few bright spots for the Golden Domers this year. He lines up everywhere – in the slot, outside, wingback, or in-line and was set motion often to get in the best coverage matchups. The athletic tight end started off the game matched up against Alabama's best corner, Dee Milliner, with limited success. As with T'eo above, Eifert has some excellent qualities, but blocking doesn't seem to be one of them. He did well to get in front of his assignments, but most times they just threw him aside like a rag doll. On the plus side, he attacks the ball at his highest point and fights off physical coverage very well. Once he has the ball in his hands, he isn't afraid to bust out a spin move and fight for extra yardage with constant leg drive. Eifert projects to be more of a move/joker tight end who should be selected in the first round of all rookie drafts.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## BOWL GAME OBSERVATIONS (CONT.)

### **Damonte Moore, DE TAM**

Moore is one of the more violent defensive ends in college football. He has a great first step which causes havoc in the offensive backfield. Unlike most defenders, he is versatile enough to line up in any defensive line position. When he played defensive end, Moore held his position, but the offense almost always threw another chip blocker at him to help the offensive tackle. He demonstrated brute power and determination in making his way to the ball carrier; however, at times, he over commits and gets washed out of plays. Moore is athletic enough to drop back into coverage or jump over the offensive line to knock down passes. He had two tremendous plays that stood out to me. In the first quarter, a guard and a tackle were both holding him and he managed to break free from both linemen tackling the runner for a loss. Then in the fourth quarter, the defensive playmaker fought through a block by the offensive tackle to reach out and grab the runner throwing both offensive players to the ground. Moore is another one of the outstanding DL options in your 2013 rookie draft.

### **Ryan Swope, WR TAM**

Swope is the new Texas A&M all-time receptions leader and he was quite effective in his bowl game. The wide receiver snags the ball out the air at its highest point despite having a defender in his hip pocket. He is willing to run crossing patterns over the middle and does a good job protecting himself from big hits. Swope will not excite anyone with his measurements, but he takes good angles, has great body control, sees the field well and uses his quickness to gain extra yardage. Even though he plays the slot almost exclusively, Swope has a toughness/determination to him, which he demonstrated breaking a tackle on his 33 yard touchdown catch. I think he can develop into a starting slot receiver in the NFL, but his dynasty upside is probably only a WR4 at best.

### **Landry Jones, QB OKLA**

Jones was one of the quarterbacks who almost left for the NFL last season, but stayed for his senior year to get more experience. The signal caller has leadership and intangibles covered. He plays at a high tempo and does a good job getting the ball out quickly. Jones is very accurate within ten yards of the line of scrimmage and puts a decent zip on the ball on those short passes. His pump fakes and phantom handoffs are effective freezing the defenders for an extra second or two.

He comes with some major concerns, though. He is not very mobile and his arm-strength past 20 yards is questionable. He reminds me of former Jet/Dolphin quarterback Chad Pennington in this regard. Even when his team was down by three touchdowns, Jones kept taking safe, short throws as it appeared he did not trust his arm down the field. Most of his long passes floated in the air and were easy to defend, or in one case, resulted in an interception. In the second half, the quarterback suffered several delay of game penalties which seemed to be more of a result of the pressure he was feeling than a communication problem with the sideline. Jones might become a QB1 in time, but I see him as a strong backup for an NFL team for now.





# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EAST/WEST SHRINE GAME OBSERVATIONS

**Author: Andy Miley**  
**Day One**

After playing dynasty football for close to ten years, one of the most important skills to develop is looking where everyone else isn't. The Andrew Lucks, the Robert Griffins, and the Trent Richardsons of the world are easy to spot. Their athleticism jumps off the screen and these players have played against the best competition. Everyone knows who they are, including the causal fan. I know there are many dynasty owners that are gearing down their interest and taking a break, please don't let that be you.

There are lessons to learn during the East/West Shrine Game week, both in practices and during the game. I am very excited to be covering these for DLF. Three years ago, tight end Dennis Pitta and safety Kam Chancellor had an outstanding week of practice and games. Just this past January, a running back that was originally projected as a fullback, Alfred Morris, impressed Mike Shannahan at the Shrine Game enough to draft him. Morris finished the 2012 season with over 1,600 rushing yards and 13 touchdowns. There is gold to be mined, so let's get our boots and shovels and go to work!

The practices had very different styles as the East coaching staff had a purpose from the start. The East team was wearing full pads and hitting was encouraged. Vanderbilt's Zac Stacy looked a bit on the tubby side when he lifted up his jersey, but it was all power once the horn sounded. The running back smashed the line hard, looking for contact. Stacy has very quick feet and when given the chance he bounced things outside. He made a point to finish every run hard 20 yards down the field.

Ray Graham, running back for the Pittsburgh Panthers, was very muscular and lean. He showed good acceleration and got small in the hole avoiding contact. I thought he showed good side to side movement and had good vision. Unfortunately, he looked a little more like Dion Lewis than LeSean McCoy out there.

The opening buzz was about Kansas State's quarterback, Collin Klein, but that quickly faded. He has very small, skinny legs and seemed to want to throw the short ball, always checking down. The quarterback looked more like a developmental project than a soon to be starter. Perhaps in a few years, Klein can develop into a starter, but it is not a guarantee.

The Army quarterback, Trent Steelman, who was converted to wide receiver for this game caught every slant that was thrown his way. He looked like a natural on those throws by catching the ball with his hands out in front of him. Unfortunately, Steelman looked out of place with other patterns. It was only his first practice at receiver, so he may get better.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EAST/WEST SHRINE GAME OBSERVATIONS

### Day One (Cont.)

The star of the East practice was Marcus Davis, the wide receiver from Virginia Tech. He made almost every catch thrown his way. Davis did a bit of body catching at the beginning, but seemed to correct that the longer the practice went. The receiver was very smooth running his routes, he hustled on every play and made sure he returned the ball to the coach regardless if he made the catch or not. Davis ran some nice deep routes and did a good job tracking the ball in the air.

Running back Montel Harris ran smooth out there. He showed second effort, kept his legs churning, and demonstrated good balance going through the line of scrimmage. Harris showed some prowess as a returner as well.

Virginia Tech's wide receiver Corey Fuller had a few nice deep grabs where he tracked the ball right into his hands. He also looked good contorting himself low to make a line drive catch.

The West team's practice was more laid back as they were in helmets and shorts. This seemed to be a distraction for a few of the players. Utah State running back Kerwynn Williams exploded through the line, sometimes even a little out of control. While he looked like his former teammate, Robert Turbin, during the bowl game, Williams looked like a more physical Michael Smith while practicing Monday. He showed off great hands, excellent vision, and patience letting his rushing lane develop.

Christine Michael, the oft injured and perhaps troubled, Texas A & M running back looked very quick and agile. He has very nimble feet and was powerful running the ball. I liked that he was trying to get his knees high, knocking tacklers away with his legs.

UCLA tight end Joseph Fauria had a mixed practice. He looked very skinny and did not have good body control. On a few plays, the ball would clunk off his outstretched hands. Then on his final catch of the day, he laid out for the ball and made an amazing reception. Too bad, after that catch, Fauria did not return to the practice field.

I liked a lot of what I saw from small school hopeful Jasper Collins. He is a wide receiver from Mt. Union, yes Garcon's and Short's alma mater. He did a great job of catching the ball at its highest point and climbing the ladder despite his 5'11" height. Collins' hands were a bit inconsistent, but he showed great body control to bring in difficult catches. I want to see more.

Dan Buckner, the wide receiver from Arizona State, was tall and lanky without a lot of muscle tone. He had three impressive downfield bucket catches where he would look over his shoulder and just cradle the ball for a nice reception. Buckner caught a few shorter passes with his hands, but looked more like a deep threat.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EAST/WEST SHRINE GAME OBSERVATIONS

### Day One (Cont,)

Eastern Kentucky wide receiver Tyrone Goard ran precise routes, showed good hands, and skied for the ball. I don't think I saw him drop a single pass. He was a very impressive small school prospect.

Zach Sudfield, a Nevada tight end, made some tough catches over the middle. If anyone would earn the title as a mudder, it would be him as he did everything that was asked of him.

### Day Two

It is now Day Two of the East/West Shrine Game practices. There is a bit more excitement in the air. The players are a little more relaxed and the crowd is a little bigger as more NFL luminaries are here. I hope to see some more hitting today and better concentration. Chances are you won't find players listed here as first round rookie picks, fantasy or NFL, but there are always diamonds in the rough just waiting to be found.

Once again I will start with the East practice, headed by former NFL head coach Jerry Glanville. Coach was very active today especially with the defensive backs. He ran a high tempo workout. The most improved player, in my humble opinion, was wide receiver Blake Emory from Auburn. He was running sharp routes and looking the passes right into his hands. Emory made a few nice catches in traffic, including a spectacular one-handed grab at the sideline. The wide receiver got mostly clean releases off the line and added a little shake move to make his coverage hesitate.

Marcus Davis, the wide receiver from Virginia Tech, had a solid practice, but was not outstanding. He hustled more than the majority of the receivers, which included his blocking on passing plays once another receiver caught the ball. Davis did a good job finding the ball, making adjustments in the air and catching the football at its highest point. The wide receiver also made a nice bucket catch on the sidelines. He didn't show much improvement over the first day in my eyes.

Army's wide receiver/quarterback Trent Steelman still did his damage on the slant routes, but also looked more comfortable in his familiar role as an option quarterback. He did a good job holding the defense's attention before pitching it.

Erik Highsmith, the wide receiver from North Carolina, caught almost everything out in front of him. He ran crisp routes, got decent separation from the defensive backs, and was leaping high to come down with a few contested balls.

# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EAST/WEST SHRINE GAME OBSERVATIONS

### Day Two (Cont,)

Florida State wide receiver Rodney Smith has very good body control and can climb the ladder to catch the ball. On Monday, he made a nice reception in the back of the end zone and made sure both feet were in bounds. He ran sharp routes, made a good fake on a corner and played physical even against double coverage. He just missed what would have been a fantastic one-handed catch and had another ball knocked out of his hands at the last second.

Corey Fuller, the wide receiver from Virginia Tech, had another decent day. He does a good job getting his body up in the air to catch the ball at its highest point. Fuller is a very physical player who boxed out his coverage and blocked well downfield.

Navy wide receiver Brandon Turner seemed to take a step back from yesterday. He looked less physical as he struggled against forceful coverage. He did not body catch as much as he did the day before, even so Turner seemed to be a bit off his game.

Tight ends Lucas Reed from New Mexico and Chris Pantale from Boston College ran good routes and caught well in traffic – they did not distinguish themselves, though. Super-sized tight end D. C. Jefferson from Rutgers (6' 6") looks skinny even at his program listed 250 lbs. He ran a nice seam route, but is not physical enough to play an in-line tight end. Too bad Jefferson isn't fast or agile enough to play a joker tight end role, either.

As far as the East quarterbacks go, I was a little impressed today with Nathan Stanley from SE Louisiana. He threw a few floaters that hung up for too long, but then rebounded nicely with some passes that were on a rope 15 to 20 yards down the field. Stanley was working on selling handoff and head fakes that slowed up the defense. On the other hand, Collin Klein from Kansas State, looked to run more than throw and struggled passing on the run. He was not very accurate on most of his throws.

A little shout out to my IDP peeps, Miami Hurricane cornerback Brandon McGee skied high to come down with an interception near the end of practice. Once the ball was in his hands, he was like lightning out there as he was weaving in and out of would-be tacklers. With that kind of wiggle, someone should give him a chance to return kicks or punts.

Last but not least, I want to talk about the East running backs. Zac Stacy had a solid day and showed off some toughness filling in at fullback. He has a nice stutter-step that sets up the defense and he uses a nice shoulder dip that causes them to hesitate while putting them on roller skates. Stacy leans his head down, gets low, and pushes through the line of scrimmage. A New England scout I met at while dining was really impressed with his lunch pail workmanship. It was concerning to see his ankles double taped, but maybe they are a bit sore after all the carries he is handling in practice and in his bowl game.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EAST/WEST SHRINE GAME OBSERVATIONS

### Day Two (Cont.)

Ray Graham, the running back from Pittsburgh, had a little better day today than he did yesterday. He kept his legs churning, saw the field well and took sharp angles. Graham has a nice jump cut, and isn't afraid to hit defenders. He has soft hands and had a bucket catch of his own. Temple's Montel Harris had a decent day as the third back out there. He has good lateral movement, but is the least physical back of the East.

The West coaching staff decided to include the use of shoulder pads today, but no one was wearing any leg pads at all – this surprised me a little, but to each their own. I had a great view of the West's practice as I had NFLN's Bucky Brooks to my left for the majority of the practice (Brooks has been scouting for years, so I know I picked the right spot).

Now onto the West....

I was fortunate enough to walk to practice amongst a few of the players. One of those players was Texas A&M running back Christine Michael. He is very thick and muscular with big legs. He showed a lot of effort bursting through the line and would run 30 yards down the field at the end of each play he carried the ball. Michael ran very close to the ground, took good angles and seemed to read his blockers well. Out of all the players practicing for the West, he impressed me the most as he was going all out on every play.

Kerwynn Williams, the running back from Utah State, did not jump off the field like he did the day before. He does a good job finding a crease and exposing it for decent chunks of yardage. He has some shiftiness to him and got compact, not giving defenders much to hit. He ran crisp routes and has very small hands. I am a little concerned about his skinny legs as they reminded me of Darren McFadden's.

UCLA's tight end Josph Fauria has left St. Petersburg due to an undisclosed injury and will not play on Saturday. Tight end Josh Hill from Idaho State did a good job catching with his hands, kept himself under control during his routes, showed nice concentration and demonstrated decent speed. The other tight end, Zach Sudfeld from Nevada, is like I said yesterday, a mudder. He catches the ball nicely, but doesn't have much speed or power after the catch. If you throw him the ball five yards down the field, Sudfeld might get you seven yards in total.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EAST/WEST SHRINE GAME OBSERVATIONS

### Day Two (Cont,)

The receivers as a whole for the West, looked much better yesterday. A favorite of mine, Eastern Kentucky's Tyrone Goard, had a mixed day. He looked very thin and struggled in the power department. Cornerbacks did a good job of jamming him at the line, especially when he ran inside routes. Goard battled back from some of the physical coverage (mostly on the outside), and tracked the ball well in the air. He looked a little gimpy a few times he can back to the huddle, but kept on fighting through it. He does a good job at catching the ball in front of him while running at full speed. He had a beautiful catch on the sidelines that showed his concentration.

Jasper Collins, the receiver from Mt. Union, also had a less than impressive day. He struggled to get off the line from press coverage. The wide receiver was much better in slot with the free release. Collins has good body control and can start/stop on dime. He runs clean routes and had a nice deep sideline reception.

Mississippi State's wide receiver, Chad Bumpis, had an interesting day. He is very sudden coming in and out of breaks, but he rounds out his routes. When a defensive back was keying on him, he concentrated and made the catch. Then on the next play, he dropped a better thrown pass for what appeared to be no reason.

Dan Buckner, the wide receiver from Arizona, caught the ball in front of him and played very physical by shielding the defender from the ball. He is quite good at making quick/sharp breaks. Buckner was the most improved receiver of both the East and West practices today.

Iowa's Keenan Davis ran a bit out of control. He rounds off his routes and takes a long time to break down once he reaches full speed. Davis looked for the ball too late and fought his hands at times. Davis made a few nice deep catches, but he was just too inconsistent.

Anthony Amos, a Middle Tennessee State receiver, had a day with ups and downs. He ran crossing patterns well and climbed the ladder getting to high thrown passes. However, Amos ran out of control as he had difficulty slowing down to make breaks and fought the ball at times. He had lapses of concentration that were easy to see.

Another treat for you IDPers – Howard's outstanding linebacker prospect, Keith Pough, was all over the field. He demonstrated good vision, lateral movement, and has a nose for the ball. I am looking forward to tomorrow as I hope to see more hitting and less special team work.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EAST/WEST SHRINE GAME OBSERVATIONS

### Day Three

It's Day Three at the East/West Shrine Week and the stakes are even higher. The East practice was more crisp and there was a lot less teaching and more yelling. The man in black, head coach Jerry Glanville, kept things on task. Keep in mind, this is my first year covering the Shrine Game on location, so I may be overly impressed. So let's discuss how the players looked:

Erik Highsmith, a wide receiver from North Carolina, was very impressive. He has a wicked (sorry a Mainerism) quick first step that he used to put the defensive backs on their heels. I liked the way he plucked the ball out of the air. Highsmith has very quick quick feet, sells a solid juke move and has great body control contorting to the ball. He was at his best catching the ball in full stride across the middle. The wide receiver sold his route long and came back to the football making a spectacular catch. He did struggle some against physical coverage, but he did his best to out-maneuver it. His body is a bit on the thin side, but I see a real playmaker there.

Virginia Tech wide receiver Corey Fuller had a solid practice. He looked very quick and agile, had very good hands, and busted out a few spin moves once he had the ball. The wide receiver ran very crisp routes and plucked the football out of the air. He showed high effort blocking, and was physical fighting press coverage. If you are looking for someone to make a spectacular catch, look to him.

My first day favorite, Virginia Tech's wide receiver Marcus Davis had another mixed day. He has the hops to get his body above the defense, and has amazing body control while trying to find the ball. Too bad he has lapses where he loses the ball in the sunlight. It is a shame as he can break clear of most press coverage as he is quite strong off the line, but sometimes comes up short at the end of a route. I really like the way he can start and stop his body like a running back. He ran the best wheel route so far in St. Petersburg and hugged the sideline the entire way.

Rodney Smith, the wide receiver from Florida State, flashed at times. He tracks the ball in the air well, and made a few nice sideline receptions. However, he has his warts as he was out-physicalled in the end zone by a safety, caught the ball at times near his facemask and got stripped after he made a decent catch. I want to see a more consistent skill set before I recommend any fantasy owner drafting him.

Yesterday's favorite, Blake Emory, the wide receiver from Auburn, had a day of body catching and drops. He runs much better inside routes than outside routes. The wide receiver seemed to be distracted and did not do a good job looking the ball into his hands. Emory tried to block, but was out-matched.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EAST/WEST SHRINE GAME OBSERVATIONS

### Day Three (Cont,)

Brandon Turner, the Navy wide receiver, looks the part with size and speed, but awkwardly catches the ball and rounds off his routes. He has decent hands, but is limited after the catch. There have been a few surprise downfield catches that he has made this week though.

Brooks Reed's little brother, Lucas, who plays tight end for New Mexico, is a solid blocker and can maintain the edge when the ball is run his way. He fought with the ball a little bit today with a double catch or two. Boston College's tight end Chris Pantale showed a lot of effort in the running and passing games, leapt high, and had soft hands.

The quarterbacks did not stand out to me during this practice.

Zac Stacy, the Vanderbilt powerhouse running back, had another good day. He has good vision, moves well side to side, and goes all out on every play. Stacy seems to enjoy hitting and delivering punishment. Out of all the East backs, he was the very best at pass pro and had decent hands.

Pittsburgh running back Ray Graham had another great day of practice. He can run any passing route you ask of him including the seam route. Graham may have the softest hands of all the East skill players. The former Panther has very quick feet, keeps his legs churning and gets very small in the hole. He sees the entire field well which helps him take the best angles to avoid contact.

Montel Harris, the running back from Temple, seemed to have a few issues with the playbook as a snap or two was stopped early after he ran the wrong way. He is a shifty back, but needs to gear down and concentrate when trying to make a catch. I saw some hesitation when he crashed into the line. A running back needs more of a killer instinct to fight for yardage, not look around with doubt. There are rumors of more leg injuries abound, so I am watching him closely.

Now onto the easier paced, less stressful for the players West practice...

There is just something about Eastern Kentucky's wide receiver, Tyrone Goard. Despite his very thin body, there is a big playmaker laying underneath. He does a great job breaking down quickly and finding the ball. Goard made a few beautiful one-handed grabs and was willing to fight for the ball on almost every single play. He seems to always know exactly where his is on the field, but was a little hesitant over the middle. I like the way this receiver gets quicker with the ball in his hands. When Goard missed a catch, he would look at his hands in disbelief. The receiver almost ran me over on a hook pass, but even then, I was impressed with his concentration near the sidelines. I don't know who will take him in the draft, but I am a fan.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EAST/WEST SHRINE GAME OBSERVATIONS

### Day Three (Cont.)

Anthony Amos, the wide receiver from Middle Tennessee State, had a very good day as well. He contorted his body to adjust to the ball in the air. I liked the way he attacked the ball and caught it at its highest point. Amos is very quick/agile and does a good job selling a route deep and coming back to make the catch. The receiver also looked like a pro fighting through physical coverage to make the reception.

Mississippi State wide receiver Chad Bumphis looked a bit better today than he did in the first two days. He made some adjustments to poorly thrown balls, and created a few plays in the middle of the field. The receiver was much better on shorter routes that allowed him to make plays in tight quarters. I'm not sure he will get drafted as he fights his hands too much for my taste.

I want to like Iowa wide receiver Keenan Davis, but he makes it so hard sometimes. Every practice he makes a great adjustment to a long ball and comes down with an incredible catch. It's the other five targets he gets that he does nothing with that puts you to sleep. For a physical guy, he gets man-handled quite a bit coming off the line of scrimmage.

Another one of my favorite wide receivers is Mt. Union's Jasper Collins. I'm convinced that he will only be a slot receiver, but he may become a darn good one. He tracks the ball well in the air, has very quick feet and makes sure he catches the ball at its highest point. Collins has a great double move that he sells his coverage that he is going one way and Collins darts the other way usually giving him great separation. It's that wiggle that freezes the defense in their tracks. He is also a high effort player as he is willing to get down and dirty to make a catch inches from the ground. Whatever team drafts him, will need to set him in motion to get the most out of Collins.

Zach Sudfeld, the tight end from Nevada, had another good practice showing off his in-line blocking. He busted out a nice swim move that he uses to get past a linebacker's bump technique. The tight end looked a bit quicker today and looked good catching in traffic. He should make a nice second tight end in the NFL and if we are lucky, have a Joel Dreessen type of career.

Once again, running back Christine Michael from Texas A&M had another solid day of practice. He has very quick feet and is very decisive once he has the ball in his hands. Michael is trying to do the little things: fighting for more yards after contact, looking for someone to hit on passing plays and constantly hustling on every play. He has good enough power and vision to be a starter in the NFL if he can remain healthy and settle any character concerns.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EAST/WEST SHRINE GAME OBSERVATIONS

### Day Three (Cont.)

Kerwynn Williams, the running back from Utah State, had a decent day for the West squad. He is more of a glider who makes people miss as he wiggles away from defenders. The back has good hands and runs tight passing patterns. He really sells fake hand-offs well. I like the way he explodes through the line of scrimmage by getting small in the hole and uses his vision to set his running lanes.

Southern Methodist's running back Zach Line flashed for a couple of plays, but looked like a fullback. He is not that quick to the hole, but he does have quick feet and did a good job pass blocking. I'm not sure how that information will help you in your rookie draft, unless you have to play a fullback in your lineup.

I also wanted to give an IDP shout out to Nevada linebacker Albert Rosette. He fills well to the hole and did a decent job in coverage. The young athletic linebacker has good vision and is best suited for an inside linebacker job.

### Game Observations

It has been a very rewarding first visit to St. Petersburg for the 88th East-West Shrine Game and the practices leading up to the event. There are some NFL hopefuls who have the opportunity to make their mark in the 2013 NFL Draft that I had the pleasure of viewing this week. In the first part of this article, I will discuss my top four running backs and top five wide receivers that should be drafted in your rookie drafts who participated in the Shrine Game Week. In the second half, I will discuss some players who made their mark during the 88th Shrine Game.

### Running Backs

#### 1. Ray Graham, Pittsburgh

He isn't the biggest back here, but he is the shiftiest. Graham is a very smooth runner who gets small in the hole and doesn't give defenders much to hit. He might start off as a third down back, but he has the speed and vision to become a three down player. The injuries were a concern at the beginning of the season, but he seems to have recovered nicely. Graham is closer to fellow former Pittsburgh Panther LeSean McCoy in overall talent than compared to Dion Lewis. With the softest hands of all the skill players here, the running back will be an asset to any offense and he can pass block as well. If his medical comes back fine from the combine doctors, I consider Graham a top five rookie running back option.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EAST/WEST SHRINE GAME OBSERVATIONS

### 2. Christine Michael, Texas A & M

He is a big, muscular man who runs powerfully into the line. The running back has quick feet, decent vision and has a chip on his shoulder. By not playing much his senior year due to injury and conflict with the coach, Michael has a lot to prove. He looked to hit people, kept his legs driving forward, and was a willing blocker. In a rookie class that does not have a true superstar, Michael has the upside to pay off big or crash and burn. I was impressed enough to put him near the end of my top 12 rookie running backs.

### 3. Zac Stacy, Vanderbilt

There is so much to like about Stacy. He is a hard-nosed runner who is very effective running inside and outside the tackles. I really like the versatility he brings in the passing game as he was the best pass blocker at his position here in St. Pete and can catch the ball in space. Stacy has good vision, decent lateral movement, and strong leg drive. When I look at Stacy, I'm reminded of former Bengal Rudi Johnson. He is willing to do the dirty work to get the job done. Stacy is in my top 15 rookie running backs.

### 4. Kerwynn Williams, Utah State

He sure looked bigger and more powerful on tape than he did live. I came away more impressed with his speed, agility and vision after seeing him in person. Williams takes great angles, sees the field well, gets separation and runs to daylight. He is big enough to take the hits, but gets small enough to avoid taking many of them. Out of all of these running backs I've discussed, his impact will be greatly influenced by where he goes. Williams could become a good returner who sees the field sparingly or he could become a third down specialist to start. I have him just outside my top 15 rookie running backs.

## Wide Receivers

### 1. Marcus Davis, Virginia Tech

He might be one of the rawest wide receivers I have seen since Brandon Marshall. Davis was the biggest wideout in St. Petersburg and he used his size to box out the defenders. He tracks the ball well in the air, catches the ball at its highest point and has good body control. He is more quick than fast, but has inconsistent hands at times. He seems to have a knack for catching the long ball and playing physical right back to defensive coverage. Anyone who selects him in their rookie draft will need to be patient with him as he needs to work his craft, but in a year or two he could be something special. I have him in my top 15 rookie receivers.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EAST/WEST SHRINE GAME OBSERVATIONS

### 2. Corey Fuller, Virginia Tech

Fuller is the better finesse receiver. He has amazing body control, can pluck the ball at its highest point, and has excellent hands. The wide receiver has good speed and agility to make people miss, but has enough physicality to fight off press coverage. Fuller also has a spin move that can get him out of arm tackles and forces defenders to take bad angles to try to bring him down. I'm not sure he will ever be more than a WR2 in the NFL or in dynasty, but he should thrive in a pass first offense. I have him a slot or two below his teammate.

### 3. Tyrone Goard, Eastern Kentucky

Some say I fell in love with this young wide receiver's talent. Goard is quite skinny and is mostly known for his ability to run nine routes; however, he offers much more than that. He can start and stop on a dime while finding the ball quickly. He made some big plays downfield and amazed with a few one-handed receptions. Like Davis, Goard is raw and doesn't run precise routes, but fights for every yard and makes defenders miss. He has top 20 talent, but may need time to develop his muscularity. Plus, I love the fact that he looks at his hands in disbelief when he doesn't make a catch.

### 4. Erik Highsmith, North Carolina

Out of all the receivers I saw, he's the one who kept on getting better each day. Highsmith is quick off the line, can throw a juke move or dart right past his initial coverage. He attacks the ball in the air and usually catches it in stride. Despite his thin size, he can hold his own against physical coverage and I don't think I saw him miss a catch the entire week. Highsmith will probably start as a slot receiver initially, but I can see him becoming a solid WR2 for his NFL team and perhaps your dynasty team.

### 5. Jasper Collins, Mt. Union

I like Collins almost as much as Highsmith, but unlike Highsmith, Collins struggles against physical coverage. He is only suited to play the slot in the NFL. Collins can contort his body to make almost any catch high or low. He needs less than two steps to get to full speed and has amazing lateral shiftiness. Even though he is under six feet tall, he can climb the ladder and get to highly thrown balls while making the difficult catch.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EAST/WEST SHRINE GAME OBSERVATIONS

Now onto the Shrine Game blog itself (by the way, I love the view from the press box):

Chad Bumphis, the West team wide receiver from Mississippi State, has been the story today with a 57 yard touchdown reception (he would finish with over 90 yards receiving). He got a great block by my man "the Mudder" (TE Zach Sudfeld). Bumphis gears down quickly and makes the most of his opportunities. His downfield vision and sideline awareness were keys to his long touchdown reception.

East team wide receiver Corey Fuller has been responsible for the majority of the passing highlights on his team. He broke out a nice spin move to get away from two defenders as he caught a pass in the flat in full stride. Fuller is getting good separation on his routes, but the ill-equipped East quarterbacks keep missing him.

Ray Graham, the East team running back, looked explosive whether running inside/outside or catching passes in the flat (outside of his first carry on which he fumbled). He makes the first defender miss and takes great angles making it hard to hit him straight on. Graham looks great in space. I hope the rest of your league is sleeping on him too.

Outside of the first series near the end zone, West team running back Christine Michael has been relatively quiet. He ran tough inside with a little shake-n-bake, but he had a critical fumble with less than 1:30 left in the first half that led to a West touchdown. While he runs with good power, I'm not sure how well he sees the field. Michael looked quick on a pass to the flat. On his six yard touchdown run, he gave a little stutter step and powered into the end zone. He might start out as a goal line/short yardage back first, so keep that in mind.

Zac Stacy, an East running back, looked hesitant with his carries and was caught a few times dancing too much for negative yardage. He got stuck playing fullback and couldn't manage to bring in a nice pass thrown to him in the flat. When he ran straight ahead, Stacy was more effective.

West running back Kerwynn Williams looked good when he broke plays outside whether it was on designed sweeps or on kickoff returns. He has the speed and wiggle to break plays outside. He tries to run hard inside, but doesn't seem to generate enough power to be effective there. He might be better off as a third down, change of pace type back.

Jasper Collins (Mt. Union) and Marcus Davis (Virginia Tech), wide receivers, flashed on a few plays showing good wiggle and nice ability to track the ball in the air. Collins is more quick than fast, but isn't stout enough to hold up as an on-line receiver. Davis, on the other hand, is very powerful and has a nose for the ball, but struggles with consistency and concentration on shorter routes. I came away impressed with their talent, but well aware of their need to improve their technique.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## SENIOR BOWL REPORT

### **Author: Andy Miley**

I won't lie to my readers. I miss the sun already as I got spoiled with 82+ degree weather in sunny St. Petersburg. Gathering in Mobile are the top potential NFL rookies who want to compete. Unlike last week, I am gleaming my information from the NFL Network's televised practices which have their benefits and their drawbacks. Seeing any part of the workouts gives you a sense of what is going on yourself, but on the other hand, you only get to see what a producer decides what is important. Here are my observations and I will follow-up later about the game itself.

### **Mike Glennon, QB NC ST**

He has been accurate, at times, but struggles with his footwork. The quarterback needs to develop better habits when the pocket is collapsing. Glennon has the NFL arm and vision, but needs to work on the little things if he wants to be a successful quarterback.

### **Stepfan Taylor, RB STAN**

He has good hands, looks powerful running and lowers his shoulders to get compact. Taylor demonstrates quick lateral movement and decent vision at the line of scrimmage.

### **Johnathan Franklin, RB UCLA**

This running back has quick feet as he changes directions easily. Franklin has soft hands and excels at pass protection. I like the way he keeps his eyes downfield and is always looking for a cutback lane.

### **Kenjon Barner, RB ORE**

My first thought is he looks smaller than his former teammate LaMichael James. He works best in space, tries hard to block (not very successfully), takes good angles and has the hands of a third down NFL back.

### **Robbie Rouse, RB FRES**

Measuring under 5'6" isn't going to help him make an NFL roster; but thankfully, he is built a lot like Maurice Jones-Drew (squat, muscular). Rouse has quick feet, runs low to the ground, and breaks out a spin move or two. I'm concerned with his struggles in pass blocking, as he will have limited success when the defense can predict what plays he will run.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## SENIOR BOWL REPORT

### **Mike Gillislee, RB FLA**

He is a high effort back, who always keeping his legs churning. The running back gets small in the hole and has a nice burst. I haven't seen enough to make a good judgment on him yet.

### **Aaron Dobson, WR MARS**

This wide receiver is very smooth getting in and out of his breaks. He catches the ball at its highest point and can match physicality with his coverage. Dobson sells a nice double move to set up the defender which helps him catch the ball in stride that helps him gain extra yards.

### **Marquise Goodwin, WR TEX**

The track star has a lot of wiggle in his routes as he can change directions in a flash. He is very smooth, takes good angles and tries to fight his way out of trouble. I'm concerned that he isn't physical enough to get away from press coverage. Hopefully, he can concentrate on being a receiver and get better at his craft.

### **Markus Wheaton, WR OR ST**

He is definitely making his mark in Mobile. The wide receiver snags the ball out in front of him while in stride. Wheaton is very sudden with his route running and can track the ball deep down the field. I was very impressed with two receptions he made as one was between two defenders right near the sideline and the other was a bucket catch 30 yards down the field.

### **Chris Harper, WR KAN ST**

Harper is a big, physical receiver who tracks the ball well in the air. He does a good job catching away from his body in stride. For such a thick athlete, the receiver does an amazing job contorting to the ball.

### **Denard Robinson, WR MICH**

He is a raw athlete which is clear when you watch him running patterns and attempting to catch the ball. "Shoelaces" is improving every day, but I am not convinced he will be an effective receiver. Some have hope that he will develop into a Randall Cobb type player, but I am not one of them.





# EARLY ANALYSIS

## SENIOR BOWL REPORT

### **Quinton Patton, WR LA TECH**

Wow, he just jumps off the screen. Patton does a great job catching the ball at its highest point, shows amazing balance and has soft hands. He willingly hand fights his coverage while getting separation and out-maneuvering everyone else on the field. I like his “my ball” mentality that he uses to attack the football.

### **Terrance Williams, WR BAY**

He was one of my favorites during the bowl games, but struggled early in the week. He battled a bit too much with his coverage and got side tracked. Now the wide receiver is more comfortable. Williams sold a nice double move on a deep route, tracked the ball well and fought for the football. His physicality is on display with his ability to block down the field.

### **Tavarres King, WR GA**

This wide receiver is good at accelerating and breaking down quickly. He runs tight, crisp routes, busts out a double move and catches the ball at its highest point. King has a good sense of where he is on the field as he excels at using the sidelines to his advantage.

### **Cobi Hamilton, WR ARK**

He has great acceleration and plucks the ball out of the air. I’m concerned that the skinny wide receiver is not very physical as he seems to get dominated by the defensive backs.

### **Vance McDonald, TE RICE**

For whatever reason, he has caught the attention of NFL Network’s Mike Mayock. McDonald is very physical as I saw him truck a few defenders, but his double and triple catching of the ball is quite concerning. His hands got better during each practice though.

### **Datone Jones, DT/DE UCLA**

He has looked explosive and very slippery coming out of his stance. Jones is strong, uses excellent leverage and is good with his hands due to his martial arts background. Unlike most defensive linemen, he has a great motor and keeps on giving high effort snap after snap.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## SENIOR BOWL REPORT

### **Ezekial Ansah, DE BYU**

Against lower level competition, he looks the part with his speed, spin moves, and power. Ansah is very raw as some of the North team's better offensive tackles (Fisher and Long) are controlling him. He has a big wingspan and did knock down a few plays on well timed jumps.

### **Alex Okafor, DE/OLB TEX**

He has a great first step and uses his hands to get into the backfield. Okafor uses good leverage, stout bull rush power, and has a strong swim move that he uses to disengage his blockers.

### **GAME OBSERVATIONS**

For two weeks in a row, the NFL Network's coverage of an all-star college game spoiled us dynasty enthusiasts. Of course, there are many more draftable players on display in Mobile than there were in St. Petersburg. I will take the time to highlight some of them who made an impression during the game. Many of these players' values will be greatly affected by the team that drafts them about how they fit the current scheme. Unfortunately, we won't know that until the end of April. I expect this being a very deep draft at wide receiver, linebacker, and perhaps even defensive line.

### **Ezekial Ansah, DE BYU**

By most accounts, he had a decent week of practice, but something changed when the whistle blew. The defensive end had a dominating game as he got pressure on the quarterback using both brute power, agility and speed. He has a very quick first step and uses good leverage to get underneath whomever gets in his way. Ansah controlled his blocker until he saw the ball and then would discard them – it didn't matter if it was a run play or a pass play. He amazed me with his determination to never give up on a play as he would chase down a ball carrier ten yards to make the tackle. This included stuffing Michigan's Denard Robinson on his first carry. Ansah is still a bit on the raw side, but he should be in the conversation as a DE2 for your dynasty team this year and grow into a DE1 in the very near future.

### **Kenjon Barner, RB ORE**

The running back did not display anything of note until the fourth quarter. He caught the ball decently, but did not show much wiggle after the catch. Barner had some ball control issues and did not look physical enough to be a three down back. With his limited skill set, he is better suited as a third down back or returner. He flashed on his touchdown reception with less than two minutes to play. Barner shouldn't be drafted before the third round in a rookie draft.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## SENIOR BOWL REPORT

### **Jonathan Cyprien, S FL INT**

Despite being from a small school, he was the talk of the practices and the game. Cyprien is a hard hitter who plays very well against the run. He is a solid tackler who doesn't bite on juke moves. Keep an eye out for him in IDP leagues as he could start for a few NFL teams.

### **Johnathan Franklin, RB UCLA**

I wasn't overly impressed with any of the running backs in this game; however, Franklin looked the most like an NFL back. He first showed good speed and decent vision on his kickoff return. In a running back role, Franklin ran more effectively on the outside as he got skinny and showed a burst of power and speed. Once he put his foot down and decided where he was going, he was very effective (he flashed that on his touchdown run). He can run inside, but does not generate enough power to be effective in that role despite keeping his legs churning. Franklin might become a starter in the right system.

### **Mike Gillislee, RB FLA**

There are many things to like about this running back. He demonstrates good vision, has good lateral movement and typically makes the first defender miss. I think he is a better space runner than between the tackles as he got caught up in the line of scrimmage when there were bodies around. Gillislee possesses a quick first step, reads his blockers, and has a jump cut at his disposal. There is upside to this running back as he might develop into a three down player in the NFL and your dynasty team.

### **Mike Glennon, QB NC ST**

The young quarterback once again looked good when he wasn't under pressure save for a phantom throw or two. He has a strong arm and is very accurate with the ball if he is given time. There were a few throws that he had amazing placement where only the receiver could make the catch. However, Glennon got rattled by Ansah and awkwardly moved around in the pocket. Unless he gets a strong offensive line and running game to protect him in the NFL, he will struggle. Glennon desperately needs to develop quicker feet to get away from pressure.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## SENIOR BOWL REPORT

### **Marquise Goodwin, WR TEX**

The track star did not disappoint. His biggest play of the night was one of the most boneheaded plays I have ever seen. Goodwin almost muffed a punt in the end zone, but instead brought it out and exploded down the sideline for a 18 yard gain. It's like the rest of the players are in slow motion and he has warp speed. Goodwin is effective making defenders miss on shorter patterns and gaining yards after the catch using his speed and agility. The coaching staff attempted to get the ball in his hands on long passes, but he struggles with more physical coverage down the field. He is very raw, but could develop into a WR2 in a short time.

### **Chris Harper, WR KAN ST**

This wide receiver has tremendous body control he uses to contort himself to the ball. Harper is a unique receiver as he is close to 230 pounds and only a hair over six feet tall. He uses his physicality to fight off smaller defenders and push the ball down the field. I will be very interested to see what team drafts him as the possibilities are there for him to be a unique playmaker.

### **E.J. Manuel, QB FL ST**

He made the most of his opportunity. Manuel made quick decisions and showed athleticism moving around the pocket or down the field. He was accurate with the football as he threw a beautiful fade route in the end zone where only the receiver could get to it. With his arm and feet, he could fit in most NFL systems. I'm not sure he will be a good starter, but he could grow into a solid NFL quarterback.

### **Kawann Short, DT PUR**

The defensive tackle was very active for most of the night. He was getting good penetration and was a step away on a few occasions from getting a sack. Short mixes up his power and agility to shed blockers and make plays. The zero through two gaps were his playground as he forced the offense to run outside the tackles to get away from him. He did take a few plays off which is concerning, but perhaps in a better rotation, Short will be more efficient.

### **Stepfan Taylor, RB STAN**

This running back appeared to be a product of his offensive line. When they struggled, so did he. I liked the way he squared his shoulders and ran with power on the outside, as he was more effective in space. Ball protection might be an issue as he got rocked by a hard hit. He is versatile enough to use in the pass game as he has decent hands and is good in pass protection. Taylor could become a decent starter in the right system, but he runs a bit stiff for my taste.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## SENIOR BOWL REPORT

### **Conner Vernon, WR DUKE**

He picked up right where he left off from his bowl game. This wide receiver runs crisp routes and knows when to sit down in the route to make the catch. Conner looks back for the ball and will shorten or lengthen his pattern to get in the right spot for his quarterback. I like the way he engages his defenders with his physical play – this sets them up to be blocked by the wide receiver on running plays or creates separation on quick routes. I think he will be a strong WR3 on an NFL team and may become a WR2 in a pass-first system.

### **Markus Wheaton, WR OR ST**

Many draftniks believe he got the biggest boost from this week's practices. He made the most with his opportunities during the game as well. He has great concentration as he made a tough catch between two defenders and did a good job keeping both feet in bounds. I wasn't overly impressed with his return skills; however, he has a knack of making the first defender whether it is in the return or passing game. Wheaton attacks the ball in the air and has enough wiggle and toughness to come down with the ball most of the time. He is moving up my draft board as I see him closer to a Steve Smith than a Jeremy Maclin type of player.





# EARLY ANALYSIS

## 2013 ROOKIE DRAFT: A FIRST LOOK

**Author: Jeff Haverlack**

If you've followed me for any length of time, you know we're entering my favorite time of year. Sure, I love new dynasty drafts, seasonal competition and the timely free agent addition, but nothing comes close to the excitement and intrigue present in the rookie combine and draft, along with the analysis and rankings that come with them. I watch many of the rookies as High School Seniors and follow their careers with great interest as their respective values rise and fall until such time that they enter the draft.

Each draft has its own unique characteristics, strengths and weaknesses and each draft, regardless of how each expert breaks it down, will have its own surprises and out-of-nowhere performers that will be late round fantasy selections – or undrafted altogether. It's a time to do your research, follow those who have a history of solid draft analysis and not be outworked by your fellow coaches.

It's very early for any preliminary rankings, but I'm certainly not unwilling to give you mine as it sits right now. I'll give you my top five at each of the three main positions followed by this year's noteworthy tight ends and end it with my top twenty rookies in overall ranking.

### 10,000 Foot View

Terrible!

There, I said it. And I won't take it back. I've been doing draft research for quite some time now, and even longer if I add in the years before I was a serious fantasy player. Like most who have followed the draft closely, it's usually easy to see the strength and weaknesses, at least on the surface, very quickly. It doesn't take much in the way of rocket science to see the cream at the top. To me, the most fun is always had in the third round or beyond of fantasy drafts. But any way I slice it, this draft is terrible from a fantasy perspective. Consider, too, the value of rookies falls dramatically after the NFL Draft in almost every case. I hope you didn't sell out for 2013 draft picks.

That's not to say that there aren't going to be true gems to be had in the first round ... or beyond. The real issue when assessing a draft for fantasy purposes is how to slot the rookies based on talent, especially those at the top of the draft. In a draft like we had in 2012, you could ask for little more. We saw as solid a top four as we have seen in a long, long time. When looking at 2013, it's a very bad year to be a fantasy team in need with that coveted first pick, or a pick in the top three for that matter – it's simply not 2012.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## 2013 ROOKIE DRAFT: A FIRST LOOK

Mark my words here, 2013 is going to be a total crap shoot. But this type of draft increases the value of picks in the second half of your first round. With so many evenly ranked players, there is little value differential between the first half and the second half of the first round. There's a tremendous opportunity, relatively speaking from previous years, for the top teams in your league to end up with the best fantasy point producer from one of the last picks in the first round.

Getting back to my earlier statement about gems who will certainly provide a level of excitement at the pro level, first and foremost the numbers have told us that the surest bets are quarterbacks drafted extremely early, as well as wide receivers drafted within the first five picks. On rare occasions, running backs grace the top five picks as well and usually produce well. In 2013, there is zero chance of any running back or wide receiver being highly drafted. In fact, I'll go as far as to say that we won't see a one drafted in the top 15 picks. For the quarterback position, things are far more interesting.

Make no mistake, there is no Andrew Luck or Robert Griffin III in the 2013 draft class. In fact, I don't think there's even a Russell Wilson in this year's rookie crop. I've seen more than one comparison of West Virginia's Geno Smith to Robert Griffin and the comparison is flat-out ridiculous. Looking at NFL team situations, there's a lot of need at the quarterback position, yet arguably no quarterback in this class is deserving of a top 20 selection. What's a team like Kansas City to do?

With no sure-fire first pick quarterbacks, in addition to a ho-hum grouping of running backs rising to the top, fantasy drafters should be anything but excited. This year's intrigue exists with the wide receivers. While no receivers in the mold of A.J. Green, Calvin Johnson or Larry Fitzgerald are readily evident, this year does possess a predictably good size-to-speed quotient. Which receivers will be the gems from this group is anything but obvious, but the first round looks to hold at least three notable players.

The tight end position is a difficult position to ever get excited about. Every once in a great while we'll get an athlete such as Kellen Winslow Jr. or Vernon Davis, but not often. 2013 has likely one first round selection at the position. With tight end playing a more prominent role in the new-look NFL, we could see a second player slip into the first, but I'll be surprised. And I'm not seeing a later round Jimmy Graham type of tight end in 2013.

Let's move on to my positional rankings.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## 2013 ROOKIE DRAFT: A FIRST LOOK

### Quarterbacks

There's talent here in 2013, but not enough for me to get overly excited about. The big question remains "What will Kansas City do with their first pick?" With Andy Reid at the helm, I fully expect the selection of an offensive left tackle or quarterback. Quarterback is, by far, the biggest need for the Chiefs, but without that guaranteed face-of-the-franchise slinger headlining the draft, Reid has his work cut out for him in deciding whose name to call. Put me down in the camp that when you have a great need, you take the best fit for that need, even if you have to overdraft to fill it. KC's quarterback need is simply too great for them to pass on a quarterback unless they can fill it via free agency. Free agent left tackle Brandon Albert could be resigned, he's young and capable. I think the choice must be quarterback, but we'll see.

1. Geno Smith – West Virginia
2. Matt Barkley – USC
3. Mike Glennon – North Carolina St.
4. Tyler Wilson – Arkansas
5. Tyler Bray – Tennessee

### Running Backs

The 2013 class of backs won't turn heads in any one category. In fact, the group is largely disappointing and fraught with risk for fantasy coaches needing a running back at the top of the draft. I firmly believe early picks in 2013 should be traded for known production, but I also understand the allure of having a top pick. There's potential with this group, but I could make a strong argument none of these backs should be taken in the top four picks in PPR formats. When Gamecock Marcus Lattimore fell to injury for the second time in two years, both of the season-ending knee variety, there's no way I can keep him highly rated and over some of the other backs in this class. He's a high risk, high reward player and he's got the work ethic to return strong, but I would not be selecting him with a pick in the top half of the first round. I do like the size of this year's backs compared to previous years. This group is going to be overdrafted in fantasy by teams forcing the pick. It's going to be a great year to be sitting in the second half of round one.

1. Eddie Lacy- Alabama
2. Montee Ball – Wisconsin
3. Giovani Bernard – North Carolina
4. Marcus Lattimore – South Carolina
5. Joseph Randle – Oklahoma State



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## 2013 ROOKIE DRAFT: A FIRST LOOK

### Wide Receivers

The cream of this year's crop exists in the wide receivers. But while the talent level is above average across the top four or five, there doesn't exist the elite receiver that top picks demand. There's not a name in the grouping that is a sure thing and fantasy teams needing a quarterback will have a difficult decision to make at the top of the draft. There's a strong argument to make this year that any player taken in the first three picks is a reach considering talent level. At least at receiver, there's depth to carry the selections deep into the first round of fantasy drafts. Enough so to create some real intrigue with risk-reward selections and trades.

1. Keenan Allen – California
2. Cordarrelle Patterson – Tennessee
3. DeAndre Hopkins – Clemson
4. Robert Woods – USC
5. Terrance Williams – Baylor

### Tight Ends

Notre Dame's Tyler Eifert continues to rise on draft boards and he'll have a following at the combine. I'm not overly optimistic about either of these tight end prospects and I see both as later second round selections in fantasy, though they likely won't be taken there.

1. Tyler Eifert – Notre Dame
2. Zach Ertz – Stanford

# EARLY ANALYSIS

## 2013 ROOKIE DRAFT: A FIRST LOOK

### Top 20

A top 20 rookie ranking in February is a fool's folly. It's well known the value of rookies falls dramatically immediately following the draft. More accurately, the values fall during the draft as teams with depth or lesser needs step up to take higher profile rookies. It happens every year and this year, with the rookie class being much thinner at the top, the fall could be dramatic and precipitous. With the NFL Combine still to come, expect these rankings to make major shifts. Additionally, I'll be watching much more tape with far more scrutiny – stay tuned on that front.

I'm ranking with an emphasis on PPR formats. Adjust receivers down and running backs up marginally for non-PPR formats.

1. Eddie Lacy, RB Alabama
2. Geno Smith, QB West Virginia
3. Keenan Allen, WR California
4. Cordarrelle Patterson, WR Tennessee
5. Montee Ball, RB Wisconsin
6. Giovanni Bernard, RB North Carolina
7. Marcus Lattimore, RB South Carolina
8. DeAndre Hopkins, WR Clemson
9. Robert Woods, WR USC
10. Matt Barkley, QB USC
11. Mike Glennon, QB North Carolina St.
12. Terrance Williams, WR Baylor
13. Joseph Randle, RB Oklahoma State
14. Christine Michael, RB Texas A&M
15. Aaron Dobson, WR Marshall
16. Stepfan Taylor, RB Stanford
17. Tyler Eifert, TE Notre Dame
18. Zach Ertz, TE Stanford
19. Tyler Wilson, QB Arkansas
20. Tyler Bray, QB Tennessee

I'll say it again. It's extremely early to be hanging draft slots on rookies that have yet to play a down in the NFL, let alone being drafted into it. Use this listing as a first look at the names on my top 20 draft board





# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EARLY 2013 ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

It's February – that means Valentine's day, cold temperatures, and the start of "Rookie Fever." With the Super Bowl in the rear view mirror, all die-hard fans are turning their eyes towards the combine and the 2013 crop of rookies.

In order to share some of our thoughts and give you a few names to watch as the combine and pro days unfold, we put together a 12 person rookie only mock draft. Keep in mind this is just a super early take on the current draft class. Personal rankings will change drastically as the combine, pro days, and the 2013 NFL Draft unfold. Landing spots will undoubtedly have major influence on several of these players and will help solidify rankings. Until then, things are very fluid. There will be names not listed that could end up being first round rookie picks if everyone goes right for them or names in the first round that go undrafted if everything falls apart.

For this mock draft, we assumed it was a standard scoring PPR league with normal lineup requirements, meaning no IDP, super flex, or 2 quarterback leagues. Trades were not allowed. Draft order was randomly assigned and each drafter was asked to make a brief comment about why they made the pick they did. I'll follow up each pick with some brief thoughts of my own. I'm not a draft expert, and like many of you, my rookie analysis is just beginning. I'm just sharing my thoughts so you get two opinions on each pick. In cases of disagreement, I'll be the first to admit that I might be the one who is wrong.

On with the show!

1.01 – Eddie Lacy, RB Alabama

Mark's thoughts: The clear top overall pick early in the process. Not another Trent Richardson, but a very good blend of power and speed. He has good hands and with the right landing spot, he has three down potential.

My thoughts: Unlike in past years, there isn't a clear top player or even a clear top three or four at this point in time. You could make an argument for roughly six different players to go at pick 1.01. If you decide you want a running back, I think Lacy is the right choice right now. While he isn't elite, he is very good at everything, which can lead to a very successful career.

# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EARLY 2013 ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

### 1.02 – Giovanni Bernard, RB North Carolina

Coleman's thoughts: In PPR, it's great to have a running back who catches the ball extremely well, as Bernard does. He could challenge Lacy for the 1.01 if he goes to a place like Detroit or Cincinnati.

My thoughts: Bernard is very fast and very explosive. PPR scoring definitely helps Bernard who has great hands and is very good in the open field. However, there is something that bothers me about Bernard – he seems to lack power and almost seems to lack the desire to fight for extra yards. He struggles after contact and doesn't seem to make defenders miss as much as I had hoped. There's a big enough gap between him and Lacy that I might have gone WR here, but he is the next best RB on the board.

### 1.03 – Keenan Allen, WR California

Jaron's thoughts: Allen has all the tools, though lack of elite speed may cause him to slip a bit – that's what I'm counting on as that could allow him to go to a better team later in the first round, preferably one with a solid QB and line. I'm looking forward to seeing what he can do in the NFL, particularly now that he's "on my roster."

My thoughts: You could make an argument for any one of at least three receivers to be the first selected right now. I'm not sure who I would take first right now if I had to pick. He almost makes me think of a slightly watered down Larry Fitzgerald in that Allen lacks speed and acceleration, but has great body control, route running, and separation ability.

### 1.04 – Geno Smith, QB West Virginia

Jeff B's thoughts: The stats (especially the completion percentage) he posted during his senior season is impossible to ignore. He's got great size and intangibles and I expect him to be an instant superstar if he gets drafted by a team that can plug him directly into a zone-read type offense. Keenan Allen is the only player I had higher on my draft board, so this was a relatively easy choice.

My thoughts: I think this was the first curve ball of the mock draft. Personally, I'm not a huge fan of this pick. Jeff and I clearly don't agree, because I really don't see any quarterback in this year's class that has QB1 upside. I think I would probably rather have guys like Josh Freeman or Sam Bradford as a developmental quarterback than anyone from this class. This early in the round I would have gone for one of the receivers still available.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EARLY 2013 ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

### 1.05 – Cordarrelle Patterson, WR Tennessee

Jon's thoughts: Best player available at this point. To me, he is a bigger, faster version of Randall Cobb. He was used on returns, rushing, and of course, receiving situations as well as even passing the ball. He has the skill set that will help him find a way on to the field early in his career. His size/speed combo combined with an electric skill set make him a first round NFL talent. If he goes to the right team, he could be the pick of the draft.

My thoughts: This is another of the three receivers I think you could argue as the best of the bunch. He is probably the most likely to be drafted first in the NFL draft due to his versatility and skill set. Of course the downside of being drafted high is that he will most likely be dealing with a sub-par or inexperienced quarterback, maybe both. However, he might just have the highest upside of the receiver group this year. I would be very happy to get him mid-first round.

### 1.06 –Zach Ertz, TE Stanford

Ryan's thoughts: The big tight end from Stanford has quickly climbed the draft boards with the NFL Combine approaching. In a deep tight end class, he and Notre Dame's Tyler Eiffert are clearly the top two options. When drafting rookies before the actual NFL draft, I was looking for the safest option, and that was clearly Ertz, who also offers big-time upside. Ertz should go in the late first round, meaning he's likely headed to an established playoff contender. On a team like Green Bay or Atlanta, he'd immediately be a top fantasy option.

My thoughts: Ertz is a great player and has the talent to maybe one day be a TE1, but I struggle with taking tight ends early in rookie drafts. Typically the position takes a while for players to develop. The logistics of most leagues also make them less valuable than other positions. Like Ryan said, this is a pretty safe pick, but I think there was more value and upside to be had here. If your scoring for tight ends is the same as receivers, and you're only forced to start one, I would have rather taken a receiver in this spot.

### 1.07 – DeAndre Hopkins, WR Clemson

Andy's thoughts: I was very excited to select him at the 1.07 as I have him ranked as my second best wide receiver. He is excellent at catching the ball at its highest point regardless of coverage. Hopkins runs crisp routes, sells the defender on where he is going, then suddenly changes direction. I love his little "shake and bake" juke he uses to get separation.

My thoughts: I think this is a steal. To get Hopkins with pick seven is about as much luck as you can hope for. With his speed and leaping ability, he has a shot to be a top notch deep threat in the NFL.



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EARLY 2013 ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

1.08 – Marcus Lattimore, RB South Carolina

Eric's thoughts: I figured if I was picking near the back portion of the round, my team must have been fairly decent, so taking Lattimore was a luxury pick considering he would have been the 1.01 before the injury. I'm keeping my fingers crossed he heals up and lands in a good spot.

My thoughts: At this point in the round, I think Lattimore is worth the gamble. I wouldn't think about taking him much before this point as the gamble is just too big. It is far too early in the process to know exactly how healthy his knee is, but there are reports that have him going anywhere from the second day of the NFL draft to being undrafted. Team and health will have a lot to do with his value in your fantasy league, but right now he's definitely worth a luxury pick at 1.08.

1.09 – Tyler Eifert, TE Notre Dame

Tim's thoughts: I was worried that picking at 1.09 or later was going to leave me with a TE. I can't stand taking a TE in the first round, but Eifert could be very valuable if he goes to a good situation. Got sniped on Lattimore.

My thoughts: I have Eifert right on par with Ertz. He is a great talent that could be very productive in the right situation. However, I still struggle with taking tight ends in the first round, just like Tim did when he made the pick. I would like this pick better if it were five or so picks later, but this is probably right about where you will see a TE go, especially if one of the top two ends up in Atlanta.

1.10 – Justin Hunter, WR Tennessee

Doug's thoughts: Best value in my eyes left on the board at pick 1.10. He hasn't fully regained all of his explosiveness since tearing his ACL in 2011, but once he does he has the ability to stretch the field. At 6'4", he should also be a matchup nightmare in the redzone.

My thoughts: Hard to argue with the value at this point. Hunter is a beast and came on strong late in the season. However, he is still yet to regain his full pre-injury form, which is why he's still available at this point. Had the knee injury never happened, we could easily be talking about him being an AJ Green or Julio Jones type of prospect.

# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EARLY 2013 ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

### 1.11 Montee Ball, RB Wisconsin

My thoughts: Since this was my pick, I obviously like it. He is very hard to pass on him at the tail end of the first round. It isn't a sexy pick by any means, but had Ball come out last year, he easily would have been taken in the upper half of all rookie drafts, even in the excellent 2012 rookie class. He made a mistake by going back to a team that lost its quarterback and pretty much the entire offense around him, allowing defenses to key in on him.

While he lacks the top end speed and burst that would make him a top tier back, he has great vision, balance and hits the hole hard. Plus, it is really difficult to argue with his college production. He clearly has a nose for the end zone with him being the all-time record holder for career touchdowns in Division I and second on the list for most in a season. He won't ever be a home run hitter, but on the right team, he could be a week one starter and the majority part of a committee, making him a very solid RB2 – hard to ask for more in the last few picks of round one.

### 1.12 – Robert Woods, WR USC

Jeff H's thoughts: He is one of those receivers I've followed from High School, committing to USC as a five star prep player. When watching tape on Woods, he's gritty, tough and is quick off the line of scrimmage. He's got tremendous agility and uses his body and speed to his advantage. He's not the type of receiver who is going to take over a game, but in a PPR system, Woods has a lot of upside and could develop into a true WR1.

My thoughts: Woods being available with the last pick in the first round is definitely a testament to the deepness of this draft, especially at the wide receiver position. He lost some value during the 2012 season – this was part due to struggling through an ankle injury, his quarterback getting injured, and the emergence of Marqise Lee. Nonetheless, Woods has the talent to be a solid starter at the NFL level and is well worth the pick.

### 2.01 –Tavon Austin, WR West Virginia

Mark's thoughts: At only 5'9 and 175 lbs., he is decidedly undersized. However, he is an incredibly dynamic athlete who reeled in 114 catches for 1,289 yards and 12 touchdowns last season. He is a bit of a wild card, but has the potential to be PPR gold out of the slot if he lands in a good spot (Houston?). As a quick side note, having the first pick in the mock I tried to picture myself in rebuild mode. With that said, I was really hoping one of the two tight ends would fall to me. I feel they are the two players with the best chance to be difference makers at their positions in the NFL..



# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EARLY 2013 ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

### 2.01 –Tavon Austin, WR West Virginia (cont.)

My thoughts: I have a few concerns about Austin. Size is obviously one of them as Mark pointed out. He is extremely quick, fast, and runs pretty good routes, but the hands are also concern to me. I'm not sure if he is just getting ahead of himself and thinking about the run after the catch, if he is losing focus in the middle of the game, or if it is something else, but he had some pretty bad drops or near drops in the games I watched. Of course those concerns are why he is still here in the second round.

### 2.02 – Stedman Bailey, WR West Virginia

Coleman's thoughts: Bailey defied logic in 2012 by catching 25 touchdowns despite being only 5'10 and 195 pounds. He has great technique, not relying on his athleticism to make plays. His route running skills and great hands will make his NFL transition easier.

My thoughts: This was the second major curveball in my opinion. Bailey isn't in my personal top ten WRs at this point in time, so I'm surprised he is the seventh WR off the board in our mock. The production this year was definitely top shelf from Bailey, but I actually have concerns about his transition to the NFL. At this point, I don't really see him as excelling in any area of the game, which makes me think he is going to get lost in the shuffle at the next level.

### 2.03 – Joseph Randle, RB Oklahoma State

Jaron's thoughts: At OSU, he's drawn comparisons to Thurman Thomas. High praise I doubt he will live up to, particularly because it's tough to envision him getting enough carries as he won't be an every-down back. However, his skills as a pass-catcher and blocker will put him in the game (especially on key downs). He'll earn the trust of his quarterback quickly. Filling a Darren Sproles-like role makes him a better value in PPR leagues.

My thoughts: I like Randle, but like Jaron said, his upside if probably capped as a passing down specialist. He lacks the power, leg drive and balance to succeed between the tackles and after contact. That said, he could excel in a role where he is paired up with a bigger power back like Mikel Leshoure in Detroit.

# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EARLY 2013 ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

### 2.04 – Matt Barkley, QB USC

Jeff B's thoughts: I did it. I pulled a Shanahan with this pick. This was purely a value pick because the running backs (Lattimore, Ball) and the receivers (Woods, Austin) I thought might be available were gone. Too many NFL teams need a quarterback like Barkley who can come in and start from day one, so he'll get the opportunity right off the bat – that's going to help my team a lot more than the other skill position players who were still available and likely won't make a fantasy impact for a few years.

My thoughts: I talked about my thoughts on the quarterbacks in this draft with the Geno Smith pick. I just can't get behind taking a quarterback with both first and second round picks on the same team. In a 12 team league, quarterbacks who aren't elite have almost no trade value. This team would now have whoever was the 2012 starter, Smith and Barkley on the roster. Just because they are NFL starters doesn't make them worth anything in fantasy anytime soon, just like Ryan Tannehill. I just don't see how this is a value pick. Jeff and I will just need to agree to disagree.

### 2.05 –Terrance Williams, WR Baylor

Jon's thoughts: I was very surprised he was available at 2.05. He has a great size/speed combination, and in my opinion was the most impressive receiver at The Senior Bowl. I think he could have gone in first round of NFL draft last year if Kendall Wright wasn't a teammate of his at Baylor. He beat out fellow teammate Josh Gordon while both were on team. Williams is the real deal and if he lands in the right spot has a legit shot at solid WR2 production.

My thoughts: I actually briefly considered Williams at my 1.11 pick. I like the height, speed and skill set. However, when I watch him, I see someone who is a little bit young. What I mean by that is that he needs to add some bulk to his frame to handle the more physical corners in the NFL. He also needs to improve his work ethic, focus and make sure he is giving constant effort on every play. I love the upside, though.

### 2.06 – Quinton Patton, WR Louisiana Tech

Ryan's thoughts: For dynasty owners, wide receiver is easily the deepest position this year. With some big names like Keenan Allen likely to be taken near the top of the first round, there will be some gems available late in the first round and even into the second and third round of rookie drafts. Patton is an explosive wide receiver who runs great routes and could go as early as the first round of the NFL draft. In the mid-second of a PPR league dynasty draft, he's a steal.

# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EARLY 2013 ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

### 2.06 – Quinton Patton, WR Louisiana Tech (cont.)

My thoughts: In the middle of the second round, I really like this pick. He has some of the best hands of this year's group. The downside is that outside of his hands, he just doesn't jump off the page to me in any other area. He's very good, but not great in any area. With that said if he can perfect his route running, I can envision him as being a very successful complementary receiver on an NFL team.

### 2.07 – Johnathan Franklin, RB UCLA

Andy's thoughts: The rich keep on getting richer as I have him as my third ranked running back and to get him at the 2.07 is huge value. Franklin has impressive vision, and uses his speed/agility well. He is a great fit for a zone blocking team, so they can take advantage of his cutback moves and his steady balance. He has decent hands, but needs to work on his core strength and pass blocking.

My thoughts: Andy is way further along in the rookie evaluation process than I am, so he could easily be dead on with this one. I don't have Franklin in my top five backs right now. He needs a fair amount of work in the passing game and he seems to lack the power to run between the tackles. The combination of those two things makes me a little concerned about where he's going to find a role.

### 2.08 – Cierre Wood, RB Notre Dame

Eric's thoughts: I really like Cierre Wood's pro prospects as part of a committee attack. With speed to kill and a hard running style, Wood can also catch passes out of the backfield. I would love to see him end up in a place like Atlanta or Pittsburgh.

My thoughts: I'll be honest. I'm not a fan of Cierre Wood. Part of it is that he was a complete non-factor in the BCS championship game, though to be fair, so was the whole Notre Dame team. I just don't see anything special in him. I also don't really agree that he has a hard running style. He seems to shy away from contact when he can and goes down a little too easily. He isn't in my top ten RBs at this point.

### 2.09 – Da'rick Rodgers, WR Tennessee Tech

Tim's thoughts: This one surprised me. I don't expect Rodgers will drop to the 2.09 in any rookie draft. He will show well at the Combine. And I expect he will run in the 4.4s. He is explosive. Of course he's got the off-field issues.

My thoughts: I would be surprised to see Rodgers last until the end of the second round in most rookie drafts as well. He has a tough, physical style that should make him a great possession receiver. The off the field issues need to be considered as well.

# EARLY ANALYSIS

## EARLY 2013 ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

### 2.10 – Aaron Dobson, WR Marshall

Doug's thoughts: I like big, physical receivers, and Dobson definitely fits the bill. He has a basketball physique, is a smooth route runner, is able to shield off defenders with his body and has a great set of hands. He's a great value this late in the second round.

My thoughts: Dobson definitely has the ability and the desire, but I think he's going to need a fair amount of polish to succeed in the NFL. He's raw, but in a few years he could end up being one of the best receivers to come out of this draft if everything goes just right for him. He'll need to end up on a team with a strong veteran to show him the ropes.

### 2.11 – Mike Gillislee, RB Florida

My thoughts: Once again, we are back to my pick, so I like it. It was very much a toss up at this point in the draft. Pretty much all the receivers I have in my first few tiers are gone, so that left me looking to the running backs. I considered Le'veon Ball, Andre Ellington and Jawan Jamison at this point, but ultimately went with Gillislee.

I liked how he developed his senior year. Rushing for 4.7 YPC in the SEC gets my attention. He showcased good speed, agility and power in the games I saw. He also showed very well in the passing game. I think he could have the potential to end up as a three down back in the league, which was the tie breaker for me.

### 2.12 – Markus Wheaton, WR Oregon State

Jeff H's thoughts: He has flown under the radar for much of 2012, playing in the shadow of the Oregon Ducks. Wheaton followed up his 73 reception 2011 campaign with 91 receptions and 11 TDs in 2012. His listed 4.45 40 time is likely a bit high and he's a monster in space. He's thinly built but should add 10-15 pounds in the NFL to play close to 200 pounds. Wheaton has game breaking ability in an offense with an established WR1.

My thoughts: Wheaton is an interesting prospect and well worth the flier with the last pick in the second round. With his size, he isn't going to win many one-on-one physical battles when it comes to press coverage or fighting for position. He does have very good hands and is fearless in traffic, making him a guy to watch working out of the slot.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## ROOKIE RISERS AND FALLERS

**Author: Andy Miley**

The underwear Olympics (the NFL Combine) has begun in Indianapolis. It is especially flashy this year with the custom designed, multi-colored Under Armour sporting attire that everyone is wearing. As you are reading this, keep in mind the Combine is only a small snapshot in time of each player. Game play and medical reports are more important than drills and stop watches. If I don't mention a particular player, I consider their stock to be close to what it was before the event.

### The Risers

Tavon Austin, WR West Virginia

While he only posted the second quickest 40 time (4.34 seconds) for wide receivers, I was impressed with his thick build, despite his diminutive size. Even though the gauntlet was not his best event, Austin impressed with his route running and did not let the ball into his body. He is a very explosive receiver who has a great deal of body control.

Stedman Bailey, WR West Virginia

He did not wow anyone over with his 40 time in Indianapolis, but he was impressive nonetheless. Bailey has natural, soft hands and does a great job of catching almost every pass in front of him to maximize his inertia. The receiver is very quick in and out of breaks while showing a great deal of effort on every snap/attempt.

Tyler Bray, QB Tennessee

The young quarterback showed off a strong arm and was fairly accurate with his ball placement. These were for the most part new receivers to him and he looked natural out there. He's moving up my quarterback prospect board.

Knile Davis, RB Arkansas

The oft-injured running back had an awesome day in Indianapolis – he looked big, quick, and strong during running drills. The former Razorback posted a 4.37 second 40 time while looking explosive. Davis also put up 31 reps of 225 lbs on the bench press on Saturday. Despite impressing in those areas, he fought his hands when trying to catch the ball. His medical evaluation may be just as important as Marcus Lattimore's.





# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## ROOKIE RISERS AND FALLERS

Tyler Eifert, TE Notre Dame

Out of all the tight ends, he had the most impressive measurables as he jumped higher and longer than his counterpart, Zach Ertz. The young golden domer had a sub 4.7 40 yard dash and looked decent in the blocking drills. Eifert is not overly muscular. He is a smooth runner who looked comfortable in the gauntlet drills. This may be enough of an edge to make him the clear number one NFL and fantasy tight end of the board come draft day.

Chris Harper, WR Kansas State

The former Wildcat showed off his big, thick, muscular frame in the drills. He had a fantastic gauntlet catching everything with his out-stretched hands. The receiver has a knack for tracking the ball in the air and adjusting his body to make the catch. These attributes weren't revelations, but they confirmed his Anquan Boldin-type skill set.

Vance McDonald, TE Rice

He is a big, muscular athlete who is drawing comparisons to the former Rice tight end, James Casey. The former Owl did better than I expected in the gauntlet drills, but still body catches more than I'd like. He posted a sub 4.7 40 yard dash which is great for a man his size.

Christine Michael, RB Texas A&M

After watching him practice at the East/West Shrine Game week, he looked even better in Indiana. Michael is a jacked-up beast who showed a lot of burst. He benched 225 lbs 27 times, which demonstrates his natural strength. His lateral agility was clear as he made cuts in the drills. The young running back seems to be improving his ability to be effective catching the ball out of the backfield from what I saw in St. Petersburg.

Markus Wheaton, WR Oregon State

The wide receiver demonstrated a lot of explosion in the drills. He attacked the ball in the air and hustled throughout the Combine. The former Beaver may have had the best gauntlet and he put on a quite the show catching passes deeper than 20 yards down the field. I came away very impressed with Wheaton.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## ROOKIE RISERS AND FALLERS

### The Fallers

Zach Ertz, TE Stanford

The young tight end has a frame that needs filling out as he did not seem to be as physical as Eifert. He does have good hands, but clearly looks to be the second best tight end in his class. If he is just another move tight end, there are several tight ends that may jump ahead of him in the NFL Draft and in fantasy leagues.

Gavin Escobar, TE San Diego State

Many in the media had put him near the level of Eifert and Ertz. He did not show that at Indianapolis. Escobar has good hands and shows a lot of effort trying to make receptions, but did not stand out against the lower ranked competition. His pro day will be very important to his draft status.

Mike Glennon, QB North Carolina State

He didn't get any thicker after the Senior Bowl. While the scarecrow has great arm strength, Glennon continues to have muddled footwork – this really impedes his accuracy which is necessary to be effective in the NFL. He needs to show he can adjust to pressure in the pocket to get a chance at a starting gig in the near future.

Marquise Goodwin, WR Texas

The former Olympian looked more like a world-class sprinter than an NFL prospect today. While he did post the fastest 40 time of the day (4.27 seconds unofficially), he fought with the ball at times. Goodwin is an explosive athlete, but may need a season or two in the NFL to be fantasy relevant.

Justin Hunter, WR Tennessee

Another world-class jumper had a bit of a disappointing Combine. The former Volunteer looked a bit too lanky. It was later revealed that he lost weight to try to increase his 40 time. I was surprised with the amount of body catching he displayed. While he does have amazing body control, he adjusted to the ball late on a few occasions and was an overall disappointment for me after watching his game tape. This is just a slight bump in the road, but does cause me a little concern.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## ROOKIE RISERS AND FALLERS

Jordan Reed, TE Florida

The move/joker tight end has big legs and looked good running the 40 yard dash. He had one of the best ten yard splits; however, it was concerning he was not running routes at the Combine. I hope he has an impressive workout at Florida as he is slipping in the tight end rankings.

Stepfan Taylor, RB Stanford

While the former Cardinal looked very muscular with big legs, he appeared to be a bit stiff and robotic. He ran upright at times and had a slower 40 time than expected, posting a time of 4.76 seconds. Taylor looked more like a tweener between a half back and full back. While watching him, he reminded me of Toby Gerhart, another former Stanford grad who is the Vikings second string running back. Unfortunately, that is not a compliment.

### DEFENSE

#### The Risers

Michael Buchanan, DE/OLB Illinois

While the defensive end had thin legs, he showed quick foot and hand coordination. Buchanan was much better standing up than he was in a three-point stance. He looked comfortable in the linebacker drills showing off decent hands and ball awareness. Buchanan's fantasy value will be very scheme dependent, but I expect he will play DE.

Zaviar Gooden, LB Missouri

The young linebacker is thick and muscular without an ounce of fat on him. He was very fluid with his hips as you can tell he was a former safety. Gooden will probably play the WLB position in the NFL as he is not that strong at the point of attack. I would draft him as an upside LB5 for your dynasty squad.

Corey Lemonier, DE Auburn

I really liked what I saw from him at the Combine. He was jacked-up with muscles on muscles. The defensive end demonstrated a lot of explosive quickness. He seemed to be very intense and displayed raw power and athleticism during the drills. His value will be better as a defensive end than as a linebacker – draft him as an upside DE4.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## ROOKIE RISERS AND FALLERS

Tyrann Mathieu, S LSU

The former “Honey Badger” had a good Combine. He looked very instinctive in drills and ran a 4.5 in the 40 yard dash. Deion Sanders raved about him on the NFLN’s coverage in Indianapolis. Mathieu has quick hips, tracks the ball well in the air and has good enough hands to cause a few turnovers. He has even more worth in return yardage leagues as he is dangerous with the ball in his hands. I’d expect Mathieu to start as a slot corner. This would be great for his value as you would get his return yardage and some defensive stats as well. I see him as a strong DB3 in return yardage leagues, but only a DB5 in other formats.

Brandon McGee, CB Miami

The East/West Shrine practice week standout had a better Combine than many draftniks thought he would. The young cornerback moved well with good speed and agility. He played with high effort and definitely improved his draft stock with this performance. I’m not sure he will ever be an NFL starter, but he may be a valuable defensive back on your dynasty team as an upside DB5.

Sharmarko Thomas, S Syracuse

This defensive back looked like a monster out there. He is very thick and muscular with huge legs. Watching a little game film, it was obvious he enjoys hitting receivers and backs who get in his way. His forty yard dash was memorable as he fell down across the finish line, but bounced right back up. He is very explosive and played like a ball hawk attacking the ball in the air. Once Thomas had the ball in his hands, looked like a running back trying to run over people. He has gone from unranked to one of my top ten safeties.

Cornelius Washington, DE/OLB Georgia

This defensive weapon has a huge wingspan and the power to match as he benched 225 pounds 36 times. He was very quick/agile and showed a lot of explosion attacking every drill in Indianapolis. I project him as pass rushing OLB. It might be the Steelers fan in me, but I would like him to be their selection in the fourth or fifth round.

Sylvester Williams, DT North Carolina

The former Tar Heel had a high motor at the Combine. He was quite fast and agile for a mountain his size. Williams was going all out on the drills and as a result he had some balance issues. I don’t have him in my top five DTs yet, but I’m going to back to watch more film on him.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## ROOKIE RISERS AND FALLERS

### The Fallers

John Jenkins, DT Georgia

Interior defensive linemen should be stout at the point of attack. Jenkins did look powerful; however, he seemed to be carrying a lot of his weight in his mid-section. The defensive tackle moved awkwardly from side to side, as he appeared to be out of breath and jiggled when he moved. Jenkins is now outside my top five DTs.

TJ McDonald, S USC

The safety has decent straight-line speed, but does not have very fluid hips. He looked very stiff and may only be a run support in the box strong safety at the next level. For him to have any kind of fantasy role, McDonald will need to go to a linebacker poor team.

Damontre Moore, DE Texas A&M

The defensive end was quite thin, especially in his calves. He didn't look strong or explosive. During the drills, it appeared he injured his hamstring and to top it off, he only bench pressed 225 pounds twelve times the previous day. I will let someone else select him as I have him outside my top eight defensive ends.

Alec Ogletree, LB Georgia

I know it might be the DUI talking, but I was not overly impressed with the troubled linebacker. He was already suspended during his college career and then right before the most important time of his professional football career he makes that huge mistake. In Indianapolis, he came out flat, and also looked awkward and skinny in drills. I knew he was no thumper, but he did not display much athleticism that was evident on tape. Hopefully, Ogletree can rebound as he is still in my top five linebackers.

Manti Te'o, LB Notre Dame

I'm sure this one will be controversial, but I was not impressed with the golden doomer. He looked like just a guy with decent quickness and agility. Te'o is not solidly built to play inside backer. While he did look better in passing drills, Te'o still looked like an oversized, yet slow safety. After seeing him suffer through the Alabama game and "girlfriend gate," I'm not sure if the NFL will get the same competitor.





# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## SUCCESSFUL WIDE RECEIVER MEASUREMENT ANALYSIS

**Author: Jacob Feldman**

At the end of every February, hundreds of NFL coaches, scouts, doctors, and staff members flock to Indianapolis. At the same time, die hard football fans start to show the effects of rookie fever and flock to their TVs to set their DVRs for the NFL Combine.

When you stop to think about it, it really is a strange phenomenon.

We watch these young men run, jump, and lift over and over again. They get measured like prize cattle and prodded by team doctors to see if they fit the bill. The only issue is that no one really knows exactly what to look for in these measurements. Some NFL teams are known to have a strong affinity for one measurement over the others (for example, Oakland and 40 yard dash times) and there are a ton of commonly held beliefs such as quarterbacks needing to be 6'2" or taller to succeed. What exactly does the combine mean to us, the dynasty fantasy footballer? Sure, faster and bigger is better. But the question that I've always had is exactly how fast is fast enough? Is it just a fast 40 or do I need to look at cone, shuttle, 10 yard splits, and everything else too?

Last June I made my first attempt to delve into the endeavor of figuring out exactly how to score and weight the various drills and measurements at the combine in order to figure out the quality of a wide receiver's skill set – the positive response was overwhelming. This year, there are a few tweaks to the methodology in order to hopefully produce even better results. My goal was to figure out what measurements mean the most and see if there were any trends that might help us increase our odds of getting that next big receiver and lessen the chances of drafting yet another wide receiver bust.

The whole process starts with me taking the NFL receivers that have placed in the top 20 PPR scorers in one of the last two seasons. This left me with a group of 29 receivers. I then went back and found data for their combine appearances. Their scores in the following categories were noted:

- 1) Height
- 2) Body Mass Index
- 3) Hand Size
- 4) Arm Length
- 5) 40 Yard Dash Time
- 6) Vertical Leap
- 7) Broad Jump
- 8) 20 Yard Shuttle
- 9) Three Cone Drill

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## SUCCESSFUL WIDE RECEIVER MEASUREMENT ANALYSIS

Once I had the data collected, I did some basic statistical analysis on the nine data points for the 29 different receivers. The mean of the group was found as well as the standard deviation for each of the categories. If you're unfamiliar with statistics, standard deviation is the average distance away from the mean. In a naturally occurring data set, such as physical measurements, you expect 68% of your data to be between 1 standard deviation above the mean and 1 standard deviation below the mean. You then expect an additional 13.5% to be between one deviation and two deviations on each of the ends. Only 2.5% of any data set should be more than two deviations on either end.

Here's how the scoring works.

If the measurement was within 1 standard deviation of the average of the top NFL receivers, 1 point was awarded. Anything that was more than 1 standard deviation above was given 2 points. Something that was between 1 and 2 deviations below the average ended up being -1 points, and anything more than 2 deviations below lost 2 points.

### Important Notes

- 1) There is an exception to every rule. There was one top WR that just doesn't fit – Wes Welker. According to the analysis, he is too small, too slow, and his jumps are way under par, yet he excels in the league. He is proof that anyone can be a top WR; however, what are the chances that we will find someone exactly like Wes Welker again? Not very likely.
- 2) The vast majority of the top fantasy WRs are outside receivers. Many of the drills and the results of those drills are skewed towards that type of receiver. That means that many of the slot receivers end up scoring lower – this includes guys like Welker and Randall Cobb as well as future rookie Tavon Austin.
- 3) High scores don't guarantee success and low scores don't mean a receiver is destined to fail. All that the score reflects is if they possess a physical skill set that closely mirrors that of the current group of top NFL receivers. There is an awful lot that goes into making a successful player that isn't measured by these drills. Use this as a piece of the puzzle, not the whole puzzle.
- 4) One non-drill trend I noticed is that almost half the top NFL receivers were first round picks in the NFL draft. Any receiver taken in the first round needs to be given a little extra consideration, especially those taken in the first five or six picks. The other half of the receivers came almost equally from just about every other round, so day two picks and day three picks seem to have equal opportunities.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## SUCCESSFUL WIDE RECEIVER MEASUREMENT ANALYSIS

5) Falling short in one of the measurements seems to be okay. Falling short in more than that seems to be a bit of a red flag. Only four of the 29 NFL receivers had more than one area where they graded out more than 1 standard deviation below the mean. Keep in mind that falling short and being deficient in an area means that they would have been in the bottom 16.5% of the sample. Being in that bottom portion in multiple physical categories isn't a good thing.

Here is the minimum I looked at before a receiver became deficient in an area and losing at least one point. In other words, these are the values that are one standard deviation below the mean of the top 29 receivers in the sample. Keep in mind that top receivers seem to be able to make up for one deficient area, but having multiple areas and still being a top player seems to be pretty rare and largely limited to those playing in a slot receiver role.

The Minimums for a top WR

Height – At least 71 inches tall (5'11")

Body Mass Index – At least 26.55

Hand Size – At least 9.1 inches

Arm Length – At least 31.34 inches

40 Yard Dash – Under 4.55 seconds

Vertical Leap – At least 34 inches

Broad Jump – At least 118 inches (9' 10")

20 Yard Shuttle – Under 4.37 seconds

Three Cone Drill – Under 7.08 seconds

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## SUCCESSFUL WIDE RECEIVER MEASUREMENT ANALYSIS

Using this system, here is a rough breakdown of the top 29 receivers in the NFL right now:

The average score for the top receivers was 7 points with 1 missing drill, which means they probably would have had an 8 if they participated in all drills.

Only 3 of the 29 receivers had scores of 2 or lower. Those were Cobb, Welker and Antonio Brown. 5 of the 29 receivers had double digit scores with the top two being Calvin Johnson (11 points with 2 missing drills) and Julio Jones (12 points).

If you give one point per missing drill, the number in double digits jumps to 9 receivers.

Here are some of the top scores from the group of 29 NFL receivers for comparison:

12 points – Julio Jones

11 points – Calvin Johnson (2 missing)

10 points – Larry Fitzgerald (1 missing), Roddy White, Vincent Jackson (1 missing),

9 points – Mike Williams, Andre Johnson (3 missing)

8 points - Victor Cruz (2 missing), Mike Wallace, Brandon Marshall, AJ Green, Dwayne Bowe, Marques Colston, Pierre Garcon

As you can see by the names, these are some pretty gifted athletes on this list. They also have pretty special skill sets. If you look at the draft position of these receivers, you notice a lot of what I mentioned above. We have seven first round picks (four of them very early), one second rounder, one third rounder, two fourth rounders, one sixth rounder, one seventh rounder, and one who went undrafted. Keep in mind, high scores don't guarantee success. It just means that athletes that can score an eight or higher are definitely players to keep an eye on as the draft and training camps occur, even if they aren't taken until the later rounds.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## SUCCESSFUL WIDE RECEIVER MEASUREMENT ANALYSIS

Here are the top scorers from the 2013 rookie class with any deficient areas noted:

13 points – Rodney Smith

12 points – Da’Rick Rodgers, Josh Boyce (Arm Length)

11 points – Mark Harrison

10 points – None

9 points – Markus Wheaton (BMI), Ryan Spadola (Arm Length)

8 points – Ryan Swope (Hand size)

7 points – Tavarres King (BMI), Justin Hunter (BMI)

This next group had decent scores, but they all have multiple areas of deficiencies or several missing drills that lowered their scores. Keep in mind that multiple deficiencies aren’t very common in the top group of receivers outside of slot receivers:

7 points – Stedman Bailey (Height, Broad Jump)

6 points – Marcus Davis (40 yard dash, 3 cone drill, missing 1), TJ Moe (Arm Length, 40 yard dash), Quinton Patton (Vertical Leap, Broad Jump)

5 points – Marquess Wilson (BMI, Arm Length), Cordarrelle Patterson (Hand Size, missing 2), Aaron Mellette (Shuttle, 3 Cone Drill), Tyrone Goard (BMI, Hand Size, Shuttle), Corey Fuller (BMI, missing 2)

Keep in mind that the scores are just a snapshot of the player. It is a one day look at one part of what makes them a football player. Here are just a few additional thoughts on some of the bigger names in this draft class in alphabetical order with their score in parentheses:

Keenan Allen (2) – Didn’t perform any of the drills due to a lingering knee injury. He’ll have a lot riding on his April pro day.

Tavon Austin (0) – The sample is almost entirely outside receivers and is overly harsh on slot receivers like Austin. Almost all of his deficiencies were size based other than being a few inches short on his vertical. His 40 yard dash and shuttle run were exceptional, so he’s still one of my top receivers even with a poor score.





# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## SUCCESSFUL WIDE RECEIVER MEASUREMENT ANALYSIS

Aaron Dobson (0) – Like Allen, Dobson didn't do any of the drills due to injury. He is a little bit thin and has smaller hands than I would have hoped, but he's still one of my top ten players and could be a true sleeper.

DeAndre Hopkins (2) – He wasn't nearly as explosive as I had hoped. His 40 yard dash was sub-par as was his broad jump. His shuttle time wasn't just bad, it was the worst time at the combine for a receiver. His size is good, but I think he's probably getting downgraded to a possession receiver role in the NFL.

Justin Hunter (7) – I mentioned him above, but I wanted to bring him up again. Reports are that he cut weight to try to run faster. I think he cut too much and it impacted some of his drills and how he looked. I think that even a score of 7 is a bit low for him.

Cordarrelle Patterson (5) – His combine was a little disappointing compared to the hype, but he still had some great numbers in the drills he did. He has a very intriguing skill set and outside of small hands, he is very close to the average of the top receivers.

Terrance Williams (3) – One of my favorites pre-combine, he had surprisingly small hands and arms for someone that is 6'2" and 208 pounds. Even with that, I still really like him. He will likely struggle with drops like Brandon Marshall, but he'll be a very productive outside receiver.

Robert Woods (1) – I'm not really sure what to think of him. I loved him in 2011, but he struggled in 2012 and continued to struggle at the combine. All of his measurements were right around that one deviation below the average. In other words, he is below average pretty much across the board from a physical standpoint. I really don't know what to make of him at this point. More research is needed.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## SUCCESSFUL RUNNING BACK MEASUREMENT ANALYSIS

**Author: Jacob Feldman**

At the end of every February, hundreds of NFL coaches, scouts, doctors and staff members flock to Indianapolis. At the same time, die hard football fans start to show the effects of rookie fever and flock to their TVs to set their DVRs for the NFL Combine.

When you stop to think about it, it really is a strange phenomenon.

We watch these young men run, jump, and lift over and over again. They get measured like prize cattle and prodded by team doctors to see if they fit the bill. The only issue is no one really knows exactly what to look for in these measurements. Some NFL teams are known to have a strong affinity for one measurement over the others (for example, Al Davis' Raiders and 40 yard dash times) and there are a ton of commonly held beliefs such as quarterbacks needing to be 6'2" or taller to succeed (just ask Russell Wilson). What exactly does the combine mean to us, the dynasty fantasy footballer? Sure, faster and bigger is better. But the question that I've always had is exactly how fast is fast enough? Is it just a fast 40 or do I need to look at cone, shuttle, ten yard splits, and everything else too?

A few months back, I took a look at the running backs who are currently in the NFL and used the top 20 running backs from last season to help build the mold for what a top running back in today's NFL actually looks like. Data from their rookie combines were then gathered and analyzed much the same way the data for the wide receivers has been done both this season and last season. In case you missed some of the previous work, take a look at the 2013 rookie wide receivers and the current NFL running backs.

In case you missed it or just don't want to look back at it, here is a quick summary of what was found from the current NFL running backs. The backs were evaluated in the following nine areas:

- 1) **Body Mass Index (BMI)** – Used instead of height and weight separately because it is more the build that matters for a running back.
- 2) **Speed Score** – A measurement developed by Football Outsiders to simulate the force a back runs with. Bigger backs don't need to run quite as fast as smaller ones.
- 3) **40 yard dash time** – To look at "long speed"
- 4) **10 yard dash split** – To look at acceleration from a stop
- 5) **Bench Press** – Strength
- 6) **Vertical Leap** – Lower body explosion
- 7) **Broad Jump** – Slightly different way to look at lower body explosion
- 8) **20 yard shuttle run** – To measure how quickly a back can stop and then restart.
- 9) **Three cone drill** – Evaluates ability to change direction quickly

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## SUCCESSFUL RUNNING BACK MEASUREMENT ANALYSIS

Once I had the data collected, I did some basic statistical analysis on the nine data points for the 20 different running backs. The mean of the group was found as well as the standard deviation for each of the categories. If you're unfamiliar with statistics, standard deviation is the average distance away from the mean. In a naturally occurring data set, such as physical measurements, you expect 68% of your data to be between 1 standard deviation above the mean and 1 standard deviation below the mean. You then expect an additional 13.5% to be between 1 deviation and 2 deviations on each of the ends. Only 2.5% of any data set should be more than 2 deviations on either end. With this method, 84% of top 20 running backs will receive at least 1 point for each of the drills. However, most rookies won't ever reach the top 20 level, which explains why most of them fall far short in many of the areas.

Here's how the scoring works:

+2 points – More than one standard deviation away from the mean in the positive direction

+1 point – Within one standard deviation of the mean on either end of the spectrum

0 points – If the back didn't participate in that drill

-1 point – Between one and two deviations away from the mean in the negative direction

-2 points – More than two deviations away from the mean in the negative direction

Here are the minimum levels for the combine drills that are considered at the level of the top 20 running backs, meaning they earn a point or more, is as follows:

BMI: 27.8

Speed Score: 98.5

40 yard dash time: 4.60 seconds

10 yard dash split: 1.58 seconds

Bench Press: 18 reps of 225 pounds

20 yard shuttle: 4.44 seconds

Three cone drill: 7.10 seconds

Vertical Leap: 31.5 inches

Broad Jump: 114.5 inches

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## SUCCESSFUL RUNNING BACK MEASUREMENT ANALYSIS

### A Few Important Notes

- 1) There are exceptions to every rule. Some running backs just come out of nowhere. We all know the stories of guys like Arian Foster and Alfred Morris. Foster was undrafted and Morris was a sixth round pick, partially because they didn't have the measurables we look for in a running back. We need to keep in mind that stories like Foster and Morris are pretty rare and not the norm.
- 2) A massive 85% of the top 20 running backs were drafted in the first three rounds. We always hear running backs are being devalued and you can get them from later rounds in the draft – this data doesn't really back that up. Every once in a while a team might get lucky, but the vast majority of top running backs come from the first three rounds of the NFL draft. After the draft, pay special attention to players who were taken in the first three rounds.
- 3) While the round they are drafted in seems to matter, the school, conference, or even the level of competition doesn't seem to exclude someone from being a top 20 running back. While the SEC did have more than anyone else, it wasn't an overwhelming amount. Five of the top 20 came from there, while six other conferences had at least two backs in the top 20. In other words, a back drafted in the second round from a small school has roughly the same chance to be a top 20 back as someone drafted from the SEC in the second round.
- 4) Like every analysis, this is just one tool to add to your toolbox. This, in and of itself, is not meant to be the end all be all analysis tool. High scores don't guarantee success and low scores don't predict automatic failure. All that a high score means is the player has a physical skill set that compares favorably to the top 20 NFL running backs. This does not take into account injury history, vision, patience, desire, work ethic, blocking ability, hands, ball security and many other characteristics that go into making a running back great.
- 5) Sometimes the difference between getting a point and losing a point was very slim. For that reason, try not to obsess about the differences between similar numbers. The difference between a six and an eight might have been one inch on a jump. Look at these in a bit more of a holistic approach instead of getting bogged down in the exact numbers. Remember, this is meant to be a tool in addition to other analysis. Not the one and only measurement you use.
- 6) My analysis showed running backs are a bit more forgiving than wide receivers when it comes to being deficient (more than one standard deviation below the mean) in multiple areas. In fact, over half of the top 20 running backs were deficient in one of the drills and eight of the 20 were deficient in more than one area. They also excelled in others, though. This is probably due to the specialization that sometimes occurs at the running back position with goal line backs or passing down specialists. This means that unlike the wide receivers, rookies with multiple deficiencies still have a solid chance.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## SUCCESSFUL RUNNING BACK MEASUREMENT ANALYSIS

Without further ado, here are the top 2013 rookie running backs by this analysis. Any areas of deficiency are noted in the parenthesis. Keep in mind that the average of the top 20 running backs was about 7 points with all of them (aside from BenJarvus Green-Ellis) being positive numbers.

14 points – Christine Michael

13 points – None

12 points – Knile Davis, Michael Ford

11 points – None

10 points – DJ Harper

9 points – Zac Stacy (10 yard split)

8 points – Giovani Bernard (Speed Score)

7 points – Jonathan Franklin (Vertical Leap)

6 points – Le'Veon Bell (40 time, vertical leap), Cierre Wood (Bench Press, 2 missing drills)

A few things jump out at me when I look at this top group of runners.

- 1) The first is just how impressive Christine Michael's combine performance was this year. As a whole, it was more impressive than the best of the best, Adrian Peterson. We also know about all of Michael's issues when it comes to character, ball security, work ethic, etc. He is the ultimate lottery ticket in this year's class. If, and it is a very big if, he can get his head on right, he could be a top ten or maybe even top five talent at the position.
- 2) We all heard about the performance of Davis, but Ford and Harper were equally impressive. Ford showed very good strength and explosion in both his upper and lower body. Harper flew under the media radar because he didn't excel at any of the drills. However, he was right near the average of the top 20 in all of the drills. The same can be said for Mikel Leshoure. I'm not saying Harper is Leshoure, just that Harper has the physical skills to be a nice part of a committee in the NFL.
- 3) Many of the other names on this "good" list are guys that we expected to be there. When you consider that several of the top backs didn't participate (Eddie Lacy, Marcus Lattimore) or didn't finish the combine (Andre Ellington), most of the other names that are on people's watch lists popped up in this group. That is good news for their long term prospects if they end up in the right situations.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## SUCCESSFUL RUNNING BACK MEASUREMENT ANALYSIS

Let's take a look at the next group down. Those running backs that were under the average of the top 20, but they were still positive scores.

5 points – CJ Anderson (40 time, Bench Press, 3 cone drill), Kenjon Barner (Speed Score, 10 yard split), Rex Burkhead (Speed Score, 40 time), Mike James (10 yard split, 20 yard shuttle), Matthew Tucker (Bench, Missing 2 drills)

4 points – None

3 points – Kerwynn Williams (Speed Score, Bench Press, 3 cone drill), Onterio McCalebb (Speed Score, 3 missing drills)

2 points – Miguel Maysonet (3 cone drill, 4 missing drills)

1 point – Montee Ball (40 time, 10 yard split, speed score, bench press), Andre Ellington (Speed score, 40 time, 3 missing drills)

Like the top group of rookies, a few things stand out to me on this group as well.

- 1) Rex Burkhead is a very interesting player for me. He was in the top ten if not top five for pretty much every combine drill other than his straight line speed. The old saying of "quick, not fast" applies here. If he ran a 4.55 instead of the 4.73 that he did run, we would be talking about him having 11 points. Some all-time great running backs are slow, so you never know. The issue is that a 4.73 is extremely slow for a running back.
- 2) Onterio McCalebb had the fastest 40 time and 10 yard split of all of the running backs at the combine. The problem is he is only 168 pounds. He isn't going to play running back at the next level and will be lucky to see the field in special teams. You might remember the name, but look elsewhere for your fantasy team.
- 3) Maysonet and Ellington are two players that people seem to be championing a little bit from some of the items that I've seen. Both players most likely would have been a little bit higher than their current scores had they fully participated at the combine. It might be best to think of them as incompletes right now instead of their current scores.
- 4) Speaking of players who have been championed, Montee Ball is a player who I've liked for a while now. This is largely due to him being one of the most productive college running backs in the history of the NCAA. Unfortunately, his score of a 1 doesn't help me out much. We all know he didn't have a great combine. If we were to substitute in his pro day performances instead of the combine, he jumps up to being eight points. That wouldn't be fair to everyone else though, so he stays at one point for now.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## SUCCESSFUL RUNNING BACK MEASUREMENT ANALYSIS

If you didn't notice, there are a few of the bigger names that didn't show up on either of the lists. If they participated in the combine, hopefully you find them down below:

Mike Gillislee – In the interest of full disclosure, he is another running back that I've been higher than most. I've viewed him as a guy that won't wow you, but he could be a very good backup that might eventually earn a shot at being a starter. His combine performance put him just below the minimum in most of the drills, which isn't very good for his long range prospects. Score: -1

Ray Graham – Slightly undersized, Graham didn't perform very well in the runs with a 4.8 second 40 time. Not only that, but he was below average or below the minimum in all of the drills. Maybe it was just a bad day, but the combine definitely created some pretty big red flags for me about if he has the physical skill set to play a role at the next level. Score: -3

Joseph Randle – Randle elected not to participate in three drills at the combine, which has a negative effect on his score. Even more negative than not participating were the drills he did participate in at the combine. Having a 4.63 second 40 time with a 1.61 second split doesn't say much for his acceleration or top end speed. The fact that he's six foot and just over 200 pounds doesn't help matters either. To me his build and skill set still look like a much better fit as a slot receiver than a running back. Score: -3

Stepfan Taylor – If guys like Montee Ball had a bad combine, I don't even know where to begin when it comes to describing Taylor's day other than to say it was an epic failure. For a player that was nationally known, his combine was the worst I can remember. Aside from being the right size, Taylor fell below the minimum on every drill, sometimes drastically below. For me, he has bust written all over him because he just doesn't have the skill set to play in the NFL if we look at his combine performance. Score: -10

That's it for now on the running back analysis from me. Once the pro days are complete, I'll revisit those players, both running backs and receivers, that didn't participate in the combine or those with major improvements. Keep in mind most players improve at their pro days though, so slightly faster times should be taken with a grain of salt.

Good luck in your draft prep!



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## POST-COMBINE ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

**Author: Jacob Feldman**

The scouting combine has come and gone – that means pro teams as well as die hard football fans have all had the chance to see (and in some cases drool over) the newest crop of rookies. In some cases, the combine changed everything, in others, it changed absolutely nothing.

In order to figure out which is the case for each player, here is the second in our series of rookie only mock drafts. This particular draft features three rounds and was conducted one week after the NFL combine in order to give you an idea of how much has changed. There are still an awful lot of items that can and will change our opinions, the largest of which is of course the NFL Draft, but here is what people are thinking right now.

For this mock draft, we assumed it was a standard scoring PPR league with normal lineup requirements, meaning no IDP, super flex, or two quarterback leagues. Trades were not allowed. Draft order was randomly assigned and each drafter was asked to make a brief comment about why they made the pick they did. I'll follow up each pick with some brief thoughts of my own. I'm not a draft expert, and like many of you, my rookie analysis is far from complete. I'm just sharing my thoughts so you get two opinions on each pick. In cases of disagreement, I'll be the first to admit I might be the one that is wrong.

Once all three rounds are complete, I'll give a wrap up of the major risers and fallers so you can get a feel for which players seem to be moving about the most thanks to the combine. If you want to take a look for yourself, you can look back at the pre-combine round 1 and round 2 mock drafts.

1.01 – Eddie Lacy, RB Alabama

Ghost's thoughts: In a league where starting running backs are so hard to come by, Lacy looks to be starting wherever he goes. His tough running style should allow him to rack up the yards and scores.

My thoughts: I was disappointed Lacy pulled out of the combine due to injury. Part of me wonders if he looked at the rest of the running backs and realized there wasn't anyone who could challenge him for the top back in this class and just decided to wait for his Pro day on his home field. Due to positional value, he has separated into a tier of his own for me right now. The NFL draft could change things, but as of now I think he's the sure fire first pick in pretty much all rookie drafts.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## POST-COMBINE ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

### 1.02 – Giovanni Bernard, RB North Carolina

Ryan's thoughts: Although many are excited by the depth of the running back class, there are few likely second or third round running backs that interest me, so taking Bernard was an easy call. There are some WRs closing the gap over the past few weeks, but for me, Bernard hangs on to this spot. In the end, I think he will be a late first or early second round pick and should get plenty of carries as part of a RBBC in his rookie year.

My thoughts: He is very fast and very explosive. PPR scoring definitely helps Bernard, who has great hands and is very good in the open field. However, there is something that bugs me about him – he seems to lack power and almost seems to lack the desire to fight for extra yards. He struggles after contact and doesn't seem to make defenders miss as much as I had hoped. There's a big enough gap between him and Lacy that I might have gone receiver here, but he is the next best running back on the board.

### 1.03 – Cordarrelle Patterson, WR Tennessee

Mark's thoughts: Perhaps the highest upside wide receiver with all the physical tools, so I was happy to take him with the third pick. He was some questions marks and isn't refined by any means, but his combine numbers solidified his spot as a top 2-3 wide receiver.

My thoughts: I agree with Mark. When it comes to wide receiver upside, Patterson is top two in this draft along with Da'Rick Rogers. He is a little raw, but if he ends up with a coach and maybe a veteran receiver who can help to nurture his ability, we could easily be talking about a player who could be pushing into top ten receiver territory with a few years as long as he can learn the pro game.

### 1.04 – Tavon Austin, WR West Virginia

Jeff B's thoughts: I don't necessarily think Austin has the highest ceiling of this extremely talented wide receiver class, but I do think he's the only can't miss prospect of the whole group. He'll be a PPR monster from day one, which is the best you can hope for if your fantasy team needs an immediate impact.

My thoughts: While I don't know if there is ever a can't miss prospect, Austin is probably the safest wide receiver out of the top group, especially if he goes to a team that can support a high profile slot receiver. Austin's skill set isn't quite at the Percy Harvin level, but it is fairly close. He's definitely in the top tier in this draft and should go in the top half of the first round, even in non-PPR leagues.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## POST-COMBINE ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

1.08 – DeAndre Hopkins, WR Clemson

Andy's thoughts: Nuk! Many draftniks were disappointed with his 4.57 40 time, but that is just looking at one aspect of his game. This wide receiver is an amazing route runner who gets separation from defenders using solid technique and agility. Hopkins tracks the ball well in the air and can contort himself to make difficult catches. I love the value he will have in rookie drafts.

My thoughts: It wasn't just draftniks that were disappointed. I had Hopkins in the mix for top receiver in this draft until his terrible showing at the combine. It wasn't just his 40 time, either. All his drills were poor and he showed a lack of lower body explosion in his broad jump as well. He has good size and catches the ball well, but I think he might fit as more of a possession receiver at the next level instead of a true number one wide receiver.

1.09 – Tyler Eifert, TE Notre Dame

Steve's thoughts: I was targeting and hoping DeAndre Hopkins would fall to this pick, but knew it was unlikely. Eifert is probably one of the safest options in this class given his college production and athleticism. He should find himself in a situation where he'll be utilized immediately as a pass-catching TE and potentially a move TE out of the slot. My other considerations here included Quinton Patton and Da'Rick Rogers. I was close to pulling the trigger on Rogers here, but a head-case is always a concern.

My thoughts: I have Eifert as the clear cut top tight end after the combine. He is a great talent who could be very productive in the right situation, which is likely to be a team like the Dolphins or Bears in the middle of the first round. I struggle with taking tight ends in the first round because there always seems to be more upside at other positions, but I think it is a solid pick at the tail end of the first if you want to play it safe with your pick.

1.10 – Markus Wheaton, WR Oregon State

Jon's thoughts: He had a very impressive combine where he improved his stock dramatically. Wheaton ran an impressive 4.45-second 40-yard dash (tenth best among receivers). He also put up 20 reps of 225 pounds on the bench press (the best number for players at his position). His 20-yard shuttle was 4.02 seconds and 60-yard shuttle was 11.16 seconds – both were the best marks for receivers. Wheaton's vertical jump was 37 inches, broad jump 120 inches and 3-cone drill were 6.8 seconds. Solid.

My thoughts: He's a very intriguing pick at this point in the draft. The measureables are definitely there, though I wonder what kind of role he will settle in to at the next level. His size lends itself to more of a slot role, but his speed plays more to the outside. He could easily turn into an Antonio Brown type of receiver if he ends up on the right team.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## POST-COMBINE ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

### 1.11 – Knile Davis, RB Arkansas

Jeff H's thoughts: He's got fumbling issues and he may be a workout warrior, but I can't pass up that size/speed dynamic at 1.11. He's going to have a chance to go to a good team and if he gets a chance on Sundays, he's the type of back who may never look back.

My thoughts: I had a feeling he would shoot up draft boards after the combine, but I didn't expect him to jump into the first round. Between the fumbling and the long history of ankle injuries, I wonder if he will get a solid chance to show what he can do at the next level. If he does, he might have a Darren McFadden type of career where he is a fantasy starter when healthy, but he always misses multiple games a year. He could also be a workout warrior as Jeff said. High risk, high reward with this pick.

### 1.12 - Andre Ellington, RB Clemson

Coleman's thoughts: The shifty back from Clemson does a lot of things well. He can press the hole, he excels at finding the cutback and has a nice blend of moves and power. However, he needs work in pass protection.

My thoughts: Another back who wasn't selected in the pre-combine mock that jumped up into the first round of this draft. How he did this with a 4.61 40 yard dash time at the combine, I'm not quite sure. Fortunately, he looked a lot faster in games than his time suggests. It does raise a few red flags for me (especially as a first round pick) since prior to the combine I viewed him as a quick, shifty back who lacks some power. If his speed is now in question as well as his power and pass protection, that doesn't leave much of a role for him.

### 2.01 – Zach Ertz, TE Stanford

Ghost's thoughts: Grabbing one of the top two TEs in this draft at this point became too hard to pass up since many of the top running backs and wide receivers are gone. Ertz should be a very interesting player at the next level, especially if he goes to a competitor at the end of the first round in the NFL draft.

My thoughts: As I've mentioned many times before, I'm not a huge fan of tight ends going early – the position just isn't worth a ton. Is Ertz really a superior prospect to Dwayne Allen or Jared Cook? They will most likely come for a cheaper price than the 2.01. Anyway, Ertz's combine showing dropped him a bit for me. He is now in the second tier of tight ends instead of competing for the top tight end spot.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## POST-COMBINE ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

### 2.02 – Robert Woods, WR USC

Ryan's thoughts: Woods' value has fallen over the past year after a disappointing season at USC. A year ago at this time, he was thought of as a contender for the top rookie spot in fantasy drafts. I often look for those types of players who might have been affected by circumstances in College, but have shown they have the talent to succeed. In the second round, Woods makes for great value.

My thoughts: Out of all of the players in the top 20 or so in this year's draft, Woods is the one I'm the most conflicted about. He has natural talent when it comes to catching the ball. However, his 2012 season and the combine were less than stellar, which is being kind. I'm starting to feel like Woods has bust written all over him, but it is tough to deny the potential. He could be a great value at this point in the draft or he could be a completely wasted pick. Tough for me to decide right now.

### 2.03 – Christine Michael, RB Texas A&M

Mark's thoughts: Perhaps a bit of reach with Taylor, Lattimore and Patton still on the board, but he's a back I'm excited about and didn't think he'd make it back to me next round. He has great size, short area burst and strength. He was the top performer in the bench press, vertical jump, broad jump, 20 yard shuttle and 3-cone drill. He has some significant character concerns, but he's a player I wanted on my team and felt okay reaching for.

My thoughts: This might be a bit too early, but there is no denying the potential. He was a standout at the Shrine game and when you look back at his game film and what he did at the combine, there is a lot to like. There are some concerns including the character issues, a rather large injury history (broken leg followed by ACL injury), and some problems with ball security. He's a gamble, especially early in the second round, but one that could pay off.

### 2.04 – Geno Smith, QB West Virginia

Jeff B's thoughts: I continue to be amazed at how undervalued Smith is, especially with a pretty stellar showing at the NFL Combine. Getting him with the 16th overall pick makes me feel guilty in the way a kid who stole a candy bar from the grocery store without getting caught might feel. In this case, it's not a parent or a store manager to whom I feel the need to confess my transgression, but rather the other owners who passed up instant production for the chance to win the lottery.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## POST-COMBINE ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

### 2.04 – Geno Smith, QB West Virginia (cont)

My thoughts: Jeff and I still don't agree on Smith, because I really don't see any quarterback in this year's class who has QB1 upside. Smith said in interviews that he doesn't want to be a read-option quarterback. He wants to be a pocket passer. I think I would probably rather have guys like Josh Freeman or Sam Bradford as a developmental quarterback than anyone from this class. However, I'm much more comfortable with the pick coming in the second round instead of the early first like it did in the last mock.

### 2.05 – Marcus Lattimore, RB South Carolina

Chad's thoughts: I was shocked to see Lattimore sitting there midway in the second round. Heck, I even thought about taking him at 1.05 (only for a second). Obviously has big question marks on how his knee will be going forward, but from everything I've heard, rehab is going ahead of schedule. While his injury is completely different from that of Jamaal Charles or Adrian Peterson, they aren't injuries I fret about as much now. If he can come back 90-95% of what he was in college, I think he's a complete steal at 2.05.

My thoughts: He fell from mid-first to mid-second, due to other people getting into the spotlight at the combine. I think where Lattimore goes in rookie drafts will ultimately be determined by where he goes in the NFL Draft. If NFL team doctors feel he is in a good enough place in his rehab to go on day one or two, he's probably going in the first round of rookie drafts. Recent reports say his recovery is going well, but also that he might not see the field in 2013. If you take him, expect to sit on him for at least a year, if not two.

### 2.06 – Stedman Bailey, WR West Virginia

Eric's thoughts: A prototypical slot receiver, Bailey will be a PPR stud if he lands in the right situation. If New England doesn't re-sign Wes Welker or St. Louis doesn't re-sign Danny Amendola, Bailey would make a whole lot of sense.

My thoughts: I'm starting to warm up a little bit to Bailey. I still have some concerns about his transition to the pro game, but I think he has the tools to eventually be effective in the NFL as a complementary or slot receiver. I don't think he'll ever be the top target on a team, but he could easily be a NFL WR2 or WR3. With that said, I feel like this is a bit early for him as I have a few other players still available in the tier above Bailey.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## POST-COMBINE ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

### 2.07– Da’Rick Rogers, WR Tennessee Tech

My thoughts: At this point in the draft, I was shocked to see two players still on the board that I have in my personal top 12. Out of all the receivers in this draft, Rogers just might have the most upside. His measureables combined with his ability to play the game make him one of the few players in this draft that have a chance to one day be considered elite at their position.

There is a reason that Rogers is pretty low on the list for a lot of people, though. The fact he spent this last year at Tennessee Tech after being kicked off the Tennessee team for repeated drug violations doesn’t sit very well with many people. This could be a Ricky Williams type of situation, but he just might be the highest reward gamble in this year’s draft.

### 2.08 – Johnathan Franklin, RB UCLA

Andy’s thoughts: Everyone keeps doubting my number three ranked running back. Franklin had a good Combine running just under 4.5 in the 40. He is explosive in the open field, cuts back well, has great vision and shows amazing burst. Franklin can get small and wiggle away from defenders. Most dynasty owners think he is a change of pace back, but I do not. Keep him in mind in the second round of your rookie drafts.

My thoughts: He’s the other one of my top 12 rookies that was still available. After Andy picked him in the previous mock, I looked into him a little bit more and was impressed with what I saw. He is a bit smaller than I was hoping, but outside of that he has just about everything you could hope. It also helped when his College coach, Jim Mora, said he was the best back he’s ever coached, and he has coached players like Pro Bowler Warrick Dunn.

### 2.09 – Quinton Patton, WR Louisiana Tech

Steve’s thoughts: Quite frankly, I was pretty surprised Patton was still on the board in the late second. I expected him to go late first or the early second round. He’s coming out of LA Tech and, therefore, his competition wasn’t as strong, but his measureables and on-field production are solid. I expect Patton to be a second rounder at worst and his value to spike over the next few months.

My thoughts: The fact that Patton is still here late in the second round speaks to the strength of this year’s draft – the sheer number of potential NFL WR2s. While there aren’t many NFL number ones out there in this draft, however, there are many who can step up and be solid starters. While he isn’t the most explosive of receivers, he is very solid and consistent across the board, which makes him a great compliment to a lead receiver.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## POST-COMBINE ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

### 2.10 – Ryan Swope, WR Texas A&M

Jon's thoughts: His stock is on the rise after a great Combine. Some teams have a second-round grade on him, which tells me he'll be given every opportunity to succeed. I'm happy to get this kind of upside 22 picks into this draft. Swope, who is the Aggies' all-time leader in career receptions, has decent size at 6-0 and 205 pounds, but he showcased speed during combine drills. He finished tied for second-best time in the 40-yard dash (4.34), not only among receivers, but of any position.

My thoughts: There is another receiver who I would definitely have taken here instead, but outside of him, this is the point where this draft gets wide open. There are probably no fewer than ten players who could go at the end of the second round in rookie drafts and you could make solid arguments for all of them. Swope is a player who has the physical tools, but is a little bit undersized. He should probably be an outside receiver in the NFL, but he'll need to show the ability to beat the press as well as the ability to go get the jump balls outside.

### 2.11 – Le'Veon Bell, RB Michigan State

Jeff's thoughts: These days, there aren't many backs who have size and speed with the production in College to be every down backs. Bell is a big back, but he's more agile than his size would suggest. In a situation like Atlanta or with the New York Jets, he could have real upside.

My thoughts: I envision Bell as being a Brandon Jacobs clone. His size is a huge asset and it is combined with surprising agility. I don't know if he can be a bell cow back any more than Jacobs was, but Bell would be the perfect complement for a speed guy like Jacquizz Rodgers. The question is if he will end up being picked by a team that could use someone like him.

### 2.12 – Marquess Wilson, WR Washington State

Coleman's thoughts: Total flier here. He's a character concern, depending on who you believe in his squabble with Washington State. I'll take a flier on a wide receiver with great hands and outstanding body control. He'll need to put on weight, but he could end up being a pretty good pro receiver.

My thoughts: Wilson isn't someone who I expected to see go in this mock, but everyone has their favorites and it's worth taking a shot on someone that you really believe in at this point. I view him as a gamble with limited upside in the pros. There are safer picks, there are also picks with more upside, so I'm not a huge fan of him here. He is more of a late third or fourth round pick in my eyes.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## POST-COMBINE ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

### 3.01 – Miguel Maysonet, RB Stony Brook

Ghost's thoughts: Small school prospect, but the guy runs like a pro. If he went to a bigger name school, he would be going around the third round. As it is, he went to a small school and I believe he will get drafted late. Whoever takes him will be getting a steal.

My thoughts: I'll be honest in saying Maysonet is someone who was completely off my radar. Part of it is the small school, and part of it is that he didn't fully participate at the combine. What he did do wasn't overly impressive. I think it is a reach, but in the third round you might as well take a gamble on a guy who you really like.

### 3.02 – Terrance Williams, WR Baylor

Ryan's thoughts: I had to triple check to be sure Williams was actually still available with the 26th overall pick. Although I would be surprised if it happens, this is a player who some consider a first round NFL Draft pick and those rarely fall to the third round of a rookie draft. Williams is another player whose value has taken a bit of a hit, but he offers solid value this late.

My thoughts: Here is the receiver I've been waiting to get drafted. Williams should be drafted by at least the middle of the second round of rookie drafts by the time that things are all said and done. He has the size, speed, and talent to be a quality NFL starter and a good depth player on a fantasy roster. I'll be very surprised if he stays a third round pick in actual rookie drafts this Summer.

### 3.03 – Stepfan Taylor, RB Stanford

Mark's thoughts: Taylor had a lackluster combine running a slow 40. However, his athleticism was never his selling point and players like Frank Gore prove a slower 40 time isn't everything. He's a well-rounded back who should carve out a role in the league. I'm very happy with the value in the third.

My thoughts: I think that comparing Taylor to Gore is a little too optimistic. When I watch Taylor play, he reminds me of former Stanford running back Toby Gerhart. He can run, block and catch, but he isn't really a NFL level talent at any of them. However, the fact he can do all of them means he will be a quality backup at the NFL level. I don't expect much more than that.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## POST-COMBINE ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

### 3.04 – Kenjon Barner, RB Oregon

Jeff B's thoughts: Barner oozes with potential. Despite his lack of ideal size for an every-down back, he was sturdy throughout his college career. He's got excellent timing, vision, speed and very underrated pass-catching abilities. With some added strength, I could see him developing in the same mold as Ray Rice and Maurice Jones-Drew.

My thoughts: I don't quite see the Rice and MJD comparison on this one. Barner is two inches taller and 12 pounds lighter than MJD while being an inch taller and 16 pounds lighter than Rice. Not only does his size not fit with that mold, his skill set doesn't fit, either. I view him as more of a product of the Oregon machine than a true NFL level talent. I view him as a Justin Forsett kind of player as a change of pace back – he's a second or third back on NFL rosters in my opinion.

### 3.05 – Zac Stacy, RB Vanderbilt

Chad's thoughts: Here's a name I've liked ever since @RumfordJohnny started touting him. After watching some tape, Stacy has real NFL ability and can contribute to a team come week one. I highly doubt he'll be fantasy relevant his rookie year (it depends on where he lands), but the guy has the build and mentality to be a workhorse. He seemed to have opened some eyes after the combine by running a 4.55 and throwing up 25+ reps at 225 lbs. I've heard he's been taken in the first round in some rookie mocks, so needless to say, I'm happy with him at 3.05

My thoughts: I like Stacy, largely because he is a very high character guy. He was a lead by example player in College and will be a high effort, locker room leader in the NFL. On the field, I view him as the early down back in a committee. He didn't catch a whole lot of passes in college (only 46 in four seasons), but he's going to get the chance to hammer the ball up the middle with his size. Injuries are also a little bit of a concern for him since he missed parts or all of seven games in his first two years of College. I view his upside as that of what Mikel Leshoure did last season.

### 3.06 – Joseph Randle, RB Oklahoma State

Eric's thoughts: I like running backs who catch the ball and Randle definitely excels at pass protection and catching out of the backfield. His production dropped a little from his Junior to Senior year, but that was a result of the team around him not being as good. I'm keeping my fingers crossed for Green Bay, Pittsburgh or Cincinnati.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## POST-COMBINE ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

### 3.07 – Mike Gillislee, RB Florida

My thoughts: Like in the second round, there were two players who I was a little shocked to see still available at this point in time. I expected Gillislee to be taken towards the end of the second round or at the latest in the early third. In the NFL Draft, I expect him to be a middle round pick due to him being a back who has the ability to play on all three downs. He needs a little bit of work in pass protection, but he catches the ball well out of the backfield and shows decent power while finishing his runs.

There are a few concerns with Gillislee as well. Outside of the pass protection, he needs to be a little bit more careful with the football. He also needs to be a bit more decisive when running. He sometimes seems to be thinking about running and where to go instead of just going there. The good thing is that pass protection, carrying the football and being more confident and decisive when running are all items that can be taught. I don't expect him to do much as a rookie, but he could be a guy that grows into a starting role in year two or year three as he takes over for an aging starter.

### 3.08 – Aaron Dobson, WR Marshall

Andy's thoughts: People are forgetting about this strong, muscular receiver from Marshall. He attacks the ball in the air at its highest point. Dobson's highlight reels have a few "I can't believe he caught that" receptions. He has very strong hands and should excel in the NFL once he figures out how to deal with physical coverage.

My thoughts: Andy and I are on the same page once again. The other player who I was surprised to see still available at 3.07 was Dobson. He didn't participate in the combine, which has him flying a little bit under the radar. I will be very interested to see just how fast he is when he runs at his pro day. His size, strength and ability to go after the ball remind me a little bit of a healthy Sidney Rice back in 2009. His biggest strength might be that he won't need to beat corners with speed in order to get open and make the catch.

### 3.09 – EJ Manuel, QB Florida State

Steve's thoughts: NFL offenses continue to migrate towards the dual-threat quarterbacks and that's exactly what Manuel is. He's extremely athletic, has a strong arm and produced at Florida State. He still needs to develop much like Colin Kaepernick did, but his ceiling is extremely high. I'll take that over a player like Matt Barkley who comes with some concerns and a lower ceiling.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## POST-COMBINE ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

### 3.09 – EJ Manuel, QB Florida State (cont)

My thoughts: At this point, the field is pretty much wide open. There aren't any players who really jump out to me as players who need to be selected. It all comes down to what you like once you're talking late third territory. As for Manuel, I agree with Steve that he is a high ceiling player. I also think he is a low floor player. Manuel's growth and progress could be Kaepernick-like or he could be more like Tim Tebow. At this point, it's worth the gamble if you have the roster space to sit on him for two or three years.

### 3.10 – Vance McDonald, TE Rice

Jon's thoughts: Vance is a big, athletic tight end who is quickly rising up NFL draft boards. I view him as the third Tight End in this draft by a wide margin. If he ends up on a team with a need, he could have an easy path to relevancy. McDonald ran exceptionally well for his size (4.69, 40 yard dash), caught the ball well and showed outstanding strength (he led all tight ends with 31 reps in the bench press). I see the potential to be a Jason Witten or Todd Heap type of player.

My thoughts: In my own personal rankings, McDonald is nipping at the heels of Zach Ertz to be the second tight end off the board and he might even pass him with further research. I view McDonald as being more athletic, having better size and with a higher upside than Ertz. I do have some questions about how McDonald will do against bigger, stronger and faster defenders (both when running routes and blocking), but if he can adjust to the size and speed of the NFL, he could be a very good all-around tight end.

### 3.11 – Matt Barkley, QB USC

Jeff's thoughts: I'm not ultra high on Barkley due to his arm strength and his USC game tape, but he's likely to be the second quarterback off the board and you could do a lot worse with a third round fantasy rookie pick. I'll take the value pick with upside here.

My thoughts: Barkley will be a very interesting player to watch as the pro days roll around. I think it was a mistake for him to not be prepared for the combine – it was a chance for him to get some positive press going for him during the month of March. For me, the NFL Draft will be the big factor for Barkley. It will be all about which team takes a chance on him. I do think that his upside is someone like Matt Schaub, but his chances of reaching that are kind of slim right now unless he ends up in the right situation.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## POST-COMBINE ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

3.12 – Mark Harrison, WR Rutgers

Coleman's thoughts: Harrison excites me. He's big (6'3 , 231 pounds) and fast (4.41 40). He looks like Brandon Marshall out there, but a better pro comparison would be Mike Williams. I expect he'll be a project, but he'll make an impact at the next level.

My thoughts: Harrison is a player who surprised me at the NFL Combine. In fact, he was one of the top four receivers at the combine according to my study on measurables. He has the physical tools and seems to be motivated to make his mark in the NFL; however, he just wasn't very productive in College, catching just over 100 passes over his entire four year career. He has several parts of his game that he needs to improve and it will probably take a few years for him to do that. If he is successful, he will surprise a lot of people. He's a day three NFL pick and his landing spot could make all the difference in the world.

### Risers and Fallers from the Previous Mock Draft

Keep in mind since the post combine draft was three rounds long (the pre-combine draft was only two rounds), at least 12 more players were added to the mix. I'm not going to list anyone taken in the third round of the post combine mock as a riser because they very well could have been there had we done three rounds in the pre-combine draft. Make sure you check out those names in the third round if you haven't done so already.

### Major Risers (Rising more than six spots)

Tavon Austin, WR West Virginia  
Pre-Combine: 2.01, Post Combine: 1.04

In the case of Austin, I think his rise is mostly attributed to the fact that he is indeed a very solid athlete and that was put on display at the combine. Running a 4.34 second 40 time and a 4.01 second shuttle really got people's attention. I still have some questions about his hands, but he is definitely in the top group of receivers in this year's draft. I would expect him to go within the top six slots of pretty much every rookie draft at this point in time.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## POST-COMBINE ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

Markus Wheaton, WR Oregon State  
Pre-Combine: 2.12, Post Combine: 1.10

This big of a jump for Wheaton surprised me a little bit. He did have a nice combine, showing better than expected times in all of the runs as well as performing better than expected in the jumps. While his original 2.12 pick is a little bit low based on the talent, I think his position as a first round rookie pick is a slight overreaction to his combine performance. He'll most likely end up going in the early to middle of the second round of rookie drafts.

Knile Davis, RB Arkansas  
Pre-Combine: Undrafted in two rounds, Post Combine: 1.11

I expected this kind of jump after one of the most impressive combines out of a running back in many years. The physical tools are definitely there. The questions come down to his injury history, fumbling issues and the fact that he looked better at the combine than he does on tape. He's a high risk, high reward pick and depending on which NFL team takes the big leap of faith, he could easily be a first round pick in rookie drafts. Chances are someone in your league will swing for the fences on him in the middle or late first round. He could be Darren McFadden or Cedric Benson.

Andre Ellington, RB Clemson  
Pre-Combine: Undrafted in two rounds, Post Combine: 1.12)

Ellington is a player who surprised me in both mock drafts so far. Pre-Combine I was surprised that he wasn't taken at all as I felt he is most likely middle to late second round talent at that time. Then he had a rather poor showing at the combine, which I expected to drop his value a bit more, but he became a late first round selection. At this point, I'm not a huge fan of Ellington but he's probably going to be more of a late second round pick at this point.

Christine Michael, RB Texas A&M  
Pre-Combine: Undrafted in two rounds, Post Combine: 2.03

Much like Davis, Michael put on one of the better combine performances in recent memory for a running back. He was fast, strong and explosive in the drills. He also showed a little bit of the red flags when he missed multiple interviews with teams. Michael's game tape seems to back up his combine performances, making it less likely that he is just a workout warrior. However, he also has some fumbling issues as well as a bit of an injury history. Combine that with a very well documented history of character concerns and you might just have a player that follows the Titus Young plan for the NFL. He's very talented and I would expect someone will definitely be seduced by the talent in the late first or early second round of your rookie draft. It is really tough to tell if he'll be a home run or a strikeout.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## POST-COMBINE ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

Montee Ball, RB Wisconsin

Pre-Combine: 1.11, Post Combine: 1.07

Ball's rise was more a product of other people falling. The pre-combine mock draft had two tight ends and a quarterback go in the first nine picks. None of them went so early in the post combine mock draft which resulted in players like Ball climbing up a few spots. While he lacks the upside that players like Davis or Michael present, he is a much safer pick than either of them. He should be a solid, but rather unspectacular pro who can handle a heavy workload along the lines of Stevan Ridley or a younger Michael Turner.

### Minor Fallers (Falling three to six spots)

Stedman Bailey, WR West Virginia

Pre-Combine: 2.02, Post Combine: 2.06

I wouldn't read too much into this drop. It just comes down to how people feel about slot receivers. Bailey is a nice prospect, but I don't see him as being elite at the next level. For rookie drafts, he is going to go somewhere in the second round. His NFL team will decide exactly where he goes. On a pass heavy team, he could be a nice PPR receiver.

### Major Fallers (Falling more than six spots)

Geno Smith, QB West Virginia

Pre-Combine: 1.04, Post Combine: 2.04

Smith's fall isn't really a product of his own doing as much as it is a result of him being vastly overdrafted during the pre-combine mock in my opinion. I'm not a fan of any of the rookie quarterbacks this year when it comes to them being fantasy QB1s. For that reason, I don't think any of them should be drafted prior to the second round outside of superflex or two quarterback leagues. Smith's "fall" is just him going about where he should go in my opinion. He's still the top quarterback in this year's draft – that just isn't worth as much this year.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## POST-COMBINE ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

Zach Ertz, TE Stanford

Pre-Combine: 1.06, Post Combine: 2.01

Let me start by saying I'm not a huge fan of rookie tight ends. Very few belong in the first round of rookie drafts in my opinion. The sixth pick in the first round was too early to start with and 2.01 might even be too early for him as well. He didn't have a great combine showing and doesn't really seem to be any better of a prospect than former teammate Coby Fleener. I would expect him to be more of a late second round rookie pick in most drafts if he doesn't slide even further than that.

Marcus Lattimore, RB South Carolina

Pre-Combine: 1.08, Post Combine: 2.05

I expected Lattimore to slip a bit after the combine. With all of the other prospects being on display and some of them putting on a show, it is only natural someone who can't participate (like Lattimore) should fall out of favor a little bit. His situation is unchanged from what it was pre-combine – it's just the case of having several others are on the rise while he is stagnant. Unless he is drafted in the first three rounds of the NFL draft, I expect him to stay somewhere in the second round of rookie drafts. I also don't expect him to do much during the 2013 season.

Joseph Randle, RB Oklahoma State

Pre-Combine: 2.03, Post Combine: 3.06

Randle didn't have a great showing at the combine and looked very lean for a running back. His body build is more of a receiver's build than that of a running back. I think that Randle is most likely a third day NFL pick and will probably be little more than a passing down specialist in the NFL, if he can even manage to carve out that kind of role.

Matt Barkley, QB USC

Pre-Combine: 2.04, Post Combine: 3.11

Much like Geno Smith, this fall is more of an adjustment to where Barkley should have been in the first place. The chances of Barkley turning into a fantasy starter anytime soon are pretty slim. I view him as more of a Ryan Fitzpatrick or Kevin Kolb kind of quarterback at the next level. Of course his team will be the final deciding factor on where he gets taken in the draft, but the third round of rookie drafts seems about right at this point in time.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## POST-COMBINE ROOKIE MOCK DRAFT

Terrance Williams, WR Baylor  
Pre-Combine: 2.05, Post Combine: 3.02

This big of a fall for Williams surprises me. His combine was about what I expected out of someone his size other than having smaller hands and arms than I would have guessed. There really wasn't anything that happened, aside from maybe a few people leapfrogging him, that should have caused a drop like this. When rookie drafts roll around, I expect him to go somewhere in the second round of rookie drafts.

Cierre Wood, RB Notre Dame  
Pre-Combine: 2.08, Post Combine: Undrafted in three rounds

This is another fall I anticipated. Wood is not in my top 12 running backs in this class and unless he ends in a very advantageous position in the NFL draft, I can't see him going in the first three rounds of a rookie draft. He projects as little more than a career backup in the NFL, much like Javon Ringer.

Aaron Dobson, WR Marshall  
Pre-Combine: 2.10, Post Combine: 3.08

Much like Lattimore, this is a product of him not participating at the combine. Dobson is a top ten wide receiver talent in this draft and should be going off the board in the second round of rookie drafts. Once his pro day and the NFL Draft play out, I think his stock will be on the rise once again. If you have your draft before then, he is someone to get on the cheap while others are forgetting about him.

Mike Gillislee, RB Florida  
Pre-Combine: 2.11, Post Combine: 3.07

His stock slipped a little bit with an average showing at the combine. He doesn't have the raw talent of some other backs in this class, but he does have the ability to be a three down player in the right system. Depending on where he goes in the NFL Draft, he could rise back up to the late second round in rookie drafts, but the third round is probably more fitting for his talent level.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## PREDICTING ROOKIE DRAFTS USING ADP DATA

**Author: Ryan McDowell**

Over the past three months, I have conducted a total of eighteen dynasty start-up mock drafts. Many of you have participated in these drafts and I plan to continue them throughout the off-season in preparation for start-up drafts and the 2013 dynasty fantasy football season.

In an off-season full of events, dynasty owners look forward to the Rookie Combine, NFL free agency, the NFL draft and the start of training camps, while I relish the chance to participate in these mock drafts and analyze the data they produce. The most obvious use of the average draft position (ADP) data is in preparing for an upcoming startup draft. While the data is not foolproof, it can give owners a good idea of where a specific player may be drafted and when position runs might begin.

The ADP data is not just for owners participating in new leagues, though. Owners in existing dynasty leagues can also use it. I'll cover just a couple of ways the data could be valuable.

First, owners can use it to evaluate potential trades. Again, this is not the only tool one should use, but it can give owners a good idea of the current market value of certain players. Roster strength and team dynamics would, of course, play a large role in creating a balanced trade in any dynasty league.

Another way to use the ADP data is to analyze a dynasty roster – this is something I have been doing lately. In the average start-up draft, an owner will leave the draft with one player valued as a first round pick, one valued as a second round pick and so on. If your dynasty team is filled with multiple highly valued players, then you are likely a playoff contender. On the other hand, if your team lacks players routinely being chosen in the first three rounds, it may be time to rebuild and look towards the future.

Another way to use the data this time of year is to predict and prepare for upcoming rookie drafts in your dynasty league. Many rookie drafts will begin the same weekend as the NFL draft, or very soon after. Even the diehard NFL fans and fantasy players who position themselves in front of the television the entire draft weekend could feel unprepared for the quick turnaround for rookie drafts.

This week, I will take a look at the ADP data, specifically the data for the incoming rookie class. Again, this is not foolproof data, as there is plenty of time for circumstances to change as the draft approaches. Also, specific team needs can always have a huge impact in a rookie only draft.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## PREDICTING ROOKIE DRAFTS USING ADP DATA

Potential Rookie Pick Position	Name	Position	March ADP
1.01	Eddie Lacy	RB	43.5
1.02	Giovani Bernard	RB	66.5
1.03	Cordarrelle Patterson	WR	71.2
1.04	Keenan Allen	WR	87.8
1.05	DeAndre Hopkins	WR	101.7
1.06	Marcus Lattimore	RB	103.7
1.07	Tavon Austin	WR	106.5
1.08	Montee Ball	RB	107.5
1.09	Tyler Eifert	TE	116
1.10	Justin Hunter	WR	120.8
1.11	Johnathan Franklin	RB	133.7
1.12	Andre Ellington	RB	144.3

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## PREDICTING ROOKIE DRAFTS USING ADP DATA

When glancing at the potential first round picks in a twelve team league, it's easy to spot some clear tiers developing. Eddie Lacy has been entrenched as the top choice for the majority of the off-season, although that could easily change depending on his landing spot. He is followed by another running back (Giovani Bernard from North Carolina), although former Tennessee Volunteer wide receiver Cordarrelle Patterson has been closing the gap on the second spot.

After Patterson is a big drop to wide receiver Keenan Allen, who seems to be in a tier of his own. Allen was once considered the favorite to be the top rookie off the board in PPR leagues, but a nagging knee injury has caused him to drop. He even had to meet with infamous Dr. James Andrews, which is almost never good news. Don't be surprised to see the next two wide receivers, DeAndre Hopkins and Tavon Austin to bypass Allen in many rookie drafts.

Among the two running backs who round out the fourth tier of rookies is one of the most popular topics among dynasty league owners – the draft spot of former South Carolina running back Marcus Lattimore. Before suffering a devastating knee injury last season, Lattimore was the hands down choice to be the top overall rookie pick, but there are doubts if he will even be able to suit up in 2013. With a class lacking elite talent, many owners could be willing to take a risk on Lattimore in the first round. The end of the round includes the top rookie tight end, Tyler Eiffert, who is considered one of the safest picks in the draft and is already being drafted as a top ten tight end. The late first round also is the beginning of a long run on running backs lasting throughout the entire second round.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## PREDICTING ROOKIE DRAFTS USING ADP DATA

Potential Rookie Pick Position	Name	Position	March ADP
2.01	Robert Woods	WR	146
2.02	Geno Smith	QB	149.7
2.03	Quinton Patton	WR	152.8
2.04	Zach Ertz	TE	155.7
2.05	Da'Rick Rogers	WR	155.8
2.06	Le'Veon Bell	RB	158.7
2.07	Christine Michael	RB	163.5
2.08	Stepfan Taylor	RB	168.2
2.09	Knile Davis	RB	172.5
2.10	Joseph Randle	RB	173.8
2.11	Markus Wheaton	WR	175.2
2.12	Zac Stacy	RB	180.2

While the second round is full of running backs, it's the two wide receivers who have my attention. Both Robert Woods and Da'Rick Rogers have the upside and ability to end up as the top wideouts in the class. The running backs in this group will have their ultimate draft position dictated by their landing spot in late April. It is very possible that one of these players will be drafted by the Green Bay Packers or Pittsburgh Steelers and as a result, will be overdrafted by many owners. On the other hand, one could be drafted by the Browns to backup Trent Richardson, or the Buccaneers to spell Doug Martin, leading many to place less value on them.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## PREDICTING ROOKIE DRAFTS USING ADP DATA

Potential Rookie Pick Position	Name	Position	March ADP
3.01	Mike Gillislee	RB	186.7
3.02	Terrance Williams	WR	187.3
3.03	Stedman Bailey	WR	197.5
3.04	Kenjon Barner	RB	198.8
3.05	Marquise Goodwin	WR	209.7
3.06	Matt Barkley	QB	213
3.07	Gavin Escobar	TE	214
3.08	Jawan Jamison	RB	222.2
3.09	Marquess Wilson	WR	227.3
3.10	Ray Graham	RB	229.2
3.11	Travis Kelce	TE	229.7
3.12	Aaron Dobson	WR	231.7

The third round is a potpourri of positions with owners starting to swing for the fences. We also see the second quarterback, Matt Barkley. This is another position that is in flux. The next quarterback of the Arizona Cardinals will likely be the rookie QB2, if not the top passer chosen, regardless of whom they choose. Again, the small gap in ADP is obvious, meaning these players could easily go several spots higher or lower once their team and situation is known.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## PREDICTING ROOKIE DRAFTS USING ADP DATA

Potential Rookie Pick Position	Name	Position	March ADP
4.01	Ryan Nassib	QB	231.9
4.02	Tavarres King	WR	231.2
4.03	EJ Manuel	QB	233.5
4.04	Cierre Wood	RB	234
4.05	Josh Boyce	WR	234.7
4.06	Chris Harper	WR	236.8
4.07	Mike Glennon	QB	238.2
4.08	Tyler Bray	QB	238.2
4.09	Tyler Wilson	QB	239.3
4.10	Matt Scott	QB	239.3
4.11	Denard Robinson	WR	240.5
4.12	Jordan Reed	TE	240.7

Considering many dynasty leagues do not even have four rounds in their rookie draft, this is the ultimate lottery ticket round. Half the players chosen this round are quarterbacks and that is no surprise. First, this is not considered to be a strong quarterback class, but some of these names are well known to those that follow college football and the pre-draft activities. I love taking quarterbacks late in rookie drafts. In most cases, they will get a chance to start at some point and that will give them instant dynasty value.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## THE TOP ROOKIE RUNNING BACKS

**Author: Andy Miley**

This is the last, best chance to check all the players based on their talent. In this article, I will analyze some of the top rookie running backs, discuss their skills and try to decide which teams are a fit for their services. As last year's draft bears witness, there are a lot of things that are unknown to the draft community. At this time in 2012, running back Chris Polk was considered a top five rookie running back in dynasty leagues until his non-selection in the NFL Draft – this revealed he had more health concerns than were originally known. Here are my top seven rookie running backs based on talent before situation before the NFL Draft:

### 1. Eddie Lacy, RB ALA

Lacy did not take part during the Combine week due to ongoing slight injury concerns. He is a strong, powerful runner who likes nothing better than running over or through people. He has excellent vision, as shown during his 20-yard touchdown to open up the scoring in the National Championship game. Lacy shows good patience and used his blockers well. It is surprising that such a big back has a jump cut and spin moves to use at his disposal.

In the passing game, he has his strengths and weaknesses. Lacy had no problems in pass blocking and is always looking for someone to hit when in protection. He is a willing blocker as he looks for contact on every passing play he doesn't run a pass pattern. His hands, however, could be cause for concern, as he fought with the ball at times. If you compare him to his fellow Alabama backs, Lacy is more of an explosive back than Mark Ingram, but is not the same all-around talent that Trent Richardson is. He is the safest pick of all the rookies. I don't think he will be the most productive running back in his class over the next five years, but he will be one of the top five players in his class for fantasy production. I would pick him confidently at the rookie 1.01. He would be a good fit with Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Green Bay or Cincinnati.

### 2. Gio Bernard, RB UNC

Bernard is a smooth runner and very good receiver out of the backfield. His best fit will probably be in a zone blocking system. While he has big legs and a good wiggle, his lack of leg strength concerns me a bit. He is explosive and can get to a second gear in the open field. There are some nagging injury concerns, but it seems he has quieted those. The young running back needs to improve his pass blocking, but I think he could take his game to a Matt Forte-lite type level if he can cut down on his body catching. I think the teams that would use his skill set the best are Green Bay, Cincinnati or the Jets.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## THE TOP ROOKIE RUNNING BACKS

### 3. Johnathan Franklin, RB UCLA

Franklin is my bang on the table guy. What I mean by that is I am a huge fan of his game, and I am willing to explain why I like him so much. He has the rare combination of speed and agility that separates him from most NFL backs. Franklin is a creative cut-back runner, who can find open lanes by getting small in the hole. His clear vision helps him set-up defenders down the field; however, he is not a player who will overpower a defender by breaking tackles. He does the little things like falling forward on each carry, shows good sideline awareness and even busts out a spin move every once in a while. Franklin has good hands and demonstrates some toughness pass blocking as he tried his best to keep his quarterback's jersey clean. He will need to work on that in the NFL. I see him as a less quick/agile Chris Johnson/CJ Spiller type who has good size. Franklin would be a good fit for the Bengals, Lions or Jaguars.

### 4. Montee Ball, RB WISC

Unlike the previous Wisconsin running backs who have played in the NFL for the last ten years or so, Ball is not a product of his stout college offensive line. He runs strong, bounces off defenders, lowers his shoulders and explodes with his powerful legs. If you want a battering ram for a lead back, Ball is your guy as he will fight for every yard. The former Badger is a bit more athletic than you would think. He can bust out a few spin moves and jump cuts, all the while keeping focused on the end zone. When Ball uses his outstanding vision, he sets up his blocks and finds the best running lane to hit. Even though he isn't used much in the passing game, Ball has decent hands and is effective as a pass blocker. His 924 total college carries are excessive, so don't expect to have Ball on your dynasty team for the next ten years. He is a good fit for Pittsburgh, Atlanta, the Jets or Giants.

### 5. Andre Ellington, RB CLEM

Ellington doesn't give defenses much to hit when he runs, has adequate vision to read his blocks and takes the right angles to make people miss. He has a good spin move and very quick feet. He has strong leg drive after contact is made, is more agile than he is fast and seems to bounce many of his runs outside. Ellington needs work on his pass blocking, but can be used as receiving option out of the backfield. He can climb the ladder to get to a high throw and can run a deep post pattern like a wide receiver. Ellington is more of a finesse runner because he is lacking in the power department. He is a good fit for San Diego, Detroit or Dallas.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## THE TOP ROOKIE RUNNING BACKS

### 6. Steffan Taylor, RB STAN

Taylor is a patient runner who seems content taking what the defense gives him. The former Cardinal back is good at finding running lanes, shows a little juke move and has soft hands. Taylor displays good lateral movement and usually makes the first defender miss. His 4.76 40 time is a bit concerning and he tends to run a little tall as well. He needs to use his powerful body better to deliver hits instead of taking them. While Eddie George could overcome the tall running and deliver punishing hits, I'm not convinced Taylor has the same overall athleticism. What I liked most about him was that he gets stronger in the fourth quarter of games. Taylor could be a good fit for Pittsburgh, Atlanta or Green Bay.

### 7. Mike Gillislee, RB FLA

The young running back is very light on his feet who can start and stop on a dime. He doesn't have a strong leg drive, nor is he a physical player as he tends to get caught up in the trash around the line of scrimmage. Gillislee is most effective in space where he had room to fool defenders with his juke moves and use his lateral agility to make people miss. He is more quick than fast, possesses a decent stiff-arm and uses his jump cut to create space. Gillislee might be a better third down back than a feature runner; however, he could be very effective in a zone blocking scheme system. He could be a good fit for Jacksonville, Cincinnati or San Diego.

### 8. Joseph Randle, RB OKLA ST

Randle is a running back who I seem to hate on more than others. He is a tall back (6'1") who runs too high. He doesn't get his pads behind him to deliver hits, instead Randle gets hit more often than he should. He is a very smooth, finesse type runner with soft hands. My concern is that he will struggle in traffic as he goes down easily after contact, and bounces too many runs outside as his short power game is not strong. The best comparison I have for him is former Tennessee Titan Chris Brown (not the singer) as he also was very quick and ran way too high. Randle will be better in a zone blocking scheme, as he would not do well on a power running team.

### 9.) Marcus Lattimore, RB SCAR

Lattimore is another player I've got heat for having so low. Significant injuries to running backs are never good. Yes, Adrian Peterson beat the odds last year, but he is the exception and not the rule. The entire dynasty community is hoping this former Gamecock will be ready to contribute by 2014, perhaps earlier. Lattimore isn't shy about making contact running over someone or blocking them and this physical style may have to change somewhat. He has excellent lateral movement, possesses good balance, sees the field well and knows what angles to take. If he fully recovers, which still could be a big "IF," I would place him in the top three of this rookie running back class.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## THE TOP ROOKIE RUNNING BACKS

### 10.) Christine Michael, RB TEXAS A&M

Michael is a jacked-up beast who shows a lot of burst and runs powerfully into the line. He has quick feet, great lateral agility, decent vision and has a chip on his shoulder. By not playing much his Senior year due to injury and not getting along with his college coach, Michael has a lot to prove to NFL front offices and the entire football community. He likes to smash people, keeps his legs driving forward, and is willing to block. The young running back is improving his ability to be effective catching the ball out of the backfield. In a rookie class that does not have a true superstar, I am willing to gamble on Michael because of his tremendous upside.

### 11.) Le'Von Bell, RB MICH ST

Bell is not an athletic running back, but he may be the toughest and most physical runner in this class. He lines up ready to smash into the line and knock around opposing defense. He reads his blockers well, always falls forward and does a great job at taking what the defense gives him. He has an effective stiff-arm and uses a subtle spin moves to gain extra yardage. Bell has good downfield vision, shows good lateral moves (including a jump cut) and runs inside to out. I worry about his foot movement as it could be quicker and he needs to pick up his feet to avoid the trash at the line of scrimmage. He is a better fit in a more traditional type blocking scheme.

### 12.) Zac Stacy, RB VAND

Stacy is a hard-nosed runner who is very effective running inside and outside the tackles. I really like the versatility he brings in the passing game as he is a good pass blocker and can catch the ball in space. Stacy has good vision, decent lateral movement and strong leg drive. When I look at Stacy, I'm reminded of former Bengal Rudi Johnson and he might even be a bit thicker than he was. He is a jack of all trades like Johnson, but is a master of none.

### 13.) Kerwynn Williams, RB UTAH ST

Williams is impressive with his speed, agility and vision in person. He takes good angles, sees the field well, gets separation and runs to daylight. He is big enough to take the hits, but gets small enough to avoid taking many of them. Out of all of these running backs I've discussed, his impact will be most greatly influenced by where he goes. Williams could become a good returner who sees the field sparingly or he could become a third down specialist to start. I think his initial role will be as a change of pace player, but will become a starter a few years down the road.





# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## THE TOP ROOKIE RUNNING BACKS

### 14.) Ray Graham, RB PITT

Graham is a very smooth runner who gets small in the hole and doesn't give defenders much to hit. His 40 time at the Combine of 4.80 was a major red flag, but he has always been more quick than fast – it's his lateral agility and vision that help him find seams in the defense. He might begin in the NFL as a third down back, but he has the hands, wiggle, and vision to become a three down player. Graham is closer, in my eyes, to fellow former Pittsburgh Panther LeSean McCoy in overall talent than compared to Dion Lewis. I might draft more than the 13 other running backs before him until he shows he is fully recovered, but I will keep an eye out on his performances during training camp.

### 15.) Kenjon Barner, RB ORE

Barner uses a slight stutter step, has good balance and gets small in the running lane. While he doesn't have much power, Barner possesses a mean stiff-arm, always falls forward and gets stronger in the fourth quarter of games. He can read his blocks, is a patient runner and uses a fantastic jump cut. In the passing game, he is an adequate blocker who slows his blitzers for a few seconds. Barner has excellent hands and is great in space, but lacks the size and power to likely be anything more than a third down back in the NFL.

### 16.) Knile Davis, RB ARK

The oft-injured running back looked big, quick and strong during running drills. In fact, the former Razorback was explosive running drills at the Combine. He tends to run too high and dances a bit too much for my taste, though. The ball sometimes is not his friend as he fights the ball when attempting to catch passes and when he tries to cradle it. Davis is a strong, explosive inside runner with quick feet. He has decent vision, can spin out of trouble, and has a few jump cuts at his disposal. I want to like him, but his injury history and ball control issues have pushed him back for me.

### 17.) Jawan Jamison, RB RUTG

Jamison has decent lateral agility and usually made the first man miss. He is effective when his team uses designed cut back runs and delayed handoffs. Jamison also has a good spin move that he uses to keep from losing yardage. I am not convinced that he will be anything more than a third down back ever in the NFL. Maybe it's the Rutgers connection with Ray Rice that is giving me hope.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## THE TOP ROOKIE QUARTERBACKS

**Author: Andy Miley**

### 1.) Geno Smith, QB WVU

Smith is fairly accurate and does a good job in not throwing interceptions. His arm strength was greatly affected by the snow and the wind as his passes had almost zero zip to them in his bowl game against Syracuse. He has quick feet, but sometimes dances around too much in the pocket. He does well when his first or second passing options are open, but struggles when he forced to go elsewhere. Of all the quarterbacks I have seen in this class, Smith is the one who is most reliant on his wide receivers to make plays. Most of his passes were short to intermediate throws. He was hurt by the way the coaching staff used Tavon Austin as more of a running back instead of as a receiver in the bowl game. He lacks a sense of pocket pressure and seems very emotional, which is very concerning for a potential leader of men. When Smith gets down on himself in a game, it is very difficult for him to bounce back. Either Arizona or Buffalo will most probably draft him. I think he would be better off in Arizona with a head coach who is good at getting the best out of young, athletic quarterbacks.

### 2.) Matt Barkley, QB USC

Barkley has an amazing amount of experience in a pro style offense. He sees the field well, but has limited arm-strength to stretch the ball down the gridiron. The quarterback is a strong leader who is mentally tough and has already played in front of record crowds under tremendous pressure. Barkley puts his talented receivers in position to make plays, but the question remains if he is truly responsible for their production. For example, Andy Dalton is a more productive quarterback because he has one of the best receivers in the NFL, AJ Green, to catch his passes. Barkley may look more mediocre with less talented weapons. I compare him to former Jet and Dolphin Chad Pennington, who could lead men and make throws with limited arm strength. Barkley would be a good fit for the Browns as they wouldn't rely strictly on his arm to move the ball.

### 3.) Tyler Bray, QB TENN

Bray has a big arm and a quick release. He is accurate when throwing the ball deep and has a gunslinger type persona that gets him into trouble. His bad decisions can quickly multiply. Once he throws one interception, he is more likely to throw more as he tries to will his team back into the game. Bray is not especially mobile and can struggle with accuracy on his shorter throws. He does his best work with a clean pocket, but that is a tough task in the NFL. Since Head Coach Rex Ryan seems to be collecting quarterbacks, I would not be surprised to see the Jets select Bray.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## THE TOP ROOKIE QUARTERBACKS

### 4.) EJ Manuel, QB FLA ST

Manuel is a guy to love and hate. He has such a strong arm and is very mobile. He also has a quick release and played against tough competition for a long time. His decision making is concerning as he forces the ball into tight windows that close earlier than he thought or he takes off running when he should be waiting for the play to develop. For as athletically gifted as he is, his footwork needs a lot of work. I'd love to see him backup RGIII in Washington or Colin Kaepernick in San Francisco.

### 5.) Ryan Nassib, QB SYR

Nassib has a lot of West Coast offense experience which would come in handy if he gets drafted by his old college head coach in Buffalo. The quarterback is accurate, sees the entire field and can process information quickly. He has grittiness to him and is a natural leader of men. Nassib was not blessed with a cannon for an arm, so he needs to anticipate where his receivers should be to get them the ball. Another possible fit for him might be the Vikings.

### 6.) Mike Glennon, QB NC ST

Glennon puts the ball where only the receiver can catch it when he has time in the pocket. He has a strong arm, that at times, gets away from him, especially when he is under pressure. When the quarterback doesn't step up as he throws, the ball floats which happened several times during his bowl game. Glennon is better when the coaching staff runs bootlegs to open up one side of the field to him and give him more time to throw. He is a very streaky player as when he is hot, he gets even better. The opposite is true as well – once he makes a mistake, the mistakes compound exponentially. Glennon is not very mobile and needs to work on feeling pocket pressure along with better overall footwork. His brittle scarecrow frame is also a point of concern. Quarterbacks in the NFL get hit a lot, so he needs to be built to take more of a pounding. I think he would be a great successor to Drew Brees in New Orleans with the chance to learn his craft under Coach Payton.

### 7.) Tyler Wilson, QB ARK

Wilson is a hard player for me to rank as I could see ranking him anywhere from fourth to here at seventh. He reads defenses well, has a strong arm and is very accurate. He can buy time in the pocket with his feet, but does not look to run. He has good mechanics and is an effective leader. I like that there is little chance for surprise with him, but this also makes him extremely predictable. Once his strong head coach left town, Wilson's play slid significantly. His deep ball can flutter and after he gets frustrated, Wilson tends to get reckless. Houston seems like a good fit for him as he can work on his craft for a season or so before replacing Matt Schaub.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## THE TOP ROOKIE WIDE RECEIVERS

**Author: Andy Miley**

### 1.) Keenan Allen, WR CAL

If you are looking for them, Allen can have a lot of knocks against him. His production was not close to several of the wide receivers I have him ranked above. Allen, unfortunately, did not have a quarterback who could get him the ball with any type of consistency. He has a knack for finding a soft spot in coverage and sitting down. Once the ball is in his hands, he looks more like a bigger Percy Harvin. He runs with power, great balance, and downfield vision. Since Harvin left town, Minnesota would be the best fit for him. I think he is the safest wide receiver in his class if his injuries check out.

### 2.) DeAndre "Nuk" Hopkins, WR CLEM

If Hopkins had sub 4.4 40 speed, he would be the best wide receiver in his class, bar none. The young wide receiver is the best in his class at route running. While most receivers get separation using their speed, Hopkins uses technique (sells a great double move), and quickness to set up defenders by constantly changing direction. While his timed speed may not impress, he makes up for it in the open field. His hands gobble up almost every throw and he fights for the ball on each play. The body control, along with his quick feet, make him a difficult man to defend. Hopkins would be a great fit for Pittsburgh or Houston. He may never be a true fantasy WR1, but I am confident that he will produce 75-80 catches, 1,000-1,200 yards, and 7-9 touchdowns for the next six to eight years without fail.

### 3.) Cordarrelle Patterson, WR TENN

Patterson certainly has the buzz right now. He is a physical freak and is as raw as any prospect ever considered in the first round of the NFL or your rookie draft. I have concerns eluding to his inability to process information. This young man does so many things well on the football field, though. He takes great angles, shields defenders away from the ball and climbs the ladder to get to the ball at its highest point. It's the inconsistencies with his hands that cause hesitation as he can make an amazing catch on one play, then body catch his next target. I love his use of juke moves to free himself in open spaces as he rarely doesn't make the first defender miss. He seems to have a fifth gear of speed that is rarely seen. Patterson may be the next Randy Moss or he could be former Lions top ten pick Charles Rogers. He would do wonders for the Bills or Vikings passing attacks.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## THE TOP ROOKIE WIDE RECEIVERS

### 4.) Tavon Austin, WR WVU

Austin is one of the most explosive receivers in this draft (4.34 40 yard dash), but then again he is also one of the smallest at 5' 8" 174 lbs. What separates him from the other receivers is his lateral agility which helps him start and stop without a loss in speed or stride. In college, he ran a lot of plays out of the backfield, but I am not expecting him to carry the ball much in the NFL due to his size. Austin is most dangerous in open space, has amazing body control and possesses arguably the best hands of his class. He could take over the Harvin role in Minnesota, replace Wes Welker in New England or be a great WR2 to Andre Johnson in Houston.

### 5.) Justin Hunter, WR TENN

Hunter is a tall receiver at 6'4", but dropped a few pounds to get quicker at the Combine. I don't think it really helped him there. He is an elusive runner who possesses the best body control of his class and can see the entire field in front of him. I love the way he catches passes in stride which makes him very dangerous and able to take any reception to the house. Hunter gets to the football at its highest point, has tremendous concentration on the ball and uses his frame to get separation from defenders. The wide receiver takes great angles, catches passes in triple coverage and is a master at making the spectacular one-handed catch. Hunter would be a great selection by Baltimore to replace Anquan Boldin.

### 6.) Robert Woods, WR USC

Woods is a great receiver, but he is just not a physical one. He reminds me a bit of former Ram Issac Bruce as they both tended to fall down at the first sign of contact. Woods can adjust to poorly thrown balls either too high or too low for most receivers to snag and does a good job shielding the ball from defensive backs. He can contort his body to make the difficult receptions and runs precise routes. He does a great job of catching the ball away from his body and sees the entire field. Once the ball is between those big mitts of his, it is hard to shake it loose. His speed is deceptive as he would lull defenses to sleep at times and break out a huge play on a wheel route after running short to intermediate patterns. Woods would be downright scary playing a WR2 role with Andrew Luck in Indianapolis or with Robert Griffin III in Washington.

### 7.) Terrance Williams, WR BAY

Williams is my biggest faller in my wide receiver ranks. The hard truth is he is more of a nine route (aka "go" route) runner than a complete receiver. He plays bigger than he is (6' 2", but looks like a 6' 4" player). Williams does a great job tracking the ball deep, has a great bucket catch and skies high for the football. It is somewhat surprising, but he is a very good blocker which will get him on the field for more plays than most deep threats would be. By using his quick feet, he can also break quickly away from defenders down the field. Williams reminds me a bit of Sidney Rice and would be a good addition to Pittsburgh, Buffalo or Detroit in the second round or later.





# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## THE TOP ROOKIE TIGHT ENDS

**Author: Andy Miley**

### 1.) Tyler Eifert, TE ND

Eifert was one of the few bright spots for the Golden Domers. He lines up everywhere – in the slot, outside, wingback, or in-line and was set motion often to get the best coverage matchups. The athletic tight end has some excellent qualities, but blocking doesn't seem to be one of them. He did well to get in front of his assignments, but most times they just threw him aside like a rag doll. On the plus side, he attacks the ball at his highest point and fights off physical coverage very well. Once he has the ball in his hands, he isn't afraid to break out a spin more and fight for extra yardage with constant leg drive. The Combine seemed to separate him from Ertz. As Eifert was the most complete tight end of his class, he would be a good fit for the vertical passing games of the Packers or the Falcons.

### 2.) Zach Ertz, TE STAN

Ertz led Stanford in receiving from the hybrid tight end spot. He lines up as a tight end, split out wide and occasionally as an H-back. The talented tight end runs sharp, precise routes and plucks the ball out of the air with his large hands. Ertz gets in defenders way in the run game and is willing to come back to block for his quarterback when the signal caller scrambles. Despite having defensive backs draped all over him, he can find the ball in the air, adjusts to it, and makes the difficult receptions. Ertz would work well on a team with a strong-armed quarterback who likes to scramble like the 49ers or the Redskins.

### 3.) Gavin Escobar, TE SD ST

Gavin Escobar is an athletic tight end who reminds me a bit of the Baltimore's Dennis Pitta. He is not a strong blocker, but is willing to get in the defenders way. He has soft hands and great leaping ability. While he isn't the best tight end in space, he has a bit of a wiggle that he uses to get open, especially on longer routes. He has tremendous sideline awareness and can find soft spots in coverage. Escobar catches the ball away from his body in stride which helps him get up the field quicker than most tight ends. I think the Raiders would be able to use him as they have a huge hole to fill at tight end.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## THE TOP ROOKIE TIGHT ENDS

### 4.) Jordan Reed, TE FLA

Reed is a versatile player as he can line up beside the tackle, in the backfield and split out wide. He shows a willingness to block on running and passing plays, but it is not a strength. The Gator tight end glides more like a wide receiver as he has very quick feet that help him in and out of breaks. Reed shows off his good balance when he hurdles linebackers while he straddled the sideline. As a route runner, he boxes out his coverage and runs exactly where the quarterback anticipates him to be. He has good leaping ability and can catch the ball at its highest point. Yes, he does remind people of Aaron Hernandez, but he is not as athletic as his older New England counterpart. Call me a Steelers honk, but I think Reed would be a great fit for a Todd Haley offense.

### 5.) Vance McDonald, TE RICE

McDonald played mostly as a wingback and in the slot. He does a decent job run and pass blocking, but lacks the physicality to keep up contact for long. Once he has the ball in his hands, he has strong leg drive he uses to gain position and power against his would-be tacklers. McDonald's efforts from play-to-play can be maddening as he will dig a ball low on a bad pass one play and on the next he will give little to no effort on a running play that isn't to his side. The tight end has decent body control, possesses some lateral agility, climbs the ladder to get to the ball, then occasionally fights the ball into his hands. I like McDonald because he is a bit of a mudder as he can play ugly to get the job done when his head is in the game. The Browns would be a great fit for him as Norv Turner could design plays to get the ball in his hands.

### 6.) Travis Kelce, TE CIN

Kelce is a receiver first and a below average blocker despite his inline usage. He can climb the ladder to get to the ball and has a good stutter step that can gain him separation running routes. He was used as an inline tight end, at wingback and split out wide. Kelce was at his best out in space with an unhindered release down the field. I have my doubts he could ever be used other than strictly as a pass catching tight end. The tight end has a smoothness/glide that makes him hard to tackle. Kelce would flourish in a pass-first offense, perhaps like Chip Kelly's spread, quick striking one.

### 7.) Dion Sims, TE MICH ST

Sims is unlike the other tight ends in his class because he is a blocker first and a receiver second. He is big, physical and strong at the point of attack. Despite being on a run-first team, he still managed to make a few plays when he had the ball in his soft hands. Once Sims has the ball, he is very difficult to bring down as it sometimes took up to three defenders to get him to the ground. He can catch the ball at its highest point, has very quick feet and can contort his body to make difficult receptions. Sims is not without his warts as he had some weight and injury issues. If he can work on those, there is no reason he cannot be his class' Jermaine Gresham. Sims could be a nice fit in a run-first offense like Tampa Bay, who desperately needs a physical tight end.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## 2013 LINEBACKER RATIOS

When trying to determine who the next breakout rookie is or who to target in rookie drafts, fantasy owners often rely on one or two bases – quantitative/statistics or qualitative/scouting. I happen to believe both are essential. Focusing on one factor often results in oversights and missed opportunities and, therefore, both factors must be considered.

Each year I look into two ratios used by several NFL front offices to assess whether defensive lineman and linebackers have the ability to succeed in the NFL. I do this for two reasons – I want to identify/affirm my sleepers and I also want to assess whether I am off on any of my initial qualitative rankings.

Here I'll focus on the linebacker results.

### Ratio Background

In *Take Your Eye Off the Ball*, Pat Kirwan explains two statistics used to determine if a front-seven defensive player is a playmaker or explosive enough to succeed at the professional level. These calculations are based on college production and NFL combine/pro day results. They are called the “explosion number” and the “productivity ratio.”

The explosion number is calculated as “Bench Press Reps + Vertical Jump + Broad Jump.”

A player with a total of 70 plus garners attention since he possesses the explosiveness to win battles at the line of scrimmage. The explosion number isn't the only condition to consider. Some players have an explosion factor below 70 and become a Pro Bowler. Terrell Suggs is a perfect example. That success despite the low number is explained by Kirwan's productivity ratio. This is calculated as “Sacks + Tackles for Loss or “TFL” / Number of Games Played.” This ratio shows how often a defender plays behind the line of scrimmage and exemplifies playmaker tendencies. The targets here are players with ratios greater than 1.0.

I acknowledge there is no certainty with these ratios. Like anything, if a player hits one, both, or none, there are no guarantees. However, as you will see in the historical ratios below, frequently individuals who breach the target explosion and productivity ratios have successful careers. There is someone like Vernon Gholston who appeared to be a sure-fire stud based on these numbers, but there are always exceptions. These ratios are not to be considered the only data point, but one of the many to analyze in ranking rookie IDPs.

### Historical Ratios

The following page includes a number players drafted in the past few seasons who appear to be busts after being selected early in the NFL draft or who have performed extremely well.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## 2013 LINEBACKER RATIOS

Productivity Number

Player	Position	TFL	Sacks	GP	Ratio
Aaron Curry	LB	45.5	9.5	51	1.1
Terrell Suggs	DE	49	44	36	2.6
Demarcus Ware	LB	57.5	27.5	44	1.9
Clay Matthews	LB	13.5	5.5	50	0.4
Brian Orakpo	LB	34.5	23	49	1.2
Lamarr Woodley	LB	50	25	49	1.5
Jason Pierre-Paul	DE	15.5	5.5	13	1.6
Brian Cushing	LB	27	8.5	44	0.8
Justin Tuck	DE	43	24.5	35	1.9
Larry English	LB	57	32	50	1.8
Trent Cole	DE	48	19	38	1.8
Desmond Bishop	LB	21	3	25	1.0
JJ Watt	DE	36.5	11.5	26	1.8
Cameron Wake^	DE/LB	21.5	8.5	31	1.0
Vernon Gholston	DE/LB	30.5	22.5	26	2.0

^-2001 excluded - played 1 game not clear number of snaps, but 1 tackle

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## 2013 LINEBACKER RATIOS

### Explosion Number

Player	Position	Bench	Vertical	Broad	Total
Aaron Curry	LB	20	28.6	8.6	57.2
Terrell Suggs	DE	19	33	9	61.0
Demarcus Ware	LB	27	38.5	10.6	76.1
Clay Matthews	LB	23	35.5	10.1	68.6
Brian Orakpo	LB	31	39.6	10.7	81.3
Lamarr Woodley	LB	29	38.5	9.7	77.2
Jason Pierre-Paul	DE	19	35	10	64.0
Brian Cushing	LB	30	35	10	75.0
Justin Tuck	DE	24	37.6	9.8	71.4
Larry English	LB	24	36	8.9	68.9
Trent Cole	DE/LB	15	38	10.3	63.3
Desmond Bishop	LB	33	32.5	9.3	74.8
JJ Watt	DE	34	37	10.0	81.0
Cameron Wake	DE/LB	20	45.4	10.8	76.2
Vernon Gholston	DE/LB	37	35.5	10.4	82.9

### Summary Findings

Several players like DeMarcus Ware, Justin Tuck, Lamarr Woodley, JJ Watt, and Brian Orakpo performed well in both instances and all have had or have started successful NFL careers. Desmond Bishop was not drafted until the sixth round in the 2007 draft, but he breached both ratios. He is now a top five dynasty linebacker.

Cameron Wake, who played in the Canadian Football League before making it to the NFL, also produced solid ratios.

Vernon Gholston is a clear bust despite having some of the highest ratios in both instances. Players like Jason Pierre-Paul, Terrell Suggs, and Trent Cole (who are dominant defensive ends) hit the target in the productivity ratio, but did not work out well, which is evident in their low explosion numbers.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## 2013 LINEBACKER RATIOS

### Summary Findings (cont.)

Inside linebackers (many who are not even included here intentionally like James Laurinaitis) may not hit these thresholds because of their style of play. These ratios seem to gloss over that aspect of the front seven and must be considered when assessing and ranking rookies.

The most important result from the above is that the players who reach the target ratios in both cases appear to have a greater chance at a success. As a result, that will be the target in assessing the 2013 draft class linebackers to better focus on potential sleepers and draft targets below.

### 2012 Backtest

First, let's take a look back at the 2012 draft class results, see who was tagged as linebackers who hit both ratios, and analyze the accuracy:

Luke Kuechly, MLB CAR

Kuechly performed quite well in his rookie year and finished among the top five IDP linebackers in 2012. He's now considered a top five dynasty linebacker. This is a solid hit.

Mychal Kendricks, ILB, PHI

Kendricks started in each of the Eagles' games in 2012 at the strong side linebacker position. For IDP purposes, he finished in the top 60 among linebackers. That's largely due to the position that he played and the limited tackle opportunities he was presented with on the strongside. In the Eagles' new projected 3-4 base scheme, Kendricks will move to the inside linebacker position. The 2013 season should be a better test of whether this was a successful predictor for IDP purposes. From an NFL perspective, his rookie season was viewed as a success as he assumed the every down linebacker position early on the season, held it through the end of the season, and produced as expected of his position. We can call this a wait-and-see despite the NFL success.





# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## 2013 LINEBACKER RATIOS

Miles Burris, WLB, OAK

Burris was often undrafted in rookie drafts or left until the later rounds. However, he ended up starting for the Raiders from week six through the end of the season at weakside linebacker. He finished in the top 45 linebackers over that period. Given he was an afterthought and ended up starting through the end of the season and produced, this is a hit. He's projected to maintain his starting spot in 2013 on the weakside or in the middle.

Nick Perry, OLB, GB

Perry started immediately for five games before being injured in week six and missing the remainder of the season. He exhibited the ability to get to the quarterback and played meaningful snaps early on, but given the small sample of data, this is another one that should be deferred until 2013.

Melvin Ingram, OLB, SD

Ingram played sparingly in 2012. No success yet, but he's projected to start in 2013 making him a viable option in big play leagues. We'll wait on Ingram, as well, until he has meaningful snaps under his belt.

James-Michael Johnson, ILB, CLE

JMJ was injured much of 2012. The decision here is deferred until 2013, as well.

On the flipside, Zach Brown of the Titans missed on both ratios. He dominated in his rookie year and finished in the top 30 among linebackers in most leagues. This is a prime example of where this quantitative analysis missed. With that said, it appears to have identified some strong candidates as discussed above.



## 2013 NFL Draft Class – Linebackers

Note: The bolded players below hit the target for both productivity and explosion numbers.

Player	Pos	College	Ratio	Vert	Broad	Bench	Total
Alonso, Kiko	ILB / OLB	Oregon	0.98	30.4	9.8	DNP	40.2
Barrington, Sam	ILB	S Florida	0.57	32.4	9.8	22.0	64.2
Beauharnais, Steve	ILB	Rutgers	0.91	33.0	9.8	19.0	61.8
Borland, Chris	ILB	Wisconsin	1.27	DNP	DNP	DNP	0.0
Bostic, Jonathan	ILB	Florida	0.68	32.4	9.8	22.0	64.3
Brown, Arthur	ILB / OLB	Kansas St	0.75	32.5	9.7	21.0	63.2
Brown, Jonathan	OLB	Illinois	1.23	DNP	DNP	DNP	0.0
Buchanan, Ramon	OLB	Miami	0.44	DNP	DNP	DNP	0.0
<b>Collins, Jamie</b>	<b>OLB</b>	<b>S Miss</b>	<b>1.56</b>	<b>41.4</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>19.0</b>	<b>72.0</b>
Gooden, Zaviar	OLB	Missouri	0.60	34.0	10.9	27.0	71.9
Greene, Khaseem	OLB	Rutgers	1.00	30.0	9.7	17.0	56.7
Hepburn, Brandon	ILB	Florida A&M	0.47	32.0	10.4	21.0	63.4
Highsmith, Alonzo	OLB	Arkansas	1.21	DNP	DNP	DNP	0.0
Hodges, Gerald	OLB	Penn St	0.96	35.4	9.9	22.0	67.3
Holloman, DeVonte	OLB/SS	S Carolina	0.33	33.0	9.4	15.0	57.4
Jenkins, Brandon	OLB/DE	Florida St	1.50	DNP	DNP	18.0	18.0
Jenkins, Jelani	OLB	Florida	0.61	35.5	9.3	27.0	71.8
Johnson, Nico	ILB	Alabama	0.34	29.0	9.2	DNP	38.2
Johnson, Travis	OLB	San Jose St	2.01	DNP	DNP	DNP	0.0
Jones, Jarvis	OLB	Georgia	2.77	30.5	9.3	20.0	59.8
Jordan, Dion	OLB/DE	Oregon	1.12	32.4	10.2	DNP	42.6
Klein, A.J.	OLB/ILB	Iowa St	0.58	DNP	9.4	20.0	29.4
Knott, Jake	OLB	Iowa St	0.40	DNP	DNP	DNP	0.0
Long, Travis	OLB	WSU	1.27	DNP	DNP	DNP	0.0
Lotulelei, John	OLB	UNLV	0.18	35.4	9.8	25.0	70.2
Magee, Brandon	OLB	Arizona St	0.96	DNP	9.5	DNP	9.5
Mauti, Michael	ILB	Penn St	0.65	DNP	DNP	28.0	28.0
McCray, Lerentee	OLB	Florida	0.55	DNP	DNP	DNP	0.0
Minter, Kevin	ILB	LSU	0.87	33.0	9.9	25.0	67.9
<b>Moore, Sio</b>	<b>ILB/OLB</b>	<b>Connecticut</b>	<b>1.45</b>	<b>38.0</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>29.0</b>	<b>77.6</b>
Moody, Nick	OLB	Florida St	0.17	DNP	9.8	17.0	26.8
Norman, Chris	OLB	Michigan St	0.30	DNP	DNP	DNP	0.0
Ogletree, Alec	ILB	Georgia	1.39	33.4	10.2	20.0	63.6
Ogletree, Brandon	ILB	BYU	0.62	DNP	DNP	DNP	0.0
Porter, Sean	OLB	Texas A&M	0.96	35.0	9.9	22.0	66.9
Pough, Keith	OLB	Howard	2.02	33.0	9.8	17.0	59.8
Reddick, Kevin	ILB	UNC	0.89	DNP	9.4	23.0	32.4
Sabino, Etienne	OLB	Ohio St	0.45	34.0	9.5	24.0	67.5
Stewart, Jonathan	ILB	Texas A&M	0.52	31.0	9.8	19.0	59.8
Tate, Kenny	OLB	Maryland	0.81	DNP	DNP	DNP	0.0
Taylor, Bruce	ILB	Virginia Tech	1.28	30.4	9.6	19.0	59.0
Taylor, Mike	OLB	Wisconsin	0.97	DNP	DNP	DNP	0.0
Te'o Manti	ILB	Notre Dame	0.81	33.0	9.4	0.0	42.4
Thomas, Chase	OLB	Stanford	1.47	32.0	9.4	18.0	59.4
Wort, Tom	ILB	Oklahoma	0.74	31.4	9.3	21.0	61.7
Wash., Cornelius	OLB	Georgia	0.52	39.0	10.7	36.0	85.7



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## 2013 LINEBACKER RATIOS

### Summary Findings

While the draft is still a month away and schemes will impact ultimate IDP value and targets, here are some findings and players to keep an eye on:

#### Kiko Alonso

Alonso comes with off the field issues. Now, add to that that he hasn't hit either target number above. He didn't bench at his pro day or at the combine, but he's unlikely to put up 30 reps or more to push him over the 70 threshold. Additionally, he missed the productivity threshold despite a dynamite 2012 season with the Ducks. Alonso was a favorite sleeper of mine headed into the draft given his non-stop motor, but the results have me a bit wary and I am now considering not to actively target him in rookie drafts.

#### Arthur Brown

Brown played middle linebacker for Kansas State for two years after transferring from Miami. Brown is likely to be selected in the first round of April's draft and could play either the weakside or middle linebacker spots in a 4-3 defense, or the inside linebacker spot in a 3-4 defense. As seen above, Brown didn't hit either of the ratios, which on its face is concerning. However, as I discussed early on, inside linebackers often don't breach the productivity ratio since they may not blitz as often as other positions. He also played in a conservative scheme. Given that Brown played the middle linebacker spot in college in a conservative defense scheme, I'm not going to hold the ratio against him come draft time. He looks tremendous on tape despite being a bit undersized.

#### Jamie Collins

Collins is currently projected as a second round pick, but a fantastic combine continue to propel his draft stock. Collins hit on both ratios, but unfortunately may be destined to be a 3-4 outside linebacker which would limit his IDP production and upside. Given his athleticism and ability to cover ground in pass coverage, it's possible he would play the strongside in a 4-3 defense or the defensive end spot in a 4-3. The great thing about Collins is that he has the ability to play in multiple schemes. Keep an eye on which scheme Collins lands in; his ceiling may be limited but the numbers point to a playmaker.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## 2013 LINEBACKER RATIOS

### Khaseem Greene

Another undersized athletic linebacker pegged for the first round, Greene has the ability to be an every down linebacker given his speed and career history playing safety. The concern is that he often needs space and to be free of offensive lineman to excel. His explosive factor missed by quite a bit which is concerning, but the productivity factor is there so no change in my ranking of Greene.

### Alonzo Highsmith

After missing 2012 due to a foot injury, Highsmith is projected to be drafted in the later rounds in the 2013 draft or be signed as an undrafted free agent. Unfortunately, he didn't participate at the combine or Arkansas' pro day, so the explosion factor cannot be analyzed. However, his productivity ratio is positive and, as a result, he deserves to be watched to see what scheme he lands in.

### Gerald Hodges

Hodges is best suited to play the outside linebacker spot in a 4-3 scheme. Depending on which position, his IDP production could be capped. He barely missed hitting the target for both ratios, which is intriguing. If he ends up on a 4-3 team to play the weakside or 3-4 defense to play inside, he'll be an interesting prospect to consider given how close his numbers are to the targets. He's currently projected as a fourth or fifth rounder in the draft next month and has the potential to be an every down linebacker. Watch this guy.

### Travis Johnson

He's best suited to play 3-4 outside linebacker since he's too undersized to stick as a 4-3 defensive end. However, Johnson's productivity ratio was off the charts, which makes him a nice target in big-play leagues or if he's drafted as a 4-3 end as situational pass-rusher.

### Jarvis Jones

His productivity numbers are stellar, but his explosion numbers are awful. Simply put, his pro day numbers were very disappointing and he showed no explosiveness in any drill. Even if he were to become dominant, he's certain to be drafted to a 3-4 defense to play outside linebacker, which will likely cap his upside as a LB2 in balanced leagues. Many are suggesting that he'll follow a similar path to Terrell Suggs who also struggled in his workout, as well, but was ultimately dominant. Because he hit one ratio, the numbers above don't seem to assist in any determination and there's no change in his value.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## 2013 LINEBACKER RATIOS

### Dion Jordan

Like Jones, Jordan may be destined to be a 3-4 outside linebacker. Given the pass coverage ability he exuded at Oregon, I'm holding out hope that he's drafted as a strongside linebacker who puts his hand in the dirt in passing situations much like Von Miller. I'll admit that it's an unlikely scenario at this point. However, he appears likely to miss on the explosion ratio since it's rare that a linebacker puts up 28 or more reps on the bench (which he did not participate in). As a result and like Jones, there's nothing terribly positive or negative here on Jordan.

### Kevin Minter

Minter is an inside/middle linebacker who is projected to be drafted in the first two rounds. While he was close on both ratios, he missed on each. Given his position, he gets a pass on the productivity factor. I'm not ready to pass judgment on him as a result.

### Sio Moore

Moore struck on both factors. He was one of my favorite targets before conducting this analysis. He's a solid all around linebacker with the ability to play every down. With the above, he'll maintain that and be a player to actively target depending on where he lands in next month's draft.

### Alec Ogletree

Like many of those discussed before him, Ogletree hit one of the two ratios. His productivity ratio hit, which appears to be the most relevant ratio given it analyzes on field production. As a result, Ogletree will continue to be a top IDP rookie target despite the off-the-field issues.

### Sean Porter

Porter is an interesting case. In 2011, he was used in an attacking role and made significant plays as exhibited by his adequate productivity ratio. In fact, many viewed him as a potential first or second round pick prior to the 2012 season. That changed in 2012 when he was used differently and he became more of a read type of linebacker. That resulted in fewer plays and a drop in his draft stock. Porter has the ability to play outside linebacker in either scheme, so his position and scheme will be the key for his fantasy stock. Given that his productivity numbers were a result of his utilization in 2011 and the fact that his explosion numbers are so close to the target, he's a player that should be targeted depending on where he lands.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## 2013 LINEBACKER RATIOS

### Keith Pough

Pough's production is off the charts, but his explosion numbers are less than stellar. It's possible that he needs to continue develop physically (like Jason Pierre-Paul), which makes these numbers promising and Pough a notable IDP target. Alternatively, it's possible the quality of competition at Howard contributed to his big time productivity numbers. Either way, the analysis above puts Pough on the target list. He's certainly on NFL team's draft list.

### Manti T'eo

Te'o didn't hit either ratio target showing little explosion at the combine. Given that, the circus surrounding him, as well as the fact that he struggles to shed blockers (see national championship), T'eo won't be at the top of my target list come rookie draft time.

### Cornelius Washington

Both Ogletree and Jones overshadowed Washington at Georgia. His role with Georgia was to take on blockers and free up the two stars. That's a large reason why his productivity ratio is well below the target. On the flip side, his explosion factor is stellar at 86. It's possible he's a workout warrior, but he deserves a watch given the signs of explosion and his Georgia role.

### Summary

While these numbers are not definitive in the determination of NFL success and fantasy greatness, both serve as additional data points to consider in drafting and ranking rookies. While this analysis isn't fool proof, it singles out several players as targets to consider earlier than most owners would for a justifiable reason.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## THE TOP 51 NON-IDP ROOKIE PROSPECTS

**Author: Andy Miley**

The beginning of April every year has its excitement for dynasty owners. Trading picks up, there's speculation about where rookies will go and some of us crazy people even start analyzing other teams rosters to predict whom every team will take in the rookie draft. In my previous articles where I ranked the offensive players by position, I've received some praise, some confusion and some hate. As I tell anyone who reads my articles, do not let someone tell you what a player is, watch the player for yourself.

As with all the rookies ranked in this article and the next one, I have already watched at least three games worth of film on each, hopefully more. I based my rankings on PPR leagues that start one quarterback, two running backs, three wide receivers and a tight end. I anticipate compiling a top 25 that includes IDPs as well before the NFL Draft. Please note I am ranking them by skill and intangibles, so players with character concerns get ranked lower than their perceived skill level.

### 1. Eddie Lacy, RB ALA

Lacy, if healthy, is a workhorse running back. He runs hard inside or outside, has good ball security, and can pass block so he will be on the field all the time. He is safest player in your rookie draft this year.

### 2. Keenan Allen, WR CAL

Allen was knocked down by some draft analysts and fans. He did not have a decent quarterback throwing him the ball, but still managed to catch almost everything thrown his way. I love the way he gets physical with the defense and at times, tries to run over them. He has his injury concerns as well, but as our doctor Scott Peak says he should be good to go. His health may drop him to a spot where a good offensive team can draft him.

### 3. Gio Bernard, RB UNC

Bernard is a smooth runner who is more of a finesse guy than a power runner. He has good hands and can make people miss. I hope he is more LeSean McCoy than Knowshon Moreno. He is another player with injury concerns.

### 4. DeAndre Hopkins, WR CLEM

Hopkins is one of my favorite players in this year's draft. He separates better than anyone else in his class, has soft hands and runs clean, precise routes. His game is not speed, but Hopkins will be successful in the NFL. He has a lower ceiling than the next ten rookies ranked after him, but his floor is a safe WR3 on your fantasy team for five-to-ten years.

### 5. Cordarrelle Patterson, WR TENN

Patterson is the best pure playmaker in his class. He is raw and his understanding of offenses and his role in them are questionable. I am excited about him and terrified at the same time. If he puts it all together, he will be worth the 1.1. If he crashes and burns, you don't want to get burned that badly.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## THE TOP 51 NON-IDP ROOKIE PROSPECTS

### 6. Tavon Austin, WR WVU

The draft buzz about Austin is climbing and climbing. Despite his stature, he is an explosive playmaker who can score from anywhere on the field. He is great in space and can make people miss. Hopefully he goes to a team that can use him as a complement to a WR1.

### 7. Johnathan Franklin, RB UCLA

Franklin is a bit small for a starting running back as he weighs close to 200 lbs. He is an explosive cut-back runner, who runs bigger than his size. His pass blocking needs a bit of work, but he can be a quicker than fast version of Chris Johnson.

### 8. Justin Hunter, WR TENN

Hunter is one of the tallest wide receivers in his class and may have the best body control, too. He attacks the ball with his hands and catches in stride like no one else.

### 9. Montee Ball, RB WISC

Ball is a bruising running back who is pretty good in the passing game as well. His enormous amount of carries in college is concerning, but then again, running backs are typically only projected for a three-to-five year NFL careers.

### 10. Tyler Eifert, TE ND

Eifert is a dynamic playmaker who plays more like a wide receiver than a tight end. He can line up inside if need be, but does most of his damage outside. In premium tight end leagues, Eifert should go four to five spots earlier.

### 11. Robert Woods, WR USC

Woods is a classic wide receiver who doesn't like to get dirty. He runs smooth, precise routes, has great hands and gets separation from defenders. He is not a physical player, but makes up for it in technique.

### 12. Terrance Williams, WR BAY

Williams is an outside, deep route running wide receiver. He has good speed and size. His run blocking is near the top of his class, so expect him to find him on a running team like Houston, San Francisco, or Minnesota that can use him to block and take the top off the defense.

### 13. Zach Ertz, TE STAN

Ertz is a basically a big wide receiver trapped in a tight end's body. He can get good separation and has great body control, but can barely block a lick. In tight end premium leagues, I would bump him up to the top ten.

### 14. Stedman Bailey, WR WVU

Bailey is a wide receiver who rarely drops the ball and has a knack for finding soft spots in the defense. He creates separation with his route running and amazing agility.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## THE TOP 51 NON-IDP ROOKIE PROSPECTS

### 15. Quinton Patton, WR LA TECH

Patton has amazing body control and plays with a very physical style. He has great speed and does not let many balls hit the ground on his watch.

### 16. Marcus Lattimore, RB SO CAR

Lattimore had great speed and power before the devastating knee injuries. If he can come back from the latest significant knee injury, he will be worth a top three pick. However, with those unknowns, I am willing to take a gamble on Lattimore here, if he is available.

### 17. Christine Michael, RB TEX A&M

Michael is an explosive, powerful runner. He was in his coach's doghouse for most of the year and has not played in significantly in more than six games each year. I liked that he put it all together at the East/West Shrine Game week, but there are still character concerns that knock him down to 17.

### 18. Geno Smith, QB WVU

Smith has a strong arm and is athletic enough to be a good NFL starter. He needs to work on his mechanics and become a leader of men if he wants to be successful in the NFL. I wouldn't want to depend on him for more than a bye week in 2013.

### 19. Markus Wheaton, WR OR ST

Wheaton is an explosive receiver. He attacks the ball in the air and plays with same intensity that Carolina's Steve Smith does. No ball is out of reach with him as he is willing to do whatever it takes to make the difficult catch.

### 20. Gavin Escobar, TE SD ST

Escobar is another tight end who plays more like a wide receiver. He isn't especially fast, but he runs good routes and can get separation against linebackers and safeties. I wouldn't want him as my TE1, but would be happy with him as my TE2-3.

### 21. Andre Ellington, RB CLEM

Ellington is a finesse runner, but he is good at making defenses miss. He is more quick than fast, but needs to get more powerful to earn a three down role in the NFL.

### 22. Stepfan Taylor, RB STAN

Most people after the Combine see Taylor as this plodding runner who is not explosive due to his slow 40 time. He is a big back who can use his body as a weapon, but at times runs too high. Taylor can be a strong, no-nonsense runner like Stevan Ridley.

### 23. Aaron Dobson, WR MARSH

Dobson is a human highlight reel as he can catch any pass thrown his way if he is concentrating on it. He wasn't asked to do much route running, so he is a bit raw with that.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## THE TOP 51 NON-IDP ROOKIE PROSPECTS

### 24. Mike Gillislee, RB FLA

Gillislee is not a powerful runner, instead he relies on quickness and speed to gain yards. I like the way he uses his jump cut to get out of trouble, but he needs to get stronger to get a chance at a three down role.

### 25. Joseph Randle, RB OKLA ST

Randle is a smooth runner who tries to make defenders miss. This is somewhat unsuccessful due to his high running style that exposes his body to unnecessary hits. With the right coaching, I think he could be a more efficient runner.

### 26. Le'Von Bell, RB MICH ST

Bell is a bigger back who can catch the ball well out of the backfield. He is a powerful runner, but seldomly makes defenders miss. Hopefully, he can work on his foot speed or he will need to go to a team with a strong offensive line to be effective.

### 27. Chris Harper, WR KAN ST

Harper is a thickly built wide receiver who has amazing hands and can catch anything. He looks like a short, converted tight end more than a wide receiver. This wide receiver could be one of the best values at his position.

### 28. Da'Rick Rogers, WR TEN TECH

Rogers has better talent than any receiver outside of my top seven, but has many off-field troubles that knock him down this far. Every draft class has a player who cannot redeem himself, I hope it isn't Rogers, but I am bracing for it. If he can be drafted to a team with strong management and an even stronger locker room, Rogers will surprise.

### 29. Jordan Reed, TE FLA

Reed is a chess piece who can be used everywhere. He has quick feet, good balance, good hands and runs decent routes. The tight end is not a good blocker, so he will be used as more of a move tight end.

### 30. Matt Barkley, QB USC

Barkley is a leader of men as he has all the intangibles a team could want in the NFL. His arm strength is lacking past 20 yards, but he can do the little things to make an offense go. I doubt if he is ever a Pro Bowl type player, but he is gritty enough to be a solid QB2 for your dynasty team when he becomes a starter.

### 31. Zac Stacy, RB VAND

Stacy is as blue-collar as a running back can get. He will run hard, put his head down and grind out yards for you. This running back will do whatever his team asks of him – run, catch, pass block, return punts, kicks, etc.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## THE TOP 51 NON-IDP ROOKIE PROSPECTS

### 32. Kerwynn Williams, RB UTAH ST

Williams has enough speed, agility and vision to be successful in the NFL. His game is more like former Utah State running back Michael Smith than he is to Robert Turbin. He might start as a third down back, but could earn more playing time.

### 33. Vance McDonald, TE RICE

McDonald is not as versatile as Reed, but is a stronger physical force once he catches the ball. His motor runs hot and cold, so he will need to work on that to see the field on his future NFL team.

### 34. Travis Kelce, TE CIN

Kelce is certainly getting a lot of draft buzz right now. He is very fluid athlete with good hands. His unknown off field troubles are a bit concerning, but perhaps he has matured enough to put those behind him.

### 35. Marquise Goodwin, WR TEX

Goodwin is a track star first and a football player second. He has amazing burst that can be exploited, but he needs more seasoning to be an effective football player. I would not draft him with hopes of starting him before the 2014 season, but the talent and skill are there.

### 36. Ryan Swope, WR TEX A&M

Swope was impressive at the NFL Combine and surprised most of the draft community with his timed speed. He has good hands and can be effective out of the slot. I'm not sure if he will be effective on the outside, but I'm willing to take the chance. I realize I might be lower on him than most.

### 37. Tyler Bray, QB TENN

Bray is a strong-armed quarterback who loves to air it out. The problem is once he starts making mistakes, they seem to multiple on him quickly. He will not be ready to start until 2014 or later.

### 38. Tavarres King, WR GA

King is a talented receiver who glides down the field and can make tough catches in traffic. His upside is probably a fantasy WR3 at best.

### 39. Conner Vernon, WR DUKE

Duke is a slow possession receiver with good hands who knows how to get separation running routes. He needs to be in a pass-first offense to be successful.

### 40. EJ Manuel, QB FLA ST

Manuel is an athletic quarterback who lacks the footwork to use his skills effectively. He struggles under pressure and is not a consistent performer. The quarterback could be successful in a read option offense.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## THE TOP 51 NON-IDP ROOKIE PROSPECTS

### 41. Ray Graham, RB PITT

Graham is a quicker than fast running back who lost some of his speed with his lower leg injuries. I'm not sure he will ever get his burst back, but he is still a solid pass blocker and has excellent hands. The former Pitt running back may need to make an NFL team as a third down back first.

### 42. Jasper Collins, WR MT UN

Collins is not a physical wide receiver, but is ideally suited to play in the slot. He can contort his body to make tough catches, gets up to speed quickly, can sky to get the ball, and moves well side to side. Don't discount him because he comes from a small school as Mt. Union is already known for NFL stalwarts Pierre Garcon and Cecil Shorts.

### 43. Kenjon Barner, RB ORE

Barner is a smaller back who uses his quickness and superior field vision to his advantage. I'm not sure if he is built to be a starter in the NFL. He might project to be more of a third down back as well.

### 44. Corey Fuller, WR VA TECH

Fuller manipulates his body to find the ball, snags the ball above his head and has excellent hands. He demonstrates a solid combination of speed and agility, while using his physicality to fight off press coverage.

### 45. Cobi Hamilton, WR ARK

Hamilton has some concentration issues. He is a long strider who breaks down quickly to make quick, sudden moves. I am a bit worried about his coordination/balance as he sometimes tripped over his own feet when he had created separation from the defense. He can make some amazing catches, but isn't very consistent from play-to-play.

### 46. Marcus Davis, WR VA TECH

Davis uses his size well. He finds the ball, makes the catch at its highest point and uses good body control. He needs to play a bit faster and work on his inconsistent hands.

### 47. Ryan Nassib, QB SYR

Nassib throws the ball very accurately and has good pocket presence. He has even more of a noddle arm than Barkley, so he needs to end up in the right system to become an NFL starter.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## THE TOP 51 NON-IDP ROOKIE PROSPECTS

### 48. Marquess Wilson, WR WASH ST

Wilson seems to be highly regarded by some draftniks. He is a fighter who shields the ball away from defenders, but tends to get out muscled at the point of attack. He has decent speed and good sideline awareness with the ability to start and stop quickly. I have my doubts he will ever be more than a fantasy WR4.

### 49. Knile Davis, RB ARK

Davis is a huge boom or bust pick. He looked healthy and explosive during the Combine; however, he has a long injury history and has ball security issues. I would stash him away and see if his talent eventually wins out.

### 50. Aaron Mellette, WR ELON

Mellette is a quick twitched receiver. He has a good spin move, leaps high to the ball and has strong hands. He can contort himself to the ball and has good sideline awareness. He needs to get stronger dealing with the physical coverage the NFL will throw at him.

### 51. Miguel Maysonet, RB STONY BROOK

Maysonet is a running back I am keeping my eye on. He has outstanding lateral agility, possesses good balance, and gets small in the hole. He shows good vision, uses his cut back lanes well and has the athleticism to hurdle defenders. He did well against Syracuse and Villanova, but this is the NFL.





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# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## 2013 ROOKIE ANALYSIS: QUARTERBACKS

**Author: Jeff Haverlack**

It's April and the information is in no small supply. So too are the numerous self-proclaimed experts, rhetoric and bold predictions.

For fantasy junkies, there's no time like April. Of course, that can be said about May, June, July and all the way until the season officially kicks off. But what is there not to like about the NFL Draft and the opportunity to add a young player to your team to aid in the quest for your league trophy. Whether you're high on rookie talent or prefer to trade away your picks, it's still an integral part of the game you need to embrace. As we move closer to the draft, you'll continue to find all the rookie information you'll need toward designing your plan. You each will have your own tendencies and strategies and, to that end, let me tell you a bit about mine before launching into my top five players within each skill position.

I love ADP data, but not for the reason that many others do. I like the data because it's a barometer for herd mentality, not necessarily a gauge of talent. Anyone can call themselves an expert. And don't think for a second that because someone has a blog, site or YouTube channel that they are an expert. If you're going to follow individuals who consider themselves to be experts in the area of rookie analysis, do your best to ensure they are doing the work behind the scenes to qualify for that title and not simply parroting others' comments. For myself, I leave the term expert for others to worry about. I'm an avid watcher of film anywhere I can get it, not just the highlight reels but also the (for lack of a better term) lowlight reel. I also watch indirect game tape in which the player I'm focused on isn't the primary focus – I've found it's a great way to find out how that player blocks, runs routes when not the primary receiver, pass defends or moves when the play is going away from him. The point here is that before using another's analysis for purposes of generating your own valuation, make sure you can trust your source. It's obvious that many out there, individuals as well as sites touting rookie information are simply relaying what other sites have found without doing their own work.

You need to know the ADP data for each individual draft. The herd mentality at work is very visible in these drafts and you must understand where your targeted players are going off the board. Having the fifth pick in the draft, but understanding you can get your player at nine can be a valuable tool if you're willing to risk trading back. If you're in dire need of a particular position, but it's likely your targeted player is going off the board a pick or two ahead of your own, maybe a trade up is your best course of action. Remember the ADP of any draft isn't necessarily a gauge of talent as much as it is a gauge of popular opinion, warranted or not. Your due-diligence and hard work will pay off.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## 2013 ROOKIE ANALYSIS: QUARTERBACKS

One final note on rookie rankings and analysis. You've got some of the best minds in the format here at DLF working for you. Being completely objective, I am constantly amazed at the amount of work, knowledge and passion our writers put into their content. We won't always agree on players or our rankings, but you should not want us to. We owe it to you to do our own work and formulate our own opinions. We have high standards for what makes it on the site and you, our reader, ultimately will determine which writers and sites will earn your trust.

We have a GREAT tool for you to do your own analysis and you'll find it here.

Just over a year ago I looked at rookie draft history of one of my primary dynasty leagues beginning in 2004 toward determining some likelihood of rookie success based upon chosen fantasy round. You can look back on that article here.

Let's get started.

### Quarterbacks

It's still three weeks away from the draft, but it's been beaten to death that this quarterback class leaves a lot to be desired. Coming off the heels of 2012's class, it's even more disappointing. But let the talking heads keep driving that home. Just because there isn't an RGIII or Andrew Luck in this year's draft doesn't mean there aren't players who won't perform given both time and opportunity. Don't forget history has shown us the first quarterback off the board is successful in the NFL in a majority of cases. Even the second quarterback selected has a decent success rate. For myself, when analyzing quarterbacks, I like to look at four primary characteristics:

- 1) Footwork/Mechanics
- 2) Arm Strength
- 3) Intelligence/Decision-Making and
- 4) Accuracy

I can find many players who have had success without all four of these traits, but if you find a quarterback that has all four, you're way ahead of the game. Beyond these, give me also Work Ethic, Mobility, Size and Leadership.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## 2013 ROOKIE ANALYSIS: QUARTERBACKS

I was very high on Colin Kaepernick because of the three primary traits, primarily strength and intelligence. I wasn't high on Jamarcus Russell, Mark Sanchez, Matt Leinart, Jake Locker or Blaine Gabbert because of critical deficits. And recall that Cam Newton was shunned almost entirely by the fantasy community after being drafted by Carolina. Point here is don't get too caught up in absolute statements about a quarterback as to where they should or should not be taken. If you have a dire need at quarterback and can't land one in a trade, the first quarterback off the board is your best bet. In certain years, however, it's best not to force the pick if you have other alternatives and 2013 is seemingly one of those years.

1. Geno Smith  
West Virginia  
6'2"/218 Lbs.

Everyone has heard the criticism about Smith's lack of accuracy. Any way you stack it, while in West Virginia's system, Smith never completed less than 65% of his passes and finished with a 71.2% completion percentage in his senior year. Accuracy concerns have been overblown to a large degree. Pop on the tape of his Senior year and you will see balls maddeningly floating beyond receivers, too wide or otherwise off the mark. But you can't call Smith completely inaccurate as a quarterback. He does have a tendency to throw off his back foot which can cause the ball to sail, but in other throws he's comfortable on the balls of his feet with good weight transfer and ball position.

Smith has plenty of velocity and intelligence and better than adequate agility and mobility. He's not an overly dynamic quarterback, but has a skill set that will provide for immediate opportunity at the next level – exactly what you hope for in a non-elite prospect in your fantasy draft. I don't have him as a top five selection in fantasy unless you have no other alternatives at the position. He's best suited as a pick in the seven-to-ten range as the first quarterback off the board or even later if the quarterback talent in your league is well distributed.

2. E.J. Manuel  
Florida St.  
6'5"/237 Lbs.

Manuel is one of those quarterbacks who I've warmed up to the more tape I watch. He's relatively accurate, has a short, compact and quick throwing motion, excellent mobility with good vision and feel but his strongest asset is his quick driving throws. He generates superior velocity with a great weight transfer. Footwork on many of his drop backs is a bit sloppy and he primarily sets up in a shotgun formation, but all of these items are very much expected from collegiate prospects. He may have the strongest arm in the class or is certainly at least in the top three. Footwork, decision making and development of touch will be of primary importance in his development.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## 2013 ROOKIE ANALYSIS: QUARTERBACKS

### 2. E.J. Manuel (cont.)

With recent tape review, Manuel continues to climb and now sits squarely as my second ranked quarterback in this year's rookie class. It will not surprise me to see Manuel off the board by the mid second round considering the need of multiple teams. The more I watch him, the more I see one of my favorite players, Daunte Culpepper.

### 3. Matt Barkley

USC

6'2"/227 Lbs.

Barkley is a tough quarterback to project. On the field and in the pocket he has the poise and obvious intelligence as to where the ball needs to be put to obtain the best result. His footwork appears relatively clean as does his release. Much like Matt Leinart, however, Barkley's arm strength is likely to be problematic in the NFL. On deeper passes, he shows good touch and enough strength to lead his receiver into space. But in the NFL, a quarterback must display strength on the intermediate and deeper out patterns and this is where he tends to struggle. Strangely enough, not every one of these routes displays poor strength. In many of these throws, velocity and trajectory are passable. But too many float and are not driven. In the NFL, floating passes will find you on the bench in a hurry.

There's no knock on Barkley as far as leadership and intelligence go. Mechanical deficits are going to limit his upside and I would rank him a bit below, or near the same level, as Christian Ponder and Andy Dalton. In the right system with a capable slot receiver, Barkley may have a chance to work to his strengths and minimize those listed deficits.

### 4. Ryan Nassib

Syracuse

6'2"/227 Lbs.

Ryan "Happy Feet" Nassib (that's my own nickname) could fall either way in the NFL. He's a bit under-sized at 6'2", but in the year following Russell Wilson's rise to stardom, I risk getting flamed by using that phrase. Still, he is undersized by prototypical standards, although 6'2" is passable should the quarterback stand tall in the pocket, have pocket presence and contain enough arm strength to deliver the ball on all routes. In Nassib's case, he has most of what is needed, save a solid foundation in the pocket and mediocre decision making.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## 2013 ROOKIE ANALYSIS: QUARTERBACKS

### 4. Ryan Nassib (cont)

Syracuse

6'2"/227 Lbs.

Nassib grossly stretches the desire for quarterbacks with a good foundation in the lower half of their body while in the pocket, remaining coiled to deliver a ball with velocity and accuracy via good footwork and stance. Nassib has a bad tendency to hop in and out his dropbacks and while set within the pocket. Whether he does or doesn't, he possesses a rocket arm with a relatively compact delivery that gets the ball to its destination in a hurry. His completion percentage is a direct reflection of how well he keeps his foundation under him and he'll be a project at the next level.

Decision-making is questionable which is not uncommon with quarterbacks possessing exceptional arm strength. He'll need a good quarterback coach and a friendly system with play-makers while developing.

### 5. Mike Glennon

N.C. State

6'7"/225 Lbs.

I continue to be intrigued by the upside of Mike Glennon, but I'm not exactly sure why. There's enough raw talent present with obvious arm strength along with a presence that has my gut screaming at me. When evaluating rookies, I've learned to trust my gut and I've found that presence (not pocket presence) and "it" factor go a long way in budding NFL stars. But beyond these traits, Glennon has enough on the other side of the scale the analytical side of me just can't ignore.

While he does possess significant arm strength, size and pro-style system experience, he has negatives that must be addressed at the next level. His footwork is often clumsy and likely attributed to his size. He often looks as if he's running in mud when sliding in the pocket or backpedaling. Like Ryan Nassib above, he often is baited into bad decisions trying to rely upon his arm strength to fit the ball into poor situations. Within the pocket, he seems nervous and often doesn't complete his progression before dumping the ball off.

Both he and Nassib are likely third round dynasty selections at best, depending on situation.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## 2013 ROOKIE ANALYSIS: QUARTERBACKS

6. Tyler Bray  
Tennessee  
6'6"/232 Lbs.

Tennessee's Tyler Bray is as difficult to analyze as any fringe NFL quarterback I've seen. If not for the pure talent on many levels, he'd be all too easy to dismiss. He played with two first round capable NFL receivers in Cordarrelle Patterson and Justin Hunter and it's hard to forecast whether this fact helped his receivers more or if, perhaps, the presence of these receivers elevated Bray's visibility. Any way you slice it, Bray has a big arm and generates a lot of velocity on his throws. In other words, there's no question he has an NFL capable arm. Beyond his arm, plenty of issues exist.

Because of the cannon attached to his shoulder, it would seem Bray's decision-making capability is flawed. When watching any tape, you see moments of magic and moments of misery. While he stands tall in the pocket, he seems slow in his assessment of the game in motion and is consistently late or wide on his throws due to his lack of recognition. This, when compared with the fact that he often throws off of his back foot, relying again on his arm strength and doesn't consistently deliver his passes over-the-top makes him wildly erratic. When he sets his feet, trusts the pocket and utilizes good weight transfer, he delivers crisp balls in catchable locations. On any given play he looks like a starting NFL quarterback or an undrafted free agent.

7. Tyler Wilson  
Arkansas  
6'2"/218 Lbs.

Wilson is one of my favorite quarterbacks in this year's rookie class. He's not as dynamic or purely talented as a few of the other names on this list but what he doesn't possess in those areas, he makes up for with leadership, toughness and a relatively solid skill-set. The linked video here isn't his best tape, but came against a very good South Carolina defense that pressured him all day. I don't like to rely of tape from cupcake match-ups when evaluating quarterback talent. Seeing how a young quarterback handles adversity, collapsing pockets, corner blitzes and a superior opponent can tell you far more than simply pitch-catch drills against lesser competition.

Wilson isn't going to leap off the page but he's solid across the board and will be a mid-round selection with a lot of upside for a team with an accomplished quarterback coach and time. He's got enough of all the traits I look for to be successful. Of course, so did Kyle Boller.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## 2013 ROOKIE ANALYSIS: QUARTERBACKS

?. Matt Scott  
Arizona  
6'2"/213Lbs.

No the "?" is not a mistake. I can't list Scott as my eighth best quarterback at this point because he's a huge project and may very well go undrafted. He's got a big arm but shows nice touch on many of his throws. He does tend to rely on his arm strength and doesn't show an acute ability to manage his progressions, instead knowing where the ball is to go on most plays and getting it there quickly. He also tends to be rather statuesque in the pocket, stiff in his mechanics through the ball and inconsistent mechanically overall. But given his mobility and the arm strength to make all the throws in the NFL, including perhaps the best ball on short/intermediate out routes of this year's class, he's certain to have caught the eye of NFL scouts.

What I like best about Scott is his competitive nature and toughness. He's got enough to like as a quarterback, but his real value comes as a football player. That's a broad definition but football players can play and at the quarterback position, mechanics and fundamentals aren't the only variables in the equation. The second video below really showcases his tenacity and his will to win. There's a little Russell Wilson in the 6'2" Scott.

### **Draft Strategy**

It's an uninspiring group for fantasy purposes. There will undoubtedly be quality field generals from this draft five years from now, but forecasting which of this group will be on top is a difficult proposition. In fantasy, especially in the first round, if you are to forego the wide receiver and running back positions to select a quarterback, you need to feel good about the selection. The 2013 class doesn't offer a passer that meets this need. Geno Smith is clearly the best of the lot, but with elite quarterbacks typically going off the board in the first five picks in fantasy drafts, a quarterback like Smith likely won't be selected until the bottom half of the first round and then only by very needy teams.

If you are in a 12 team or greater league and in need of a quarterback, you can select Smith late in the first round if given the opportunity – it's a good spot to take a signal caller with an uncertain future. As for the remaining quarterbacks in this year's class, the second one will likely not go off the board until the late second round and most will be later round rookie picks. Talent-wise, this year's rookie quarterbacks are a QB3/QB4 group outside of Geno Smith's QB2/QB3 ranking.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## RANKING THE WIDE RECEIVER AND TIGHT END DESTINATIONS

**Author: Tim Stafford**

We're closing in on the 2013 NFL Draft and the free agency period is finally starting to wind down – this allows us to stop and take a clear view of the player landscape yet again. While many teams addressed their perceived needs at wide receiver or tight end through free agency, there are still many more who will likely turn to the draft to fill theirs. For complete scouting information, make sure you use our Draft Tool and scour through the Premium Content archive for complete breakdowns of the class.

With hours of tape watched, combine and pro-day performances documented, it's finally time for the last step in the process – the draft itself. While it's generally best not to overreact to the situations that players find themselves in, it's certainly a factor in how your rookie draft will fall. Situation and your team's individual needs are good tie-breakers when you are torn between two players of similar talent. Today we look at every team for wide receivers and conclude with a quick overview of top landing spots for tight ends.

With that in mind, let's take a look at all 32 teams and see where they rank as far as landing spots for wide receivers. Each of the teams is put into a tier based on good (four stars) to terrible (one or no stars).

### **Four Stars**

#### **Pittsburgh Steelers**

The Steelers have gone from NFL powerhouse to near rebuild in close to record time. Wide receiver is a particular area of need even though they matched the Patriots tender offer on Emmanuel Sanders. They may have retained Sanders, but they lost their star playmaker in Mike Wallace. This leaves only Plaxico Burress and Jericho Cotchery as options behind Antonio Brown and Sanders. The Steelers simply need to burn an early draft pick on a wideout. Given the combination of the depth chart and Big Ben at the helm, Pittsburgh is one of the top landing spots for a rookie receiver.

#### **Houston Texans**

With the departure of Kevin Walter, the Texans also find the cupboard somewhat bare at WR2. Andre Johnson, while still effective, is on the downward slope of his career. The Texans have been a perennial dynasty hot spot for rookie receivers, but have yet to develop a reliable weekly option for fantasy. With the obvious need, a competent (if uninspiring) quarterback and the depth of the wide receiver class; maybe this is the year the Texans give fantasy owners a Texas sized winner.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## RANKING THE WIDE RECEIVER AND TIGHT END DESTINATIONS

### Carolina Panthers

Cam Newton needs more weapons. The signing of Domenik Hixon was only an insurance move so that in the event the draft doesn't fall favorably, the Panthers aren't forced to take a wide receiver they don't like. Expect there to be an attractive option at pick #44 and Carolina will snap up a pass catcher. While Carolina's offense can't be called high-octane, the opportunity would be terrific for the rookie. This would also boost expectations for Cam Newton's passing production.

### Baltimore Ravens

The Ravens don't have quite the acute need of the other teams, but the depth chart is thin nonetheless. They view themselves to be in a championship window and have their franchise quarterback signed to a lucrative long-term deal. It's a good move to invest in a wide receiver to give Joe Flacco an option to the vertical threat, Torrey Smith. Expect a lot of the elite prospects to be gone before the Ravens pick in round two, but there will still be nice alternatives. You could do worse in your rookie draft than to end up with a decent prospect on a current Super Bowl caliber team.

### Washington Redskins

An emerging quarterback and a depth chart that doesn't have a proven stud makes Washington one of the premier wide receiver destinations. Pierre Garcon would benefit from a complimentary player and so far Leonard Hankerson hasn't demonstrated much of anything. Washington is a team on the rise that apparently has the running back situation well in hand. This is a solid destination for a wide receiver.

### Three Stars

#### St. Louis Rams

On need alone, the Rams should be at the top of any list of best locations for rookie wideouts, but Sam Bradford hasn't produced up to his draft day valuation. It shouldn't surprise us if the Rams are one of the first teams to take a wide receiver and, if they do, he'll be a stud level prospect. There's a good chance that St. Louis will produce the first wide receiver off the board in rookie drafts. Let's just hope Bradford can step up his game and make that player a valuable dynasty asset.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## RANKING THE WIDE RECEIVER AND TIGHT END DESTINATIONS

### Minnesota Vikings

The Vikings are a playoff team that lost their prime playmaker in Percy Harvin. Greg Jennings is a nice player, but he can't carry the torch alone. Minnesota, thanks to the Harvin trade, has two first round selections – one should be a wide receiver. Like the Rams above, that will pair a stud prospect with a questionable quarterback, but opportunity and talent could win out. There isn't anyone on the team right now who deserves the WR2 role without a camp battle. De'Andre Hopkins or a healthy Keenan Allen could be a formidable competitor for the role.

### Tennessee Titans

Looking at the depth chart, one wouldn't think the Titans are a great location for a wide receiver to land. Scratch below the surface and things get a bit murkier. Kenny Britt may be getting on the last nerve of the front office, Nate Washington is overpaid and aging, and Kendall Wright isn't ideally suited to be a WR1. The Titans will be opportunistic in this draft because they don't have glaring needs at any position. If the right wide receiver falls to them in the second round, he could make for a nice rookie draft selection. Under any circumstances, don't expect 2013 production from a Titans rookie, but you may be rewarded in the long run.

### New England Patriots

Key losses in Wes Welker and Brandon Lloyd make wide receiver an area of interest for another team that has the luxury to pick based largely on talent rather than need. One concern is the long history of Bill Belichick missing on wide receivers. It appears to be the one weak spot in his otherwise stellar coaching resume. However, how could you pass on a player like Robert Woods who is polished and nearly NFL ready joining up with a first ballot hall of fame quarterback still his prime?

### Dallas Cowboys

While you'd have to wait a year or two, a top end rookie in Dallas could be interesting. Miles Austin appears to be declining quickly and has had nagging health issues. A complement to Dez Bryant could put up nice numbers once Austin steps aside and Jason Witten's production begins to diminish.

# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## RANKING THE WIDE RECEIVER AND TIGHT END DESTINATIONS

### Two Stars

#### New Orleans Saints

The depth chart is packed, but somewhat spotty. The Saints spread the ball around so well that it's difficult to get consistent wide receiver fantasy production after Marques Colston. Still if a talented prospect goes to New Orleans, it will be tough to ignore what could be.

#### Tampa Bay Bucs

Picking in a range where Tavon Austin could be an interesting selection. Could Tampa try to use him as a Swiss-Army knife type with both Mike Williams and Vincent Jackson on the field as well? ESPN/Scout's Inc's Todd McShay thinks so. This could be good for Doug Martin owners as Austin would steal fewer carries than a traditional RB2.

#### San Diego Chargers

The Chargers are in rebuild mode and need to focus on the lines. Philip Rivers' talent has declined rather rapidly, but the depth chart shows opportunity for a young player – DX can't stay healthy and Vincent Brown is unproven at the NFL level.

#### Buffalo Bills

Clearly a need, but quarterback play is very much a question mark. This is simply another team with many holes. It would be hard to get too excited about a wide receiver going to Buffalo, sort of like when Michael Floyd was picked by Arizona last year.

#### Chicago Bears

It will be interesting to see what the Bears do at wide receiver in this draft. It will come down to how confident they are in Alshon Jeffery. Not an area of major need in my opinion, but let's see.

#### Indianapolis Colts

Notwithstanding all the additions at wide receiver, the Colts still don't have a good replacement for Reggie Wayne when he finally hangs it up. TY Hilton and Darrius Heyward-Bey will compete for targets in the vertical game, but there is room for a possession type receiver to emerge as a fantasy option over the next two years.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## RANKING THE WIDE RECEIVER AND TIGHT END DESTINATIONS

### Detroit Lions

Can Ryan Broyles stay healthy? If so, this is a weak destination for a rookie wide receiver. If not, it's prime cut. Are you a gambler?

### San Francisco 49ers

The 49ers can do anything they want in this draft. Michael Crabtree is emerging, Anquan Boldin is a proven commodity and they have AJ Jenkins in the wings. Not an area of need, but they can burn a pick if they want to. Worth keeping an eye on for the long term.

### One (or zero) Stars

### Arizona Cardinals

Many, many other needs before another wide receiver.

### Atlanta Falcons

At some point, the NFL will pass a rule saying they have enough weapons on offense.

### Cincinnati Bengals

They should give Mohamed Sanu and Marvin Jones a shot before going back to the well.

### Cleveland Browns

Even if they drafted a wide receiver, it is hard to imagine how he could become fantasy relevant. It will be tough enough for Brandon Weeden to make both Josh Gordon and Greg Little viable starters.

### Denver Broncos

By the time a rookie wide receiver is ready to go in Denver, Peyton Manning will be gone.

### Green Bay Packers

The Packers are loaded at wide receiver. There are plenty of teams who would love to have James Jones as their WR2, let alone WR3. No need here.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## RANKING THE WIDE RECEIVER AND TIGHT END DESTINATIONS

### Jacksonville Jaguars

The combination of Justin Blackmon and Cecil Shorts is about the best group at any position on this team. They need to go elsewhere in this draft.

### Kansas City Chiefs

Like the Jags, they go elsewhere with Dwayne Bowe re-signed.

### Miami Dolphins

They might add depth, but that's all.

### New York Giants

Hinges on what happens with Victor Cruz, set for now.

### New York Jets

I'm avoiding all Jets for fantasy.

### Oakland Raiders

They have more wide receivers than several teams combined. They'll make do with what they have. Plus, owning Raiders wide receivers hasn't been a route to fantasy success in recent years anyway.

### Philadelphia Eagles

They have what the need for now to run Chip Kelly's offense.

### Seattle Seahawks

They will be subject to the Atlanta limitation as well.



# POST-COMBINE ANALYSIS

## RANKING THE WIDE RECEIVER AND TIGHT END DESTINATIONS

### Top Spots for TEs

Rather than go through an exhaustive review of every team in the NFL regarding TE, here are some key places to watch:

#### Atlanta Falcons

Their TE need was pushed back a year by Tony Gonzalez agreeing to return. Once he's gone, this will be a great situation for a prospect. If Tyler Eifert falls to Atlanta in the first, they'll consider it Christmas in April. In a TE-premium league, you can take an Atlanta bound Eifert whenever you want.

#### Cleveland Browns

Chud and Turner both love the TE and I'm not sure they trust Jordan Cameron. Travis Kelce in Cleveland would make for an interesting mid-second round dynasty rookie pick.

#### Houston Texans

Solid offense with a TE who can't seem to stay healthy. Spells rookie draft opportunity.

#### San Diego Chargers

Not sure Lardarius Green is the answer. If not, a rookie could produce quickly given Antonio Gates' failing health.

#### Oakland Raiders

There's a good chance you can't name anyone on their roster at TE. However this is a team in disarray. Not sure TE will be a high draft priority, but keep an eye on it.



# PLAYER PROFILES

## DYNASTY SPOTLIGHT: EDDIE LACY

**Author: Jacob Feldman**

I am going to start out my dynasty rookie spotlights with the running back who almost everyone has as the top back on their board and in most cases the top fantasy rookie, Eddie Lacy.

Lacy is a big name and a big back who checks in at 5'11" and just over 230 pounds. He was in the media spotlight since he led the powerful running game of the national champion Alabama Crimson Tide. All the media attention and the nationally televised games not only increase his name recognition, but also increase the chances someone will end up reaching a bit and taking him earlier than they should. Before we get into that, let's first take a look at what he brings to the table.

Lacy brings good size and a fairly complete (though not special) skill set to the NFL. He has above average hands, but could use a little refining when it comes to his pass protection, though he is further along than a lot of college backs are in that area. The fact he played in a pro-style offense definitely helps him out in the passing game. His power is one of his strongest points and the fact he combines that power with great balance and being light on his feet will definitely help him at the next level. He also has a little bit of wiggle to him, which is great for someone of his size. He is able to either make defenders in the open field miss or at least run through them to pick up a few extra yards.

I question his vision a little bit as he tended to miss some of the smaller holes and windows that were opened for him. I also wonder about his top end speed. He has good acceleration, but I think his top end speed is closer to the likes of Montee Ball's combine performance (4.66 seconds in the 40 yard dash) than people want to realize. Lacy didn't run at the combine due to an injury and it remains to be seen if he'll run at his pro day. If he really is a 4.55 second type of guy in the 40 yard dash, he might choose not to run because that kind of time might hurt him a little bit in the draft even though that isn't terrible for someone of his size – it just means he isn't going to be a huge home run threat against the faster defensive players in the NFL.

There are also a few concerns when it comes to Lacy.

My other concern, and possibly my biggest one, stems from the team he played on. While Alabama runs a pro system that helps to prepare its players for the NFL, it is also the home to what is always one of the best offensive lines in all of college football. In fact, just about every starter on their offensive line ends up being an early NFL Draft pick. That means players like Lacy are running behind an offensive line filled with first and second round NFL talent going up against must less talented defensive lines. The result is often a hole I'm pretty sure I could run through for a first down. We need to realize the Alabama line just might be one of the best lines that Lacy will ever run behind. That's a pretty big advantage for him (and all Alabama running backs for that matter) that you need to keep in mind when projecting him to the next level.



# PLAYER PROFILES

## DYNASTY SPOTLIGHT: EDDIE LACY

Fortunately, Lacy was very productive in his time leading the Tide. Over his three seasons, he had 355 carries for 2,402 yards (a very impressive 6.77 yards per carry) to go with his 30 touchdowns on the ground. Even more impressive might be the consistency he showed. During the 2012 season when he was the starter, he had only a single game in which he didn't average at least 3.9 yards per carry. He topped all that production off with a very nice 20 carry game for 140 yards and a score in the National Championship game against what had been (up until that point) a very dominant Notre Dame defense.

To sum up the strengths and weaknesses of Lacy, we have a strong, agile and productive back who can catch passes out of the backfield. While he lacks straight line speed and needs to refine his blocking ability, he is the top running back prospect in this year's class – that doesn't mean the same thing this year as it did last year, though. He isn't on the level of Richardson or Martin. He probably isn't even on par with David Wilson when it comes to overall talent.

You might be wondering where exactly that leaves him if you're about to do a startup draft. After all, you don't want to reach, but you also don't want to miss out on him if he is your guy. Unlike last year, where Richardson was going in the first 20 picks of most startup drafts, Lacy is going a few rounds later. According to the dynasty startup Average Draft Position (ADP) that is available at [dynastyleaguefootball.com](http://dynastyleaguefootball.com) or by clicking [here](#), you can see Lacy is currently going in the middle of the fourth round in twelve team PPR leagues as the 19th running back off the board and as the 43rd player overall. This puts him just behind Stevan Ridley, Maurice Jones-Drew and Lamar Miller, but just before Ryan Mathews and Darren Sproles.

Long term, I expect Lacy will have a productive, though unspectacular career as a starting running back in the NFL. He is much closer to former teammate Mark Ingram than he is to Trent Richardson. I expect his production over the next few years to be on par with what we saw last year out of guys like Shonn Greene, Mikel Leshoure, and Ridley. The bottom line is that while he is the best running back in this class at this point in time, he likely lacks that special quality that is required to make someone a top ten running back in the NFL.



# PLAYER PROFILES

## DYNASTY SPOTLIGHT: GENO SMITH

Previously I took a look at the top running back on most draft boards, Eddie Lacy. Let's take a few moments to check out the top quarterback on most boards, Geno Smith.

Smith has led West Virginia as their starting quarterback ever since his true Sophomore season. During his time there, the 6'2", 218 pound signal caller managed to put together some rather impressive numbers as he led the spread attack for the Mountaineers. Not only were his numbers impressive, but he improved a little bit each and every year, which is exactly what teams like to see.

He is billed as an accurate, athletic quarterback who makes good decisions and can lead a team. Some look at his size and physical abilities and try to lump him into the same category as RGIII – that isn't Smith's kind of game though. While he has the ability to run (evident by his sub 4.6 second time in the 40 yard dash), he is much more of a pocket passer. Even Smith has said in various interviews that he is not a running quarterback and doesn't really want to be one either.

His main strengths are his accuracy and quick, quality decision making. Over his career he had a 97:20 touchdown-to-interception ratio. He also managed a 67.5% career completion percentage as a starter at West Virginia. His Senior year was even better than his career numbers with an impressive 42:6 touchdown to interception ratio and a 71.2% completion rate. His arm strength and quick release are other key strengths that will definitely help him to progress as both are definitely at the level needed to be a quality starter at the next level.

Like most skill position players in this year's draft, there are some concerns about Smith and his transition to the next level. First and foremost on that list is that he played almost exclusively from the spread and took almost every single one of his snaps during his senior year from the shotgun formation. That raises some major question marks about the quality of his footwork as well as his ability to pick up blitzers and pressure when taking snaps under center. He struggled when faced with pressure even when taking snaps in the shotgun. When he was forced to scramble, his passes were either inaccurate, lacked power, or both. At the next level, passes like that often lead to turnovers.

Another concern I personally have in regards to Smith stems from the fact his top two targets in the passing game will very likely be drafted in the first or second round of the NFL draft. While most top college quarterbacks have at least one receiver with NFL-caliber talent catch passes for them, sometimes top level receivers can make a quarterback appear a little bit better than they really are. With Tavon Austin (likely to be drafted in the top half of the first round) and Stedman Bailey (a likely second or third round pick), that is quite the talent pool catching passes from Smith. At times, their ability to haul in slightly off target throws, ability to create space and most importantly their talent to make yards after the catch might have inflated Smith's statistics a little bit.





# PLAYER PROFILES

## DYNASTY SPOTLIGHT: GENO SMITH

To sum up the strengths and weaknesses of Smith, we have an extremely accurate quarterback with a strong arm, quick delivery and very good decision making ability. Unfortunately, almost all his experience is in a spread offense out of the shotgun. Smith also struggles with his footwork and doesn't always feel the pressure coming after him. When he is forced to throw on the run, his passes often lack accuracy or float in the air. He has the ability to run with the ball when required, but he doesn't like to and simply prefers to stay in the pocket.

While most believe he is the top prospect in this year's draft at the quarterback position, he isn't anywhere near the special talent level of Andrew Luck or RGIII. If I had to compare him to someone in last year's draft class in terms of talent level (though not necessarily style of play) it would have to be Ryan Tannehill. When it comes to production over the early part of his career, I'm guessing it will more closely mirror Tannehill's season than either of the other first round quarterbacks.

If we are talking more of a Tannehill level of talent, the question is where he should be going in terms of startup drafts? Unlike last year, where Luck and RGIII were going in the first five or six rounds of most startup drafts as low end QB1s, Smith can be taken much later than that. According to the dynasty startup Average Draft Position (ADP) that is available at [dynastyleaguefootball.com](http://dynastyleaguefootball.com) or by clicking [here](#), you can see Smith is currently going in the middle of the thirteenth round in twelve team PPR leagues as the 17th quarterback off the board – this puts him just behind Tannehill and Joe Flacco, but just before Josh Freeman, Sam Bradford and Andy Dalton.

Looking several years down the line, the fantasy upside of Geno Smith is likely that of a high-end QB2 or low end QB1. In other words, I put him in the 10-15 range when it comes to quarterbacks. You are probably talking about someone on par with the production that we have seen out of Flacco or Ben Roethlisberger over the last few years. He'll be a quality backup, but not someone I would want as my primary starter.



# PLAYER PROFILES

## CORDARELLE PATTERSON: PROCEED WITH CAUTION

With the NFL Draft closing in on us with each passing day, the last piece of the rookie puzzle will finally be revealed to dynasty fanatics in a couple of weeks. It has been well documented that this particular rookie class lacks a truly elite option at almost every offensive position (besides perhaps Eddy Lacy and Tyler Eifert) and from what I've seen, player values are all over the board.

I can't say I've ever witnessed such a spectacle in all my years of playing in a dynasty format. If you were to ask seven people who they thought was the number one rated wide receiver in this draft class, there's a good possibility you may get seven different answers.

The one player whose name I've found is consistently in the conversation for the top wide receiver in this class is Cordarrelle Patterson. I think the word "upside" is probably the most accurate way to describe Patterson at this point because his rookie stock is comprised purely on perceived "upside" in my opinion. There is no concrete evidence that suggests Patterson will have a successful NFL career and is a "can't miss" prospect, even though some people regard him in that fashion.

When I think of drafting Patterson with a top three rookie pick, it literally makes me break out in a cold sweat. He has so many red flags, but will still be drafted very high purely based on "upside," with a reckless abandonment for what's right in front of your eyes. So let me enlighten you, in order to aide you in making an educated decision.

Of all the red flags he possesses, for me, the biggest of them all is the lack of big time college experience. If you take into consideration he was a JUCO transfer from Hutchinson Community College, you'd probably assume that playing for such a small program would result in lighting the world on fire, right? Wrong. His statistics (besides total touchdowns) were mediocre at best playing against far inferior competition. In 23 games in a HCC uniform he put a stat line of 113/1832/24 which to me seems very underwhelming. Granted, he did have 398 rushing yards and six touchdowns over the course of his two year JUCO career and was also quite effective as a kickoff and punt returner. So, he does have versatility working in his corner, which could end up being his saving grace.

As we all know, Patterson ended up transferring from HCC to the University of Tennessee where the big boys play – the SEC. In his lone season as a Volunteer, he put up a stat line of 46/778/5, which is very unimpressive for someone regarded so highly in the dynasty community. His sample size is small in the world of big time college football and it's not like he dominated his adversaries by any means. I'd also like to remind everyone that he had only one elite game all season at UT against Troy in which he put up a gaudy stat line of 9/219/1. However, if you average it out, roughly 24% of his entire 2012 output came in one game, against a weak opponent – not exactly what I look for in a top three dynasty pick.



# PLAYER PROFILES

## CORDARELLE PATTERSON: PROCEED WITH CAUTION

Here's the thing, some NFL team is probably going to draft Patterson as their number one receiving option, so I think that counting on him for return yardage is very far fetched. There are only a few select players in the NFL who can man all three of those spots successfully and two of them are named Percy Harvin and Randall Cobb. I could see him getting a few carries here and there out of the backfield, but not enough to bank on. As far as return duties go, most teams don't put their number one receiver out on the field to return kicks due to injury risk (i.e. Dez Bryant), so I think you can confidently rule out any possibility of that happening unless he is drafted by a team that already has a couple of solid receiving options.

Another red flag for Patterson is how extremely raw he is. If I had to compare him to another player currently playing in the NFL, it would be Darrius Heyward-Bey. They are roughly the same size, have elite speed, are below average route runners and are not natural hands catchers but rather chest catchers – all of which I've witnessed first hand not only during the combine, but also on tape. The evidence is literally at your fingertips.

When DHB came into the league, he was drafted to be “the guy” (unfortunately for him) in an offense that lacked a quality quarterback or any complementary pieces besides Darren McFadden, who at that point was considered a borderline bust. He was also extremely raw and more of a one trick pony rather than a polished wide receiver. I see Patterson coming into the league on similar terms, where he will end up on a team that has a desperate need at wide receiver and will be expected to produce immediately. If that happens, I think it will be very detrimental to his career because the expectations will be sky high.

I believe the best case scenario for Patterson is to step into a situation in which he isn't expected to a superstar from day one. He has the talent and athletic abilities you can't teach, but what he needs is time. If he gets afforded the luxury to refine his route running skills, work on the concentration lapses he has from time to time, perfect his ability to beat press coverage and improve on looking the ball into his hands rather than let it get into his body, he could be a very special player. He could also offer huge upside in the return game if your league awards return yardage points.

If upside is what you like to risk the future of your dynasty team on, Patterson definitely has it. I view Patterson as more of a “proceed with caution” prospect, rather than the “can't miss” prospect some people talk him up as.

Do yourself a favor. If you haven't already set up a draft board for yourself, do it soon. Time is of the essence. You owe it to yourself to rank these players on a pre/post draft basis and move people up and down your draft boards accordingly. You're a GM, remember? As a GM, you can't let one player cloud your judgment and overlook one of the deepest classes of wide receivers we've seen in years. Do your due diligence, and ask yourself...

Is the risk worth the reward?



# PLAYER PROFILES

## DYNASTY DEBATE: MARKUS WHEATON VS. QUINTON PATTON

**Authors: Doug Vetach and Mark Rockwell**

Writing these debate articles has been a blast for me. First, I get to write about football and second, I get to know some of the other writers a bit better. This has been particularly fun as I'm one of the "new guys." As I fight my way through my fellow writers, I'm learning this is one dedicated crew of excellent writers. Trust me when I say, DLF will continue to be the global leader of dynasty fantasy football content. We all love it just as much as you and appreciate you guys reading and commenting on our work...if you can call writing about fantasy football "work."

Enough with the love fest, let's get to the fighting.

For this edition, I challenged another new guy, Doug Veatch. As has been the norm, I gave my counterpart the option of picking the players we'll argue over. Doug had a twist planned for me. He offered up a pair of rookies. Doug will be making a case for Quinton Patton out of Louisiana Tech and I'll be arguing for Oregon State's Markus Wheaton.

### **Doug's argument for Quinton Patton**

Before I get too deep into this, I would like to point out I think Wheaton is a solid NFL prospect, but I have some concerns. Not huge concerns by any means, but enough that would steer me in another direction because I think he has limited upside.

Wheaton is one of those wiry players at first, second and third glance. He has decent size, but is lacking in the weight department (183 lbs) which could really hurt his chances of staying on the football field if he doesn't bulk up. At 5'11" he does have the frame to add some weight, but sometimes it can take younger players a bit more time before they put on what I like to call their "man weight." The bigger question is if he does put on additional weight, how much of his speed and fluidity will be sacrificed?

If I had to compare him to any player in the NFL right now it would be DeSean Jackson. I think Wheaton basically has the same upside as DJax as well. I don't think he'll be a player who will grab 90 balls per year or score you eight touchdowns, but rather finish somewhere in the range of 50-65 catches and 5-7 touchdowns, though his high yards per catch average will keep him squarely in the mix to be a WR4-5 for your dynasty teams.



# PLAYER PROFILES

## DYNASTY DEBATE: MARKUS WHEATON VS. QUINTON PATTON

It never hurts to have that kind of depth on your roster, but I'm always looking for someone who I believe has solid WR2 value, with potential to grow from there.

Quinton Patton is probably the most underrated wide receiver in this draft class at this point. I know it's still early in the process and these players don't have a home yet, but I'm really struggling to find something about Patton's game that isn't an easy fix.

From what I'm hearing out there in the dynasty community, the biggest knock on Patton is that he played in the WAC and therefore, did not play against top notch programs. While that is true, I feel a lot of people don't really dig deep enough to search for clarity, because I couldn't disagree more. Patton had one of the best statistical games I've ever witnessed against Johnny Manziel and the Texas A&M Aggies in 2012. In that game Patton was, for a lack of a better word "unstoppable." He put up an insane stat line of 21/233/4 against one of the best teams in the country, yet made it look easy. Questioning his talent because of the conference he played in is a non-issue in my eyes.

Patton's measurables and the way they translate onto the football field remind me so much of Hakeem Nicks, it's actually quite scary. They are almost identical in size, speed and intangibles. They are both very aggressive in the red zone, natural hands catchers, excellent route runners, very quick off of the line of scrimmage, get to full speed within a few steps, are able to fight off press coverage and both work the sidelines to perfection. As far as feet go, Patton has some of the quickest feet of any player I've ever scouted. The way he changes direction without sacrificing speed is rare for a player of his size and he is a nightmare for defensive backs to take on alone in the open field. He also has experience playing both outside and in the slot, so I could see a team really maximizing his skill set by moving him all over the field, which also makes him a good candidate to be on the field for all three downs.

I see Patton as one of the most NFL ready wide receivers in this draft class. If he is drafted into the right situation, he could produce top 30 numbers in year one, with plenty of upside going forward. Both of these wide receivers should be taken within a few picks of each other in most rookie drafts, most likely somewhere in the late first to mid-second round, so they both represent great value picks to dynasty owners.

For my money, if I own a late first round pick and both players are sitting there for the taking, I'm taking Patton without a doubt in my mind.





# PLAYER PROFILES

## DYNASTY DEBATE: MARKUS WHEATON VS. QUINTON PATTON

### Doug's Argument for Markus Wheaton

Quinton Patton was a proficient college player. He displays impressive physicality and is superb at adjusting to a pass and controlling his body. He doesn't have elite deep speed and isn't remarkably quick off the line of scrimmage. I'm not a scout by any stretch of the imagination, but those are the things I noted while watching his highlights. Patton has been compared to Reggie Wayne and Greg Jennings and I have high expectations for him in the NFL, but that seems a little lofty to me.

Negatively, he doesn't have premier size or speed. Standing at six feet tall and running the 40 in a mediocre 4.53 seconds doesn't exactly scream top-notch NFL talent. While most recently scouts have talked him up as a second round pick, prior to draft season this feeling was far from unanimous. He was referred to as a third receiver option in the NFL and "just a guy" at various points (granted the scout who called him "just a guy" was anonymous). There's no denying he was remarkably productive in college racking up over 2,500 yards and 20 touchdowns in two seasons. However, keep in mind those totals came in games that averaged a gazillion points in the Western Athletic Conference.

Conversely, Markus Wheaton racked up 91 catches, 1,244 yards and 11 touchdowns as a senior in the PAC-12. Not that the PAC-12 is a defensive strong hold, but there are some legitimate defenses including Stanford and to a lesser extent, UCLA. He was asked to play a featured role against significantly better defenses than Patton ever faced and excelled to an equal extent.

Wheaton is also markedly faster with a track and field background. He ran the 40 nearly a full tenth faster than Patton at 4.45 seconds. While he measured in one inch shorter and a smidge lighter than Patton, he out benched him 20 to eight, out jumped him by four inches, and ran the three-cone drill slightly faster. While both are impressive physical specimens with tremendous athleticism, Wheaton wins by a whisker when it comes to speed and lateral agility.

He could borrow a little of Patton's physicality getting off the line of scrimmage, but once he gets the ball, watch out – he's one the most dynamic open field threats in the draft with tremendous elusiveness and speed. It's his lateral quickness and ability to stretch the field that will have NFL team's drooling over him. Once a pass is thrown, he tracks it well and is fierce fighting for and high pointing the ball. Much like Patton, he's a disciplined and crafty route runner.





# PLAYER PROFILES

## DYNASTY DEBATE: MARKUS WHEATON VS. QUINTON PATTON

Essentially, Wheaton has a couple of advantages in my eyes

While both are savvy route runners, Wheaton has the additional speed to help create separation against faster NFL corners. Secondly, while both receivers were tremendously productive in college, Wheaton excelled against better defenses. After doing the film and scout report studying, both excite me to a new level – this speaks to the quality depth of wide receiver in this draft. There isn't a Julio Jones or Calvin Johnson in this draft, but there may just be a few players comparable to Antonio Brown, Greg Jennings or Anquan Boldin. Both of these players fit the mold, with a slight edge to Wheaton.

### Conclusion

As both of us noted, there's a lot to like about these players. Patton plays with a beautiful blend of physicality and disciplined route running, but lacks field stretching speed. Wheaton has an extra bit of speed but is spindly and will need to prove he can stay healthy at the next level. I'm hoping for a WR2 career out of Wheaton comparable to Boldin or Brown, while Doug feels that Patton compares favorably to Hakeem Nicks.

There may not be a clear winner in this debate, but I'm glad Doug picked these two prospects. Taking the time to do some research paid off in a big way. I'll be happy to end up with either of these receivers in my rookie drafts. Wheaton and Patton are two underrated, high character and disciplined players with highly productive college careers.



# STRATEGY

## KNOWING IS HALF THE BATTLE: ROOKIE DRAFT PREP

**Author: Andy Miley**

Growing up watching cartoons on Saturday mornings, that was always one of my favorite lines, “Knowing is half the battle.” Why is that important when it comes to your rookie drafts? Dynasty leagues are won and lost by owners taking an interest in scouting or following good scouting information, analyzing other teams needs and trends and finally doing the work for yourself.

I love April as it has been said many times..this is the time for liars. There are liars on NFL teams, liars in your leagues and liars in the media. Every team will bring in 30 non-local players for a workout. Some of those players get brought in for legitimate reasons, but many will visit to force another NFL team to show their hand. Now the liars in your league, hopefully most of you still have a local league to attend where you are look at each other and make your selections in the same room. I always loved wearing jerseys of players I would never draft, because it would force another owner to try to “get” me by drafting my “player.” Even talking someone up on twitter or on the DLF message board, can cause someone to pick someone whom they would not have otherwise. Last, but not least, the media lies. Tim Tebow getting drafted by the Broncos was a goldmine. ESPN hyped him as the best thing and kept him in the draft spotlight throughout the entire process. Matt Barkley is a media darling, but his ability to be a quality NFL starter is in doubt.

When it comes to scouting, whom do you listen to? I’ll be honest, I love to watch film myself. Football has been apart of my life for 38 years or so and I played organized football for five years. Every year I watch more film and compare it with scouting reports from others who have been around longer. Mike Mayock is one of my favorites as he doesn’t act like he knows everything. He simply states his opinion and why. The fact he is at every all-star game talking to players and scouts impresses me. I saw him being quite active several times at the East/West Shrine game week this past January. Cecil Lamme has a unique voice and is very insightful with his player thoughts. By working in radio and on a fantasy football website (footballguys.com), he gets to talk to a local media member from every team and gains tremendous insight. He is always at the NFL Draft and every all-star game as well. Much like Mayock, he shows his work. Shane P. Hallam and Joe Everett have both been going to all-star games and watch a lot of film. I am lucky enough to have as much access with them as I want. We on occasion share emails, direct messages, phone calls or podcasts together where we discuss our thoughts and find common ground. I see that sharing of knowledge happening on the DLF message board in the NCAA Prospects and NFL Draft section.



# STRATEGY

## KNOWING IS HALF THE BATTLE: ROOKIE DRAFT PREP

Decide what your thoughts are on every single player that you expect to be drafted in your league. If your rookie draft is six rounds with 12 teams, you better have your top 72 players that will be drafted. Set your own tiers on these players. Many draftniks, including myself, like UCLA's running back Johnathan Franklin. It's up to you to decide if he should be placed in the same tier as Eddie Lacy and Gio Bernard. Mayock doesn't include Franklin in his top five running back list.

Are you more risk averse than some owners or are you willing to take chances? Players like Marcus Lattimore, Christine Michael, Travis Kelce, Da'Rick Rogers, and Cordarrelle Patterson have some of the best skill sets in their class, but they could burn you by being out of the league in a year or two. Or you can play it safe by taking players like DeAndre Hopkins and Stedman Bailey who are not exciting physical freaks, but offer consistent effort and honed skills. I tend to be a little more conservative, but am more than willing to invest in a player if the price is cheaper because of the risk. Kelce in the back half of the second or top of the third round has a lot of value versus taking Patterson in the top three picks of the draft.

Be aware of supply and demand. Perhaps the rookie running backs are running dry and you know someone loves the Big Ten and Le'Veon Bell - take him as a reserve player for you, but as a potential starter for the team that has strong wide receivers and little help at running back. You might be able to get an Eric Decker, who is tremendously de-valued right now, for Bell. These rookie pick values will never be higher than right before they get drafted. Keep that in mind while you contemplate trading them. Once you make the pick, their value goes out the window.

To recap, April is the time to gather information about rookies. Scout the players with help from people who have done it before and have been successful. Study the other teams needs in your league. Decide where upside and value meet for your team. Know when the bottom will drop off with position runs. If you keep these tips in mind, you will be ready for your rookie draft.



# STRATEGY

## REBUILDING: TRADING A HIGH ROOKIE PICK

**Author: Doug Veatch**

If you've never looked at your dynasty team and honestly thought to yourself, "it's time for a rebuild," the future is now. It means you've looked at your roster over and over (and over) and determined you have a legitimate three year window in which to win a championship – that's what this game is about after all, isn't it? Winning?

Now that we're on the subject, I've got an idea. Since you already have your laptop, smart phone, tablet or whatever in your hands right now, do me (and yourself) a favor. I can't believe I'm about to say this, but stop reading this article (that really hurt), pull up your roster(s), take as long as you need, be brutally honest with yourself and make that determination right now. We'll pickup this conversation whenever you're ready...

Welcome back!

After pulling up my dynasty rosters and doing a thorough evaluation of my own teams, it looks highly probable you've come to one of four conclusions:

- 1.) I'm a legit contender
- 2.) I'm a playoff team
- 3.) I'm on the verge of being a playoff team
- 4.) I'm rebuilding.

Chances are you own multiple teams (since dynasty football is highly addictive) and find yourself in a situation where all four scenarios may describe more than one of your dynasty team. Today, I'd like to focus my attention on the teams that are rebuilding.

Whether you had a poor start-up draft, took over an orphan team, had a series of bad trades or whatever the case may be, your team is clearly in rough shape. The good news is this – the rookie draft is right around the corner! If you haven't already traded away your draft picks (since you're probably sitting with a top three pick), listen up. You (yes you) are in a position of power. Why, you ask? Because the teams that are competitive year in, year out want your picks, bad. So bad in fact, they may be willing to overpay you for them. To put it into perspective, last year I paid Torrey Smith, two first round picks (2013 & 2014), a second round pick and a third round pick to obtain the services of Trent Richardson at pick 1.01. A player we all thought would be great (turns out we were right), but had never played a down at the NFL level and had some injury concerns.

# STRATEGY

## REBUILDING: TRADING A HIGH ROOKIE PICK

The team I acquired that pick from had been the perennial basement dweller of our league for five years, with no light at the end of the tunnel.

Then, something funny happened. After our trade, he started becoming a hyper-active owner, which he had never been. He ended up swindling Drew Brees, committed grand larceny while acquiring Tony Gonzalez (traded Joique Bell straight up for him) and gave up one of my first round picks straight up for Darren Sproles (yes, it's a PPR league). It seemed like all he had to do was make one good trade to boost his confidence and he was off to the races. The difference was he had some additional pieces to work with after trading pick 1.01.

After that, the players he had either drafted or picked up off of the waiver wire over the years like Michael Crabtree, Eric Decker and Antonio Brown started producing at a very high level and kept getting stronger as the season got shorter.

Not only did this former scratching post of the league finish with a 9-4 record and a first round bye, but he also beat yours truly in the semi-finals, earning him a spot in the championship game. While he ended up falling short in the end of winning it all, it was the biggest one season turnaround I had ever seen in a dynasty league, and it all started by trading away that high end first round pick, which will still be paying him dividends in the 2014 rookie draft.

So the moral of the story is this – don't put all your eggs in one basket. It's time to diversify your portfolio. Having a high end first round pick can net you so much more than the ONE player you intend to draft. It gives you bargaining power to go after additional proven players who can stock your roster with young, upcoming talent for years to come. Do not commit the cardinal sin and trade your high end picks away before the NFL Draft, unless you get an offer that is too good to turn down. Situation always drives up prices. Always!

To put it into its simplest terms, you're taking a risk management approach by targeting multiple younger players like Josh Gordon, Justin Blackmon, T.Y. Hilton and David Wilson while also being compensated with future draft picks at the same time – this is the best way for rebuilding teams to become relevant in a hurry.

If I (as well as thousands of other dynasty owners) was willing to pay that much to latch on to Richardson last year, how much will someone pay you for the pleasure of owning Eddy Lacy this season? That is yet to be determined, but I guarantee you that if you search hard enough for the right trade partner, you will be rewarded handsomely. I know you're sick of finishing in the bottom three every year, aren't you? One advantageous trade can reshape the entire core of your team.

# STRATEGY

## A BUCKET OF COLD WATER

**Author: Tim Stafford**

I'm writing this article at the risk of being very unpopular for doing so. This is a message many dynasty owners don't want to hear, especially right now. Sometimes one has to be the bearer of bad news. Plus, we've had an influx of new dynasty players to the site and I felt this information would benefit them.

I've been on record for some time as saying the 2013 draft class isn't particularly good for dynasty. The draft lacks many of the elements of an attractive class:

No super studs a la Trent Richardson, AJ Green or Julio Jones. One of the best draft sites on the net ([www.draftcountdown.com](http://www.draftcountdown.com)) doesn't have a RB/WR/TE going off the board until Cordarrelle Patterson at pick 17

No star quality QBs such as Mathew Stafford or Andrew Luck. Geno Smith will go early because of positional value and team need, but I hope someone reaches for him ahead of me in my rookie drafts  
No surefire first round RBs like Mark Ingram, CJ Spiller or David Wilson. Eddie Lacy and Gio Bernard are nice players, but they are second round NFL talents

What proponents of the class point to is the depth and particularly the depth at wide receiver. And there is no doubt that this class has a bevy of receivers who may have impact in the NFL and in dynasty leagues.

### Approach

Since the argument put forward is that this class is built on receivers, I decided to look back over the last four years and assess how the receivers have fared in fantasy. Sadly, it's not a very good picture. I'm generally of the opinion that in non-IDP leagues, picks after the first round are dice rolls and should be treated as such. So the group of receivers I looked at were ones routinely taken in the first round of rookie drafts. Your league might have been a little different, but generally speaking these were the typical first rounders.

I categorized the receivers into four groups:

**Stud:** These are players we all love to own, play weekly and see as cornerstone players for our teams

**Solid:** Players who are owned in all leagues and are routinely in starting rosters

**Questionable:** Jury is still out. Players from recent drafts for whom the opportunity to shine (or bust) hasn't yet happened

**Bust:** These are players I am avoiding in 99% of situations

Readers may want to question some of my categorizations and that's fine. Chances are some will say that there are players I list as "busts" that should be "questionables," or whatever. That wouldn't change the outcome of the analysis anyway.



# STRATEGY

## A BUCKET OF COLD WATER

	2012	2011	2010	2009
<b>Stud (7)</b>		Green	Bryant	Harvin
		Jones	Thomas	Nicks
				Crabtree
<b>Solid (4)</b>	Blackmon	Smith		Maclin
	Wright			
<b>Questionable (5)</b>	Floyd	Brown		
	Hill			
	Jeffery			
	Quick			
<b>Bust (8)</b>		Little	G.Tate	Heyward-Bey
		Baldwin	Benn	Britt
		Hankerson		
		Young		

### Findings

Wide Receiver is a 50/50 Proposition: The chart demonstrates that a WR is a 50/50 proposition in the first round of your rookie draft – this is disappointing for dynasty owners. Surely the hope would be that a first round pick yields better results than this. I've received a lot of questions of late about trading known WRs for rookie picks (e.g. Torrey Smith for the 1.03) and this suggests extreme caution should be used in doing so. The safe play turns out to be to cash in the picks on the "less sexy" WRs such as Jeremy Maclin, Stevie Johnson or Dwayne Bowe as opposed to rolling the dice on a rookie.

Watch the NFL Draft: Every single stud was a first round NFL rookie pick. Obviously there are players who were picked in the first round who didn't pan out, but it's noteworthy that none outside of the NFL first round have emerged as studs. This is somewhat concerning in terms of the argument that what makes this class good is the depth at WR. We aren't going to see six or seven WRs taken in the first round! Depending on how you see this, a play might be to try to parlay a late first in to two seconds to give yourself two swings at the plate. If the class really is that deep, this would theoretically give you better odds.



# STRATEGY

## A BUCKET OF COLD WATER

**Character Matters:** Notice that a lot of the busts have well known character issues. Greg Little, Jon Baldwin, Titus Young, Golden Tate and Kenny Britt all had issues coming in to the NFL. In the case of both Britt and Baldwin, teams overlooked that and drafted them in the first round anyway. Clearly Dez Bryant and Percy Harvin are the counter-example. I'd suggest you weigh character when you are selecting a receiver with your first round selection. If you're on the fence between two players, use it as the tie-breaker.

**Patience isn't Necessarily a Virtue:** Conventional wisdom suggests it takes a while for receivers to acclimate to the NFL and therefore provide meaningful fantasy value. Maybe so/maybe not. Obviously we aren't throwing in the towel just yet on the 2012 class – thus a lot are listed as “questionable.” However, the only player who changed his spots for the good over this time period was Michael Crabtree - all the other studs came out of the gate with a bang. While this doesn't have much impact on your draft behavior, it does speak to cashing in on value. Example: It's likely that a lot of Jeremy Maclin owners wish they had sold a year or so ago. His value seems to have been on a slide ever since. And in terms of the draft, this means that odds are that the highest point of value from your pick is right before you make it.

### Conclusion

As mentioned before, the disappointing aspect of this is that a first round dynasty rookie pick at wide receiver is a 50/50 proposition at best. I think we could accept that if I had included the second rounders as well, but it feels like we should get better results with our coveted first rounder.

The safe play is clearly to trade your pick for a known quantity. The trade market for rookie picks is already in full swing in most leagues and will only gain steam over the next six weeks or so. Try not to let your emotions about the NFL draft cloud your judgment on doing what's best for your team.

**The Counter Argument:** If you do trade away your pick, you're losing some major upside. This is the allure of the rookie pick! Realistically, the only way to get AJ Green or Julio Jones for anything but your first born child was via the rookie draft. The issue is that this is fool's gold in this rookie class. It may be hard to believe this (or sadly maybe not), but I knew that AJ Green had the goods to be a stud while he was still in high school. He was/is that good. With Julio Jones, even my Grandma could have watched an Alabama game and said that he was good. We'll get those level of prospects again in the future, it's just not happening this year.

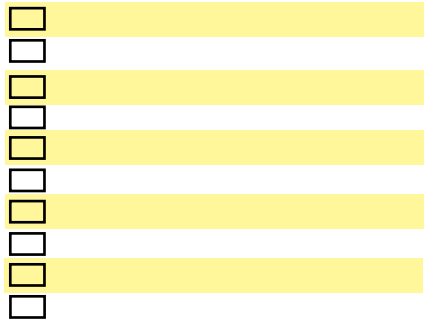
**A Potential Silver Lining:** The one argument in favor of this class (other than depth) that makes sense to me is how the NFL draft is lining up. The really bad teams (those at the top of the draft), have line needs and will not reach for any of this crop of receivers. It seems unlikely that we'll end up with a Justin Blackmon to Jacksonville or Michael Floyd to Arizona type situation in 2013. Frankly, the teams can't afford it and the players don't warrant it. This should mean that receiver needy teams like Pittsburgh and Minnesota will have their choice of some high caliber talent. Hopefully this will mean quick impact for dynasty. Just thought I'd try to end on a positive note!

# ROOKIE DRAFT CHEAT SHEET

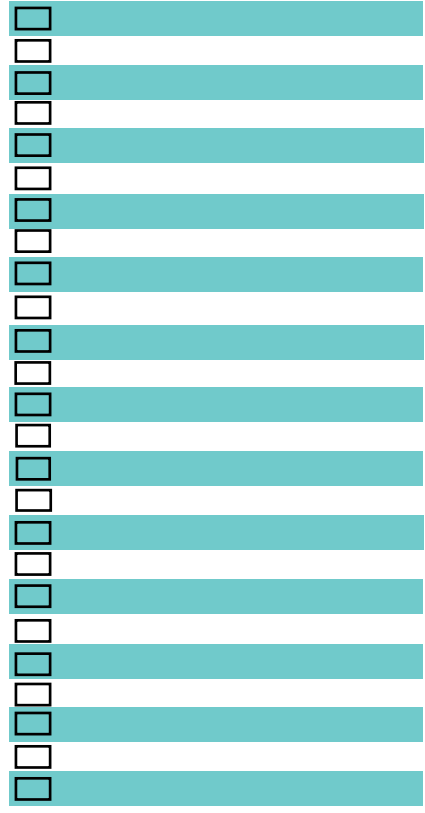
## COMING SOON!

### ROOKIE POSITIONAL RANKINGS

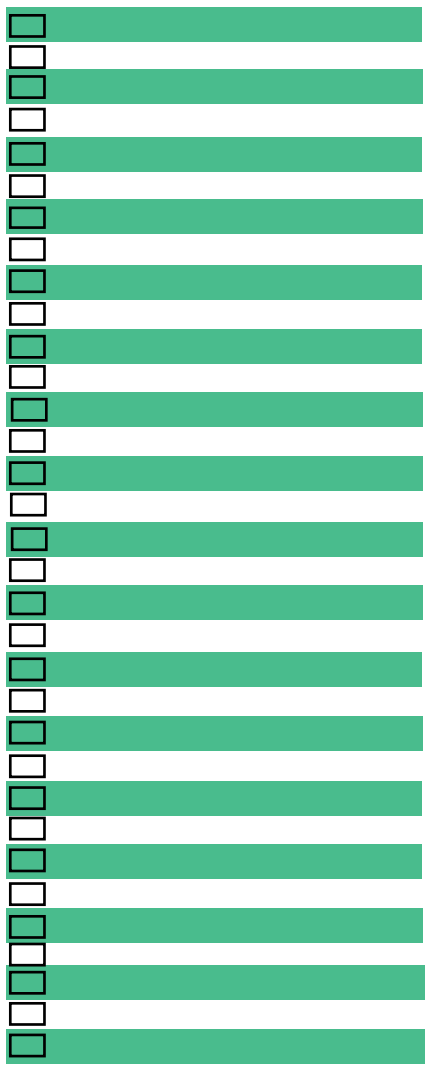
#### QUARTERBACKS



#### RUNNING BACKS



#### WIDE RECEIVERS



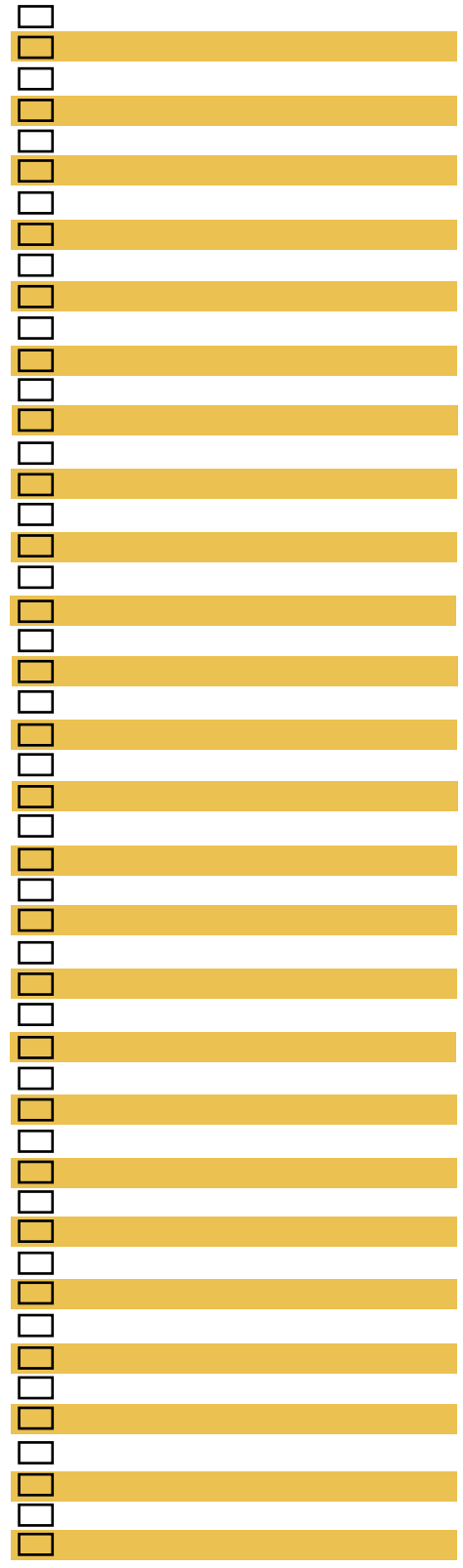
#### TIGHT ENDS



#### IDPS (NOT INCLUDED IN TOP 50)



### ROOKIE TOP 50



**DRAFT**

DYNASTY LEAGUE FOOTBALL